

## Arjo as a Garrison Town: The Roles of Its Appointees in the Regional and National Politics, 1884-1935

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### Abstract

*Using the years 1884–1935 as a starting point, this article seeks to examine how Arjo's appointees helped establish and solidify feudal-based Naftegna systems in the areas south of Abay, west of Gibe, north of the Gaba Rivers, and East Sudan, as well as how they stabilized national power and sparked succession intrigues. Their contributions to establishing and molding 'Modern' Ethiopia were substantial, the report contends, even though their activities have received little academic attention. The study used a historical research approach and a qualitative research design, with evidence derived from primary and secondary sources, oral data, and the stories of travelers. Arjo was a fortress town that provided a bastion for imperial court appointees, according to the study's interpretation of these facts. It had a crucial role in the tightening of the Makegna, which allowed for the acquisition of territory, as well as in monitoring the borders of neighboring autonomous governments and the counter-Anglo-Egyptian occupation of Sudan. Furthermore, the study shows that Arjo became a major hub from which these appointees rallied the country's people and resources to fight foreign invaders. They also played a key role in calming political unrest during the imperial court's power struggles.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The article is about the roles the Arjo appointees played in the implantation and consolidation of the *Naftegna*<sup>1</sup> system in the region between Gibe River in the East, Abay

(Blue Nile) in the North, Gibe Valley in the East, Gabba Rivers in the South and Sudan in the West. It is also about the contributions of Arjo appointees to bring political stabilities during the contentions of power successions in the imperial court, and their influential roles in defending foreign aggressions at the

<sup>1</sup> Originally, the term *naftagna* is derived from Amharic term *Nafti* which is to mean rifle. Later, the name *naftagna* was given to Emperor Menilek's Warriors of northern origin who later settled in the newly conquered southern parts of Ethiopia. See Bahru Zewde, (Second Ed.) *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2002): 276.

required time. Taking these issues into consideration, the article gives special focus to Arjo as a head seat for the consecutive Shawan<sup>2</sup> imperial court appointees from 1884 to 1934.

This region over which the appointees at Arjo got total control, was incorporated in the Kingdom of Shawa in 1882. Arjo was strategically positioned garrison from where the direct imperial court appointees exerted their power, maintained order, and protected their economic interests. It was also the center from where these appointees mobilized their abilities, resources, and forces for the implantation of the *Naftegna* system in the region and backed the consolidation and stabilization of the Shawan supremacy over the whole region of Ethiopia. In this pioneering work, the paper argues that the roles of appointees at Arjo were both regional and national. At a regional level, Arjo played a central role in the Implantation and Consolidation of the *Naftegna*-feudal system in the region under its direct administration. It also took the role of superintendent over the neighboring autonomous states of Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellem. At the national level, it made a lion's share of contributions in the conquest of additional regions of the peripheral areas and in defending the country from external aggressions. It was also one of

the sections that participated in the political intrigues of the imperial court.

Arjo attained this position, as it is strategically located at a high altitude and overlooks some parts of Wollega, the Five Gibe States, Ilu Abba Bor, and even some parts of Western Shawa zones. The trade routes that came from the five Gibe states, Kaffa and Ilu Abba Bor, passed through Arjo and diverged to Naqamate and Gojjam to the North, Addis Ababa to the East, and Gimbi, Dambi Dollo and Asosa to the West. Its Centrality to Wollega, the Five Gibe States, and Western Shawa.<sup>3</sup>

The other reason was also in the attempt to remove Tucho Danno from his strongholds and to control any rebellious activities in the region closely, as Tucho continuously challenged the position of the settlers. Despite his nominal peaceful submission to the forces of *Ras Gobana*, Tucho used this strategic position as a springboard for his sporadic attacks on the *Gondore*<sup>4</sup> forces billeted over his territories. According to Samuel Mamo, Tucho harassed them until all the *Gondores* were forced to move out of central western Ethiopia. Establishing a league with newly conquered Oromo states of Nono Rogge, Nono Migira, Leqa Billo, Sibu Amuma, Limmu Ennariya, and Jimma Gudaya, Tucho

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<sup>2</sup>Shewa, also pronounced as Showa, or Shoa, was as historic kingdom in central Ethiopia. It was the core from where the modern Ethiopian state was built by Emperor Menilek in the end of the of the nineteenth century. It is because of this, the appointees from the imperial court of Addis Ababa were referred as the Shewans. See Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menilek II: Ethiopia 1884-1913*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1975).

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Mamo, "The Administration of Arjo (South Eastern Wollega, 1882-1936)" (M.A Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1998): 4.

<sup>4</sup>Although the reason for the origin of this term *Gondore* is not clearly known, Tesema states that the concept was derived from the soldiers that either served in Godor or the soldiers that had *Godore* origin and later best fitted to recruitment criteria of the imperial soldiers. Despite of its etymological reference, in context of Arjo- *Nategna* settlers, the term *Gonderes* means a marksman or the best trained soldiers of the time. See Tesema (1986): 165.

derived the *Gondore* forces as far as Gudar Mountain.<sup>5</sup>

It was these continued leading roles of Tucho in the resistance against the Shawan settlers that brought mainly Arjo to focus.

In principle, the purpose of designating Arjo as a garrison town was to make the center of administration closer to central western Ethiopia. It was aimed to mediate between the imperial court at Addis Ababa and the societies in the region. However, the practices on the ground were beyond the responsibilities given to its appointees. Using its distant location from the imperial court as an opportunity, the appointees exercised every form of their feeling in their administration of the people. In doing so, they created at Arjo a moderate court resembling the imperial court at Addis Ababa.<sup>6</sup> They dissolved the Oromo institutions of self-government, liquidated indigenous leadership, destroyed cultural institutions, banned major cultural practices, confiscated land, and made the inhabitants tenants, etc. without the necessary consent of the Shawan imperial court. If there was a matter, they practiced with the consent of the Shawan Imperial Court. It was the issue of the boundary with the neighbouring colonial countries.<sup>7</sup> They took everything into their own hands and emerged as an almost independent autocratic centre in the region. They also exerted all possible efforts to liquidate the autonomous rights of the neighbouring states of Leqa Naqamte and

Leqa Qellem. Therefore, in this study, the roles of Arjo mean the influential roles played by these fully authorized appointees from their headquarters in Arjo in the years between 1884 and 1935.

The acts of establishing garrison towns on the headquarters of those who posed resistance to forces of conquest was a common practice in Ethiopia during the conquest. Most towns which were established during conquest in eastern, southern and western regions of present-day Ethiopia were directly related to this orientation. Most of the towns were established in militarily strategic locations which were selected by appointed military chiefs with the guidance of local peoples. The main purpose was to maintain the army that held down the conquered peoples.<sup>8</sup>

According to the information collected by Deherain, who was a European traveller in Ethiopia, there were more than thirty-seven garrison towns all over the conquered territories between 1887 and 1910.<sup>9</sup> However, historical studies on the conquest of southern Ethiopia and the subsequent administration of the conquered regions have overlooked the influential roles of these garrison towns in regional and national arenas.

References on the Maccaa Oromo under the imperial administration do not give us substantive studies on such towns including Arjo except telling us issues related to the 'submission of the Maccaa Oromo with no or

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<sup>5</sup>Samuel:34-36.

<sup>6</sup> Temesgen Abdiisaa; Guddataa Ifaa; Mulatu Abata; Tasisa Dinagde

<sup>7</sup> Bahru Zewde. "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontiers, 1898-1935." (PhD Dissertation in History. University of London, 1976): 83-114.

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<sup>8</sup> Akalou Wolde Michael. "Urban Development in Ethiopia (1889-1925) Early Phase." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 11, 1 (January, 1973): 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> Deherain, H. "Les Katamas dans les provinces méridionales de l'Abysinie pendant le règne de l'Empereur Menilik," *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, 14 (1914): 225-241

little resistance' to Menilek II imperial conquest. They lack elaborations on why and how some garrison towns like Arjo emerged as significant political centres in peripheral areas. Nonetheless, understanding of the roles of Arjo in the regional political sphere has benefitted from the analysis of Tesema Ta'a on the process of imperial conquest of the Maccaa Oromo and its economic and political relationships with the central government.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Gustav Aren touches on some points about the influential roles of Arjo in missionary and religious issues in regional and national politics.<sup>11</sup> Equally important, Samuel Mamo in his M. A. Thesis examined how the *Gondore* administration at Arjo was culturally dehumanized, politically suppressive and economically exploitative.<sup>12</sup> Although shallow, his treatment of the role of Arjo as superintendent of the neighbouring regions and the roles it played in influencing national politics, especially in post-emperor Menelik is helpful. Bahru Zewde's dissertation examination of Dajjazmach<sup>13</sup> Demisew's (the governor of Arjo) active enjoyments in boundary delimitation issues with the neighbouring colonial countries and his modern Ethiopian history on power intrigue during Tayitu's role-play and Liji Iyasus's

reign<sup>14</sup> are important works to support the study. Otherwise, these groundbreaking contributions have considerable limitations in revealing the roles of appointees at Arjo in controlling and patrolling the regional administration and backing the consolidation of national power over internal disobediences and against external aggressions. Therefore, this article examines the roles of Arjo in regional and national Ethiopian politics.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Study Area

The focus of the study area is Arjo, a small town, located 380 km from Finfinnee (Addis Ababa), the capital city of the country to the west and from Naqamte, the capital of the zonal administration, at 48km to the south. Astronomically Arjo is located with the GPs coordinates of 8° 49' 0.0012" N and 36° 28' 0.0012" E. at an altitude of 2556.93m (8388.88ft) above sea level.<sup>15</sup> Before it became a garrison town for the Shewan appointees, Arjo was a town, which was said to have been founded and used by Dano Bera as his headquarters in the late 1870s.<sup>16</sup> From 1884 to 1935, it served as a major politico-military administrative capital of the regions between the Gibe River in the east, Abay (Blue Nile) in the North, the Gabba Rivers in the south and Sudan in the West.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, although the focus of the study area is Arjo

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<sup>10</sup> Tesema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early 20th Centuries" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Department of History, Michigan State University, 1986): 115-193.

<sup>11</sup> Aren Gustav, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: The Origin of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Stockholm: Uppsala University Press, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> Samuel, 24-68

<sup>13</sup> *Dejjazmach* is a traditional title which means 'commander of the gate', and a politico-military title below Ras. See Bahru (2002):275.

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<sup>14</sup> Bahru (2002):114-120.

<sup>15</sup> Feyisa Olana and Hailu Shiferaw, "Soils Acidity Characterization, Mapping and Lime Recommendation of Jimma Arjo District, East Wollega Zone of Oromia Region, Ethiopia." *International Fertilizer Development Centre: Vol. 4*: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-637000/v1>.

<sup>16</sup> Tesema (1986):103.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 164-166.

town, the study touches all the regions of Arjo that exerted direct influences when it was the politico-military administrative capital.

The study has a temporal limitation between 1884 and 1935, as the period was when different historical activities for regional and national interests were undertaken from Arjo. This time range is important because it was the time when the appointees at Arjo engaged directly in political, economic and cultural transactions. It also the time when they launched territorial expansion to the peripheries, engaged in boundary negotiations, involved in a series of power intrigues around the imperial court and defending different foreign aggressions. The year 1884 was taken as the lower temporal limitation as the time was when Arjo was overtaken as a garrison town by the *Nafteгна* administration and 1935 was when regional and national roles of the appointees at Arjo were declined.

## **2.2. Research Design and Approach**

The study employed a qualitative research design and historical research approach. Qualitative research design is used as it is effective in identifying intangible factors, which human beings have experienced in their daily activities. It is effective to interpret the complex reality of a given situation. It also helps to have an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon. Accordingly, data were collected and interpreted using a historical research approach as the approach helps to identify, locate, evaluate, and synthesize data from the past. It imperative to deal with historical records, books, photographs, letters,

and evidence that belong to the time the research focuses.<sup>18</sup>

## **2.3. Data Sources and Types**

For the study travellers' accounts, archives, oral evidence and secondary literature were employed. These sources were collected both from the libraries and field works by visiting the relevant libraries and informed informants from 2018 to 2022. The sources were found valuable in that travellers' accounts provide information on the deeds of the leaders in the study. Oral sources were collected from the informants who were selected by *Darbaa Dabarsaa* (snowball method) and utilized in comparison with the other sources. Secondary sources were reviewed and used as a supplement in substantiating the study as archival sources were collected for their importance in providing valuable insights into the life of individuals and institutions. Different empirical studies on the subject also aided the research. All of these sources were combined to create a complete picture of evidence for the study from 1884 to 1935.

## **2.4. Method of Data Analysis**

The collected data were sorted, arranged and organized into categories to develop comprehensive meanings, cross-checked to find out agreements and contradictions, and to check their validity and authenticity, objectively evaluated to find out historical facts, and chronologically analysed to have a coherent narrative. The analysis and the interpretation of the data were made based on a historical research approach to generate

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<sup>18</sup>John Cresswell, (Third Ed.) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approach* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publication Ltd., 2009).

empirically substantiated and contextually grounded facts. A critical analysis of all sources, time series analyses, comparative methods across periods and space, counterfactual analysis and the examination of outliers were carefully done to bring this research to a meaningful result.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1. Arjo and in the Regional Politics.

Arjo emerged as an important headquarters for the imperial appointees in 1884. From 1882 to 1884, Kephel which is 12 kilometres north of Arjo and just on the immediate border of *Dejazmach* Moroda of Leqa Naqa served as fortified centre. However, *Dejazmach* Moroda was not happy with this proximity fearing the subsequent issues of immediate surveillance. To distance himself from the proximity, he persistently advised *Ras* Gobana for the relocation of his centre to Arjo, which was the seat of Warra Bera. In his advice, *Dejazmach* Moroda argued that the relocation would help *Ras* Gobana monitor and quell Tucho Dano and his allies' rebellious movements. Considering the advice, *Ras* Gobana relocated his centre from Kephel to Arjo in 1884.<sup>19</sup> Informants state that *Ras* Gobana also planned to use Arjo as a seat of his kingship position that he had already assumed over the Macha Oromo and the region of present-day Benishangul Regional State. However, before the plan was materialized, *Ras* Gobana's kingship position was revoked in 1888.<sup>20</sup> Since then, Arjo continued serving as a crucial hub for *Ras* Gobana and the subsequent

appointees of the imperial court. In addition to the administration of the newly conquered areas, Arjo was used as a springboard from where different campaigns for the suppression of local rebellions, the conquest of additional areas and defending external invasions were conducted.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Arjo began playing influential roles both at regional and national levels from the very beginning of its designation as a garrison town in 1884. It served as headquarters for the successive appointees first by *Ras* Gobana, then by Emperor Menilek II, Liji Iyasu and later by Emperor Haile Selassie. These appointees were *Fitiwrari*<sup>22</sup> Lulsagid (Ca, 1884-1887), *Fitwirari* Tekele (Ca. 1887-1896), *Dejjazimach* (later *Ras*) Demisew Nasibu (1897-1910), *Fitiwrari* Ibsa (1910-1913), Again *Ras* Demisew (1913-1916), his son *Dejazmach* Mekonnon Demisew (1916-1930), *Dajazmach* Amade (1930-1933), and again *Ras Bitiwadd*<sup>23</sup> Mekonnon Demisew (1933-1935). All the appointees were authorized to act on behalf of the imperial court at Addis Ababa.<sup>24</sup> The criterion for the appointment was the trusteeship the candidates had at the Imperial Court. Their hearing was very high as they officiated in the name of the emperors. They also played the middle roles of accepting instructions from the imperial courts and

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Fitiwrari* is Ethiopian traditional title which can be translated as 'commander' of the vanguard 'which is a title below *Dejjazmach* but sometimes higher depending on the legitimacy of the bear. See Bahru (2002):275.

<sup>23</sup> *Ras Bitwadd* is an Ethiopian traditional title which combines the power of the *Ras* and the imperial favor of the *Bitwaddad*. For the meaning of *Ras* footnote: 30, and *Bitwaddad*, see footnote no.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel: 32.

<sup>19</sup>Tesema (1986): 136-138.

<sup>20</sup>Informants: Tesema Gobena; Seqata Iticha; Regasa Nugusa; Gudeta Ifa

dictating them as *Yajano hoy Tizazi* (order of the emperors).<sup>25</sup>

The first two appointees, *Fitiwrari* Lulsagid and *Fitiwrari* Tekele attempted to establish the northern Ethiopian feudal-based state structure by dissolving the Oromo administrative system. They worked on the assignment of *Godores* to several peasant families where they had taken turns feeding and feeling comfortable. An ordinary soldier was given between two and ten peasants, while officers were given between fifteen and twenty peasant families.<sup>26</sup>

The assigned *Gondores* were in charge of carrying out preparatory works for the implantation of the *Naftegna* system in the region. Despite these facts, informants affirmed that although the *Gondores* were distributed over the families of different households, for the first five years the position of Arjo settlers was slightly felt.<sup>27</sup> If there what the families of the households did, they provided full accommodation to the maximum satisfaction of the needs of the *Gondore* who remained with them days. During *Fitiwarai* Lulsagid (1884-1887), who was the appointee of *Ras* Gobana and the first Amhara appointee over Arjo, no serious changes were observed except frequent campaigns against recurrent rebellions of Oromo leaders who lost their presiding status to the *Naftegna* implantation.<sup>28</sup> This period in Arjo witnessed only political confusion, and the settlers were not able to manipulate cultural and economic bases.

Although the true nature of the *Naftegna* system began to appear during the period of *Fitiwrari* Tekele (1887-1895) who was the direct appointee of King Menilek, changes in local norms were no more than what were done during *Fitiwrari* Lulsagid. *Fitiwrari* Tekele did not push for the full implementation of the *Naftegna* system. Rather he focused on the preparation works. He earnestly worked and made the region ready for the establishment of organized state structures with hierarchies by appointing the *Malkegnas* at different localities. However, he left the region with his *Gondore* forces to the battle of Adwa at the end of 1895.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, the true nature of the *Naftegna* system began to be realized with the appointment of *Dejjazmach* (later *Ras*<sup>30</sup>) Demisew over Arjo in 1897. *Dejjazmach* Demisew was the son of Afe Negus Nesibu Walda Amanuel, who was one of the influential court personalities in the imperial administration of Emperor Menilek II. Before the battle of Adwa *Dejjazmach* Demisew was a ruler of Goma and Guma of the Gibe states as *Fitiwrari*. It was the tighten administration he demonstrated at Gomma and Guma that put him in the eyes of the emperor for his appointment over Arjo. Above all, it was to have a focal centre from where strong command of campaigns were launched against local rebellions and conquests of the new territories were undertaken. It was also to check the western frontiers of Ethiopian boundaries from external threats. For the aspiration to make Arjo centre of strong command, 30,000 *Gondores* armed with rifles

<sup>25</sup>Informants: Tesema Gobena; Seqata Iticha; Regasa Nugusa; Gudeta Ifa.

<sup>26</sup>Samuel, 51

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Informants: Temesgen Abdisa; Gudeta Ifa; Mulatu Abata; Tasisa Dinagde

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ras* is the highest title of Ethiopian traditional title next to king. See Bahru (2002): 276.

most of which were seized in the battle of Adwa were allotted to him.<sup>31</sup>

With the aid of these *Gondores*, *Dejjazmach* Demisew continued the implementation system that had been interrupted during of the battle of Adwa. He immediately distributed and billeted the *Malkegnas*<sup>32</sup> who returned with him from the battle of Adwa over the Oromo land. He uprooted the Oromo from their lands and made them *qutir gabbar* (fixed tenants), and divided them with their land to the *Malkegnas* he assigned over them. The number of the assigned *Qutur gabbar* varied according to their ranks.<sup>33</sup> On average, a *Dajjazmach* was allocated 1,000 tenants, a *Fitiwrari* with 300 tenants, a *Qangazmach*<sup>34</sup> with 100 to 150 tenants and a *Girazmach*<sup>35</sup> with 70 to 90 tenants. These *Malkegnas* were reinforced by the *Gondore* forces in case they encountered security problems.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the *Gondores*, they also established a new local government structure locally known in Arjo as Loko and popularly known as Qoro.<sup>37</sup> The Loko or Qoro was given the new Amharic name known as

*BalambaRas*.<sup>38</sup> The Lokos were from the Oromo who accepted subservient positions and accepted the *Naftegna* system. For the loyalty they showed and the services they provided, the Lokos were rewarded *siso* land (one-third of the land previously he/she possessed).<sup>39</sup> The main roles of the Lokos were controlling production, ensuring tribute collections and resource mobilization in coordination with the *Malkegnas* assigned to them. Above all, they were responsible for maintaining order and security in the territories assigned to the *Malkegna* (the soldiers-settlers) and organizing forced labour against them.<sup>40</sup>

Following the billeting and distribution of the *Malkegna*, *Dejjazmach* Demisew worked on the establishment of the administrative structure. He reorganized the administrative structure of his Ma'id Bet<sup>41</sup> into and *Andi Ras*, *Hulet Ende Rase*<sup>42</sup> *Zitegn Dejjazmach* (One *Ras*, Two *Enderases* and Nine *Dajjazmach*). Assuming the '*Ras*' position for himself, *Dejjazmach* Demisew appointed and assigned these *Dejjazmaches* to the districts he clustered as sub-unity of administration. Accordingly, *Dejjazmach* Demisew assigned *Dejjazmach* Bayene Baqabil over Arjo, *Dejjazmach* Baqabil over Dapho Hanna, *Dejjazmach* Debay over Makko Sachi, *Dejjazmach* Haile Mariam over Leqa Billo,

<sup>31</sup> Tesema (1986): 164-165; Samuel:32

<sup>32</sup> *Makegna* was a state appointed governor of administrator in different localities even deep into the countryside with different degrees of administrative rights.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel: 51

<sup>34</sup> *Qengazmach* is an Ethiopian traditional title which means 'commander of the right'. It is a politico-military title above *Grazmach*. See Bahru (2002):276.

<sup>35</sup> *Girazmach* is an Ethiopian politico- military traditional title which means 'commander of the left and above *Balambaras*. See Bahru (2002): 275.

<sup>36</sup> Yemaneh G/ Egzabher, "Seenaa Warra Bakaree (History of the Bakare Families), (Unpublished Manuscript, 1971 E.C): 118-19.

<sup>37</sup> Informants: Nagari Roro; Ragasa Nugusa; Gedefa Ifa; Tujube Tefera

<sup>38</sup> *Balambars* is an Ethiopian traditional title which is a 'head of an Amba (left over)' and the low-level administrative title. See Bahru (2002): 275.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel: 52-53.

<sup>40</sup> Tesema Gobena; Seqata Iticha; Regasa Nugusa; Gudeta Ifa.

<sup>41</sup> *Mad Det* is a source of use values for his own house hold or kitchen needs.

<sup>42</sup> *Endarase* is a term to refer to 'in may place' or viceroy or local representative of a higher authority. See Bahru (2002): 275.



*Dejjazmach* Haile Tesfaye over Nole Kabba, *Dejjazmach* Achamyelew over Lalo Qile, *Dejjazmach* Marra over Leqa Dullacha. Later when Horro Guduru was taken from King Tekele Haymanot of Gojjam in 1901 and added to *Dejjazmach* Demisew's Ma'id Bet, he divided the region into two districts and assigned them two *Dejjazmaches*. He assigned *Dajjazmach* Wolde Maskel Ashenafi over a large area extending from Guduru in the east to Limmu in the west and his son *Dejjazmach* Asfaw over the Guduru districts. Under the *Dejjazmaches*, he also appointed about 50 *Fitiwraris*, 189 *Qangazmaches* and *Girazmaches*, in fact whose number varied according the landscapes and intensity of the security problems.<sup>43</sup>

The *Enderases* were *Dejjazmach* Beyene Beqabil and his son *Dejjazmach* (Later *Ras Bitwaddad* Mekonnon Demisew. *Dajjazmach* Beyene Baqabil was made the *enderase* over Arjo proper, Dapho Hanna, Makko Sachi, Nole Kabba, Lalo Qile, Leqa Dullacha and Leqa Billo from his Arjo. *Fitiwrari* (to 1916) Mekonnon was made the *Enderase* of the present-day Horro Guduru including Kiramu, Gidda Ayyana, Ebantu and Limmu from his centre Tabor which is a hilly maintained five kilometres west of present-day Shambu town. These *Dejjazmaches* were made responsible to the two *EndeRases* who were in turn responsible to *Dejjazmach* Demisew.<sup>44</sup>

Being endorsed with every political right from the court of Emperor Menelik II, 'Ras' Demisew was seen as the "Shadow of the Imperial court" in the region. He exercised every right to restructure the administration of

his region in the way he wanted and appoint the rulers to the structures. He had also the right to bestow any feudal title below his own ('Ras') to his appointees over the region based on the size and the importance of the area they administered and the service they rendered.<sup>45</sup> For the securities and the stabilities, *Dejjazmach* Demisew allotted the 30,000 *Gondores* to each appointee. The number of allocated *Gondores* was dependent on the rank of the *Malkegna* and intensity of the security problems. Any detected defiant activity was usually accompanied by *haRassment*, incinerates and unbearable tortures. The number of *Gondores* at each camp was not fixed. The number increased from time to time as there were more settlers and a need for strong suppression of the local people.<sup>46</sup>

*Dejjazmach* Demisew was also made the superintendent of *Dejjazmach* Kumsa (Christianised Gebra Egzabher)<sup>47</sup> of Leqa Naqamte and *Dejjazmach* Jote Tullu of Leqa Qellem. Although the two Leqa states received autonomous rights because of their peaceful submission to the conquest of Imperial Ethiopia, their loyalties were not fully trusted. As a result, the overall role of checking the continuous loyalists of the two states was entrusted to *Dejjazmach* Demisew.<sup>48</sup> The *Gondore* who were sent

<sup>43</sup> Samuel: 57; Informants: Nagari Roro; Ragasa Nugusa; Gedefa Ifa; Tujube Tefera

<sup>44</sup> Samuel:32

<sup>45</sup> Informants: Jirata Tefera; Mosisa Qanani; Nagari roro; Tesema Gobena; Temesgen Abdisa.

<sup>46</sup> Tesema (1986): 167.

<sup>47</sup> *Dejjazmach* Kumsa the son and successor of *Dejjazmach* Moroda He ruled of Leqa Naqamte from 1889-1923)

<sup>48</sup> Alexander Bulatovichi (Trans. Richard Seltzer), *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: A Country in Transitions, 1896-1898* (Asmara: The Red Sea Press: 1993),9 and 86; Samuel, 38; A Letter Written from *Ras* Damisew to

frequently from Arjo to Horro Guduru to maintain peace and order in favour of the Shawan administration, and Leqa Qellem to check the boundaries status with the occupied Sudan spied and supervised the loyalty of Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellem. They performed intelligence services by collecting information on the governors and their administrations.<sup>49</sup>

Even *Dejjazmach* Demisew went beyond his superintendent role and made all necessary efforts to include the autonomous state of Leqa Naqamte to his own *Ma'id Bet*. The attempt was made in connection with the transfer of the administration of Horro Guduru from King Tekele Haymanot<sup>50</sup> of Gojjam to *Dejjazmach* Demisew. To convince the Emperor, *Dajjazmach* Demisew produced a conspiracy with *Fitiwrari* Tekile of Leqa Billo who recently replaced *Dejjazmach* Hailemariam. Using *Fitiwrari* Tekile as a proxy, *Dejjazmach* Demisew produced a false accusation stating that *Dajjazmach* Kumsaa and King Tekla Haymanot of Gojjam were in preparation to rebel against their subservient position to the Shawan supremacy. To give more weight to the conspiracy, *Fitiwrari* Tekile allegedly accused both *Dajjazmach* Kumsa and King Tekla Haymanot by stating that for the preparation they imported 30, 000 rifles through Sudan. Although he did not mention the number, he added that they also bought a large amount of ammunition from

Addis Ababa. By doing so, he was able to convince the emperor, if not aborted by the interference of Empress Taytu (the wife of Empress Menilek). Empress Taytu opposed the decision and suggested further investigation, which proved that the conspiracy was false.<sup>51</sup>

Although the transfer was aborted, *Dejjazmach* Demisew continued his supervision over the two regions. In doing so, he was able to collect some developments not incongruent with the *Naftegna* system like teaching in Afan Oromo (government-forbidden language for official use) and the expansion of periodic rebellions known as in political language Shifta (disobedient) in Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellem. Thus, these frequent reports from Arjo reduced the emperors' trust in the two autonomous states and resulted in the belittling of the *Gondores* on them. 200 *Gondores* were belittled over Leqa Naqamte under the precondition to be fed during the famine period of in 1890s. Other groups were in 1899 as collectors of revenues at customs in both Leqa Naqamte. The third round constituting 1300 *Naftegna* was deployed over Leqa Naqamte on 30 December 1906.<sup>52</sup> The mission was to inspect the anticipated revolts under the command of *BalambaRas* Bakele. Although these *Naftegna* lived and worked in the territories of *Dejjazmach* Kumsa, he had no any authority over them and the *Naftegna* were only responsible to *Dejjazmach* Demisew of Arjo.<sup>53</sup>

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Dejjazmachi Kumsa on Tir 13, 1905., File, no.  $\omega/\sigma\sigma/3/141$

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.; Samuel: 38; Tesema (1986); 162.

<sup>50</sup> Yemaneh G/ Egzabher, "Seenaa Warra Bakaree (History of the Bakare Families), (Unpublished Manuscript, 1971 E.C): 118-19.

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<sup>51</sup> Yemaneh: 118-19.

<sup>52</sup> Tesema Ta'a, "Defending Regional Autonomy and Cultural Identity: The Case of Leeqaa Naqamtee & Leeqaa Qellem (1882-1937)." *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 15,1 (March 2008): 60.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.: 62; Samuel, 38; Bulatovich, 86.

<sup>53</sup> Tesema 2008): 59-61.

Using the strategic locations of Nole Kabba and Lalo Qile, *Dejjazmach* Demisew who extended his hand on the western Ethiopia particularly to supervise the continuous loyalty of Jote Tullu. He worked inexorably against *Dejjazmach* Jote's position in Leqa Qellem through the agents he despatched. It was mainly based on his reports that *Dejjazmach* Jote Tullu of Leeqaa Qellem was removed and replaced by *Fitiwrari* Sahle Giorgis in 1908. *Fitiwrari* Sahle Giorgis was the brother of *Ras* Tesema Nadew who was then the governor of Ilu Abba Bor.<sup>54</sup>

Arjo also endowed the right to preside over the conflict related to the Amhara settlers in Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellem with local Oromo although in principle the two Leqa states had the right to administer issues in their territories. The case in point was the litigation between Onesimus, one of the indigenous Oromo missionaries who was accused by the orthodox clergy of violating the principles of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity in Naqmate. In this presiding, both Onesimus and *Dejjazmach* Kumsa were made to give their justification over the court presided by *Dejjazmach* Demisew at Arjo in 1905. In this litigation, *Dejjazmach* Demisew made *Dejjazmach* Kumsa and Onesimus criminal and reported his judgement directly to the emperor stating that they disturbed the life of the peaceful.<sup>55</sup>

The other the case was the conflicts the *Gondores* with local communities in Leqa Naqamte. When the local communities appealed to *Dejjazmach* Kumsa stating that the *Gondores* plundered their goats, sheep, honey, and buttery, *Dejjazmach* Kumsa

automatically referred the case to *Dejjazmach* Demisew as *Dejjazmach* Kumsa had the right to preside on the *Naftegna* cases whatever the status of that *Naftegna* was. If what he did was there, he continued appealing to the emperor by writing several letters for which he did not get any response until Liji Iyasu came to power and visited Wallagga in 1913.<sup>56</sup>

As revenge to the appeals, the *Godores* continued causing clashes even more bitter than the previous ones until Liji Iyasu passed an order of their removal from Leqa Naqamte to *Dejjazmach* Demisew's territory in 1913. Liji Iyasu ordered them to settle in the territories administered by *Ras* Demisew. Based on the order, *Dejjazmach* Demisew took that of the Leqa Naqamte and settled 900 of them at Limmu and Dapho, 400 of them at Digga and the rest at Lalo Qile.<sup>57</sup> Still, the responsibility to hold up their necessities was to be carried by both *Dejjazmach* Kumsa and *Dejjazmach* Jote.<sup>58</sup>

*Dejjazmach* Demisew also played the mediating role of passing important orders from the Emperor to *Dejjazmach* Kumsa. As the emperor trusted him more, *Dejjazmach* Demisew was also empowered to ensure the proper implementation of the orders. This was understandable from the letters written by the Emperor to *Dejjazmach* Demisew and *Dejjazmach* Kumsa. Most of the letters dictated that *Dejjazmach* Kumsa should act under the authority of *Dejjazmach* Demisew. Among such letters was the one written on 14 Nefise 1892 (20 August 1900) by Emperor

<sup>56</sup> A letter Written by *Dejjazmach* G/Egzabher to Liji Iyasu, Tir 6, 1905 E.C. IES, SMS, 1884

<sup>57</sup> Samuel 37.

<sup>58</sup> A Letter written by *Dejjazmach* G/Egzabher to *Ras* Teferi Mekonnen, Miyazia 18, 1905 EC: IES, SMS. 1884, letter, No.156.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Aren, 424.

Menilek ordering *Dejjazmach* Kumsa to submit the gold extracted from his administration to *Dejjazmach* Damisew at Arjo,<sup>59</sup> to the place 48 km farther from Addis Ababa than Neqamte.

As a representative of the imperial court in the region, *Dejjazmach* Demisew also held one of the earliest state prisons known as Karchale for the incarceration of individuals or groups alleged for secret plots. The prison used to keep the plotters and the alleged in custody from Ambo down to the border of Sudan. Informants state that even it had underground sections where individuals suspected of serious plots were incarcerated. It also served as the second most important prison next to that of Intoto to jail figurative personalities.

Arjo also served as a main base from where the *Gondores* were mobilized to check any disloyalty in western Ethiopia. The case in example was when 7000 to 8000 *Gondores* were mobilized from Arjo to aid of *Dejjazmach* Birru to crush the resistance of Mardasa Jootee, the son of Jote Tullu in 1918. Mardasa revolted against the direct imposition of the Shawan administration over Leqa Qellem.<sup>60</sup>

Generally, the authority from Arjo emanated from the day of its designation as a main garrison in Western Macha Oromo. The appointees used Arjo as a springboard to conduct military and administrative activities.

<sup>59</sup> A Letter Written by Emperor Menilek II to *Dejjazmach* G/ Egzabher, Nehase 14, 1897, File No. *ፀ/ፀፀ/3/108*.

<sup>60</sup> Alsandro Triulzi, "Social Protest and Rebellion in Some Gabbar Songs from Qellem, Wollega." in Tubiana, J(ed.) *Modern Ethiopia from the Accession of Menilek II to the Present* (Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1980): 179

During the rules of these appointees, the *Gondores* constituted a very powerful organ. These armed *Gondores* were the perfect agents of the appointees. They used their coercive powers to support and implement what their lords ordered

### 3.2. The Influence of Arjo in the National Politics

The roles of Arjo from the very day of its inception as a garrison town were also high in national politics. It had a strong position in securing newly conquered regions and participating in different political developments throughout the country. The conquest of the border regions of western Ethiopia and the boundary negotiations with the colonizers of the neighbouring countries especially with the Anglo-Egyptian-occupied Sudan were made by Arjo on behalf of the emperor. In this case, *Dejjazmach* Demisew was honoured to undertake such boundary negotiations with these neighbouring countries along the borders of Benishangul and Leqa Qellem.<sup>61</sup> To the contrary, *Dejjazmach* Kumsaa and *Dejjazmach* Jote Tullu who were in principle equal to *Dejjazmach* Demisew in status were officially forbidden not to deal with any political matters including boundary issues with neighbouring countries.<sup>62</sup>

Arjo also served as a centre in the mobilization of the forces settled in the western part of Ethiopia when there would be external threats. Among such expeditions was

<sup>61</sup> Tesema (196): 165; Informants: Tegegn Mohammed; Tsedale Asmare; Alhidir Ahmed Zaid; Belete Wakjira; Berkessa Waqweya

<sup>62</sup> A letter written by the emperor to *Dejjazmach* Kumsaa dated 8 March 1904, File. No. 3/6

the one that was undertaken by *Ras Gobana* against the Mahdist in 1886. This expedition was based on the requests of *Dejjazmach Moroda* of Leqa Naqamte and *Dejjazmach Jote Tullu* of Leqa Qellem for support against the Mahdist forces that invaded territories of both into the interior. It was based on the request that emperor Menilek ordered *Ras Gobana* to mobilize the forces stationed at Arjo and fight back the Mahdists out of the territories under the Ethiopian claims. *Fitiwrari* Tekele who was then an appointee of Emperor Menilek at Arjo served in the expedition as a second commander-in-chief next to *Ras Gobana*. *Dejjazmach Moroda* and *Dejjazmach Jotee* participated as facilitators and supportive generals as there were great suspicions of their alleged desertion.<sup>63</sup>

However, according to Triulzi and Etana, *Ras Gobana* and his forces did not confront the Mahdists in the battle. *Ras Gobana* persuaded them to leave the claimed territories in peace. Rather, he directed the mobilized forces towards the conquest of Anfilo. Anfilo was an independent state and a strong contender of *Dejjazmach Jote Tullu* on the western frontiers.<sup>64</sup> It was also during this campaign that *Ras Gobana* ensured the full summation of *Dejjazmach Jote Tulu*. On his submission, *Jote Tullu* was bestowed with the Abyssinian feudal title of *Dejjazmach* entrusted to rule combining Anfillo and

Sayyoo with his previous fief of Leqa under the new name of Leqa Qellem.<sup>65</sup> Referring to the Italian traveller, Wmilio Dulio, who had been in southwestern Ethiopia throughout 1886, Triulzi states that in this expedition, *Ras Gobana* went with his Arjo forces as far as Sobat River.<sup>66</sup>

On the second round Mahdist invasion of Leqa Qellem and western parts of Leqa Naqamte in June 1888 in collaboration with some Belashungul sheikdoms, they were the forces of Arjo who played the upper hand role under the overall command of *Ras Gobana*. In addition to the standby forces at Arjo, *Fitiwrari* Tekile also recruited the Oromo cavalries.<sup>67</sup> The forces were mobilized on 26 September 1888. In this expedition, *Fitiwrari* Tekele of Arjo was made the second commander in chief under *Ras Gobana* whereas *Dejjazmach Moroda* was again made facilitator. The forces were backed by the local societies and the invading Mahdist forces easily crashed at the battle of Gute Deli near Najjo on October 14, 1888. The forces chased them across Dabus into the interior of the Sudan as far as Fadis.<sup>68</sup> Following the victory, *Ras Gobana* made Arjo the best of his choice to stay and attend any further irregular development in the region. He stayed at Arjo from 18 October to December 1888. On his return to Intoto following the order of King Menilek, in whose

<sup>63</sup> Samuel: 41; Alesandro Triulzi, *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy: Prelude to the History of No Mans Land Bela Shangul, Wollega, Ethiopia (Ca. !800-1898)* (Napoli, 1981). 157.

<sup>64</sup> Triulzi (1981): 158-160; Etana Habte, "Resistance and Integration in The Ethiopian Empire: The Case of The Macca Oromo of Qellem (1880s-1974)." (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of London, 1918): 70-71

<sup>65</sup> Etana:70-71.

<sup>66</sup> Triulzi (1981): 158

<sup>67</sup> Paulos Melkias and Getachew Metaferia (Eds.). *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory against European Colonialism* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005):124; Triulzi (1981):10.

<sup>68</sup> Triulzi (1881): 157-161; Samuel: 43; Gebra Sellasie, Wolde Aregay, Tarik Zemena Dagimawi Menilek Negusa NagestZa Ethiopia (Addis Ababa'1959 E.C.): 150.

hand *Ras* Gobana left the control of the region was *Fitiwrari* Tekile.<sup>69</sup>

From 1889 to 1896, the attention of *Fitiwrari* Tekele at Arjo was concentrated on the backing of the king's imperial position as King Menilek was now crowned Emperor of Ethiopia. The responsibility of publicizing the emperor's legitimacy in the region and the two roles of defending it from external invasions were entrusted to *Fitiwrari* Tekile as *Ras* Gobana died suddenly in 1889. Thus, from Arjo, *Fitiwrari* Tekele made everything possible for the indispensable reputation of the coronation of King Menilek II as Emperor of Ethiopia following the death of Emperor Yohannis IV in 1889, who ruled Ethiopia from 1873 to 1889. At the same time, he also made every inculcation to collect peoples' support of the emperor in case there would be foreign invasions as there was suspicion of anticipated Italian invasion. This preoccupation with the coronation and preparation to defend against Italian aggressions left the administration of the loosely incorporated western lowland of Ethiopia including Belashungul in the hands of local rulers. Taking the situation as a golden opportunity, these local rulers rebelled against the Shawan overlordship at Arjo in particular and that of Abyssinia in general. Using the opportunity, the chiefs began reasserting their lost power. It also gave free space for the British Empire which was then expanding from the direction of Sudan.<sup>70</sup>

As anticipated, on the call for the battle of Adwa, Arjo was referenced as one major

centres of mobilization. The message of Emperor Menilek was sent to *Fitiwrari* Tekele to mobilize the forces at Arjo and to supervise all material and human mobilization for the campaign from all Wollega regions including that of Leqa Qellem and Leqa Naqamte. *Fitiwrari* Tekele of Arjo called upon his *Gondore* forces and the Oromo cavalries at Arjo and directed them with other forces from Wollega to the front.<sup>71</sup>

On return from the battle of Adwa, it was to Arjo that the emperor sent many numbers of the war veterans to billeted them on the land that had been confiscated during the conquest. Since *Fitiwrari* Tekile was killed in the battle, the veterans came back under the new appointee, *Dejjazmach* Demisew who was appointed administrator of Arjo and chief commander of the *Gondores* in western Ethiopia in 1897. He was endorsed not only to rule the region based on the direction of the emperor but also to take every measure he thought was correct.<sup>72</sup>

As it had been before after the battle of Adwa, *Dejjazmach* Demisew continued its influence in national politics. It became one of the major centres upon which the emperor left trusts. The decisions and acts from Arjo were said to have been recognized without reservation at the imperial court. Orders from the Imperial court were also channelled to neighbouring autonomous states like Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qellem. At the same time, Arjo was also made to have consents on orders and directives directly sent to these autonomous states from the Imperial court. Especially the roles it played as a major centre in mobilizing and commanding forces that

<sup>69</sup> Triulzi (1981):

<sup>70</sup> Informants: Abebaw Sisay; Tegegn Mohammed; Tsedale Asmare; Waqjira hitu; Teferi Gelalicha.

<sup>71</sup> Pawwuolos Getachew: 77.

<sup>72</sup> Bulatovich: 9.

were needed for the imperial policy of extending the Ethiopian border in post-Adwa.<sup>73</sup>

Hence, it was the forces of Arjo that saved the forces of *Ras Wolde Giorgis* from defeat during the conquest of Kaffa on 11 September 1897. Receiving the report on the waning forces of *Ras Wolde Giorgis*, the forces that the emperor ordered to make immediate reinforcement was the regiment of Arjo under *Dejjazmach* Demise. Joined with the forces of *Ilu Abba Bor* under *Dejjazmach* Tesema Nadow, the forces of *Jimma* under *Abba Jifar* and that of *Kulo Konta*, the reinforcement from *Dejjazmach* Demise that shifted the balance of power from the kingdom of Kaffa to that of *Ras Wolde Giorgis*.<sup>74</sup> At the campaign, the captives of war and some other *Gondore* fighters were handed over to *Dejjazmach* Demise to stay at Arjo as reserved forces for another conquest in the western direction and for conditional outbreaks of revolts or any other external invasions.<sup>75</sup>

They were the forces at Arjo that Emperor Menilek II ordered to take immediate action upon the Mahdist invasion in collaboration with *El Juri* of *Qabesh* and *Wad Muhamud* of *Komosha* (both chief of *Benishangul*) deep into the *Leqa Naqamte* and *Leqa Qellem*. *Dejjazmach* Demise of Arjo was made the second commander in chief of the front under *Ras Mekonnon* who reinforced the Arjo and the other local forces from *Wollega* with 8000

armies.<sup>76</sup> The forces undertook a bitter battle in February 1898 and pushed out the Mahdists and their *Benishangul* allies until they passed *Famaka* which the Ethiopian government claimed as its western frontiers. The victory enabled *Ras Mekonnon* and *Dejjazmach* Demise to plant Ethiopian flags at this site as a notification to the British colonial government that the area was under the occupation of Ethiopia.<sup>77</sup> Later the supervision of the area was entrusted to *Dejjazmach* Demise when *Ras Mekonnon* was called upon to return to *Addis Ababa* after staying in *Belashungul* for nine months.<sup>78</sup>

Two weeks after *Ras Mekonnon* and his forces returned to *Addis Ababa*, the two *Benishangul* generals *Tor El Juri* and *Wad Mohammed* revived actions and began moving into the interior of Ethiopia to restore their lost territories. He was *Dejjazmach* Demise who had taken orders from the emperor to undertake the overall command of the front. *Sheik Khjole* of *Asosa*, *Dejjazmach* *Jote* and *Dejjazmach* *Kumsa* were ordered to participate in the campaign under *Dejjazmach* Demise. On this expedition, *Dejjazmach* Demise bravely commanded the fronts that his forces captured *Tor El Juri* *Qebash* and *Wad Mohammed* of *Komasha*. To sustain the future *Shawan* dominance over the regions, he established military Garrisons at *Qebash* of *Tor El Juri* and *Komasha* of *Wad Mohammed*, and put them under his commanders; *Fitiwrai Gulilat*, *Fitiwrai Getaneh*, *Fitiwrai Gete* and

<sup>73</sup>Informants: Tegegn Mohammed; Tsedale Asmare; Waqjira hitu; Teferi Gelalicha. Sirnesa Gabisa.

<sup>74</sup> Bahru (2002): 65.

<sup>75</sup> Informants: Temesgen abdisa; Gedefa Ifa; Mulatu Abata; Tesema Gobena; Tasisa Dinagde

<sup>76</sup> Yemaneh, 123.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*: 124; Truilzi (1981):160-117;

<sup>77</sup>Bahru(1976): 83-101

<sup>78</sup> Atieb: 42.

Fitiwrai Oda.<sup>79</sup> He took Tor El Juri and Wad Mohammed as prisoners of war and jailed them at his headquarters, Arjo.<sup>80</sup>

To check the advances of the British colonial forces into the interior of Ethiopian territorial claims in 1898, Emperor Menilek ordered take expedition to the Sudanese border to extend the territory was *Dejjazmach* Damisew. *Dejjazmach* Demissew actively gathered provisions and 5000 detachments and went on an expedition against Abdurakhman who was working under Anglo-Egyptian forces along the course of the Tumat River.<sup>81</sup> At this expedition, *Dejjazmach* Demisew's forces were accompanied by a contingent of Leqa Naqamte under the command of *Dejjazmach* Kumsa and that of Leqa Qellem under the command of *Dejjazmach* Jote.<sup>82</sup> The expeditionary forces marched down to the White Nile (Sa'id), which the British colonial forces had already a claim over, and hoisted Ethiopian flags. By the time they reached Sa'id, the British arrived and protested the conquest. Fearing clashes with the British, Menelik ordered *Dejjazmach* Demisew not to advance beyond. At the expedition, *Dejjazmach* Damisew suspected Sheikh Khojole of secret dealing with the British government and took him prisoner to Arjo where he added him to Tor El Juri and Wad Mohammed, the prior prisoners.<sup>83</sup> Later he took them to the court of Emperor Menilek II for further trials. It was because of these

efforts of Arjo's appointees that the Ethio-Sudan boundary took the present-day border.<sup>84</sup> Regarding religious issues, the roles of the Arjo appointees were also not easy. The appointees of Arjo had the right to extend their hands as far as the head office of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Addis Ababa. The case in point was the roles *Dejjazmach* Demisew played in the trial of the Leqaa Naqamte indigenous missionaries at the litigation presided over by Abune Mateos, the archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. *Dejjazmach* Demisew was able to influence Abune Mateos, the archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to pass serious decisions on the missionaries in Leqa Naqamte. Pertinent to *Dejjazmach* Demisew's verdict, Abun Mateos passed on Onesmos and his colleagues' heavy chain and loss of all his properties in 1906. The decision was averted because the emperor refused to confirm the decision.<sup>85</sup>

More than ever the significance of Arjo's appointees in national politics reached its apogee during the controversies of power succession between Liji Iyasu and Empress Taytu. *Dejjazmach* Demisew became among those who bitterly opposed Empress Taytu's attempts to devalue Liji Iyasu's nomination as heir to power. As a result, *Dejjazmach* Demisew became one of those who became victims of Taytu's Shum shire (appointee and dismissed) in 1910.<sup>86</sup>

Another *Dejjazmach* Demisew's involvement in the national political intrigues during power succession controversies between the supporters of Liji Iyasu and Ras

<sup>79</sup> Bukuratsion, Tilahun, "Ya Asosa Benishangul Awraja Gizat Tarik (History of Asosa Benishangul District)" (Addis Ababa, 1961): f20.

<sup>80</sup> Letter by Emperor Menilek to Djjazmach G/Egzabher (Kumsa), Tir 3,1900.

<sup>81</sup> Bulatovich:104

<sup>82</sup>Samauel:44.

<sup>83</sup> Atieb: 42-43.

<sup>84</sup> Bahru (1976): 66.

<sup>85</sup> Aren:426.

<sup>86</sup> Bahru (2002): 120-121



Abate Buwalyalew who was then the palace guard. *Dejjazmach* Demisew who established an amicable relationship with Liji Iyasu sided with him in the power struggle. *Dejjazmach* Demisew arrived with 12,000 armies from Wallagga on 14 November 1911 and aided Liji Iyasu against the challenges of *Ras* Abate Buwayalew.<sup>87</sup> He also supported Iyasu by denoting large tribute in gold which he collected from his administration of Arjo which Liji Iyasu acutely needed for the court treasury.<sup>88</sup> The war *Dejjazmach* Demisew to fight with *Ras* Abate was averted by the prior arrival of *Ras* Micha'el (father of Liji Iyasu and ruler of Wallo) in December 1911 which was accompanied by 8000 forces from the north. *Ras* Michael was able to summon *Ras* Abate and imprisoned him at Wallo where he stayed until the battle of Sagale in 1916.<sup>89</sup> It was during this *Dejjazmach* Demisew's allegiance that Liji Iyasu promoted him to the title of *Ras* (hence for issues after this period *Ras*), the title that he assumed since his appointment over Arjo. To keep his alliance with the court *Ras* Demisaw was made to marry one of Liji Iyasu's sisters which he did in 1914. The reward and the marriage were to collect *Ras* Demisew's future support.<sup>90</sup>

However, later when power intrigue was started between Liji Iyasu and *Ras* Teferi (the later emperor Haile Selassie I), *Ras* Demisew changed his position and sided with *Ras* Teferi against Liji Iyasu. At the battle of Sagale the battle that was fought the question of Liji Iyasu's disposal, *Ras* Demisew and *Dajjazmach* Ganame commanded 20,000

troops of their own and fought on the side of the Shawan nobilities in 1916. It was this newly arrived *Ras* Demisew's and *Dejjazmach* Ganame's forces that changed the power balance and enabled *Ras* Teferi to win the battle.<sup>91</sup>

He devotedly engaged in these national power controversies and the controversies even affected his families. *Ras* Demisew's sons: *Dejjazmach* Mekonnon of Horro and *Dejjazmach* Asfaw of Guduru favoured Liji Iyasu and bitterly opposed what their father did. The father who worried about the positions of his sons ordered *Fitiwrari* Manise of Abe Dongoro to capture the sons and hand them over to Zufan Chilot (Imperial court) in Addis Ababa. Based on the order, *Fitiwrari* Minase confronted the two sons in the battle at a place called Lakkuu in which *Dejjazmach* Asfaw was killed and *Dejjazmach* Mekonnon was captured and taken prisoner to Addis Ababa.<sup>92</sup>

Until the death of his father *Ras* Demisew, *Dejjazmach* Mekonnon was kept in prison. But on the death of his father, he was released and was appointed as governor-general governor of Arjo and Leqa Naqamte with the position of *Ras* in 1919. However, opposing the appointment, the traditional ruling family of Bakare Godana of Leqa Naqamte continued to rule from their usual palace in Naqamte.<sup>93</sup> On the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930, he was recalled to Addis Ababa and appointed as Ministry of Justice with the title

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. :279-280; A letter written by Doughy to Edward, FO371/2596.

<sup>92</sup> Cherinet Wakweya, "Land Tenure System and Self-Settled Walleyes in Abbe Dongoro Warada (1900-1974)." 9B.A. Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1988): 30-31.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.: 33-34

<sup>87</sup> Samuel:44

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Bahru (2002): 120-121

<sup>90</sup> Marcus (1975): 261.

of Afe Nugus. But taking the influential roles Arjo had both regionally and nationally, *Ras Mekonnon* was promoted to *Ras Bitiweded* and was sent back to Arjo in 1933. However, two years later, in October 1935, he was entrusted to organize the forces that were to fight against the invading Italian forces from western Ethiopia. Consequently, he organized 64,000 armed forces and as usual he bolded the role of Arjo in the national issues. However, he was killed on 14 February 1936 at the battle of Amba Radom while fighting bravely with his forces.<sup>94</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The roles of the Arjo appointees tells us a lot about how the consecutive governments of imperial Ethiopia established garrison towns that served them to implant *Naftegna* feudal system in the newly conquered southern regions, and to keep its stainabilities in the subsequent period. Using these garrison towns, they liquidated local administrations and cultural practices, and replaced by core Abyssinian based *Naftegna* feudal system. From Arjo, the appointees controlled and suppressed local opposition, supervised autonomous states of their neighbours, conducted territorial expansions to the porphyries. Being endorsed with every right from the imperial court, the exercised all measure to their capacities. Issue west of the Gbe, north of Gabar, south of Abay rivers Sand east of Sudan referred to Arjo. Arjo was also from where the appointees defended the country from external aggressions, worked relentlessly to consolidate the stabilities of the

imperial court during succession intrigues with all their knowledge and resources. General, Arjo between 1884 to 1935 was the garrison town from the appointees of the imperial government of Ethiopia did everything they could to fulfil their interests at the disadvantages of the host societies.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding this paper.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENTS

The data of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid

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### Informants

No	Name of Informants	Sex	Age	Place of Interview	Date of interview
1	Abebaw Sisay	M	75	Asosa, Beni Shangul	20/06/2022

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2	Alhidir Ahmed Zaid	M	75	Asosa, Beni Shangul	21/06/2022
3	Barkeessaa	M	97	Walee Dhibbaa, Qellem Wallaggaa	11/11/23
	Waqawayyaa				
4	Belete Waqjiraa	M	96	Deentaa Biille, Qellem Wallaagaa	15/07/23
6	Birriituu Firrisaa	F	90	Noolee Kaabbaa, West Wallaggaa	29/04/2022
7	Gedefa Ifaa	M	69	Arjoo, East Wallaggaa	12/07/22
8	Jiraataa tefera	M	83	Noolee Kaabbaa, West Wallaggaa	15/04/2022
9	Moosisaa Qananii	M	80	Noolee Kaabbaa, West Wallaggaa	17/04/2021
10	Mulatu Abate	M	60	Arjoo, East Wallaggaa	08/07/2022
15	Nagarii Roorroo	M	81	Shaambuu, Horroo-Guduruu	18/10/2015EC
16	Olaanii Giichoo	M	82	Shaambuu, Horroo-Guduruu	16/10/2015EC
17	Raggaasaa Nugusaa	M	80	Aboo Daadoo, Horroo-Guduruu	9/9/2015EC
	<i>Informants continues..</i>				
18	Saqqataa Itichaa	M	80	Gitiloo, Horro-Guduruu	20/10/2015ec
19	Shuma Ayana	M	60	Asosa, Benishangul Gumuz	21/06/2022
20	Sirneessaa Gabbisaa	M	92	Meekkii, Qellem Wallagga	08/10/23
21	Tafarii Galaalchaa	M	89	Aallee Guumaa, Qellem Wallaggaa	04/11/23
22	Taasisaa Dingadee	M	60	Arjoo, East Wallaggaa	13/07/2022
23	Tegegne Mohammed	M	110	Asosa, Benishangul Gumuz	22/06/2022
24	Temesgen Abdiisaa	M	62	Arjoo, East Wallaggaa	12/07/2022
25	Tesema Goobanaa	M	62	Arjoo, East Wallaggaa	12/07/2022
26	Tsedal Asmare	F	101	Asosa, Benishangul Gumuz	20/06/2022
27	Tuujjubee Tefera	F	102	Noolee Kaabbaa, West Wallaggaa	03/03/2021
28	Waaqjiraa Hiixuu	M	97	Caanqaa Town, Qellem Wallaggaa	24/08/23

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