

## Paper Title: Assessing the Aftermath of Adwa in Wallagga Territory (Ethiopia): The Case of Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem (1896-1937)

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**Abstract**-The Battle of Adwa, the war fought between Ethiopian and Italian forces on 1 March 1896 and concluded with an overwhelming military victory of the former, has so far been known for establishing Ethiopia as a politically independent African state throughout the colonial era. And indeed it did. Adwa's local impact, though equally important, has not been given any attention. This article attempts to analyze and reinterpret the local impacts of the Battle of Adwa by assessing its aftermath in Wallagga territories of Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem. It endeavors to show this by making a brief comparison of the pre-Adwa days with its aftermath. The first section of the paper deals with an introductory remark that reviews the general nature of these states. The second presents the politico-military settings there by underlining methods of their conquest and inclusion into the Ethiopian empire state. The third section exclusively analyzes the aftermath of Adwa and attempts to show its impacts on Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem on the basis of legitimate local and national sources.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the nineteenth century saw the conquest of the independent states and peoples in southern half of what is today Ethiopia. Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem were among these states which were conquered, subjugated and annexed by Menilek of the Kingdom of Shawa as he endeavored to build the Ethiopian empire state. While many of the conquered states in the region put up strong resistance against Menilek's forces and lost their sovereignty, these two entities of Wallagga attempted to defend their regional autonomy and ethnic identity against the expanding Shawan and Gojjame forces.

The contemporary leaders, Morodaa Bakaree (r.1868-1889) of Naqamtee and Jootee Tulluu (1855-1918) of Qellem, were busy consolidating their control over their local contenders. The leaders of both entities were left with the option of resistance and peaceful submission to the powerful Ethiopian leaders such as Menilek of Shawa and *Negus* Taklahaimanot of Gojjam, armed to their teeth with modern firearms. King Menilek and King Taklahaimanot, the feudal traditional rulers of Shawa and Gojjam respectively, were the vassals of Emperor Yohannes IV (r.1872-1889). In 1881, Yohannes gave Taklahaimanot the title of "*Negus* of Gojjam and Kafa," perhaps to check which one of the two vassals was more powerful since they were rivals. This unleashed a grand territorial competition for the rich western Oromoo lands to the south of Blue Nile between the two kings in which the Leeqaa leaders were confronted with. Morodaa and Jootee had, however,

attempted to use pragmatic alternative mechanisms to maintain their right to govern their respective regions, organize their internal affairs and make their own decisions. They had also made relentless efforts to protect and preserve the identity of their society not merely as a source of sense of pride and joy but also of strength and confidence. But this attempt was seriously damaged following the Battle of Adwa (1 March 1896). The military victory achieved by the Emperor added his confidence to erode the autonomy he agreed to be enjoyed by the two Leeqaa states of Wallagga.

Both states peacefully submitted to the Ethiopian Empire state considering the politico-military problems awaiting from their rivals and the promises entered with *Ras* Goobanaa Daacee, Menilek's general. However, the resultant negotiated internal autonomy did not give them a freehand to rule their domains particularly after the Battle of Adwa (1 March 1896). But the peaceful submission clearly spared the Leeqaa people from the devastating war during the conquest, avoided the unbridled *nafxanyaa* exploitation and the superimposition of an alien administration and the complete loss of cultural identity.

### II. ALLIANCE AND DIPLOMATIC EXERCISES

The most important development in the two strong Leeqaa states of Wallagga following their annexation to the Ethiopian empire state was the serious attempts made by their governors to keep regional autonomy. The best example in this regard is Leeqaa-Naqamtee. Leeqaa-Naqamtee's attempt to keep its regional autonomy at any price possible to be paid goes back to Morodaa Bakaree's period (1868-1889).

When in 1881 Morodaa and his people failed to challenge *Ras* Darasu because of lack of fire arms which the enemy possessed, and lack of unity among local Oromoo leaders the former decided to make an alliance with the latter to help him tip the local balance of power in his favor (Tesema Ta'a, 1976:56). Although the detail it went through may not be relevant to this paper, he succeeded in retaining local autonomy of his state.

Shawan-Amhara residents' intrigue to seize political power in Leeqaa-Naqamtee because of Morodaa's death in 1889 was foiled. Morodaa's son, Kumsaa, became the governor of Leeqaa Naqamtee continuing the line founded by his grandfather, Bakaree Godaanaa. Kumsaa was baptized in 1888 with Menilek as his godfather; his Christian name was Gabra-Egzabher (*Ibid*).

Kumsaa demonstrated his collaboration by building a number of Orthodox Churches in many districts, to spread

Christianity and to win the hearts and minds of the people. During the early years of his governorship, *Dajjach* Kumsaa governed with considerable independence from the central government. He was responsible for all the internal affairs of Leeqaa-Naqamtee except that capital punishment was reserved to Menilek. Kumsaa had been responsible for collecting customs duties until 1899 when a *Nagadras* was sent from Addis Ababa. His major obligation to the central government was the payment of an annual tribute as his father had done. At first, the amount was the same with what his father had paid, five hundred *waqeeitiis* of gold and one hundred *farasula* of ivory (Triulzi and Tesema, 2004:86).

### III. THE IMPACT OF ADWA

The most important and indisputably clear impact of the Ethiopian victory at the Battle of Adwa on 1 March 1896 on the two Leeqaa states of Wallagga was the gradual erosion of regional autonomy and cultural identity it brought. Soon after the battle of Adwa the amount of gold was doubled (Triulzi and Tesema Ta'a, 2004:8).

Menilek's interference in the internal affairs of the two Leeqaa states of Wallagga was not limited to financial matters and resources for the construction of infrastructure. They were also ordered to participate in the conquest of Bella-Shangul. (Atieb Ahmed Dafalla, 1973:50). Menilek's interference increasingly increased in the autonomous province of Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem after he had consolidated his authority following Adwa. Menilek sent a number of *Nagadras* to Naqamtee, to collect revenues at custom gates and markets. *Nagadras* Tana and *Nagadras* Sartsa Wald, with a few escorts each, were assigned to Naqamtee and Mandii respectively (Tesema, 59, 96). The situation in Qellem had even taken turn for worse. Jootee was placed under the pressure of *Ras* Tasama Nadaw appointed by Menilek and acted as an overseer of Jootee. The settlement of northern soldiers in Qellem led to the displacement of the indigenous inhabitants and they fled in mass to Begii (Bahru Zewde, 1970:40-55; A.Triulzi, 1980:178). Thus, it is possible to argue that Leeqaa-Qellem's autonomy almost certainly ended with Jootee's death in 1918 and the territory fall under the Shawan generals. Some sources confirm that although most of the Gondare troops were stationed away from Kumsaa's personal domains and interfered little in his administration he was asked to pay for their provision in the amount of 10,000 to 13,000 *thallars* a year and this figure later rose to 23,000 *thallars*. (Triulzi, 1986:60).

Addis Ababa's interference and involvement in the internal affairs of "autonomous" regions of Leeqaa-Naqamtee and Leeqaa-Qellem was evidently intensified right after Adwa. The change is clearly evidenced in a letter which Menilek sent to Kumsaa on 8 July 1899, authorizing *Nagadras* Yigezu to be in charge of the customs in Leeqaa-Naqamtee (Triulzi and Tesema, 4). Relations between Kumsaa and the capital thus became less cordial. Although the agreement of 1888 ruled not to settle soldiers in the country of Morodaa, this aspect of Leeqaa's autonomy seems to have come to an end on December 30, 1906, when one thousand three hundred Gondare under *Balambaras*

Bakala were sent to live in Naqamtee (Triulzi and Tesema, 69). Even though Kumsaa had begun to prepare to rebel against *Ras* Tasama's decision, Iyasu's transfer of the troops from Kumsaa's territory to Arjoo satisfied Kumsaa and averted the rebellion. The troops were given land by *Ras* Damissaw and made their new home there (*Ibid*, 96).

From the preceding discussion and pieces of evidence it is not difficult to understand that Leeqaa Qellem and Leeqaa Naqamtee's local autonomy was increasingly threatened particularly during the post Adwa period. Habtamariam, son and successor of Kumsaa, showed substantial loyalty and friendly relations with the central government. Therefore, the attempt by Leeqaa-Naqamtee to defend its regional autonomy continued. This type of relation between Addis Ababa and the Leeqaa states of Wallagga had thus sustained into the 1920s and early 1930s.

Finally, the period of Italian occupation, 1935-1941, was important because it demonstrated the degree of the integration of the conquered regions to the empire state of Ethiopia. The occupation clearly showed that the conquered regions were less integrated because of economic exploitation, cultural domination and political dictation. During the early months of Italian invasion, Goree became a new capital of the exiled government under *Bitwadda* Walda-Tsadiq as a Prime Minister and *Ras* Imiru as a viceroy respectively. Just before Imiru's arrival in the south west, the Oromoo potentates had indeed formed a 'Western [Oromo] Confederation,' and were appealing to Anthony Eden for recognition and protection (Alberto Sbacchi, 1985:35). Soon the exercise by the 'Western [Oromo] Confederation,' failed. Its failure meant that the two Leeqaa states were left with the options of either fighting against the Italian rule or collaboration with them. The region initially welcomed the Italian invasion and the Italians favored the Oromo against the former agents of the Ethiopian government until they consolidate their power. The Italians completed the occupation of Wallagga in 1937. Later on, however, guerrilla resistance became a widespread project among the Oromoo of Wallagga (Alemu Shuie, 2002:100-130).

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