



# Ethiopian Cultural Center in Belgium

## የኢትዮጵያ ባህል ማእከል በቤልጅየም

### NEWSLETTERS

ቁጥር –20 May 23, 2021

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#### Brief History of Ethiopia

#### Part 10: The Decline of Gondar and The Zemene Mesafint (The Era of the Princes; 1769 – 1855)

For about 200 years, Ethiopia passed through turmoil caused by the aggressiveness of the Muslim states, the far-reaching migrations of the Oromo and the disruptive influence of the Portuguese. These episodes left the empire much weakened and fragmented by the mid-seventeenth century. One result was the emergence of regional lords who are essentially independent of the throne, although in principle subject to it. In this issue of the newsletter, we will briefly describe the major events and decisive characters that shaped the course of Ethiopian history until the rise of Tewodros II in 1855.

The Gondar period produced a flowering of architecture and art that lasted for more than a century. For the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopian royal chroniclers, Gondar, as a city, was the first among the cities that fulfilled all desires. Imperial Gondar thrived on war chests, trade and revenue from feudal taxation. Local aristocracy lived the high life and enjoyed luxury goods in the castle’s enclosure. When the Yemenite Ambassador visited the castle of Fasilides in 1648 he was impressed by “beds glittering with gold and magnificent sofas inlaid with pieces of jewelry and gems”. Travelers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century also described the presence of precious mirrors from Venice, gilt and ivory decorations in addition to immense quantity of the finest

Indian textile and European furniture. Gondar enjoyed the veritable status of a fashion capital to the extent that it was described in the 1840s by two French captains as the “Paris de l’Abyssinie” where ladies and gentlemen wore dresses of dazzling whiteness, had good taste, polite and distinguished manners. Nevertheless, Gondar monarchs never regained full control over the wealth and manpower that the nobility had usurped during the long wars against Gagn and then the Oromo. But this was hardly the problem that started during Gondarine period. In fact all imperial expansions of the Ethiopian state was never accompanied by the establishment of an effective administrative structure. Thus

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the relation between the monarch and subjects was at all times loose – which often enabled regional chiefs to challenge the central authority. This came to head when, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the political structure of the Ethiopian kingdom fractured and actual government rested in the hands of an array of local warlords and a succession of puppet kings.

The period known as the Zemene Mesafint was a period in Ethiopian history between the mid-18 th and mid-19 th centuries, which witnessed violent struggle for power and influence between dominant regional classes. The country was divided into several regions with no effective central authority. It was a period in which the Emperors from the Solomonic dynasty were reduced to little more than figureheads confined to the capital city of Gondar – a succession of about 23 nominal Emperors held the throne during this period. There was no powerful authority uniting and controlling the warring princes and provincial kings who continuously fought each other. They competed to extend their own territory at each other's expense and be seen as the guardians of whoever was the current nominal King of Kings enthroned at Gondar. The beginning of this period is commonly set on the date Ras Mikael Sehul deposed Emperor Iyoas I (1769) and its end to Kassa's coronation as Emperor Tewodros II (1855), after he militarily defeated all his rival princes. Full imperial power was once again in the hands of one leader and the history of modern Ethiopia began.

The genesis of the Zemene Mesafint can be traced to the reign of Iyasu II (1730–1755; throne name: Berhan Seged; meaning &quot;He to Whom the Light Bows&quot;). Iyasu II ascended the throne as a child, allowing his mother, Empress Mentewab to play a major role as his Regent from 1723 to 1730. Mentewab, had herself crowned as co-ruler in 1730, becoming the first woman to be crowned in this manner in Ethiopian history (throne name: Berhan Mogassa; meaning Glorifier of Light). Thus, as his regent and later co-ruler, the new emperor had his shrewd and capable mother, Dowager Empress Mentewab (queen mother and grandmother, 1730-1769), a second wife of Bakaffa from Qwara region. Empress Mentewab wielded unprecedented power over government throughout the reign of her son. However, as a young emperor and women co-ruler the imperial duo were not in a position to lead military campaigns in the vast territory left behind by Bakaffa. This probably enabled some regional lords to feel independent and be emboldened enough to influence the center. Soon after assuming power, the queen made sure that her kinsmen from Qwara were given important palace positions and named her brother Wolde Lul as Ras. Mentewab also used the attempted coup by the traditional nobility in 1735-1736 as a pretext to place Qwarans at the high command in the army. To obtain Oromo support, she married Iyasu II to Wubit (Welete Bersabe), the daughter of an important Wello chief, who came to the capital with many followers. As a result of this official rapprochement, the Oromo begin to play an ever- increasing role in the affairs of the

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kingdom, especially in the military sense. In time, Iyasu II relied upon Oromo military units to help counter challenges to their authority from the traditional nobility and for purposes of campaigning in far-flung Oromo territory. By the late eighteenth century, the Oromo were playing an important role in political affairs as well. At times during the first half of the 18th century, Afaan Oromo was the primary language at court, and Oromo leaders came to number among the highest nobility of the kingdom. Mentewab's arrangement of the marriage of her son to Wubit brought its own serious consequences at a later stage. Because Iyasu II gave precedence to his mother and allowed her every prerogative as a crowned co-ruler, his wife Wubit suffered in obscurity. But she waited for the accession of her own son to make a bid for the power wielded for so long by her mother-in-law and her relatives from Qwara Province. When Iyoas (Iyasu II's son; reigned 1755-1769) assumed the throne upon his father's sudden death, the aristocrats of Gondar were stunned to find that he more readily spoke in the Oromo language rather than in Amharic and favored his mother's Yejju relatives over the Qwarans of his grandmothers family. Furthermore, Wubit, who believed that it was her turn to serve as regent, thwarted Mentewab's attempt to continue in her role during the reign of her grandson Iyoas.

The conflict between these two queens led to Mentewab summoning her Qwaran relatives and their forces to Gondar for support. Wubit responded by summoning her own Oromo relatives and their

considerable forces from Yejju. When a real conflict and a bloodbath became imminent, Mentewab summoned Mikael Schul (the powerful governor of Tigray and, later, her son-in-law) to Gondar in order to save the Solomonic state. Upon arriving, he was made Ras, promising to mediate the dispute between the two queens and their followers. Mentewab had hoped that he would land firmly on her side, but instead Ras Mikael proceeded to destroy the power of both the Qwarans and Yejjus in quick succession. Mikael Schul then continued to work behind the scenes to undermine the house that Yekuno Amlak had rebuilt in 1270.

Emperor Iyoas, alarmed at his growing power, formed a coalition of anti-Tigray forces and ordered Ras Mikael back to his province. The Ras disobeyed and, in January 1769, marched against his master, whom he defeated, deposed and then assassinated, ushering in almost a century of feudal anarchy and mayhem, the Zemene Mesafint, which lasted until 1855.

Ras Mikael thus consolidated his position as Gondar's most powerful warlord and a ruthless puppet master, but the murder of Iyoas sparked the armed reaction from a group of Amhara and Oromo lords. Ras Mikael's response was unleashing of a period of terror in Gondar in 1770 when even high churchmen were executed, but failed to control the countryside. Finally, forces of a coalition of envious Amhara and Oromo lords, Fasil of Damot, Goshu of Amhara, and Wond Bewossen of Begemdir, defeated the Ras Mikael Schul in 1771 at the Three battles of Sarbakusa

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and imprisoned him for a year, then sent him back to Tigray.

During the Era of the Princes, nobody dared take the sacred throne by force or even to lay claim to it. The throne was therefore passed back and forth between the hands of rulers who were legally Solomonic, but weak and engrossed in their palace intrigues. They did not venture beyond the walls of their imperial city. The real power lay, in the shadow of these puppet rulers. The triumvirate of Fasil, Goshu and Wand Bewossen periodically placed their own emperor on the throne. More emperors followed as these three fell from power and were replaced by other strongmen, who constantly elevated and removed emperors. Tekle Giyorgis is famous for having been elevated to the throne altogether six times. The years from 1771 to 1784 constituted a sort of interval or a transition period between two eras – the era of the absolute monarchy and the era of rule by the Wara Sheh (or Wereseh; or people of the Sheikh) rulers of the Yejju dynasty. The origin of the Yejju people and their ruling dynasty, the Wereseh, largely remains uncertain. Although there are different assumptions, an oral tradition of the Wereseh themselves relates the origin of the ruling family with Sheikh Omar. It maintains that during the campaigns of Ahmed Gragn, a family of Arabian origin called Wereseh or Wereseh, settled in the region of Yejju. In the expansion and rule of the region, the Oromo established matrimonial ties with this family, thus giving rise to the dynasty. The Oromo Yejju Dynasty stepped on to the stage of Ethiopia history with Ras Ali

I, who together with his Wara Sheh family members became “Enderases” (Regents) of the Ethiopian Empire and their power reached its peak with Ras Gugsa Mersu, the founder of Debre Tabor, Yejju’s dynastic capital.

Meanwhile in Tigray, Ras Wolde Selassie, opponent of the Oromo-Amhara power, was the first Ethiopian local governor to form contacts with Europeans, particularly the British empire through the visits of Lord Valentia, his secretary Henry Salt and Pearce, as described in their books. Wolde Selassie, a conservative Christian who valued Ethiopia’s monarchical traditions, hated the Yejju pretenders and, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was probably the main champion of the Solomonic tradition. He inevitably thought about removing the Oromo leadership, reuniting Christian Ethiopia and restoring the monarchy. Among the Amhara and the Tigray leadership, considerable bitterness remained over the two-centuries-long record of helplessness before the Oromo arrived.

Wolde Selassie tried to harness the general anti-Oromo prejudice to move against the Yejju by approaching Dejazmach Gebru of Simien and Ras Wossen Seged of Shewa. However, Ras Gugsa manipulated his control over the Emperor and the Abune to exacerbate the religious differences among his foes and to destroy their unity. In the meantime, Wolde Selassie grew old in his single-minded opposition to the Yejju, and by the time of his death in 1817, Gugsa had broken the anti-Oromo front by arranging a matrimonial alliance with Dejazmach

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Haile Mariam, the new ruler of Simien. The Yejju Ras and his people remained the masters of the Gonderine monarchy. Shewa quickly retreated from the national scene to concentrate on internal issues and politics as a new ruler, Sahle Selassie (r. 1813-1847) began consolidating his government. The Shewans claimed Solomonic legitimacy as descendants of Atse Lebna Dengel. Their early contacts with Europe and its riches served to arm them and Ras Sahle Selassie took the title of Negus (King) but bided his time and waited for his chance. History would give him this opportunity in the figure of his grandson Menelik. But before this took place, another character, Kassa Hailu, would put an end to the Zemene Mesafint. The End of Imperial Gondar In the mid-19th century, a major figure in Gondar was Kassa Haylu, son of a lesser noble from Qwara. Beginning about 1840, Kassa alternated between life as a bandit and life as a soldier of fortune for various nobles, including Ras Ali II, the last of the Yejju Enderases. Kassa eventually rebelled against Ali, occupied Gondar in 1847 and compelled Ali to recognize him as chief of the western frontier areas. Under the authority of the influential Empress Menen (Ali's mother) Kassa was given Tewabech, Ali's daughter, as a bride in order to have influence over him (Kassa came to love his wife and remained faithful to her until her death).

Kassa then agreed to a reconciliation with Ali, whom he served until 1852, when he again revolted. Following a series of stunning victories by Kassa, Ras Ali II was decisively defeated by his son-in-law Dejzmach Kassa in the Battle of Ayshal on 29 June 1853 and he lost both the regentship and his territories. That way, Kassa Haylu ended the Wara Sheh dynasty and the Zemene Mesafint. In 1854 he assumed the title Negus (king), and in February 1855 the head of the church crowned him Emperor Tewodros II. Kassa sought to build an empire with the messianic name of Tewodros II.

Tewodros II put an end of the troubled Zemene Mesafint by reviving the traditional monarchy. The reign of Tewodros II ushered in a catastrophe for Gondar. Tewodros turned his rage against the city several times during the 1860s, blaming the dwellers for supporting rebels or refusing to pay taxes. The emperor repeatedly sent his army against the city, burned it down and plundered all the churches. Tewodros II would bring the booty from the pillaged churches to Debra Tabor, which he proclaimed the new Gondar.

to be continued...

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## ፍቅርን ፈራን

ፈራን  
 ፍቅር ፈራን  
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 ሀብረት ፈራን  
 ፍቅር ፈራን  
 ልጅነት የለገሰንን  
 የፍቅር አምላክ በጥበብ በረቂቅ ያለበሰንን  
 በመለኮት የቀባንን  
 ሀብረት ፈራን  
 ፍቅር ፈራን



ሎሬት አርቲስት ጸጋዬ ገ/መድህን

**ቤልጅየም - ሳምንታዊ የኮሮና ቫይረስ ሥርጭት፤** (ምንጭ: የማህበረሰብ ጤና ሳይንስ ተቋም - Sciensano)  
 በማህበረሰብ ጤና ሳይንስ ተቋም ሳይንሳዊ ይፋ የተደረገው የኮሮናቫይረስ ወርሽኝ ስርጭት ሁኔታ የሚያሳዩ አኃዞች ባለፉት ሁለት ሳምንታት ውስጥ የታየውን አዎንታዊ አዝማሚያ ቀጣይነት ያሳያሉ። በቫይረሱ መያዛቸው በምርመራ የተረጋገጠ የሰዎች ቁጥር፣ በኮቪድ-19 ምክንያት ሆስፒታል መተኛት ያለባቸው ሰዎች እና በበሽታው የሚሞቱ ሰዎች ቁጥሮች አሁንም በተከታታይ ሳምንታት መቀነሳቸውን ቀጥለዋል።  
 በቤልጅየም የማህበራዊ ጤና ሳይንስ ተቋም በሳምንቱ መጨረሻ የዘገበው መረጃ የሚከተለው ነው።

- ከMay 12 እስከ 18 ድረስ በነበረው ጊዜ ውስጥ በየቀኑ በአማካይ 2,159 ሰዎች በኮሮና ቫይረስ መያዛቸው ተረግጧል። ይህ ከሳምንት በፊት ካለው አሃዝ ጋር ሲነጻጸር በ22 በመቶ ያነሰ ነው።
- በአጠቃላይ በአሁን ሰዓት 1,612 የኮሮና ቫይረስ ህመምተኞች በተለያዩ ሆስፒታሎች ውስጥ በህክምና እየተረዱ ይገኛሉ። በዚህ መሰረት ከባለፈው ሳምንት ጋር ሲነጻጸር በየሆስፒታሉ የሚገኙ አጠቃላይ የኮቪድ-19 ህመምተኞች ቁጥር በ16 በመቶ እንደቀነሰ ነው።
- ከእነዚህ ውስጥ 540 ታማሚዎች በጽኑ ሕመምን ክፍል በከፍተኛ እንክብካቤ ላይ ይገኛሉ። ከነዚህ ውስጥ 354 ታካሚዎች ሰው ስራሽ የመተንፈሻ እርዳታ የሚያስፈልጋቸው ናቸው። ይህ በከፍተኛ እንክብካቤ ውስጥ ያሉ ታካሚዎች ቁጥር በፍጥነት መቀነሱን

- የሚያሳይ ሲሆን ከባለፈው ሳምንት አንጻር ሲታይ ወደዚህ ክፍል መግባት ያለባቸው ህመምተኞች ቁጥር በ16 በመቶ ቀንሷል።
- ሆስፒታል የሚገቡ: ከMay 15 እስከ 21 ድረስ በየቀኑ በአማካይ 127 ህመምተኞች ሆስፒታል ገብተዋል።ይህ ቁጥር ካለፈው ሳምንት ጋር ሲነጻጸር በ12 በመቶ ቀንሷል። ይህም በኮቪድ-19 ምክንያት ሆስፒታል የሚገቡ የህመምተኞች ቁጥር ለአራት ተከታታይ ሳምንታት ከፍተኛ መጠን እየቀነሰ መሄዱን ያሳያል።
- የሚሹቸው ቁጥር: ከMay 12 እስከ 18 በነበረው ሳምንት በኮሮና ቫይረስ ምክንያት በየቀኑ በአማካይ 20 ሰዎች ህይወታቸውን አጥተዋል። ይህ ቁጥር ከባለፈው ሳምንት ጋር ሲነጻጸር በ12 በመቶ ቀንሷል። በዚህ

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# Ethiopian Cultural Center in Belgium

## የኢትዮጵያ ባህል ማእከል በቤልጅየም

መሰረት በምንኖርባት አገራችን አጠቃላይ የሚሾች ቁጥር 24,809 ደርሷል።  
- እስከ May 20 ድረስ በቤልጅየም ውስጥ 4,220,285 ሰዎች ቢያንስ የመጀመሪያውን ክትባት ወስደዋል።

ይህ 46 በመቶ የሚሆነው የጎልማሳ ህዝብ ቁጥር ነው። ከእነዚህ ውስጥ 1,560,689 የሚሆኑት ሁለተኛውንም ዙር ክትባት ስለወሰዱ ሙሉ በሙሉ ተከትለዋል ማለት ነው።

ማጠቃለያ (እስከ May 21, 2021)

የሰው ቁጥር	በጠቅላላ	ባለፉት 7 ቀናት (በየቀኑ አማካይ)	ባለፉት 14 ቀናት (በየቀኑ አማካይ)
የህመምተኞች	1,044,612	2,159 (-22%)	2,461 (-20%)
የሚሾች	24,809	20 (-37%)	26 (-33%)
ሆስፒታል የገቡ	73,271	127 (-12%)	136 (-25%)
ምርመራ የተደረገላቸው	13.5 ሚሊዮን	42,200 (-19%)	47,000 (+1%)

የኢትዮጵያ የኮቪድ-19 ስርጭት



ባለፉት 24 ሰዓታት ውስጥ በተደረገ 4,376 የላብራቶሪ ፍሙና ምርመራ 293 ሰዎች በኮሮና ቫይረስ መያዛቸው ተረጋግጧል። በአጠቃላይ እስካሁን በቫይረሱ የተያዙ ሰዎች ቁጥር 269,194 ደርሷል። በሌላ በኩል 1,677 ሰዎች ከበሽታው ያገገሙ ሲሆን በአጠቃላይ እስካሁን ድረስ 228,757 ሰዎች ከበሽታው አገመዋል።

ውድ አንባቢያን መልካም ንባብ ስናይ ሳምንት