

The Resistance Leagues of the Western Maccaa Oromoo: A Study of Anti-Conquest Movements, 1881-1900

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Abstract

In response to the violent conquests by the Shawan Amhara, the Western Maccaa Oromoo formed Resistance Leagues in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, according to this research. It explores the many types of resistance demonstrated both within and outside of the leagues, as well as the internal political causes that threatened Oromoo unity prior to the conquest. Notwithstanding these efforts, historical writings about the Maccaa Oromoo have a tendency to overlook the Oromoo battles that took place outside the Gibee River and instead center on the winners' allies. The study takes a qualitative approach to research by gathering and evaluating primary and secondary sources, as well as oral histories, to understand the views, emotions, and thoughts related to the resistance activities. The Western Maccaa Oromoo seemed to be hardy and tactically astute, since their leagues managed to defeat the invaders on more than one occasion. Their attempts at resistance were overwhelmed by modern European armies, and by 1900, they had been entirely subdued and suppressed.

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INTRODUCTION

The last quarter of the 19th century witnessed the conquest of the Shawa Amhara kingdom of vast territorial areas in the Horn of Africa. Using the advice of the Europeans and their firearms to the maximum capacity Menilek, the king of the Shawa Amhara kingdom, waged full-scale campaigns of expansion on all the nations in all the corners of present-day Ethiopia. The Oromoo was one of the major ethnic groups targeted by this expansion. In the North the Rayyaa and Azeeboo, in the centre the Tuulamaa, in the east the Ittuu-Umbaanaa,

in the south and south east the Arsii, the Gujii and the Booranaa, in the west the Maccaa Oromoos were the targeted Oromoo branches of all the campaigns (Mekuria Bulcha, 2011:321-370).

However, the campaigns were not without resistance. All these Oromoo branches attempted their best to protect their sovereignty from external threats. However, the resistances varied in strategies of confrontations, intensity, duration, and frequencies. Some were on the spot, severely bloody and short. This is true in the cases of the Arsii and Harargee Oromoo

(Abbas Haji, 2014: 138-162). Others were gradual, better in strategy, frequent in engagement, and over a decade in duration. In this regard, the resistance movement of the Maccaa Oromoo was the best example.

The resistance from the Maccaa Oromoo branches, which are the focus of this study, mostly started after they were brought under the control of the conquest. Once they became aware of the consequences of the conquests and started resistance movements, they made all sorts of efforts including establishing the resistance leagues in their attempts to dislodge the conquerors of the Shawa Amhara from their occupied territories. In the beginning, the members of these leagues tried to resist the conquest independently to keep their territories away from external threats. They did not establish a common front to resist the war of occupation as they did not recognize the intention of the conquest at the early stage. It was when the soldiers and generals who were tasked with overseeing the conquered territories began imposing economic exploitation, cultural dehumanization, and political suppressions that they became aware of the true nature of the conquest (Informants: Abdu Baankaa; Taye Nagarii; Dhugumaa Hirkoo; Dar Rasoo Ooshoo).

However, these significant historical episodes have not been thoroughly examined, recorded, and silenced. Rather than emphasizing the nature of the responses to the conquest, academics have concentrated on the actions of the conquerors. To the most awful, Ethiopian historiographical study, which was often influenced by Abyssinian political views

overshadowed the bloody resistances that the Western Maccaa Oromoo leagues undertook by those who ‘peacefully submitted’. Academicians of Ethiopian historiography valued the collaborators as astute leaders who recognized the futility of the resistances beforehand (Bahru, 2002: 62-64; Paul Henze, 2000; Marcus, 1994). They praised them for their collaborations and didn't even go into detail about how the partners utilized the cooperation for silent resistance. Instead, they condoned the resistance efforts as misguided leaders endangering the peace of the people.

Bahru Zewde's *Modern Ethiopian History*, which is frequently used as a foundational text for students of Ethiopian history overlooked these bloody wars of the leagues as “no or little resistances”. He embedded the history of those who posed resistances into the history of the ‘collaborators’ such as Jimmaa, Leeqaa Naqamtee, and Leeqaa Qellem. He treated the states that resisted which constituted more states and geographical areas as insignificant and less influential (Bahru, 2002: 62-64). Similarly, Harold Marcus, who spent a significant portion of his life researching Ethiopian history, noted that the Oromoo people in this area voluntarily ceded their rights to the conquerors (Harold Marcus, 1994: 81). Paul Henze (2000: 150-155) also takes the same position with Bahru and Marcus. They disregarded the sporadic outbursts of resistance that the majority of the Oromoo chieftains in the area regularly staged.

Before Marcus and Bahru's works, Tesema Ta'a (1986) wrote a dissertation on the history of the region under the “Political

Economy of Western Central Ethiopia". Tesema examined how rivalries between the states were formed during the early stages of state formation by various Oromoo clans. He also revealed how their rivalries and mistrust made them easy targets for the Shewan and Gojjame invasions, as well as how the conquests led to terrible economic exploitation and political and cultural repression. Despite his extensive knowledge of the area and the wealth of information he gathered, Nonetheless, he gave little attention to the states that consistently opposed these three kingdoms, some of which were even stronger than them. Additionally, he compared the valiant opposition these states mounted to the conquerors to rolling dice and resistance at all costs (Tesema, 1986:115-190)

Enrico Cerulli's *Folk Literature of the [Oromoo]* of Southern Abyssinia is another significant work that informs this study. Oral histories of the Oromoo people that Cerulli gathered on the rivalries among the Oromoo and their responses to the conquests of the Gojjame and Shewa Amha (Cerulli, 1922; 9-220). However, as he was a linguist, there was a lot of chronological mixing in his work. He neglected to include the years when the historical events in this combat zone occurred. Nevertheless, it is critical to support this study because his work is replete with information on the issues.

The M.A. Theses of Guluma Gemada (1984) and Samuel Mammo (1998) provide us with a broad overview of the historical processes of the region. Guluma highlights how the intrigues among the Oromoo chieftaincies during the process of state formation exposed them to severe forms of

the *Nafteгна* administration (Guluma,1984: 112-170). Although marred by a serious lack of sources, Samuel Mammo also tried to point out the rivalries among the Oromoo of Wallagga and their encounters in the subsequent *Nafteгна* administration (Samuel,1998:1-60). Nonetheless, while Guluma refrained from articulating the resistance movements following all the traces, Samuel left only by mentioning the places of the battles marking them as minor events.

Largely, despite their best efforts to broaden the scope of Oromoo historiography, the historical literature discussed above looked at the Oromoo struggles beyond the Gibee River as passing references and has not given the relevant attention the struggle deserves. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the Western Maccaa Oromoo resistance struggles that were made successively both independently and by establishing leagues at least for the first seventeen years of the conquest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the Study Area

The primary focus of the study is the region between the upper Gibee Valley in the east, the Gojjab River in the south, the Birbir and Dabus Rivers in the west, and the Abay (Blue Nile) River in the north. The area includes the present day of West Shewa Zone, Iлуу Abbaa Boor, Boonnoo Bedellee, Jimmaaa, Qellem Wallaggaa, West Wallaggaa, East Wallaggaa, and Horroo Guduruu Wallggaa administrative zones. The region was overwhelmingly inhabited

by the Western Maccaa Oromoo clans who used to live peacefully with no or less external influences before the conquest. Tesema noted that the Oromoo people lived in the region peacefully, with the exception of some notorious slave raids and some internal skirmishes. Throughout the 19th century, the area was regularly visited by caravan merchants in search of gold, ivory, civets, animal skins, coffee, slaves, and other goods. The region was also known for its high level of agricultural output (Tesema, 1986: 7-35). This and the abundance of rich and productive resources were what drew people to conquer the Amhara.

Research Design and Approach

The study employed the qualitative research method believing the method is the relevant approach to collect and analyse non-numerical data and helps to understand experiences, concepts, and opinions. It allows the collection of relevant texts, photos, videos, audio interviews, survey responses, and field notes that are the best approaches for historical studies. It also gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, and evokes responses that are meaningful, culturally salient to the participant, and even explanatory in nature (John Cresswell, 2009).

Data Sources and Types

This manuscript was produced from both secondary and primary sources. The researcher has gathered information about the transition from the egalitarian administration of the Gadaa System to

monarchical rules from various sources. These include the accounts of Antoine D'Abbadie, who traveled from Guduruu to Kaffa in the 1840s (1880), Gugielimo Massaja, who resided in Guduru from 1849-1879 (1886-95), Leon Avancheres, who was in Geera in the 1860s (1884), Antonio Cecchi, who lived in Gommaa from 1878-1881 (1885-7), and Juan Maria Schuver, who was in Qellem Wallaggaa in the early 1880s (1884). When handled with caution, their descriptions can be valuable for historical reconstruction. Data were additionally gathered by a comprehensive examination of relevant literature and manuscripts, as well as through oral interviews.

The study extensively utilized documents that mostly focused on the Imperial conquest of the Western Maccaa Oromoo and the subsequent resistance by the Oromoo people. The remaining gaps, which were not reduced by either category of the papers, were supplemented by interviews based on oral information and tradition. The researcher collected pertinent secondary and archival data by physically visiting the Ethiopian National Archive and Library Agency, Addis Ababa University Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and other individuals and institutions that possessed the relevant papers. To gather oral information and traditional knowledge, informants with extensive expertise on the subject were meticulously located using the *darbaa dabarsaa* (snowball) method.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data from various sources was classified, meticulously scrutinized, and

subjected to historical analysis and synthesis using a qualitative research methodology. Upon thorough analysis, comparison, and verification of the gathered data, the researcher determined that a significant portion of the data exhibited a complementary relationship. In the course of the study, the grand narrative was adopted which was based on chronology as it aids in comprehending and explaining the changes that the Leagues and the resistance movement underwent

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Internal Political Condition of the Maccaa Oromoo on the Eve of the Conquest

On the eve of the imperial conquest, most clans of the Maccaa Oromoo were under transformation from the Gadaa system of government to a hereditary and monarchical form of administration. Abbaa Duulaa¹ of each clan established at least their respective kingdom on which they became chiefs. The Abbaa Duulaas surrounded themselves with large entourages of *Qondaalaa* (the militant wing during Gadaa governance) into their armies and used them for the defences and the conquests of their fellow rivals of the Oromoo clans. They deliberately ignored their loyalties to the power of Abbaa Bokkuu and positioned themselves as the heads of state structures (Tesema, 1886: 103). In western central Ethiopia, several kingdoms, including the Gibee monarchies (Guumaa, Gommaa, Geeraa, Jimmaa, and

¹ Abbaa Duula is a commander of defence in the Oromoo Gadaa system.

Limmuu), Leeqaa Naqamtee, Leeqaa Hordaa, Leeqaa Qellem, Horroo Guduruu, Iluu abbaa Bor, etc. have appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. There were also other Oromoo clans with a similar fashion of state formation. All of these states experienced similar social systems, although they differed somewhat in terms of wealth, size, and political structure (Tesema, 1986: 84).

This form of state formation was not exclusive to the Oromoo. The period was also when strong regional lords who were in frequent bloody conflicts with one another emerged in Gojam, Shewa, Gonder, Wallo, and Tigray (Mordiachi Abir, 1968). The trend was also typical of Europe in the cases of Germany (Alan Farmer and Adrina Stiles, 2008:49-97) and Italy (Henery, D. Sedgwick, 1905:395-409), the two nations that fought bloody wars to establish powerful and unified states. In a similar vein, the time also witnessed the formation of kinship-based states in some Sub-Saharan regions, which continued until the late 1800s. These different kin-based state formations were characterized by power rivalries, which weakened their unity and exposed them to the conquest of European colonizers (Philip Mawhood, 1989: 239-250). As was common throughout the state formation processes in Africa and Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, these newly formed Oromoo monarchical states engaged in power competitions and rivalries with one another in an effort to gain control over large territories and strong state holds (Tesema, 1986: 115-190). Some of the states established temporary alliances to build states that could defend themselves or to

emerge states of strong and large territorial areas by subduing the others. These temporary alliances eventually gave way to the establishment of the Leagues (Cerulli, 1922: 26-32).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the kingdoms of Guumaa, Goommaa, Jimma, and Limmu formed a league named *Afran Naggadootaa* (the Four Merchants) against the league of *Afran Oromootaa*. The League of *Afran Oromootaa* was formed by Daaboo Haannaa, Leeqaa Hordaa, Leeqaa Billoo, and Noolee Kaabbaa. The person at the head of *Afran Naggadootaa* was Abbaa Joobir, the king of Guumaa state, and at the head of *Afran Oromootaa* was Daannoo Beeraa, the king of Leeqaa Hordaa (Cerull, 1922:26-32). In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, in Horroo Guduruu; Jimmaa Raaree under Qadiidaa Wannabee, Jimmaa Gannatii under Soorii Gelaa, and Guduruu under Jibaati Bushoo allied against the increasingly powerful Abiishee Garbaa of Horroo (Tesema, 1986: 129). At the same time, Leeqaa Hordaa from East Wollega, Noolee Kaabbaa from West Wollega, and Sadii Guumaa from Qellem Wollega formed an alliance against Abbaa Dhasaa of Galaan in Qellem Wollega (Etana Habte: 65). Nevertheless, except engaging themselves sometimes within the members of the league itself and at other times against the other league, none of them built large and strong state that could subdue the others and defend external aggressions. Instead, these recurring conflicts and power struggles rendered them vulnerable to outside attacks, initially from the Gojjame and subsequently from the Shawans (Guluma, 1984:148).

Therefore, mounting inter-clan conflicts and rivalries were the common practice in western Maccaa Oromoo in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. This contributed greatly to the decline of the Oromoo cohesiveness that had been common knowledge in the 19th century. In the 1870s, to the worst, the leader of the state who felt weaker than its enemies was out of the Oromoo clans and began seeking others' support against their fellow Oromoo as a means to get away from the incursions. Tesema states that the first appearance of the Gojjame in Horroo Guduruu was a result of the invitation of Jiibat Bushoo of Guduruu, Soorii Gelaa Jimmaa Gannatii and Qadiidaa Wannabee of Jimmaa Raare against Abiishee Garbaa of Horroo who was emerging powerful (Tesema, 1986:129-130). The same was also true in other parts of western Maccaa Oromoo during the Shawan imperial expansion to the region.

The Encounters between the Oromoo and Shewans in the Late 19th Century Conquest

Before any of these flourishing Oromoo kingdoms developed a strong and unified power capable of protecting the area from outside threats, they were all subjected to the invasions first by the Gojjame from north of the Abay River and later by the Shewan Amhara from the east. With long-standing aspirations to rule over the rich and productive agricultural lands, the Gojjame and the Shewans launched a full-scale invasion of the area. The Gojjame and the Shewans who learned a lot about the disunity among the western Maccaa Oromoo began to organize territorial conquest of the region. Particularly, the Gojjame placed a high value on the trade routes that passed

through what is now Horroo-Guduruu, the northeastern region of Wollega, and was constantly engaged in military expeditions perhaps as early as the 1870s. Similarly, the kingdom of Shewa, ruled by King Menilek II, conducted persistent invasions along the headwaters of Awash River and toward the Gibe River Valley in the west to as far as beyond Dhidheessaa River (Guluma, 1984: 148-149).

These Gojjame and Shawan invaders initially encountered little or no resistance from the warring Oromoo chieftains as some of them had no understanding of the objective of the conquests and others were wearied of the ongoing disputes and internal rivalries. Aside from those near the Abay River, the others seemed to be less aware of external threats, viewing the invaders as armed groups passing through their territories. They greeted them warmly and permitted them to enter their domains. Except for the Horroo Guduruu episode, there were no notable Gojjame influences or counter-resistances as a result. The Abyssinian title that varies from *Dejjazmach*² to *Barambara*³ was bestowed upon some local leaders who had welcomed the Gojjame, thereby returning them to their previous positions. Understanding the conquests and overcoming the mistrust they developed among themselves over decades took time. Thus, they were unable to

immediately unite against their adversaries. Rather, the situation gave rise to the stories in which certain kingdoms betrayed their fellow Oromoo kingdoms and allied with the forces of invaders (Tesema, 1986: 129).

The actions Jibat Bushoo of Guduruu and Qadiidaa Wannabee of Jimmaa Raaree took against Abiishee Garbaa of Horroo was the outcome of this development. It was based on the rivalries and mistrust among them that Jibaat Bushoo, Qadiidaa Wannabee, and Soorii Gelaa invited *Ras Adal Tesema* (later King Tekle Haymanot) of Gojjam to eliminate their internal rival, Abiishee Garbaa. Seeing the situation as an opportunity, King Tekle Haymanot had successfully waged a military campaign by the end of 1881 and established his domain over Horroo Guduruu by driving out anyone even who had collaborated with him (Gulummaa, 1984, 149–155).

However, until he was deceived by Qadiidaa Wanabee and submitted to the Gojjame forces, Abiishee Garbaa fought the battle deadly against both the forces of King Tekele Haymanot and traitorous internals like Soorii Gelaa, and Qadiidaa Wannabee. However, as anticipated Abiishee's submission had not granted the Gojjame easy passage to the Kingdom of Kaffa. They encountered different forms of resistance that varied from little skirmishes to fierce but short resistance. The first tough but short resistance the Gojjame encountered was from the Oromoo states of Noonno of the present-day West Shawa zone, and Leeqaa Sibuu, and Leeqaa Amumaa of the present-day East Wallagga zone. The Noonno Oromoo fiercely resisted but using the modern armies, the Gojjame massacred the

² *Dejjazmach* is a traditional Ethiopian military title, which means commander of the gate.

³ *Barambaras* is the lowest a traditional Ethiopian military title meaning commanders of the guards.

inhabitants and passed them over (Alphones Aubry, 1888:493-494). Similarly, the efforts of Leeqaa Sibiuu and Leeqaa Amumaa to put barriers to the Gojjame passage to the southwest were quickly overthrown in one of their leaders, Buushan Miju was killed (Guluma,1996:58).

The state of Leeqa Naqamtee, in contrast to the aforementioned Oromoo states, graciously welcomed the Gojjame and granted them passage to Leeqaa Hordaa, which is located southwest of Naqamtee. The Leeqaa Hordaa Oromoo state attempted to put up resistance but the Gojjame quickly defeated them and crossed to the Five Oromoo Gibe States. At the Gibe States, the local reactions varied from state to state. Jimmaa, one of the Five Gibe States, initially made the decision to oppose and hoped that her former Afran Naggaaddota league would support her. Although the Afran Naggaadotaa league amended their agreement and promised to defend one another in the event of an outside attack, they did not put organized resistances together. The Omotic states of Konta, Dawro, and Kaffa were also parties to the agreement but kept silent on the necessity of their assistance. When Abbaa Jifaar, the king of Jimmaa, recruited a few young men and confronted the Gojjame at the place called Afataa, the only member of the league who mobilised his forces was Abbaa Joobir of Gumaay under his brother, Abbaa Diggaa. However, before the arrival of Abbaa Diggaa's aid, Abba Jifaar lost most of his forces to the modern arms of the Gojjame and consented to surrender. With the victory, the Gojjame passed to Gumaay of Abbaa Joobir (Guluma' 1984:154).

While returning home, Abbaa Diggaa sent his brother a message calling to meet him at the border between Gommaa and Gumaay so they could encounter the Gojjame's advancing army. He also informed his brother to ask the other pact members for help. Thus, at Bakkee Ganjii, close to the Dhidheessa River, Abbaa Diggaa and Abbaa Joobir put up a fierce resistance. Finally, the Gumaay forces were destroyed after fierce fighting that lasted the entire day. In the battle, Abbaa Joobir and Abbaa Diggaa were killed. Learning from Gumaay the rest Gibe states such as Geeraa, Gommaa, and Limmuu agreed to pay tribute to the Gojjame (Guluma, 1996: 48); Yemane G/ Egabher, 1977/8: 65& 68-69). Nonetheless, what they did there was receive tributes and the collection of gold, ivory, civets, hides, and coffee both in the form of gifts and loots, without establishing their system of government for the area. When viewed normally, the conquest appears to be reconnaissance for the larger-scale conquest that follows (Guluma, 1980: 154-156; 1996:57).

Nonetheless, the Gojjame's brief occupation of the Western Maccaa Oromoo South of the Abay River was short-lived. When the news of the Gajjame advance to the region reached Negus (King) Menilek of Shewa who had already grown very ambitious about controlling the Western Maccaa Oromoo, he ordered *Ras* Goobaa to go on an immediate campaign. In December 1881, *Ras* Goobaanaa mobilized his Shewan forces, which were primarily composed of Amhara people, with the goal of overthrowing the Gojjame and subsequently conquering the area (Bahru, 2002: 60-63).

Since many Oromoo war leaders who were determined to fight the invaders, including Abishee Garbaa of Horroo and Abbaa Diggaa of Gumaay, were eliminated during the wars against the Gojjame, the Shawan forces did not initially encounter significant opposition (Informants: Qana'aa Yaadataa; Addunyaa Fiixee; Geexee Waaqajiraa; Nagarii Roorro; Saqataa Itichaa).

In order to overthrow the Gojjame armies and obtain an easy passport to the Oromoo land, the Shewan forces engaged the Gojjame in combat at Habaaboo (also known by its corrupted name as Imbaaboo), on June 6, 1882. In the battle, some Oromoo kingdoms of the Western Maccaa Oromoo took the reservation, while those submitted to *Ras* Goobana sided with the Shawans. However, unlike the others, the Leeqaa Hordaa and the Guduruu states fought on the side of the Gojjame. Shewan dominance over the area was demonstrated during the battle (R.A. Caulk, 78–88). After the victory, the Shewa forces followed the strategy of persuasion. In addition, initially, the Shewan army did not encounter any significant opposition from the local societies because the principalities in the region had already paid tribute to the Gojjame (Ibid.).

However, chiefs of states that the Gojjame expansion had not reached made some efforts to thwart the Shawan armies. Some of these were Abbaa Kutal of Gachii at the upper Dhidheessaa River and Fanxansaa of Iluu Abbaa Bora. Abbaa Kutal, the Gachii chief at the time, rallied his people and engaged the Shawan forces in combat at the upper course of the Dhidheessaa River on the current route that connected Jimma and

Beddlee towns. In the battle, Abba Kutal and his forces bitterly fought until *Ras* Tesema lost a lot of soldiers in the conflict. Although there were many numbers of casualties on the Shewan sides, they were able to break Abbaa Kutal's defense line and continued their campaign against Bunnoo (Mengesha Lukas, 201:16-18).

Similar opposition was put up by Faxansaa Iluu, who was the chief of Buunoo at the time, against the forces of *Ras* Teseema Nadew. In his effort to defend, Faxansaa sent emissaries to Jimma and Leeqaa Naqamtee in an attempt to bring the surrounding Oromoo kingdoms together in opposition to the Shawan army. Fanxansaa's attempt, however, was futile since these invited kingdoms had already submitted. Although he was alone, Faxansaa made his final defensive stand at Gabbaa against *Ras* Tasama's forces. Eventually, his forces were soundly defeated, and Faxansa was taken prisoner and eventually killed (Herber Lewis, 70-80).

As that of Buunoo, initially, the Oromoo of Leeqaa Qellem planned to put similar resistance against the expanding Shawan forces. According to Tesema, Jootee Tulluu, the king of Leeqaa Qellem, approached his erstwhile rivals *Abeetuu* Abbaa Gimbii of Anfilloo and *Abeetuu* Abbaa Daannoo of Sadii to convince them to form an alliance against Amhara forces that were advancing on all of them. The three Abetus made a solemn oath to be united in the event that Goobana's forces attacked them. However, Jootee voided the solemn when *Ras* Goobaana entered Sadii of Abba Dannoo. Abbaa Daannoo left his plan to resist and began discussion with Jootee

for the possible submission. Both Abbaa Daannoo and Jootee met *Ras* Goobanaa at Komboo, some fifty kilometers to the east of Dambii Dollo, and submitted as exactly Morodaa had done before (Tesema, 2008:48-49). According to informants, on the submission, Jootee gave gifts to Goobanaa as a representation of his wish to quietly submit to Menelik's rule. In return, *Ras* Goobaanaa gave Jootee the title of *Dejjazmach* and was appointed governor of the area west of Morodaa's domain, excluding Bela Shangul to the north (Informants: Barkeessaa Waqawayyaa; Belete Waqjiraa; Birriituu Firisaa; Qana'a yadataa). In this context, it's important to understand that through an alliance with the Shewans, these groups maintained their strong position in the area and used the collaborations to eliminate their previous rivals. The others later became conscious of the conquest and tried to resist relentlessly until their forces were completely destroyed by the superior weapons of Europeans (Tesema, 2008:48-49).

The Leeqaa Leagues and the Resistances of the Maccaa Oromoo

It was three years after the conquest that the Western Maccaa Oromoo began to be aware of the true nature of the conquest. For the first three years, the majority of the society did not understand what the nature of the conquest was. During these three years, even the chiefs of the conquered regions enjoyed semi-autonomous positions. King Menelik did not completely eliminate the regional chiefs even after appointing generals in most areas. What was expected from them was tribute payments and supplying some *Naftenga* who were tasked to facilitate

tribute collection (Informants: Qana'aa Yaadataa; Addunyaa Fiixee; Geexee Waaqajiraa; Nagarii Roorro; Saqataa Itichaa).

Three reasons were thought to have led to the suspension of the immediate measure. One was the preoccupation of King Menelik with the ongoing Arsi Oromoo campaigns, to which he did not want to commit his forces to another mission by evoking the lifestyle of the conquered peoples. The second was that *Ras* Goobanaa who was tasked to direct the implementation of feudal-*nafetegna* system in the conquered region among the Maccaa Oromoo was preoccupied with quelling the uprisings in the Gurage and Caboo areas. The third was Menelik's fear of *Ras* Goobaanaa's greater popularity in the area than his own which emanated from the envy of numerous other generals under King Menilek. The generals informed King Menilek that *Ras* Goobaanaa was gaining too much power and popularity and might challenge his authority by allying himself with the defeated Oromoo chiefs. Thus, the generals urged King Menilek to take immediate action against *Ras* Goobaana. The fourth was that a sizable portion of the Shewan army, including *Ras* Goobanaa, were of Oromoo descent and had set up a system for coexisting with the local societies. Consequently, during the first three years of the conquest, there were no significant changes made to the customary administration of the Maccaa Oromoo (Guluma, 1984, 161–162). Thus, the years between 1882 and 1884 were probably referred to as the time of "indirect rule".

Subsequently 1884, King Menelik revoked the authority to appoint officials

from *Ras* Goobanaa made some administrative changes and appointed his loyal officials straight from Shewa. During this period, even those Oromoo chiefs who were given autonomy were put under the superintendent of Menelik generals. Thus, the intermediate roles of Oromoo leaders in the first three years of the conquest were severely diminished. Subsequently, the local population began to be subjected to arbitrary demands for all supplies and coordinated attacks on their language, national identity, and cultural heritage. They also began to experience frequent plundering of their livestock and produce.

The *naftengna* settlers who were garrisoned stole sheep, goats, cattle, and other local produce on a regular basis and caused hardship for the Indigenous population. They also took more personalized collections from caravan dealers and destabilized regular trades. They ruled arbitrarily and violently, and they detested the people living there. This disorganized management approach changed the previous fairly nonviolent relation and caused the locals to become more openly resistant and insurgent (Informants: Abbaa Diggaa Abbaa Garoo; Gadaa Ifaa; Gaachee Waaqaumaa; Guddataa Lamuu; Abduu Gammadaa).

This made the Oromoo realize that they would have no real meaningful life after the administrative change. Many Oromoo chiefs who had initially understood the impacts of the conquest as no more than food supply for the settlers for a time being, started to understand that it was losing all rounded rights that they previously had. Many Oromoo leaders, who had at first seen the

effects of the conquest as limited to the supply of food and the settlement as temporary, began to realize the removal of their former authority. Thus, they started to revolt frequently because of this harsh and repressive misrule of the *Naftengna* (Gulumma, 1984:171-173).

The revolts were widespread throughout the occupied territories except in Leeqaa Naqamtee and Jimmaa while *Ras* Goobanaa was busy subduing the Caboo Oromoo, the Guragee, and the Qabana in the present-day southwestern Shawa. The widespread revolts forced *Ras* Goobanaa to undertake the second-round expedition beyond the Gibee River. Right after defeating the Caboo Oromoo, the Qabeenaa, and the Gurage, *Ras* Goobanaa again marched to the Western Maccaa Oromoo. Unlike the previous one, the forces of *Ras* Goobanaa met fierce encounters from the Limmuu Ennariyaa Oromoo as they crossed the Gibee River to the west. The Limuu Ennariyaa Oromoo bravely fought and put up a strong blockage to the forces of *Ras* Goobanaa. After trying for a few days, *Ras* Goobanaa, who had not anticipated such a confrontation, withdrew from the front knowing his forces would suffer heavy losses. He ordered his soldiers to loot the local societies on retreat. *Ras* Goobanaa took the action because the confrontation taught him to prepare well (Guluma, 1996:58; Gebeyehu Duressa and Kenea Gemechu, 2022:4-13).

However, on their retreat, *Ras* Goobanaa and his forces encountered another fierce resistance from the Nonnoo Oromoo in the present-day West Shawa Zone. The Nonnoo Roggee Oromoo inflicted significant damage on the retreating

forces of *Ras* Goobanaa (Cerulli, 1922: 74; Gebeyehu Duressa and Kenea Geleta, 2022: 13). *Ras* Goobanaa who failed to handle the confrontation, called on *Dejjazmach* Morodaa Bakaree for assistance. The Noonnoo Oromoo also valiantly engaged *Dejjazmach* Morodaa in numerous battles. Even it was said that *Dejjazmach* Morodaa was severely defeated, lost his horse and barely managed to escape (Yemane: 58). In doing so, the Noonnoo Roggee Oromoo recorded victory after victory until their Mootii (King) Dambii Jiigaa was captured and shipped to Gudar Mountain as a prisoner (Cerulli, 1922: 74; Gebeyehu Duressa and Kenea Geleta, 2022: 13).

Encouraged by the significant victories of Limmuu and Noonnoo Oromoo over *Ras* Goobanaa, the other Oromoo of Western Maccaa refused to be ruled by the *Naftegna* and started to harass the notorious *Naftegna* out of their territories. The first Oromoo chief who started challenging the *naftegna* presence in the area was Tuuchoo Daannoo of Leeqaa Hordaa, who was in serious inconvenience with the Amhara conquest of the Oromoo land. Tuuchoo Daannoo attacked the fortified station of *naftegna* at Kephel and killed some armies. The others including Fitwerari Aboye Akkachaa, the *enderase* of *Ras* Goobanaa in the area, fled to Leeqaa Naqamtee. Tuuchoo went even further and invited the other Oromoo chiefs to join him (Samuel, 1998: 26).

He sent messages to *Dejjazmach* Moroda of Leeqaa Naqamtee, Garbii Jiloo of Leeqaa Billoo, Geendaa Buushan of Leeqaa Sibuu and Ligdii Bakaree (Brother of *Dejjazmach* Morodaa) of Leeqaa Waamaa informing them the victory he had

achieved over conquerors and called them upon to form resistance league. Responding to the call, all except *Dejjazmach* Morodaa, the rest came together and formed the League by taking the Kaka (oath). Following the conclusion of the oath, the members of the league started to harass the Amhara agents in their territories (Tesema, 1986: 146; Informants: Tesema Goobanaa; Taasisaa Dinagdee).

The formation of the league among the Leeqaa chiefs and the news of the revolts against the *Naftegna* settlers disturbed *Ras* Goobanaa and King Menilek. To give a conclusion to the revolts, *Ras* Goobanaa made the third-round expedition to the heartland of the Maccaa Oromoo. Thus, with greater preparation and better weaponry than the forces of the league, *Ras* Goobanaa confronted the League. However, either the League who swore to kill or die fiercely received the forces of *Ras* Goobanaa at Leeqaa Billo. The League bravely fought to stop *Ras* Goobanaa from becoming a part of Western Maccaa territory. In the battle, although the forces of *Ras* Goobanaa were better armed with European weapons against spears, swords, and shields of the league, they were bitterly defeated and retreated. *Ras* Goobanaa lost a number of battles and was forced to go back to his camp at Faallee, which was about 35 kilometers from Inxooxxoo (the main court of King Menilek). The defeat shocked even dignitaries at Menelik court. Disappointed at not being able to advance into the Western Maccaa Oromoo heartland and frustrated by the obstacles, the retreating Shawan forces pillaged the civilians along their retreating

routes rather than engage the resistance forces (Jules, Borelli,1890: 280-282)

At Fallee, *Ras* Goobanaa gathered his disorderly retreated troops and backed them with the new reinforcement forces allocated to him from Inxooxxoo (the court of the King). Although the best modern weaponries of the time were with the campaigners against Arsii Oromoo, *Ras* Goobanaa collected some of the modern ones, which were reserved for the protection of the king's court at Inxooxxoo. Not to serve the same defeats he had experienced in the past two confrontations with this Maccaa resistance league, *Ras* Goobanaa made preparations to the maximum capacity of the time (Ibid.; Informants: Tesema Goobanaa; Taasisaa Dinagdee).

On their part, the Western Maccaa Oromoo resistance league reorganized their alliance and made themselves ready for the inevitable war of resistance. They also added other new Oromoo states to their previous members of the league. Noonnoo Roggee under Turii Jagaa, Noonnoo Migiraa under Mardaasaa Konchee, Jimmaa Gudayyaa, and Limmuu Ennariyaa joined the previous Leeqaa Billoo under Garbii Jiloo, Sibuu Amumaa under Geendaa Buushan, Leeqaa Hordaa under Tuuchoo Daannoo, and Leeqaa Waamaa under Ligdii Bakaree. Now, the league was stronger than it had been before even though they lacked contemporary European weapons that their counter-enemy was armed with (Samuel,1998; 27-28; Informants: Qana'aa Yaadataa; Gaachee Waaqumaa; DarRasoo Ooshoo; Guddataa Lamuu; Dhugumaa Hirkoo; Gadaa Ifaa:).

All the member states were warned to be ready to defend bravely against the anticipated revival of invasion from the Shawan Amhara. They prepared their horses, spears, swords, and shields. The preparation included psychological readiness and exercise of galloping horses, throwing spears to the pointed target, and taking protection using shields. War chants and songs that encouraged the fighters circulated from end to end across genders and ages. Even healers prepared traditional medicines to treat the wounds on the spot. The movement almost reached the level of liberating the areas from the Amhara occupation (Cerulli,2022: 74).

The preparation put the Amhara in exile at Leeqaa Naqamtee under the protection of *Dejjazmach* Morodaa in dreads. Ligdii Bakaree's joining of the league further increased the tension. Observing the mounting preparation for the war the tension echoed among the Amhara under *Dejjazmach* Morodaa's protection. *Dejjazmach* Morodaa even feared the probability of being crushed by the league. Messages for immediate reinforcement were frequently sent by any possible means to *Ras* Goobanaa at his camp of Fallee and to the court of King Meilek (Ibid.).

The Shewan forces were reorganized and sent back to punish the rebellious league of the Western Maccaa Oromoo in 1884. In this campaign, *Ras* Goobanaa did not participate as King Menilek and the Shawan dignitaries lost trust in him because of the repeated defeats he experienced. King Menilek sent his commanders Tesema, Dilnessa, and Desta: the three sons of

Dejjazmach Nadew.⁴ The forces entered the rebellion territories in three directions under the commands of the three sons of Nadew: Tesema also took the overall command of the campaign (Guluma, 1996:57-58; Informants: Tesema Goobanaa; Taasisaa Dinagdee).

Although the invading forces were said to have been frustrating, the league fighters had received the invaders with determination. The battle lasted for two days long at the place called Gaara Doobbii, near the bank of the Waamaa River. The league bitterly fought and soundly defeated the Amharan forces. In the battle, Desta was killed; Dilnessa barely managed to escape from the Leeqaa Sibuu Oromoo abandoning his horse to Ligdii Bakaree. Tesema was chased by Leeqaa Billoo Oromoo all the way to Mount Gudar (Cerulli, 1922: 81-83).

Ligdii Bakaree who was delighted by the Victory and the horse captured from Dilness was said to have expressed his victory as follows:

Afaan Oromoo- English

Gaarii Dilnessaa Nadew- O! Fine

Steed of Dilnessa Nadew

Abbaa kee biyyoo gootee- You put your master to soil

Ana abbaa biyyaa gootee- You restored me to my ownership (Ibid.:82)

Ligdii expressed in his song that now the victory they achieved restored them to the lost power and territories as the Amhara commander escaped the battle committing

what was taboo in Oromoo culture. Among the Oromoo of the time, it was so shocking to leave horses as war captives that one never did so while alive. As a result, this was viewed as a special triumph that uniquely raised Oromoo's morale in battle. The song expresses as though the Amhara were annihilated and never comeback Oromoo land.

There was also a song that expressed how Tesema acted while he was taken safely to Mount Gudar, a place about 130 kilometers to the west of Addis Ababa. Tesema used bullets that killed the Oromoo at a distance, preventing them from climbing the mountain, despite the Oromoo having only shields and spears for most of their weaponry.

The Oromoo ministerial reflected the situation as:

AfaanOromoo - English

Tesema qeensa buddussee Tesema-with long nails

Niitiin kee dheengadda duutee - Your wife died two days before

Mucaan kee eda irra buutee -Your daughter this night

Maal sii dhaame gooftaankee - What is your master promised to you?

Jaarsi areeda bukkuura - A poor old man with speckled bread

Yoo dhugaa jannaa taatee-If you are really brave

Bu'i gadi goodaa- Descend to a flat plain

Qawwee faranjii tumtii - Gun belongs to Europeans

Faranjiin durbii keetii- Is Europeans are you kindred

Maaf sodaatta sii goodaa?- Why do you fear the plain?

⁴ *Dejjazmach* Nadew was Menilek's tutor as well as the commander in chief of Menilek's army in the 1870s and one of the leading royal councilors until his death in the late 1886.

Maliif muka yaabdaa? - Why do you climb the tree? (Ibid.:79-80).

Representing the Amhara with the wife and daughter of Tesema, the song expressed how they killed the Amhara forces one by one. The song also indicates Tesema's escape was only because of his superiority in European weapons. It also criticizes Amhara for their fear of fighting on the plain even with European firearms against the Oromoo armed with spears and shields. It also tells that Tesema was fighting someone's war even the one that was personally diminishing. They also mentioned Tesema's strategy of time buying using the gun from the mountain until *Ras* Goobanaa arrived with his help.

As anticipated, *Ras* Goobaana and his officers promptly marched from their camp of Fallee upon learning of the Oromoo victory over the Amhara. Guluma states that the severity of the situation compelled Menelik to direct the campaign in person (Guluma, 1996: 57). Irritated by the increasing success of the Oromoo over his Shawan invaders and King Menilek joining of the campaign, *Ras* Goobanaa organized his forces under four commandments and entered the enemy territories in October 1885. He assigned *Fitiwrari* Garadew on the Tibbee front,⁵ *Dejjazmach* Morodaa of Leeqaa Naqamtee against Leeqaa Sibuu, Mastawit, the Walloo prince of Warra Himanoo, against the army of Leeqaa Billoo

and by himself against Tuuchoo of Leeqaa Hordaa. *Ras* Goobanaa also commanded the overall fronts (Samuel, 1998: 28).

On all fronts, repeated confrontations were undertaken. However, unlike the previous one, this round of confrontation became futile for the Oromoo. *Ras* Goobanaa and his other commanders used superior armies and attacked them. The bitter resistance that Tuuchoo Dannoo engaged *Ras* Goobanaa in numerous battles ended in the ultimate defeat of Tuuchoo at the Battle of Malka Naggaade, which took place close to the Waamaa River. After the defeat, Tuuchoo took refuge at Tullu Amhara in present-day Horroo Guduruu. A year after Tuuchoo went to Inxooxxoo and submitted to King Menilek (Ibid).

Following the defeat, *Ras* Goobanaa brought all of the Maccaa kings and Balabats (as war prisoners and presented them to the court of King Menelik at Inxooxxoo in December of 1885. Early in 1886, Henri Audon, a French traveler, saw these kings at Inxooxxoo (Audn, 1889: 147). King Menilek summoned *Ras* Goobanaa and his captives to a meeting at which he promulgated his decision to assign the Shewan generals over the newly conquered Oromoo territories and restrict the Oromoo chiefs only to the fiefs of their households. Two reasons were behind the measures. One was the king feared the growing power of *Ras* Goobanaa and the probability that he could forge an alliance with the conquered Oromoo chiefs and defy his position. The second was the king planned to minimize the resistance of western Maccaa Oromoo believing that *Ras* Goobanaa was not doing on enforcing the Naftegna system

⁵ Baakkoo Tibbee direction is on the direction of Addis Ababa Naqamtee main road. This front campaigned on the Limmuu Oromoo in the present day of Jimmaa province

effectively (Informants: Abbaa Diggaa Abbaa Garoo; Gadaa Ifaa; Gaachee Waaqumaa; Guddataa Lamuu; Abduu Gammadaa).

Anticipating more challenges, the new Amhara appointees arrived with massive troops in 1886. Walde Giorgis arrived in Limmu with 16000–20,000 soldiers, while Tesserna and Basha went to Guma and Gomma, respectively, with roughly 15,000 soldiers each. Yet, the deployment of these huge forces did not the subject people submissive. Instead, it made them persist in their struggles in the cases that were more serious in Gommaa and Guumaa (Guluma, 1996).

With a very small force, the chief of Gommaa, Siidoo Gidiboo popularly known as Abbaa Booraa, mounted formidable resistance against the armies of *Dejjazmach* Basha at Malkaa Tajjii, near Aggaaroo that is about 27 kilometers from Jimmaa town to the southwest. However, the war was ended tragically for both sides. Reportedly, *Dajjazmach* Basha lost almost 1,000 dead, while Gamma lost about 400 troops, which included their chief, Abba Bora. Suffering heavy losses, Basha fled to Limmuu to reorganize his forces for another campaign. A few months later, *Dajjazmach* Basha returned with reinforcement and destroyed the resistance forces of Guumaaa. For the continuous control of the rebels, he established Ketema (an administrative center) at Say and renamed it Menagasha (Ibid.).

The vanquished people, far from becoming servile, persisted in their resistance even after more reinforcements and administrative adjustments in 1886.

Many localities experienced insurrection as a result of the Shewan army's harsh and oppressive reign. The Shewan arms departure for a campaign to Gondor in 1888 motivated the Oromoo in the Gibe region to try to put an end to the occupation. Jules Borelli, the French explorer, noted during his exploration of the Gibe region from 1887-8 that there were extensive disturbances in Gomma, Hagalo, Nonno, and Lirnmu (Jules Borelli, 1890: 280-282). The mistreatment of Abbaa Bosoo, the known warrior of the area, in 1888 sparked the uprising. The uprising gravely endangered the Shewan army. In Gommaa and Geera, everywhere they went, they fought Basha's troops and drove them back into their encampment. The region was restored to the Shawan control with the help of Wolde Giorgis's soldiers from Limmuu. After that, administration of the region was given to *Dajjazmach* Demissew Nasibu, another Shewan general. *Dejjazmach* Demissew took over the region and eventually put an end to the uprising, ruling the province for the next twelve years. Sensing that the previous governor had failed, Demissew attempted to coopt Gommaa's elite into running the state. Consequently, the events of the late 1880s somewhat lessened the exploitation of the Gommaa peasantry, even though the resistance was unable to accomplish its greater goals (Guluma, 1984: 170-171)

In Limmu, shortly after Wolde Giorgis departed the region for a campaign in the north, in February 1888, the uprising began and continued from 1888 to 1890. Even after the governor sent additional troops back to the province in late 1889 or early 1890,

however, the situation remained unstable (Guluma,1996: 59).

Nonetheless, the resistance in Guumay was relatively more organized. Firrisa Abba Foggii, who had been a member of the royal dynasty before the conquest, led the resistance. Firrisa who fled Massawa in the 1880s when Guma was under occupation raised a small army in the late 1890s and went back to Guma to continue the resistance movement against the settlers under *Dejjazmach* Tesema Nadew. As soon as Faxansaa arrived, he called on the Gumaa people to rise up against the imperial forces. He presented the movement as a religious holy war known as jihad in order to draw the Islamized peasants into the war. The tactic enabled him to prevail in a few of the early encounters. Following around three years of warfare, Firrisa was ultimately detained and his armies were disbanded. Yet, it made non-Islamized Oromoo not support him and even it became one factor for the ultimate failure of his resistance. Then, the region was put under *Dejjazmach* Tesema Nadew who centralized the imperial government and strictly suppressed open armed rebellions. From this time onwards, the Oromoo of the area was brought under total control of the Shawan administration although grievances expressed in the forms of songs, proverbs, and banditries continued in most cases.

CONCLUSION

Generally, this manuscript clarifies the role the Leagues played in resisting the conquerors. Through the use of a qualitative research approach, the study examined the ideas, experiences, and viewpoints related to

the formation of resistance leagues and the autonomous acts that the Western Maccaa Oromoo took in opposition to the violent conquests of the Shawa Amharas. The Oromoo people's ability to effectively reject the conquerors in several wars over seventeen years serves as evidence of their persistence and determination in the face of external challenges, as demonstrated by the findings. The Western Maccaa Oromoo people's resistance movements were ultimately put down in 1900 with the help of contemporary European forces, but their legacy of resistance stands as a tribute to their unyielding dedication to protecting their lands and cultural heritage. This manuscript challenges the prevalent stereotypes that have minimized the significance of such resistance activities and advances a more nuanced understanding of Oromoo history by focusing the narrative on these anti-conquest struggles. In order to fully understand the Oromoo cooperation and resistance during this crucial juncture in history, more study and research are required in the future. This document aims to contribute to the Oromoo people's historiography by elevating the voices and experiences of the Western Maccaa Oromoo and highlighting the persistent spirit of resistance that has molded their collective identity.

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DECLARATION

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Informants

No	Name of Interviews	Sex	Age of Interviews	Places Interviews	Dates of Interviews
1	Abdu Baankaa	M	70	Sayyoo Noolee	14/08/2020
2	Abdu Buraayyuu	M	75	Sayyoo Noolee	14/08/2020
3	Guddataa Lamuu	M	90	Sayyoo Noolee	14/08/2020
4	Taye Nagarii	M	90	Ganjii,	15/08/2020
5	Abdii Wayyeessaa	M	73	Eebantuu,	20/06/2020
6	Dhugumaa Hirkoo	M	74	Eebantuu,	20/06/2020
7	Abbaa Diggaa Abbaa Garoo	M	81	Limmuu Saqaaa	24/07/2019
8	Abbaa Waarii Abbaa Luleessaa	M	88	Limmuu Saqaa	24/07/2019
9	Adduunyaa Fiixee	M	78	Billoo Boshee	08/02/2021
10	Abduu Gammadaa	M	80	Billoo Boshee	08/02/2021
11	Darraasoo Ooshoo	M	120	Biilloo Boshee	09/02/2021
12	Gaachee Waaqumaa	M	82	Billoo Boshee,	09/02/2021
13	Qana'aa Yaadataa	M	98	Jimmaa Arjoo	04/05/2023
14	Geexee Waaqjiraa	F	90	Jimmaa Arjoo	05/05/2023
15	Gadaa Ifaa	M	70	Jimmaa Arjoo	05/05/2023
16	Nagarii Roorro	M	81	Horroo-Guduruu	18/10/2023
17	Saqataa Itichaa	M	80	Horro-Guduruu	18/10/2023
18	Barkeessaa Waqawayyaa	M	98	Qellem Wallaggaa	11/11/2023
19	Belete Waqjiraa	M	96	Qellem Wallaagaa	11/11/2023
20	Taasisaa Dingdee	M	60	Nuunnuu Qumbaa	12/12/2022
21	Tesema Goobanaa	M	62	Nuunnuu Qumbaa	12/12/2022