UNIT FOUR: DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE GONDORIAN PERIOD UNTIL THE END OF 18TH C (MT4)

4.1. The Jesuits and their Evangelization in Ethiopia

In 1535, Lebne Dengel sent a **letter** of military help to Portugal. In 1541, Portuguese soldiers came to Christian Kingdom and played decisive role in ending the Adal hegemony in the region.

- Catholic missionaries known as **Jesuits** sought to introduce Catholicism.
- Jesuits attempt to do this started as soon as the Portuguese soldiers entered the Christian kingdom.
- **Bermudez** made himself patriarch of the Christian kingdom.
- He claimed that Libne Dingil had promised to be

- Bermudez went on to request **Gelawodewos** to fulfill the alleged promises of his father; he required Gelawodewos:
  - to embrace Catholicism.
  - to assists in converting the subjects
  - to recognizes his Patriarchy.
- Gelawodewos knew that his father did not make the alleged promise.
- Therefore, he rejected the request of Bermudez.
- The king of Portugal, **John III**, also refused to recognize Bermudez as a patriarch.
- Finally, Bermudez retired to **Debarwa** in 1553.
- **The official appointment of patriarchs started only later**.

- Gelawdewos has requested some of Portuguese soldiers to live permanently in his kingdom.
- The soldiers agreed to the King’s request.
- Then the king wrote a letter to the king of Portugal to send Catholic priests who could render religious services for the Portuguese soldiers.
- King John III and **Roman Pope** thought that Gelawdewos wanted to be converted to Catholicism.
- Thus, they sent one patriarch and two bishops.
- When Gelawdewos heard such news, he wrote a letter of objection to the Portuguese governor of Goa.
- And after then **Rodriguez** and Andre de Oviedo tried to convince the King embrace Catholicism.

- **Andre de Oviedo** isolated the Portuguese armies from Gelawodewos.
- **Pedro Paez** extended the efforts; He suceeded to convert first **Sille Kiristos** and the **King Susenoyos** (r. 1607-1632).
- Paez passed away in 1622 and **Alfonso Mendez** and replaced Paez a patriarch.

Civil War

- The 1st peasant rebellion against Suseniyos & Catholic broke out in **1617**.
- In **1622**, Suseniyos made Catholicism the official state religion.
- Suseniyos fought many battles & that was one of the large scale peasant uprising in Ethiopia history.

- After the battle of **Denqez** in 1632 Suseniyos:

  - Decided to withdraw from the experiment with Catholicism

  - Abdicated power in favor of his son, Fasiledes.

- On his reign **Fasiledes took** the following **measures:**

✓ Severely punished local converts including Susenyos' brother uncle Se'ela Kristos.

✓ introduced a new policy called "Close-Door Policy."

✓ initiated diplomatic relations with the Islamic world.

✓ concluded (in 1647) an agreement with Ottomans that the latter should block any European into Ethiopia.

➢ Secret visits by Doctor Charles. J. Poncet (1700) and James Bruce (1769) were exceptions regarding "Close-Door Policy."

- **Jesuit intervention triggered doctrinal divisions within EOC.**

4.2. The Establishment and Socio-Economic and Political Developments of Gonder

- The Gondar period refers to the time when the **monarchs** of the Christian highland **ruled from Gondar**.
- Gondar was **founded** as a capital **by Fasiledes** around 1636.
- It ended the traditional ruling from temporary camps.
  - The city was located on the long-distance trade route.
  - It was also at a far distance from Oromo threat.
- **Gondar became known for its architectural achievement & building technology.**
  - Marvelous castles were built;

- **Gonder developed certain urban features very soon.**
  - It was inhabited by **compatriots** and **foreigners** such as Armenians, Greeks, Indians and Persians.
  - It housed varying **occupational groups** like Bête Israel active in masonry and Jeberti in trade.
  - Muslims, Bête Israel & expatiates lived in separate quarters.
  - Cash payment for labor, usually in *amole*, was also introduced.
- **Gonder led a glory of its time during three strong successive kings.** These kings were:
  - Emperor Fasiledes (r.1632-67)
  - Emperor Yohannes I (r. 1667-1682).

- **Military power declined**; imperial court itself had to be guarded by powerful warlords of regions.
- The assassination of King Iyasu I in 1706 led to **power struggle** among the royal family.

•Inefficient kings took the throne in succession. Turmoil continued until coming into power of **King Bekafa** (r. 1721-1730).

Etege **Mintewab and the Move towards** ***Zemene Mesafint***

- The last stage of Gondarian period was dominated by the Quara born woman, ***Itege*** **Menetwab.**
- Menetwab came to the Gonder court as **a wife of Bekafa**.
- She controlled actual power as a reagent of **Iyasu II** (r.1730-55).

- *Ras Bitwoded* Weldeleul died in 1767.
- **Wollo Oromo occupied key positions and emerged powerful**.
- Thus Mentewab was threatened by the **Quara-Wollo Oromo rivalry**.
- Wollo Oromo faction was represented by **Wabi, mother of Iyoas,** while Quara by *Itege* Menetwab.
- Menetwab invited ***Ras* Mikael of Tigray** to come to Gonder.
- Mikael has big army & modern firearms.
- Mikael restored peace and stability in the capital.
- He was then rewarded a title of *Ras Bitwoded*.
- ***Ras Bitwoded* Mikael assassinated King Iyoas in 1769**

4.3. Decadence within the Ruling House & the *Zemene Mesafint* /the Era of War Lords (1769-1855)

- *Zemene Mesafint* (1769-1855) was the period when the actual political power was in the hands of regional lords.
- Gonder remained capital and kings became just puppet.
- *Ras Bitwoded* Mikael Sehul was kingmaker from 1769-1771.
- In 1771 warlords of Gojjam, Wollo and Lasta opposed and defeated him at the battle of **Sabrakussa**.
- Mikael then went back to his homeland.
- However, making and unmaking of kings set by him became tradition. Regional lords vied to:
  - ✓ defeat rivals and collect as much tribute as

- **Doctrinal division** inherited from the Jesuit theology worsened the political crises of *Zemene Mesafint*.
- The internal religious division gave an ideological dimensions to the power of conflict
- There was also **foreign threat** from Egypt during the period of *Zemene Mesafint*.
- In due course, **Yejju Oromo grew powerful** and came up with influential ruling class.

Note: Only the province of Shewa remained neutral in the wars of *Zemene Mesafint*.

4.4 The Ascendancy of the Yeiju/Wara Sheh Dynasty

Yejju Dynasty:

- founded in1786 by **Ali Gwangul** (Ali I or Ali Talaq)
- centered at **Debretabor** and was dominant until the mid 1850s.
- took the title of ***Ras Bitwoded*** for themselves
- Its ruler **acted as a guardian** of weak kings at Gonder.
- reached peak in the reign of ***Ras* Gugsa** (r. 1803-1825).
- Gugsa extended authority over Gojjam, Wollo, Lasta, Dembya, Begemedir, Simen and Wegera.
- He **faced resistance from Tigrian** lords *Ras*

- *Ras* Mariye (r. 1828-1831) and Sabagadis fought at the battle of **May Aslamay**.
- The result was the death of both lords and victory of Yejju forces.
- At the battle of May Aslamay*, Dejjazmach* Wube Haile- Mariyam joined Mariye.
- For this contribution, he was rewarded the province of Tigray.

4.5. Developments in Omo Basin, Gibe Region, Wellega Area, Harrar, the West and Shewa

- ✓ **The Kingdom of Kaffa**
- ✓ was found south of the **Gojeb** River.
- ✓ divided into twelve and later into **eighteen provinces**.
- ✓ Taxes were collected by assigned collectors called **Tate-kisho**.
- ✓ The names of two dynasties were **Matto** and **Minjo**.
- ✓ The Kaffa kings held a royal title called **Tato**.
- ✓ All the land was considered as a property of the tato.
- ✓ The king was assisted by a council called **Mikerecho**.

The kingdom of Yem

- Located north-east of Kaffa, on the western bank of Gibe.
- existed as political entity since the 14th c.
- ruled by a dynasty called **Mowa**.
- Ruled by **amno** who acted as a chief priest.
- had hierarchically organized administration.
  - The **amno** was at the top of the social and political pyramid.
  - Below amno, there was council of officials named **Astessor** with its chairperson **Waso**.
- Provinces and sub provinces were ruled by officials called **erasho** and **gena** respectively.
- The state of Yem was conquered by **Abba Jifar II** of Jimma.

The Kingdom of Walayita

- was a monarchy **ruled by Kawo (king)**
- protected by the "**goqa**”, the privileged warrior class.
- had a strong connection with the medieval state of **Damot**.
- **ruled Wolayta-Malla by dynasty and Tigre dynasty.**
- **Wolayta-Malla** was founded by Motalami.
- later **Wolayta-Malla** was replaced by “Tigre” dynasty.
- Walayta was a **tributary** state of the Christian kingdom.
- During **Imam Ahmed**, it regained independence.

The Kingdom of Sheka

- It was located to the east of **Baro** and west of **Gojeb** Rivers
- Its ruling dynasties were **Batto** and **Bushasho**.
- It was ruled by the **tato**, monarch.
- Bushasho dynasty ruled from the end of 16th to the 19th c.
- In the 17th C, Sheka was conquered by the **Mecha Oromo**.
- It regained its independence at the beginning of the 19th c.
- The kingdom had a close economic, political and historical relationship with **Enarya, Kaffa** and **Anfillo.**
- Traditions of Sheka recognized the names of **five**

The Oromo Monarchies (*Motumma*)

- At the end of population movement, ***Abba* Dulla** controlled the long-distance trade.
- They established a **private army**.
- They assumed the title of ***Moti***, meaning king.
- Thereafter, *Moti* made their power **hereditary**.
- The Gada System was transformed into **monarchy**.
- The process occurred first in the **Gibe region** and then seen in **Wellega areas**.
- The factors accounted to such transformation were:

- The extended contact of Oromo with other societies.

- **Five** Oromo monarchies emerged around Gibe River.
- They were located along the trade routes. These states were:

✓ **Limmu-Enarya**

✓ It was the earliest monarchy founded through the incorporation of Enarya.

✓ **Bofoo/*Abba* Gomol** (1800-1825) established it.

✓ It reached the height of its power during **Ibsa/*Abba* Bagiboo** (1825-61).

✓ He was succeeded by *Abba* Bulgaa (1861-1883).

✓ **Jimma**

It was prominent during the reign of *Abba* Jifar I or Sanna (r. 1830-1855).

- **<u>Gumma</u>: was founded by Jilcha** or Abba Bal'o who ruled in the first decade of 19th c.
  - was well known under Oncho Jilcha (r. 1810-1830).
  - was brought into Shewan rule sometimes before 1890.
- **<u>Gomma</u>: Abba Boke (r. 1800-1829) founded it**.
  - Gomma emerged as an important state since 1820s.
  - achieved its highest stage during **Abba Mano** (r. 1829-1840).
  - **the earliest Gibe state to accept Islam**.
  - taken over by *Nigus* Menelik in 1886.

Wellega-Oromo (Leqa) Monarchies

- formed in the early 19th century.
- had trade relations with the **Funj** Sultanate and **Shiekdoms** of Aqoldy and Bela Shangul.
- submitted to *Nigus* Menelik around 1886.

Leqa-Naqamte:

- founded by **Bakare Godana** in 1840.
- reached its height under his successors **Moroda** (r. 1868-1889) and **Kumsa** (r. 1889-1932).
- *Moti* Kumsa was later baptized and became Gebre lgziaber.

Leqa-Qellam

- founded by **Tullu** and became powerful under his son, **Jote**.

Nilotic Sheikdoms

- In the **early 19th c**, important Islamic centers emerged in the lower course of the Abbay (by **Berta+Gumz+Arabic speaking Sudanese Muslim**).
- The main factor for the rise of these Muslim States was the **influence of Islam and the border trade**.

✓ **the Sheikhdom of Assosa or Aqoldi**
  - got preeminence under **Sheikh Khojale al Hasan**.

✓ **Bela Shangul**
  - became famous under **Abd al Rahman Khojale**

✓ **Khomosha**
  - at zenith under **Khojale Muhammad Wad Mahmud**.

- They were rich in **gold** deposits.

The Harar Emirate

- In 1577, Walasma rulers left Harar for Awsa.
- Since then the emirs of Harar paid annual tribute to the Imam of Awsa.
- Emir Ali Dawud (r.1647-1662) declared the independent Emirate of Harar.

✓ controlled trade routes from the ports of Zeila and Berbera.
✓ had authority over the surrounding **Oromo** and **Somali**.
✓ Growth of Islam and marriage alliance and trade helped the emirate to consolidate its power over the surrounding Oromo and Somali communities.

- Moreover, serve as the center of Islamic religious study and training.
- The Emirate of Harar controlled trade routes as far east as Berbera and Zeila, ports on the Gulf Aden.

- Many **foreigners** lived in the city of Harar.
- Among these were the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Armenians and the Greeks.
- But the emirate had no direct relations with Europeans.
- In 1855, **Sir Richard Burton** had stayed in the city for ten days.
- He disclosed the wealth and strategic importance of the emirate.
- In the consequence, the first threat came from the Egyptians.
- **Egyptians** force occupied for a decade (1875-1885).
- Harar was liberated by *Emir* Abdulah (r.1885-87).
- However, Menelik annexed the emirate in January **1887**.

The Shawan Kingdom

- For only some times, r/ns were maintained b/n Gonder and Shewa.
- But Shewa gradually detached itself and emerged as an independent kingdom.
- formed by a Menz ruler **Negasi Kristos** (r.1696-1703)
- gradually expanded by successors.
- Shawa reached the height of its power during the reign of **Sahale Selassie** (r.1813-1847).
- Sahale Selassie was the first Shawan ruler to adopt the title ***Negus*** for himself.
- The former rulers of Shawa used titles like ***Meridazmach*** and ***Abeto***.

- He brought peace and stability to the state.
- It actively traded along **Zeila** route.

- It had commercial contact with Harar and Afar.
- Because of political stability and economic prosperity, European travelers were interested in Shewa in the 1840s.

❖ The first Europeans to approach the Shawan state were the missionaries **Isenberg** and **Krapf** in 1837.

❖ **Britain** sent an envoy to Shawa in 1841. This envoy was led by W. **Harris** who succeeded in securing a formal treaty between the British and Shawa.

❖ Later in 1843 the **French** envoy **Rochet d' Heircourt**, on the behalf of his Government signed a treaty of commerce and friendship with Sahle Selassie.

❖ These foreign contacts helped king Sahle Selassie

- The reign of **Haile Melekot** (r 1847-1855), marked the end of the autonomous existence of Shawa.
- This was because Emperor **Tewodros Il** (r. 1855-1868) campaigned to Shawa in 1856 and made it one of his provinces.
- King Haile Melekot died a little before Tewodros defeated the Shawan force at **the Battle of Bereket**, in November 1855.

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