

Research Article

‘No War No Horse - No Horse No Victory’: The Seven Years’ War of Aggression and Crafting of Modern Wolaitta, 1887-1894

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ABSTRACT

Before the final assault made by the Shoon, the Imperial government had been encroaching around the Wolaitta kingdom since 1880-1886 E.C. During the seven years’ war, the various Abyssinian generals and army contingents led many expeditions and skirmishes. On these battle fields, they had been experienced losses of their soldiers and armaments. Such incidents apparently generated the belief that the Wolaitta army had been invincible. As a result, Menelik began to organize a huge campaign in terms of armaments, army organization and operated European military advisers. Hence, the aim of this work is to reconstruct the comprehensive history of the seven years war of aggression and crafting of modern Wolaitta, 1887-1894. It employed qualitative method. The study used primary and secondary sources as well as substantiate the lacuna with rich oral data. Lastly, the finding of this research would be a necessary step to solve the existing socio- economic, political crises and also help to consider policy matters in the upcoming period.

Menelik campaign to Wolaitta had both major and minor drives. Religion was the minor one, where Christianity used as a pretext to invade Wolaitta. The inherent causes were political and economic. Politically, the threat and expansion of European imperialism. Ethiopia had been encircled by the expanding colonial power like Great Britain, French & Italy. In 1891 Italy colonized Eritrea and began to expand to south by crossing Mereb Melash. Ethiopia knows that there would be unavoidable war against Italy in the near future. In addition, Tona’s instigation of the surrounding Omotic (Dawro, Kucha, Konta, Koyra) and Cushitic (Sidama, Hadya, Kambata and Arsi) states, who were incorporated earlier against Imperial government irritated Menelik to give attention to Wolaitta cause before dealing with Italy. Above all, the economic motive was the main justification for the 1894 Wolaitta conquest. It includes the Great Famine, European debt, the upcoming battle of Adwa and strategic significance. Wolaitta’s 8 years war against Imperial Ethiopia embraces two phases and six major campaigns. When the first period covers (1887-1893) and 5 major expedition, while the 1894 venture was the 6th grand invasion in which all generals took part, who were later involved in the battle of Adwa.

The outcomes of the 1894 conquest were far reaching. To indicate political, socio- economic, history and heritage destruction as well as moral blow. In short term, the battle brought fresh resources, fertile land for settlement, large cattle population and slaves as booty, which answered the hunger of great famine and secured the campaign of Adwa. In contrast, both sides lost thousands of people. Wolaitta lost its independence, pride and wealth. The long term impact had been the Neftegna Gabbar system or Melkegna rule, the most exploitative quttir-gebbar, the grinding reign instituted. In general, Imperial troops made devastation on Wolaitta. It obliterated traditional administration, customary law,

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brought material and moral blow; exploit the wealth of a nation; historical and heritage destruction; mass massacre, mutilation and enslavement.

Key words: Imperial government, neftegna gabbar, melkegna, quttir-gebbar, Shoan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Wolaitta is the earliest state flourished in south western Ethiopia. Its civilization, clan-ship, kingship, and territorial expansion appeared in the hinter land Omo valley and considered as the master mind of Omotic and Omo valley civilization. The ancient and medieval Wolaitta had been ruled by four consecutive dynasties roughly Wolaitta Malla I (c. 600-875 A.D), Arujjia (c. 875-1100 A.D), Wolaitta Malla II (c. 1100-1504) and Tigre (r. 1504-1894) and governed by fifty one kings. Local sources further claimed the emergence of Wolaitta state drives back to first millennia B.C. Despite, local tradition capable to narrate up to six century A.D. (Vansina, 1985; Jones, 1970; Oliver, 1959; Bradbury, 1959; Fage, /n.d/, pp, 177-89; Trautmann, 1969; Fenchu and Eyob, 2006; Geramo, 2010; Lambebo, 2020).

Wolaitta as an independent state endured for more than a millennia and experienced complex socio-economic and political cultures. Some of the most notable expansionist rulers of Medieval Wolaitta include Kawo Motolomi, Sana, Amado, Ogato, Damote and Gobe. Kawo Tona, the 14th ruler of Tigre and the last Kawo of Wolaitta. Tona successfully repulsed the seven years military expeditions made by the Shoan empire in coalition with the surrounding conquered Cushitic and Omotic states. Nevertheless, the 1894 wave of grand invasion dismantled the fate of Wolaitta. (Henok and Sishir Triphaty, 2020; Bogale, 1956; Afworke Gebre Selassie, 1990; Assela, 2004; Henok, 2012; Elias et al, 1991; Wana, 1994).

Medieval Wolaitta army success in their war against rival Abyssinian encompass military training scheme, army organization (cavalry and infantry), armament composition and war strategy (offence and defence). Mount Damota as a strategic spot served as abode to the imperial guards and training center. The army had been keeping the training of skiing (down slide), acrobat, swimming, jumping the trench, skating, horseback riding, traditional karate (*hiriya*) and bruises (punching), mountain hiking and downhill. (Geramo, 2010; Wondu 2020; Tesema, 2006)

Moreover, they had train war tactics, dug ditches, trenches, built fortresses (*Kella*), border defence (Galchchaa), sword combat, etc. Hunting field could be taken as warfare training ground for the Wolaittans. Every male member of the society took part in the annual hunting festival. The person who kills locally recognized animals such lion, tiger, buffalo, elephant, deer, etc., would be honored and rewarded by the family, society and the king. In contrary, not killing any animal in the yearly hunting means an insult for the individual called as *Monicha*. In Wolaitta culture, not to participate in war and shot from back in the battle meant shame and would result in slavery. As a result, the Wolaitta army were fearless in any battle field. Their principle of war had been kill the enemy or died. (*Ibid*)

Wolaitta proverb depicted the ancient adoption of horse in warfare as follow:

“If there is no war, there will be no Horse

If there is no Horse, there will be no victory” (Informants: Zebdewos , Eyasu, Abrham and Gebre Michael)

To the traditional Wolaittan’s war and horse were inseparable. *Lakaytuwa* took the lion share in organizing the horse men and infantry force in battle field. However, the long established politico-military culture of Wolaitta ended in 1894. Therefore, this study has been conducted in Southern Ethiopia Wolaitta Zone which composed of 15, 5 and 5 districts, reformed towns and city administration respectively. According to 2019 Zonal Administration population report, inhabited by 2.4 million people and more than 1 million dwells outside the current Zonal state. (Henok and Sishir Triphaty, 2020; WZA 2019; WZFEDD, 2019)

Generally, the seven years Shoan war of aggression against Wolaitta state primarily divided into two developmental phases. When the first period covers from 1887-1893 having 5 major expedition, while

the second and last stage deals about the 1894 sixth grand invasion of Wolaitta which culminated by incorporating the kingdom into modern Ethiopia. Therefore, the various phases, causes and outcomes of the wars are the subject of the study.

2. THE PRE-1894 SUCCESSIVE CAMPAIGNS (1887-1893)

2.1. The First and Second Expeditions (1880-81 E.C/1887-88)

In 1887 *Azazh* (commander) Tekle and *Dejjach* (commander of the Gate) Tessema Worku led the first expedition by invading Boloso. At the battle of Bane'a, Bolosso peasant force circled the Shoan, crushed and completely wiped out except the commander survived. The justification behind why Wolaitta army did not kill the enemy war generals embraces their discipline/respect to commanders and send them to tell the enemy that the Wolaittan's were brave and unconquerable. In the meantime, Tekle was captured by the Bolosso fighters and they were making fun of him by saying "Takilee Tamaa Ho''a", meant sit down around the fire furnace or blow a fire in the corner of the stove. Thus, he sent back to Emperor Menelik as ወሬ ነጋሬ (news speaker) to inform their defeat. (Geramo, 2010; Fanchu and Eyob 2006; Afework 1990; Lambebo 2020; Informants: Wolde Mariam Lisanu)

Menelik took a lesson from the weakness of the preceding warfare and organized the second campaign in 1888 under the leadership of *Dejjach* Basha Aboye and *Azazh* Tekle attempted to seize Wolaitta, even though warned by the fugitive. The Shoan army contingent crossed Damote Gale and settled at heart land of Damote Pulassa. From Gununo they had begun to enforce Wolaitta state to surrender. Amidst of this turmoil, the local Gale and Pulassa peasant army led by Keshamo Madalcho stricken Imperial contingent and defeated them at the battle of Shanto-Bolosso. Tekle escaped while Basha captured. The peasantry entertained on him by saying "*Baashshaa Bashiyaa Tookka*", hold a bread bakery or wear a loaf of bread. They had sent him to address the news to the Emperor that 'the Wolaittans blows the fire that burns you.' Likewise, Basha directed towards Menelik and assured their losses. When Empress (*Etege*) Taitu heard the news, she had advised Menelik and war captains to co-operate with other neighbors to surrender Wolaitta state. In short, the message behind the above two fun were to say that 'you are not male, so your duty from this day onwards would be to assist the women when they make meal in the kitchen. (Wana, 1994; Elias et al, 1991).

2.2. The Third and Fourth Expedition (1883 E.C/ 1890)

In 1890 Abyssinians launched two different campaigns in the same year. Both forces invaded Bolosso from Kambatta direction. Accordingly, the first of this invasion was commanded by *Ras* (head, the highest military position) Mengesha Atikem, prominent general. The second Imperial army led by *Ras* Kassa and *Ras* Gobena Dache. Nonetheless, the two contingent army encountered complete destruction at the battle of Bolosso, while the three captains (*Ras*'s) escaped from battle and the news reached to the court. (Henok, 2012; Chiatti, 1984; Assela, 2004).

2.3. The Fifth Expedition (1885 E.C/ 1893)

The last battle of the first rounds held at Koyisha. The large and better organized Shoan army in comparison with the aforementioned four campaigns well commanded under *Ras* Mengesha Atikem, a fugitive from the third expedition. and *Dejjach* Tessema, governor of Arussi also took part in the campaign to crush Wolaitta army. In the midnight, Shoan army was encircled and attacked by the Wolaittan's in the morning. At dawn, they would fly into the yard of the beehive, which he had carried on his shoulders. The bearded bees left the casket at about ten o'clock in the morning, waiting for the execution of the command by the Gadawas, when they came in and ran out of control. In the meantime, Balshiya (cunning beehive), a furious and violent bees, began to wobble around the enclosure and wait a little. As the dawn began to smash on the mules of the hot bees, even the man in the covert of the mule, as the gamblers began to clamor for their excitement, the bees roared over him, and the wine ran out of his cage while he ran away. By the help of biological weapon (swarm of Bees) the Wolaitta army devastated the conquering contingent at the battle of *Alequwa Odoruwa* (literally, place of beautification or beauty salon), named to mark the height of their victory. As a result, from the battle field, *Dejjach* Tessema and *Ras* Mengesha Atikem with some guards escaped and returned back to Addis Ababa. (Lambebo, 2020; Lussier, 1896; Geremo 2002)

In general, those battles gave imperative experience for Menelik, invading Wolaitta was invincible (not a quiet chore) but inevitable to stop the Italian advance to South from North of Mereb- Melash.

3. THE 1894 MENELIK’S CAMPAIGN ON WOLAITTA

3.1 Causes and the Whole Process of the Venture

The existence of serious and continues skirmishes between the kingdom of Wolaitta and Imperialist Abyssinia momentarily intimidate the central government. Prior to the attempt of conquering the kingdom of Wolaitta, Abyssinian army led by different war generals such as *Dejjach* Luelseged, *Ras* Wolde Giorgis, *Ras* Gobena Dache, *Dejjach* Geneme and *Dejjach* Basha Aboye consecutively beaten and seized the sovereignty of the adjoining states of Arussi, Sidama, Kambata, Dawro, Gurage, Hadiya and Konta and incorporated into the Abyssinian Empire. (Balisky, 1997; Henok, 2012; Elias et al, 1991)

Gaga Tona (r.1873-1894), the grandson of Gobe *Worqqa* succeeded the throne in 1873, due to the natural death of his father. The 12 years old governor of Mallo (Gofa), took the kingship under the regency of his notable uncle (Sorato, later *Fitewarar*) for eight years. When he was at the age 20, Tona begun to rule independently. From 1882-1894, the young and energetic Tona mobilized the entire Wolaitta for the inescapable war with the Shoan’s. His reign well-evoked for his brave and heroic resistance against the Imperial conquest. As Abera confirmed, “Kawo Tona locally means Victories king, Gagga named him as Tona because of the prophecy that is his son will expand and defeat all his enemies.” (Abera Paulos, 1987, p. 17) In fact, Tona’s military might and economic strength to some extent realized the situation by defeating some Menelik generals; (Tsehai, 1969; Assela, 2004; Chiatti, 1984; *Bakkaliya Mesehate*, 1995) but not at all.

According to Paul Balisky, “At the turn of the century, the many clans within Wolaitta were residing in a harmonious relationship with one another, retaining their social status and function.” (Bailsky 1997, p. 30) However, the Shoan’s extended their hegemony over the surrounding areas of Wolaitta. Successively the period between 1886 and 1890 showed the political unrest and uncertainty that existed around Wolaitta. (Geramo, 2010; Chiatti, 1984; Henok, op. cit., 2012). This was mainly due to Menelik’s Generals who continuously raided and conquered the neighboring states and other parts of southern land.

It was believed that for seven years, Wolaitta successfully repulsed the Abyssinian attempt of invading the kingdom. Tsehai articulated this as, “...the Shoan’s had been pressing on the boards of [Wolaitta] while also campaigning around it.” (1969, p. 30) By the help of the surrounding generals like, *Dejach* Basha Abboye, Tessema Worku, *Ras* Kassa, *Ras* Mengesha Atikem and *Azazh* Tekle (Solomon and Sudhakara Reddy, 2018; Wudneh 1984; Lambebo, 2020; Informants: Adane Ayza) tried to conquer Wolaitta, but they were botched.

The great famine which affected the lives of cattle and human population in northern Ethiopia had an impact on the 1890 Menelik’s planned campaign to south. In order to solve the famine problem and loss of cattle in the north in 1890 Menelik arranged seven expeditions to the Sidama and the surrounding regions for permanent occupation and plunders of cattle and slaves. (Lapiso, 1974; Elias et al, 1991; Henok, 2012) As Tsehai explained, “The invasion of 1890 was part of Menelik’s desperate policy for feeding a starving army.” (1969, p. 31)

However, the Shoan army commanded by various generals armed with modern artilleries were incapable to halt the traditional force of Wolaitta. The Wolaitta army incorporating of *lakayttuwa* (cavalry) and *ollancha* (infantry) equipped with armaments like swords, *qonchora*, spears, shields, *biassa* and horses crushed Imperialist conquest. (Demisie, 2009; Elias Awato et al, 1990; Henok, 2012; Lapiso, op.cit., 1974; Wudneh, op.cit., 1984; Informants: Wolde Mariam) Solomon Berhe argues that, “Wolaitta military resistance and repulsion of Menelik’s generals repeated aggression's, which were armed with modern firearms with backward traditional weapons for more than seven years, showed the strength of Wolaitta military organization and the people.” (Solomon and Sudhakara Reddy, 2018, p. 16)

Moreover, Tona’s army deployed biological weapon such as swarm of bees and natural disease (the infected person deliberately surrender to the enemy and infect the army) to defend and counter attack their enemy. Locally, there is a story that tell us how the Tona’s army defended themselves and attacked the Shoan army.

“Swarms of bee’s let loose on the Shoan, an expected sound made by beating dry hides frightened the horse which were trapped in holes dug by the [Wolaitta] and powdered with pepper were beaten in the wind to suffocate the Shoan army. The [Wolaitta] must have far outnumbered the Shoan or they would not have been beaten by such simple trick.” (Tsehai, 1969; Wana, 1994; Demisse, 2007; Henok, 2012)

By doing so, the Wolaitta were able to won the Shoan’s and preserved their independence despite the Shoan encroachment continued until 1894.

Sources evidently notifies that there were varied motives caused Menelik’s invasion of Wolaitta in 1894. To remark some, religious and political (Tona’s provocation) causes were a pretext to conquer Wolaitta. *Gadle* of Tekle Haymanot justifies that Saint Takla Haymanot preached the gospel in the kingdom of Wolaitta and evangelized *Kawo* Motolomi including the society around the 13th century. In the period between 13th and 16th centuries, Orthodox Christianity had strong basement in Wolaitta. Nevertheless, during the sixteenth century, the War of Imam Ahmad (*Gragn*) and the Oromo population movement greatly endangered the mightiest medieval kingdom of Wolaitta- Damota that ruled up to Bulga in Shewa and limited to the smallest part of northern Wolaitta. While Menelik made the campaign to restore Christianity in the area. *Tsehafe- Tizaz* (Menelik’s chronicler) Gebre Sellassie, states that God send Menelik to Wolaitta in 1894 to expand and protect Christianity against the anti- Christian Wolaitta. (Balisky, 1997; Geramo, /n.p: n.d/, pp. 1-11; Lambebo, 2020; Gebre Sellasse, 1959)

Tona’s provoking of the people of Gamo, Gofa, Kucha, Boroda, Koyira, Dawro, Konta and Kambata to rebel against the Shoan domination was the political preamble. Bahru argued that, “Tona’s instigation of the [Dawro] and the Konta peoples, to the west of Wolaitta to rise against Menelik’s authority added fuel to the confrontation.” (2002, p. 64) Hence, Tona’s provocation had its impact in causing but it is not the major one. In parallel with this, Menelik zealously calculated to avenge the failure of the pre-1894 successive seven years expeditions.

Both written and oral sources corroborates that, the primary motive for the conquest of Wolaitta was economic. Menelik principally moved to capture slaves, cattle, cotton, fertile land to settle northerners, the need to strengthen his household supply and satisfying his soldiers through booty. (Chris Prouty, 1986; Lambebo, 2020; Balisky, 1997; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006)

The Great famine (*Kefu Qen*, 1888-92) shattered Abyssinian Empire and destabilized the Shoan’s basement. The northern and central Abyssinian cattle had been wiped out due to the effect of *Kefu Qen*. As a prelude to colonize Ethiopia, the Italian government deliberately imported cattle infected with rinderpest epidemic disease. Furthermore, locust invasion and the outbreak of drought and famine added fuel in the incidents and drastically depleted Abyssinian cattle. As a result, the Northern societies escaped from famine and death moved to Shoa, twisted strong pressure on the Menelik’s government. (Bahru, 2002; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006)

In 1893 Menelik borrowed two million lire’s from Italy to buy rifles and imposed taxes on the newly conquered areas, however, he was not satisfied with the additional tribute to strengthen his army as well as repay the debts. (Elias et al, 1991; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006; Assela 2004; Tsehai, 1969; Lapiso, 1974; Informants: Aysha Aymado) “A contemporary observer presented the [Wolaitta] expedition as a deliberate means calculated by Menelik to solve the economic problems that he faced...,” (Tsehai, op.cit., 1969, p. 31)

According to Ivo Strecker, “Menelik organized campaign against Wolaitta... the monumental plunder of one of the richest and most well-organized people of the south.” (1994, p. 307) Therefore, this plunder and booty helped Menelik in his campaign to Adwa and enabled to defeat the Italians in 1896. Hence, Menelik’s conquest of Wolaitta had strong economic ground that is to capture cattle, slaves, cotton, to strengthen his household through booty and make permanent settlement site.

In short, logically why the Emperor arranged such unpardonable large campaign to Wolaitta the simple justification was to solve the northerner’s socio- economic crisis. Menelik politically, anticipated to unite the southern provinces to exploit their rich untapped resources and wealth. In line with this, the strategic value of Wolaitta in between the two resourceful regions of Kafa and

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Sidama as well as Menelik’s personal zeal to buffet his fame and glory by devastating such invincible country that dared his empire for the last seven years were equally indispensable. Menelik’s campaign to Wolaitta was fully planned and well documented by Vanderheym and Gebre Selassie the chronicler of the king, who accompanied the campaign. (G/Selassie, 1959; Lussier, 1896; Chiatti, 1984)

On August 1, 1894 summer, Emperor Menelik addressed the crowd and declared the campaign against Wolaitta at Saturday Market of Finfine. Menelik ordered his soldiers to prepare war equipments and his servants other logistic supply which were needed for the campaign under the leadership of *Ras* Tekle Haymanot and Wolde Giorgis. (Marcus, 1969; Tsehai, 1973; Lussier, 1896) War preparation had took three months. The reason for the delay was as Chiatti presents: “Taitu was very upset at this plan and the court tried to stop the emperor because of the wide spread notion that Wolaitta was invincible.” (Chiatti 1984, p. 333) This fact was shown in the pre-1894 operation to Wolaitta. And the widely accepted notion for Menelik’s delay was Taitu and the court opposition to the expedition. (Nardos, 1963; Paulos, 1984; Abera, 1987; Tsehai, 1969) Besides, the delay of *Ras* Michael of Wall was also another precondition. On Nov 1, 1894 *Ras* Michael, Emperors son-in-law, joined the Imperial army with 10,000 vanguard force. Hence, after two weeks (on Nov 15, 1894) the Shoan army left Addis Ababa in their way to Wolaitta. During their journey, the force of *Fitawrari* Gebeyyehu (governor of Gurage), *Dejjach* Bechat (Menelik’s cousin and governor of Alaba area), and *Dejjach* Tessema Darge (Menelik’s uncle and governor of Arussi) and other governors of southern force joined with Menelik’s. (Lussier 1896; Fanchu and Eyob 2006; Chiatti, 1984; Lambebo 2020)

On Nov 29, the Shoan armed forces reached Qorgga, (the boundary between Arussi and Wolaitta) and camped at Shone. From Shone Menelik sent delegations to Tona’s to peacefully submit without any bitter fighting. Nevertheless, *Kawo* Tona denied to surrender to the Christians without fighting. As a result of the aforementioned seven years successive campaign, Tona had taken a lesson and his main duties were to dug ditches, trenches and organize a polished bamboo shafts in ground. Crossing such blockade/ palisade is a tough job for human beings let alone to pass for horses and mules. Menelik assigned four generals (*Ras* Michael, *Dejjach* H/Mariam, *Fitawrari* Gebeyehu and *Liqä Makewas*) and their army contingents to evade such obstructions. On November 30, 1894 (the whole day) they drove these obstacles and opened the way to march on Wolaitta. In the next day (On 1 Dec, 1894) the Abyssinian army crossed the border of Wolaitta and settled at Qontola. From that day on wards, the war had been intensified, mass massacre, mutilation, enslavement, plunder and firing of beehive Wolaitta houses continued till Menelik denounce war on December 15, 1894. (Kassa Kaficho, 1990; Geramo 2010; Lussier 1896; Wana 1994; Henok 2012)

Menelik employed two methods as a means of war. These are peaceful submission and forceful subjugation. Accordingly, the area peacefully surrender paid their annual tribute and allowed to exercise a certain autonomy of rule (their tradition rule continued whenever they were loyal to the central government), the best instances were that of Jimma and Christian Gurage. However, those who have resisted, Menelik’s policy of peaceful diplomacy, the penalties were attack, humiliation, massacre and subjugation. (Assela, 2004; Demisse, 2007; Kassa, 1990)

In terms of army and armament composition, the Wolaitto-Ethiopian war was incomparable. The Abyssinian army deployed advanced modern armaments of Russian, France, Italian, Egypt and British made. These includes Automatic Grass, Winchester, Mortar, Martinez, Remington gun, Grass refiles, Nadar, Mincer, spy glass and field glass cameras. In addition to this, they hold traditional warfare devices like spear, shield, sword, tent-poles, sticks, and also Horse and Mule as well. Menelik’s army were trained and assisted by European military advices. On the contrary, Wolaitta army composed of infantry and *lakayttuwa* (horse men). The *lakayttuwa* division became the core of Wolaitta army unit. The Wolaitta contingent armored with locally made weapons like axe, shield, sword, spear, and sticks, long knives, Bee and Horses. (Fenchu and Eyob, 2006; Lusser, 1896; Geramo, 2010; Elias et al, 1991; Tedla and Sudhakara Reddy, 2018)

The Menelik force employed the war plan called Encirclement and Envelopment (invading the enemy from all direction, cutting the enemy forces at different section and demolished the army, no space to admit surrender even to the civilian made the horror holocaust). Under this war strategy, they enacted

guerrilla fighting at the initial phase (Dec 1 - 10, 1894) and conventional warfare during the second phase (Dec 10-15, 1894) of the warfare. Conventional fighting primarily pointed to capitulate the enemy's army through attacking. However, it is the easiest technique if the enemy is competent with them. While the Wolaitta army used "*Ingilitiya togga worajjuwa*" techniques, in which the cavalry contingent (*lakayttuwa*) directly confronted the Shoan's. This warfare method is very tough and similar with that of terrorist attack but effective only if their armament complement with their enemy. The Wolaittan's had bravely fight in every corners of their country. They determined not submit to the Imperialist force and Wolaitta women encouraged their husbands to fight and not capitulate to the conquerors. As their self-determination, not surrender to their enemy extended, the horror of massacre had got apex. (Geramo, 2010; Elias et al, 1991; Bahru 2002)

Correspondingly, both Wolaitta and Imperialist force deployed various war fronts and commanders of their armies. In order to stop the advance of Shoan army, Tona organized four war fronts. It include Qontola, Duguna- Fanggo, Afam and Kindo Koysha. Kawo Tona was the chief commander of the army. Under him there were many prominent war *gadawas* like Borssamo Anjullo, Ondu Ollolo, Dagaga Dalle, Ashku Gache, Adalo Dabullo, Daye Lachore, Aldada Qajjella, Wallana Albe, Dagoye Dando, Darara Dojje, Salfaqa Hirboro, Haxero Haniche, Odhdha Make, etc. On the other hand, Menelik invaded Wolaitta through all direction. Under the command of Menelik the whole general who made history at Adwa two years later participated in the battle against Wolaitta. Those renowned war commanding officer include *Ras* Michael, Grazmach Yosef Negoussie, *Fitwraey* Gebeyyehu, *Ras* Alula Abba Nega, Bejrond Balcha, *Dejjach* Haile Mariam, *Dejjach* Tessema, *Leqa Mekawus* Abate Buyalaw, *Dejjach* Luelseged, Abba Jiffar II, *Ras* Kassa, *Dejjach* Geneme, *Dejjach* Wolde Giorgis, *Ras* Gobenna Dache, *Ras* Mekonen, *Fitawrari* Habtegiorgis, *Dejjach* Basha Aboye and *Dejjach* Bechat. (Tsehai, 1980; Lussier, 1896; Geramo, 2010; Wana, 1994; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006; Henok, 2012; Afework 1990)

As stated above, the Abyssinians deployed their army to invade Wolaitta from the eastern, southern, north western and northern front. The eastern front named as Duguna Gate. Duguna- Fango was one of the arduous front defended by the command of well-known *gadawa* Ondu Ollolo and Ashku Gache. About 26, 000 Imperial army commanded by *Dejjach* Leulseged (governor of Sidama) crossed Bilate River to invade Fango. However, the highly experienced Duguna warriors wrinkled the modernized armies of Sidama and killed nearly 20, 000 soldiers. Luelseged started the war before Menelik gave command and his armies had been perished. The devastation of Abyssinian army at the battle of Duguna shocked the Shoan army and irritated Menelik. The strategic importance (mountains area) and the skilled experiences of warfare due to war prone front facilitated Duguna victory. (Assela, 2004; Elias et al, 1991; Demissie, 2007; Henok, 2012; Lambebo, 2020)

Menelik's chronicler Gebre Selassie said that, some numbers of Ethiopian soldiers waged war against Wolaitta without the knowledge of Menelik; about 75 of them lost their lives while large number of Wolaittan's as well; (G/ Sellassie 1959, p. 220) but this might referred to the front of Duguna, in reality the majority of Luelsegeda's army perished.

After the defeat of Shoan army in the eastern front, Menelik proclaimed a new edict to boost the morale of the defense force to combat courageously. He was advised by the two deserters called Lomina Adare and Wozito Wobilo (former member of king's counselor), declared to fire the beehived houses, enslave the victims and loot the country. Accordingly, Menelik ordered all generals and his troop to invade Wolaitta in four direction. The envelopment and encirclement war plan became a means that helped Menelik to make deliberate assassination of every individual, burn houses, devastate the country side by calculating to control free land. The Imperial forces armored with modern armaments primarily by scattering the then confronted Tona's army. (Henok, 2012; Chiatti, 1984; Marcus, 1969; Tsehai, 1969; Demisse, 2007; Lapiso, 1974)

In the Southern front, the Imperial army contingent commanded under *Dejjach* Geneme (governor of Gamo Gofa) invaded Humbo from their basement of Boroda. The Humbo force led by the notorious *gadawas* Salfaqa Hirboro and Adalo Dabullo ferociously challenged the Abyssinians but later after strong sacrifice defeated. The north western front recalled as Offa or Afam Gate. Abyssinian army commanded by *Dejjach* Basha Aboye and *Ras* Kassa invaded Offa from Kambata. Tona's contingent

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under the leadership of notable *gadawa* Daye Lachore defied Imperial army at the battle of Yakima. Nonetheless, the enormous traditional defense force unable to halt the advancing army. (Bisrat, 2011; Abebe Anebo, 2019; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006)

From the western front, the Imperial army assisted by the Dawro, Konta and Jimma led by *Ras* Wolde Giorgis and Abba Jiffar II invaded Kindo Koysh. The Kindo Koysha front commanded by *gaddawa* Dagaga Dalle after stubborn resistance defeated. However, in each front Menelik II lost nearly 20,000 soldiers. (Fenchu and Eyob 2006, p. 155)

The Qontola Gate was the first and the most formidable front of all. *Kawo* Tona was commander in-chief of the entire army unit of Wolaïtta gave order from this direction. In parallel with this, Emperor Menelik including eight generals invaded Qontola. The well organized, better trained and equipped huge Abyssinian crowd assisted by spy and field glass as well as supervised by Adare and Wobilo (Wolaïtta deserters) made two decisive battle at Hartto-Burqatto and Bana’e. From Qontola to Damota Choramo *Garuwa* the most decisive battles had been held. When Tona realized the supremacy of the Shoan army, he made strategic retreat to re-organize his force. Conversely, the retreat gave upper hand to the Abyssinian advancement into the Palace. (Lussier, 1896; Geremo, 2010; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006)

The Shoan’s superiority in weapons and number gave chance to drive out the Tona’s force. In spite of their courage, and the Wolaïtta women encouragement, their trench, infantry and cavalry proved useless against the Shoan’s. In terms of armament and number of soldiers there was a wide gap between them. In fact their military superiority added with their numbers gave them to supremacy in the war. The Wolaïtta army camped at Qontola defeated and retreated. The Shoan’s massacred, mutilated, enslaved and taken cattle as booty. Many Shoan’s died and suffered from casualties but only the dead bodies of important people were buried and the remaining majority was thrown on the battle ground as dead animals. On the same day, when Tona fled to the south, Menelik marched towards Damot by clearing the trenches and palisades. On sixth December, the emperor reached Dalbo, the capital was devastated by the force of *Ras* Michael. (Tedla and Sudhakara Reddy, 2018; Lussier, 1896; Elias et al, 1991; Geramo, 2010)

Beginning from Dec 1 - 15, the blood drunk Abyssinian after merciless atrocity and mutilation in each day they chanted the Tigrean victory tune described below,

“Sing, vultures!

You will be fed

Human flesh!” (Lusseir 1896, p. 95)

Gaston Vanderheyem, the eye witness account conveyed the status quo as follows:

“It was a terrible butchery, an orgy of flesh, dead or alive, torn to shreds by the blood thirsty soldiers. I saw places which must have been where the village market was, covered with corpses, their clothes torn away and gruesomely mutilated. I saw Abyssinians escorting lines of prisoners, women and children, forcing them to carry bloody remains of their husbands or fathers. I even saw (Ethiopian) soldiers tearing babies away from their mother’s breast and throwing them in the fields...,” (Vanderheyem, 1896; Lusseir, 1896)

Vanderheyem overtly uttered the horrors of Menelik campaign on Wolaïtta as a kind of infernal hunting, “It was like watching some hellish hunt, where the game was replaced by human beings.” (*Ibid*, p. 181; Lussier 1896, p. 103)

Likewise, Professor Bahru Zewude, one of the eminent scholars of Ethiopia argues that Wolaïtta conquest was “...one of the bloodiest campaigns of the whole process of expansion.” (Bahru, op.cit., 2002, p. 64) Thus, it was the most worst bloody horror in Ethiopian history. One of the old participant generals of Abyssinia proved the fact from his many years war experience witnessed, “... he had never before seen such a massacre.” (Lussier 1896, p. 99)

On 10 December, the guerrilla fight ended and conventional warfare under envelope war strategy enacted. In the same day, Menelik declared the final assault that is the overall extermination of the

people of Wolaitta from Decembers 10-15. Then the campaign arranged to encircle the Tona's army and started to attack from all direction. In the meantime, the Shoan soldiers encircled, but Tona fled further south ward to Boroda. On Dec 13, they followed his foot step Tona shot by one of *Ras Micheal's* soldier at Boroda and the seriously wounded king was captured and brought to Menelik. (*Ibid*, p. 102; Fanchu and Eyob, 2006; Henok, 2012; Chiatti, 1984).

በኋላም ምኒሊክ ፊት ቀርበው “ለምን ሕዝቡን ታስፈጃለህ” ቢባሉ “ሕዝቡ ላይ ጦርነት እኔ አላወጅሁም የመጣብኝን ጠላት መከትሁ እንጂ። በመሣሪያ ብዛት ተመትቼ እጄ ተይዟል የያዘኝ ግን በመሰለው መንገድ እንዲያስተዳድር ማን ይከለክለዋል” ሲል መልስ ለምኒሊክ ሰጥቷል።

Later, when Menelik appeared before him and asked, “Why do you trouble the people?” And who can prevent him from holding it in such a way as to be beaten by a myriad of weapons? ” (Geramo, 2010; Wana, 1994)

When the heavily wounded Tona appeared in front of Menelik, he answered fearlessly ‘I did not make any mistake than depending my country and people from such cruel enemy.’ Now it is the time to do your wish since you have possessed superior weapon. Thus, Kawo Tona evidently marked Menelik's brutality, mercilessness and accused his illegal annexation of Wolaitta. The reason for Menelik's success in his expansion to south, south west and east is well stated by Nardos, “...the superiority of army. Menelik used a comparatively a well-organized army well-armed with modern quick firing rifles and an abundant supply of ammunition.” (1963, p. 36)

3.2 The Outcomes of the Conquest

The cost of Menelik's planned destruction on Wolaitta was innumerable. To remark the war brought political, socio- economic and moral blow to the Wolaitta nation. After a month campaign, as his calculation Menelik feasted rich cattle booty, slave, vast and fertile land for settlement. The conquest secured the central government, aided the northern economy, contented the hunger of *Kefu Qen* and by the same token Wolaitta was sacrificed for the two years later battle of Adwa.

The first adverse outcome of 1894 conquest was political. A millennial dynastic rule of Wolaitta came to an end, the notorious kingdom had been ruined and lost its independence for once and all. The traditional administration system endangered under the control of *Neftegna* (military government). Garrison troop was established in a new settlement site called Aroge Arada, the old city of Sodo town. Basha Kurfe appointed as administrator of Wolaitta. In parallel, the local judicial system had been replaced by *Lebashy* System (accuser and the wrong doer or being accused tied together until justice had given). The *Neftegna* rule gave birth to clan conflict. (Assela, 2004; Fenchu and Eyob, 2006; Balisky, 1997; Henok, 2012; Lambebo 2020)

Socio-economic crises could be taken as the second blow. Depopulation became the main target of Menelik's preset holocaust on Wolaitta. In fact, both sides paid heavy cost in death and casualties. In the case of figure, there was disagreement among the two eye witnesses. After the two weeks massacre G/Selassie estimated about 118,987 Wolaitta men were dead or wounded and Menelik estimated 96,000, while as Vanderheym 20,000 died. The Shoan campaign total devastated Wolaitta economy. Both agreed upon the number of cattle captured 36,000 from these Menelik took 18,000 and 1800 (one-tenth from 18, 000 total) slaves. These cattle population not include sheep, goat, horse, mule, donkey and poultry. The remaining cattle and slaves were divided for the participant generals. The Wolaitta land distributed under 44 *shaleqqa's* (250 brigade/11,000 soldiers) and the *Neftegna's* (garrison troop) had been settled. (Lapiso, 1978; Gebre Silassie, 1959; Lussier, 1896; Chris Prouty, 1986; Teshale Tibebe, 1995; *Bakkaliya Mesehate*, 2001; Elias et al, 1991; Balisky, 1997)

Marccuwa, Wolaitta Iron money was banned and replaced by Maria Theresa Thaler (Austrian coin). Although, local sources proved that the death toll reached into 120, 000 and 80, 000 on the side of Wolaitta and Abyssinians respectively. At amidst the battle, enslavement had intensified. Menelik for himself acquired 30, 000 youngsters, *Ras Michael* shared 18,000 and other general divided many thousands slaves. (Lussier, 1896; Wana, 2004; Chiatti, 1984; Geramo, 2010; Fenchu and Eyob, 2006; Lambebo 2020) Besides, Pankhurst R. revealed that in the following year, “A British diplomatic report for 1895 stated that 15,000 slaves were captured in [Wolaitta] and that persons obtaining them were subjected to a tax of a dollar per slave.” (1968, p. 105) Similarly, Hugues Le Roux argues that,

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in 1894 Menelik brought not less than 20,000 slaves from Wolaitta campaign and after the Adwa battle they had put to digging ditches and road construction. The Wolaitta captives of war including the Gurage daily labourers had constructed the present day Addis Ababa. (Le Roux, 1901; Pankhurst, 1968; 2004; Wylde, 1901; Balisky, 1997) Thus, Menelik strategically depopulated Wolaitta during and after the battle.

History and heritage destruction and moral blow were the other critical crises generated by the conquest. Like the 1539 Imam Ahmed’s seizure caused the destruction of the treasury collected by the generation of Christian Empire at Mount Gishen, Menelik campaign recapped comparable blunder after four century by devastating Millennial collection of natural, historical and cultural heritage when they occupied Dalbo and fired seventy museum houses in the compound of Choramo Palace at Mount Damot (Wolaitta center, since 13th century to 1894). The generational unconquered treasury burnt and Wolaitta’s memorial paradise and proudness altered into debris. (Taddesse, 1972; Fenchu and Eyob, 2006; Balisky, 1997; Strecker, 1994; Lambebo; Abraham, 1971)

Moreover, the 1894 Imperial tsunami hardly worked to cripple the strength, proudness and eroded Wolaitta’s heroism by blurring societal moral. Some of the strategy employed were depopulation (bloodbath, mass enslavement) and insult. Menelik’s army expanded throughout the country, the propaganda of Wolaittan’s were slave, theft, criminal, ugliest and panic people in place of their heroic determination, honest, industriousness and having with black beauty called Amado *Karetta* (proud of being black race). By doing so, the Abyssinian achieved their ill-motive while the Wolaittan’s lost their identity, dignity, proudness and unity since 1894. E. Paul Balisky strengthened the episode by describing that Menelik’s subjugation on Wolaitta as incorporation into Abyssinia, however, a burden of historical force imposed to the Wolaittan’s. It was motivated by religious vindication but with no revitalization instead brought despair, confusion and disillusion. Its effect include cultural humility, excessive economic exploitation, and slavery, slave raiding, slave trade, serfdom and poverty. Further Balisky argued that, the 1894 campaign and ensuing socio- economic and political order destabilized Wolaittans, smashed their earthly paradise, broken their hope, confidence and proud. (Chris Prouty, 1986; Balisky, 1997; Chiatti, 1984; Geramo, 2010; Abrham, 1971)

In general, Menelik troops made destruction on Wolaitta. They had kicked traditional administration, customary law, brought material and moral blow; exploit the wealth of a nation; historical and heritage destruction; mass massacre, mutilation and enslavement. (Geramo, 2010; Fenchu and Eyob, 2006) Henceforth, the last century of Modern Era in Wolaitta history contemplated as Dark Age; due to the subsequent Ethiopian regimes worsened the horrific than reversing the tragedy. Teshal Tibebe articulated the severity of Abyssinian war on Wolaitta as, “ ... one of the most horrendous campaigns of Menelik’s.” (1995, p. 43)

On December 20, 1894 at *Wanza* meeting in Dalbo, the Emperor established a new administrative structure. Accordingly, Wolaitta became Imperial kitchen (*Madbeit*) until 1903. *Basha* Kurfe appointed as the governor of Wolaitta; the capital transferred into Sodo, center of garrison troops. In 1903 *neftagna-gabbar* (*melkegna*) system was set up. Under this system, land was measured and the manipulative *quttir-gabbar* arrangement was enacted. (Hodson, 1927; *Bakkaliya Mesehate*, 2001; *Bakkaliya Mesehate*, 1995; Donald Crummey, 2000; Teshale, 1995; Balisky, 1997; Abera, 1987; Lapiso, 1978; Markakis, 1974; Wana, 1994) Thus, the *melkegna* rule was analogous to Hell.

4. CONCLUSION

Wolaitta is one of the strongest and expansionist medieval state. Its army success was banked on military training scheme, army organization, armament composition and war strategy. By the last two decades of 20th century Wolaitta had been in constant warfare with the expanding Ethiopian empire. Imperial campaign to Wolaitta caused by political and economic motives. Menelik was zealous to control the proverbial most fertile, wealthiest and prosperous Wolaitta. After months of serious preparation and the engagement of almost all Ethiopia except Kafa and southern borderland (independent states) Menelik invaded Wolaitta in four corners. However, with the superiority of modern armament and the help of spies Ethiopian army succeeded in annihilating the ground tackle of Wolaitta traditional force. In turn, resulted in political, socio- economic and moral blow. Wolaitta lost its independence, pride and wealth. Death and casualty were high in both sides. The Emperor attained

what he intended and controlled fresh resources, fertile land for settlement, large cattle population and slaves as booty. Thus, the Shoan government resolved the tension created by Evil Days and facilitated their way to Adwa battle while the people, land and rich resources of Wolaitta sacrificed for their atrocious benefit.

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