

UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Studi Africanistici

Serie Etiopica

12

NEGOTIATING POWER IN IMPERIAL ETHIOPIA

**WALLAGGA, 1890s–1930s
A HISTORY IN DOCUMENTS**

Edited by
ALESSANDRO TRIULZI
ETANA HABTE DINKA
TESEMA TA'A



UniorPress

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IS M E O

Cover: *gebbi* of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér in Naqamtee (from Triulzi A., Tesema Ta’a, የወሊጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ, 2004).

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FOREWORD

This volume constitutes the completion of a thirty year-long research done into an exceptional dossier of Amharic documents. To this scientific journey, promoted and for decades sustained by Alessandro Triulzi with inexhaustible energy, many people have contributed, and of this the reader will find exhaustive illustration in the introductory essays. Here we want to limit ourselves to expressing and justifying the satisfaction of the members of the steering committee of this series, since the editors of the book wanted to hand over to us the publication of a book that fulfills an ancient promise and realizes an old project.

At the University of Naples L'Orientale, the complex cultural articulation of ancient and modern Ethiopia, inclusive of its eastern and western lowlands, has always received due attention, alongside the 'classical' studies focusing on the languages and the cultures of the highlands, predominantly inhabited by communities of Christian religion. It is no coincidence that the volume from which this also flows, that of Alessandro Triulzi and Tesema Ta'a (eds), **የወሊጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ**, was published in 2004 jointly by the Department of History of Addis Ababa University and the Department of Studies and Research on Africa and Arab Countries of the University of Naples L'Orientale. That collaboration was one expression of the need, felt by both academic institutions at the end of the last century, in Italy as in Ethiopia, to preserve local historical sources. And it is no coincidence that financial backing for that project was provided by the Italian Cooperation.

Twenty years after the documents were published in the Amharic language, the English translation now arrives, an event of great significance that will certainly enliven scholarly debate about birth and development of modern Ethiopia. To frame the importance of this documentation, covering the forty-year period 1890–1930, suffice it to consider that it is currently a unique source for the history of a province of pre-1991 Western Ethiopia, the Wälläga (Wallaggaa), bordered by Goġgam, Ilubabor, Šäwa and Sudan, and now part of the regional state of Oromia. It is precisely the historian of modern Ethiopia who is primarily addressed by this publication, which offers a wealth of material for new and deeper reflections.

Therefore, we are grateful to the editors of this volume and to all those who contributed to its production, for their great effort and its relevant results. In particular, one of the three scholars, Alessandro Triulzi, was a co-founder of the series “Studi Africanistici. Serie Etiopica”, and a teacher for generations of Ethiopian scholars at the University of Naples L’Orientale. For this reason, too, it is not possible to hide the considerable symbolic value inherent in the fact that his most recent work is now being published here, underscoring continuity and persistence of an important tradition of scholarship.

Gianfrancesco Lusini

ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ANL	Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei
ATFN	Alessandro Triulzi, <i>Wallagga Fieldnotes</i> , 1972–1973, 1994–1996
AHM	Addis Ababa, <i>Wayzäro</i> Atsädä Habtä Maryam Family Collection 1973
C.E.	Common Era (Gregorian Calendar)
CGC	Naqamtee, WEM, Central Government Correspondence with Naqamtee (1895–1936)
CR	Conti Rossini Fund., ANL
<i>EAe</i>	Uhlig, Siegbert <i>et al.</i> (ed.), 2005. <i>Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Volume II: D-Ha</i> , Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005
E.C.	Ethiopian Calendar
GEC	Naqamtee, WEM, <i>Däjjazmach</i> Gäbrä Egzi’abher Correspondence with the Central Government, 1905–1928
HMC	Naqamtee, <i>Dajjazmach</i> Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi’abher Correspondence with the Central Government, 1933–1935
HSIU	Addis Ababa, Haile Sellassie I University
IES	Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, MSS collection
IUO	Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale
NG	Negaso Gidada’s handwritten comments and annotations to Wallagga Chronicles, 1983–84
REC	Naqamtee, WEM, Receipts of Naqamtee taxes and tributes received by the Central Government, 1910–1935
UNIOR	Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”
WDOCS	Tesema Ta’a – Triulzi, Alessandro (eds), 2004. የወሊጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ (እ.ኤ.አ.) (<i>YäWälläga Tarik Sänädoch kä1880woch eskä 1920wochu</i>), Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1996 E.C.
WEM	Naqamtee, Wallagga Ethnographic Museum, Archive collection

TRANSLITERATION RULES

Vowel orders

I	ä
II	u
III	i
IV	a
V	é
VI	e
VII	o

Consonants

ሀ ሐ ኀ	h (e.g. <i>Hedar, Hamlé</i>)
ሥ ሰ	s (e.g. <i>Tahsas</i>)
ቀ	q (e.g. <i>wäqét</i>)
አ	' (e.g. <i>Egzi'abhér</i>)
ዐ	‘ (e.g. <i>Ge‘ez</i>)
ጠ	t' (e.g. <i>T'err, T'eqemt</i>)
አ	p' (e.g. <i>p'app'as</i>)
አ ፀ	s' (e.g. <i>s'ähafe te'zaz</i>)
ፑ	p (e.g. <i>P'agumé</i>)
ሸ	sh (e.g. <i>shaykh</i>)
ቸ	ch (e.g. <i>däjjazmach</i>)
ኘ	ñ (e.g. <i>zäbäñña, näft'añña</i>)
ዝ	zh (e.g. <i>azazh</i>)
ጅ	j (e.g. <i>däjjazmach</i>)
ጨ	ch' (e.g. <i>ch'iqashum</i>)

Observations on the transliteration

The original Amharic text contains numerous Oromo proper names which are written in *fidäl*, i.e. in the Ge'ez-Amharic writing system. For the sake of consistency, in the English translation these names have been transliterated according to the above rules. However, they are written following the Oromo

alphabet (*qubee*) in the introductory texts, the title of the chapters and the footnotes: e.g., Mäch'a in the text (following the Amharic መሐ), but Macca in the title and in the footnotes, according to the Oromo standard spelling.

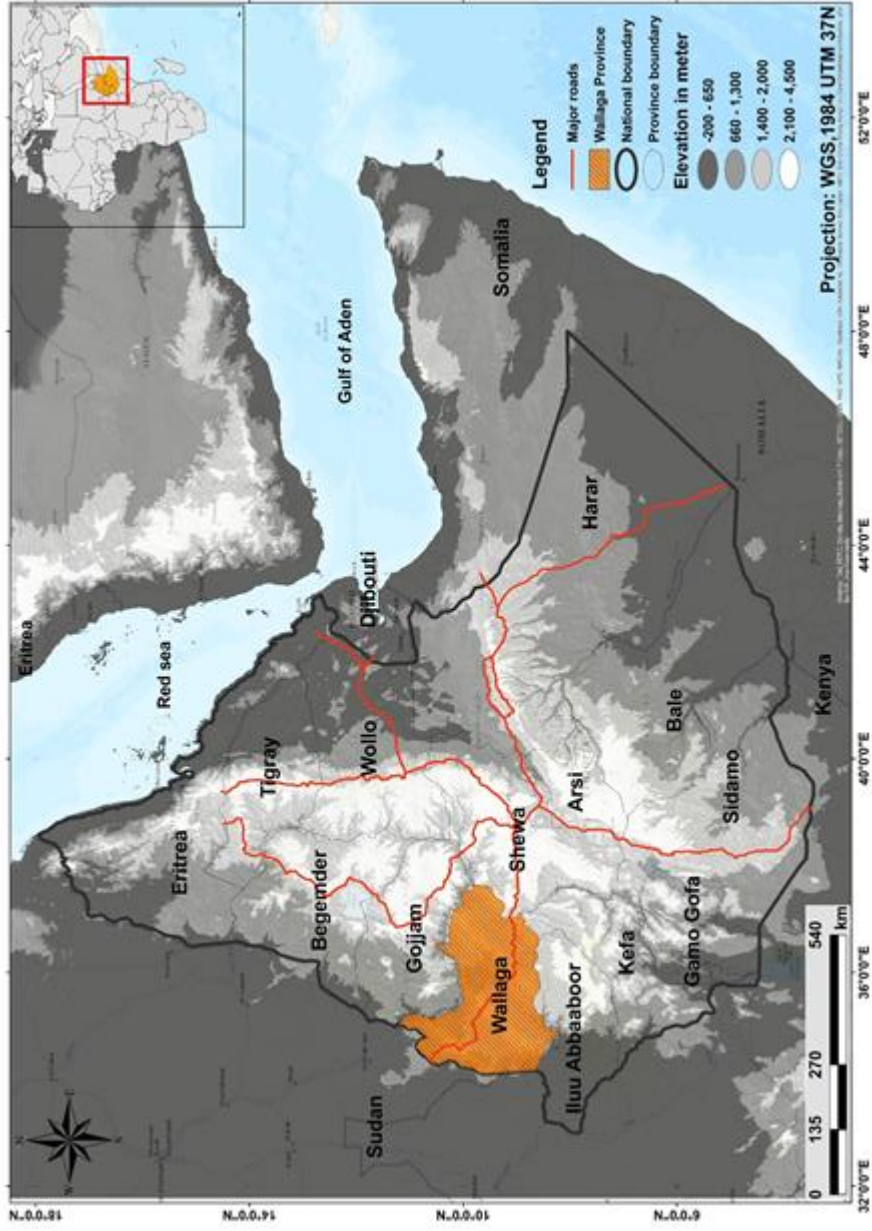
Moreover, the reader will find that some geographical names are written according to the current conventions: Wallagga (not Wälläga), Addis Ababa (not Addis Abäba), Shewa (not Shäwa), as well as the Wallagga state capital (Naqamtee) and other provincial cities (Mandii, Beggii, Najjoo, Gidamii, Dambidolloo). Also, words commonly used in the secondary literature are transliterated following a simplified spelling: *birr* (not *berr*), *lij* (not *lej*), *rist* (not *rest*), *shifta* (not *shefta*). Finally, proper names formed by two words are written separated: Habtä Maryam (not Habtä-Maryam or Habtämaryam), even in those cases in which they sporadically occur in the text as one single word.

GLOSSARY

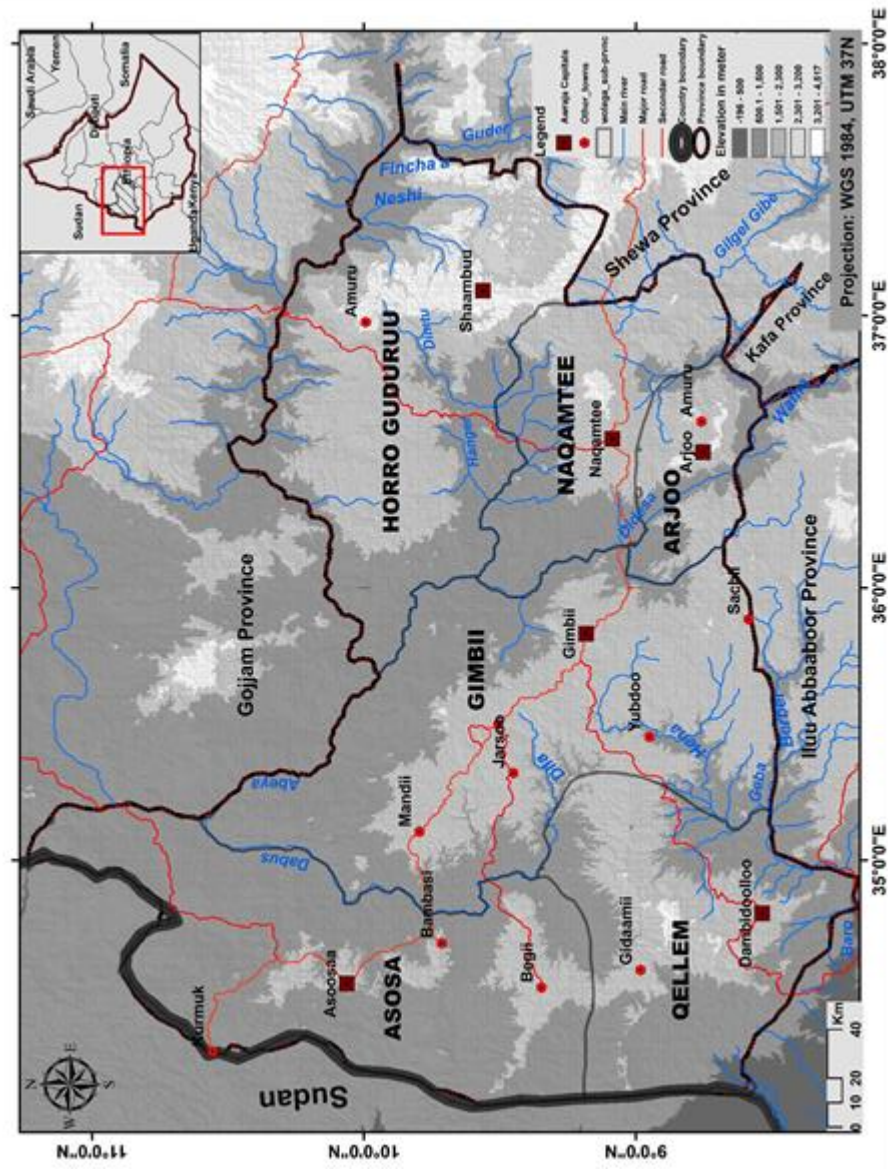
<i>abba</i>	father (of), a title of respect; also title for an ordinary priest.
<i>abba bokku</i>	(Or. <i>abbaa bokkuu</i>) father or keeper of the scepter (<i>bokkuu</i>) held by <i>gadaa</i> in power.
<i>abba gada</i>	(Or. <i>abbaa gadaa</i>) leader of <i>gadaa</i> in power.
<i>abun(a)</i>	bishop; highest ecclesiastic title in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
<i>afä negus</i>	lit. ‘mouth of the king’, a title for chief justice.
<i>afärsata</i>	traditional system for detection and recovery of lost property.
<i>aläqa</i>	head of a church, title for a learned priest.
<i>agälgel</i>	a traditional basket used to carry food.
<i>ambifata</i>	(Or.) literally ‘retainer’; a portion of local land and/or tax/tribute a notable keeps for himself.
<i>angafa</i>	(Or.) eldest son.
<i>ankola</i>	cup made of gourd.
<i>as’ê</i>	title for addressing the emperor.
<i>ashkär</i>	lit. ‘servant’, also used to refer to native soldiers (‘ <i>ascari</i> ’).
<i>asrat</i>	tithe, land taxation corresponding to one tenth of the crops.
<i>azazh</i>	title for a commander, chief of the imperial court.
<i>bäjerond</i>	title for royal treasurer.
<i>balabbat</i>	originally hereditary owner of <i>rist</i> land, notable(s); also intermediary between the state and the local population.
<i>balambaras</i>	title for low-level administrative officer.
<i>bär</i>	lit. ‘gate’, trade gate, customs checkpoint or office. See <i>källa</i> , <i>jemruk</i> .
<i>bäräha</i>	desert, arid zone in a lowland territory, also wilderness.
<i>barya</i>	enslaved person, anyone who has been deprived of his/her personal freedom due to war, trade or other form of economic, political or cultural subjugation.
<i>birr</i>	Ethiopian money currency.
<i>blattengéta</i>	title for high government official.
<i>bokku</i>	(Or. <i>bokkuu</i>) wooden scepter kept by <i>abbaa gadaa</i> in power.
<i>butta</i>	(Or. <i>buttaa</i>) ritual ceremony of bull slaughtering to celebrate transition between outgoing and incoming <i>gadaa</i> power leadership.
<i>ch’affê</i>	(Or. <i>caffee</i>) lit. ‘swampy grass’, shaded area for traditional Oromo gathering or assembly.

<i>ch'iqashum</i>	village headman.
<i>däbänansa</i>	(Or. <i>dabanaansaa</i>) blacksmith, same as <i>tumtuu</i> .
<i>däjjach</i>	'commander of the gate', also <i>däjjazmach</i> , title below <i>ras</i> .
<i>dañña eger</i>	lit. 'fee for a judge', border demarcation judge.
<i>dawulla</i>	Ethiopian weight approximately equivalent to 100 kg.
<i>dhäläta</i>	(Or. <i>dhalataa</i>) literally 'he who is born', adopted into/by an Oromo clan.
<i>diina</i>	(Or. <i>diina</i>) enemy.
<i>dullacha</i>	(Or.) ox, as opposed to <i>korma</i> , bull.
<i>enderasé</i>	local representative of higher authority.
<i>etégé</i>	title for addressing queens and queen mothers.
<i>fängay</i>	slave hunter or trader.
<i>färäsulla</i>	Ethiopian weight equivalent to 17 kg.
<i>fitawrari</i>	'commander of the vanguard', title below <i>däjjazmach</i> .
<i>gäbäro</i>	(Or. <i>gabaroo</i>) people/group of low social status, conquered people required to serve within the Oromo clans.
<i>gäbbar</i>	tribute-paying peasant or laborer.
<i>gada</i>	(Or. <i>gadaa</i>) traditional Oromo age class system in which power shifts from one age class to another.
<i>gasha</i>	lit. 'shield'; a unit of land measure equivalent to 40 hectares.
<i>geber</i>	agrarian tribute usually paid in kind; periodic feasting ceremony organized by a local governor, king or emperor.
<i>gosa</i>	(Or.) clan.
<i>grazmach</i>	lit. 'commander of the left'; title below <i>qāññazmach</i> ; the highest title provincial rulers could assign to their dependents.
<i>gundo</i>	measurement unit for weighing honey.
<i>gwada</i>	palace treasury.
<i>imbilta</i>	traditional flute, trumpet made of bamboo.
<i>janhoy</i>	title for addressing the emperor.
<i>jemruk</i>	customs post.
<i>källa</i>	trade or toll post.
<i>läm</i>	fertile land, representing higher population density area rather than land fertility <i>per se</i> .
<i>läm-t'äf</i>	semi-fertile land, representing medium population density.
<i>lébashay</i>	traditional system of thief detection.
<i>liqämäkwas</i>	official serving as the king's double to divert enemy attacks in battle.
<i>madäriya</i>	land or fixed number of peasants assigned to civil or military officers in lieu of salary.
<i>madbét</i>	lit. 'kitchen'; provision earmarked for the immediate needs of the palace; a form of indirect rule through regional autonomy.
<i>mäkwannent</i>	nobles, collective noun for nobility of service.

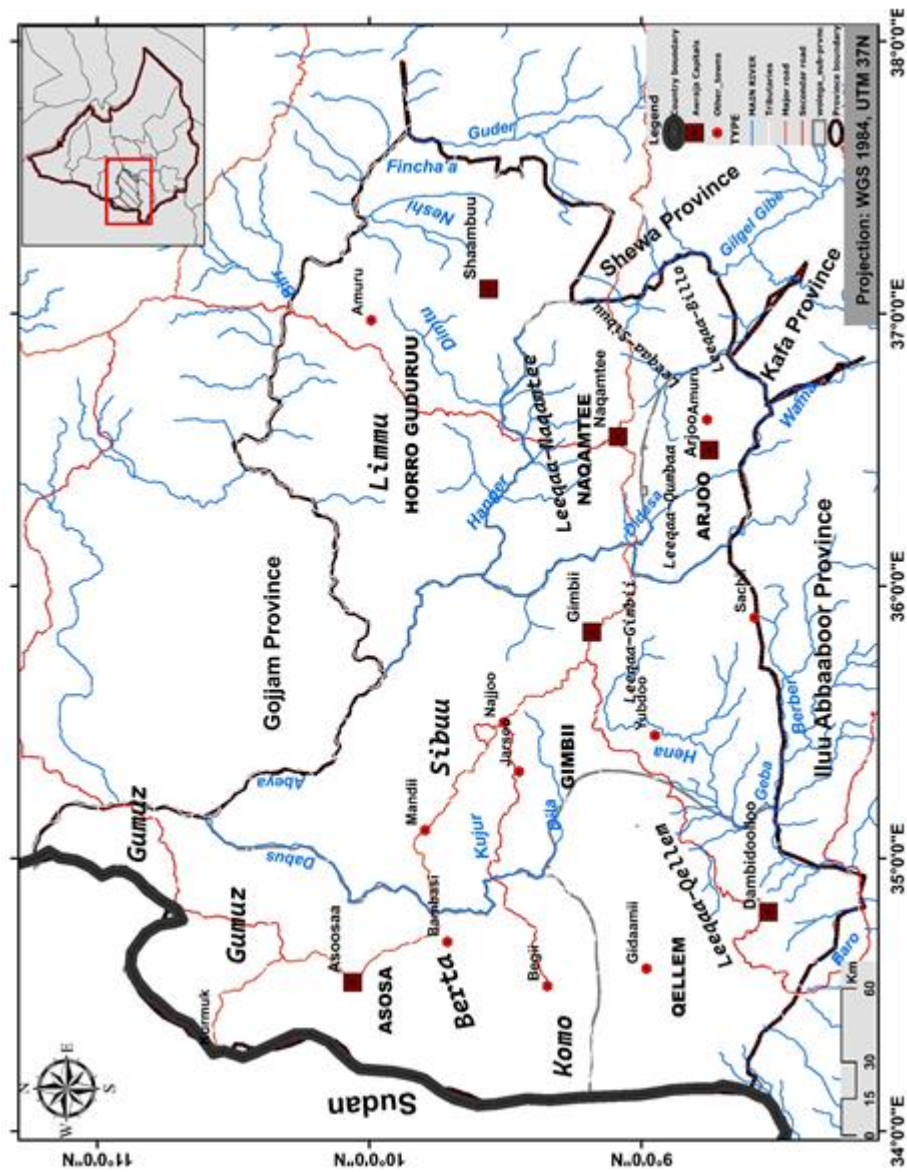
<i>mälkäñña</i>	local official, usually Amhara soldier or officer charged with collecting tribute from the <i>gäbbar</i> .
<i>marigéta</i>	title for junior ecclesiastic.
<i>mättaya</i>	gift or present to honor special occasions or authority.
<i>mäzgäb</i>	book register.
<i>médhich 'a</i>	(Or. <i>meedhicca</i>) leather string used in adoption ceremony.
<i>moggasa</i>	(Or. <i>moggaasa</i>) ritual ceremony of name-giving for an adopted child.
<i>moti</i>	(Or. <i>moti</i>) king, or high authority outside of the <i>gada</i> system.
<i>näft 'äñña</i>	from <i>näft</i> , 'rifle'; gun bearer, government soldier, synonym of armed settler.
<i>näggadras</i>	lit. 'head of merchant'; title for government official in charge of customs' collection.
<i>näsa zäbaña</i>	special police to check slave trade.
<i>qälad</i>	lit. 'rope'; land measurement introduced by Emperor Menilek.
<i>qäññazmach</i>	lit. 'commander of the right', title above <i>grazmach</i> .
<i>goro</i>	title indicating the village headman.
<i>qunna</i>	Ethiopian weight measure approximately equivalent to 8 kg.
<i>rist</i>	hereditary land or fief, private property of land.
<i>s'ähafē te 'zaz</i>	Head of the royal scribes, after 1907 official title for the Minister of Pen.
<i>séra</i>	(Or. <i>seera</i>) basic law or decision made by <i>gada</i> assembly.
<i>shaläqa</i>	local representative of higher authority entrusted with collection of tribute.
<i>shifta</i>	outlaw, bandit.
<i>siso</i>	lit. 'one third'; land apportionment reserved to original owner.
<i>t'äf.</i>	unfertile land, also signifying low population density.
<i>täkläñña</i>	lit. 'planted'; central government soldiers settled in the southern provinces.
<i>tämun</i>	money, one eighth of a <i>birr</i> .
<i>t'is</i>	lit. 'fire smoke', synonym of hut or household, also hut tax.
<i>tumtu</i>	(Or. <i>tumtuu</i>), blacksmith, same as <i>dabanaansaa</i> .
<i>wägäl</i>	measurement unit for honey.
<i>wanch 'a</i>	(Or. <i>wancaa</i>) cup made of horn.
<i>wäqét</i>	gold ring approximately equivalent to an ounce.
<i>zämach</i>	campaigner, soldier, those who support an army from the rear.
<i>zéga</i>	state subject.



Map 1 – Administrative map of Ethiopia during the imperial period (by courtesy of Addisu Damtew, Wolaita Soddo University).



Map 2 – Physical map of Wallagga province and sub-provinces (by courtesy of Addisu Damtew, Wolaita Soddo University).



Map 3 – Human settlement map of Wallagga Province and sub-provinces (by courtesy of Addisu Damtew, Wolaita Soddo University).

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ALESSANDRO TRIULZI, ETANA H. DINKA, TESEMA TA'A

The present volume is the English translation of Alessandro Triulzi and Tesema Ta'a (eds), *Documents for Wallagga History 1880s–1920s E.C.* (Amharic የወሊጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ [YäWälläga yätarik sänädoch kä1880wochu eskä 1920wochu]), published jointly by Addis Ababa University Press and Università di Napoli “L'Orientale” in 2004. What follows is the long-promised English translation.

The work of interpreting and translating these documents has had a long period of gestation, embracing some fifty years of intermittent research due to administrative and teaching duties and other pressing commitments. The first documents were recovered by Triulzi and Tesema while conducting their respective fieldwork in the 1970s, but most of them were spotted as the two of them were heading to the History Department Annual Seminar in Jimma in July 1997. The Naqamtee Correspondence was later recovered through the kind cooperation of the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM) staff, where the hand-written documents had been preserved in good status in their original leather-bound folders (*mäzgäb*). Since then, Triulzi and Tesema have been using these documents sparingly in their respective research as they rather preferred to share them with graduate students and colleagues working on common areas of research. This they were able to do through an Italian Cooperation University project in 2004 when the Amharic version was printed in Addis Ababa.¹

The long work of translation and interpretation of these sources was carried out since the beginning through a joint agency that made free use of friends and colleagues' knowledge as well as of graduate students probing into the field of local and regional history of Ethiopia's western marches at the turn of the nineteenth century. The work of drafting and redrafting translations took literally years and was carried out by different people, at different times, and at various stages of research advancement. The present work reflects a long

¹ Triulzi–Tesema, 2004.

probing and is the result of multiple energies and renewed contacts with informants and colleagues in an unending process of trial and error that the present editors wish to be continued.

In the course of time, fresh Addis Ababa graduates joined old colleagues, as new information was gathered locally, and precious assistance was provided in time by variously-minded linguists such as Tamene Bitima, Dinsa Lepisa, or Tesfay Tewolde, historians Donald Crummey, Mohammed Hassen, James McCann, and particularly anthropologists Donald Donham, Jan Hultin, Aneesa Kassam, and Wendy James. AAU's Department of History early colleagues such as Hussein Ahmed made the very first translation of the early Amharic correspondence and the then-Hamburg graduate student, Negaso Gidada, later to become the first President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, translated and annotated the Oromo chronicles during a six-month research leave spent at Naples' Istituto Universitario Orientale between June and November 1983 while he was finishing his PhD thesis in Germany. But it was the Covid pandemic of 2019–2021 that forced the editors, joined by Etana H. Dinka, a SOAS graduate now teaching at the University of Miami, to take the final step of revising and co-editing the translations offered in this volume. The texts we present here thus benefited from the useful insights and commentaries of many people whose works and inputs we gratefully acknowledge.

No research work is perfect, and this set of English translations is far from final. But all work of translations must come to an end, and the English rendering of these sources, as rich and irksome as they are, is only the final draft of a long series of translations we present here so that future researchers will be able to complete and enrich with their own insights and criticisms. We are grateful to Prof. Gianfrancesco Lusini, Director of the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, and Dr. Massimo Villa, Editorial Secretary, at the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" for offering us to print this volume in the Ethiopian Series of Naples' Asian, African, and Mediterranean Department (DAAM). We are also grateful to Ethan Key, a PhD student at Boston University, for providing textual help and English editing to the volume, and to Tarik Ranieri, PhD student at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Unimore) in partnership with Naples' "L'Orientale", for assisting us in compiling its complex Index of names.

The editors are fully convinced that oral sources and local writings—mainly when confronted, matched, and reacted to by internal and external sources such as the ones presented in this volume—show the extreme richness and complexity of exploring locally gathered regional sources to address the historical unfolding of contemporary Ethiopia. The language used by the administrators of the era reflected the times, as demonstrated by the

terminology referring to individuals and communities. Wallagga is perhaps an exceptional case not only in terms of richness of historical documentation but also for the good care its various administrators—rulers, governors, appointees, and museum curators—applied to these historical documents that were duly registered, copied, and preserved in the old *gebbi* of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér in Naqamtee and later in the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum.

The present editors are grateful to their many friends and colleagues for volunteering assistance and information throughout the years and for urging us time and again to bring the present volume to an end. We do so today in full appreciation that there is no end to historical enquiry.

The editors are particularly grateful to their colleagues in Addis Ababa and Naples who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the fruition of this volume. Their list here by no means is exhaustive. Over the years, we relied on several individuals’ knowledge and skills, especially at the early stage of this volume’s work. We thank in particular Wandemu Ummeta, Kebede Hordofa, Badassa Seina, Tesfay Tewolde and Ahmed Hassen for supporting in various ways the work of early translations. We are thankful to Addisu Damtew of Wolaita Sodo University who drafted the illustrative maps of the volume, and to the University of Miami’s History Department that financed the work. We also thank Daniel Ayana of Youngstown State University for responding quickly when we asked for his comments on specific historical concepts. We feel particularly indebted to Ruth Iyob, James McCann and James De Lorenzi who read earlier versions of the volume and provided generous and constructive criticism. Finally, the long editing of this work could not be carried through without the endless patience, endurance and generosity of our respective families to whom we are all highly indebted.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES FOR AFRICAN AND ETHIOPIAN HISTORIES

ETANA H. DINKA

Over the last several decades, research in African history mobilized a vast array of sources, including, but not limited to, archaeology, ethnobotany, historical linguistics, oral traditions, physical anthropology, and, of course, written and documentary materials.¹ The use of such a diversified array of sources was necessitated by the need to overcome doubts in Western historiography that, until the early 1960s, perceived Sub-Saharan Africa as having no history to speak of and severe limitations in written archival sources.² However, this set of documentary sources has been continuously refined, and new methods and sources have been introduced recently: archaeobotany, archaeozoology, genetics, demography, remote sensing, and geographical information systems. Recognizing the challenges, historians have been encouraged to utilize these ‘highly specialized disciplines.’ Thomas Spear recently called on Africanist historians “to master more than a few [of these ‘specialized disciplines’] if we are to be able to understand the data, analyses, and interpretations that emerge from the specialists’ studies”.³ Although Africanist historians have for decades rightly considered documentary sources on Africa, especially those produced by Europeans—colonial archives, missionary records, intelligence reports—as biased accounts, such sources proved the *sine qua non* to the study of Africa’s recent past.⁴

Nevertheless, older non-European documentary and written sources recounting Africa’s past are replete, albeit thin compared to European ones, and have been utilized for African historical research. These sources navigate key features of ‘convergence and divergence’ in Africa’s ‘vast and diverse historical landscape’ several centuries back in time and include innumerable African family manuscripts, chronicles, and travel accounts written in Arabic and in

¹ See, among others, innovative methodological discussions in Falola–Jennings, 2003; Philips, 2005.

² Parker–Rathbone, 2007, p. 3; Appiah, 1998.

³ Spear, 2019, p. 3.

⁴ Spear, 2003, p. 169.

African languages authored by Arabic script (Ajami), Coptic, Ge'ez, and indigenous African languages used by Muslim and Christian chroniclers and missionaries, and by European authors.⁵ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European imperial powers conquered almost all of Africa, turning the continent into their respective colonies or settler states. European colonialism in Africa lasted for seven or eight decades. Historians studying colonial Africa depended on oral accounts and a plethora of reports produced by European colonial officials, soldiers, missionaries, and their African intermediaries. Since European officials drafted colonial Africa's documentary sources with little or no knowledge of African languages, cultures, social codes, and economic and political structures, their racist overtones made historians' efforts to write the lives of ordinary Africans under colonial rule difficult.⁶ While *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* is the only avenue for discussions and debates about sources and methods in African history, a few publications have, over time, increased our awareness of their geographical distributions, features, accessibilities, benefits, and limitations.⁷ Notwithstanding a relative paucity of works serving as avenues of debates on the growing diversification and sophistication of sources and methods in African history, the recently launched *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Sources and Methods* (published both online and in print) created a vibrant scholarly space engaging rigorous discussions in the field.⁸

The list of published documentary primary sources of African history, with specialist editions and annotations, has increased over the last several years, facilitating research and teaching at universities and colleges worldwide.⁹ The fruits have been seen in the expanded empirical base for recent research undertakings and in producing African and world history textbooks whose presentations included written and documentary primary sources on Africa, integrating them into the discussions and making them accessible to students

⁵ Vaughan, 2019, pp. 659–60; Brett, 2013, pp. 8–11; Iliffe, 2007, p. 5.

⁶ Falola–Stapleton, 2020, pp. 9–10.

⁷ See, among others, Curtin, 1960; Heintze–Jones, 1987; Hamilton, 1998; White, 2000; Barber, 2006.

⁸ Spear, 2019. For detailed historiographical discussions on primary sources utilized since the emergence of African history as a distinctive field of study, see Vaughan, 2019, pp. 659–64; and seven other thoroughly researched articles in the “Documentary and Written Sources”, pp. 664–818.

⁹ Bellagamba, Greene, Klein *et al.*, 2013; Girma–Selassie–Appleyard–Ullendorff, 1979; Appleyard–Irvine–Pankhurst, 1985; Freeman–Grenville, 1975; Brooks, 1995; Newitt, 2010; Tolmacheva 1993; Jacobs, 2014; Hopkins–Levtzion, 1981; Worger–Clark–Alpers, 2001; *Iid*, 2010.

and professors alike.¹⁰ The collective effort in producing *Negotiating Power in Imperial Ethiopia. Wallagga, 1890s–1930s: A History in Documents* must be seen as a modest contribution to open up to the global community of scholars documentary sources on imperial Ethiopia that had hitherto been limited to Amharic literate specialists.

The nineteenth century for Ethiopia and the Horn, as for the continent, was a period of turbulence, engendering political, economic, social, and cultural transformations. Although the sources that captured developments of this transformative era were not always accessible, for Ethiopia in particular, the chronicles of the northern highland kingdom produced since the fourteenth century were made available through the concerted efforts of a few nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars such as Ignazio Guidi, G.W.B. Huntingford, C.F. Beckingham, Enno Littmann, Carlo Conti Rossini, Marius Chaîne, Herbert Joseph Weld-Blundell, Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet, Luigi Fusella, and Bairu Tafla.¹¹ In Ethiopia, all archival collections from about the thirteenth until the mid-nineteenth century were in the custody of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) and monastic libraries.¹² More importantly, several written and documentary primary sources from Ethiopia with varying temporal scopes have been published over the last few decades.¹³ Despite the façade of Ethiopia's possession of one of the oldest literate traditions, the political culture of the Ethiopian state was essentially oral, and so was political communication until the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The recent publication of surviving political correspondence suggests that this was true to a large extent until the first quarter of the twentieth century.¹⁵ The present volume provides several illustrative examples of the orality of Ethiopia's political cultures and communications until the early twentieth century.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, as Emperor Tewodros (r. 1855–1868) attempted to reform state administration, notably by infringing on the

¹⁰ While the list is long, the following constitute good examples: Harms, 2018; Duiker–Spielvogel, 2019; McKay, Weisner-Hanks, Ebrey, *et al.*, 2021.

¹¹ Littmann, 1902; Guidi, 1903a; *Id.*, 1903b; Mondon-Vidailhet, 1904; Conti Rossini, 1907a; *Id.*, 1907b; Chaîne, 1912; Weld-Blundell, 1922; Beckingham–Huntingford, 1954; Fusella, 1959; Huntingford, 1965; Bairu Tafla, 1977.

¹² Ficquet, 2019, p. 1.

¹³ Well-known works include Girma-Selassie–Appleyard–Ullendorff, 1979; Appleyard–Irvine–Pankhurst, 1985; Rubenson–Getatchew Haile–Hunwick, 1987; Rubenson–Amsalu Aklilu–Merid Wolde Aregay *et al.*, 1994; *Id.*, 2000; Rubenson–Amsalu Aklilu–Shiferaw Bekele *et al.*, 2021; P'awlos, 2010a; *Id.*, 2010b; Salvadori, 2010; and the Amharic volume of the present work, Triulzi–Teseema Ta'a, 2004.

¹⁴ McCann, 1998, p. 19.

¹⁵ See, among others, P'awlos, 2010b.

EOC's grip on public affairs and reasserting royal authority, he created a royal treasury that included an extensive collection of archival manuscripts previously in possession of the EOC Churches of Gondär.¹⁶ When Tewodros captured Mäqdäla, a mountain stronghold some 155 miles southeast of Gondär in 1865, that would become the heart of his new government, he relocated the collection there. Tewodros appealed for European support to realize his visions but was turned down, compounding his difficulties in winning over regional rebels and the EOC's resistance. Frustrated, Tewodros imprisoned European missionaries in his domain which precipitated the British invasion, leading to his downfall and death. Most of the manuscripts he deposited in the Maqdala archive were looted by British soldiers, taken to the United Kingdom, and ended up in the British Library.¹⁷

Tewodros's successors had predicaments emanating from the penetration of European powers and Egypt into the Horn region. While engaging these forces by sustaining preexisting diplomatic relations and entering into new commercial agreements was necessary, resisting and pushing back their penetrations was a primary endeavor. The diplomatic and commercial engagements with European powers increased the number of recorded and preserved correspondence, constituting a pool of archival collections later accessed, studied, and published by scholars,¹⁸ as exemplified in the *Acta Aethiopica* series. Initiated in 1987 by Sven Rubenson, *Acta Aethiopica* produced four excellent volumes of primary sources in the subsequent two and a half decades. The first, *Correspondence and Treaties 1800–1854*, was a translation, edition, and annotation of Ge'ez, Amharic, and Arabic documents selected from seventeen archival centers and libraries.¹⁹ The second, *Tewodros and His Contemporaries 1855–1868*, presented translations and editions of Amharic, Arabic, French, Italian, and a minimal number of Ge'ez documents, addressing Emperor Tewodros's conflicts with Egypt, Britain, his domestic rivals, and his contestation of France's purchase of an Afar plain on the Red Sea littoral.²⁰ The third, *Internal Rivalries and Foreign Threats 1869–1879*, presented 235 documents translated from Amharic and Arabic, addressing the British, French, and Italian initial steps targeting to secure the coastal colonies and the exploitation of the Horn of Africa's economic resources.²¹ *Colonial Powers and Ethiopian Frontiers, 1880–1884*, represents *Acta Aethiopica*'s

¹⁶ Ficquet, 2019, pp. 2–3.

¹⁷ Ficquet, 2019, pp. 2–3; Bahru Zewde, 2002*b*, pp. 30–42.

¹⁸ Ficquet, 2019, pp. 2–3.

¹⁹ Rubenson–Getatchew Haile–Hunswick, 1987.

²⁰ Rubenson–Amsalu Aklilu–Merid Wolde Aregay *et al.*, 1994.

²¹ Rubenson–Amsalu Aklilu–Merid Wolde Aregay *et al.*, 2000.

fourth output produced by Sven Rubenson and his successors, including his son Samuel Rubenson, over a decade after the founder of the *Acta* regrettably passed. The primary documents presented in this set of volumes illustrate the growing external pressures on the Abyssinian state, roughly Eritrea and the northern half of what is today Ethiopia, and the attempts by its rulers to define the political geography of their state more clearly.²² Sven Rubenson's *Acta Aethiopica* volumes, published between 1987 and 2021, provide revealing primary documents addressing key historical issues that constituted the historical background to the rise of the new Ethiopian empire by the close of the nineteenth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Ethiopia took a radical detour from the continental scene, where the scramble for Africa turned independent states and societies into European colonies. Ethiopia resisted the European colonial onslaught and made of itself a vast African empire rivaling European powers in their hold of the Horn region. In the words of Haggai Erlich, "[w]hile rebuffing imperialism successfully in the north, Ethiopia managed to practice it in the south".²³ As the 'southern marches' of imperial Ethiopia gathered momentum, turning hitherto local kings and chiefs into vassals of the new Ethiopian empire's government in Addis Ababa, imposing its state apparatus to access new resources and exploit labor became illustrations of the reconfiguration of economic and political structures at the local level. The making of imperial Ethiopia has been mainly written from the perspective of central institutions and 'great rulers,'²⁴ which have been pushed back by competing, often contradictory interpretations that surfaced over the last three decades.²⁵ While written primary sources on imperial Ethiopia are not scarce, the availability of its archival records to the global community of scholars is rare. The reasons are twofold: the lack of publications and translations from Amharic to other languages of global significance and the inaccessibility of many documents.

The documents preserved by the state between the 1880s and 1935 were mainly inaccessible to researchers, the general assumption being that Italian forces set imperial Ethiopia's records on fire. However, there is an indication that state archival records in the national palace and the Ministry of Pen

²² Rubenson–Amsalu Aklilu–Shiferaw Bekele *et al.*, 2021.

²³ Erlich, 1986, p. 4.

²⁴ Donham–James, 1986.

²⁵ For rebuff against the Great Tradition Ethiopianist historiography, see, among others, Asafa Jalata, 2005; Mekuria, 2016; Gemetchu Megerrsa–Aneesa Kassam, 2019. For nuanced analyses of issues in Ethiopia's competing historiographies, see Etana Habte Dinka, 2022; Marzagora, 2017; Ezekiel Gebissa, 2014; Triulzi, 2002; Clapham, 2002; Bahru Zewde, 2000; Sorenson, 1993, pp. 38–76; Crummey, 1990.

survived,²⁶ although some ministerial offices were either destroyed or looted before the Italian forces took over Addis Ababa.²⁷ Given Ethiopia's state tradition of secrecy, unwilling to allow scholars even today to access archives reflecting the country's deep past, highlighting how the country's past is very much part of the present, it is unsurprising that historians are still awaiting to access the archives of the former Ministry of Pen.

However, an unexpected opening created a moment of exception to the inaccessibility of imperial Ethiopia's archives covering the formative era of the modern state. In 1982, as the military *Derg* regime (r. 1974–1991) began preparing to celebrate Addis Ababa's centenary, a team of journalists and authors committed to gathering historical information was formed to commemorate the city's past. The military regime authorized the team to access imperial Ethiopia's archival records preserved in the national palace and multiple ministries. Included in the team was the late journalist and amateur historian P'awlos Ñoñño, who secured written permission "to access and copy historical documents from the [former] Ministry of Pen archives" and copied over 3000 domestic and foreign samples of Emperor Menilek's correspondence.²⁸ P'awlos had an agreement with the Addis Ababa municipality to compile the correspondences into a book for which the municipality would provide financial assistance with the understanding that it would receive the book manuscript and publish it. P'awlos himself would have had the right to do so if the municipality had not realized it. The Municipality failed to publish the work and denied P'awlos the opportunity to do so, stating orally that it would be inappropriate to publish the work under a personal name.²⁹ Consequently, P'awlos completed the book manuscript and submitted it to a publisher but was stopped by an "unspecified higher [state] authority" who confiscated his text from the publisher, leaving the author frustrated and demoralized.³⁰ The measure taken by the unspecified authority against P'awlos and his book manuscript was very Ethiopian, and it illustrates a clear regret on the side of the state to have allowed P'awlos to access and copy imperial Ethiopia's correspondences. P'awlos encountered health difficulties and subsequently died, but his family worked with his former colleague and close friend, Atnafsegged Yilma, and with an editor, Getachew Belete, who published a copy of the book manuscript he had left behind. The result was two Amharic

²⁶ The primary evidence is the publication of P'awlos' two volumes of Amharic primary sources from the period (see fn. 27 below). See also Ficquet, 2019, p. 2.

²⁷ Täsafayé Mäkonnen, 2003 E.C., pp. 81–90.

²⁸ P'awlos, 2010*b*, pp. 2–4, 8–9, 15; *Id.*, 2010*a*, pp. 2–3.

²⁹ P'awlos, 2010*a*, pp. 2–3; *Id.*, 2010*b*, pp. 2–3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

volumes, one including Emperor Menilek's *Domestic Correspondence*, and the second one his *Foreign Correspondence*. The internal evidence of the volumes suggests that P'awlos himself organized the letters into "domestic and foreign correspondences" and typed them but was unable to see them through the print process.³¹ While *Emperor Menilek's Domestic Correspondence* presented 2242 selected letters, the Emperor sent to his vassals throughout the empire between 1898 and 1901 (although one of the editors claims the volume included letters from 1887), the second, *Emperor Menilek's Foreign Correspondence*, unearthed 1043 letters covering the same period.³² Both volumes demonstrate limited editorial intervention, with little or no annotations, and remain untranslated to this day. The translation, edition, and annotation of these volumes yield another significant pool of primary sources that will help historians of Africa and Ethiopian specialists access imperial Ethiopia's internal dynamics.

The present volume, *Negotiating Power in Imperial Ethiopia. Wallagga, 1890s–1930s: A History in Documents*, complements this short list of published Ethiopian primary sources and joins the long list of African history primary sources. Nevertheless, it departs from the existing published Ethiopian primary sources in more than one way. Despite the *Acta Aethiopica* volumes, for example, the present collection includes historical experiences of both "great rulers" and ordinary people at both the center and the periphery. This volume presents three sets of historical documents: correspondences, receipts, and local chronicles. The people involved in the making of imperial Ethiopia ranged from Emperors, Queens, Popes, and politico-military elites in Addis Ababa, to regional governors and their ruling cohorts, as well as peasant farmers, rebels, *shifita* (bandits, outlaws), enslaved persons, imperial soldiers and their families, and merchants in Wallagga and Benishangul. Their ordinary lives as actors and acted-upon persons were affected by the new state of things. The correspondence exchanged between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa, and vice versa, besides imperial issues concerning elites at either end of the state structure, reflects Macca Oromo representations and practices of slavery,³³ daily concerns and petitions of peasant farmers and lesser chiefs,³⁴ voices of the poor (*deha*) reported at least indirectly,³⁵ local complaints of ordinary people heard

³¹ P'awlos, 2010b, p. 9.

³² P'awlos, 2010a; *Id.*, 2010b.

³³ Few prominent examples include, but are not limited to, divorce negotiation and settlement between *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér and one of his wives, *Wäyzäro* Mayéti, detailed in GEC letters nos 202, 229, HM reports to the Emperor represented in letters nos 1–2, 4.

³⁴ See HM reports from Qellem.

³⁵ GEC letters nos 1, 6–7, 9, 19, 57, 84, 128, 135, 207, 219.

in Addis Ababa palace or Naqamtee's and their fear of being reported,³⁶ and imperial soldiers practicing some form of banditry and negotiating or renegotiating their interests despite acting or claiming to act on behalf of the Addis Ababa government,³⁷ conflicts between local notables,³⁸ and challenges and voices of outlaws.³⁹ The local chronicles of Naqamtee and Arjoo target preexisting local powers within the context of the Ethiopian empire's expectations while presenting substantial narratives of the western Oromo local transformations from the Oromo *gadaa* system to monarchical organizations. Although their primary concerns are their respective localities, their details shed light on various parts of the western Oromo and non-Oromo peoples, Oromo lineages and clan structures, local conflicts, and economic interests. While the Macca genealogy, true to its name, recounts genealogical stories, its narrative navigates far beyond the lineages. It highlights how various indigenous Oromo institutions function, including *moggaasa*, *rakoo*, "*Kottu! Dhufé!*" (lit. 'come! I have come!') and highlights the precarious relations between the advancing western Oromo (*boorana*) and the groups that had submitted or were integrated (*gabaro*) through various forms of filiation or adoption (*moggaasa*). Its tone and argument suggest an alternative history for the local Naqamtee ruling class and its Oromo subjects. While we are aware of the limits of colonial and imperial archives discussed in recent scholarly outputs such as Ann Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain*⁴⁰ and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*,⁴¹ we believe that *Negotiating Power in Imperial Ethiopia. Wallagga, 1890s–1930s: A History in Documents* will offer not just a sample of imperial history but will contribute to a broader investigation into several aspects of Ethiopia's past, including opportunities to examine roots of its current predicaments.

Because of the nature of the historical records it presents, *Negotiating Power in Imperial Ethiopia. Wallagga, 1890s–1930s: A History in Documents* opens a window of scholarly interaction between shared histories of Ethiopia and colonial Africa, a phenomenon of potentially significant impact for examining critical bodies of historical knowledge on both sides. One apparent barrier has been the idea of 'Ethiopian exceptionalism' in Africa—a land of old state traditions endowed with its own national church, one that invented and

³⁶ See, for example, CGC letters nos 6, 64, 72, 142; GEC letters nos 1–2, 50, 93, 101, 115, 134, 216.

³⁷ Examples are in CGC letters nos 86–87; GEC letters nos 86, 114, 122, 128, 134, 140, 150, 161, 166, 172–173, 176, 179; HMC letters nos 1–2, 4.

³⁸ Good examples are in CGC letters 77, 81, 83, 92, 141; GEC letters nos 51, 55, 73, 93–94, 218.

³⁹ See CGC letters nos 116, 120; GEC letters nos 57, 131, 200, 204–206, 208–213, 217–219, 224.

⁴⁰ Stoler, 2010.

⁴¹ Trouillot, 2015.

owned a national script and defeated European colonialism, hence serving as a hope for the independence of colonial Africa and potential freedom for the global black race. Although ‘exceptionalism’ may be logical in the sense that no European power conquered Ethiopia as they did to the rest of Africa, the fact that Ethiopia, until the eruption of the 1974 revolution, used its own ‘exceptionalism’ on a global scale seems to have compounded superficial views on the country’s past that have precluded a deeper contextualization of imperial Ethiopia’s experience in colonial Africa. Ethiopia’s historiography of the Great Tradition mold, which emphasizes the achievements of state builders and rulers and is characterized by the old Church and State model,⁴² essentialized this idea of ‘exceptionalism’ and embedded it in the body of historical knowledge.⁴³ We hope our volume will provide opportunities for African historians to look inside imperial Ethiopia’s historical experiences, enabling them to integrate Ethiopia’s past into the continent-wide historical understanding and for Ethiopian specialists to look beyond Ethiopia’s past. We also hope the present volume will empower students and researchers with new critical resources to access Ethiopia’s past in various fields—history, historical linguistics (especially Amharic and Oromo), anthropology, sociology, political science, archaeology, and economics—and will help educators at colleges and universities around the world to train their students. We now turn to the origins of the present volume, the length of time it entailed, and the nature of work it required for us to bring it to fruition.

November 2023

⁴² Pankhurst, 2001; Marcus, 1975; *Id.*, 1995; Getachew, 1986; Levine, 2000.

⁴³ See Etana Habte Dinka, 2022, pp. 162–64.

THE NAQAMTEE PAPERS

ALESSANDRO TRIULZI

A long quest

The present English translation of Oromo primary sources written in Amharic has been in gestation for many years. Mostly being themselves the result of translations from one language to another, their rendering into a third language has been quite challenging and has involved different people at different times. The search for primary sources¹ in Western Ethiopia started in early 1972 when I first visited the Wallagga *awrajjja* capital of Naqamtee, then a small agricultural centre, in preparation for the terrain of my Ph.D. dissertation on the history of Wallagga.² The following two years of field and archival investigations brought a mass of taped interviews and local documents that were too extensive to be managed within a single Ph.D. thesis. This is why the topic of my dissertation was eventually restricted to the history of Wallagga's northwestern district, Beni or Bela Shangul, later englobed in the new state of Benishangul-Gumuz of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, a border

¹ Being a fresh recruit of Northwestern University's Program of African Studies, the oldest African Studies Centre in the US, I came to Ethiopia with an Africanist background engrained in oral history and primary sources as the only way to recover historical growth out of the colonial period.

² After two years of graduate studies at Northwestern University, I went to Ethiopia with my family in September 1970 and stayed in the country, with an off trip to Sudan and Italy in April 1972, till October 1973. The family lived in Addis Ababa, not far from the University (HSIU). I used to go every day to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) to consult its extraordinary Library, then headed by Richard Pankhurst. After one year of readings and contacts, I started shuttling to Naqamtee and Asosa and for nearly two years I carried my fieldwork making interviews and contacts with informants. My main assistants in the field were Wandemu Ummeta, a HSIU graduate from Naqamtee, and Atieb Ahmed Dafallah, a third year history student from Asosa, the first one from Beni Shangul to enroll at HSIU, later to become Chief Administrator of the new State of Benishangul-Gumuz in the early 1990s. Atieb spent his third year of service (1972–73) teaching history in the Asosa secondary school while preparing his fourth-year essay on Beni Shangul history. See Atieb, 1973.

area that has received little scholarly attention since then.³ Throughout 1972 and 1973 a series of field visits were carried in the nearby towns of Najjoo, Arjoo, Beggii, Asosa, Gidaamii and Dambidoolloo. Several interviews were carried both with local informants in and around these towns and with prominent Wallagga personalities in Addis Ababa.⁴ The oral material gathered in the field was accompanied by archival searches in London, Paris, Rome, Cairo and Khartoum. In Rome, particular attention was dedicated to the Conti Rossini Fund at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome where one of the Naqamtee chronicles was found.⁵

The subsequent 1974 revolution, and my teaching duties at the new Faculty of Political Science of the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, forbade my going back to the field for many years till I was able to go back to Ethiopia in the mid-1990s to reactivate my early research interests in the region's history. It was during one of these research leaves as a visiting professor at the History Department of Addis Ababa University, that a research project focused on assessments of local historical sources was started within the Department of History of Addis Ababa University (AAU). The financial backing for the project, which was aimed at supporting post-graduate studies at AAU, was provided by Italian Cooperation.⁶ In some way, the project was a continuation of the collection of Jimma oral traditions the History Department had launched

³ In the 1970s the district of Asosa-Beni Shangul was indeed a no-man's land for historical enquiry. I owe my interest in this area to a group of self-conscious HSIU students then doing their third year in the field. Among them Atieb Ahmad Dafallah became a longtime co-researcher and friend. See Triulzi, 1981, pp. 17–19.

⁴ For a list of interviews carried in Asosa-Bela Shangul (A-BS), Asosa-Beggii (A-BG), Leeqaa Qellem (LQ) and Leeqaa Naqamtee-Siibuu (LN-S) see *Ibid.*, pp. 202–03. Copies of these interviews have been deposited in the IES manuscript section. Between 1994 and 1996, intensive interviews were carried in Addis Ababa with *Fitawrari* Täfärra Est'ifanos and *Qäññazmach* Abdiisaa Moosaa, this last one with Tesema Ta'a, specifically on the interpretation of the sources collected in the field and retrieved in the ANL archive. See ATFN, Interviews with *Fitawrari* Täfärra Est'ifanos, Addis Ababa, March–April 1994 (with Dinsa Lepisa), and *Qäññazmach* Abdiisaa Moosaa (with Tesema Ta'a), May–June 1994. See also *Qäññazmach* Abdiisaa Moosaa's Commentaries to ANL CR 48, Macca Genealogy), and to Bakaree Chronicle, both in ATFN, 1994–1996.

⁵ ANL CR 48. See Stefan Strelcyn, 1976, pp. 144–46.

⁶ The project, titled “Conservation and Valorisation of Human and Cultural Resources for Development: A Documentary Survey”, was started in February 1994 under the direction of Shiferaw Bekele and myself. The project aimed at strengthening the research potential of the Department of History in the conservation and preservation of the country's historical memory.

in the early 1970s under the aegis of Prof. Merid Wolde Aregay.⁷ Several research surveys backed by the project were achieved in the following years by staff members of the History Department involved in the project. The local history project aimed to survey the availability of local historical sources within the respective areas of investigation of participating faculty members. In so doing, it was believed that new documentary evidence would surface from local enquiries and active field research would be pursued by the Department.⁸ It was in this framework that Tesema Ta'a and I, on our way to the 8th Annual Seminar of the History Department—which was held in Jimma in July 1997—were able to locate in the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM) of Naqamtee the official bound copy-books of the original correspondence exchanged between Emperor Menilek's Court and the Oromo élites turned into Provincial Governors, i.e. Kumsaa Morodaa (alias *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér) and his son Habtä Maryam.⁹

The source materials reproduced in this volume reflect years of continued research in the history of Wallagga carried out by Tesema and myself in our respective areas of research. Tesema collected the bulk of his historical documentation from local officials and informants while conducting his M.A. and Ph.D. theses in the late-Seventies and mid-Eighties.¹⁰ I collected most oral information and local documentation during my field enquiries on the history of Beni Shangul and the western Oromo in the early 1970s, as well as during my return trips in the mid-1990s. This included the correspondence exchange between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa that I was able to copy thanks to the generosity of *Wäyzäro* Atsadä Habtä Maryam, daughter of *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, the last Naqamtee Governor before the Italian occupation, who allowed me to peruse at length the family papers that had been moved from Naqamtee to Addis Ababa due to a legal case the family was then involved with. It was on that unrepeatable occasion that I was entrusted with a copy of the Bakaree family chronicle included in this volume.¹¹

⁷ Shiferaw Bekele, *Foreword*, in Triulzi–Tesema Ta'a, 2004. I am indebted to the late Merid Wolde Aregay, my earliest and closest friend in the History Department at the time, for continued encouragement and advice on research aims and methods in Ethiopian studies.

⁸ Research trips and local surveys were then conducted by various members of the Department in a collective effort to assess and possibly duplicate local historical sources retrieved in the field by the Department faculty. See Hussein Ahmed, 2000, and Shiferaw Bekele–Triulzi, 2000.

⁹ See Triulzi, 1999. The official correspondence was contained in five leather-bound books (*mäzgäb*) where the original letters were either pasted (for incoming correspondence) or copied (for outgoing correspondence) on each individual page. For the importance of written records being kept in “dated, organized, and... bound” registers, see McCann, 1998.

¹⁰ Tesema Ta'a, 1980; *Id.*, 1984; *Id.*, 2002.

¹¹ See Ch. 3, *passim*.

Another significant document, such as the Chronicle of the Warra Beeraa family, was provided by *Ato* Dässalāñ Qana'aa of Arjoo during oral interviews conducted in the region.¹² The Borāna genealogy was retrieved later on in Rome while searching through the papers of the Italian scholar Carlo Conti Rossini now kept at the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome.¹³ But it was only later on, while conducting further enquiries in the field in 1994 and 1996, that Tesema and I were able to trace in Naqamtee the copy-books of the official correspondence exchange relating to the Oromo administration over western Wallagga after the annexation of the province to Menilek's empire. These documents, which were originally kept in Gäbrä Egzi'abhér old *gebbi*, had been confiscated by the Derg in the mid-1970s together with the family property and, after the opening of the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum in Naqamtee years later, had been deposited there.¹⁴ When Tesema and I spotted them in July 1997, the documents were in good condition, as they had been properly preserved and catalogued by the Museum staff. It was through the courtesy of local authorities and the willing collaboration of the Museum curators that we were allowed to consult and make copies of these register-books for our joint study.

As these documents show, the quest for local sources is a lengthy but potentially fruitful one in Ethiopia. The Naqamtee papers may be exceptional in so far as they reflect a tradition of local record-keeping which has been locally maintained despite adverse conditions and political turmoil in the region. The documents which were salvaged in the Naqamtee region are only part of a wider historical documentation which may have been lost, although more documents may surface in the future. The effort by past Leeqaa rulers to preserve local documents and traditions anticipated in many ways the ongoing interest in the 'conservation and valorisation' of the country's cultural heritage and its key role in guiding the country's growth. The state of the country in the past fifty years, with its vast movements of peoples and communities, has not provided a favourable environment for collecting local sources, both oral and written. Yet, there is no doubt that local culture will keep playing an increasing role in enriching the historical identity of the country. As the project moved along in the early 2000s and digitalized files flashed in and out between Addis Ababa and Naples, the 2004 joint publication of the Amharic texts in *Documents for Wallagga History 1880s–1920s E.C.* (Amharic የወሊጋ የታሪክ ሰነዶች ከ1880ዎቹ እስከ 1920ዎቹ) was the first step in engaging the local history project within a wider public and sharing its field results with students and colleagues.

¹² Interviews Arjo Elders, January 1973, in ATFN, Leeqaa Naqamtee-Sibuu (LN-S) Interviews, JA-2, interview with *Ato* Dässalāñ, 13 January 1973.

¹³ Strelcyn, 1976, pp. 144–46 (MS Rome, ANL CR 48), 207–09 (MS Rome, ANL CR 81).

¹⁴ Solomon Alemayehu Gutema, 2020, pp. 71–72.

In so much as they reflect some 40 years of official relations between the rulers of Naqamtee and the royal court in Addis Ababa, the collection we present here is a unique testimony of Wallagga history and of imperial administration over the 'Western Marches'. We gratefully acknowledge the owners and the curators of these documents, without whose care and historical awareness such rich documentary material would not be preserved. The historical documentation they contain is offered here in its English translation in the hope it will encourage other scholars and researchers to continue and improve the present collection. As the process of retrieving, translating, and interpreting these documents has taken so many years, and has involved so many old and new colleagues, the English translations of the Amharic originals are accompanied by short introductions detailing the origin, content, and scope of each document. We gratefully acknowledge the Department of History of AAU and Italian Cooperation for the support they provided to the 2004 publication and the Università di Napoli L'Orientale, through the ISIAO research fund, for contributing to the printing of this publication.

The long years of research and translation behind this volume benefited from the generous collaboration of many friends and colleagues, some of whom are no longer with us. Their names and the huge debt we incurred with each of them will appear further in each section of this volume. Tesema and I are also indebted to various members of the History Department of AAU and of the old Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi (now Dipartimento Asia, Africa and Mediterraneo) at the Università di Napoli L'Orientale where we respectively taught and exchanged research results for a number of years until I retired in 2011. The 2004 publication was itself the academic result of a collaborative interuniversity programme that had been supported by Italian Cooperation since the early 1990s in the field of Anthropology, Archaeology, Geology and History coordinated by Prof. Giampaolo Calchi Novati.

Since then, the work of translating into English and editing of these complex and at times irksome field materials continued at a slow pace until Tesema and I were joined by a younger researcher, Etana H. Dinka, himself a SOAS graduate and American-based historian of Ethiopia, who brought new energy and scope to the translation project. When Gianfrancesco Lusini, editor of the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, mentioned the possibility of accepting our work in the Ethiopian Series of Unior Press, we were very pleased and hoped that this volume of Wallagga documents will be seen in line with Naples' long tradition and involvement in Ethiopian Studies. Age and time will tell whether the present English translation of Oromo sources written in Amharic concerning the administration of Wallagga as *madbét*, a form of indirect rule within

Emperor Menilek's new domains at the turn of the nineteenth century,¹⁵ will render justice to Wallagga history during the crucial years of extending state administration within imperial Ethiopia.

The Naqamtee Museum Registers

The register-books housed in the Wallagga EM of Naqamtee represent a wide selection of the official correspondence exchanged between the central government of imperial Ethiopia based in Addis Ababa and the local government of the Wallagga province (*awrajjja*) based in Naqamtee between the mid-1890s and mid-1930s. The letter exchange documents how the Naqamtee sub-province (*wäräda*) of eastern Wallagga, under the rule of Leeqaa Oromo rulers—turned into imperial Ethiopia's provincial governors—was gradually incorporated within the administration of the Ethiopian state under the subsequent rule of Menilek, his heir *Lij* Iyyasu, and Haylä Sellasé up to the Italian occupation. The Naqamtee papers also document how the ruling Bakaree family monitored the process of gradual integration into the expanding empire safeguarding as much as possible the region's vital interests and those of the ruling family particularly in self-acquired land and local power.¹⁶

The Amharic texts we present here are primarily drawn from the original register-books (*māzgāb*) of official documents relating to the administrative history of the province that have been preserved in the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum of Naqamtee.¹⁷ The five *māzgāb* were formerly kept in Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's old residence (*gebbi*) in Naqamtee, a building which, although somewhat decaying when we visited it in 1997, still maintained the atmosphere and status of the old ruling palace.¹⁸ After the Derg requisitioned the building together with its content in the mid-1970s, the documents were moved away by the local authorities and eventually assigned to the archive section of the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum which had been built with East German help in the 1980s to preserve local lore and material culture. After a first perusal of the *māzgāb* content, in agreement with local authorities, photographic reproductions of these documents were made, one to be kept in the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum for the benefit of future visitors and researchers as well as for the preservation of the original texts, and one for the AAU Department's

¹⁵ For the term *madbét* and its different meanings, see below fn. 23.

¹⁶ Triulzi, 1986.

¹⁷ See Solomon Alemayehu Gutema, 2020, pp. 72, 81.

¹⁸ See the tin-roofed *gebbi* of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér pictured on the cover of Triulzi–Tesema Ta'a, 2004, and the five *māzgāb* piled one on top of the other on a wooden Jimma stool, *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Local History Project. It is out of this second copy that wide selections were made of the important correspondence exchange, which were eventually typed out in Addis Ababa and turned into print.

Of course, both Tesema and I knew the existence of this correspondence, and during our individual research efforts in the past we had come across several samples of this extraordinary source, particularly the correspondence exchange between *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér and Menilek, that both of us quoted in our respective work.¹⁹ In the course of time sizable portions of the correspondence exchanged between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa were obtained through descendants: Tesema included samples of this correspondence in his BA work on Leeqaa Naqamtee²⁰ and managed to retrieve quite a few letters the central government had exchanged with Naqamtee. Quite independently, I was able to obtain from *Wäyzäro* Atsädä Habtä Maryam permission to copy several letters exchanged between the early 1890s and the 1920s between the Naqamtee Court and the Central Government. As it turned out then, getting hold of the Naqamtee papers was mainly due to quite a fortuitous circumstance: the need by the Bakaree family descendants to have their private papers brought to Addis Ababa in order to use them in a land case to be argued in court in the early 1970s. It was because of this that I was lucky enough to be allowed to read and reproduce the family chronicle as well, a document I had long searched for and had escaped the attention of most historians.²¹

After the take-over by the Derg, what survived of the Naqamtee papers—which were kept in Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's old *gebbi* in Naqamtee under the custody of Habtä Maryam's own daughter, *Wäyzäro* Shaashituu—were requisitioned by the local authorities. The family chronicle possibly escaped confiscation and was retained within the Bakaree family descendants as it was not to be found among the Naqamtee papers Tesema and I were able to view in July 1997. At the time of our visit, the *gebbi* was used as a military depot, but *Wäyzäro* Shaashituu was allowed to inhabit part of it. The Naqamtee papers, or rather what publicly survived of them, were kept in the local Museum.

Yet, what survived was more than what we had anticipated. The five *māzgāb* containing the administrative correspondence and related materials included a total of about 900 letters, receipts, and other administrative items. It was with a mix of anxiety and surprise that Tesema and I, generously helped by the Museum assistants and the staff of the Culture and Information Department

¹⁹ See Tesema Ta'a, 1976, Triulzi, 1986.

²⁰ See Tesema Ta'a, 1976.

²¹ Tesema mentions it in his BA Senior Paper. See Tesema Ta'a, 1976, p. 120. I have used part of this document in Triulzi, 1981. Both the correspondence and the family chronicle were reported in my "Preliminary Report" (*Id.*, 1984).

of Naqamtee, *Ato* Amsalu Tāmāsgān and *Ato* Aklilu T’elahun, were given total freedom to study such bulky documents and to reproduce them. The five leather-bound volumes were each marked by the same call number (in Amharic): *wa[llagga]/mu[seum]/n. of volume/025.17*. Only the official Letters and Receipts of the Central Government had an individual call number (025.1714963) followed by the serial number of each individual letter.

The official *māzgāb*

What follows is a sketchy description of the five *māzgāb* as Tesema and I registered their content at the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM) in July 1997.

***wa/mu/1/025.17* [Letters sent by *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér to the Central Government, 1898–1917 E.C./1905/06–1924/25, cp. Ch. 1.1]**

Māzgāb 1 contains copy of the official correspondence exchanged between *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér of Naqamtee and the Central Government in Addis Ababa (*kä-Näqānte wädä mahkälawi māngest yätälaku, yä-däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér däbdabéwoch, 1898–1917 E.C.*). The general state of the volume is good, but the damaged state of some letters and the fading ink here and there precludes a proper reproduction of all letters. The Letter-Book is registered under code number *025.17*.²²

The letter-book contains copies of 590 letters sent by the Naqamtee ruler to the Central Government. All letters were copied by hand in the *māzgāb* in chronological order till the last letter signed by Gäbrä Egzi’abhér on 9 *Nähasé* 1917 E.C./15 August 1925, shortly before his death. The last pages of the *māzgāb* are unnumbered and contain a few scattered edicts and tax records. The period covered is of the utmost importance for the reconstruction of the relationship between the local Oromo ruling family of Naqamtee and the central government as it covers the most crucial years of Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s government. As the correspondence Naqamtee-Addis Ababa faithfully records the continuous unfolding of *madbét* government over the Naqamtee region,²³

²² What follows is a brief description of item *wa/mu/1* as it was recorded at the time of first finding (July 1997): “A leather-bound ledger sized ab. 34,5x15 cm. with 402 numbered pages and 17 pages unnumbered at the end. All letters are in Amharic: the first letter, dated 19 Säné 1898/28 June 1906, starts on the last page of the volume (p. 402); the last letter by Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, dated 9 *Nähasé* 1917/15 August 1925, is copied on p. [9]. On top of first page a handwritten green-pencilled note in French says: “Le travail [sic] de mon père chez le gouvernement.” Back cover has the following Amharic writing: *wädä janhoy yāmmis’afāwu t’eqit däbtär yeh näw*.

²³ *Madbét* (lit. ‘kitchen’) rule was a form of government entrusted by the Crown to those lands whose produce was earmarked for the immediate consumption needs of the Palace. A similar

i.e., the letter-book appears to be a unique collection in terms of both local record-keeping and regional government under imperial rule.

wa/mu/2/025.17.2 [Field reports sent to the Central Government by Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam as acting Governor of the region of Qellem, 1925–1927 E.C./1932–1934, cp. Ch. 1.2]

Mäzgäb 2 contains copy of the letter exchange between *Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam* and Emperor Haylä Sellasé (*kä-Näqämté wädä mahkälawi mängest yätälaku, yä-däjjazmach Habtä Maryam däbdabéwoch, 1925–1927 E.C.*) specifically concerned with the widespread looting in the region of Qellem under the absentee rule of *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen Wäsäné* and his local appointees with the consequent exodus of local Oromo peasants to the ‘Arab’ country, i.e., Beni Shangul, in the years 1932–33.²⁴ The first letter is undated but internal evidence indicates events of *Tahsas* 1925 E.C. (December 1932–January 1933). The last letter of this group is dated 27 *Teqemt* 1927 E.C./27 October 1934. The general state of the volume is good. The letter exchange is registered under code number 025.17.2.²⁵

The ledger contains 39 lengthy letters written by *Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam* to Emperor Haylä Sellasé to report on the troubled state of the region. All letters concern the difficult handling of local administration by the Naqamtee appointees over Qellem after the death of Jootee Tulluu in 1918 and the subsequent appointment of *Däjjazmach Berru Wäldä Gabre’él* and of *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen Wäsäné* in the mid-1920s.

wa/mu/3/02517.14963 [Official correspondence sent by the Central Government to Naqamtee, 1887–1928 E.C./1895–1936, cp. Ch. 2.1]

Mäzgäb 3 contains the original correspondence exchanged between the central government and Naqamtee over different points of local administration and national policies over the course of forty years of *madbét* (indirect) rule (*kä-mahkälawi mängest wädä Näqämté yätälaku, 1887–1928 E.C.*) till the rupture of the Italian occupation. The general state of the volume is good, but several letters are torn at the edges and part of the writings is faded or cancelled due to either time or use. Each letter has been pasted over a different folio with the

rule on the western periphery was applied to Jimma under Abbaa Jifaar and to Qellem under Jootee Tulluu till 1912.

²⁴ See Triulzi, 1980, Etana Habte Dinka, 2022.

²⁵ The following was the state of the source at the time of our visit to WME in July 1997: “A ledger in canvas sized 34,8 x 20 cm. numbering 300 pages. Only the first 69 pages are handwritten. All letters are in Amharic. The front cover has a paper sticker with the French “Journal” imprinted in capital letters. On p. 1 an Amharic writing in big letters says: *1925 amät täs’afä janhoy*”.

entry code *wa/mu/3/025.1714963* followed by the serial number for each letter (nos 1–206).²⁶

The ledger contains some 200 official letters sent from the Court in Addis Ababa to the rulers of Naqamtee between the late 1880s and 1928 E.C./1895–1936. The letters are all in the original but have been glued to the ledger without any chronological order. As the period covered matches Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s copy-book, a joint checking of the two sources allows the historian to monitor from both angles what appears to have been a very lively and often negotiated relationship, with the central Government imposing rights, duties, and taxes, and the local government trying to avoid or evade them.

***wa/mu/4/025.1714963* [Tributes and taxes paid by Naqamtee to the Central Government, 1902–1928 E.C./1909/10–1935–36 cp. Ch. 2.2].**

Mäzgäb 4 includes evidence of taxes and tributes paid by the Naqamtee Government to the Central Treasury (*yä-geber enna yä-ij mänsha därräsäñoch*, 1902–1928 E.C.) till the Italian occupation. The general state of the volume is good. Each record is numbered with the entry code *wa/mu/4/025.1714963*, followed by the serial number of each letter (nos 208–301).²⁷

The ledger-book gives evidence of tributes and other *regalia* sent from the ruling house of Naqamtee to the Court in Addis Ababa between 1902 and 1928 E.C. (1909/10–1935/36 C.E.). Some 100 receipts are kept in this account book. As the core of the Naqamtee-Addis Ababa relationship revolves around the sending or omitting of tributes, the collection must have been kept by the Naqamtee Court as evidence of the money and other tributes that were sent to the central government in Addis Ababa.

***wa/mu/5/02517* [Land money and *qälad* register]**

²⁶ Description at time of first visit: “Very elegant ledger covered by canvas with back side and angles in leather, size 34 x 21 cm. Pages are numbered 1–570. All documents are in Amharic, a few in Ge‘ez. Each document is identified by a serial number and is glued on the right-hand side of the ledger; only occasionally two documents are glued on the same page. Only pp. 1–366 contain documents. On the back of front cover a sticker in yellow has the following writing: “Specially made for AKBARALLY ABDUL HUSAIN & CO., ADDIS-ABEBA”. The first pages (pp. 5–22) contain a detailed list of household objects belonging to the Naqamtee palace. On p. 5, an Amharic writing in violet says: *kä-mahkälawi mängest yätälaku däbdabéwoch* [Letters sent by the central government]. The original letters start on p. 24 of the *mäzgäb* and run continuously through p. 366.

²⁷ Description at time of first visit: “The ledger (sized 39 x 25) is bound in leather and canvas. Inside back of front cover a printed sticker says ‘Lion Brand Books, Reg.d Trade Mark reference n° 3245/5 T.C.L. Size 5 Quires. Made in Great Britain’. All pages are numbered; the numbering is in sequel with *wa/mu/3* but do not follow a chronological order. All documents are similarly glued on the right-hand side of the ledger. The first receipt (no. 298) is dated 19 *Hamlé* 1902 E.C./26 July 1909; the last one (n. 256) is dated 15 *Hedar* 1928 E.C./25 Novembre 1935”.

Māzgāb 5 is an over-used register enlisting land property and *qālad* measurement around Naqamtee.²⁸

This land register lists official assignment of land according to the *qālad* measurement around Naqamtee and the surrounding areas. All land is marked by district (*qoro*) and is subdivided in three categories: fertile (*lām*), semi-fertile (*t'äf-lām*), and non-fertile (*t'äf*). The land register also lists land sales and lands bought by the Naqamtee family. Due to its poor state, it was not possible to make a copy of this land register.

Out of this vast historical documentation a selection was made of some 470 letters and dispatches that appeared to be particularly relevant to the history of the region and were printed in the Amharic edition of this volume.²⁹

Local Chronicles

Local chronicles are important testimonies of the past as they reflect local perceptions of power relations and of spatial and cultural identity. In Ethiopia, a long tradition of clerical literacy and royal chronicles written in Ge'ez, the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), did not encourage the use of vernacular Amharic in written form till the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ It was only under Emperor Téwodros II (1855–1868) that Amharic vernacular in written form was used for non-ecclesiastical purposes,³¹ and even then, it was mostly employed for communication with foreign agents and European courts rather than for internal usage.³² As James McCann has persuasively argued, the political culture of the Ethiopian state was fundamentally oral, and so was political communication till the end of the nineteenth century as written codes “implied a fixed body of principles and procedures that could be verified and used as a means of control. Local officials and elites sought the ambiguity of oral form since it was context-bound and often fleeting”.³³

The written chronicles included in this volume confirm, albeit indirectly, the common assumption that oral communication is a key element in Ethiopian

²⁸ Description at time of first visit: “Leather (back and angles) and carton-bound ledger sized 33,5 x 6,5 cm. Pages are unnumbered. On the back page, a printed sticker has: “Made specially for G.M. Mohamedally & Co., Harrar. In reordering this book please quote n°”. On the margin of this sticker a writing in Amharic says: *yä-mürät gänzäb yä-qālad mǎzgāb näw* [Land money and *qālad* register].

²⁹ Triulzi–Tesema Ta’a, 2004.

³⁰ See Rubenson–Getatchew Haile–Hunwick, 1987, p. vi.

³¹ See Girma-Selassie–Pankhurst 1979; Girma-Selassie–Appleyard–Ullendorff, 1979.

³² See McCann, 1998.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

culture. The Wallagga Chronicles show that the Oromo rulers of Naqamtee understood the “new order” and tried to use it to their own advantage, *translating* orality into literacy precisely because they aimed at preserving and possibly expanding their own autonomy within the new boundaries of the Ethiopian empire-state. Thus, they used orality not to contrast but to accompany the “development of a secular political language in written form”, and chose to exploit rather than resist the “political culture prescribed by an expanding central state”.³⁴

We have included in Part Two three written documents which seem to reflect the influence of oral culture in recording the history of Wallagga’s ruling houses:

Chronicle of the Warra Bakaree

The Amharic chronicle of the Bakaree ruling house of Naqamtee is reproduced here in its English translation (Chapter 3). The chronicle was apparently recorded orally from local elders and was transposed into writing by Kumsaa Morodaa, alias *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. As the Chronicle’s origin and spread is still unclear, we know little about the modalities and times of its composition, but we may assume that its drafting followed the same pattern as the one described below for the “Genealogy of the Borana”. Indeed the two documents appear to have been drafted at about the same time, as it is clear from Habtä Maryam’s answer to Emperor Haylä Sellasé questioning him about the history of the region:³⁵

In 1906 E.C./[1913–1914], when my father Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér was alive, seeking to write down the genealogy and history of the whole Galla [Oromo] people, he brought together elders from our country [region] and from the neighbouring areas right and left, and he asked them the genealogy and history (yätewuledachäwun tarik enna zärachäwun) of all the people called Galla, [which he] wrote down in a register [mäzgäb].³⁶

(...) Secondly, since he [Gäbrä Egzi’abhér] collected from the same elders the history of Wällägga-Läqämt and had it written down in a separate mäzgäb,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁵ Emperor Haylä Sellasé had written to *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam asking for an account of the province’s history on 3 *T’eqemt* 1926 E.C./13 October 1933. The date is mentioned in Habtä Maryam’s answer on 24 *T’eqemt* 1926 E.C./3 November 1933. See HMC, letter 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.* See also the *Genealogies of the Macca (Boräna)* below, and Gäbrä Egzi’abhér Correspondence (henceforth GEC), letter 222. For more information about the production of these documents, see Triulzi, 2006, pp. 43–55.

I also had it copied down [and] sent [it together with] the history of the life of my father up to his death [which I recorded] by asking [the country's] elders".³⁷

The chronicle's content is an oral account of how the Mana Ña'a, the Leeqaa group that gave birth to the Bakaree ruling house of Naqamtee, came to power in the region of Waamaa, below the Dhidheessa river, and how they consolidated power and wealth by expanding beyond the Dhidheessa to the north and the west up to the Dabus and Berber rivers. The chronicle relates the coming of *Ras* Goobanaa in the 1880s, the famine of 1888–1892, the fight against the 'Dervishes' of the Mahdist leader Khalil al-Kusani at Gute Dili near Najjoo (1888), the submission to Amhara rule, the christening of Kumsaa Morodaa, and his rule over eastern Wallagga as Menilek's vassal and caretaker in the region under the name of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. The oral mode of narration cannot disguise the prime motives for the written chronicle, i.e., to assert the legitimacy of the Bakaree group to rule over the region, to mark their role as the main political actors in the areas across the Dhidheessa River, and to state in writing their own rights over land particularly over the Sibuu and Dabus region to the north. The Bakaree chronicle records Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's building of churches and bridges in the region but notes down as well all the land acquisitions that the Bakaree family bought or acquired with Menilek's consent—not a minor point, as is shown in the heated correspondence held with Addis Ababa and the continuous litigation over land and taxes with the appointees sent by the central government.

The text of the Bakaree chronicle was photocopied from the original MS (fols 1r–23r), which, at the time of copying (1973), was in the hands of *Wäyzäro* Atsäda Habtä Maryam. Since then, the original MS has not been traced back and is likely to be still in the hands of family descendants. The MS appears to have been written by the same hand who wrote the "Boräna Genealogy", is characterized by the same Oromo linguistic influences as the Genealogy, and has been laid down on the usual lined ledger used by Gäbrä Egzi'abhér scribe, possibly the same *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos who is mentioned in the letter above.³⁸ The first page of the manuscript is torn and the first few lines are unclear.

³⁷ See HMC, letter 32.

³⁸ In 1994 I interviewed the son of *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos, *Fitawrari* Täfärä, together with *Qäññazmach* Abdissa Mosa of Naqamtee. Täfärä told me that his father Est'ifanos had been at Gäbrä Egzi'abhér service as his main secretary (*s'ähafe te'zaz*) for 13 years. Apparently the family of *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos had come to Naqamtee from Däbrä Berhan following *Ras* Gobäna's expeditions in the area. Est'ifanos was given Church education in Naqamtee. Interview with *Fitawrari* Täfärä Estifanos, ATFN, Addis Ababa, April 1994.

Genealogies of the Macca (Boräna)

The document we present in Chapter 4 is the English translation of the 40-page manuscript written in Amharic that has been retrieved in Carlo Conti Rossini's manuscript collection kept at the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome. This Amharic manuscript has an interesting story, which I will briefly summarize here. The MS was handed over in 1937 to Martino Mario Moreno, then Secretary General of the Italian-styled Galla-Sidama Government in Jimma, by Col. Giuseppe Fasulo, commanding officer at Naqamtee. In his accompanying letter to Moreno, Col. Fasulo stated that the work "had been started by degiac Gabresgher and was continued by degiac Apte Mariam".³⁹ Whether the MS was confiscated or handed over to the Italian authorities is not clear. But the original MS was eventually entrusted by Moreno to Conti Rossini who added it to his manuscript collection in Rome.⁴⁰ The late Stefan Strelcyn, who catalogued Conti Rossini's collection in Rome, attributed this MS (no 48) to *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér after a late colophon which claimed the MS had been copied down on 23 Hamlé 1299 E.C. (30 July 1937), and named it "Généalogies des Gallas". Yet the first line of the original MS reads, "Genealogy of the Boräna" (*Boräna yätäwälladubät*), as reads the title of another MS kept in the same collection (no. 81), which is a copy of MS 48. In fact, the Genealogies give the origins of the various Macca Oromo groups living in the region, distinguishing the early Oromo groups who claimed noble (i.e., *boorana*) descent from the originally non-Oromo groups who were later assimilated through various forms of adoption. *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam's own contribution to the MS appears to be limited to the last three folios (fols 37–40).⁴¹

In fact, we now know from the Naqamtee correspondence that it was *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér himself who first had the "Genealogy" written down but was refused by *Ras* Täfäri to have it printed. In a letter dated 19 *Tahsas* 1916 E.C., Gäbrä Egzi'abhér wrote to the Crown Prince *Ras* Täfäri as follows:

I have asked my country's elders and have written down the genealogy of our grandfathers so that it won't be forgotten by the [country's] youth. I thought that it could be printed last year and sent it to the press together with my request. I was told that it won't be printed without the permission of the Crown Prince

³⁹ See Triulzi, 1984, p. 324.

⁴⁰ See Conti Rossini, 1944–45, p. 114.

⁴¹ See Strelcyn, 1976, pp.144–46 (MS 48), 207–209 (MS 81); Triulzi, 1984, p. 324.

*Ras Täfäri and [so] it was returned. Now I am sending [this document] in the hands of Qäññazmach Est'ifanos so that it may be printed.*⁴²

We don't know what resulted from Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's request but the matter was raised again ten years later by his son Habtä Maryam as we have seen above.⁴³ It is clear from these quotations that the "Genealogy of the Macca (Boräna)" had originated during Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's time out of his own initiative and that the incipient state literacy in Wallagga, as will be clear from a reading of the Genealogy, rested firmly on orality and its fluid codes of communication.

The "Genealogy" was used sparingly by Ethiopian authors.⁴⁴ Yet this MS deserves closer attention as it is an interesting interpolation of an oral testimony translated into a written code to sustain local autonomy and legitimacy claims by the Macca, and which were drafted in writing to adapt to the new political culture of the expanding state in the region.⁴⁵ As such, the "Genealogy of the Macca (Boräna)" is a text within a text, which necessitates a lot more scrutiny and local knowledge to dispel its several ambiguities and unclear passages.

The copy we have used here is MS 48 (fols 2r–40r) of the Conti Rossini MS collection in Rome titled, in Strelcyn's Catalogue, "Généalogies des Galla" as checked against MS 81 of the same collection ("Généalogie des Boräna") which is merely a copy of MS 48.⁴⁶

History of the Warra Beeraa

The family history of the Warra Beeraa, a Leeqaa group belonging to the Hordaa clan of Arjoo, is the third kind of documentary source we present here (Chapter 5). The historical account has been written down by Ato Dässaläñ Qana'aa, himself a member of the Hordaa clan of the Arjoo region west of Naqamtee, based on oral testimonies the author himself collected during most of his life. "The History and Deeds of our relatives the Hordaa who are called Warra Beeraa"—such is the lengthy title given to this manuscript—is fashioned in the typical style of an oral narrative, full of personal, family and material details derived from local lore and representations, and the absence of any wider

⁴² See GEC, letter 222: *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér to Crown Prince Ras Täfäri, 19 *Tahsas* 1916 E.C./29 December 1923.

⁴³ See HMC, letter 32: *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam to the Emperor, 24 *T'eqemt* 1926 E.C./3 November 1933.

⁴⁴ Notably by Negaso Gidada (who calls it 'Maccaa Genealogy') in Negaso 1984; *Id.* 2001.

⁴⁵ See Triulzi, 1988.

⁴⁶ For further details see Triulzi, 1984.

spatial and chronological setting which makes it difficult for the historian to handle it as a written source. The reason why it is reproduced here is that the History of the Warra Beeraa, when seen in parallel with that of the Warra Bakaree, is the story of a group who ‘did not make it’, both as a rival group in the local power competition and as a subject group vis-à-vis Amhara overrule. Tucho Danno, contrary to the more powerful Morodaa Bakaree, resisted the coming of *Ras* Goobanaa and decided to fight it out. The result was that Arjoo—an unruly district and a rival southwest of Naqamtee—was made the regional headquarters of the feared *Gondäré* troops of *Ras* Dämessäw—a punishment inflicted for resisting imperial expansion and ignoring or underestimating the power politics of the day. The story narrated by the author on the basis of oral accounts by the community’s elders is interesting as the ‘misery’ of the Warra Hordaa is explained in critical tones towards their own internal feuds and the misjudged bravery and cruel government of their own leaders.

The MS (26 pp.) was photographically reproduced in January 1973 following a long interview with its author.⁴⁷ The Chronicle is written in very poor calligraphy in an old school notebook filled on each side of the page with ink spilling and stains which make the text difficult to decipher here and there. The Chronicle had been earlier described by Friedrich Klausberger in 1971 who also reproduced two pages of the original MS.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See ATFN, LN-Arjo, no 1 (Amh. Text) and Interview with *Ato* Dässalān Qana’aa, 13.1.1973.

⁴⁸ See Klausberger, 1971, pp. 16-27; the first two pages of the Ms. are reproduced pp. 28-29.

– Part One –

ADMINISTRATIVE CORRESPONDENCE

1.

Naqamtee to Central Government

1.1. – Letters by Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér (1898–1917 E.C/1905–06–1924–25 C.E.)

This section contains the English translation of 230 letters sent by Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér to the central government between 1898 and 1917 E.C., corresponding to the years 1905–06 to 1924–25 C.E. These letters have been selected out of 550 dispatches officially sent from Naqamtee to Addis Ababa during this period. All letters come from the official copy-book of the ruling family of Naqamtee and are hosted in mägäb n. 1 (wa/mu/1) at the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM) of Naqamtee. On top of each letter, the numbers on the left side represent an internal serial numbering; the ones on the right indicate the source (wa/mu 1) and the relative page number. Please note that, as the copy-book starts on p. 402 and goes backwards, the numbers on the right go back till p. [9]. Letters have been reproduced as they appear in the copy-book regardless of chronology or topic. All letters are copies of the original ones written in Amharic, only a few of which, concerning religious matters, are in Ge'ez. Drawn in a formal courtly style, all letters are unpunctuated and contain frequent misspellings of personal and place names. In translating into English, the phrasing has been maintained as close as possible to the original Amharic except where the meaning was at threat. Punctuation has been added throughout.

Most letters concern state affairs and administrative matters. Only a few, particularly at the end of the exchange, concern health problems of the ailing Naqamtee ruler (letter 230) or a compensation settlement in court concerning Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's divorced wife Wäyzäro Mayéti (letter 229). In selecting these letters from the original mägäb we have privileged the exchanges concerning the yearly tribute, disputes over land and taxation, the expanding of central administration over trade and revenues, and the role and limits of provincial rulers turned into governors in maintaining power and authority vis-à-vis the central state. Throughout, the letter exchange provides the background to the gradual integration of the western province of Wallagga within imperial Ethiopia and the negotiated nature of such a relationship.

A provisional English translation of these letters was provided by Kebede Hordofa, a graduate student of the Department of History at AAU in 1998. Tesema Ta'a and Etana Habte Dinka offered later revisions and edits.

1

wa/mu/1/402

Etégé [T'aytu],¹

I used to submit my annual tribute to [the Government] from the proceedings of the customs duties [*jemruk*] I collected at the gates (*bär*) and from income taxes. Now, however, the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis² have been appointed to collect the customs duties at the gates. They, with the intention of ingratiating themselves [to *Janhoy*] are robbing [i.e., over-taxing] the poor (*deha*)³ outside of the standard procedure. I, on my part, saying that the revenue for *Janhoy* [His Majesty Emperor Menilek] may not fall short [of the usual amount], am pressing the subjects (*deha*) [to pay] too. We are here two rulers (*misläné*) in one country. The poor are suffering because of us. It is now over a year since they started collecting the customs duties at the gates. Let their register-book (*mäzgäb*) be inspected and the amount they had collected so far be added to my share of the annual revenue. I submit this to *Janhoy*. *Etégé*! Please intercede on my behalf before *Janhoy*. Moreover, if I ever said no one can inspect my tenants, may *Janhoy* send [his] any of his trusted men and count my *t'is* [*gäbbar* households]. The reason [why] I am saying this is

¹ Gäbrä Egzi'abhé's (GE) letter to Empress T'aytu opens the written records of the official correspondence of *mäzgäb* 1. In the official exchange of letters with the central government (CGC), mainly addressed to Emperor Menilek, the letters to the Empress either seem to anticipate a major issue, as in this case, or ask for the Empress' intercession (see letter 6).

² This is the first complaint by *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhé against *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis, called the "näggadras of the Arabs" (letter 25), over the gradual appropriation of customs duties by the Central Government. See letters 6, 7, 21, 23, 25, 27, 38, 39, 41, 44, and 67.

³ The word *deha* (pl. *dehoch*), lit. 'poor', is a vital one in imperial Ethiopia's lexicography for comprehending the different meaning attached to various social, political and economic groups or individuals. In the exchange reproduced in this volume, the word is used to refer both to the country's destitute peasants and to 'provincial governors', such as Gäbrä Egzi'abhé (henceforth GE) and his son and successor Habtä Maryam. The word *deha*, therefore, bears different meanings according to context. In the first occurrence (letter 1), *deha* appears to be used in reference to people (i.e., traders) who were liable to be taxed at toll gates (*bär*) by central government officials. In the second occurrence, the word *deha* implies not only poor people but first and foremost the country's 'subject people'. For multiple definitions attached to the word *deha*, see HMC letter 3.

the following: if two rulers rule in the same country, the poor (*deha*) will leave my country. Written on *Säné* 19, 1898 E.C/June 28, 1906.

2

wa/mu/1/402

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. May it reach *Qäññazmach* Yebsa. You know the reason [why] I sent *Qäññazmach* Ayälä to you yesterday. Now you are the only friend I have. Please present this matter in great strength before *Janhoy*. I can not go back thinking that I have a country of my own while Särs'äwäld is still inside my territory. Even yesterday, I presented myself in front of *Janhoy* [Emperor Menilek] with a thousand *wäqét* of gold as *mättaya*⁴ that has not been collected from my country, to contribute my share to help *Janhoy* in his work. I borrowed gold from [somebody in] Addis Ababa. Even before, the tribute worth one thousand *wäqét* of gold⁵ that *Qäññazmach* Ayälä has brought, I borrowed it from *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis with interest. But *Janhoy* may think that I got it from my country. Let *Janhoy* send any of his trusted people and count my *t'is* [*gäbbar* households]. I will abide by their verdict. As to the customs revenue, I never said I wanted to be exempted from it. I will pay accordingly apart from the tribute. Written on *Säné* 19, 1898 E.C./June 28, 1906.

3

wa/mu/1/401

Janhoy,

I have arrived at my house at Näjjo.⁶ As soon as I arrived, I told the *färänji* [white foreigners] that *Janhoy* had instructed me to oversee the gold work. They agreed to supervise with us. However, when I told them that the

⁴ Lit. 'present(s)', i.e., the gifts presented to Emperor Menilek by his subject rulers and subordinates as a sign of loyalty, to accompany a plea for local interests or as a homage during public holidays. In this letter GE is pleading Emperor Menilek to remove *Näggadras* Särs'äwäld, whom Menilek had appointed to oversee customs collection at Naqamtee's gates and markets, as GE feels the appointment would lead to the erosion of local autonomy. For the complex relationship that developed between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa regarding this matter, see Triulzi, 1986.

⁵ Supposedly it refers to the tribute (*geber*) for the year 1906 which was not, strictly speaking, a 'gift' (*mättaya*) but a due tribute to maintain the administrative autonomy of the province.

⁶ Näjjo (Najjoo) was the main area of gold extraction for the Naqamtee ruling house. GE established and fortified the town, making it his seat of government in the early 1900s. See ATFN LN-S 6, interview with *Qäññazmach* Disasa Karro, Najjoo, 31 July 1972.

gold collected each day should be weighed and recorded every evening, they refused to do so and said that they would leave all the gold collected on the machine and would weigh it every month, having cleared it from the machine. Concerning the work, however, they have installed wire [electric] light and are working day and night with [the help of] the light. The men only put in the machine the soil which has been dug out and heaped up already; they have nothing else to do now. Only the water pump is operating. And now, *Janhoy*, it is only proper that the gold collected each day should be weighed and recorded on the same day in the evening. Also, the gold collected each night should be weighed early in the morning and recorded. Unless we protect it as such, they will hide the gold from us, and we will not obtain [anything]. And now, let *Janhoy's* seal [order] be sent to them, stating that the gold worked each day should be weighed and recorded the same day in the evening. If it is to be weighed each month, how can one [expect to] have [all] the gold? Written on 28th of *Hamlé* 1898 E.C./August 4, 1906.

4

wa/mu/1/401-400

May it reach *Qäññazmach* Yebsa. These *färänji* at Näjjo, this year starting from [the month of] *Säné*, while I was in Addis Ababa and even now, are hoisting flags all over the hills and mountains of Näjjo. I asked them what it was all about since it had nothing to do with gold exploring. They said that it was only to measure the distance between areas. I have already informed *Janhoy*, that the *färänji* residing in Näjjo are going here and there without anybody guiding them on my behalf. You wrote that they are looking for gold [mines] and ordered me to let them go wherever they wish, even without a guide, since they are now well accustomed to the area. You also told me in this letter with your seal: “if they do so, it will create no problem to us”. This letter is now in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Yebsa. But I seriously doubt if it is necessary [for the *färänji*] to do so, hoisting flags everywhere does not help them know the distance between places. Written on 28 *Hamlé*, 1898 E.C./August 4, 1906.

5

wa/mu/1/400

Janhoy,

These *färänji* in Näjjo, this year starting from *Säné*, while I was in Addis Ababa now and, even now, are going all over Näjjo on every hill and mountain peaks hoisting flags. I asked them what it was all about, since this hoisting of flags is not part of the gold search. They said they wanted to learn how far

these places are from Näjjo town. I doubt the distance of the places could be known by hoisting flags. Written on *Hamlé* 28, 1898 E.C./August 4, 1906.

6

w/m/1/399-398

Etégé,

May God show you [the truth]. Concerning this matter dealing with the Customs, let the register-book (*māzgāb*) be examined for me; or else, let me pay to *Janhoy* twice as much as the dues collected. Let the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis not interfere with me. Whereas I am struggling with the poor (*deha*) so that my tributes will not decrease, they are robbing the poor to acquire reputation [in the eyes of *Janhoy*]; in the meantime, the poor are suffering. Let the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis not interfere with me and do intercede for me with *Janhoy*. I am reminding [you] now. Written on the 28th of *Hamlé* 1898 E.C./August 4, 1906.

7

wa/mu/1/398-397

Janhoy,

Earlier your seal [order] had reached here stating that *Näggadras* Yeggäzu, by *Janhoy*'s order, could supervise the work in my town, Naqamtee, concerning those who did not bear the seal of the customs office of Billo.⁷ Accordingly, *Näggadras* Yeggäzu used to levy customs duties on those coming via various routes as well as supervising in Naqamtee. Later on, *Näggadras* T'äanna Gashaw, while supervising in Naqamtee, used to collect duties up to the present. And now, in the town of Naqamtee itself, the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis are levying duties, for a second time, on those who have already obtained the seal [receipt] from *Näggadras* T'äanna Gashaw's men and have passed [the gates]. *Näggadras* T'äanna's men are levying five out of a hundred as usual. Again, in Naqamtee itself, on the same day and in the same area, the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis are levying five out of a hundred. Because of this, the poor (*deha*) suffer and groan. Written on the 2nd of *Tahsas* 1898 E.C./December 11, 1905 in the town of Naqamtee.

⁷ *Näggadras* Yeggäzu was appointed in 1905 to supervise trade revenues and taxes at Naqamtee. *Näggadras* T'äanna Gashaw who followed him gave GE a hard time. See letter 97. On *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis see below, letters 21, 38, 39, 44.

8

wa/mu/1/397

Janhoy,

You wrote asking me how much gold dust I have given to *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw⁸ and telling me to report specifically about this matter to you. I have given [him] a total of ninety and a half cups (*kubbayya*) last year and the year before. Also, in addition, I have given him eleven *wäqét* minus a *temun* of gold extracted at my place with quicksilver (*baziqa*). Written on the 4th of *Tahsas* 1898 E.C./December 13, 1905 in Naqamtee.

9

wa/mu/1/397

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. When I ordered the people of Sibu Wal-lagga to give twice as much tribute [as that paid earlier] because the [annual] tribute (*geber*) has doubled, all the *Abba Qoro*⁹ got together, collected the tribute from the poor (*deha*) and, went to *Janhoy* to plead without handing over the tribute to me. [I am writing this] to remind *Janhoy*, fearing that they might present their plea in another manner. Written on the 28th of *Tahsas* 1898 E.C./January 6, 1906.

10

wa/mu/1/396

Janhoy,

Two years ago, Hamid, *Shaykh* Hojälé's servant (*barya*)¹⁰ entered [the territory of] the *färänji* [British Sudan], having escaped from [our] country.¹¹ And we pursued him there, and when we asked the English [British] to hand him over to us, as he was our *gäbbar*, they told us that they would not hand

⁸ *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw Näsibu, later *Ras*, was the governor general of eastern Wallaggaa, including the areas of Arjoo and Guduruu, which neighbored the Leeqaa areas governed by the Bakaree family. He was the son of *Afä Negus* Näsibu and brother-in-law of *Lij* Iyasu. He was the head of the *Gondäre* troops stationed in Arjoo. See below, letter 161.

⁹ A *qoro* was an administrative district, mostly smaller than *wäräda*, governed by the *Abba Qoro*, who served as its governor (Tesema Ta'a, 1980, pp. 54–57).

¹⁰ *Barya*, lit. 'slave', is a standard Amharic word used in the correspondence to refer both to servants and enslaved persons. In this letter it is used in reference to the former. In the correspondence, it is common for *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér and *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam to refer to themselves as 'your *barya* (slave)' while addressing themselves to the emperor.

¹¹ Border crossing to another territory with one's followers has been a traditional form of protest in the Wallagga region, whether internally or outbound. See Triulzi, 1980.

Hamid over, as they had made an agreement with *Janhoy* to the effect that a subject could live wherever he wished. However, when they asked our men to return the guns Hamid had taken with him, our men refused to take them without *Janhoy*'s permission and returned home without them. And now it would be good if they delivered Hamid to us. If this is not possible, why should we leave behind our guns? Send word [to them] on our behalf so that they will give us our gun. Written on the 21st of *Nähasé* 1898 E.C./August 27, 1906.

11

wa/mu/1/396-395

Janhoy,

When *Musé* Kumbol [Monsieur Comboul] came, I gave him in accordance with your wish a hundred slaves (*barya*).¹² Among these slaves, some have disappeared; others have died, and *Musé* Jälärdi asked me to take the remaining ones away from him. But I told him that I could not receive the slaves without the permission of *Janhoy*. His request that I should take the slaves is not because, having completed the work, he wanted to stop the operation. Formerly, the work was done with the help of men; however, today it is being done by machine and with water [power]. Earlier, five hundred local inhabitants used to work, getting provisions and wages each month, in addition to the slaves. However, at present they said that since they have wasted much money, they need fewer people and only twenty men [can] work moving the soil into the machine. The rest of the people have ceased [working]. The slaves are sitting idly. Written the 21st of *Nähasé* 1898 E.C./August 27, 1906.

¹² Enslaved labour was employed in gold panning before it was replaced by Oromo manpower. Jirata Märdasa, the *Abba Qoro* of Käta near Najjoo, told Wandemu Ummeta that, prior to Oromo presence in the area, it was the 'Shanqella' who panned for gold. 'Shanqella' workers were used as cheap labour but had difficulty acclimatizing themselves to the area, leading to illness, deaths, and returns to lowland areas, cp. IES MS 1888 [ATFN LN-S-3], Interview with Jirata Märdasa, July 29, 1972. Reginald Koettlitz described Oromo people panning for gold at the turn of the century (Koettlitz, 1900, p. 51). See letter 51 and note.

12

wa/mu/1/395

Janhoy,

You had instructed me to supervise the gold work with the *färänj* at Näjjo [*Musé Jälärdi*].¹³ When I told them to show me [the gold] collected every day, they said that they could only collect the monthly produce of gold in one particular day and that they could not collect it every day. When we weighed the gold collected in a month, together with the quicksilver (*baziqa*), it came to be seventy-six *wäqét*. When I said “together with the quicksilver”, it is the refined type used to coat materials. All this, together with the quicksilver, weighed seventy-six *wäqét*. I told them that I should see the purified gold extracted each day; they said they would not purify it the same day but on the morrow. The gold stayed with them that night. The next day they purified it before us and it weighed thirteen *wäqét* and a half. However, it would be better if we purified the gold the same day it is extracted. If we purify it the next day, how could we tell whether or not they have stolen [some] the night it stayed with them? 28th of *Nähasé* 1898 E.C./September 3, 1906.

13

wa/mu/1/395-394

Janhoy,

The guards who came to oversee the tobacco and cigarettes¹⁴ quarreled with the *färänj* [*Musé Jälärdi*] who are extracting gold in Näjjo [*Musé Jälärdi*]. When they asked them to pay taxes, they refused. I would like to report this to *Janhoy* so that something would be done concerning their exemption from paying the tax on tobacco and cigarettes. Moreover, the men of *Musé Adilbi* [*Hasib Ydlibi*] who came to buy rubber say that they would not pay the tax on tobacco and cigarettes again as they had been levied at the Baro tax post. Should we make them pay the tax or should they be exempted? Also, the British men of Mr Bäländi and Mr Ross who are staying at Tullu Jaldéssa extracting gold from Dabus, do they have to pay the tobacco and cigarette tax or are they exempted? I just wanted to report this matter to *Janhoy*. Written on the 28th of *Nähasé* 1898 E.C./September 3, 1906.

¹³ Concessions to foreign gold prospectors in the Näjjo area were on the increase at this time. Comboul, Jalardi and Zappa are often mentioned in the correspondence. See letters 11–14, 17, 28, 64, 66, 68.

¹⁴ See below, letter 19.

14

wa/mu/1/394-393

Janhoy,

Your seal [imperial order] concerning gold, and how I should supervise it and see that it is weighed each day, has reached me. Also, I have given to the *färänji* [*Musé Jälärdi*] the seal that *Janhoy* had sent them. They agreed [to obey] the day I gave them the letter. After two days, [they said] a letter had come from their country concerning the work here. He told me that the letter which they received stated that the expenditure for the workers exceeded [the price of] the gold extracted and that the loss had become great; that we should not do any work and extract gold; and that except for two *färänji* who should remain to look after the equipment, the rest should go back [home]. As soon as he had told me this, he moved the machines from the various sites where they were placed and kept them in his house. He also showed me the gold extracted and purified in the three months of *Genbot*, *Säné* [and] *Hamlé* when we started the supervision, weighing fifty-four *wäqét* and one *medugal*, and one *shäräbät'lah*.¹⁵ Also, the gold extracted in two weeks together with the quicksilver (*baziqa*), i.e., without being purified, weighed twenty-six *wäqét*. He stopped working henceforth since he said that he had received a letter from his country. Written on the 11th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./September 21, 1906.

15

wa/mu/1/393

Etégé,

The gold extracted in a month since I started supervising the gold work, weighed together with the quicksilver (*baziqa*) seventy-six [*wäqét*]. When this was purified, it weighed seventeen and a half *wäqét*. And now, as we are just beginning the second month, he told me that a letter from his country reached them stating that the expenditure for the workers was more than the worth of the gold extracted and [therefore] the loss had increased; that we should not work and extract gold [any longer]; and that two *färänjis* should stay to look after the equipment and all the rest must go back. Immediately after he had told me this, he removed all the machines from the several sites where they had been placed and kept them in his house. The work has stopped. However, when the machines were removed, twenty-six *wäqét* [of gold] including the quicksilver that is not purified, were found. Written on the 11th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./September 21, 1906.

¹⁵ Both are local weight measurement terms.

16

wa/mu/1/392

Janhoy,

Concerning the [imperial] order you sent me that all cattle should be counted and a head out of forty heads of cattle, one which is fattened, castrated (*sānga*), and recovered from disease should be levied for you, and that a *birr* should be levied over ten sheep or goats. I have accordingly started counting. However, in my country that lies below the Dédéssa [Dhedhessa], since the cattle epidemics of early times, I have been controlling [the spread of] the cattle disease at the [customs] gates and no cattle disease has appeared again. Therefore, one cannot find [any cattle] recovered from disease. At present, I received [levied] one *birr* every two heads, it amounts to twenty *birr* for forty heads. With twenty *birr*, one can buy a good type of castrated ox, which has recovered from disease, in the upper part of the Dédéssa. Shall I buy castrated oxen which have recovered from disease for twenty *birr* each, having levied one *birr* per each head of cattle? This means [or], shall I have the fattened and castrated oxen which have not recovered from disease levied? Written on the 28th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./October 8, 1906.

17

wa/mu/1/392-391

Janhoy,

Now *Musé Jälärđi*, having quit the gold work, has come [to you] on his way to his country. But the gold extracted and purified from *Hamlé* 28 up to *Mäskäräm* 10, weighed twenty-four *wäqét* and a half and one pound (*midiguwal*) and a gram (*grät*). This was the gold extracted since I returned from Addis Ababa to supervise [the work]. *Musé Jälärđi* is coming to *Janhoy* with this [gold]. Also, according to *Janhoy*'s message, I had given *Musé Kumbul* [Comboul] a hundred slaves formerly to work for him. Among these, excepting those who died and disappeared, I have received from them fifty-five male and sixteen female slaves. Moreover, *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis*¹⁶ had also given, in accordance with *Janhoy*'s message, many slaves to *Musé Kumbul*. However, when *Musé Kumbul* left for his country later on, he took *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis*' slaves to deliver them to *Janhoy* in Addis Ababa. Now I have received from *Musé Jälärđi* fourteen female and two male slaves who stayed behind at that time because they were ill. And now, they set out all at once, leaving only two

¹⁶ *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis* was a member of the Shewan court who had joined *Ras Gobana*'s campaigns in the southwest in the late 1880s. He also later fought in campaigns against the Walayta people and became governor of Kaffa from 1897 to 1910.

färänj to look after the equipment. 28th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./October 8, 1906.

18

wa/mu/1/391-390

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The land called Koyna was not under the Arabs in former times; no one had been there. At the time we conquered [*yakännut*] the isolated Arabs [territory],¹⁷ it was *Däjjach* Dämessäw who, before anyone else, colonized it. Also, when Major Guyinn [Gwynn] defined the boundary from Abay [Blue Nile] to Bonga Guggu, he left Koyna[’s boundary] undefined because he said he would do it together with *Ras* Täsämma’s territory.¹⁸ And now we could not go down to Koyna and order [make claims] over it because I was afraid the limit might be to the other side. Also, the *färänji* have not reached there. They have never even set foot on it. And now, if *Janhoy* [you] have concluded the matter there through discussion, let me know if [our] limit is to this side or theirs. The boundary between *Däjjazmach* Joté and Koyna has not [yet] been defined. Written on 27th of *T’eqemt* 1899 E.C./November 6, 1906.

19

wa/mu/1/390

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The [rural] inhabitants (the *balagär*) suffered (to my disfavour) because of the matter concerning the tobacco. After the proclamation had been issued, the people were accused of selling tobacco to each other [instead of the men appointed to supervise the tobacco dues collection]. Also, they were charged of uprooting the tobacco from where it had been planted and hiding it [from the men in charge of the tobacco dues collection]. So, the poor (*deha*) were imprisoned and made to pay much money. And

¹⁷ The term *Araboch* or ‘land of the Arabs’ is used here to refer to the territory of Beni Shangul. GE writes ‘we conquered [it]’ as he had accompanied Ras Makonnen’s 1898 expedition to reestablish Ethiopian control of the border region. See Triulzi, 1981, pp. 172–84.

¹⁸ *Ras* Täsämma, who had participated in the Shewan expansion into the west and southwest in the 1880s, was governor of Gumaa and Ilubbabor (Iluu-Abbaaboar). As governor, he appeared to have strained relations with *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér and the Bakaree family. He was appointed regent in 1909 for *Lij* Iyasu, but he died in 1911, prior to Menilek’s death and *Lij* Iyasu’s succession to the throne.

now, *Janhoy*, the men to supervise the tobacco [dues collection] in the lower part of the Gibé came only to my country and never showed up in the countries of *Däjjach* Dämessäw and *Däjjazmach* Joté. The poor say: “if this is the law of *Janhoy*, it should be implemented in the whole country”. Because of this, the poor are looking at their neighbours [Qellem and Arjoo] and are in confusion. And now, if *Janhoy* wants [this regulation] to be delayed or continued as in my country, write the regulation, and send it to me [in a letter].¹⁹ Written on 10th of *Hedar* 1899 E.C./November 19, 1906.

20

wa/mu/1/390-389

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The [local] inhabitants (the *balagär*) used to carry guns for me. Four years ago, they protested saying that they would no longer carry guns as they were tribute-paying [subjects], whereupon *Janhoy* advised me to take other men from another region (*yäsäwun agär säw*) into my service. And I took other men, according to Your message, into my service. And now that the tribute has been doubled, the [local] peasants (the *balagär*) cannot provide for the soldiers’ pay; allow me therefore to assume the right to collect the customs dues from the Arabs’ territory. It will, at least, help me meet the soldiers’ pay. [Written on the] 10th of *Hedar* 1899 E.C./November 19, 1906.

21

wa/mu/1/389-388

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. May it reach *Qäññazmach* Yebsa.

You wrote me that your daughter was ill and reminded me to think of [helping] you. May God heal her on your behalf. May God make you happy. I was sad to hear about the matter. The fully caparisoned mule, together with the golden glassware which *Janhoy* had sent me reached here. And I received it kissing the ground. May God give long life to *Janhoy*’s government and may his throne (*alga*) pass on to [his] grandsons. As a token of my happiness, I have sent a hundred *wäqét* of gold to *Janhoy*. Moreover, concerning the [cus-

¹⁹ The term ‘poor’ (*deha*), mentioned three times in this letter, refers to the local peasant population. It is important to note that the term *balagär*, lit. ‘rural people/person’, is used here as a synonym of *deha*. But *balagär* also carries a derogatory undertone signifying ‘uncivilized, backward’ as opposed to town’s people.

toms] gates, I used in former times to levy taxes and pay tributes. And now, by *Janhoy*'s order, it came under *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis. At present, it would be proper if, as in former times, I levied taxes and paid tributes to *Janhoy*. Or else, as *Janhoy* mentioned earlier, let the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis levy the taxes and deliver the [money] to me. Let not the customs duties of Billo under *Näggadras* T'äñña be added to me. May God show you [the truth]. Concerning the collection of customs dues in the land of the Arabs, it was my right even in former times. It was from my own hands that *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis' men took it. And now [as I said long ago], plead this matter on my behalf to *Janhoy*, for it would help me cover the expenses for the soldiers' pay. As far as the money is concerned, even if it is doubled, I said that I should collect and submit it myself. In response to this, *Janhoy* said "let them [the men of *Näggadras* T'äñña] collect and hand it over to me", which [in practice] means the return of [the authority to levy and collect tributes] effectively into my hands. [*Janhoy*] returned the country to my jurisdiction]. Why should the work [of collecting tribute] be separated from the work [of governing the region]? I have sent ten *wäqét* of gold to you as a present. Written on 16th of *Tahsas* 1899 E.C./December 25, 1906.

22

wa/mu/1/388

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Concerning the matter of gates,²⁰ I pleaded with you last year when I came [to Addis Ababa] that no one should interfere with my right, and I would even give *Janhoy* twice as much as the dues I collected myself. You said that I should go back and that you would write me through *Qäññazmach* Ayälä, having concluded the matter. So *Qäññazmach* Ayälä came here and told me that you had said: "They would, as in former times, collect the duties at the customs gates and give it [the money] to you every three months. As for the taxes of the markets and on gold, it would be our right to collect as in earlier times". And now, after *Qäññazmach* Ayälä had arrived, *Janhoy*'s order from Addis Ababa was sent to me through Särs'äwäld stating that I should hand over [the right of collecting] dues of the markets and

²⁰ As control over gates was crucial for state revenues, it soon became a point of contention between regional governors and the central government. As this letter shows, record-keeping is important because it fixes in writing the details of oral transactions within these negotiations. On the necessity to keep written records as a "precise account of what orders had been given" or "as verification of an oral transaction", see McCann, 1998.

gold to them. The year before last, when the customs gate office was established, *Janhoy* had left the right of collecting taxes over the markets and gates to me. And now, when the order of relinquishing it reached [me], I was shocked. It is the *gäbbar* who purify the gold and attend the markets, not the merchants. Why should the *gäbbar* be interfered with to my disadvantage? Also, the poor (*deha*) suffer and groan (because of this). Written on the 16th of *Tahsas* 1899 E.C./December 25, 1906.

23

wa/mu/1/388-387

Janhoy,

When you gave me the land of the Arabs, you said that [this land] should give as a tribute six hundred *wäqét* of gold. After that, when the British defined (marked) the region's boundary, part of *Däjjach* Abdurrahman's territory was taken away from the other [his] side, and half of *Fitawrari* Mähammäd's was taken away [from him]. Half of it was cut off on this side. Only *Shäykh* Hojälé's town [Asosa] was left on this side. The whole territory was cut off and taken away to the other side. As for the poor (*deha*) who remained in our [territory], *Shäykh* Hojälé's official, Hamid, gathered them and fled with them to the British two years ago. Those still remaining at present cannot provide the six hundred [*wäqét*] tribute to us.²¹ And now, *Janhoy*, leave for me the right of collecting dues at the customs gates here, in the land of the Arabs. Let *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis' men collect the taxes and hand [the money] over to me so that it would increase the amount of tributes [to be paid] by me. Formerly, I was collecting the dues, and it was from me that *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis's men took this [right]. Written on 20th of *Tahsas* 1899 E.C./December 29, 1906.

24

wa/mu/1/386-385

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. When I came [to you] last year, I pleaded with *Janhoy* that the matter concerning *Balambaras* Bäqqälä had been a source of much trouble to me and that while I was able to deal with his thir-

²¹ First mention of the 600 *wäqét* that apparently were the yearly tribute paid by the 'Arab region' of Beni Shangul through the intermediary role of Naqamtee.

teen hundred *Gondäre*,²² I was unable to be on good terms with him. *Janhoy* told me that he would be removed [transferred] at the beginning of the year [*t'ibbi*]. Later on, *Janhoy*, who had thought over the matter more than I did, sent him an order instructing him to come [to Addis Ababa] with his convoy [luggage]. But he refused to comply with *Janhoy*'s seal [order] and having left his luggage in Naqamtee, came to Addis Ababa where he is staying at present. And now he says that he would again return to Naqamtee. Why is he coming again to me? I say this not because [of worrying about] his provisions [*qäläb*]. Concerning his provisions, I can send it to his place in Addis Ababa if *Janhoy* orders me to do so. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. Written on 21st of *Tahsas* 1899 E.C./December 30, 1907.

25

wa/mu/1/385-384

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You wrote me that I should give to *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis' official intermediary (*baldäräbba*), Särs'äwäld, the land held and used as *madäriya*²³ by the *näggadras* of the Arabs. [But] the Arabs²⁴ do not have a *näggadras*. Their *qoro* collects taxes at the rivers; they have no *näggadras*. There is a *qoro* called *Abba Mächafa*²⁵ about whom Särs'äwäld gave *Janhoy* false information. He, by virtue of his authority as *qoro*, orders and collects *Janhoy*'s tributes only; he has not even a single tenant [*t'is*] as his *madäriya*. If Särs'äwäld can verify that *Abba Mächafa* has a tenant [*t'is*] for himself besides his being a *qoro*, let *Janhoy* have both of us meet together [and be confronted on the matter]. Otherwise, what did I do wrong to you so that you gave my land to Särs'äwäld? *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. Written on 30th of *T'err* 1899 E.C./February 7, 1907.

²² First mention in the correspondence of the 1,300 *Gondäre* headed by *Balambaras Bäqqälä* being stationed in Naqamtee. Despite Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's appeal and insistence of their removal from Naqamtee, the *Gondäre* stayed there until *Lij Iyasu*'s visit of the province in 1913.

²³ A plot of land granted by the Ethiopian state to its soldiers or officials in lieu of salary. The same term is used in the correspondence to signify the *gäbbar* households assigned to the military functionaries of the imperial state (*mälkäñña*, *näft'äñña*) and their families and dependents in lieu of salary. The word *madäriya*, therefore, may refer either to appropriated land or to *gäbbar* households. Here, it refers to the former.

²⁴ See fn. 8 above.

²⁵ On *Abba Mächafa*, who was a *ch'iqashum* under Särs'äwäld, see letter 49 below.

26

wa/mu/1/384

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Formerly, we used to hunt elephants and pay ivory as tributes. *Janhoy* knows that. And now the elephants are disappearing throughout the country. Let me give gold [as tribute] in place of ivory. My tribute [to you] in ivory was a hundred *wäqét*. How much shall I give? However, the [local] people (the *balagär*) are complaining that they cannot provide double tribute in gold. I had reported this to *Janhoy*. And now, *Janhoy*, write to me [saying] how much I should give [in place of] ivory and the amount I should pay, and I will do so accordingly. Written on the 3rd of *Mäggabit* 1899 E.C./March 12, 1907.

27

wa/mu/1/384-383

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You wrote me: “I have written you earlier about the matter concerning the taxes at the [customs] gates. However, as far as the matter of markets and merchants is concerned, get a scribe who would supervise [the work] with Särs’äwäld, *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis’ official intermediary, and collect taxes at the gates and markets which would go to you, as in former times, in accordance with the regulation of the customs office, as well as the remaining part every two or three months—whenever it is convenient for you—and you should not send anything to me from the taxes collected. I made this regulation which would apply not only to you in particular but to everybody. Get a scribe who would supervise the gold duties and after it had been collected by them, let it be handed over to you every three months”. But now *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis’ men said that they would only give me the money collected from the gate taxes, not from the markets. Written on the 9th of *Yäkkatit* 1899 E.C./February 16, 1907.

28

wa/mu/1/383

Janhoy,

You wrote me that I should receive the equipment with which the *färänji* at Näjjo used to extract gold. Having written in the register-book (*mäzgäb*) in Amharic, I have received the equipment. *Musé* Zabba [Zappa] gave me [the book], having written [it] in *färänji* language. Since *Musé* Zabba had mentioned to me the number of items, may *Janhoy* have [both] the register-book which I have written and sent and the one he has written be checked against each other, before he leaves for his country. Written on the 4th of *Mäggabit* 1899 E.C./March 13, 1907.

29

wa/mu/1/383

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. May it reach *Qäññazmach* Yebsa.

When two years ago, *Qäññazmach* Jirata and the English [the British] quarreled, you told us to be careful not to create trouble again with the English in that direction [Arab country]. *Janhoy*, Särs'äwäld's men are committing much wrong against the merchants of Sennar coming from the territory of the English. I did not write about this to *Janhoy* because I thought it would appear as if I hated the tax-collectors of the customs office. And now if the English plead with *Janhoy* that their men have been mishandled, the people in the land of the Arabs who are under me might react the same way against my own men [tax collectors]. And these ones do not pay attention to my orders. Concerning this matter, one of my men residing in the land of the Arabs sent me a letter, which I am sending herewith [to you]. Written on the 4th of *Mäggabit* 1899 E.C./March 13, 1907.

30

wa/mu/1/382

Janhoy,

My men who are overseeing the land of the Arabs complained that they were separated from [their] church [life]; I, therefore, built a *tabot* [church] at a place called Egoliha. The place is decent and has a cool wind [weather]. There is no malaria. Moreover, the Arabs [farm] by digging [land] with a pick (*doma*); they do not know how to farm with oxen. So that the Arabs would learn how to farm with oxen, I sent some slaves who know how to farm from here and had them [till the land] by using pairs of oxen. Also, I found a spot on the Dabus where a bridge could be built. I could not have a wooden bridge built because [the river's width] is forty arms/cubits long and [therefore] too big. It would be best if a metal bridge could be built on it, like the ones *Janhoy* had built on the various streams in Addis Ababa. There is rock on both sides of the river, which is ideal for building bridges. The lower part of the spot on which the bridge will rest is a cliff, and water cannot touch it during the summer when the river overflows. [The height of this cliff] is twenty arms/cubits long. Written on the 24th of *Yäkkatit* 1899 E.C./March 3, 1907.

31

wa/mu/1/382-381

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Four years ago, Ibrahim Mahmud, brother of *Fitawrari* Mähammäd, deserted from the English [the British] and came to us.²⁶ [Since then] *Janhoy*'s seal with the following order reached me: "Because [the English] will hand over to me any of my men who goes to them, hand him [Ibrahim] over to them". Accordingly, I handed Ibrahim Mahmud over to the English. Also, three years ago, Hamid left his country and entered [the territory] of the British. When *Fitawrari* Gullelatu, bearing *Janhoy*'s seal, asked [them] to hand Hamid over to us, they said that Hamid was not a governor but a simple man (*deha*)²⁷ and that they would not hand him over; therefore, he [Gullelatu] returned without him. Ibrahim Mahmud is not a governor as such; the governor is his brother, *Fitawrari* Mähammäd.²⁸ And now *Janhoy*'s seal [order] reached me with the [following] instructions: "Since we are going to conclude for you the matter concerning Hamid later on, and since they said that they would return his [Hamid's] guns, receive the guns". In accordance with *Janhoy*'s order, I sent men to receive the guns but they [the English] returned to us only forty-six guns which are broken and have fissures. Among the forty-six, only seven are of good quality. The remaining ones are without wood [barrel] and are broken. I am sending herewith to *Janhoy* their letter and the register of receipt (*māzgāb*). *Shäykh* Hojälé's guns, which Hamid took with him to the British, are seven hundred and ten in number. However, except these four—*Abba* Musa, *Abba* Sombir, Yassin Chorqa and *Abba* Moti—who are still here, all *Shäykh* Hojälé's men have left. Hamid went to the English with them. I am sending here the register which has the names of the men and their respective leaders. Written on the 16th of *Tahsas* 1899 E.C./December 25, 1906.

32

wa/mu/1/380

Etégé,

May God show you [the truth]. When I came last year, I pleaded with you to intercede for me to have *Janhoy* agree that no one should interfere with my

²⁶ *Fitawrari* Mähammäd was one of the three chiefs of Beni Shangul who were kept in Addis Ababa ostensibly to complete the border demarcation of the region which was under negotiation with the British Sudan.

²⁷ *Deha* is used here to mean 'a subject.'

²⁸ Also known as Wad Mahmud, traditional chief of Khomosha.

right to collect dues at the customs gate here and that I would give to *Janhoy* the money that I collect from the dues. While I was waiting for a decision, Särs'äwäld came with *Janhoy*'s seal, instructing me to relinquish the right of collecting dues at markets and on gold, although, when the customs gate was established, *Janhoy* did not take [this right] away from me.²⁹ Also, those who purify gold (*manguwaläl*) and attend the markets are the [local] inhabitants (the *balagär*), not traders coming from another region. And now why should the [local] inhabitants be interfered with? What did I do wrong since, when the customs house was established, *Janhoy* had allowed me [to oversee it]? And now, *Etégé*, please intercede with *Janhoy* on my behalf. [n.d.]

33

wa/mu/1/379

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I earlier informed *Janhoy* that *Balambaras* Bäqälä was not getting along with the town dwellers and the country and that *Janhoy* had ordered his removal with his convoy and that he should leave [the country]. He has not yet taken his luggage from Naqamtee; his stuff is still in Naqamtee. He is staying in Addis Ababa. And now, *Janhoy*, let him take his stuff away from Naqamtee. I have already taken and given him his provisions in Addis Ababa. As for the provisions (*qäläb*) to be given in the future, let one of your men receive it [the provisions] from my men in Addis Ababa and give it to him. *Balambaras* Bäqälä is not on good terms with my men. [n.d.]

34

wa/mu/1/379-378

Janhoy,

Let me remind you that you asked me to let you know the amount of money I collected after counting the livestock (cows, sheep and goats). I thus collected one *birr* against every ten goats, sheep and against every head of cattle. And the total income from these is about fifty-two thousand and two hundred *birr*. And you sent further message in which you said: "and with the money, since I [*Janhoy*] heard gold is sold at a cheaper price in your country, purchase gold (for us)". It is true that gold was sold at twenty-eight *birr* [per *wäqét*] previously. These days, however, since we have started buying gold to pay our taxes, the price has risen up to 30 *birr*. Now, *Janhoy*, I will buy the

²⁹ Cp. similar letters to Empress T'aytu (letters 1 and 6) and to Menilek (letter 22).

gold at the current price, is that all right? Written on *Mäggabit* 30, 1899 E.C./April 8, 1907.

35

wa/mu/1/378

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You told me to look over this Arab land, and I will. I have kept *Janhoy* informed with every situation down here. But, if I do not receive any reply from *Janhoy*, how can I govern this country? I have never received a single reply to the letters I have sent since *Hedar*. My servants, with whom I sent the letters, are complaining that they are forced to remain there [in Addis Ababa] because they found no one who could present my letter to you. Written on *Mäggabit* 24, 1899 E.C./April 2, 1907.

36

wa/mu/1/378

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth], when you gave me the land of Méttä, you gave it to me as *gult*. [*Azazh Ayälä*] leaves the land for me [when he likes] and comes back to seize it again. This year when I came and appealed about it to *Janhoy*, you promised “from now onwards, *Azazh Ayälä* will never seize it [i.e. the land I gave to you]. Furthermore, you told me that *Qäññazmach* Yebsa would follow up the case for me and I would soon get back my land. But *Qäññazmach* Yebsa had done little about it ever since. And my land is still under the control of *Azazh Ayälä*. May God show you [the truth]! Written on *Mäggabit* 29, 1899 E.C./April 7, 1907.

37

wa/mu/1/377

Janhoy,

I have [just] had the bridge on Dabus built [completed] with the help of God’s benevolence and *Janhoy*’s wealth. The narrow part of the ford is sixty arms long and I have had it built. The arm’s thickness is four arms. It will last for a long time. [Written on the] 1st of *Miyazya* 1899 E.C./April 9, 1907.

38

wa/mu/1/377-376

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Janhoy*'s seal [imperial order] concerning the [collection of] dues, ordering the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis to leave [it] to me except for the customs house, reached me. And now, when I told them that since the customs house is at Mändi, they should stay there and collect dues from the land of the Arabs and that they should leave mine, they said that they would only leave the markets, not the [customs] gates.³⁰ They also said that my men and their own would stay together and that we should continue collecting dues as in former times, and they would do the same at the customs house. If we stay at the same gate and they collect dues from the same people that we have already taxed and vice-versa, the poor [the merchants] will suffer. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. Earlier, when the customs house was established at Mändi. *Janhoy*'s seal reached me saying: "Until the time they get used living in the land of the Arabs, let them collect dues from the land of the Arabs staying at Mändi". And now, there is in the land of the Arabs [a place] called Goliha which is much more temperate than Mändi. I had a church built [there] and have started farming with pairs of oxen. There is not even influenza (*gunfan*), let alone malaria (*nidad*). Let him [Haylä Giyorgis] go and collect dues there. The gate at Mändi has always been mine. Written on the 20th of *Genbot* [1899] E.C./May 28 [1907]. We also wrote to *Etégé* this same word [letter].

39

wa/mu/1/376

Janhoy,

I have received your letter stating: "your [right of] collection of taxes [*qärät*'] may return to the old status and *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis should leave the work [of tax collection] to you". I accepted it by bowing down and kissing the ground [with great joy], let your government remain long, let God give you long life. I have sent one hundred *wäqét* of gold as a gift (*mättaya*). Written on *Genbot* 20 [1899 E.C.]/May 28 [1907].

³⁰ The "matter of gates" is raised this time for the northwestern gate at Mandii (see letter 53) as well as the eastern gate at Billo (see letter 41).

40

wa/mu/1/376-375

Janhoy,

Bidu Gäda's home is Jidda. Two years ago, he came to an arid region (*bäräha*) where it is forbidden to go hunting and kill elephants. I wrote to *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw to have him arrested, but he fled and entered *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä's territory. Also, this year, during the Holy Week [*imamat*], he came from the territory of the *däjjazmach* and killed an elephant in the forbidden arid region. The arid region used to be protected by my men who used to go there in turns. During the Holy Week, when my men returned to church for prayer, he explored the region and, believing that there was no one [there], killed [an elephant]. This arid region was banned [for hunting] by *Janhoy's* order. Other arid regions that were not prohibited before were later prohibited as hunting grounds for elephants through *Janhoy's* sealed proclamation and the *Abun's* order of excommunication. This proclamation and the order of excommunication were not, however, made for me but for the whole country. It would be best if this man would be caught before he escapes from *däjjazmach's* territory and goes to another region. He cannot deny his killing because he sang the war song (*iyäzäfäné iyägeraré*) while he was returning home. The Galla as well as the Amhara have seen him. If he denies having killed, I can win [a legal case] against him, certifying [that he did so]. Written on the 20th day of *Genbot* [1899 E.C.]/May 28 [1907].

41

wa/mu/1/375-374

Janhoy,

Formerly, *Janhoy's* seal to the effect that *Näggadras* Yeggäzu, by order of *Janhoy*, could oversee [anyone] devoid of seal [i.e. receipt] from Billo's customs house, and that he would do this in my town Naqamtee reached me. *Näggadras* Yeggäzu used to supervise in Naqamtee and levy taxes on those coming from different routes. Later on, *Näggadras* T'änna used to supervise [the work of dues collection] in the town of Naqamtee and has been ever since levying taxes in accordance with the regulation. And now, in the town of Naqamtee itself, *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis's men are levying taxes for a second time on those from whom *Näggadras* T'änna's men have already collected dues and let them pass in Naqamtee without their moving out [of town]. *Näggadras* T'änna's men are levying a five per cent tax. Again, in Naqamtee, on the same day, *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis's men levy a five per cent tax. As a result of this, the poor [i.e. merchants] suffer and groan. Written on the 2nd of *Tahsas* 1898 E.C./December 10, 1905.

42

wa/mu/1/374-373

Janhoy,

I have gone to the river Dédessa to look at the possibility of constructing a bridge. It is about fifty-five arms. I am afraid if I construct it with wood, it would be fragile, and it would break down soon. It is better with metal [*färänji* bridge]. It is a very shallow river which is bordered with rock. Even during the rainy season, the river's height never reaches the top [never overflows]. It is a three-hour journey from where the Dédessa and Däbäna rivers meet in my country. Moreover, I have sent you a copper wire that you asked for. There is no one thicker than this one, but I have a black wire much thicker than the copper one. Written on the 20th of *Genbot* 1899 E.C./May 28, 1907.

43

wa/mu/1/373-372

Janhoy,

In the year before last, we had our hands tied together (*taqoraññtän*) about the *Gondäre* who died in the nearby forest.³¹ The case was settled in the presence of *Janhoy*. Those *Gondäre* were the soldiers (*chifra*) of *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw, who deserted [him] and went to [be followers of] *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä. I [also] had a servant (*ashkär*) of mine called *Fitawrari* Indirro. This year, *Fitawrari* Indirro's son had a slave who escaped, and when his son crossed over to Wäbära, *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä's country in search of the slave who had escaped, five of those *Gondäre* ambushed him on the road and shot at him [and his company] during the night, and they killed the son of Gäbrä Selasé and left two persons wounded. The ringleader of this affair [i.e. the ambush] is the man known as Bälay. I mean by this letter to let *Janhoy* be informed about it and I wish the Holy Saviour (*Mädhänä 'Aläm*) may give your health and I bow down ten and ten times. This is the word of your servant and

³¹ Imperial Ethiopia's courts tied the plaintiff and the defendant's hands together by a rope until a verdict was passed. It was known as the *qurañña system* (derivative of the Amharic word *mäqoraññät*, lit. 'to have one's hands tied together'), until lifted by *Lij* Iyasu in ca. 1909. Here Gäbrä Egzi'abhér used the Amharic word *taqoraññtän* only to underline the fact that he and his plaintiff (not clear from the letter) appeared before the imperial court where Emperor Menilek was present, debated and got a verdict passed. Hence the case was resolved. Otherwise, there is no evidence in this letter or any other contemporary correspondence where the emperor's vassals had their hands literally tied together unless they were removed or imprisoned for some serious matters of national significance. For the *qurañña system* see, among others, Bahru Zewde, 2002b, pp. 120–23.

slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on *Genbot* 22, 1899 E.C./May 30, 1907 at Näjjo town.

44

wa/mu/1/372-371

Etégé,

May God show you [the truth]. Earlier the letter bearing *Janhoy's* seal [imperial order] which says: "regarding the collection of taxes (*qärät*) except from the customs dues (*jemruk*), let the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis leave it to you, and, as in previous years, let it be to your benefit". Accordingly, I told the men of *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis, "since the customs duties (*jemruk*) are collected at the Mändi [gate] leave my area and settle in the Arab country to collect the duties there". But they refused saying, "we will leave you the market but we will continue collecting the duties at the gate". If both of us collect the customs duties [twice], the poor will suffer. Moreover, this is also in accordance to *Janhoy's* seal [imperial order] which said: "let them stay at Mändi and collect custom duties until they get accustomed to the Arab country". Furthermore, there is a tract of land by the name Agomi which is twice as fertile as that of Mändi and I have established a *Tabot* [i.e., an Ethiopian Orthodox church] and started to introduce a better farming system and these days there is no sign of influenza (*gunfan*) let alone malaria (*nidad*) in the country. Therefore, let him cross over and attend to the customs duties there. As for the gates at Mändi, they were, in fact, mine since the beginning [of time]. [n.d.]³²

45

wa/mu/1/370-369

Janhoy,

When you gave me the country of the Arabs, you told me that the [annual] tribute should be six hundred *wäqét* of gold.³³ But, when the British demarcated the boundary, they cut off certain localities including Buruk, Miguf,

³² This letter is a copy of letter 38 above at the end of which is written: "We also wrote to *Etégé* this same word [letter]". Although undated, there is little doubt that this letter was written on the same date, i.e. the 20th of *Genbot* [1899] E.C./May 30 [1907].

³³ While the Beni Shangul chiefs were kept in Addis Ababa for the border negotiations, Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was supposed to collect the Arab country's yearly tribute amounting to 600 *wäqét* of gold. Here the Naqamtee *enderassé* is asking for a reduced amount of tribute due to the border region being reduced in size.

Gerock and Mayack which belonged to *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman and *Fitawrari* Mähammad. At that time, I reported about this to *Janhoy*. Furthermore, two years back, a servant (*barya*) of *Shäykh* Hojälé named Hamid defected to the British along with many followers. I sent the names of these persons to *Janhoy*. For this reason, the annual tribute to the ‘Arabs’ land cannot be six hundred *wäqét* of gold. On the other hand, if we force them to bring tax, as we do in our Galla country, I am afraid the ‘Arabs’ will leave for the British territory; since each of the Arabs has one part of their family here and another there. Therefore, I am now sending a tribute for two years that amounts to six hundred *wäqét* of gold for the ‘Arab’ country and one thousand *wäqét* of gold for one year’s tribute for my own country Wallagga. Altogether, I am sending one thousand and six hundred *wäqét* of gold as tribute. Written on *Hamlé* 4, 1899 E.C./July 11, 1907 at Näjjo.

46

wa/mu/1/369

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth], my country cannot pay double the amount of tribute [it has been paying till now]. Earlier on I appealed to *Janhoy* saying that: the *gäbbar* households (*t’is*) should be counted [to verify my claim]. In the past, we were paying tribute in ivory when there were elephants in the country. But now, if we ask them [the *gäbbar*] to double the tax and at the same time pay it in cash instead of ivory, [I am afraid] the poor will not be able to do it. Written on *Hamlé* 4, 1899 E.C./July 11, 1907.

47

wa/mu/1/368

Janhoy,

There is a temperate and cool place three hours’ walk from Näjjo. I have built my town there. However, I did this in order that it would be closer to the land of the Arabs to control it. I have just had the construction of an excellent church started. I had written about [this same matter] to *Janhoy*.³⁴ I had the work of the church’s construction started there. It is better for human habitation than Näjjo. [I wrote] to inform *Janhoy* about this. Written on the 6th of *T’eqemt*/October 17 in the town of Yäbäl in 1900 E.C./1907.

³⁴ See letter 38 above.

48

wa/mu/1/368

Janhoy,

You wrote me that since you wanted men to bear guns for you, you wanted me to select able men and *balabbat*'s sons to be under my own son and send them to you at the beginning of the year (*t'ibbi*) so that they would get the guns. I did not bring my son because he was still a small child and had not come of age. But now I will bring him when I come [next time]. The number of guns that *Janhoy* gave me earlier is four thousand and two hundred, which I distributed among capable sons of the *balabbat* whom I [earlier] selected. And the sons of the *baläbbat* and *ch'äwa* have been no more than four thousand. If we order the poor to bear arms, they will refuse to till the government land (*hudad*) and [will refuse to] pay tributes. Four years ago, at the time of building the steam engine's (*babur*) rail, the poor pleaded with *Janhoy* that they would not pay tributes since they bore guns.³⁵ Written on the 4th of *T'eqemt* 1900 E.C./October 15, 1907.

49

wa/mu/1/367-366

Janhoy,

You ordered me to watch the Arabs who crossed the British boundary to hunt elephant there. *Janhoy*, I reported to you last year that a man by the name *Abba Mächafa*, a *ch'iqashum* of Särs'äwäld, crossed over the boundary to the British [Sudan] and killed an elephant. You told me then that he will react to this as soon as the British inform him and would send me a message. *Janhoy*, still, this Arab man named *Abba Mächafa* crossed over the boundary to the British land for a second time and killed six more elephants. As to me, to bring him to justice is against the order of *Janhoy* to apprehend any of Särs'äwäld's subjects. I did not arrest him, but when I asked him why he had hunted in the British territory, he replied that he had reached an agreement with the British. May God show you [the truth] that this man without our permission agreed with the British. I wish the Holy Saviour gives you health and, I bow down in front of you ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 29 *T'eqemt* 1900 E.C./November 9, 1907, at Yämbäl.

³⁵ For a different view on recruiting gun-bearing soldiers for the government, see letter 20 above.

50

wa/mu/1/366

Janhoy,

Two years ago, a man called Bidu Gäda entered the domain of *Däjjach* Dämessäw and hunted an elephant in the no-hunting zone. Then, while *Däjjach* Dämessäw was trying to arrest him, he escaped to *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä's territory.³⁶ And last year, he returned back to the no-hunting area, at the time of Holy Week (*himamat*),³⁷ and killed another elephant. When I reported this to you, you sent me a word that you had already sent a message to *Däjjach* Käbbädä to arrest Bidu Gäda. If the man has already been arrested and is denying his act, I am ready to send men who can testify against him. May God show you [the truth], it is already announced that if anyone sees him anywhere, let alone in the no-hunting zone, one should arrest him. This man, Bidu Gäda, has gone against your and the archbishop's [*p'app'as*] word. May God show you [the truth]. Written on 29 *T'eqemt* 1900 E.C./November 9, 1907 at Yämbäl.

51

wa/mu/1/365

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. There was an Arab *balabbat* by the name Yasin Ch'orqa.³⁸ He is one of *Shäykh* Hojälé's men. He has one hundred rifles at his own disposal. This year, in September, he crossed into *Däjjach* Joté's territory invading the Shanqella³⁹ people and took by force considerable number of Shanqella men. After *Däjjach* Joté's complaint, I sent to him three different occasions to come to terms with *Däjjach* Joté and to resolve the problem but to no avail. Do I have to arrest him? This man is a bandit (*shifta*) who has killed and took 'our Shanqella'. If he succeeded to escape to the British,

³⁶ *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä was the head of a sizeable group of *Gondäré* stationed at Wabära. See above, letter 43.

³⁷ Same as *imamat*, see letter 40 above.

³⁸ On Yasin Ch'orqa, Hojälé's representative in Beni Shangul, as a slave-raider see further, letter 55.

³⁹ The term 'Shanqella' is a derogatory collective noun used in reference to subject peoples living at the outer limits of Ethiopia's western borders. The term here may possibly mean any Nilotic people (Berta, Koma, Gumuz, etc.) living across the border. In the correspondence Gäbrä Egzi'abhé repeatedly asserts that it was the 'Shanqella' living in his Sibü territory who mostly panned and worked gold in the Näjjo mines. See letter 11 and note, letter 60.

would you ask the British to send him back to us? Other than this man, the Arabs are good-mannered. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and bow down eleven times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 11 *Hedar* 1900 E.C./November 21, 1907, at Yämbäl.

52

wa/mu/1/365-364

Etégé,

Earlier, when one of my *gäbbar* defected to the land of the Sibu, I asked *Basha* Ezzineh to hand him over to me, he refused to do so in spite of your order. This year, the *gäbbar* of Sibu have started to cross over to my country. May God show you [the truth]. If it is the will of *Etégé* that my *gäbbar* should not cross over to Sibu and that the *gäbbar* of Sibu should not cross over to my country, I will hand them one by one over to the Sibu. But if you decide that the *gäbbar* may reside wherever they like, I like it either way. *Etégé*, I am waiting for your decision. Otherwise, *Basha* Ezzineh may put blame on me for the desertion of his *gäbbar* to my country. [n.d.]

53

wa/mu/1/364

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You sent me a letter in which you wrote that you had restored the gates and markets to me, as in former times, and I was glad and stationed my men at the markets and gates. Also, the gate at Mändi belonged to my father formerly.⁴⁰ Believing that, when *Janhoy* restored the gates and markets, you did not keep the gate at Mändi away from me, I placed my men on it. And now *Ato Särs'äwäld's* men refused to leave it to me and are levying taxes there. I also placed my men and am levying taxes [there]. The result is that the poor were hurt. Being at the same gate, they as well as I [we both] are levying taxes, and the traders (*näggadé*) are suffering. The routes have been closed. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. Also, in order to [effectively] control the [customs] dues in the land of the Arabs, we built a church last year at a place called Goliha in the land of the Arabs which is much cooler and more temperate than Mändi. It would be best if he

⁴⁰ Gates are important entry and exit points for revenue-making both for the regional administration and the central government. The right to tax at Naqamtee's external gates is constantly renegotiated between the central government and the regional administration. See letter 35 above.

[Särs'äwäld] levied dues from there. Written on the 4th of *Tahsas* 1900 E.C./December 14, 1907 in the town of Yämbäl.

54

wa/mu/1/362

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Janhoy* knows I used to hunt elephants formerly in the arid regions (*bäräha*) and paid tributes in ivory. My tributes were delayed because elephants had disappeared from the arid areas. And now I am sending all that I could find and collect from various places. As for the remaining part, I shall collect whatever is available and send the ivory or the gold. Written on the 24th of *Tahsas* 1900 E.C./January 3, 1908 in the town of Naqamtee.

55

wa/mu/1/361

Janhoy,

You wrote me that you had restored to *Shäykh* Hojälé his country and that he was going back to this country.⁴¹ He had accordingly entered his country. Since early times, *Janhoy* had given me the office of judgeship over the land of the Arabs. And now shall I interfere with *Shäykh* Hojälé in matters of justice? Or shall I not? Does the tribute to *Janhoy* have to pass through me? Or shall *Shäykh* Hojälé do it himself? Also, there is a *balabbat* called Yasin Chorqa in *Shäykh* Hojälé[’s territory]. *Däjjazmach* Joté said that he [Yasin] had attacked his land. When I sent for him to come and appear [before me], he refused to come. I earlier sent a letter to *Janhoy* asking for instructions on what I should do. In the meantime, before *Janhoy*’s reply reached me, *Shäykh* Hojälé entered his country. Also, while *Shäykh* Hojälé was in prison, his men committed several offenses. It would be best if *Janhoy* would ensure *Däjjazmach* Joté does not accuse *Shäykh* Hojälé because of this matter. However, *Däjjazmach* Joté writes me every day about the matter concerning Yasin Chorqa. Written on the 8th of *Yäkkatit*/February 16 [1908].

⁴¹ The return of the Beni Shangul chiefs to their country and the restoration of their land and rights is a major adjustment for Gidaamii and Naqamtee who are now confronted directly by their Arab neighbors. See below, letters 77, 81, 94, 101–103.

56

wa/mu/1/360

Janhoy,

Coal (*dāngiya käsäl*) was discovered, apart from the earlier one, at three places. One is near our town of Näjjo. The other two are in the Handäq arid region. In the earlier place, I had the ground dug around at several spots that are one hundred to two hundred cubits apart, and it [the coal] is in all the spots around. At one spot, I had it dug up to ten arms deep and further down and such kind of coal abounded up to the bottom. The quantity is inexhaustible. One cannot dig and finish it. I am sending [samples of] the [coal] found afterwards [at] the three [spots]. Written on the 10th of *Yäkkatit*/February 18 [1908] in the town of Näjjo.

57

wa/mu/1/360

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth] [I am writing] about contribution from the *gäbbar* that is expected for the construction of the railway.⁴² We are pressing them (the *gäbbar*) to contribute in every way possible, whether by land or cattle. But due to the present low price of cattle, they could not sell them and contribute. Giving them some extra time would be an option, but I am afraid that it would be against your word. The poor are suffering. Therefore, I have decided to appeal to *Janhoy*. Written on 6 *Mäggabit* 1900 E.C./March 15, 1908 at Näjjo town.

58

wa/mu/1/359

Janhoy,

I hereby send the *mäzgäb* with a list of cattle which has been counted this year for the railway [work]. I could not receive in land because those who own land also have cattle. They use the land for cattle raising. There is no land-owner who has no cattle. Also, retail merchants and *dämäñña*⁴³ all have [at least] a sheep. That is why *dämäñña* and retail merchants were not registered by name. Also, *Janhoy*, this is not all the cattle in my country. When we levied

⁴² The construction of the Djibouti–Addis Ababa railway, sponsored by the Ethiopian and French governments and built over a long process between 1897 and 1917. Provinces were expected to contribute to the country's growth and defense with public works.

⁴³ It is not clear why the term *dämäñña* 'foe, enemy' is used here attached to retail merchants; a possible sense might be that of 'friends and foes'.

formerly, the people hid many cattle deliberately. Later on, when we tried to count a second time, the [local] inhabitants started a quarrel, and seven [people] died, having refused to have [their cattle] counted. Many men were wounded. However, it is not only a single region. All the country [people] refused to have their cattle counted and started quarreling with the men sent [to count them], and they are causing me trouble by wounding each other. Formerly, my country never transgressed my order and wish. This year for reasons I am not aware of, it has become a source of trouble for me. Written on the 23rd of *Miyazya* 1900 E.C./May 1, 1908, in the town of Näjjo.

59

wa/mu/1/359

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I built a house on the land that you gave me in Addis Ababa and also fenced it with stone around it. Recently, I received a letter from the man I entrusted the house to in Addis while I was in Wallagga saying that *Fitawrari* Abba Korra[n] has occupied my compound. May God show you [the truth], *Janhoy*, where can I rest when I come to Addis Ababa? Written on 23 *Miyazya* 1900 E.C./May 1, 1908 at Näjjo.

60

wa/mu/1/358

Janhoy,

I received a letter with your seal asking me for one hundred male slaves and another one hundred female slaves from my countrymen in order to develop (*maqnat*) the land of Bägämder. When I shared your order with my people, they were against the idea. No one wants to give away his own slave. But I have my own Shanqella. They know nothing about farming, but they can do any other work.⁴⁴ I may send them to you if you wish. Otherwise, I am afraid, the peasants (the *balagär*) will not give me their slaves. My countrymen were loyal to me in the past, they would never have acted contrary to my words, but these days they act differently. I do not know what is going on with them recently. Once, I attempted to count their cattle but, even though I already knew how much they had, they hid their cattle away from me. When I tried to do the same thing for the second time, one of my *gäbbar*, Gänji, protested and quar-

⁴⁴ This reference to Shanqella laborers being mainly non-agricultural groups of enslaved origin fits with earlier references in the correspondence. See letter 17, and Interview with Najjoo Elders (MS Addis Ababa, IES 1888).

reled with my men, and consequently seven men died due to the fight between them. Thus, I would send you my Shanqella even if they can do all but to plough. Written on 20 *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./April 28, 1908 at Näjjo.

61

wa/mu/1/357-355

Etégé,

May God show you [the truth]. “We have given *Shäykh* Hojälé a sealed order by which he would be provided with food wherever he spent the night on his way back to his country and be attended to favourably. It is said that he entered his country without having received what we had ordered for him, not even for one day. Why did he spend the night without food after showing my seal?” This was the content of *Janhoy*’s seal that *Ato Särs’äwäld* gave me. May God show you [the truth]. If this were true, may I be shot with my own weapon in the name of Menilek. On his way to his country, I let *Shäykh* Hojälé pass [through mine], having given him, wherever he spent the night in my territory, thirteen castrated oxen and seventeen fattened sheep. Besides, he obtained without the least delay grass and barley (*gäfära*) for his animals, feed of *enjära*, honey, *t’äjj*, *t’älla*, and firewood. Even without *Janhoy*’s seal, how could I see anyone [in my country] spend the night without food, let alone with *Janhoy*’s seal? This is all the result of *Särs’äwäld*’s lies.⁴⁵ He has not once spoken the truth ever since he came to our country. Although his lie has not been discovered, he has never spoken the truth. He has been telling all these false things because he thought *Janhoy* would not have him and me come together [for disputation]. And now, *Etégé*, I am sending *Afäwärq* to meet him. This man [*Särs’äwäld*] is my enemy. He accuses me falsely of doing anything. Although I never lied to the Government he looks for reasons to make me quarrel with the Government. *Etégé*, may God show you [the truth]. Let alone being responsible for *Shäykh* Hojälé’s spending the night without food in my own land, I have given even to *Ato Särs’äwäld* a castrated ox, six fattened sheep when he came with *Shäykh* Hojälé. Moreover, as [I did to] *Shäykh* Hojälé, he has received without any delay whatsoever grass for his animals, *t’äjj*, *t’älla*, feed of barley corn (*gäfära*), *enjära*, and firewood [he needed]. *Etégé*, may his misdeeds against me be revealed to you. I am sending

⁴⁵ Antagonism with *Särs’äwäld*’s men is a recurring complaint of GE throughout the correspondence. See letters 2, 29, 53, 67, and 74 below. GE’s letter to Empress T’aytu is the first reference to *Shäykh* Hojälé’s returning to his country after his long confinement in Addis Ababa.

to you *Janhoy*'s seal which has reached me. However, unless you do something that will separate me from him [Särs'äwäld], he will not let me live [peacefully]. He will ruin me on false [charges]. Written on the 8th of *Genbot* 1890 E.C./May 16, 1908, in the town of Yämbäl.

62

wa/mu/1/355

Janhoy,

You ordered me that I should let Hamid, when he comes here, spend the night in my territory and give him food. Accordingly, I gave him four castrated oxen and fifteen fattened sheep. I am sending the register-book (*mäzgäb*), which certifies that I had given him [while he was] in my land, *enjära*, *t'äjj*, *t'älla*, firewood, grass for his animals, feed of barley (*gäfära*), and honey. To *Ato Särs'äwäld* also, I had given, wherever he spent the night in my land when he came with Hamid, sixteen sheep, and a castrated ox. Besides, firewood, grass for his animals, feed of barley corn, *enjära*, *t'äjj* and *t'älla* [have been inscribed in] the register book which I am sending [to you]. [n.d.]

63

wa/mu/1/354

Janhoy,

Earlier the customs supervisors used to buy tobacco from the market from the common people and would later sell it to the people themselves. They did not make inappropriate search [of luggage] at any gate. Recently, I was requested to make this search on every trader who travels with his coffee, ivory, and wax. I am contrary to this idea because the traders would be confronted with a great problem to [unload and] reload their belongings a second time. Thus, I hereby appeal to *Janhoy* [to repeal] this regulation that has been issued only on my country and I never heard of it in any other part. May God show you [the truth]. Written on 30 *Miyazya*/May 8 [1908?] at Yämbäl.

64

wa/mu/1/353

Janhoy,

In accordance with the message you sent recently that I should hand over to *Musé Zappa* all the equipment which the *färänji* have been using for the gold work in Näjjo, I have handed it over to *Musé Zappa*. But *Musé Zappa* says he will work here, trying to discover gold. Shall I oversee [his work] as in former times? What am I expected to do? Written on the 30th of *Säné* 1900 E.C./July 7, 1907 in the town of Yämbäl.

65

wa/mu/1/353

Janhoy,

Earlier you sent me a message that I should send you one hundred male and one hundred female slaves, as you are preparing to develop Bägämeder.⁴⁶ So, I am hereby sending one hundred male and one hundred female slaves, thirty-two of whom are carrying a baby. This makes two hundred thirty-two slaves altogether. Written on 18 *Sané*, 1900 E.C./June 25, 1908, at Yämbäl.

66

wa/mu/1/353

Janhoy,

Musé [Zappa] wants to work on [sieving] gold. Earlier, I had sent you a letter asking you whether I should overlook his work like I did before. Now, he has started working on the gold. He is not sieving the gold with a machine as in the past. He has employed a number of Galla to sieve it by hand. Because of this, the amount of the gold produced is very negligible.⁴⁷ Written on 7 *Nähasé* 1900 E.C./August 13, 1908, at Yämbäl.

67

wa/mu/1/352-351

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You wrote me that since *Ato Särs'äwäld's* men are overseeing and arresting at the gate of Maräch, contraband traders who come without carrying the Custom House's seal of Säyyo and Mändi, I should not prohibit them. Maräch [gate] is [at] the Dédéssa River. My territory on the upper part of the Dédéssa is small. *Janhoy* also knows that all my territory lies on the lower part of the Dédéssa River. He [Särs'äwäld] wants to oversee [the duties collection] at Märach to ruin my country. My men who, for the sake of not showing the customs seal, do not go to Säyyo or Mändi, and those who come from Wallagga to Naqamtee and vice versa, are caught like thieves and are taxed by him. And when I levy taxes on them by *Janhoy's* permission which recognized my old right, while [because] we levy taxes being at the same gate, the traders will suffer, and the country will be ruined. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. Dédéssa and Säyyo, where the Cus-

⁴⁶ It is not clear whether the enslaved persons referred to here as a movable workforce were drawn from the Shanqella or other Nilo-Saharan groups mentioned in the correspondence.

⁴⁷ Gold panning and sieving was traditionally handled by Shanqella workers. See letters 42, 68.

toms House is, are very far apart, like [between] Addis Ababa and Boru Méda. Commercially, it is the gold route. The traders travel for a month to get the Custom House's Seal, although they have no business [there]. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. *Däjjazmach* Joté's territory [borders] belongs to *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis. Why don't they oversee the markets on their boundary and its neighborhood? [I swear] in [the name of] God. His [Haylä Giyorgis'] wish to oversee at Maräch, *Janhoy*, is only aimed at wresting from me what you had given me. How can he distinguish between men who have illegally passed the gates from *Däjjazmach* Joté's territory and those coming from mine? May God show you [the truth]. Written on the 15th of *T'eqemt* 1901 E.C./October 25, 1908, in Naqamtee.

68

wa/ma/1/350-349

Janhoy,

I have received your letter which orders me to hand over the working materials for the processing of gold, which, once used to be the *färänji*'s, to *Musé* [Monsieur] Zappa in *Säné*. Otherwise, it said nothing whether or not Zappa may begin his work or not. Despite this, he started the work as soon as he arrived here. Then, I wrote again to you asking what measure should I take concerning the man, but your answer did not reach here. So, I assigned my men to watch over him. From 29 *Säné* to 20 *Mäskäräm* he sieved out about sixteen and a half *wäqét*. Then, on 21 *Mäskäräm*, I received a letter from *Janhoy* to stop his work. Now, after your letter I prohibited him from working. This sixteen *wäqét* of gold was not processed with a machine. He employed Galla to sieve out the gold by hand. Written on *Mäskäräm* 24, 1900 E.C./October 5, 1908, at Näjjo.

69

wa/ma/1/349

Janhoy,

I, now, with the benevolence of God and with your treasure, feel a little better. I have come from my house at Näjjo to that of Naqamtee.⁴⁸ Would you allow me to come and see you in this sunny season. I am afraid if I delay [my coming to you] until the rainy season, my ailment will aggravate. Written on 15 *Tahsas*, 1901 E.C./December 25, 1908.

⁴⁸ The year before GE had built a house near Najjoo. This is the first mention in the correspondence of GE's health.

70

wa/ma/1/348

Janhoy,

You wrote me about Abba Musa, an Arab, whose daughter was *Shäykh* Hojälé's wife. While he [Hojälé] was imprisoned she, without having obtained divorce, took his children and cattle and went to her father with whom she is [now] staying. I heard about this from the people. And now, have Abba Musa stay with you, and return to *Shäykh* Hojälé his wife, children, cattle and all.⁴⁹ Moreover, since *Shäykh* Hojälé told me that, while he was here, "Abba Musa and the sons of Wäzäruq quarreled with Hamid, and they refused to be governed by *Shäykh* Hojälé, as a result of which they were causing trouble to him and confusion in the country, have them [both] reconcile if they [Abba Musa and Wäzäruq's sons] agree; if they refuse, arrest them and send them to me". The men [who quarreled with Hamid] went to *Däjjach* Abdurrahman's territory, where they are living at present, soon after their quarrel with Hamid. They are still in *Däjjach* Abdurrahman's territory. According to *Janhoy*'s order, I sent for them to come to me [so as] to have them reconcile, if possible, or else go together to *Janhoy*. They refused and did not come. I wrote to *Däjjach* Abdurrahman to send these men to me since it was *Janhoy*'s order. He said that he would report [the matter] to *Janhoy* himself and would not send the men and kept them [with him]. I am reporting this to *Janhoy* because, if I sent [my] men to bring [them] by force, a dispute would arise. Moreover, the Arabs do not know the regulations of our country. Also, they do not know that anyone who refuses [your order] should be punished. For this reason, they do not pay [much] attention to the matter. And now, *Janhoy*, let the reply to this [letter] be sent to me promptly. I will do what you want me to do. Written on the 18th of *Tahsas* 1901 E.C./December 27, 1908, in Naqamtee.

71

wa/mu/1/347-46

Etégé,

May God show you [the truth]. Sibu was the old territory of my father and grandfather. *Ras* Gobäna sliced it off from my father's territory] and gave it to his servant (*ashkär*). I pleaded earlier to *Etégé* concerning the territory having been taken away from me. I pleaded to *Etégé* so that she would restore

⁴⁹ Internal quarrels made the 'Arab region' a tense area of negotiation for the Naqamtee administration, particularly due to the old animosity between *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Däjjach* Abdurrahman (Abd al-Rahman) Tor el Guri. See below, letters 78, 97, 101, and 103–105.

the land to me and then, the territory being under my control, I would pay tributes in gold or honey, the amount *Etégé* fixes I should pay every year. And *Etégé* said that you did not want tribute since you need badly a place where the men and the soldiers will live. And now the *qälad* [land measurement] is introduced [in the country]. If the *qälad* is registered under another person's name, it leaves me dispossessed of the *rist* which belonged to my father and grandfather. And why should I be dispossessed of my grandfather's *rist* during *Etégé* and Menilek's reign? And now, let the appointed chiefs (*mälkäñña*) and the soldiers stay where they have [settled]. May I assume possession of my father's *rist*? Let me be registered as the first owner. I will give the annual tributes as fixed by *Etégé*. When I say, "I will give the money", I shall not collect the money from Sibü but will pay from my own [pocket]. The land that I have now is enough for me, however. The country in the lower part of Dé-déssa was conquered by my father on horseback [while on a campaign]. However, Sibü is the *rist* of my grandfather and great grandfather.⁵⁰ As a man dispossessed [of his land] during the time of Menilek and *Etégé* remains so forever, and one settled [on land] in Menilek and *Etégé* ['s time] remains so forever. *Etégé*, may you restore my *rist* to me. I am sending ten *wäqét* [of gold] as a gift. Written on the 16th of *T'err* [1901 E.C.]/January 24, [1909].

72

wa/mu/1/346-344

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Ever since *Janhoy* gave me my father's territory after my father *Däjjach* Moräda [Morodaa]'s death, I have never quarreled even with my neighbors. Nor have I ever come to *Janhoy* with any serious affair. I dread disputes, let alone for them to come to me. I have never come to *Janhoy* with a [legal] case. I would prefer to make reconciliation myself. Moreover, I have never quarreled with my neighbors over boundaries. The Wama River is the boundary between my [territory] and that of *Däjjach* Dämessäw. In the direction of Limmu, our boundary with *Däjjach* Käbbädä's [territory] is the Angär River. In the lower part, in the direction of Wämbära, our boundary is the River Abbay [Blue Nile].⁵¹ And in the direction of the

⁵⁰ The forceful pleading with Empress T'aytu concerns traditional land rights in Sibü territory GE claims to have inherited from his father Morodaa. On this see further, letters 139, 220, and the Bakaree family chronicle (Ch. 3).

⁵¹ GE's claim attesting Naqamtee rights over the land bordered by the western province's four main rivers (Waama, Angär, Abbaay and Daabus) is quite interesting.

Arabs, our boundary is the Dabus River. And now [recently] the Arabs such as *Däjjach* Abdurrahman and *Shäykh* Hojälé crossed the Dabus and occupied my territory. That [the region] up to Dabus has been tribute-payer [did not begin] in my time. It [the country] was colonized [first conquered] by my father, *Däjjach* Moräda [Morodaa], a long time ago. *Däjjach* Moräda, my father, had gone on a campaign against it during the time of *Ras* Gobäna for whom he acted as a guide, having crossed the Dabus [River]. That [the region] up to Dabus paid tributes to us and how the way was cleared [submission was made] to *Ras* Gobäna wherever he spent the night, to this all the soldiers who went on the campaign with *Ras* Gobäna bear witness. The evidence is: having crossed the Dabus, *Ras* Gobäna reached the mountain called Tullu Arba, killed all the Shanqella,⁵² and piled stones on Tullu Arba to mark [the boundary] and returned [to his camp]. Moreover, when we went on a campaign with *Ras* Mäkonnen, [it was known that the region] on this side of Dabus was my tributary and that on the other side of Dabus was the Arabs'. That this was so, all the soldiers of *Ras* Mäkonnen know. *Däjjach* Dämessäw also knows [this] himself as well as all his soldiers. Also, after the territory of the Arabs has been colonized, *Däjjach* Dämessäw has been occupying the Arabs' territory on the other side of Dabus and I have been occupying the one on this side of Dabus up to now paying tribute to *Janhoy*. This also *Däjjach* Dämessäw knows as well as his whole army. *Janhoy* also knows that my territory is on this side of Dabus as well as the [boundary] mark.⁵³ When, eighteen years ago, he gave [sent to] me *Qäññazmach* Bayu, who [later] died at *Ras* Wäldä Giyorgis' place, Yämadu, in order to show him [the gold area] since he knew [how to sieve] gold dust, [and that] he stayed at Dabus [River] for four years searching for gold dust: the Galla as well as the Amhara know this. Later, *Janhoy* sent *Bitwäddäd Musé* Ilg [Alfred Ilg] to me because he [*Janhoy*] thought that *Qäññazmach* Bayu did not know [how to collect] gold dust. I took him [Ilg] myself down to the Dabus River, walked along the riverbanks with him and having showed him everything, returned [home]. That this side

⁵² 'Shanqella' in this letter is a reference to all dark-skinned people who inhabited both sides of the Daabus River in the region of Beni Shangul. The implicit meaning attached to *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's use of the word 'Shanqella' is very close to saying 'my slaves.' For deeper meanings attached to 'Shanqella' and how it is related to *barya* see Pankhurst, 1977a; Fernyhough, 2010, pp. 65–108.

⁵³ After describing the geography of his traditional domain, in this letter GE writes out its history, calling as witnesses all the leaders and soldiers of the military expeditions (led respectively by *Ras* Gobana, *Ras* Mäkonnen, and *Ras* Dämessäw) that made Naqamtee part of imperial Ethiopia. See Triulzi, 1986.

of [Dabus] has been mine since long ago, even *Janhoy's* envoys know, let alone the [local] inhabitants. Also, I have sent *Qäññazmach* Ayyälä with an oral message concerning my difficulties; let him plead for me with *Janhoy*. I am herewith sending ten *wäqét* of gold as a present (*mätaya*). Written on the 16th of *T'err* 1901 E.C./January 24, 1909.

73

wa/mu/1/344-343

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. About the matter concerning these Arabs, I wrote a letter recently and sent it to *Qäññazmach* Ayälä. And now *Däjjach* Abdurrahman himself set out, came [in our direction] and having camped at Dabus, told the Shanqella to obey his orders as *Janhoy* had given [them] to him. My own *ashkär* who guards the country asked them why they had crossed their boundary and told them that they could not order our tributaries. He is camping on [this] bank of the Dabus River and guarding. *Däjjach* Abdurrahman wants to settle on the other side of Dabus after taking the Shanqella from this side. In the meantime, a dispute will break out; consequently, the country will collapse. At the moment, my servant (*ashkär*) is camping on this side of Dabus having refused to hand our *gäbbar* over. While *Däjjach* Abdurrahman tries to take my Shanqella to the other side of Dabus, my *ashkär* is prepared not to allow him to do so. Let *Janhoy's* seal come to me so that in the meantime, no dispute will break out and my Shanqella will be safe. Let *Däjjach* Abdurrahman and me come together to *Janhoy*. *Janhoy* will decide [over the matter]. I have sent [a message] for him through my *ashkär*. I have written to him [my *ashkär*]: “If they [Abdurrahman and his men] kill or rob our men, plead to a judge saying ‘by Menilek’s God’, do not do anything else”. However, since it is a territorial matter, let the reply be sent to me promptly. Written on the 28th of *T'err* [1901 E.C.]/February 5, [1909].

74

wa/mu/1/343

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Särs’äwäld assembled [and put under his command] all of *Shäykh* Hojälé’s soldiers as well as all those he has, and having come to my country, has camped [here] wanting to build houses at Läga Doqé [Laga Dhoqqee]. My *ashkär*, not wanting [him] to have any house built without *Janhoy's* seal and his master’s permission, camped staying near them. Also, I was not given *Janhoy's* seal. It did not reach me. Moreover, Särs’äwäld is my enemy. He would not give me *Janhoy's* seal even if he had one. He will only try to cause war amongst us so that the country would col-

lapse. I am sending to *Janhoy* the letter that my *ashkär*, *Fitawrari* Jirata, the overseer of the country, has sent me so that you can see. Lāga Doqé is not, as *Janhoy* may have thought, in the lower part of Dabus. It is in the upper part of Dabus here in Mändi. Written on the 4th of *Yäkkatit* 1901 E.C./February 13, 1909.

75

wa/mu/1/343-342

Janhoy,

I received your message which says: “*Däjjach* Abdurrahman is claiming that the land at the near side of River Dabus is his, if you say so, leave it to him, if you do not, send your men to reach an agreement with him”. *Janhoy*, you know this matter well. If you want me to talk with him, I will send no one, I will come myself. I will arrive in Addis Ababa on the Holy Saviour Day of *Yäkkatit* [*Yäkkatit* 27/March 8]. Due to my rheumatism (*qurt’imat*), I cannot travel as fast as I did before. Written on 9 *Yäkkatit* [1901 E.C.]/February 16 [1909].

76

wa/mu/1/342-341

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You wrote me that *Shäykh* Hojälé should be allowed to settle his men and govern the abandoned region in the lower part of Lāga Doqé. What did I do wrong? What offense did I commit to warrant your giving to *Shäykh* Hojälé my father and grandfather’s *rist*, for which I have been paying tributes since olden times up to the present? *Janhoy*, who knows it is my *rist*, would not have given it to *Shäykh* Hojälé [had it not been for] Särs’äwäld [who] is my enemy. Särs’äwäld had falsely informed you [about the matter]. And now *Shäykh* Hojälé has not come. Särs’äwäld, having collected *Shäykh* Hojälé’s soldiers, came and said that he would build [houses] as far as Mändi. Also, the abandoned region, *Janhoy*, cannot produce anything. However, having obtained permission from *Janhoy*, it has been reserved as a hunting ground and I have been paying tributes [for it].⁵⁴ As for Dabus, I have been paying tributes for it by collecting gold that we have been doing

⁵⁴ The Laga Dhoqqee lowland region bordering the Dabus River is the new area of interest for gold panning and for hunting. It is also part of the Sibu country where the Bakaree family held traditional rights and where the Handaq forest was located; see the Bakaree family chronicle (Ch. 3), fols 4r–6v, 22v.

since the time of my father and grandfather. I cannot obtain gold in any other place except Dabus. *Janhoy* is also aware of [this fact], and that Dabus is in the lower part of Lāga Doqé. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. If we have any benefit from this lowland region, it is a mere governorship; and what have we been obtaining from the [local] inhabitants except collecting *Janhoy*'s tributes? Honey, cotton and ivory are obtained from the lowland region. And we are capable of developing [clearing and ploughing] it. I let it as it is, because I thought ivory was more important to me as a tribute. Two years ago, I pleaded to *Janhoy* in a letter concerning this lowland region [after] *Janhoy* had forbidden [the hunting of] elephants. I pleaded to *Janhoy* to issue a proclamation in order to prevent elephants from moving to British territory as a result of firing shots that might frighten them when lions and other wild animals are hunted in the arid area. Your seal [imperial order] instructing me to make a proclamation for other wild animals also reached me. And according to *Janhoy*'s order, I issued a proclamation by which the area became prohibited [for hunting]. And now, *Janhoy*, send a letter to *Shäykh* Hojälé, so that no house will be built on my *rist*. If he says that all [this] is a lie and claims that it has been his *rist* since former times, have *Shäykh* Hojälé and me meet [for disputation]. If *Shäykh* Hojälé cannot come, arrange a meeting between one of his men and me. Until I discuss the matter [before you], see to it that no houses are built on my *rist*. *Janhoy*, send your seal to *Shäykh* Hojälé on my behalf. Written on the 9th of *Yäkkatit* [1901 E.C./February 16, [1909].

77

wa/mu/1/339

Janhoy,

These Arabs, such as *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Däjjach* Abdurrahman, starting from the time they [were released from prison in Addis Ababa and] came back to their country; when they go to Addis Ababa, they claim that they are sent for. On their return, their load is full of firearms [*wujigra* and *Dimotfor*]. I could not forbid them to purchase firearms, since I do not have any order from *Janhoy* concerning this. I would like only to report this to you. The Arabs are not the only ones who take the blame. There is a *Shanqella* [group] whose name is *Abigar* [i.e. the *Nuer*] by the side of River Baro. Some people claiming that the firearms are their own, without loading the firearms on the back of the animals, take them one by one to be sold to the *Shanqella* people known as *Abigar*. Thus, I would ask *Janhoy* that it is time to prohibit the movement of firearms at every gate. Written on 16 *T'err* 1901 E.C./January 24, 1909.

78

wa/mu/1/339

Janhoy,

These Arabs, *Däjjach* Abdurrahman, *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Fitawrari* Muhamäd [Mohammed], once had their own seal. But, these days, they send their messengers with a pass without their seal, to cross my country, claiming that they are on their way to *Janhoy*. How can I know that the letter is false or not? I am afraid there is some mischief behind all this. I say this, *Janhoy*, because each of these rulers control such a vast country, how is it possible that they are without a seal. Hamid, who is under *Shäykh* Hojälé has his own seal. So do his sons. The servant of *Däjjach* Abdurrahman has his own seal. How is it possible that servants possess their own seal and their chiefs do not?⁵⁵ *Janhoy*, they do this deliberately to decline their responsibility. Written on 17 *T'err*/January 25 [1909?].

79

wa/mu/1/338-37

Janhoy,

I do not know what is going on in *Däjjach* Joté's country, Qélläm. They are fighting with each other, and *Janhoy's* country is about to disintegrate. I have been informed about the problem there, but I refrained myself to report to you because it was only a rumor. And now, if *Janhoy* does not send an influential person down here, the country will fall apart. Everyone is doing things on his own. The quarrel among them is strengthened. There is no responsible person with whom I can talk and try to resolve the problem. The situation there is such a childish thing. Let *Janhoy* know this. Written on 17 *T'err* 1901 E.C./January 25, 1909.

80

wa/mu/1/338-337

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth], *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman has crossed the Dabus River and occupied my country. To make things worse he did not present himself in person to resolve the problem. With whom do I have to talk? This is not a question of demarcation. Everyone knows that he crossed the Dabus [the river which separates our boundary] and occupied half of my terri-

⁵⁵ In the initial wording ("These Arabs") of letters 77 and 78 one can perceive GE's mistrust of the Beni Shangul chiefs who did not possess or did not want to carry the imperial seal.

tory. How can I reach an agreement with his [*Däjjach* Abdurrahman's] servant? May God show you [the truth], let him present himself in person. It is well known that the Dabus River has been our boundary since time immemorial, from the time of both our fathers to these days. How can I talk to his servant for the land that I have been paying the tribute for, and is now under his control? Moreover, even if I want to negotiate with him in correspondence, the fact that his letters bear no seal creates a problem. Your slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

81

wa/mu/1/335

Janhoy,

The Arabs such as *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman and *Shäykh* Hojälé, having crossed the Dabus, occupied my land claiming that it was theirs. The land extending from the Dabus on this side has been mine since the time of my father, *Däjjazmach* Moräda, up to the present; this all the Galla and Amhara know.⁵⁶ And now they complain on account that their country was cut off and added to the British [territory]. When they wanted to come nearer to us, I gave them a large territory from my own, preferring that I lose rather than they, so that I should not plead and it does not cause trouble to the Government since all the country is *Janhoy*'s. The length of the territory I gave them is as far as the distance from Addis Ababa to Ankobär. Its width would take a day to cover for a quick traveler. That the country is big [can be known] from the fact that when *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma asked the Arabs, they told him that it was big. And the Arabs were happy when they received it from *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma. I pleaded to *Janhoy* asking if I could develop the *t'äf* country which had belonged to my father but I lost. And I will seek your decision, *Janhoy*. Written on 7th of *Mäskäräm* 1902 E.C./September 17, 1909.

82

wa/mu/1/332

May it [this letter] reach my master, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The claim that the land south of Daabus is part of the Naqamtee ruling family traditional *rist* is a recurrent theme in the correspondence.

⁵⁷ This is the first letter addressing *Lij* Iyasu as heir to the throne. The ailing Emperor Menilek would die in December 1913.

You sent a letter to Dämessäw so that the *Gondäre*⁵⁸ would leave my country. *Ras* Dämessäw has accordingly ordered orally the *Gondäre* commanders (*aläqoch*) to leave Naqamtee, since it was the government's order. They listened but refused [to leave]. Again he [Dämessäw] wrote a letter to them asking them to leave but they said that they would plead themselves and are coming to Addis Ababa. They have set out to come to Addis Ababa to plead. Having wished that the Saviour of the World give you [good] health, I prostrate myself before you ten times. Your servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 6th of *T'err* 1905 E.C./January 14, 1913 in the town of Naqamtee.

83

wa/mu/1/332

Let it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May God show you [the truth].

I have a plot of land in Addis Ababa which *Janhoy* [Menilek II] granted me [as a *rist*]. Now I appeal to you to reaffirm that it is mine with your blessing. I will pay back all according to the regulation. In addition to this, I had a plot of land in Méttä that *Janhoy* granted me [as a *rist*]. Now, they [the Government officials] have measured the land for the second time and claimed that they found an extra piece of land. And they confiscated it. This piece of land that they claimed to be extra is mine. I appeal to you to give it back to me with your blessing. May God show you [the truth]. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 22 *T'err* 1905 E.C./January 30, 1913.

84

wa/ma/1/331

⁵⁸ The term *Gondäre* in this correspondence is a reference to Menilek's settled soldiers in the region, variously called *tekleñña* or *näft'añña*. The *Gondäre* comprised soldiers recruited from different parts of Ethiopia, mostly from the north and from Menilek's Shewa Kingdom, to serve in the imperial army. They were absolutely vital for Menilek's hold of the southwestern provinces, hence for the consolidation of the empire and for the survival of its economy. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér for years appealed to the central government for the removal of the *Gondäre* from his province. This, however, did not happen until *Lij* Iyasu's visit to the province in 1913, although Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was often asked afterwards to give provisions to *Gondäre* officials; see Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's letters 135, 136, 140 below. See also Pankhurst-Ezekiel Gebissa, 1988, pp. 85–86; Oljira Tujuba, 1994, pp. 112–27.

May it reach my lord, *Lij Iyasu*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. My lord, may God show you [the truth].

About the matter concerning my accusation by *Däjjach Achamyälläh*, he had solemnly declared to release me from legal act and have the case concluded for me by *Fitawrari Dämära*. Since he [*Dämära*] is now ill, let *Qäññazmach Wäldä Maryam* conclude the affair for me. The affair is of this nature, my lord: there are *gäbbars* who entered my territory having fled *Ras Dämessäw*[’s territory] during the time of adversity (*kifu-qän*). *Ras Dämessäw* instructed *Däjjach Achamyälläh* to arrest these men and take them to him. For this reason, *Däjjach Achamyälläh* tried to arrest these *gäbbar* and take them. The poor suffered and sought my help. Consequently, I made an agreement with him by which he would leave the *gäbbar* to me and I would give him nine hundred *birr* every year. And now he [they] pleaded to the *afä negus*, saying: “Half of *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*’s land has come under the *qälad* system. We were told to pay tributes again to *Däjjach Achamyälläh*, having also paid [them] to the owner of the *qälad*”. I have received a letter that forbids that they should pay taxes twice. Some brought a paper allowing them to go back to their land and I should not prevent them, and went back to their country. Others said: “Formerly, we came here as refugees because of the bad time in our country. Now that the times of adversity are gone, let us go back to our country”, and went to their land, having left secretly (*mäkoblä*). I told him [*Achamyälläh*] that he could arrest and take the remaining *gäbbar* from here but he accused me saying: “Even if there are no *gäbbar* in your land, give me the [agreed] money”. How can I give [money] on account of people who already fled my country? May God show you [the truth]. Wishing that the Saviour of the World gives you [good] health, I prostrate myself ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. Written on the 11th of *Yäkkatit* 1905 E.C./February 18, 1913.

85

wa/mu/1/330

Let it reach *Lij Iyasu*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. May God show you [the truth].

I have received a message from the *afä negus* which says: “From now on, no reconciliation process concerning homicide would be effected at your court, thus he also ordered me not to receive the twenty *birr* that is to be paid for the process”. It is now twenty-five years since my father, *Däjjazmach*

Moräda, died.⁵⁹ Until now, I have been registering every reconciliation process that was conducted here in my court. In case one party was insistent to revenge the murder, I used to send both parties to *Janhoy*. At that time, even if they were reconciled at the court of *Janhoy* or that of *Afä Negus* Näsibu, the payment for the process used to come to me. The same thing works at the court of *Afä Negus* Est'ifanos. But now, if the *afä negus* orders me not to conduct such a thing any longer, I will do so. I will send them both to you. But, my lord, why should I be denied the twenty *birr* that I used to get for the last twenty-five years? May God show you [the truth], I am not saying for money but rather for the importance of my being demoted from a position I once enjoyed. May God show you [the truth]. Written on 12 *Yäkkatit* [1905 E.C.]/February 19 [1913].

86

wa/mu/1/329

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. My lord may God show you [the truth].

Formerly, the tribute I used to pay was five hundred *wäqét* of gold.⁶⁰ When people told *Janhoy* that [my] territory was big, he fixed the tribute by doubling it to a thousand *waqét*. Because the country was unable [not rich enough] to provide these thousand *waqét* [of gold], I started to receive the [local] tributes of two years from my subjects [*gäbbar*] and have been paying it as an annual tribute. As a result, there is an overdue payment of three-year tributes. I cannot get this from the people and pay it because they have already paid [and] I received it. It became overdue because I collected the two-year revenue as a one-year tribute. Coupled with the country's impoverishment, *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma added on me thirteen thousand *birr* to be paid as provisions for the *Gondäre*. Concerning this overdue payment of tributes, I pleaded to you, my master, while you were here to exempt me as I am in difficulty. And now, my master, may God show you [the truth]. Exempt [me] from the forthcoming tribute. I have planted plenty of coffee [trees] (*bun*). I have

⁵⁹ Morodaa Bakaree died in 1888.

⁶⁰ Yearly tribute (*gebr*) has been at the heart of the relationship between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa from the beginning of this correspondence. Here GE gives a brief account of Naqamtee's tribute from the initial 500 *waqét* in the 1890s to the 1,000 *waqét* plus 13,000 *birr* that Ras Täsämma ordered for the *Gondäre*'s provision. Although the Naqamtee *Gondäre* soldiers were removed to Arjoo, Naqamtee had to pay for their provisions. See letters 20–21, 82, 114, 123, 128, 140.

forced the [local] people to plant coffee [trees]. As for tributes in the future, I will be able to pay. What worries me is the overdue tributes and the extra thirteen-thousand *birr* worth of provisions for the *Gondäre* which *Ras Bitwäddäd Täsämma* imposed on me and which *Janhoy* had not done to me. You, my master, have seen that the country is [mostly] uncultivated, the reason of which being the result of too much tribute [to be paid], not a result of any misgovernment on my part. And now if I order the people to give the three-year overdue tribute, the country will be completely abandoned. When the matter concerning the overdue tribute worried me, I told *Ras Dämessäw* to plead the matter to my master [you] for me. And *Ras Dämessäw* told me that he had done so. However, unless my master's seal reaches me, I cannot sleep well while this large debt is weighing me down. My master, wishing that the Saviour of the World will give you good health, I prostrate myself before you ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. [Written on the 2nd of *Mäggabit* 1905 E.C./March 11, 1913.]

87

wa/mu/1/325

May it reach my lord, *Lij Iyasu*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. [My] lord, blessed be God who made you pass from one year to another. I also pray my Creator to make you live through the coming year, in His benevolence.

My lord, in the past I bought two hundred *gasha* of land in Sibu country. My lord said that I should pay its tribute to the governor of the country, and the land would remain with me permanently. And now, two hundred soldiers were settled on the two hundred *gasha* of land. When I presented my agent to all these [soldiers], they almost drove him away. Moreover, I pleaded and sought your decision, my master, about the fact that half of Sibu was my *rist-gult* as well as that of my grand and great grandfathers. Concerning that, however, it will be concluded whenever you, my master, feel it convenient to do so. As for these two hundred *gasha* of land, turn them for me into *gult* land so that no soldiers are settled [there]. My master may God show you [the truth]. I also sent a verbal [message] to my master through *Qäññazmach Rumicho*. Let him plead for me. I also sent my present of a hundred *wäqét* of gold. Wishing that the Saviour of the World will give you [good] health, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 11th of *Mäskäräm* 1906 E.C./September 21, 1913.

88

wa/mu/1/324

May it reach my lord *Lij Iyasu*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. My lord, may God show you [the truth].

Ras Bitwäddäd Täsämma has cut off a piece of my land, which stretches from Mändi to the River Dabus, and has given it to the ‘Arabs’. Then, as soon as they got the land in their hands, these ‘Arabs’ killed sixty-four of my tenants (*gäbbar*) who were at this locality in order to sift gold. At this point, they [the Arabs] were asked by the *ras bitwäddäd* to present themselves with the culprits to resolve the dispute but they refused. Last year, with the help of my lord *Ato Wäsänyäläh* I succeeded to retrieve my land saying that, if the Arabs wanted to negotiate, let the land in their possession be from here to there, let the other land be at my disposal. But after a while, the Arabs crossed my territory and camped to tax my *gäbbar*, who were sifting gold. Thus, I arrested them and sent them to *Fitawrari* Habtä Giyorgis. And now, in order to avenge those who were arrested, their countrymen crossed my territory, carrying arms, and camped on my territory to tax my *gäbbar*. And my *gäbbar* are resisting being taxed by strangers on their own land. Now, the Arabs are telling me that: “if you do not bring a written order, we will not leave the land back to you”. My lord, send me your seal [imperial order]. If they insist on remaining there to tax my tenants since they did not get your order, while my *gäbbar* are resisting their being taxed by the Arabs, I am afraid the situation would reach the brink of war. This land has never been in the hands of the Arabs. It was *ras bitwäddäd* who gave it to them by cutting off my land. The Shanqella who live on that part have complained to the *ras bitwäddäd* that they have a long-running enmity with the Arabs. After this, the *ras bitwäddäd* passed away while the case was in the hands of *Näggadras* Berru. Then, when the case reached the hands of *Ato Wäsänyäläh*, the land was returned to me. So, the land has never been in the hands of the Arabs. Now, they occupied it by force to create unrest. I pray my lord, so that he sends a message to *Däjjach* Mähämmäd. Let the Holy Saviour give you health, and I bow down ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 16 *T’eqemt* 1907 E.C./October 26, 1914.

89

wa/mu/1/320

May it reach my lord, *Lij Iyasu*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, you wrote me: “Have the cattle in your country counted and having levied one *birr* per four heads, send the money to Addis Ababa so that it would reach on the 1st of *T’eqemt*”. Accordingly, I have collected the money and sent it [to you]. It was delayed up to now because I was waiting for [the

money collected] from the lower region, Mändi. I was unable to inform you of the amount of money because, as I found the number of cattle counted in some regions [to be] too small, I am having the cattle counted a second time. I will let you know the amount of money soon. Wishing the Saviour of the World keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [Written on the] 3rd of *T'eqemt* 1907 E.C./October 13, 1914.

90

wa/mu/1/320

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. My master may God show you [the truth].

The matter concerning *lébashay* has been very difficult for me. When we administer the drug to the *lébashay*, he [often] goes to the house of anyone who has not stolen and sleeps there. Also, after the suspect pays the money on false charges, the money lost [stolen] is found in the hands of another person. Also, those who lost a *birr* or two claim they lost a thousand *birr*; all swear falsely even under threat of excommunication; consequently, they take other people's money, and the country is in trouble. I am writing this to inform my lord that, because of this matter, the country is facing much difficulty. [n.d.]

91

wa/mu/1/319

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Here are the thirty-five thousand and one hundred and sixty-four *birr* derived from the revenue tax on cattle which I collected by levying one *birr* for every four heads of cows. I am sorry for the delay because there were people who did not want to reveal the exact number of their cattle. May the Holy Saviour give you [good] health, and I bow down ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 21 *Hedar*, 1907 E.C./November 30, 1914.

92

wa/mu/1/319

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. My master, may God show you [the truth].

My lord, last year you exempted me from the three-years' overdue payment of tributes of three thousand four hundred *wäqét* of gold. Besides this, also, I have a total of three-years' tribute [to be paid] which consists of the tributes of the year before last, last year and the current one. Moreover, last

year I borrowed [money] from *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis in order to give a present to my lord [you] that I must pay back. Therefore, in order to pay back these debts, I told the rich men to raise five *birr* per their respective *t'is* and the poor to pay one *birr* each. The [local] inhabitants refused to give this and have come to Addis Ababa to seek justice. However, if the richer people raise five *birr* each per their respective *t'is*, it is not too big for them. [They refused] because of [their] mischief. And now, may God show you [the truth] about this matter. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [n.d.]

93

wa/mu/1/318

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

A subject (*zéga*) of mine called Aga Shuba is seeking justice [complaining] that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér [I], without doing anything wrong on my [his] part, has removed him from his land and taken away his slaves. Concerning this matter, he [Aga Shuba] brought me a letter from *Qäññazmach* Käfaläw instructing me to have a person come and discuss the matter. He [Aga Shuba] says now that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér removed him from his land and took away his slaves; [but] the land is where my house is built at present. Concerning my taking away the slaves from him, all this happened seventy years ago when my grandfather captured them in battle. My grandfather, at that time, took this land after a battle [was fought] and he died in the battlefield.⁶¹ And now if they want to have the land that my grandfather took in battle, I also want my grandfather's blood. I will come myself and dispute [the matter]. My lord may God show you [the truth]. I will not send my representative for legal cases for such an important matter. I will come myself and dispute it. I request my master to send word to the judges, so that the matter may be [discussed] when I come. Written on the 29th of *Tahsas* 1907 E.C./ January 7, 1915, in the town of Naqamtee.

94

wa/mu/1/315

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

⁶¹ GE is referring here to his grandfather, Bakaree, the founder of the Naqamtee ruling house.

My lord, you sent me a cabled message (*selk*) saying: “Since *Däjjazmach* Joté is involved in a fighting with the Abigar [Gaajak Nuer], if he [Joté] writes to you asking for help, send him soldiers under a chief leader to prevent the soldiers from pillaging the country”.⁶² Afterwards, *Shäykh* Hojälé came with a letter from my lord which said: “Let *Däjjazmach* Mähämmäd, *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman’s son, come to Mändi and hold a discussion. If he does not come to Mändi, however, send several of your men to his place, and let them meet according to their agreement. Let him [Mähämmäd] come here with the men you sent [to him]”. Does the army not become smaller when it is divided into two?⁶³ I thought of taking counsel with my lord. And now if [the army] is about to leave with *Shäykh* Hojälé, after [you] ordered him to do so, *Däjjazmach* Joté has not yet sent [written] asking for my help. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 20th of *T’err* 1907 E.C./January 28, 1915.

95

wa/mu/1/314

May it reach to my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, may God show you [the truth]. Earlier I asked my *gäbbar* to pay their tribute, out of which I, in turn, would make up my annual tribute. But, some of them paid their usual sum while others failed to do so. In the meantime, the *gäbbar* accused me to *Afä Negus* T’ilahun for imprisoning them and having their cattle confiscated. Then I received a letter from the *afä negus*, which ordered me to release the imprisoned men and return the cattle seized in compensation for the unpaid tribute. I complied with his order. And if I did not do so and did not return all their cattle to the *gäbbar*, I would compensate them after I paid this year’s tribute to my lord. May God show you [the truth], here in our country, gold is abundant in the summer. After I collected all the tribute, I thought of buying a lot of gold for you. But I am afraid now, if I re-

⁶² Joté [Jootee] and his family had a long-running question of sovereignty over part of Gaajak Nuer’s territory. Having failed considerably to subdue the region until 1915, the central government was happy to have Joté conduct a fresh raid on the Gaajak Nuer. See Bahru Zewde, 1976, pp. 115–51.

⁶³ It is interesting to note how the central government relied on GE for settling or mediating disputes along the western periphery and, at the same time, how the Naqamtee ruler was quite cautious in handling them.

main obedient to the order of the *afä negus*, and do not collect the tribute on time, my lord would be mad at me for the absence of this year's tribute. What should I do? I am in great difficulty. May God show you [the truth]. Your servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 30 *T'err* 1907 E.C./February 7, 1915.

96

wa/mu/1/313

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Qäññazmach* Haylé sent me a letter from Mändi [saying]: "*Däjjazmach* Mähammäd came to Mändi with many soldiers lined up and with timbal, banner and trumpets. Without paying back all of *Shäykh* Hojälé's money, he [*Däjjazmach* Mähammäd] says he wants in the meantime to go back to his (home) country. And when we gave him my lord *Lij* Iyasu's letter, he said he did not want to go to Addis Ababa at present. Because of this, for his being unwilling to go to Addis Ababa and obey my lord's order, we arrested him, whereupon his soldiers who had come lining up with him, fired guns and killed many of [our] men. After that, we also fired guns. Many men from our side as well as theirs died". This is the content [of the letter that] *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Qäññazmach* Haylé through my servant, *Fitawrari* Jirata, sent me. They also wrote that *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd has, however, been caught and is in their hands. [Written on the] 2nd of *Miyazya* 1907 E.C./April 10, 1915.

97

wa/mu/1/312

May it reach my lord *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, I received your telephone message which said: 'let *Shäykh* Hojälé, *Qäññazmach* Haylé and *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd remain there, in case they are already on their way, let them be back'. *Shäykh* Hojälé and *Qäññazmach* Haylé handed over *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd to my man at Mändi and this, in turn, sent him to me. And now *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd is in Naqamtee with me. Since I have received your message not to send him to you, to whom shall I hand him over, to *Shäykh* Hojälé or to *Qäññazmach* Haylé? Until I get a response from my lord [*Lij* Iyasu], he will remain under my watch. May the Holy Saviour give you health and I bow down ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 27 *Miyazya*, 1907 E.C./May 5, 1915.

98

wa/mu/1/312

May it reach my lord *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Government [of Ethiopia], son of Menilek II, Emperor of Ethiopia.

I send ten *waqét* of gold to my lord as a present. I finally made peace with *Fitawrari* Déréssa and *Fitawrari* Qänä'a after a long line of mediators from the Galla and Amhara. We made this peace on the terms of lord and servants. They have never had their own country; it is me who put them in their present post.⁶⁴ May the Holy Saviour give you health, and I bow down ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 24 *Genbot*, 1908 E.C./June 1, 1916.

99

wa/mu/1/311

May it reach *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, you have sent me a message saying: "Let me know about the tribute of one *birr* levied on every four heads of cattle, let us know whether you have finished collecting or if the collecting is not over yet. Complete it and let the money reach me". My lord, about this, I have already finished collecting the tribute and I sent it all to you previously. None of it is remaining with me. The total amount was thirty-five thousand and two hundred twenty-seven *birr*. Considering the previous one, this year the amount is low due to the recurrent epidemic that attacks the cattle. Earlier on, we agreed that one who does not reveal the number of his cattle, should be confiscated. But now, instead of confiscating, let him be penalized one *birr* according to the number of cattle he hides. Despite all, some *gäbbar* have failed to reveal their number of cattle. Then, with the help of some informants, they were fined. Now, there are three hundred seventy heads of cows that have been confiscated. And now, their owners have paid one *birr* for each head of cow. So, I send you the three hundred seventy *birr* of the fine. The cows have been returned to their owners. May the Holy Saviour give you health and bow down ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 30 *Genbot* 1907 E.C./June 7, 1915.

⁶⁴ It is clear that GE is not willing to consider potential rivalry coming from his appointees. *Fitawrari* Dheeressaa and *Fitawrari* Qana'aa claim that GE had snatched away land from them. See below letters 106–107, which actually predate this one. By stating that *Fitawrari* Dheeressaa and *Fitawrari* Qana'aa 'never had their own country', GE claims they had no local hereditary rights and were simply his appointees.

100

wa/mu/1/309

May it reach my lord, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, Iyasu, son of Menilek II, Emperor of Ethiopia.

My lord, when you called me to send [a message] to *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd's slaves [dependents] to render their service to, and obey the orders of, *Shäykh* Hojälé, and tell *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd himself to write to and reprimand his men, I, accordingly, sent my master's actual word as well as the cabled message and the letter with a servant called Sädi Loku who speaks Arabic. And they [*Däjjazmach* Mähammäd's men] sent me a message saying that since *Shäykh* Hojälé was their deadly enemy, they would never be ruled by him but would be willing to be ruled by another man, even by a slave.⁶⁵ I am sending [you] the letter that they sent, written in Arabic, as well as the Amharic copy which I had translated, in order that you, my master, could see it. Also, the men are not *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd's dependents alone; there are also other Arabs. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 23rd of *Säné* 1907 E.C./June 30, 1915, in the town of Naqamtee.

101

wa/mu/1/309

May it reach my lord, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, Iyasu, son of Menilek II, Emperor of Ethiopia.

My lord, you sent me a cabled message (*selk*) saying: "If *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd is with you, let him go down to Mändi and, having paid *Shäykh* Hojälé's money, let him come here [Addis Ababa]". And I, in accordance with my lord's order, was going to send *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd to *Shäykh* Hojälé in Mändi but *Shäykh* Hojälé left for *Däjjazmach* Abdurahman's country, having set out from Mändi. He is still there. According to my lord's order, I was to send *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd to *Shäykh* Hojälé but because *Shäykh* Hojälé had left for *Däjjazmach* Abdurahman's country, I could not send *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd to the country of the Arabs without my lord's order, and so he is therefore staying at Mändi. Hojälé writes me saying: "If you do not send *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd to the place where I am now staying, you will pay the money to me". Since he [Hojälé] is still in *Däjjazmach* Abdurahman's country and I cannot send *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd without my lord's order, I am in-

⁶⁵ This letter confirms the long-held hatred between the two powerful Beni Shangul chiefs of Asosa (Hojälé) and Khomosha (Mähammad, now promoted to *Däjjazmach* rank.

forming you, my lord [about the situation]. I shall wait for my lord's reply whether you want me to send him [Māhammād] to him [Hojälé] there. What shall I do? [n.d.]

102

wa/mu/1/308

Sent from *Lij* Iyasu.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you sent has reached me. I saw [read] your words. I [also] saw the letter that *Däjjazmach* Māhammād's men have written to you and which you have sent to me so that I would see it. You wrote to me asking what you could do because you refused to hand *Däjjazmach* Māhammād over to *Shäykh* Hojälé. If *Shäykh* Hojälé asked you to hand [Māhammād] over to him in order that those men who refused to be ruled by him could submit to and not escape from him when they saw him [Māhammād] arrested, and if he used this plan as a skillful way of doing so, hand him over to him so that he [Hojälé] would imprison him. However, if he asked you to hand him over to him in order to get his money [back], do not hand him over. Written on the 18th of *Hamlé* 1907 E.C./July 25, 1915, in the town of Däsé [Dessié].

103

wa/mu/1/307-306

May it reach my lord *Lij* Iyasu, son of Menilek II, Heir to the Throne of the Kingdom of Ethiopia.

My lord! *Shaykh* Hojälé sent me a message saying: "since the servants (*baroch*) of *Däjjach* Abdurahman disobeyed the word of the government, let Gäbrä Egzi'abhér give you military support to punish the disobedient", and he also said that you [my lord] have sent a message to me to do so. But your word has not yet reached me. I am afraid to take such a drastic action, like making war, without your word. Since Hojälé is pressing me to send him an army as quickly as possible, how shall I deal with it? I am waiting for your immediate response. The words that you sent me last year through the telephone was that the servants (*baroch*) of *Däjjazmach* Abdurahman should not get involved in criminal acts, and that I should send a contingent of guards". This was the message I received, but you did not instruct me to send an army on a campaign. Moreover, in order not to drive *Däjjach* Abdurahman's slaves away to the British territory, Hojälé told me that he sent a message to the British. But he has not received any reply. Written on 18 *T'eqemt*, 1908 E.C./October 29, 1915. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

104

wa/mu/1/306

May it reach my lord Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, last time, you ordered me to send military support to *Shäykh* Hojälé to punish *Däjjach* Abdurahman's men. Meanwhile, *Däjjach* Abdurahman's men went to you, my lord, with presents. As a result, *Fitawrari* Häbtä Giyorgis and *Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis telegraphed me not to escalate the military confrontation until they return back. Which I did. But, if the confrontation is unavoidable, I say, it would be better to do it before the rainy season. I look forward to my lord's response. May the Holy Saviour give you health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 29 *T'err*, 1908 E.C./February 7, 1916.

105

wa/mu/1/305

May it reach my lord *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Last year, you ordered me to receive one hundred slaves (*barya*) from *Shäykh* Hojälé al-Hassan and send them to you afterward.⁶⁶ And now, ninety of the slaves have arrived here. In addition, sixty slaves have been sent from *Däjjazmach* Mähämmäd Hojälé from Mändi. There are now, in total, one hundred and fifty slaves with me. To whom shall I deliver them in Addis Ababa? And to whom shall I send them? I want to inform you about this. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. And I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 30 *Yäkkatit*, 1908 E.C./March 9, 1916.

106

wa/mu/1/304

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I received your letter about the accusation made upon me by *Fitawrari* Qänä'a and *Fitawrari* Därässa, who complained to you that I, Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, took away their fathers' land.⁶⁷ Furthermore, you asked me to do

⁶⁶ Enslaved people were an important source of manpower and household servants for the Shewan elites, as well as for wealthy Oromo families in Wallagga.

⁶⁷ See above letter 94.

justice, and if their accusation is true to give them back their land, and if it is not to send an attorney [*nägärafäij*] to resolve the case. My lord! You sent this letter on 28 *T'err*. But they put aside your letter, and it reached me now on 4 *Mäggabit* with their servant while they remained in Addis Ababa. May God show you [the truth], they never had their own [autonomous] country. They are my servants [*ashkäroché*]. I gave them the land. My lord, I will not send any other man on the case which regards my [sovereign] country. I will be there in person. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. And I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 5 *Mäggabit*, 1908 E.C./March 14, 1916.

107

wa/mu/1/303

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you [the truth], I informed my lord about the confrontation between me and *Fitawrari* Qänä'a, *Fitawrari* Därässa and *Qäññazmach* Kidanä Maryam. And you told me to send my attorney [*nägärafäij*] to discuss the accusation they made against me. They do not have a country of their own [under them]. They are my servants. It is I who gave them land.⁶⁸ Despite all this, the *afä negus* signed a letter in favour of a man, *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam, who is looking after my house in Addis Ababa, so that he should be given the land in case I will not send a man who represents me in this case. And the *afä negus* also sent me a message to present myself in person. May God show you [the truth], I would be pleased to talk minor things in front of the *afä negus*. But, as for the country which *Janhoy* gave me, and which now my own servants want to snatch out of me, I prefer resolving it before you. Let the case of my country be before you. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. And I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 27 *Mäggabit*, 1908 E.C./April 5, 1916.

108

wa/mu/1/301

May it reach my lord *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

⁶⁸ See above, letter 98.

I have sent you the one hundred slaves that you asked me after receiving them from Hojälé. The delay happened because I was waiting my lord's return to Addis Ababa. Hojälé also sent me sixty other slaves that he had captured after a clash with *Däjjazmach* Mähamäd. Then I delivered them to my tenants [*balagär*] from whom some of them were able to escape. There are some who remained here due to bad health. I have asked the tenants to pay for the slaves who have escaped from their hands. I will inform my lord about the total payment for the escapees and the number of sick slaves. May the Holy Saviour give you good health and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 24 *Genbot*, 1908 E.C./June 1, 1916.

109

wa/mu/1/301

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of Government of Ethiopia.

In the past I bought the hot lowland of Handäq⁶⁹ from *Janhoy* for the price of five hundred and fifty *wäqét* of gold at a time when the land was put on sale [through the *qälad* land measurement]. I paid four hundred *wäqét* of gold on the spot and as I was in great debt at that time, I postponed the remaining payment. And now, I have sent you the remaining one hundred and fifty *wäqét* of gold. Nevertheless, this land has always been the land of my forefathers.⁷⁰ Now, I did so with the intention of making it mine for the time to come. May the Holy Saviour give you good health and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 7 *Säné* 1908 E.C./June 14, 1916.

110

wa/mu/1/300

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I telegraphed you about the arrival here of *Fitawrari* Burayyu with his Shanqella captives from Yambo. After that, *Däjjazmach* Gänämé complained

⁶⁹ The words used in the Amharic original, *yäHandaq bäräha*, literally translates as the barren land or desert of Handaq. But Handaq was actually a hot lowland forest region.

⁷⁰ The forest region was the traditional hunting and ritual ground of the Leeqaa Oromoo where Bakaree acquired supremacy over his rivals. See the Bakaree family chronicle (Ch. 3), fols 4r-v, 6v, 20v, 22r, CGC letters 76 and 81, GEC letters 145 and 203, HMC letter 37.

to me that, “in spite of the words of my lord to hand over the captives to me, he [*Fitawrari* Burayyu] crossed over to you, do not allow him to pass through your territory”. And he pleaded me to help him in the name of Menilek. What shall I do? I will be waiting for your response. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. And I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on 8 *Säné* 1908 E.C./June 15, 1916.

111

wa/mu/1/299

May it reach my lord, *Lij* Iyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I received your telegraph saying: “*Fitawrari* Burayyu told you that there are Yambo headchiefs (*balabbat*) among the slaves he (*Fitawrari* Burayyu) was [taking to Addis Ababa] but had them arrested here at the check point (*kélla*)”. You also told me to send you fifteen females and fifteen males out of them. These arrested persons are all naked Shanqella men. If he [Burayyu] claims that they are indeed *balabbat*, why did he not make them wear decent clothes? Anyway, from the forty Shanqella men who were captured at the checkpoint, I sent you fifteen males and fifteen females. Let the Holy Saviour give you good health. And I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on 26 *Hamlé* 1908 E.C./August 2, 1916.

112

wa/mu/1/299

May it reach *Lij* Zäwdé Gobäna.

The message you cabled yesterday reached me. You wrote: “Because *Lij* Iyasu changed his religion, we made *Wäyzäro* Zäwditu Queen and *Ras* Mäkonnen’s son, *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne”. When I heard this, I was very glad. If anyone comes to change the Christian religion, we will sacrifice our lives. That is why I became happy. And now, may Menilek’s God protect the sovereign (*yänäggäsäwun*). I pray to God so that [throne] shall stay in the house of Menilek. [Written on] the 19th of *Mäskäräm* 1909 E.C./September 29, 1916.

113

wa/mu/1/297-96

May it reach my lord, *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. May the Holy Saviour give you good health and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you.

May God show you [the truth], from the time of Emperor Menilek II, I have been earning the arbitration fee for murder cases [Guma] until now.⁷¹ Even if the settlement was held sometimes in Addis Ababa, at the court of *Janhoy*, the fee has always been mine, not of the judges. It was the same even at the time of *Afä Negus* Näsibu and *Afä Negus* Est'ifanos. *Afä Negus* Est'ifanos knows it well. After the death of *Ras* Täsämma four years ago, *Lij* Iyasu took it away from me and used it for himself. The fact that it was mine is well known by the judges and to all [successive] *afä negus*. It is a gift that was given to me by *Janhoy*. He [*Lij* Iyasu] snatched the fee from me without my posing any harm to the throne. I am not saying this because it is a lot of money. But why should I be demoted from the position I enjoyed once? May God show you [the truth]. Written on 16 *Yäkkatit*, 1909 E.C./February 23, 1917.

114

wa/mu/1/295

May it reach my lord, *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten times before you. And now, may God show you [the truth].

In accordance with *Janhoy's* order, I used to give ten thousand *birr* to the *Gondäre* for their provisions. Later on, *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma added thirteen thousand *birr* on me - the total reaching twenty-three thousand *birr*.⁷² I have already paid this year's provisions, worth twenty-three thousand *birr*. The [following] year's pay starts on the 19th of *Säné*. However, they [the *Gondäre*] came to get their pay before the due date. I told them that I had already paid this year and the date for the coming year's pay has not yet approached. They have come to my lord [you] to seek justice. I am informing [you] warning that they might falsely accuse me of having refused to provide provisions for the campaigners' women and let them go hungry. However, the twenty-three thousand *birr* that I gave them has not always been enough to buy them provisions for a year. It is used up before the end of the year. The

⁷¹ At each change in the central government, Naqamtee tried to claim back some of its lost rights with the new incumbent, this time on arbitration fees, but in fact over the declining right to hold court in Naqamtee. This is GE's first letter to *Ras* Täfäri after *Lij* Iyasu was deposed. See letter 112.

⁷² The provision for the *Gondäre* of *Ras* Dämessäw had been doubled by *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma the year before. See letter 128 below.

men who get provisions at *Ras Dämesäaw's* [place] are many. This *Ras Dämessäw* himself knows, as does *Shäykh Hojälé* as well. Written on the 18th of *Miyazya* 1909 E.C./April 26, 1917, in the town of Naqamtee.

115

wa/mu/1/294

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. Sent from *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you.

I had given a piece of land to my servant, *Fitawrari Déréssa* to live on it. But last year he made a complaint against me that it is his own land [*rist*]. And now, he brought me a letter from *afä negus* and *Qäññazmach Käfäläw* that called on me to send my attorney (*gät'ami*) to reach a settlement. I will never negotiate my land (*eristé*). My lord let this settlement be reached when I come to Addis Ababa. Anyway, this man collected all the tax from the land that I gave him and disappeared last year. Eventually, after my appeal, he was made to appear before the *afä negus* and promised to pay it all back, which he did not keep. And now, this year he collected again the tax and went to Addis Ababa. So, my lord, may you postpone this case to a time when I [may] come to Addis Ababa. May God show you [the truth]. Written on 28 *Miyazya*, 1909 E.C./May 6, 1917.

116

wa/mu/1/293

May it reach my lord *Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Last year, I received word from Addis Ababa that the grain tithe (*asrat*) was to be collected on the basis of [the peasants'] making an oath (*mähalla*), which I did. The first year, the *gäbbar* have done accordingly. Nevertheless, the following year, the peasants of a certain territory that normally produced one hundred *dawla* swore that they had harvested only between twenty and thirty *dawla*. For this reason, I dismissed the idea of a peasant's oath making an oath, and as before I collected it with an *asrat* (tithe) collector. They [the *gäbbar*] do this not because of the poor harvest. This year, harvest is much better than that of last year. It is only because the *gäbbar* are no longer afraid to live up to their words. I only want to inform you about it. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Written on 16 *Hamlé*, 1909 E.C./July 23, 1917.

117

wa/mu/1/292

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Kingdom of Ethiopia.

From the time my men went away to *Däjjazmach Joté's* territory, i.e. from 4 *Hamlé* to the beginning of *Nähasé*, I received the [the fees of] judiciary services for one month. It is one thousand and one hundred and sixty *birr*. The remaining amount was one thousand and fifty-six *birr*. It will be two thousand and two hundred and sixteen in total. The price of an ivory is equal to one *wäqét* and fifteen milligrams [*nät'r*]. Furthermore, my men brought one Mos-kob [Russian] rifle and six slaves. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 10 *Nähasé* 1909 E.C./August 16, 1917.

118

wa/mu/1/292-291

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, you wrote me saying: "Since *Däjjazmach Joté's* country has now become mine, let all the money found [collected] since 14th of *Mäggabit* be counted and stay in the hands of the local chiefs (*ch'iqashum*). Let a capable person go and stay there as the overseer of the country". And now, according to my lord's [your] message, I have sent my chief servant and representative (*wanna ashkär endärasé*), *Fitawrari Käba*, who is there at the moment.⁷³ The money that *Däjjazmach Joté* handed to my men, which he said was collected from judiciary services from the country [region] between the 14th of *Mäggabit* to the 1st of *Hamlé* amounts to three hundred and twenty-six *birr*. The overdue tribute is five hundred and sixteen *birr*. The money collected from taxes is one thousand and three hundred and ninety-five *birr*. The total sum of all this is two thousand and two hundred and thirty-two *birr*. Also,

⁷³ As in Beni Shangul, the central government relied on Naqamtee to fill in the void between the removal of one governor and the arrival of his successor. Appointed in August 1920, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's* interim administration in Qellem, headed by his brother *Fitawrari Kabaa*, replaced *Däjjazmach* (later *Ras*) *Berru Wäldä Gäbre'él* (r. 1917–1920), whom *Ras Täfäri* had recalled to Addis Ababa. *Fitawrari Kabaa* arrived in September and ran the local administration until December 1920, when the new governor, *Däjjazmach Yeggäzu Bähabté*, sent his *endärasé* to take over the administration. Unable to restore stability by governors directly appointed from the center, Addis Ababa again ordered the Naqamtee ruler to oversee Qellem in 1933. When *Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam* arrived, the province was in considerable chaos. See HMC letters no 1, 2, 4, 5.

Däjjazmach Joté has handed to my official what he called *t'efé* money consisting of ten *dägaga*, nineteen *qälanj* small-sized ivories. The ten *dägaga* weigh fourteen *wäqét* and two *nät'r*. The nineteen *qälanj* weigh five *wäqét* and eleven *nät'r* [milligrams]. The total weight is nineteen *wäqét* and thirteen milligrams. They [my men] said that they have deposited all this in the hands of the local chiefs (*ch'iqashum*) after he [Joté] handed [it] to them. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [Written on] the 10th of *Nähasé* 1909 E.C./August 16, 1917.

119

wa/mu/1/291

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the-Government of Ethiopia.

In accordance with your cabled message instructing me to arrest and send to you *Shäykh* Hojälé's servant named Firi, having prevented him from passing through the [customs] gate, having arrested him, I have now sent him to you. However, we have not found any papers with him although we searched for [them]. We found nothing. Also, I have sent two of *Däjjazmach* Joté's men who were caught at my gate having been charged with stealing mules. I have also sent the four mules caught on which they were mounted while traveling. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 10th of *Nähasé* 1909 E.C./August 16, 1917.

120

wa/mu/1/291-290

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne [of the Government of Ethiopia].

The land on which the Gämbéla steam engine (*babur*) stops used to belong to *Däjjazmach* Joté. Later on, *ras bitwäddäd* governed *Däjjazmach* Joté's territory, it was in the hands of *Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis. Now it has been transferred to *Däjjazmach* Käbbädä. If you did this consciously [with your knowledge], it is alright. If it was done without your knowledge, I thought of informing you about it. Dämbidollo is a gate that leads down to Gämbéla. Formerly, by *Janhoy's* order, a customs house was established [there] and taxes were collected. Since the time when the country was restored to *Däjjazmach* Joté, the customs house has been abandoned, but taxes are still collected. If the customs house, as in former times, is established again and taxes are collected under its supervision, much money could be obtained. However, at the customs house of Dämbidollo, the *asrat* tax (tithe) is not imposed. A

tithe tax is collected at Jäjjäba[é], where the steam-engine stops. I say that a customs house should be built at Dämbidollo so that merchants could not secretly cross from the other side and go to Gämbéla [as they do now], and they would not cause trouble to the officials collecting taxes, and [in fact] it would be convenient for them. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 10th of *Nähasé* 1909 E.C./August 16, 1917.

121

wa/mu/1/290-289

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

You sent me a cabled message saying: “*Däjjazmach* Mähämmäd request-ed me to restore his country to him. Since I told him that I should ask you why it was occupied, was the country considered his? What is the reason that it has been occupied? Inform me about this matter in a reply”. I have not occupied *Däjjazmach* Mähämmäd’s country. The country had been my father’s since olden times. Our boundary that lies in the center of [between] our territories is the big River Dabus. The country in the lower part of Dabus belongs to the Arabs. The country in the upper part of Dabus has been my father’s since former times. In the center of [between] our territories is the big River Dabus. It is as [big] as the Abbay. The country in the upper part of Dabus has been my father’s and mine since the time of the Galla, the time when the land of the Arabs was still unconquered. This, all *Ras* Gobäna’s men know. Also, all the men who had gone with *Ras* Mäkonnen on the latter’s campaign to the land of the Arabs know about this. All *Ras* Dämessäw’s soldiers also know this.⁷⁴ Many people know that the country in the upper part of River Dabus has been mine ever since the time when the country of the Arabs was still unconquered. The country is not small at present. Since the country is large, I will not assign a representative for legal cases and will come myself to discuss the matter. Fix the date for me, when should I come? Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 10th of *Nähasé* 1909 E.C./August 16, 1917.

⁷⁴ As in earlier claims, GE restates once and again that the land in the upper part of the Daabus River has been in his family since *Ras* Mäkonnen’s campaign of 1898. See below letter 193.

122

wa/mu/1/288

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Last *Nähasé*, the *ras* [you] cabled me asking to get ready to set out on a day you tell [me] to come has reached me. I told this to my men. They said that since there were no special pack animals and tents, they could not go on a campaign carrying their guns and provisions on their backs. They were hesitant. This [what they said] is true. My men who carry guns are those who pay taxes. There are none who carry guns having been recruited according to the *näft'ännä* regulations. However, if I am exempted from the debt imposed on me at the time of *Ras Täsämma*,⁷⁵ I will be no weaker than any servant [and would be willing] to undertake any campaign to oversee [protect] the country. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. 20th of *Mäskäräm* 1910 E.C./September 30, 1917.

123

wa/mu/1/288-287

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have ordered my country to give provisions for the *Gondäre*. *Fitawrari Déréssa* has bought much land, and on the land he bought he did not give me someone who would be responsible for the *Gondäre's* provisions and for the payment of tax tribute. I have appealed to you so that he could give me someone responsible for the provisions of the *Gondäre* and the payment of taxation on his land. Also, you have ordered me through the telephone so that we should get prepared for the campaign. I have also asked *Fitawrari Déréssa's* men to get prepared for the campaign according to the orders given. I have done this through a messenger, and they said if the word does not come directly from *Fitawrari Déréssa* they will never agree. Moreover, the *ras* [you] has handed over to me three prisoners with the title of *Däjjazmach*. They are guarded by my men in turn. And *Fitawrari Déréssa's* men carry my firearms. And yet they refused me. It is not impossible for me to imprison and confiscate those who sit near me and refuse my orders. Nevertheless, the words that the *ras* [you] hears are good. Now, if they do not listen to my words,

⁷⁵ The increased provisions for the *Gondäre* imposed by *Ras Tasämma* and the need to pay his tribute to the central government in gold appear to be the main worries of the second part of the correspondence. See below letters 128, 134, 140, 161.

Fitawrari Déréssa should count and return my firearms by sending someone who would also be responsible for his land. I am appealing to the *ras* [to you]. May the Saviour of the World give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 20 *Mäskäräm*, 1910 E.C./September 30, 1917.

124

wa/mu/1/287

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I wish you a happy new year. I wish that my Creator shall keep you in good health all through the coming year. I have prepared a number of *Shanqella* who will blow the *imbilta* and trumpet. But most of them are with their little children. I do not want to separate them from their parents and at present, with this muddy terrain, they could not make it to Addis Ababa. Thus, I will send them all when this condition gets better. I will also send you the wax with them. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 20 *Mäskäräm*, 1910 E.C./September 30, 1917.

125

wa/mu/1/285

May it reach my lord, *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have sent forty-three *Shanqella* including their children to serve you as *imbilta* and trumpet blowers. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down in front of you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 23 *T'eqemt* [1910 E.C.]/November 2 [1917].

126

wa/mu/1/284

May it reach my lord, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

You wrote to me [saying]: "With the money obtained from *Däjjazmach Joté's* territory before the appointment of *Däjjazmach Berru*,⁷⁶ buy gold and

⁷⁶ *Däjjazmach Berru* Wäldä Gabre'él took over Qellem at the head of 7–9,000 soldiers when *Ras Täfäri* removed *Däjjazmach Jootee Tulluu* and placed the province under Addis Ababa's

send it to me. As for the money obtained after *Däjjazmach* Berru was appointed, however, give it to *Däjjazmach* Berru's servant". The money obtained before *Däjjazmach* Berru was appointed was five thousand and one hundred seventy-eight *birr*, with which I bought one hundred and forty-eight *wäqét* of gold—[each] costing sixty-five *birr*—and have sent it. The money obtained since *Däjjazmach* Berru was appointed on the 16th of *Nähasé* was one thousand and one hundred nineteen *birr*. I have written to my official to give the money to *Däjjazmach* Berru's servant, *Grazmach* As'mä Giyorgis. Also, the tribute obtained before *Däjjazmach* Berru was appointed, was sixty pieces of ivory and five slaves, while my official, having loaded the ivory and [being accompanied] by the slaves was coming to me, *Däjjazmach* Berru's servant named *Grazmach* As'mä Giyorgis caught [them] on the way. And now if I get a letter [from you], I will receive [the slaves and the goods] and send them over to you. However, while *Grazmach* As'mä Giyorgis was moving from here [Naqamtee] to Qélläm, I told him that since the ivory and slaves belonged to my master [you], they should stay safe. He held them, although he knew they were my master's [yours]. Therefore, let a letter be sent to me so that I could send them [to you] after receiving them [from him]. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 26th of *T'eqemt* 1910 E.C./November 5, 1917.

127

wa/mu/1/282

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, the news has reached me that these Arabs like Hojälé al-Hasan want to request to have *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér [me] appointed as an official intermediary [*baldäräba*] for them. However, I do not want to be an official intermediary for them. I cannot. May God show you [the truth]. Their territory borders on the British territory. I am afraid that they, picking up a quarrel with the British over trifle things, might create friction between me and the government. They do not also know the [our] customs. They do not

direct control, ending the autonomy under erosion when the latter was first imprisoned and removed in 1909–1912. Täfäri recalled Berru to Addis Ababa and arrested him due to an unidentified 'inappropriate action' (see letter 164 below). He was reinstated in Qellem in 1922, replacing *Däjjazmach* Yiggäzu Bähabté. In March 1927, Berru was transferred to the Sidamo province and replaced by *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam as interim governor. See HMC, Ch. 1.2.

know whether a certain action brings them success or failure. They are ignorant of the significance of [administrative] customs. Therefore, I am informing you, my lord, about this situation, for if they do something wrong, I may be asked for responsibility. Do take notice of this, my lord. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [Written on] the 4th of *Hedar* 1910 E.C./November 13, 1917.

128

wa/mu/1/281

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I am sending my tribute of one thousand *wäqét* of gold. Formerly, when *Janhoy* fixed the tribute for me, it was five hundred *wäqét* of gold. Later on, having said that my country was large, he imposed on me one thousand *wäqét* of gold that I had to pay as tribute. Because of the *Gondäre's* provisions coupled with the tribute of one thousand *wäqét* of gold, the poor [people] emigrated. Therefore, because the tribute was too much and the country [was] deserted, I sought justice from *Janhoy* and pleaded that the hut tax [*t'is*] be counted in my country. He sent me a letter and said that he would have *t'is* counted for me. Since I have sent [you] the letter that *Janhoy* had written to me, see it on my behalf. While I was still feeling the burden of this double tribute, *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma imposed on me thirteen-thousand *birr* payment for the *Gondäre's* provisions. And now, since I shall try to [pay] as much as possible the tribute which *Janhoy* imposed on me, exempt me from the thirteen thousand *birr* tribute that *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma imposed on me afterwards. May God show you [the truth]. If this is not possible, let the *t'is* be counted for me and after [the wealth of] the country has been ascertained, let even more tributes be imposed on me. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [n.d]

129

wa/mu/1/281-280

May it reach my lord, *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have received your cable regarding the tribute to be paid in grain. But, since the *gäbbar* started to hide their harvest [in order to evade] the tithe on grain, I have decided to take one tenth of the grain before it is harvested. This is done by my representatives. And the *gäbbar* will take for themselves nine-tenths of the whole harvest by their own choice. Thus, the *gäbbar* will harvest

and prepare only the part that they should give to us as a tithe tribute. With this method, we received three-fold that of last year. Now again, I request your permission to finish the work in my way. The following year, I will do the way you tell me to do. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [n.d.]

130

wa/mu/1/279

Oh, *Etégé* [Zäwditu],

May God show you [the truth]. Sibü has been the *rist* of my grand and great-grandfathers. *Ras* Gobäna removed [it from] me without my doing anything wrong. I have always sought *Janhoy's* justice to have my *rist* restored to me. When I came last year, I informed Your Majesty to have it restored to me whenever it was convenient to do so, and you gave me *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu as an official usher [*baldäräba*]. And now *Ras* Gugsä has left. Oh, *Etégé*! do not forget me [my case]. I asked you to exempt me from tributes, excluding my former ones, and give me [Sibü] for myself. When I say Sibü, I do not mean all of Sibü but only my own *rist*. My *rist* is not even half of Sibü.⁷⁷ Besides, the Sibü country is at present full of forests and thickets (*dur*). There are no people living [there]. You can ask people to ascertain what I am saying. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 15th of *Hedar* 1910 E.C./November 24, 1917.

131

wa/mu/1/276

Oh *Negest*,

[You told me]: “[The] man called Wärqinäh is my servant (*ashkär*). He went out to bring me my Galla. The Galla are seven in number”. You [Täfäri] also said: “while he was returning with the Galla, my [i.e. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's] dignitaries snatched the Galla from him”, asking me to give him back the Galla so that he will bring them to you. But the Galla are not seven in number. They are five. And even the man who brought the message said that his Galla are five and the other two are someone else's. He might have said that they were property (*gänzäb*) of the *Negus* (King), but in front of me he

⁷⁷ Failing to reach his right over the Sibü land with *Ras* Täfäri, GE writes several letters to Queen (later Empress) Zäwditu to obtain it.

said that they were his own. He also said that he bought them from a slave trader on a certain night. In spite of this, when we asked the Galla, they claimed that they were freemen (*yäsäw lij*) and would never be considered slaves in their homeland. They also said that “bandits (*shifita*) kidnapped them and sold them to Wärqinäh”. I am now afraid to hand them over to him while they are claiming to be sons of men and not slaves.⁷⁸ But the one who has admitted to be a slave, I handed him over to Wärqinäh. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. [Written on the] 12 *T’err*, 1910 E.C./January 20, 1918.

132

wa/mu/1/269

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

I heard that a proclamation has been issued that people who have paid taxes at the Customs Houses in Addis Ababa and Billo should not pay taxes again at [other] gates. I could not keep quiet, since no letter has come to me, because [such] a proclamation has been issued. Besides, *Janhoy* formerly allowed me to collect taxes at the gates in my country in order to add to the tributes I pay. I used to collect taxes in my country from those who had the Customs House’s Seal [receipt] and paid taxes already at the Customs Houses in Addis Ababa and Billo.⁷⁹ Although the amount of taxes was small and I did not collect taxes according to the regulations of the Customs House, I used to collect taxes a second time from those who had the Customs house’s seal. And [now] I am just informing [you about] the old custom and the regulation in my country. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 17th of *Hamlé* 1910 E.C./July 24, 1918.

133

wa/mu/1/266

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

⁷⁸ Although considered theoretically ‘sons of men and not [of] slaves’, marginalized Oromoo were caught up in the slave trade through various forms of banditry. The distinction is further blurred by the ambiguous term ‘Galla’ employed in the official correspondence.

⁷⁹ Trade revenues drawn from merchants crossing Biilloo and Addis Abba prevented Naqamtee from exercising its own right to tax. See above, letters 4, 6, 7, 16, 21.

I sent you an appeal requesting your permission to allow me to have an audience with you. Of course, I have already appealed about the reason for doing so. It is about the mistreatment I received from *Ras Täsämma* who levied on me thirteen thousand *birr* for the provision of the *Gondäre* of *Ras Dämessäw*. Even Menilek never levied such a tax on me. I have applied to you for the recount of all my *gäbbar* households and for a possible exemption of this tribute.⁸⁰ You have promised me to solve the situation when you come to visit me. This time, the reason for asking your permission to come to you is to pay homage (*däj t'inat*) to you on this matter. But my health is deteriorating these days and I cannot even sit on the back of the animal.⁸¹ Regarding the doctor who came here to treat me last time, he did nothing for me. The illness has worsened ever since. My country is on the edge of great risk due to the heavy taxation. Let the recount of my *gäbbar* household be held as soon as possible and I will pay accordingly. Let the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 5 *Mäskäräm*, 1911 E.C./September 15, 1918.

134

wa/mu/1/264

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

You wrote me saying: “Since *Balambaras Täsämma* said that after you had given him the provisions and salary as well as ration (*dirgo*) that *Balambaras Bäqqälä* used to obtain, and he made use of it up to now, you now forbade him [to have them any longer], let him [*Täsämma*] receive, including that which is overdue, as usual. Let him not be forbidden in the future”. May God show you [the truth]. *Janhoy* has not given [sent] *Balambaras Täsämma* to me. No message to the effect that he [*Täsämma*] be entitled to *Balambaras Bäqqälä*’s privileges has ever come. It was *Lij Iyasu* who recently sent *Balambaras Täsämma* to stay with me. Even *Lij Iyasu* did not mention to me that he should be entitled to [take the place of] *Balambaras Bäqqälä*’s privileges.

⁸⁰ For an earlier request of exemption of the thirteen thousand *birr* imposed by *Ras Täsämma*, see letter 128.

⁸¹ By September 1918, GE’s health was deteriorating. His health worsened in the next few years and, when he asked Addis Ababa to send him a doctor in urgency, he was already near death. GE died, most probably of diabetes, in 1925, and was succeeded by his son *Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam*.

When I came the year before last seeking aid, I pleaded to my master [i.e., you] my difficulties concerning the increased expense in tribute that *Ras Täsämma* had imposed upon me, and you exempted me from *Balambaras Täsämma*'s provisions.⁸² And I came home, having paid my respects and feeling happy. The tribute that *Janhoy* formerly doubled was a thousand *wäqét* of gold and the present [I used to send] was also a thousand *wäqét* of gold. When I give to *Ras Dämessäw*'s official ushers (*baldäräboch*) as provision the tribute I collect from this country, the tribute becomes overdue every year. Therefore, I seek my master's justice that the *gäbbar* households (*t'is*) in the country be counted for me. And now, let the *t'is* in the country be counted for me. Until the *t'is* is counted for me, exempt me from [having to provide] *Balambaras Täsämma*'s provisions. And now, if *Balambaras Täsämma* says that he replaced *Balambaras Bäqqäla* in the latter's privileges by order of *Janhoy*, and that he lived with *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* [me] in such a way, have him and me meet [for legal disputation]. Starting from now, I will send an attorney. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 2nd of *T'eqemt* [1911 E.C.]/October 12 [1918?].

135

wa/mu/1/263

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

The matter concerning the *lébashay* has caused [much] difficulty to me. People who lose money administer the drinking to the *lébashay*.⁸³ The *lébashay* does not [however] catch the man who stole [the money]. He catches those who did not. The stolen good is also found in the hands of those who the *lébashay* has not caught. It is not one or two people. It is many people who

⁸² *Balambaras Täsämma* wanted to take the place of the previous head of the *Gondaré* in Naqamtee, *Balambaras Bäqqälä*, who had been removed from office during Menilek's time. Both were the main receivers of the food provisions assigned by the Government to feed the soldiers and officers stationed in Naqamtee. Provisions had been doubled by *Ras Täsämma* but were later repealed by *Ras Täfäri*. See letter 136.

⁸³ *Lébashay*, derived from two Amharic words: *léba* ("thief") and *shay* ("to search, seek"), was a whimsical method of searching for criminals, where a drunk boy with a loose rope or cloth tied on his waist would be sent to a village or community for detection of thieves. The person or family in whose compound or vicinity the boy ended up would be labelled as a wanted criminal. See Bahru Zewde, 2002a, pp. 121–23.

lost their money. Although the *lébashay* catches people, the money is found, indirectly, in the hands of other people. Thus, the matter caused me [much] difficulty. Change the administrator of the *lébashay* drinking on my behalf. Or else do, my master, what you think is wise. The poor are suffering. If there is another administrator of the drinking, change him on my behalf. If the ones here claim that they still know [how to administer drinking], have them meet me [and discuss the matter]. Why should the innocent poor be suffering? May God show you [the truth]. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 5th of *Hedar* 1911 E.C./November 14, 1918.

136

wa/mu/1/260

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

Can you make the man who is requesting to have *Balambaras* Bäqälä's provisions meet me? *Balambaras* Bäqälä does not get any provisions from me. Have him meet me since I can defend [my case]. While *Balambaras* Bäqälä, having been appointed by *Janhoy* [as governor of] Edäppo, was there, he was demoted. Having been demoted, he came and stayed with me, not by *Janhoy*'s order but as a friend. Later on, since his activities were not good, and I found that inconvenient, I had him leave my country after informing *Janhoy*. That he left by *Janhoy*'s order is evidenced in *Janhoy*'s sealed letter. I am sending this seal [imperial letter] of *Janhoy* [Emperor Menilek] for you to see it. After he left my country, *Janhoy* did not send me any person to replace *Balambaras* Bäqälä. *Balambaras* Bäqälä left my country long ago when *Janhoy* was well [in good health]. However, people speak falsely as if he left later on at the time of *Lij Iyasu* and *Ras Täsämma*. *Balambaras* Bäqälä has no right of obtaining provision from me. And now, I have a legal basis (*sir'at*) for defending myself, have the one who is asking for his [Bäqälä's] provisions, meet me. Written on the 25th of *Nähasé* 1911 E.C./August 31, 1919.

137

wa/mu/1/259

May it reach my lord *Ras Tafari*, Heir to the Government of Ethiopia.

Last year, according to your order, I and *Fitawrari* Abébé have exchanged [land] in Sibu country and I hereby apply that this land to be registered [in the imperial land register] in my name. I ask this because, in case *Fitawrari* Abébé is to be transferred to another locality, I may not enter into possible conflict with the new coming ruler. I have sent *Grazmach* Käbbädä to

Fitawrari Abébé so that he would reach an agreement and the land be registered on my behalf. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 24th of *Nähasé* 1911 E.C./August 30, 1919.

138

wa/mu/1/258

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

Three years ago, when *Lij* Iyasu gave *Musé* Dilbi [Hasib Ydlibi] the governorship over the Shanqella of Yäbo [Yämbö] in Baro, *Musé* Dilbi said that, since he had no assistants, the Shanqella refused to render service to him. Therefore, he asked (and had them attacked by *Fitawrari* Burayyu). Among these Shanqella, he had about forty-one captives whom he was to take to Addis Ababa, and when he reached my place, Naqamtee, *Lij* Iyasu sent [a message] to *Fitawrari* Burayyu saying: “since *Däjjazmach* Gänämé has pleaded [complained] to me that *Fitawrari* Burayyu [you] had attacked his country, let all the captives be returned and you will have a meeting for disputation over why the Shanqella were fought against”. Later on, he [Iyasu] cabled me: “Let *Fitawrari* Burayyu come to me, since he will take them [the captives] on his way back from here. Until then, let the Shanqella stay with you”. Accordingly, I took them from *Fitawrari* Burayyu. When later on, *Lij* Iyasu cabled me that *Fitawrari* Burayyu had arrived, and that he [*Lij* Iyasu] wanted me to send fifteen selected Shanqella from those I had received from *Fitawrari* Burayyu, since he had resolved the matter with them. At that time, my official usher (*baldäräba*) was *Azazh* Mätafärya, to whom I sent a letter asking him to take these fifteen Shanqella, whom I was to chain, to *Lij* Iyasu. But before *Lij* Iyasu received the Shanqella, he [Iyasu] went to Harärgé. *Azazh* Mätafärya received [the Shanqella] and sent me a paper [receipt]. Twenty-six Shanqella were left with me, having been settled. Of these, one killed another man last year, and I sent him chained to the accuser to Addis Ababa, and *Afä Negus* T’elahun, having taken him, put him in prison. Four of them died of illness this year. And at the moment, there are twenty-one Shanqella with me. They have been settled down [here]. If you want me to send them to you in Addis Ababa or that they should return to their country [I will do so accordingly]. To whom shall I give them? Also, when *Lij* Iyasu came to this country, four Shanqella fell ill and stayed here, having been settled. I found them while interrogating the others. One of the four died. The [other] three are alive. Shall I send them, too? [n.d.]

139

wa/mu/1/256

Oh, *Etégé!*

I had sent you a letter through my servant *Grazmach* Käbbädä, requesting you to register the land I exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé, verifying the amount of land and the *qoro*'s name. *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä, however, sent me a message saying, "I could not get the land registered so far because they say that the letter was written long ago, [and is now] outdated". I wrote a letter recently in the month of *Mäskäräm*, unless it is dated wrongly. In fact, I consider this as if it had been added to my country, not as a piece of land I got in exchange. Anyway, I seek your favour that you make it to be registered in my name. I mean this in case *Fitawrari* Abébé be removed from the Sibu land, and I may not enter into a conflict with the new ruler on the boundary. At this moment, there is nothing wrong about it. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 2 *T'eqemt*, 1912 E.C./October 13, 1919.

140

wa/mu/1/254

Oh, *Etégé!*

May God show you [the truth]. *Däjjazmach* Gänämé cabled me saying: "since I have been appointed to collect tithe taxes on grain, and also the taxes on mineral water (*hora*) and thermal water (*fil-weha*) I will send this week a man to oversee this [work]". Formerly, *Janhoy* said that I should pay ten thousand *birr* to the *Gondäré* for their provisions; as for the tithe on grain, it would be used [counted] as provisions for my soldiers. As for the taxes collected at the gates of my country and all taxes on mineral and thermal water, he had allowed me to keep [them] for myself to be used as supplement to my tribute; and although people were appointed over other regions, mine was left free and it has not been interfered with until now.⁸⁴ May God show you [the truth]. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 26th of *T'eqemt* 1912 E.C./November 6, 1919.

⁸⁴ Taxes on grain and mineral waters contributed to the yearly tribute Naqamtee was asked to pay to the Government Treasury. The appointment of *Däjjazmach* Gänämé as the Government collector of these taxes confirmed the trend of acquiring regional resources for national development but diminished Naqamtee's ability to pay the overdue tributes. See letter 143.

141

wa/mu/1/251

Oh, *Etégé*!

In this rainy season, with your permission, I bought two hundred *gasha* of uncultivated (*t'äf*) land from *Fitawrari* Abébé, giving my word to pay the annual revenue of the land, i.e. becoming *Shaläqa* of the land. I hereby sent the revenue of this year thirty *gundo* of honey in the hand of *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam. I did this so that the land would be registered in my name. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 24th of *T'eqemt* 1912 E.C./November 4, 1919.

142

wa/mu/1/250

Oh, *Etégé*!

I have sent the revenue with *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam. However, here the price of gold is too expensive. Thus, I sent half the revenue in gold and the other half with money. I told *fitawrari* to buy the gold at Addis Ababa and to pay the revenue in full. May the Saviour of the World give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 24th *T'eqemt* 1912 E.C./November 4, 1919.

143

wa/mu/1/249

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras* Täfäri.

You wrote me: "Since a merchant named Wäldäyäs said that, while having borne the seal of the Customs House in Addis Ababa and loaded merchandise, he was going to Naqamtee, *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam levied taxes on him at Wama, send him [Wäldä Maryam] together with the opponent". May God show you [the truth]. A merchant receives the seal of the Customs House in Addis Ababa, while coming to my country, in order not to pay dues at the gates of Addis Aläm, Toki, Chäliya and Billo. However, even if he has the seal of the Customs House in Addis Ababa, he pays dues in my territory - this has been done for a long time now. Similar to the present [case] is this: *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu, while collecting dues at Billo, brought me a paper from *Janhoy* to the effect that a merchant bearing the seal of the Customs Houses of Addis Ababa and Billo should not pay dues again in my country. And I pleaded to *Janhoy*, and he had *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu and myself meet [for legal dispute] there in Addis Ababa. May God show you [the truth]. I pay my tributes by virtue of the money collected as taxes at gates and dues on markets, not be-

cause the country is rich enough. When I pleaded to *Janhoy* about the tributes, he allowed me to collect dues but [said] that I should not impose too much money. He made a regulation for me by which I levied one *birr* on two camels' load and one *birr* on four donkeys' load and I have been levying accordingly. Last year, my master [you] wrote me informing me that I should levy in accordance with the regulations of the Customs House and that I should not levy more. Since then, once a tax has been paid on a certain good at Wama, it would not be necessary to pay a second time in my country. [n.d.]

144

wa/mu/1/244

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

You sent me a message saying: “a man called *Wäldäyés* applied to me that, while he was carrying a receipt of his being taxed at Addis Ababa Customs House, he is taxed for the second time at the Naqamtee gate. May you [*Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*] send someone to clarify the case”. My lord, this man did not carry a receipt from Addis Ababa. What he was carrying was a receipt for the salt he paid at Billo. I taxed him according to the norm that has been in practice since early days.⁸⁵ It is a practice that is in force since the time of Emperor Menilek, that a merchant carrying a receipt from Billo is to be taxed again. Besides, my lord [*Ras Täfäri*] has issued a guideline last year saying that custom duties be paid at Naqamtee. Accordingly, I have been charging the customs duties. Otherwise, I have never gone out of the guidelines and not even charged duties for a single sack of salt. Moreover, this man, *Wäldäyés*, is a servant of *Särs’äwäld*, and every Ethiopian knows well that I and *Särs’äwäld* are adversaries. We do not like each other. In fact, it is *Särs’äwäld* who is encouraging *Wäldäyés* to accuse me. Anyway, on my behalf, let *Fitawrari Wäldä Maryam* discuss the situation. May the Saviour of the World give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. Written on 25 *Tahsas*, 1912 E.C./ January 4, 1920.

⁸⁵ Time and again, old norms of the royal kitchen (*madbét*) are contrasted to the tax reforms introduced by Menilek’s successors, particularly by *Ras Täfäri*. See Bahru Zewde, 2002a, p. 119.

145

wa/mu/1/243

Oh, *Etégé*!

Since the time of my forefathers, it has been prohibited to hunt in the forest land of Handäq without permission. In earlier days, I let this be known to Menilek II, and with his approval a proclamation was issued, and it is still in force. Moreover, I made this word be public during the time of *Ras Dämessäw* which he in turn re-proclaimed it. Now, I appeal to you that you send out a word to *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen*, as he is a new appointee, and he has little knowledge about it, so that he will also issue the proclamation to his men stating that hunting at Handäq without permission is forbidden. But what I mean by hunting is forbidden may not be taken as meaning there are plenty animals in the forest; rather, I mean only a few of them are left. Most of them have already disappeared. I, therefore, mean to preserve the remaining species. May the Saviour of the World give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 19th of *T'err* 1912 E.C./January 28, 1920.

146

wa/mu/1/212

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the-Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

You, my master, sent me a message: "Have *Däjjazmach Berru*'s country supervised on my behalf. Let *Janhoy*'s servant-settlers (*ashkär täkläñña*) who have been 'planted' by *Däjjazmach Berru* stay with their *madäriya*.⁸⁶ Do not remove them". *Janhoy*'s servant-settlers were 'planted' on one half of the two thousand *gäbbar* land which *Däjjach Joté* had retained as *siso* land when he was still alive. It is now in their [*Däjjazmach Berru*'s people] hands. And now *Fitawrari Habtä Giyorgis* sent me [a message] to remove [them] without your [my master's] order, and I am now informing you about it. And as for them, where could they go if, having removed them from here, they were not given [other land as a replacement]. If we, without preparing another place, remove the soldiers, they will destroy the government's ammunitions and regular pack animals. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 17th of *Hedar* 1913 E.C./November 26, 1920.

⁸⁶ "*Däjjazmach Berru*'s country", like "the country of *Joté*" mentioned in letters 67, 79, 117, 120, 126, 161, 185, refers in this correspondence to the territory of Qellem.

147

wa/mu/1/204

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

I am sending my tribute of one thousand *wäqét* of gold in the hands of *Grazmach Berru*. The delay was because I could not find any gold. I had informed my master [you] about the scarcity of gold earlier on. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 27th of *T'err* 1913 E.C./February 4, 1921.

148

wa/mu/1/195-94

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

And now, may God show you [the truth], concerning tribute payment in my country in former times when *qälad* was introduced. We used to count the peasant households (*t'is*) and, having selected the rich [ones], they used to pay tributes [taxes] on the *t'is*.⁸⁷ Those whom we registered as being rich this year would, a year later, become poor and, when this created some difficulty for me, I pleaded to *Janhoy* about the matter. Having gotten permission from *Janhoy*, I had the *qälad* [system] introduced [in my territory] and at present tribute in my land is collected by [according to] the *qälad* [system]. At the time that the *qälad* system was started, I had obtained my *siso* land [holding] according to the regulation. It was not entered into the [central] government [land] register. Although *Janhoy* gave me the *shaläqennär*⁸⁸ because of his generosity [when he was still alive and in good health], the *baläbbat* made their living (*tidar*), [without difficulty] upon their *siso gult*. As a human being, no one escapes death and removal [from power]. Unless it [my *siso* land] is entered into the government register now, while I [am alive] and if an incapable son (*sänäf lej*) succeeds me, my family and relatives might be dispossessed of their *rist*. Therefore, let it be entered into the government register. And now, my master, let the town of Naqamtee, where I am living, as well as the

⁸⁷ Before land was measured and *qälad* was introduced in 1910, property was taxed on the basis of dwellings (hut tax). On the application of the *qälad* norms, the 'third' part (*siso*) remaining to the original owner, see Tesema Ta'a, 1984, p. 186. In this letter GE clearly specifies that his own *siso* claim included the town of Naqamtee, the lowland (Sibuu) land he had bought, and the Upper Dhedhessa River.

⁸⁸ I.e., the power to levy and collect tribute.

lowland region I had bought and the country in the upper part of Dédéssa be reckoned as one out of four according to the number of *qälad* and be turned into *gult* [land] for me. Let my *siso* [land] be entered separately into the government register, by which (i.e. entering it into the government register) I do not mean that I should be exempted from the salt duty that *Janhoy* had imposed on me. The upper part of the Dédéssa includes the *siso* [land] I gave to the [local] inhabitants as well as that which they had bought, the *sämon* land which I had donated to the Church. I do not intend to take all this land. I want the owners of these lands to pay the tributes to me while still keeping the land. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [Written on the 2nd of] *Mäggabit* 1913 E.C./March 11, 1921.

149

wa/mu/1/189-88

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras* Täfäri.

A young man, my sister's son, accused me before the *afä negus* so that he would share with me the cattle and *rist* of my father, *Däjjach* Moräda. *Däjjach* Moräda, my father, had died before King Menilek became Emperor of Ethiopia. At the time that my father died, the Amhara custom had not been introduced. My father's children [including myself] were five males and four females. The five males shared [their father's property] while the four females did not. However [this is because] formerly, in the time of the Galla, if a father died, a daughter would not share [possessions] with the sons. And now, if whatever used to be done in the time of our forefathers (and of the Galla) were not considered to be valid, it would be done not only to [against] me but to the whole country. Consider the custom [tradition] (*serat yesmuñ*).⁸⁹ It is *Qäññazmach* Kaba who will conclude the matter for me. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gabrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 20th of *Miyazya* 1913 E.C./April 28, 1921.

⁸⁹ Naqamtee's negotiations with Addis Ababa were not only limited to tributes and taxes. Here GE emphasizes the different inheritance laws (Or. *seraa*) between "Amhara custom" (*yamara serat*) and the "times of the Galla" (*bägalla zäimän*). See letter 154.

150

wa/mu/1/183

May it reach my master, the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

My master, the price of gold in my country at present is fifty-three *birr* [per *wäqét*]. Hence, I am in difficulty concerning the tribute. Formerly, in the time of Emperor Menilek, a *wäqét* of gold cost at most forty *birr* and as such I used to pay my tributes. Having collected fifteen *birr* in taxes from each *gasha* and paid provisions for the *Gondäré*, we used to buy gold with less than forty *birr* [per *wäqét*] to be paid as tributes. And if I increase the [land] tax because of the rise in the price of gold, the country [people] will suffer. I was afraid that they might plead [against me]. And now my master, let me pay the tributes in money - as I used to, in the time of Emperor Menilek - on the basis of *wäqét* of gold costing forty *birr*. I seek your permission. If you think this is impossible, let me increase the [land] tax of the country and buy the gold at the current price. I plead my master seeking your permission. Those who cause the increase in the price of gold (to my disadvantage) are the Indians, the Arabs, and the *färänji* who are living in my country. When they buy [the gold] at higher prices from the traders, the latter hide it from us and sell it secretly at night to them. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy. I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. [Written on the 8th of] *Nähasé* 1913 E.C./August 14, 1921.

151

wa/mu/1/167

Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Empress of Ethiopia, *Zäwditu*, Daughter of Emperor Menilek II.

May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Earlier *Janhoy* made a regulation to the effect that a head per forty heads of cattle and a head per ten heads of sheep and goats should be selected, and this used to be done occasionally. And now, we have sent [orders] to various regions [for tax purposes] that cattle, sheep, and goats should be selected as in former times because of the increase in the number of guests. However, a head used to be selected from forty heads of cattle in former times. Since we have now decided that a head should be selected from sixty heads, do the same in your country for cattle which were once attacked by disease, and have a head per ten sheep and [or] goats selected soon.⁹⁰ When this is done, count the one or two heads of

⁹⁰ On the required cattle counting, including sheep and goats, see above letters 34, 57–58, 60, 89, 91, 99, and 199.

cattle [possessed by a person] together with the many possessed by another man until it reaches sixty and select the head from the many cattle owned by that man; do not do so with the owner of [just] one or two heads of cattle. A calf less than one year old should not be counted. When the cattle are selected, it should not move from one region to another. If it does, turn it back and let it be selected in the respective region. Written on the 20th of *T'eqemt* 1914 E.C./October 30, 1921.

152

wa/mu/1/157

Oh, *Etégé*!

May God show you [the truth]. In the time of *Janhoy*, Emperor Menilek, the head priest (*liqä kahlen*) of our father, *Abunä Matéwos*, did not have power in my land. When our father, *Abunä Matéwos*, appointed and sent to me a head priest, I pleaded to *Janhoy*, who forbade [it] saying that “his [Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s] country is an exception and a *liqä kahlen* should not be appointed over the Léqa”. In the time of *Ras Täsämma*, a letter from him reached me instructing me to let our father [*Abunä Matéwos*’ appointee] in [to my country]. And I sent *Ras Dämessäw* to our father to intercede, with the message: “May God show you [the truth]. How could a man interfere with me [in disregard of my country’s autonomy] while it was not done in the time of Emperor Menilek? If this is impossible, appoint one of my men”.⁹¹ And our father appointed one of my own men. Having demoted this man last summer (*kerämt*), he appointed my own man (*yänénu saw*) this year. May God show you [the truth]. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* *Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. Written on the 20th of *Tahsas* 1914 E.C./December 29, 1921.

⁹¹ GE was a loyal member of the Orthodox Church, but occasionally he was at odds with the clergy, who initially came primarily from Gojjam. He also provided support to Protestant missionaries, who were mostly Oromo teachers with connections to the Lutheran Swedish Evangelical Mission. With both denominations, he sought to maintain autonomy over religious affairs within the region. This included sending clergy trained in Leqa to receive ordination from *Abunä Matéwos* (Arén, 1978, p. 428). See also letter 198.

153

wa/mu/1/156

Oh, *Etégé!*

A message reached me last year instructing me to collect the money people would contribute willingly for the construction of *Janhoy's* memorial statue. When I informed the people about this, they paid little attention. They give a *tämun* or two. They did not give me much. I could not collect [much] by force, because the order that had reached me instructed that I [should] receive what is given willingly, not by force.⁹² I have sent with *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos two thousand and two hundred-fifty *birr* that people willingly gave me. I have also sent my own contribution of three thousand *birr*. Let *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos hand it over for me [in my name].⁹³ I should have given not only this [little money] had it not been for the fact that I have spent much for the construction of the *Dédessa* bridge. I have not yet fully paid the cost; I will have to give six thousand *birr* more to the *färänji*. Wishing that the Saviour of the World may keep you healthy, I prostrate myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. [n.d.]

154

wa/mu/1/012-13

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

May it reach all the *mäkwant*. I did not want to have the cattle of the *mäkkän* [a childless, barren person] in the first place. I confiscated it when people said things that were improper. And now I leave it for his [the *mäkkän's*] wife and relatives, for a man who has sons and daughters is useful for his children. If a man, having married a wife, and dies before having a child, this money [property] is [to be] equally shared, one half going to his wife and another half to his heir relative. However, let them prepare the death celebration (*täzkar*) before sharing his property. When they share [it] later on, the property should be equally divided and each should take his share by lots without designating beforehand one's own share. As for the wife's share, she can sell it or use it with her new husband; no one can interfere. However, if the deceased has *rist*, the land is [to be] left to his heir relatives. The wife cannot bring somebody else's child (*guddisa*) on that *rist*. She can marry a husband. If the deceased person owes money to someone, his relative who shared

⁹² Re: CGC, letter 101.

⁹³ On the special role of *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos as Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's trusted secretary and scribe (*s'ähafe te'zaz*) at the Ethiopian court, see letters 192 and 223 below. ATFN, Interview with *Fitawrari* Täfärra Est'ifanos, Addis Ababa, March 1994.

his property with his wife should pay it. The wife's share shall remain intact. If such a man is a stranger and does not have relatives, [and he dies], his cattle (*käbtu*) shall be given to the church. Give it to the church, but only the part that is left after the expense for the *täzkar* has been deducted. If a person has two or three maid-servants (*gäräd*) and one of them gives birth to a child by him, and if the first wife is barren, let her leave [her husband's house] with all that her husband had given her before he died. The child born [from the maid-servant] cannot withhold the property her husband had given her while still alive, saying that he will not give her his father's cattle, because she was barren. If a person has three or four children and one of them dies, his brothers should [can] not inherit his cattle. His own father can do so. If a woman has a child but not a husband and her child dies, his property should not be inherited by her relatives because she is a woman. The mother should inherit her son's property. Written on the 12th of *Hedar* 1899 E.C./November 21, 1905.⁹⁴

155

wa/mu/1/76

May it reach my master, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri*.

My master, may God show you [the truth]. A relative of mine sent me [a message] that he heard that *Fitawrari* Olana, the *abba qoro* of Billo, inherited the Billo country from *Däjjazmach* Achamyälläh. He [the latter] does not have land (*midir*). The land is Nägäwo Gäربی's. And beyond him, all the land is the collective property of the Léqa [clans]. Nägäwo Gäربی is married to my aunt, daughter of Bäkäre, *Däjjazmach* Moräda's sister. Nägäwo Gäربی had many sons and daughters from this aunt of mine. The children, although impoverished, are still alive today. I have my [own] *rist* in this land. And now, since I want to discuss the matter with *Däjjach* Achamyälläh - and custom [blood relationship] is on my side—let *Fitawrari* Olana, the one who had him inherit [the land] be also present, I plead to my master that *Qäññazmach* Kaba present each other with [legal] guarantors. [n.d.]

⁹⁴ It is not clear why this 1905 regulation on childless (*makkan*) inheritance has been reproduced among the correspondence of the 1920s but is possibly due to the rising need to clarify inheritance rights due to the declining health of GE. See letter 155.

156

wa/mu/1/240-239

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Recently, I have received your letter which says, “*Fitawrari* Burayyu is claiming that the thirty-two slaves [Shanqella], which he was to pay as homage [*mättaya*] to *Lij Iyasu*, have remained in the hands of *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*, and now you [Gäbrä Egzi’abhér] send me those slaves accompanied by one of your men” This letter was written two years ago, but *Fitawrari* Burayyu has put aside the letter all this time and gave it to me recently. During these two years, the slaves caught disease and were ill, but now I send you the twenty-one of them who recovered from the illness. The other two [have not recovered and] are too weak to travel to Addis Ababa. Moreover, at that time there were forty-one slaves that he [*Fitawrari* Burayyu] sent me. I sent fifteen of them to *Lij Iyasu*. But *Lij Iyasu* was not in Addis Ababa at that time. He went to Harargé without receiving them. Because of that, I handed them over to *Azazh Mätafärya*. I hereby sent the letter of *Azazh Mätafärya* which confirms safe receipt of the [fifteen] slaves. One of the slaves was killed in a quarrel with someone else’s slave. I sent the culprit to the *afä negus* two years ago. The other two have died of the illness. In total, they are forty-one in number. Now, I have sent you twenty-one slaves other than the two who are sick. May the Holy Saviour of the World give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. Written on the 8th of *Säné* 1912 E.C./June 15, 1920.

157

wa/mu/1/239

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have heard the word order [*yäselk qal*] you sent by cable to *Shäykh Hojälé* which says, *Fitawrari* Mähammäd prohibited the Englishmen who got our license paper to search for gold, iron and bronze in the country of Dul. Hence, do not let him prohibit them”. I know that *Fitawrari* Mähammäd does not abide by *Shäykh Hojälé*’s word. Since early times, he has been autonomous. He rules the country by himself. And, as soon as I heard your word, I sent a message, enclosing your order, to *Fitawrari* Mähammäd. And now, I am sending you his response so that you may have a look at it. Since the letter is written in Arabic, I made it translated into Amharic. I sent you along with the original copy. Meanwhile, I sent a letter to *Fitawrari* Mähammäd which requested him to let the English men, who are there with a licence paper obtained from *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia, do their job and create them no problem. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I

bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 18 *Säné* 1912 E.C./June 25, 1920.

158

wa/mu/1/238

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have sent revenue obtained in cash from the Sibu land from the time it became my possession. It is obtained from juridical services and income tax of the cotton trade. It is one thousand four hundred and twenty-seven *birr* in total. As it is too cumbersome to carry it along to [Addis Ababa], I thought it would be much easier to change it into gold. The price of gold in our country at this time is 27 *birr* for each *wäqét*, and thus I bought each *wäqét* of gold with twenty-seven *birr*.⁹⁵ I am sending you a total of fifty-three *wäqét* of gold. As to the tribute grain, I have made it registered by a certain *Aläqa* Ziqé, who sits at Sibu as a government scribe, and have deposited in the state depot [treasury]. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 21st of *Säné* 1912 E.C./June 28, 1920.

159

wa/mu/1/237

May it reach *Wäyzäro* Mänän, may the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you.⁹⁶ Sent from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Hojälé sent me a letter which requested me to send you [Mänän] ten slaves. But the slaves which he sent to me are not ten as he claimed to be. They are three men and five women slaves. The other two have not arrived to me yet, even though he has noted it in his letter. Now I have sent you those eight slaves. Written on 21 *Säné* 1912 E.C./June 28, 1920.

160

wa/mu/1/236

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

⁹⁵ As the price of gold varies from time to time, gold rings appear to be a less cumbersome way to send tribute to Addis Ababa.

⁹⁶ This is the first letter to *Wäyzäro* Mänän, wife of *Ras* Täfäri, later crowned Empress (1930).

Two years ago, I applied to you the case of a *färänji* named Yani Mingos, with whom I had a contract to build a bridge [on the Dédéssa] for forty-three thousand *birr*. The agreement was signed at the consulate office of his country [Greece]. And now, before concluding the construction, he asked additional money of twenty-two thousand *birr*. May God show you [the truth], but we made an agreement to finish the work with the first sum of money [forty-three thousand]. Now, either he should finish the construction of the bridge, or he should pay me back all the money that I gave him for the work. So far, he has done a remarkable work, but he has interrupted the work, insisting that he needs more money.⁹⁷ Let he present himself for me [before the imperial court]. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 4th of *Hamlé* 1912 E.C./July 11, 1920.

161

wa/mu/1/232-231

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I heard your word through *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos regarding the overdue and the incomplete payment of the revenue from my part. My lord, may God show you [the truth]. The problem is due to the additional tribute which Emperor Menilek did not actually impose on me but *Ras* Täsämma has levied on me. In addition to this, I am still financing the revenue collected as tribute for the provisions of the *Gondäré* from year to year. It is because of this that taxes are overdue. Regarding this, I have already appealed that this increment on the tax revenue is hurting my people, which you, my lord, once exempted me from. For this incomparable kindness of yours, I say, may God make you live longer and may your government continue from generation to generation. From now on, I will not fail to submit the amount of taxation that Menilek had set on me previously. It is because the provisions of the *Gondäré* that I had to pay that such an overdue was created.⁹⁸ Indeed, I appealed to *Janhoy* [Menilek] about the difficult situation my people are in, let alone the additional tax raise. He, then, ordered to conduct a census of the *gäbbar* household (*t'is*) in my favour. I am now sending the letter in which I appealed to Menilek earlier on and also to you, my lord, so that you may have a look at it again. Today,

⁹⁷ On the Dhedhessa bridge see letter 163 below, as well as letters 42 and 153 above.

⁹⁸ On the provisions for the *Gondäré* see above letters 86, 114, 122–123, 128, 134, 140, 150, 161, 166, 176, 179.

Däjjach Joté's territory has been deserted, yet if [Joté's country] will have its *t'is* counted, including the deserted parts, is far greater than mine even apart from the land inhabited by Shanqella, but the tribute levied [on my country] is greater than Joté's country. My lord, if you insist on levying the tax on my assessment, let the census of the *gäbbar* household (*t'is*) be conducted and I will pay accordingly. But the overdue tax which has accumulated due to the provision of the *Gondäré*, I ask you in the name of God, to be cancelled for good, so that I will never fail to pay the tax in future. But now, if I order them to pay the overdue tax the country will be destroyed. If a person with one or two cows is forced to sell them to pay his debt, then there will be great destruction. Let God show you [the truth]. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down in front of you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 12th of *Nähasé* 1912 E.C./August 18, 1920.

162

wa/mu/1/231-230

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My lord, you ordered me to take control of the uncultivated virgin Sibuu land, which formerly belonged to *Fitawrari* Abébé.⁹⁹ It is an uninhabited forest land which I seek to develop, which I said would help you sustain one of your servants (*ashkär*) after I develop it. Meanwhile, let me pay one *gundo* of honey for every *gasha* of land. Or if you say the taxation to be in cash, I will do it accordingly. But for the government, it is better if the land cares for one servant than to bring it money. My intention is not to snatch it from the *rist* owner and to pay tax by using the land. If the land is already assigned to a *rist* owner, he will pay his share. I am referring to the land which remained uncontrolled. If you do not believe that the land is uninhabited, you may send someone to verify the fact. Regarding the number of the *qälad* [the size of the land in question], on one side of *Grazmach* Dänäqé's, soldiers (*baldäräbochwätadar*) have been 'planted' [or settled]. Apart from the land where the soldiers [of *Grazmach* Dänäqé] have been planted, the land from which the *balabbat* obtained their *siso* and *sämon* land, the land that I have exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé, which is already in my hand, the *gabbar* land and the *shaläqa*'s *madariya* land the total [size] is one thousand and thirty-seven

⁹⁹ For earlier claims to the uninhabited Sibuu lands and their apportionment following the *qälad* system of land measurement see letters 71, 87, 130.

gasha of land. Practically, on this land there is almost nothing. Therefore, let me pay one *gundo* of honey per *gasha* of land annually. In case, however, you may not allow me to take all of Sibu land, please do not forget my request for Gänji for which I beseeched your favour earlier on. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 12th of *Nähasé* 1912 E.C./August 18, 1920.

163

wa/mu/1/227

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Earlier, I agreed with Mingos to construct a bridge over the Dédessa River for forty-three thousand *birr*. However, the amount of *birr* assigned initially has been consumed before the work is concluded. I asked Mingos to finish the work or to pay me back the cash assigned to the bridge so that I would give it to another constructor. And I have informed my lord about this case. Then, after the arrival of the dignitaries who came to the site to evaluate the work done so far by Mingos, they said that it is reasonable to ask for more money since the work done so far is up to standard. Thus, they concluded that additional payment should be made. Now I asked my lord your permission to proceed on his work. I have sent you a contract paper on which we agreed in the case of not keeping his word, to complete the work with the assigned money, he will pay me back all the money. I sent my servant *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä to reach to sign an agreement with the consulate office there in Addis Ababa. My lord, I do not know whether you are aware or not, but the River Dédessa is a little less than the River Abbay. Beyond Gibe, there is no greater river than Dédessa. I started constructing the bridge right after the confluence of the River Dédessa, Dabäna and the River Wama. Let the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 6th of *P'agumé* 1912 E.C./September 11, 1920.

164

wa/mu/1/225-224

May it reach to my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I received your word, which says, “we have arrested *Däjjazmach* Berru due to his inappropriate action; therefore, assign someone to look after the [Qélläm] country [domain of Berru] so that there would be no looting”.¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, I sent my brother *Fitawrari* Oljirra, but *Däjjazmach* Berru’s official, *Qäññazmach* As’mä Giyorgis did not allow him to enter his domain, saying that he did not receive any word from you. My servant also told me that when they told them of his removal from power, his men denied this by saying that he was still in power and made a proclamation to his people to this effect. My lord, let them be informed by telephone that he has been removed in case they were not informed about it. This does not mean that I am incapable to remove them by force, but if they are not well-informed, I want to avoid clashes. I have my men stationed there so that they may not loot. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 27th of *Mäskäräm*, 1913 E.C./October 7, 1920.

165

wa/mu/1/223

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

After your word to look after the Sibu land, I received a word from *Azazh* Dägäfé and *Ligaba* Wädajé, Ministers of Agriculture and Public Works respectively, to hand over the land to the man called Asrat Agonafir. I protested saying that I was ordered by you [*Ras* Täfäri] not to use it but to look after it. When I informed you later about the case, you sent me a message to retain it, not to give it to anyone. Again, these men [the Ministers] ordered me to make the month of *Mäskäräm* provision to *Fitawrari* Abébé’s men, amounting to thirty-seven *dawulla* and seven *qunna* [about one hundred forty-eight quintals] grain of crops. They even said that I should continue to give their provisions for the coming months and other dominants for the tribute crops are to come. What shall I do? I am waiting for your reply. I enclosed the letter they sent to me. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 7th of *T’eqemt*, 1913 E.C./October 17, 1920.

¹⁰⁰ First mention of possible looting in Qellem following the demise of *Däjjazmach* Berru. See letters 126, 168 and HMC, Ch. 1.2.

166

wa/mu/1/222

May it reach to my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. I received your word that my soldiers [*yäqut'er t'or*] who went to *Däjjazmach Berru's* country [Qellem] should remain at his place and his *madbét* and his servants' *madäriya* to be under my men. Moreover, you told me that the soldiers of *Däjjach Berru* be given their provisions as it has been done before. Then in return I sent this message to my servant who is there to look after the country.¹⁰¹ He then asked *Qäññazmach As'mä Giyorgis* to hand over the granary to him, and the latter responded by saying that there was not even a single *qunna* [a measurement of about ten kilos] of grain in it. Indeed, there is no grain left in the granary. We can supply the army only when the crop is harvested. But the country is already deserted and mostly abandoned, with a few scattered households left, which have long left the farm work. When an armed soldier is hungry, he may misuse his gun. I mean to inform you that it is because of the lack of provision that the soldiers have not received their supply, not because I did not want to supply them. I am waiting for your reply as soon as you can. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 17th of *T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./October 27, 1920. The same letter is sent to *Etégé*.

167

wa/mu/1/221

Oh, *Etégé*!

The tribute I made in the form of gold is bought from my country after I collected the money from my subjects. The delay is because I must buy and accumulate it. Now I beg *Etégé* to submit the tribute in *birr*, the value of which corresponds to the gold. I simply do this in order not to make further payment. The price of gold now has become very low, and due to this, people who usually sift the gold dust have abandoned the work and returned to their routine farming. Therefore, even if we accumulate the gold for a year, it would not reach the amount of *birr* that we used to pay. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and bow down ten and ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 17th of *T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./October 27, 1920.

¹⁰¹ *Fitawrari Oljirra*, the Naqamtee representative sent to Qellem, is in fact one of GE's four brothers. See letters 149 and 164.

168

wa/mu/1/220

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

A person from Wällo province named *Fitawrari Wäldäyés* was imprisoned under *Däjjazmach Berru*. Now he is living in the domain of *Däjjach Joté*, who, himself, has been released recently, receiving (*iyäbälla*) the stipend of one hundred twenty *birr*. When my servant, who is assigned to look after the domain of *Däjjazmach Berru*, asked them that they have to pay the above-mentioned *birr* to the appointee of *Fitawrari Märdasa*, they refused, claiming that the government had granted them their *gult* free of payment (*märiqollinal*). And they added that even before it was done only to harm them in defiance of the government orders. I mean to let this be known to my lord. What shall I do? May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 17th of *T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./October 27, 1920.

169

wa/mu/1/219

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have received a message about [ex-wife] *Mayéti*, who claimed that she is entitled to some money that I owe her after our divorce. You also asked me to resolve the case by giving her the money that she claimed she has or to resolve it by sending my attorney. Let God show you [the truth], this marriage case is very crucial, let it be conducted when I come there [Addis Ababa]. I divorced her with great misdeed [*talaq-näwwur*], and we separated twenty years ago while we were young, at the time when *Menilek* founded *Addis Aläm*. We are separated with *Janhoy's* consent. And I came to *Addis Ababa* more than twenty or thirty times [after our divorce]. She could have come to *Addis Ababa* with me and open a legal case. All this time she did not utter any word, and I did not see her attempting to file any legal charge against me. She could have done so if she had a true [case]. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 27 of *T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./November 6, 1920.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Although *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* tried to argue and annul *Wäyzäro Mayéti's* claim, he seems to have lost the case in a spectacular court battle, resulting in his concession of considerable wealth to her. See letter 229 below.

170

wa/mu/1/218

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have received your message telling me to repurchase pack animals (*agasäs*) with three thousand *birr* from the four thousand three hundred *birr* that you sent me. You also told me that there in Addis Ababa the price of animals is too expensive and the animals there are too young. My lord, I will do as you wish. However, here in my country the merchants do not sell the animals in good form, as they use it for their own purpose, neither do the tenants (*balagär*). Moreover, my officials are claiming that they use their animals for the ever-existing campaign. They ask for your permission to purchase the animals from Shewa, contributing some money from their pocket. It would probably be against time for me 'to feed and fatten them here [to enable to serve as pack animals]. Assign your man there in Addis Ababa to evaluate the condition of the animals that my men will purchase for you. He, then, will receive those which are in good form, for the rest we will do our best to exchange them with good ones. I ask for your forgiveness, and I will buy *machañña* [packaging materials] and send it to you in Addis Ababa as soon as possible. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhé*. Written on the 28th of *T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./November 7, 1920.

171

wa/mu/1/216

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Ligaba Wädajé sent me a letter saying he had appointed *Azazh Dägäfé* to oversee and collect tithes in the Boli Hora, from both [the grains in the peasants'] granary and from the farm [yet to be harvested] in the country of *Däjjach Joté* on behalf of the government. *Azazh Dägäfé* would also oversee hunting in the country of *Däjjach Joté*. Then, *Azazh Dägäfé*, in his turn, told me that he had appointed *Balambaras Chibsa*, the former servant of *Däjjazmach Joté*, to do the job and leave all the responsibility over this land to him. And I said, on my part, it was *Etégé* and *Ras Täfäri* who appointed me to oversee [*Däjjach Joté's*] country until I receive a paper reversing this decision, I would not let it go. Even when you instruct me to hand it over [to *Däjjach Joté's* servants] I should not be obliged to do so, as I am a government servant (*ash-kär*), I suggest it would be better in the hands of a government servant (*ash-*

kär).¹⁰³ The servants of *Däjjazmach* Joté want to use it for their own sake and not for the benefit of the government. As for the income from hunting, first of all, I want to inform my lord that all hunting initiatives should seek permission. I have never permitted any hunting activity without your knowledge. Moreover, since you have entrusted the country [of *Däjjach* Joté] to me, I have instructed [my men] not to charge more than two *birr* for court deliberations, even when it involved a mule or a horse trade. My intention in doing so is to develop [*Däjjach* Joté's] country, which has been deserted. The number of *gäbbar* who have returned home ever since I became an overseer to the country numbers two to three thousand. We [*Däjjach* Joté and *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] used to submit only the annual tribute [to the central government] as our territories had been *madbét*. Otherwise, these tributes from Boli Hora, weavers (*yäshämané gudguad*), and tanners (*gojjo däbänansa*) were not charged separately. All are included in the annual tribute. Now, my lord, let me know which of these ways I should follow: if you want me to impose the old days' tribute, I will do so. Or if you want me to levy as a *shaläqa* does, including the judicial service fees, I will do accordingly. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 10th of *Hedar* 1913 E.C./November 19, 1920.

172

wa/mu/1/213

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I received your message, which refers to the accusation made on me from *Näggadras* T'anna, and to send one of my men (*nägärä-fäj*) on behalf of me. Accordingly, I am hereby sending *Fitawrari* Olani, so that he will represent me and resolve the situation. May God show you [the truth], there is no place in all of Ethiopia where customs stations are not established. Merchants are taxed only once at tax stations. But there is no area in the region in which merchants are taxed twice as [if they were] smugglers. I am carrying taxation as a norm which has been established since the time of Menilek II.¹⁰⁴ But this

¹⁰³ In defining himself as 'a government servant' (*yämängäst ashkär*), *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér places himself and *Däjjazmach* Jootee as the only two *madbét* rulers in western Ethiopia.

¹⁰⁴ The letter confirms the spread of customs stations in the country and the need to rationalize the system in order to favour trade and avoid double taxation as was established at the begin-

man [*Näggadras* T'anna] has taxed the merchants who have already been taxed. Consequently, the merchants deserted him. The poor (*deha*) have suffered a lot. *Näggadras* T'anna was taxing the poor for the second time, not to make [greater] income for the government. He is doing it for himself and to persuade the merchants not to pass through my domain, so as to destroy the market. Once, the markets, down to the river Gibé, were all greater than mine, but now they do not exist at all. *Näggadras* T'anna has lost his market at Billo, he is taxing only at the gates. He accused me out of pure envy that my market is still working. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 16th of *Hedar* 1913 E.C./November 25, 1920.

173

wa/mu/1/212

May it reach to my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

A word of my lord came to me after I was assigned by you [*Ras* Täfäri] to oversee the country of *Däjjazmach* Berru saying: “do not uproot the servants (*ashkär*)-colonist (*täkläñña*) of Menilek II, the settlers whom *Däjjazmach* Berru had assigned (planted) there, let them stay on with their *madäriya*”. However, *Däjjach* Joté's *siso* of two thousand *gäbbar*, which were restored to him (*Däjjach* Joté) when he was still alive, *Däjjach* Berru had half of them assigned to the servants (*ashkär*)-colonist (*täkläñña*) of *Janhoy*. It [the servant's *madäriya*] is now in their own hands. Now, *Fitawrari* Habtä Giyorgis instructed me in his message to transfer them to *Fitawrari* Märdassa. My lord, I would not do this without your knowledge. If we uproot them [from their *madäriya*] without any alternative, where would they go? Since they are government soldiers and armed, they can destroy the country.¹⁰⁵ May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you.

ning by Emperor Menilek. The Biilloo gate (*bär*) headed by *Näggadras* T'anna has been a constant worry to GE's administration since the beginning of this correspondence. See above, letters 7, 21, 41, 132, 143-44, 155, 172.

¹⁰⁵ The point is repeated in the following letter to Empress Zäwditu. GE's worry will soon become a grim reality when Qellem will be devastated by widespread soldier looting forcing the Government to ask GE's son, Habtä Maryam, to intervene. See the HMC exchange, Ch. 1.2.

Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 17th of *Hedar* 1913 E.C./November 26, 1920.¹⁰⁶

174

wa/mu/1/211

Oh *Negest*,

On the day I received your word to oversee *Däjjach* Berru's country, I also got an order that I should not uproot the servants (*ashkär*)-colonist (*täklä-ñña*) of *Janhoy* [Menilek II] from their land. However, *Däjjach* Joté's *siso* of two thousand *gäbbar*, which were restored to him (*Däjjach* Joté) when he was still alive, *Däjjach* Berru had half of them assigned to the servants (*ashkär*)-colonist (*täkläñña*) of *Janhoy*. It [the servant's *madäriya*] is now in their own hand. Now, *Fitawrari* Habtä Giyorgis instructed me in his message to transfer them to *Fitawrari* Märdassa. I am thus notifying *Negest* (you) and your government pending execution of the order. If we uproot them [from their *madäriya*] without any alternative, where would they go? Since they are government soldiers and armed, they can destroy the country. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 17th *Hedar* 1913 E.C./November 26, 1920.

175

wa/mu/1/206

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the-Government of Ethiopia.

My servant (*ashkäre*) *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä told me on the phone that you, my lord, has requested him to take sixty thousand or fifty thousand *birr* with him to me so that I will purchase for you some commodity of the best quality and if it is not available in my domain, you told him you want me to get it from neighbouring domains like Qélläm or the Arab country. My lord, I do not even know what kind of purchase I have to make. However, if it is about gold, my lord, I could not buy and accumulate even a thousand *wäqét* for the tribute. Earlier, I applied to make my tribute in *birr* because of the scarcity of gold. But you insisted it to be paid in gold. And now, if it is gold

¹⁰⁶ For a better understanding of this letter, see GE letter 166 above. Here the potential threat of having armed soldiers take over the country is reinforced in repeating the same message to Täfäri and the Queen.

that I purchase, send thirty thousand *birr* with *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä, and I will send you all that I can find. [n.d.]

176

wa/mu/1/205

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

For the letter you sent me to give the provisions (*qälläb*) for *Däjjach Berru*'s men as it used to be in former times, I tried to explain to you that it is not harvest time now, and that *Qäññazmach* As'mä Giyorgis has not handed over to me even a single *qunna* of grain from the granary. And recently I received your word to give them their provisions not from the harvest on the farm land but from the granary. Look, my lord, the soldiers of *Etégé* (*täklä-ññaw yäqut'ir t'or*) are living on the *madäriya* designated for them but the *qit'abäl* soldiers¹⁰⁷ are complaining that they were treated well at the time of *Däjjach Berru*, but now they do not have any provision (*qälläb*) to live on. So, will I have to distribute the remaining grain for these *qit'abäl* soldiers, rather than it getting destroyed by the insects [because of having been stored in the granary for long], or is there another needy group for which it [the grain] will have to be given? I am in great difficulty, and I just want to inform you about the case. I am waiting for your reply. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down in front of you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 27th of *T'err* 1913 E.C./February 4, 1921.

177

wa/mu/1/204

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have just sent you a tribute of one thousand *wäqét* of gold with *Grazmach Berru*. The delay has occurred because of the scarcity of gold in the region. I have informed you about this earlier on. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 27th of *T'err* 1913 E.C./February 4, 1921.

¹⁰⁷ *Qit'abäl* were ordinary soldiers who were not given *madäriya* land or a fixed number of *gäb-bar* to live on and hence would live on provisions directly assigned to them out of the state granary or store of their commander or governor in charge.

178

wa/mu/1/200

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Since the time you ordered me to oversee the domain of *Däjjazmach Berru* [*T'eqemt* 1913 E.C./October 1920], the income from the judiciary service for *Mäskäräm* is three hundred and ninety *birr*, for *Hedar* six hundred thirty-six *birr*, and that of *Tahsas* six hundred fifty-eight *birr*, for a total of one thousand six hundred eighty-four *birr*. Apart from this, my servant (*ashkäre*), who is stationed there, sent me two black *wuzhigra* [a type of rifle]. In addition to this, I have in my possession five hundred fifty-five *birr* obtained from judicial services from the *Sibu* land. Should I send the money to you? I am waiting for your reply. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 28th of *T'err* 1913 E.C./February 5, 1921.

179

wa/mu/1/198

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have received your word [written imperial order] that the two divisions of *Däjjazmach Berru*'s soldiers [*shambäl and yämäto aläqa*] are to come to you with *As'mä Giyorgis*, and the remaining group [*yäshi indärasé and yähamsa aläqa*] to remain here with their belongings, receiving their provisions (*qälläb*) in turn. Last year, *Qäññazmach As'mä Giyorgis* did not give me a single *qunna*, claiming that there was nothing left in the granary. This year's crop has not yet been harvested. I have informed you about this case but you insisted to give them not from this year harvest but from that of last year. Now, these men are in great difficulty having lost both their country (*agärachäw*) and their provisions. Consequently, my representative has informed me recently that they have gone to hunt without our permission. I have ordered my servant to arrest them, to send all of them to me. If these men are left without a certain chief, and if they remain with nothing to eat, my lord, they will eventually sell their animals and arms and create chaos. What should I do? I want to keep you informed about the case. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant (*ashkärwo*) and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 19th of *Yäkkatit* 1913 E.C./February 26, 1921.

180

wa/mu/1/195-194

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

My servant, *Fitawrari Oljirra*, who is overseeing the land of Qélläm, has informed me about the quarrel between *Fitawrari Märdassa*, for whom you entrusted the land with two thousand *gäbbar* households (*t'is*) [Gidaamii], and his relative in this same territory. I enclosed my servant's letter with this one. What can I do? I want to keep you informed. May the Holy Saviour keep you in good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant (*ashkärwo*) and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on the 19th of *Yäkkatit* 1913 E.C./February 26, 1921.

181

wa/mu/1/195-194

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you [the truth]. In the past, when the *qälad* system [of land measurement] was introduced in my region, we used to collect tribute by counting the *gäbbar* households (*t'is*) so as to distinguish the rich [from the poor]. I have encountered a problem, as those we counted as rich at first turned poor in the next harvest season and thus, with the permission obtained from you, I have introduced the *qälad* system and all my *gäbbar* now pay their tribute according to the *qälad* system. Earlier, when the harvest was bad, I did not take the *siso* I used to. I do not think it has been registered. I have retained this title with the benevolent gesture of *Janhoy* [Menilek II], but for the land-owner, his treasure is his *gult* [hereditary power to levy and collect tax on land]. No one is immortal, and everyone will one day be demoted from his position. If my lord does not register all my *gult*, and if one day one of my sons, who may be incapable of administrating all the *gult* [*sänäf lij*], is assigned to my place, my family and relatives will probably be uprooted from their land. And again, I insist that you may register the town of Naqamtee, including the barren land beyond Dédéssa.¹⁰⁸ This does not mean that I do not pay the tribute for these lands. And it does not also mean that the land that I gave to the Church and the *siso* land I gave to the tenants (*balagär*) would be mine, neither do I intend to take away land from them [the Church and the tenants], but I say that the tenants (*balagär*) retaining the land that I gave them should pay

¹⁰⁸ The barren land beyond the Dhedhessa included the Sibuu homeland of the Bakaree family and the Handaq forest.

the tribute to me. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 2nd of *Mäggabit* 1913 E.C./March 11, 1921.

182

wa/mu/1/193-191

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Empress of Ethiopia, daughter of Menilek II, Emperor of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

From time immemorial, when a king who has done a lot of good things to his country passes away, his dignitaries, officials, landlords, tenants, soldiers, farmers and merchants, contribute the money of their [own] will and install a memorial to dedicate to the name of their loved king. When a king who has done nothing for his country dies, his people do not wish to dedicate anything even by force. This simply means that the king was hated by his people. In our country, Ethiopia, there has never been a king like *Janhoy*, Emperor Menilek II, who has done a lot to his country and who has been loved by his people has died. During his time, Ethiopia has become a great country from east to west and north to south. In his time, the children of Ethiopia have arrived at the highest stage in education and wisdom. In his time, the merchant with his trade, the farmer with his farm, and the soldier with his *gasha* have become rich. In his time, we have seen and heard good things from Europe which our fathers would not even have dreamt of. In his time, the people of Ethiopia who once were divided by language, boundary and territory have become one. This is only to cite a negligible part of the good deeds Menilek has done for his country and people. If we want to write it all, we would be in short of papers to write on. You know it all, this is only to refresh your memory. If Menilek has died after all the good thing he has done to us, it would be our task to repay him back. On this respect, like the European kings, we have planned to construct a memorial house in Addis Ababa and in a place where we think it deserves to make his name immortal. When we shared this idea to the dignitaries, all of them were happy and have started contributing the money, and now, you do the same thing in your domain, informing the dignitaries, landowners, soldiers other than the tenants (*balagäru*). You inform them in written form with your seal and collect whatever money they can contribute, by registering their names. And then send the money, including your part, as soon as possible. Be careful not to force them to make the contribution. Everyone should make it with his free will. If one can contribute a quarter, half and one *birr*, let them do it by their free will. But if we find out that you force them to do it, or fix the amount they should contribute, you will be held responsible. All the people who participate in this contribution, to acknowledge their good

gesture, their name will be written in the memorial house.¹⁰⁹ Written on the 12th of *Nähasé* 1912 E.C./August 18, 1920, in Addis Ababa.

183

wa/mu/1/191-190

May it reach to my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have received your message regarding the money brought by *Qäññazmach Käbbädä*, and that I should send you the purchase I already made as soon as possible. You also told me to make the remaining purchase later on. I will send it immediately. When *Qäññazmach Käbbädä* came here with the money he told me to buy the gold with thirty-three *birr* for every *wäqét*. When he arrived, the price of gold in *wäqét* was thirty-five *birr*, and in a short period of time the price has increased to thirty-six *birr*. Because of this, I sent money to *Qélläm* and to the Arab region. Even there it is very expensive. The merchants hide the gold from us and go to Addis Ababa where the price of gold is thirty-eight *birr*. When the merchant hears that there is more profit somewhere else, he will not sell it to us. If you agree to buy the gold with thirty-six *birr* in every *wäqét*, I will buy it for you. I am waiting for your response. Let me know when this letter reaches you. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 22 *Mäggabit*, 1913 E.C./March 31, 1921.

184

wa/mu/1/184

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Due to the increase in the price of gold, I have not concluded the purchase with the money you sent me. At present, the price of gold here has reached

¹⁰⁹ The “memorial house” this letter alludes to is probably Emperor Menilek’s equestrian statue built in Arada, in front of St George Cathedral in central Addis Ababa. Although the fundraising started in 1920 under Empress Zäwditu, when Täfäri was still a regent, the statue was completed in 1930 and was inaugurated a day before Täfäri’s coronation as Emperor Haylä Sellasé I on November 1, 1930. Emperor Menilek’s statue was made in Germany. It was taken down and buried by the Italian occupying forces in 1938. It was rebuilt and inaugurated by Emperor Haylä Sellasé on May 5, 1942. See Pankhurst, 1969, p. 2; Biniam Weldegebreil, 2004, pp. 18–19, 27, 31–32; Biniam Zeray, 1983, p. 6; Fikru Ayalew, 1999, p. 41.

forty-seven *birr* per *wäqét*.¹¹⁰ I am in great trouble because even at this price there is little gold available in the market. Responsible for this increase in price are the Arabs, Indians, and *färänji* who are living in Näqämt[é]. Now, I have sent you sixty-eight *wäqét* bought for thirty-nine *birr*, twenty-seven *wäqét* for thirty-eight *birr*, sixteen *wäqét* for thirty-six *birr*, eight *wäqét* for thirty-seven *birr* and fifty cents, fourteen *wäqét* gold for thirty-five *birr*, two *wäqét* gold for thirty-four *birr*, twenty *wäqét* for forty-one *birr*, four *wäqét* for thirty-two *birr*, seven *wäqét* for thirty-three *birr*, in total 167 *wäqét* bought for six thousand and twenty-three *birr*. I have also sent my own sixty-six *wäqét* of gold. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 28th of *Hamlé* 1913 E.C./August 4, 1921.

185

wa/mu/1/179

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

You told me to inform you about the ivory [tusks] coming from hunting activities inside the domain of *Däjjazmach* Berru. I have in my possession twenty ivory [tusks] of less value because of its small size. But considerable numbers of elephants were killed. In spite of my order to hunt only an adult elephant with two ivory [tusks] and the proclamation made on hunting, the men of *Däjjazmach* Berru who live in *Däjjazmach* Joté's domain and the landowners [there] have made indiscriminate killing. And I have sent an order to my man [official] who is overseeing *Däjjazmach* Berru's domain to retrieve all the ivory [tusks] and to arrest all the culprit along with those who killed against the law buffalo and giraffe and send them to me. No sooner had he collected twenty ivory [tusks], then word [written imperial order] came declaring that the domain had been transferred into the hands of *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu. Then the culprits refused to submit the ivory. Consequently, we have submitted the name of those who have transgressed the law and have killed the wild animals to the representative of *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu, *Fitawrari* Lidäté. I have not sent you the tribute money and the revenue from judiciary services from *Däjjazmach* Berru's domain because of the expensive price of gold. Now there is a decrease in the price of gold. I will send it to you

¹¹⁰ As tribute was paid mainly in gold, the increase of its price in the market raised the value of the annual tribute and its monetization (see letters 187 and 199). Later on, revenues from coffee and cotton helped pay the yearly tribute. See letter 221.

together with the ivory. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 22nd of *Mäskäräm* 1914 E.C./October 2, 1921.

186

wa/mu/1/175-174

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Since the domain of *Däjjazmach* Berru has been put under my control, the animals that have been killed are sixty-three giraffes and buffalos, nineteen elephants, and twelve lions. From this killing, we have received twenty ivory [tusks], money derived from fines for the killing of thirty-two giraffes and buffalos, and two lion skins. Before concluding our work, the domain has been put under *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu. I have submitted the list of the remaining objects, the fine money for the killing of thirty-two giraffes and buffalos, the ivory coming from nine elephants, and skins of ten lions, to *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu to retrieve them by himself. I have sent you twenty ivory [trunks]. Out of these, six inflexible (*yämayta'taf*) ivory which weigh three *wäqét* and twenty-three *nät'r* and flexible ivories [and] eleven *qälänj* which weigh twenty-seven *nät'r*. However, according to the word of my lord I have sent my order with a messenger to hunt only adult elephants, but people of that land have slaughtered animals indiscriminately. And I regained the ivory [trunks] of ten elephants from the culprits. In addition to this, I have submitted to *Däjjazmach* Yeggäzu a collected *asrat* worth of four hundred and eighty-five *dawulla* of *teff*, eighteen *qunna* and six cups of unground coffee, twenty thousand eight hundred and ninety-two cotton. This all was collected from that country. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times before you. [n.d]

187

wa/mu/1/173-172

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I received your message that since the price of gold has become very expensive, I should not purchase it for you with the money I got from the judiciary services from *Däjjazmach* Berru's domain. So, now I have sent you the money as you asked me to. It is four thousand seven hundred eighty-eight *birr* in total. Out of this, I have paid one hundred forty *birr*, instead of [unfairly] raising it from the people, to *Abba* Haylä Maryam, godfather of *Däjjazmach* Joté, about whom I was told to remain here and continue teaching. I have sent

you the remaining four thousand six hundred forty-eight *birr*, out of which three thousand seven hundred and eighteen *birr* were obtained from the judiciary services and nine hundred and ninety *birr* from the fines derived from the illegal hunting of giraffe and buffalo. Since the decrease in the amount of the revenue from judiciary services meant extreme impoverishment of the country (*tägodto'al*) I have ordered [my representative *Fitawrari* Jirata] to receive only one *birr* even in the case of owning just a horse or a mule. In addition to this, I have sent you two rifles [*Wujigra*] and two lions' skin. I have also a sick slave with me, I will send you when he gets better. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 1st of *Hedar* 1914 E.C./November 10, 1921.

188

wa/mu/1/162

Oh *Etégé*,

May God show you [the truth]. In the past, after the introduction of the *qälad* [land measurement], we used to count the *siso*, to distinguish the poor from the rich, and make the latter pay the tribute accordingly. As those we registered as rich one year turn out to be poor the next year, giving us troubles, the only option we had was to secure permission from *Janhoy* [Menilek II] to introduce the *qälad* system. My country now pays tax according to the *qälad* system.¹¹¹ When the *qälad* system was introduced I got my *siso* share of the land. But it was not registered for me in the government registry accordingly. I have got the right to levy and collect tax (*shaläqannät*) by the benevolence of *Janhoy* [Menilek II], but a *balabbat*'s life depends on his hereditary land (*rist*) and his *gult*. No one is immortal, and everyone can one day be removed from his land titles. If *Etégé* does not register all my *gult*, and one day one of my sons, who may be incapable of administering [*sänäf lij*] all the *gult*, is assigned in my place, my family and relatives may be uprooted from their land. And again, I beg you to have the town of Naqamtee registered for me [in the imperial government's land register], including the barren land up to the *Dédessa* [River]. Let it be counted in *qälad* and let one in four *qälad* of land be registered as a *gult* for me.¹¹² Let my *siso* get registered separately in the government register. This does not mean that I will not pay the tribute for these

¹¹¹ *Qälad* was not just a way to measure land, it also apportioned land and taxation mostly in favour of State, Church, and local notables. For a critical appraisal, see Tesema Ta'a, 1984.

¹¹² Official registration was a necessary component of the new land system.

lands. I referred to this in the letter I sent you last year in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos, but, after waiting for a long time, he went on to a campaign. He came back to me with a message that I was promised a response as soon as he gets back. And now, I have sent you a register so that you would take my case into consideration. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 17th of *Tahsas* 1914 E.C./December 26, 1921.¹¹³

189

wa/mu/1/160

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you [the truth], an official of *Qäññazmach* Yelma, *Qäññazmach* Gäbrä S'adeq who oversees the land of Sibü, has installed a new tax gate (*bär*) in the land of Hora Qarsa which is inside my domain. He crossed over to my land and is taxing the people who pass through my territory. Here, I am not referring to the land I exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé but the land I inherited from my ancestors (*yät'int agäré, iristé*).¹¹⁴ The reason for applying to you while they tax the people on my land is only to avoid unnecessary clashes. I am capable of sending them away when they occupy my land without the word of my lord. And I beg that you tell them to refrain from their illegal act. This land has never been in their possession. If they claim that it is, let us resolve the case legally. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 20th of *Tahsas* 1914 E.C./December 29, 1921.

190

wa/mu/1/159

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. May God show you [the truth].

The suffering of your people is also the suffering of your government. The merchants who trade beyond the River Gudär, places like Tokké,

¹¹³ See *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's letter 181 above.

¹¹⁴ The importance of maintaining the traditional right of taxation over the inherited Sibü land is reaffirmed here by GE. Once again, a centrally-controlled trade gate is seen as a threat to the Naqamtee ruling family's rights. See also letter 190.

Ch'älliya and Tibé Sibu are being taxed four or five times. These places can be covered in just one day journey. They [the traders] are being taxed because they do not have a custom seal in their possession. It is impossible for someone who trades in Ch'älliya and Tokké to get a seal from far away Addis Ababa. The people who make this illegal taxation do not abide by the amount of taxation I have designated. Send some of your men who can spy on them while taxing the poor under a simple tree. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 20th *Tahsas* 1914 E.C./December 29, 1921.

191

wa/mu/1/159

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have made a request to you to pay tribute for the land of Gänji after *Däjjazmach* Haylu has examined the good and bad parts of the land. Then, despite the protest from the men of Sibu, your word reached me, which allows me to pay the tribute. Now, I and the Sibu men have settled the case. Let me know how much I have to pay for it. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 20th of *Tahsas* 1914 E.C./December 29, 1921.

192

wa/mu/1/154-153

May it reach to my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. May God show you [the truth].

I have received a letter recently from *Etégé*, which was sent last year on 28 *Säné* and reached me on 3 *T'err* this year. The letter refers to the accusation made by *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay against me about the *gäbbar* who have migrated from Boshé and Soddo to my country. He asked me to repatriate them all to him, but eventually, we agreed to let them live where they wanted; in return, I will pay the tribute on his *gäbbar*. It [the letter] also refers to the payment I have to make to *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen according to our agreement. My lord, it is true that a considerable number of *gäbbar* have entered my domain at the time of drought. After the word of *Afä Negus* Näsibu to return the tenants back to where they were, I [tried] but could not repatriate them in chains like slaves while they were crying not to be. Then, I agreed to pay the money for the *gäbbar* to him in front of *Ras* Dämessaw. This was happening not only in Boshé and Soddo but also in Wallagga Gudru

in the land of *Ras Dämessaw*. I agreed to pay [*Ras Dämessaw*] nine hundred *birr* after collecting from the *gäbbar*. But when the condition of the harvest got better, all the tenants have left for their old land. Now, I have sent *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos to discuss my case and to explain the situation. May God show you [the truth]. Written on the 7th of *T'err* 1914 E.C./January 15, 1922.

193

wa/mu/1/151-150

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, the Government of Ethiopia.

You asked me on the telephone why *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd claims that his land had been taken away from him and how did this happen and how long ago. I did not occupy his country. How could it be that I take away somebody's land? The boundary between the Arab country [Beni Shangul] and the Galla is the Dabus River. Dabus is as big a river as is the Abbay [Blue Nile].¹¹⁵ The region above the Dabus River is my *rist*, it is a territory of my father and grandfather. All the Christian soldiers who campaigned to the Arab country with *Ras Mäkonnen* knew this definitely. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you [n.d.].

194

wa/mu/1/194

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Däjjazmach Mulugéta is forcefully taking over my *rist* in Sibu which is 460 *gasha* of land in Gäto and Tuqa and which I have exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé with full permission from the government. When he [*Däjjazmach* Mulugéta] entered the house of my official in charge of the land [and asked him to leave], and the latter refused to submit unless a written order comes from the government, he looted the country after arresting the *qoro* and the *baläbbat*. My people are now mobilized and are standing in defense of the refusal. He [*Däjjazmach* Mulugéta] is sitting there as well. Obviously, there is not a man unwilling to die over his *rist* and wife. I do not lack the [military] ability to stop him, but I strongly believe that my ability is [in] the government. I plead at your door (*däjä it'äñalähu*) to get a quick response before the lives of these people standing fall [due to the soldiers]. He should leave my

¹¹⁵ Although blunt, GE makes his point clear: the Daabus River is the natural boundary between the 'Arabs' and the 'Galla'.

country and appear before [the imperial court] to answer for his earlier lootings as well. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times in front of you. Written on the 22nd of *Yäkkatit* 1914 E.C./March 1, 1922.

195

wa/mu/1/148

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

The plot of land I exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé in Sibu is about four hundred and sixty *gasha*. Out of this I have bought two hundred *gasha* of land. The remaining was set aside as the *balabbat siso* and tenants. I ask my lord to register the two hundred *gasha* of land as my *rist*. In addition, I ask my lord to register my twenty *gasha* of city land in my name. I will accordingly pay all the tributes. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 4th of *Mäggabit* 1914 E.C./March 13, 1922.

196

wa/mu/1/147

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks to God I am very well.

As to the land that you [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] got in exchange and the eventual occupation by *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta, we have sent a clear message to *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta that he must return it to you. We have informed him about this through the cable [*selk*]. But you [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] should give in return the appropriate compensation [to him]. In case there is anything more, both of you should send your representatives (*nägäräfäj*) to solve the problem. We have also sent [a message] to *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta. Written on the 28th of *Yäkkatit* 1914 E.C./March 7, 1922.

197

wa/mu/1/145

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

The letter written on 7 *Hedar* by *Ligaba* Wädajé has reached me on *Miyazya* 20. It contains the complaint made by *Azazh* Dägifé who carried the

government order that the collection of *asrat* (tithes) and Bolé-Hora [taxes]¹¹⁶ should be made not by the respective landowners and dignitaries, but by the government representatives. May God show you [the truth], starting from last year these men, *Azazh* Dägifé and *Ligaba* Wädajé, were interfering in my activity and on my land. I informed you about this last year that I have been executing my work accordingly [i.e. governing the country without interference] since the time of Menilek. Then you instructed me in the letter you wrote in response to my plea on the subject, saying, “let no man interfere in your country; carry out your work as you have been doing since the time of Menilek”. Maybe *Ligaba* Wädajé has written his letter to others and mistakenly sent the letter to me. It is only to inform you about the case. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on the 27th of *Miyazya* 1914 E.C./May 5, 1922.

198

wa/mu/1/144

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you the truth. Since the time of Emperor Menilek, I have been paying my tribute [to the central government] without any interference. I made my complaint to Emperor Menilek when our father [the late] *Abunä* Matéwos assigned a regional head of the Church [*liqä kahen*] in my land without my knowledge. The Emperor made a decision and removed the new [regional] head of the Church the *Abun* had assigned to my country, saying that Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s country is autonomous. And now, our [current] father [i.e. the *Abun* in office] again has sent a new head of the Church in my country without telling me about the case before hand.¹¹⁷ May God show you [the truth], why would I be demoted from my old title and position without doing any harm to you and to your government? Yes, a man may be appointed to my country when found disappointing by the central government and got removed from my status, otherwise why should I be removed of my special status bestowed on me by Emperor Menilek? May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjj-*

¹¹⁶ *Bole-Hora* (*yäHora yäBolé*) was a particular type of tax levied on spring water and cattle.

¹¹⁷ Religious controversies in the Naqamtee area endangered GE’s autonomy. When these controversies required arbitration in Addis Ababa, however, Menilek reaffirmed GE’s autonomy over the region (Arén, 1978, pp. 424–29); see letter 152.

jazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 26th of *Genbot* 1914 E.C./June 3, 1922.

199

wa/mu/1/142

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Qäññazmach Est'ifanos informed me that you want me to buy you gold at a good price. Nowadays, the price of gold here is thirty-eight *birr* for a *wäqét*. It is very expensive. It would be better to purchase it when the price goes down. *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos has told me also to get the money from Addis Ababa, but I got the tax money which I collected from my country on live-stock. I do not need money, I only want to know at what price should I buy the gold? From the livestock tax I have with me twenty-one thousand *birr*. Since not all of my country was able to pay the tax on time, I have registered those who could not pay the tax. Now I am collecting the remaining tax payment. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 15 *Genbot* 1914 E.C./May 23, 1922.

200

wa/mu/1/141

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

You may have heard about the bandits (*wämbädé*) who are destroying houses at night and make trouble around this country.¹¹⁸ There is a river called *Wäma* [Waamaa]. Across this river, in the land of *Mäkonnen* *Täwänd* *Bäläy* at *Nono*, they are still creating problems. These bandits take refuge in the land of *Fitawrari* *Berru* *Chole*, at *Hurso*. This land is currently governed by *Fido* *Qulumsé*, *Fitawrari* *Berru* *Cholé's* man (*zéga*). The names of these bandits are *Aga*, *Jänna*, *Qana'a*, *Jänna* (*sic*), *Tullu*, *Hunde*, *Dhinsa*, *Humdida*, *Mijäna*. These are the leaders of the bandits. I have assigned guards at three different places on the border of my country. When the bandits returned from their plunder, they clashed with my guards. One of them was killed in the clash, and I also lost one of my guards. The rest escaped to the land of *Fido* *Qulumsé*,

¹¹⁸ On banditry along the River Waamaa and in the lowlands under *Däjjazmach* *Mäkonnen* *Täwänd* *Bäläy* see below letters 204–206 and 208–213. For the official reaction of the Crown, see below letters 218–219.

and they are still there. Now, let these bandits be apprehended by the responsible person in the land of *Fitawrari* Berru. If the above-mentioned men are arrested, I will send someone to testify on their transgressions. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 13th of *Genbot* 1914 E.C./May 21, 1922.

201

wa/mu/1/140

May it reach our father, *Abunä* Matéwos, archbishop [of Ethiopia].

Last time I sent *Memheré* S'äga to our father to make a confession and to receive absolution, and you have sent me your consent with your seal. But later, you again told me to make peace with *Wäyzäro* Mayéti, my former wife, before receiving absolution.¹¹⁹ Father, as she is the mother of some of my children, I was advised by a priest and elders some time ago [to reach] a final decision by paying her compensation with some money as a peace deal. I did this with a testimony of many Amhara and Galla, all people not from my country, and in the presence of *Mämheré* Habtäwäld, a representative of our father and one appointed as head priest in my country as judge. Despite all, my representative *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos informed me lately through the cable that since *Wäyzäro* Mayéti was represented by her brother, *Qäññazmach* Binägede, *Mämheré* Habtäwäld is not willing to register the peace deal on account that *Wäyzäro* Mayéti is not present. May God show you [the truth] the woman is not well. She can not make it to Addis Ababa. If you do not believe the word of *Mämheré* Habtäwäld, send one of your trusted men to observe the situation on your behalf. May God show you the truth. I am wasting my life without getting absolution. Written on the 18th of *Genbot* 1914 E.C./May 26, 1922.

202

wa/mu/1/139

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

This year I received permission from our father, *Abunä* Matéwos. But later, a word reached me from our father that before making a confession I must settle a case with my ex-wife, with whom I was separated eighteen years ago.

¹¹⁹ GE had long been separated from his wife Maayettii. See letters 169, 202, 223 below, and the final settlement, letter 229.

Then I sent my representative, *Qäññazmach* Kaba and by her side her brother *Qäññazmach* Dinägdé to Addis Ababa. There, in the presence of respected elders, I settled the case by paying her some money as she is taking care of my children. But this settlement was not accepted and is not being registered because the woman wants to present it in person. The woman is not well. She cannot make it to Addis Ababa. Would you please send one of your trusted men to confirm by asking that we did in fact settle [the case]. My lord, I am wasting my life without getting the absolution. May the Holy Saviour give you good health and I bow down in front of you ten and ten times. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 18 *Genbot* 1914 E.C./May 26, 1922.

203

wa/mu/1/138

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I possess a wildland (*yä awré killil*) in the lowland of Handäq.¹²⁰ It is a *rist* I have inherited from my forefathers. My grandfather passed all the land he possessed to his children, and out of this he gave the Handäq land to his elder son, my father. When the *qälad* land measurement was implemented in the highland (*däga*), I bought the Handäq wildland from *Janhoy* [Emperor Menilek]. Recently, *Qäññazmach* Mänkir and *Qäññazmach* Ta'é, brothers of *Fitawrari* Déréssa, are saying that, even though I bought it from *Janhoy*, this deal will never be effective, and they accused my representative in Addis Ababa. May God show you [the truth]. For big cases like this one, let us discuss it after the rainy season. If my lord's wish is to resolve the problem right away, let me know, and I will be there despite the rainy season. I am afraid the *afä negus* might push my representative in Addis Ababa to make him take a decision in my absence. I implore you to use your influence on the *afä negus* to discuss the case with me. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down in front of you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 27th of *Genbot* 1914 E.C./June 4, 1922.

¹²⁰ On the importance of the Handaq forest see the Bakaree family chronicle, fols 4r–v, 20v, 22r and previous correspondence. See above letters 109 and 145.

204

wa/mu/1/133

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you [the truth]. We are in big trouble with the bandits (*shifta wämbädé*). On the land of Boshé, under the control of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Tawänd Bälay, the merchants are being taxed both by legal custom officials and by the bandits. The merchants, who do not agree with double taxation, are being killed summarily by the bandits. The *gäbbar* pay tribute to the landowner and to the bandits. Those *gäbbar* who refuse to pay must see their house turned into ashes and have their cattle robbed. Now, it [Boshé] is becoming a deserted land (*wudimma*). The merchants and the local messengers, who used to travel to Addis Ababa by the Billo road, are forced to divert their usual way and are forced to go through Sibu, crossing the land of Tibé. My guards, who were defending the merchants from the bandits at Wäma fell sick due to malaria. Furthermore, the merchants who usually came to Limmu and Jidda from Gojjam and Gondär, crossing the Angär desert, have been robbed by the bandits. Now, the merchants do not come to my land; there is no way to the local merchants to go to another territory to trade. There is a great need to apprehend these bandits (*shifta*). Otherwise, the country will soon be out of control. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 1st of *Hamlé* 1914 E.C./July 8, 1922.

205

wa/mu/1/130

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I told you before that the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Tawänd Bälay, Bosh [Boshé], has been disrupted by the bandits (*wämbädé*) and the merchants have been robbed. I also told you earlier that they use the land of *Fitawrari* Berru Cholé as their base. Now, they have moved to the land of Boshé which is in possession of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Tawänd Bälay. There is a man called *Qäññazmach* Gudu Kassa who is cooperating with them. The bandits are doing no damage to his land in exchange for his help to them. All around his country they are burning down houses and killing people. On the 5th of *Säné*, the merchants who live in my land have been robbed at the land of *Qäññazmach* Gudu in broad daylight. They lost their property which costs three thousand thirteen *birr*, three donkeys and one cow. In addition to this, on *Hamlé* 2 they robbed my merchants' goods which cost three thousand three hundred thirty-eight *birr*, three *mähalaq*, forty-seven pack animals carrying salt (*ashäbo*), three rifles, and two slaves. May God show you [the truth], I

implore you to send a judge who, by overseeing the case through *afärsata*, would either make the people who housed the bandits robbing the country to pay back the merchants' loss or to arrest the bandits (*wämbädé-woch*) and hand them over to the government. I will send my man, *Grazmach* Bashah, with this letter in order that he would return [here] with the judge. I will also send three of the merchants who have been robbed to give you their first-hand information. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on the 29th of *Hamlé* 1914 E.C./August 5, 1922.

206

wa/mu/126-125

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May God show you the truth, in the month of *Mäggabit*, these bandits (*shifta*) have killed six of my merchants in the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay. The merchants were returning from Addis Ababa. Last time, my merchants have been robbed of goods which cost three hundred and thirteen *birr*, three donkeys and one cow in broad daylight. And then, in the month of *Hamlé*, they lost three thousand five hundred and sixty-eight *birr*, eight *mähaläq* goods, forty-eight mules and donkeys with their load of salt (*ashäbo*), three rifles, and two slaves. These are the names of some of the bandits: their leader Qan'a Jana, Aga Jana, Fäyisa Bosen, Tato Didamije, Ambaye Luche, Dinägde Chala, Gubo Tolasa, Jelcha Dinsa, Sändabo, Yando Waqqira, Yando Bänti, Dämär Ol, Abe Waqqira, Bongasu Yadeta, Digana Abba-Fodde, the son of Wägga Dadi Sanbato. Their real number is closer to one hundred. And those who are participating in the action of the bandits by giving them a base, giving them a place to put their stolen goods and giving them shelter and food are the following: *Qäññazmach* Gudu Kassa, *Qäññazmach* Gulma, *Grazmach* Gabata Dibala, *Fitawrari* Olana Nägäwo, Olani Aba Ballo, Bulla Rufo, Gissa Gasho, Aba Bushu, Däso Lämu, Amo Ibsa, Dako Wäyäsa.¹²¹ Their base is not far from my territory. It is less than one hour walk. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 22 *Nähasé* 1914 E.C./August 28, 1922.

¹²¹ Clearly, the 'bandits' had a wide social base in the Waamaa region and benefited from the support of local notables. See letters 204-13, 217-9.

207

wa/mu/1/119

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Due to the tax levied on cotton, the farmers have given up producing it. So, I received your cable about the remission of the tax for the next three years. May God show you [the truth]. Apart from the wildland (*awuré yaläbät sifra*), the cotton is being produced in every part of my land. And I have never missed to pay my tribute. It is my countrymen who are selling the best cotton clothes in Addis Ababa. Half of my total tribute is from cotton. If I increase the tax on cotton, the poor (*deha*) would suffer, and so would the country. May God show you [the truth], why do I lose the tribute because of the problem in another land? May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 16 *Mäskäräm* 1915 E.C./September 26, 1922.

208

wa/mu/1/109

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Last time, I informed you about the bandits (*wämbädē*) who are destroying the country in the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay. I also told you my wish to stand before the court to testify against them. According to your order to *Liqämäkwä* Mäkonnen, those *balabbat* who are helping the bandits with their deeds of robbing the country have been arrested. But the bandits were not arrested. But the *balabbat* admitted their wrongdoing. They had admitted in front of *Liqämäkwä* Mäkonnen that the bandits were based in their respective jurisdictions while robbing the merchants, destroying the country. If they tend to change their word when they arrive to you, I have sent *Qäññazmach* Wäldé who can testify on my behalf. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten times in front of you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 12 *Hedar* 1915 E.C./November 21, 1922.

209

wa/mu/1/107

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

One of the leaders of the bandits (*shifra*), *Qänä'a Jänna*, who was destroying the Boshé country, has been arrested, and he is now in my hands. Earlier, I informed you [about this] by telegraph. The second bandit who had a lot of followers is *Didhä Mijäna*. His base is in the land of *Fitawrari Berru Cholé*

Fidhā Qulumsé's house. This bandit is destroying our country and dividing the loot with Fidhā Qulumsé. I can testify his banditry. I asked you earlier for their arrest. Although I have received [your] order to arrest [them], the judge of that country did not arrest Didhā Mijāna. Qulumsé has been arrested, but after two months in prison they let him free. I call for the judges in Boshé to arrest both Didhā Mijāna and Fidhā Qulumsé and bring them before the government in Addis Ababa, so that I will [testify] their banditry (*sheftännatachäwun*) and win the case. The men who let Qulumsé free are *Fitawrari* Yigezaw, official of *Ato* Däboch, *Aggafari* Abägaz and Wäldäkidan. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down before you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 8 *Tahsas* 1915 E.C./December 17, 1922.

210

wa/mu/1/100

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

The bandit Amänté Kánt'ufé who destroyed, burned down houses and killed a number of people in the Gudru country, was seen crossing my territory on his way to Wallagga [Gimbii]. The man who saw him with seven other people informed one of my officials. Seven of them have been captured while the remaining one was killed, as he refused to surrender. I interrogated one of them and he admitted being a bandit (*shifita*) in Gudru and he came to my land because he escaped from retaliation from the local people. Now he is in prison. I will send him to Addis Ababa with my guards. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 30 *Tahsas* 1915 E.C./January 8, 1923.

211

wa/mu/1/97

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Amänté Kánt'ufé, the well-known bandit (*wämbädé*) has been arrested. When I interrogated him, he admitted that he is a bandit who robbed the country, levied taxes on the country and burned down the houses of those who refused paying the taxes. While admitting that his cohorts killed some people, he denied that he killed anyone himself. But the people there in Guduru insisted that he did kill a lot of people. When I asked him the reason why he is in my country, he replied that he came because he wanted to ask for pardon by ringing the church bell, but he was arrested before he reached the church. Now, I

send all the seven men to you. May God show you the truth. My men, who brought you the bandits (*wämbädéwoch*) before, have not returned yet. They are still in Addis Ababa. It would be better if they return home soon. They will help me to control the bandits. Written on 15 *T'err* 1915 E.C./January 23, 1923.

212

wa/mu/1/90

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

Amänté Kánt'ufé, the well-known bandit (*wämbädé*) has been arrested. When I interrogated him, he admitted that he is a bandit who robbed the country, levied taxes on the country and burned down houses of those who refused paying the taxes. While admitting that his cohorts killed some people, he denied that he killed anyone himself. But the people there in Guduru insisted that he did kill a lot of people. When I asked him the reason why he is in my country, he replied that he came because he wanted to ask for pardon by ringing the church's bell, but he was arrested before he reached the church. Eight, including himself, were arrested. One of his men was killed while trying to evade capture. Because of fire which broke out in the prison and burnt prisoners, five of these bandits are dead. Two were spared including himself. One is sick [of the fire burning] and left behind. Now I send him [Amänté Kánt'ufé] to you. Written on 23 *T'err* 1915 E.C./January 31, 1923.

213

wa/mu/1/86

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

The merchants of Gondär, while they were on their way to my country for trade, were attacked by the bandits (*wämbädé*) in the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Tawänd Bälay, in Arqumbé wildland. The bandits killed three merchants and injured five of them, looting all their goods and money. They did this while the merchants were taking rest for the night. This indicates their cutting off the trade line of Gondär. Now, I want you to send a letter to *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen, telling him that the looted money of the surviving merchants be returned, deliberate justice to the dead through *afärsata*, and to capture the bandits who killed the merchants. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 3 *Mäggabit*, 1915 E.C./March 12, 1923.

214

wa/mu/1/81

Oh *Etégé*,

My countrymen have lost their *rist* due to usury (*arat'a*). Those who have money [in cash] wanted to snatch the *rist* right from the local people, whether they are merchants, *balabbat* or tenants (*balagär*). I made a request to the government that this type of lending money be changed with banking rules to protect those with acute lack of cash. Then I received an order [saying] that one who lends money to another should not receive an interest of more than twelve out of hundred and one hundred and twenty out of one thousand in a year. This also works for the debt made even before the decree. I made a proclamation accordingly. The poor have accepted this with great joy. But those debtors who lent money before the decree accused me to the *afä negus*, who in turn ordered me to send my lawyer (*nägärä-fäj*) to Addis. May you remind the *afä negus* that I did what the government instructed me to do. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I prostrated myself before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 25 *Miyazya* 1915 E.C./May 3, 1923.

215

wa/mu/1/64

May it reach my lord *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have been appealing to *Janhoy* [Emperor Menilek] to give *Sibu*, my *rist*, to me. And again now, when I applied to you about the case, you told me that it is already in possession of another man. Then I gave four hundred and thirty *gasha* of land from my Wallagga country to exchange it with *Fitawrari* Abébé, who was then the owner of all *Sibu* land. Then, believing that the government confirmed this, I constructed my house and left my official to oversee the land [in *Sibu*] for me. When you have transferred the *Sibu* land into the hands of *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta, he dragged my official out of his house, and allowed my house to be looted. No man may be unwilling to die for his wife, his *rist* or his house. But I am a man of law. Now, with the word from above, he gave it back to me. And again, he now snatched my forefathers' land at Léqa Qärsa. Qärsa is [a place of] mineral water (*ambo*). At the place where the animals were drinking mineral water, he came and took one hundred eighty-six cows, two mules and fifteen donkeys. They belong to the poor. Now, I demand the immediate return of the animals and his evacuation from my land, including the mineral water. If he insists that the land does not belong to me,

we shall resolve it legally. I apply to you to send a letter with your order. He [*Däjjazmach* Mulugéta] is always searching to have conflict with me.¹²² I have no idea of what I did against him. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down before you ten and ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 1 *Mäskäräm* 1916 E.C./September 12, 1923.

216

wa/mu/1/61

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia,

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta, how are you? Thanks to God, I am fine. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér is complaining that you took his forefathers' *rist* called Qärsa and, while the animals were drinking mineral water (*ambo*), you took one hundred eighty-six cows, two mules, and fifteen donkeys which belong to the poor. Let the land and the animals be returned to him, and if you say that it is a false accusation, send your attorney (*nägärfäij*) and resolve the case. Written on 22 *Mäskäräm* 1916 E.C./October 3, 1923.

217

wa/mu/1/60-59

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, the Government of Ethiopia.

Last year the bandits (*wämbädé*) based in the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay killed a lot of innocent men and robbed the merchants. I have sent letters a number of times to *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen to return back the money to the poor and take a proper action on the individuals who committed the crime; he refused to do so. Consequently, I applied to the government for the arrest of the *balabbat* who have cooperated with the bandits by giving them shelter. With *Liqämäkwäs* Mäkonnen as a judge, four officials, *Fitawrari* Olana, *Qäññazmach* Gudu, *Qäññazmach* Gulma and *Qäññazmach* Gäläta, have been arrested. They were taken to Addis Ababa. The damage done on material and human life has been assessed and registered. Admitting all the crime, they were released on bail on the ground that they would pay to replace all the damage. The responsibility of making them pay the damage was put on *Liqämäkwäs* Mäkonnen according to my lord's word sent by *Qäññazmach* Haylä Mäsqäl. But, till now, *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen has failed to make the accused pay the money. I even asked *Liqämäkwäs* Mäkonnen, as he is responsible to make them pay. But he told me that it has

¹²² On the conflict with *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta over GE's Sibuu land, see letter 220.

become beyond his power and advised me to apply to you. I enclose his letter with this one to my lord. May God show you [the truth], it is very inappropriate that the money robbed from the poor is not given back in a country where there is a law-abiding government. Five years ago, I received a word from the government which said: if the governor is not capable of making pay the culprits, he himself must pay back the money. If a similar thing happens in my country, I will not waste a day to have the money paid back to the poor. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 8 *T'eqemt* 1916 E.C./October 19, 1923.

218

wa/mu/1/57-55

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Empress of Ethiopia, Zawditu, Daughter of Emperor Menilek II. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay, how are you? Thanks be to God, I am fine.

Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has made the following complaint against you: "In the country of Boshé there exists a base of bandits (*wämbädé*) who are destroying the country, and I informed my lord who in turn sent *Liqämäkwä* Mäkonnen as a judge. Then the *balabbat* who cooperated with the bandits (*wämbädé*) were apprehended and sent to Addis Ababa. They admitted their crime and agreed to pay back the money and they were released on bail. After that, one of the leaders of the bandits, Qänä'a Jänna, was captured while he was crossing my land and was sent to Addis Ababa escorted by guards. And now, the brother of Qänä'a, *Aga* Jänna, having a base at Boshé, since he is enjoying some cooperation there, is destroying my country, *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta's territory and even the country of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Dämessäw's country. This bandit is taxing the merchants every day in the Boshé land. I can defend my territory by assigning the guards even at nighttime, but the countries nearby are in total chaos. If you do not send a message to *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen to keep order or if you will not do something, there will be a great danger. I cannot stand aside watching our country being destroyed. Down the Gibe River, there is a place called Wama, which is known to every Christian dignitary. It is found between my territory and that of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen. I constructed a wooden bridge for the use of the poor and for the merchants who are free from taxation. And now, a servant of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen, *Fitawrari* Nuru is taxing the merchants on the bridge". Gäbrä Egzi'abhér sent me this letter. We have shown the letter to your representative here and he told us that he has no knowledge of it. Why does your servant tax on the bridge made by Gäbrä Egzi'abhér? Let this be corrected and make sure you guard the merchants who pass through your country not to be

taxed by the bandits (*shifta*). Written on 10 *T'eqemt* 1916 E.C./October 21, 1923.

219

wa/mu/1/55

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen, how are you? Thanks be to God I am fine. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has complained to me that the bandits (*wämbädé*) whose base is in your country are looting Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's land and have escaped to yours. He told me also that he could not arrest them because they are found in your territory. In addition, *Aga Jänna*, who is looting the country and burning down houses, resides in your land. Why did you take no action against this? Furthermore, why does your servant *Fitawrari* Nuru tax the poor and the merchants on the bridge made by *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér? I was informed *Aga Jänna* also taxes the merchants on the other side of the same place. I want you to give me an explanation for this, let it not happen in the future. And let this bandit (*wämbädé*) [*Aga Jänna*] be arrested. Written on 19 *Mäskäräm*, 1917 E.C./September 29, 1924.

220

wa/mu/1/51

Oh *Negest*,

Let God show you [the truth], the year before last (*tachamna*), *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta snatched my *rist* land in Sibü, which I had [obtained in] exchange of [my *rist*] with *Fitawrari* Abébé, imprisoning my official and looting my harvest *gäbbar*. Since I believe my only ability is [Ethiopia's] government, I did nothing in response. The only thing I did was to let the government act on the case. He [*Däjjazmach* Mulugéta] left the land after the government's order to do so. And this year, he took my forefathers' land at Léqa which is called Qärsa. Here he illegally crossed the boundary, occupying a place with mineral water [*ambo*] and taking my animals which were then drinking the water. I applied about this to the *negest* who in turn gave [an imperial] order to the *afä negus*. He [*Däjjazmach* Mulugéta] returned my *rist* land and gave the animals back following the written order of the *afä negus*. Now, for a third time, conspiring against me by telling the people of my country: "let those of you who had enmity with Gäbrä Egzi'abhér come to me, and I will take your case to the government [in Addis Ababa] and file an accusation against him". This does not worry me but I would like you to know that this man has nothing to do except looking for trouble with me. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I prostrate myself before you. Your servant

and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 26 *Hedar* 1916 E.C./December 6, 1923.

221

wa/mu/1/45

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Government of Ethiopia. May God show you [the truth].

The tithes on coffee and cotton helped me pay the tribute. Now all the coffee plants down the Dédessa River, both mine and those of the peasants (*balagär*), have dried up. Now it has started to dry up even over the Dédessa. Only half of it is left. The coffee planted by hand has caught some kind of animal sickness and got dried. Unfortunately, my coffee is all hand-planted, there is no wild coffee [in my country]. If I cannot make the tribute under the form of cotton, I will be in great difficulty. In my country, cotton is not a new harvest. It has been planted since ancient times. The peasants will not give up harvesting cotton simply because of the *asrat* tax (tithe) on the produce. Neither do they cultivate a plant they do not want simply because we have exempted them from the *asrat* tax. Let God show you [the truth]. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down myself ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 2 *Tahsas* 1916 E.C./December 12, 1923.

222

wa/mu/1/42

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, the Government of Ethiopia.

I wrote [the history] of generations of our forefathers after consulting elderly people here in my country and examining it [the information]. I did so to preserve [it] for the next generation.¹²³ Last year, I sent it to the printers with the [necessary] money, but they told me that it could not be done without the permission of my lord *Ras* Täfäri. And now, I sent it with *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos, so that you allow it to be printed. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down before you ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 19 *Tahsas* 1916 E.C./December 29, 1923.

¹²³ This letter addressed to *Ras* Täfäri by GE is an interesting background to the very writing of the Bakaree family chronicle. See Triulzi, 2006.

223

wa/mu/1/41

May it reach *Abunä Matéwos*, archbishop of Ethiopia.

I heard the news that you are suffering from rheumatism (*qurt'emat*), and you are now at Dire Dawa to be in a warm area. May the Lord make you well. How are you now? To discuss the case of *Wäyzäro* Mayéti, my representatives, *Fitawrari* Qänä'a and *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos are still in Addis Ababa. They are wasting their own resources in vain. I am asking my father to send them back. They will return when you are well. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 10 *Tirr* 1916 E.C./January 19, 1924.

224

wa/mu/1/39

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mekonnen Täwänd Bälay, how are you? Thanks be to God, I am fine. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has informed us that the bandits (*wämbädé*) based in your country killed a lot of people and looted the merchants. He sent to you twice, but you refused to apprehend the culprits and did not pay the money back. After *liqämäkwä* assigned him a judge, he [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] arrested the four *balabbat* who co-operated with the bandits. These are *Fitawrari* Olana, *Qäññazmach* Gudu, *Qäññazmach* Gäläta and *Qäññazmach* Gulma. These four *balabbat* were brought to Addis Ababa and admitted their crimes. Then they were released on bail after agreeing to pay for the damage done. This has been registered. The *liqämäkwä* told them to pay. But the payment has not been done yet. What is the reason for doing so? I tell you to make them pay under the past agreement. And if the victims complain again, you will pay from your own pocket. Written on 18 *Tahsas* 1916 E.C./December 28, 1923.

225

wa/mu/1/36-35

Oh *Negest*.

May God show you [the truth], I was pleading to you (*däjj-t'inat*) for the land of Gänji which I exchanged with [a land in the country of] *Fitawrari* Abébé, seeking to pay the tribute separately. You agreed and sent *Däjjazmach* Haylu to identify the fertile (*läm*) and unfertile (*t'af*) land and report back to you, so that you will be able to determine the amount of tribute I have to pay over it. After the Gänji land has been placed under my control, *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta snatched from me the Sibü land by force. When I petitioned the matter [to the imperial government], I was told to leave the lower Gänji to

Däjjazmach Mulugéta. I had to respect the order of the *negest*, and I left. Although I was embarrassed by this decision, I left the land without any complaint. I did nothing wrong. Now I heard that this country is in damage. The people of Ganji are disappointed with me [for letting this damage happen to their country]. Now, give it back to me before this land is destroyed once and for all, so that I will pay the designated tribute. *Däjjazmach* Haylu has already determined the size of the land in *qälad*. At present he is in Addis Ababa. May the Holy Saviour give you good health. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 13 *Yäkkatit* 1916 E.C./February 21, 1924.

226

wa/mu/1/29

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

S'ähafe Te'az Wäldämäsqäl informed me through cable that there is a three-year unpaid tribute held against me and that I should pay it immediately. The only remaining tribute I have to pay is this year's. I will send it as soon as possible. Other than this, there is no arrear in tribute. I am also sending my lord's letter that I received. It [the case] can be verified from the Treasury Register.¹²⁴ May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down myself ten and ten times before you. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 5 *Mäggabit* 1916 E.C./March 14, 1924.

227

wa/mu/1/22-21

Oh *Negest*.

The bandits (*wämbädé*) based in the land of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay killed a lot of men and robbed the merchants. But *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen did nothing to rectify the situation even though I asked him several times to do something about it. Then I accused the *balabbat* and *qoro* who gave shelter to the bandits in front of the government, and they admitted all their crimes. They agreed to pay back for the damage. This is registered in the Government Register. *Liqämäkwas* Mäkonnen gave us a judge to oversee the execution of the payment. But *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen did not agree with this. And then I sent a letter of *Liqämäkwas* Mäkonnen to *Negest*. *Negest* sent me the letter which instructed *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen to make the culprit pay the

¹²⁴ For receipts of actual tributes and other payments and gifts sent to the Royal Treasury, see Receipts (Ch. 2.2, nos 26, 33, 39, 41).

money back, and if he failed to do so he would pay it from his own pockets. The letter reached me in Hedar. But *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen did not budge and used different excuses to skip the payment. I do not think that he will obey even if he receives thirty letters.¹²⁵ Let the representative (*nägärfäj wämbärachäw*) of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen who is in Addis Ababa call for and register a guarantor. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down myself before you ten and ten times. Your slave and servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 24 *Mäggabit*, 1916 E.C./April 2, 1924.

228

wa/mu/1/21

May it reach my lord *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Government of Ethiopia.

I have sent one thousand *wäqét* of gold for the tribute of this year. The delay was due to the scarcity of gold. My countrymen gave up purifying gold (*manguwaläl*) ten years ago. They claim that there is no profit in purifying gold (*manguwaläl*). They all abandoned such kind of work and turned to commerce. I bought one thousand *wäqét* from the Arabs' country. May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on 28 *Mäggabit*, 1916 E.C./April 6, 1924.

229

wa/mu/1/15-11

Wäyzäro Mayéti made a written complaint to the archbishop (*Abun*) that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér should not make a holy matrimony with another woman. At that time, she was represented by her brother, *Qäññazamch* Binägdé, who eventually reached a peace deal. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has given to *Wäyzäro* Mayéti the fief (*qoro*) of *Grazmach* Däqa Märga, *Grazmach* Guta Duqé, *Abägaz* Waji, *Dilbo* Bädjäna, *Gudato* Mamudé and *Näma* Aga. These lands were given to her for *shaläqennat* in the tradition of what a lord gives out to his servant. They [He] also gave her the total ownership of these lands while she is alive. Afterwards, the land is to be transferred to the son of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér to whom he gave it. The deal also includes that the coffee (*bun*) plants located on the farmlands to be hers on the

¹²⁵ GE, as 'a man of law' (letter 215), is clearly discouraged by the failure of the judiciary and executive system to make Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay pay for his repeated omissions and offences.

condition that the *gäbbar* are required only to clear the weed on the coffee farm as they used to do for *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. But there is not any debt or tax [to be paid]. One tenth of the grain tithes from these lands (*yä ihil asrat*) is to be left to Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Out of these, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér is to give two hundred fifty *dawula* of grain every year to *Wäyzäro* Mayéti as her annual ration (*qäläb*). The *däjjazmach* has left all revenue he had been generating from this land except the grain tithes. But if there is a new order [putting us in any] debt¹²⁶ with the government, whether it be paid as per [the existing] *t'is* or by counting cows, it will be paid according to the rules of the country. The other thing is, when other coffee producing areas may be required to bring one wood per head to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér or bring him one stone per head for the church, the country of *Wärrä Babbo* will do the same. In the past, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér gave the land of *Handäq-Bullo* to *Wäyzäro* Mayéti, and she is still receiving *irbo* (one fourth) and *asrat* (tithes), but after her [death], the land will be transferred to his son. He also gave her five carpets and one hundred cows. Like he was doing in the past, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér will continue giving her thirty-four *birr* every month to buy honey during her lifetime. He also gave her two mules (*yäkoricha bäqlo*), one of which is very good and three pack animals (*yä-bäqlo agasäs*). In addition to these, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has given twenty and a half *gasha* of farmland as a *gult* to *Wäyzäro* Mayéti. The name of the *qälad* are as follows: *Känäma* Aga's *qoro*, a *qälad* of *Embeli Dabal's* [*qoro*], a half *qälad* of *Déké Hora's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* of *Nayo Moti's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* of *Hundé Roba's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* of *Ferga Abdi's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* of *Gamos Dängi's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* in the land of *Jarso* where there is a house of *Järsa Wayu*, a *qälad* of *Agäta Aga's* [*qoro*], a *qälad* of *Dhinsa Obsa's* [*qoro*]. In addition to these, one *qälad* in *Bijité* which is confirmed (*yätäs'afä*) by *Ayana Dhinsa*; a *qälad* of *Dilbo Bajéna's* *qoro* where there is the house of *Qoro Bonga*; a *qälad* from the land where *Fodé Akako's* house is located; still one *qälad* at *Guto Mamudé*, confirmed by *Aläqa Däbäla*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Bäka Kara*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Fäysa Jäwé*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Gojésa Raso*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Yénfa Jägan*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Dänbäla Binägdé*; a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Gelo Abdi*, a *qälad* of land confirmed by *Rufi Guro*; and a *qälad* of land con-

¹²⁶ The Amharic version of this phrase, *addis te'zaz ida*, must be referring to occasional financial demands from the government of Addis Ababa. It was not uncommon for the government to ask *Naqamtee* for contributions when it faced financial problems over and above the normal annual tribute. See above, letters 201–202, 223.

firmed by Urgessa Fido. Totally, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has given *Wäyzäro* Mayéti twenty and a half *gasha* of land as a *gult*. Other than these, he gave her the total right of ownership of the slaves he had given her earlier. He will also give her another ten slaves. The name of these slaves are: those who are at Gulliso, Adä[é] Gäläta[é] with her five children, Abba Gända with his wife, Adäbula (*sic*) with her son, Milki (just herself), Wältäji is three with his kids, Déké Hora is five with his kids, Adä[é] Qäno is ten with her children, Kamiso Tola [is] with his mother, Konchi with his mother, Qanqure with his three kids, Fojoga with his four kids, Hirpa with his seven kids, Gänäti with his five brothers, Chamada, Balcha with his son, Muläta with his wife, Jirata Éba is seven with his children, Waré, Sélban, Fola Osäna is four with his children, Gälgäl is four with his children, Bächara Boru is eight with his children, Bula [is] with his wife. Those who are in Wama: Aba Dinka is four with his kids, Qabäta Kassa is five with his family (*känä gwazu*), Waqjira Däbäla and Oliqa Däbäla are five with their kids, Toläsa Gochole with his wife. Those who are in Bijäté: Abba Hundé is three with his children, Hurgéssa with his son, Hika with his mother, Lubé with his mother, Tola is three with his kids, Olana is three with his kids, Tuta, Nägawo Golé is five with his kids, Abba Gara, Ayyana is four with his kids and his mother, Meti is two with her kid, Ayané, Ayantu Märsé, Absé [Obsee], Gäläta Dinsa, Ayyana Dinsa with his mother, Arko Waré with his wife, Agé Dukän, Ayané Tatu, Dästa, Tola, Afarsé, Adä Gutu, Toläsa Tésis, Komo. Those who are now working for her [*Wäyzäro* Mayéti]: Gäba is seven with his wife and children, Bultu Adanägäri with her three children, Bäri Sänbäto with his three children, Gämäda Särda with his wife, Déréssa Särda, Ayyana Särda, Jäläta Busa, Garbo, Qumbu, Maramé Qana'a with his wife, Abay with his three children, Bädasa Doqosa with his wife, Héné, Biyya Orma, Abäshe, Bädasa with his mother, Fida with his mother, Bihon with his wife, Adä Uma with her two kids, Amäné with her five kids and her mother, Kitila with his mother, Ada Tiba, Nägäré, Toltu, Binägdé Titi with his wife, Dänbiti with her son, Dasta Aba Ganti, Robé, Ayané. The total number of slaves, including those who are with *Fitawrari* Käba, with *Fitawrari* Baläh and *Wäyzäro* Mayéti, that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér gave to *Wäyzäro* Mayéti are two hundred and twenty-one. When the deal was made, by the side of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér were *Ato* Mängistu, telegrapher of Naqamtee, *Qäññazmach* Täsfayé, servant of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Dämessäw who looks over his *gult* at Wama, *Ato* At'nafé and *Ato* Wäldä Maryam, telegraphers of Nono, and the telegraphers of Naqamtee *Ato* Wäldä Tsädiq and *Ato* Wäldä Maryam. By the side of *Qäññazmach* Dinägde Sifé: *Näggadras* Falas, *Balambaras* Abdäta Läméssa, the brother of *Qäññazmach* Märga Gobäna, *Ato* Habtä Wäld, and *Fitawrari* Qänä'a the servant of *Wäyzäro* Asäläfäch who looks over her land at Tuqa, as

well as *Fitawrari Wäldä Maryam*, *Fitawrari Dhinsa*, *Fitawrari Mosa*, *Fitawrari Disasa* and *Fitawrari Kidanä Maryam* who were part of the negotiation. The judge was *Mämheré Habtä Wäld*, the head priest [appointed by] *Abunä Matéwos*.¹²⁷ In case there is a denial of this peace deal the guarantor (*yäsämaniya was*) of *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* is *Ato Mängistu* and that of *Fitawrari Dinägdé* is *Fitawrari Qänä'a*. Written on 26 *Miyazya* 1916 E.C./ May 4, 1924.

230

wa/mu/1/09

Oh *Negest*,

I am really sick. Send me a good doctor. I will pay him the money he asks me. If he does not come as soon as possible, my situation frightens one with probability of leading me to death. Earlier, the ailment impeded me to urinate, and [I] was constipate[d]. The only thing that I am taking is water. It is fifteen days since I put anything in my mouth. Here, there was a doctor, but he could do nothing to cure me. My *Negest*, as soon as this letter reaches you, please send me a good doctor. My situation is very grave. There is a great risk of death.¹²⁸ May the Holy Saviour give you good health, and I bow down ten and ten times before you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Written on 9 *Nähasé* 1917 E.C./August 15, 1925.

¹²⁷ See above, letters 169, 201–202, 223. The extreme detail of this lengthy negotiation's agreement is shown by the specific identification of every transfer of property and the personal names of all people involved, including the individual name and number of children of each enslaved person, and those of the numerous and influential witnesses, guarantors, and judges.

¹²⁸ This letter by the ailing Governor of Wallagga closes the Naqamtee correspondence with the Addis Ababa court. GE died of diabetes in 1932.

1.2. – Letters by *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam (1925–1927 E.C./1932–1934)

The following letters were taken from mägäb 2 (wa/mu/2) which contains the Amharic correspondence exchanged between Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam and the central government in Addis Ababa from 1925 to 1927 E.C. (1932–1934). Except these, so far, no other letters written by Habtä Maryam have been found in the Naqamtee collection. It is conjectured that these letters may still be with family descendants.

Born in June 1910, Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam succeeded his father, Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abher Morodaa, as the governor of Leeqaa-Naqamtee when the latter died in 1923¹, but was already acting on his father’s behalf as he was summoned to Addis Ababa ‘to consult with the government’ in August 1926.² Between November 1932 and August 1933, Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam served as a caretaker governor of the neighbouring Qellem province on behalf of the central government in Addis Ababa as the näft’ännä-gäbbar system bred instability in the province, provoking violent local resistance and state response. This section presents thirty-nine letters and reports Habtä Maryam wrote to the central imperial government in Addis Ababa. Habtä Maryam’s letters and reports cover, among others, matters related to his annual tribute, the difficulties of restoring peace and stability in Qellem, customs management, issues of slavery and criminality, as well as cross-border matters such as disputes with Benishangul governors, issues of hunting, and gäbbar mobility. We provided notes only where the expressions appeared difficult to understand for the English audience, however, as a matter of principle we have made the best possible effort to represent the Amharic tone, making interventions only of style. The content, form, and style of Habtä Maryam’s correspondence, and especially his minute rendering of events which he was a witness and participant of, will furnish considerable evidence for researchers in the fields of history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and political science.

Early English translations of these letters were offered by Tesfay Tewolde, an exiled Eritrean linguist living in Rome in the early 2000s, and by Badassa Seina, a student of Tesema Ta’a in 2002. Later revisions and edits were provided by Etana Habte Dinka.

¹ See “Gäbrä Egzi’abher Moroda” in *EAe*, vol. II (2005), pp. 608b–09a (by A. Triulzi).

² See above CG letter 125 dated *Nähasé* 4, 1918 E.C./10 August 1926. On Habtä Maryam (henceforth HM) see also “Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi’abher” in *EAe*, vol. II (2005), pp. 954a–55a (by A. Triulzi).

1

wa/mu/2/1

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I received your order [word] on *T'eqemt* 23 and [I left Naqamtee] on *T'eqemt* 24 [1925 E.C.]/November 3 [1932], as you ordered me to control the area under the rule of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Wäsäné and protect it from looting. Hence, I immediately arrived in the area to show my obedience to you and respect your orders. As soon as I arrived, I reported to Your Majesty by phone that a person called *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam, *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen's representative (*endärasé*), had looted the country. Nobody but he knows what his master told him to cause such a disaster in the region. But as we heard, he told his soldiers that they were strictly ordered by higher officials to get their salary from the people. Hence, he and his soldiers decided to loot before *Mäsqäl* [i.e., the celebration of the finding of the true cross which falls on *Mäskäräm* 17 E.C. every year]. The looting started six months ago.³ However, three months ago, it is said that he looted not only properties but *yäsaw lij*⁴ and took them to a place called Doräni. Furthermore, as per your order on *T'eqemt* 24/November 3, I moved to control and take care of the area while, on the 26th/November 5, *Fitawrari* Berru sent them a message to control the area together with me. The message reached them a day after I got Your Majesty's message. But the travel from Läqämt [Naqamtee]⁵ to Tabor town takes at least 10 days, and so they made a lot of disasters before I arrived there. Even one day is enough for someone who wants to plunder. They reached the area three days before me. They ostensibly showed the people the message sent to them by *Fitawrari* Berru and said that they would not leave the area. They told them that they will control and protect the area together with me, but in the meantime, many poor people (*deha*) suffered. After I reached there, however, I protected the area following your order. Everything is safe now, and nothing is lost. I am saying this to show my loyalty to you and my responsibility to the poor. However, how much the poor have suffered will be clearly known when the judges sent by Your Majesty will see the amount of the looted property and the number of enslaved persons returned after gaining freedom. I have sent Your Majesty the exact copy of the message that *Fitawrari* Berru sent by phone [telegram]. I request Your Majesty to give it back to *Qäññazmach* Täklé Marqos, who shall return it to me after you have read it. I bow in front of your

³ Possibly 'from *Genbot* to *T'eqemt* (May to October)' [1932], see below letter 4.

⁴ *Yäsaw lij* (pl. *yäsaw lijoch*), lit. 'children of man', refers here to a free person as opposed to an enslaved one.

⁵ The name of Naqamtee in Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér letters was written in two slightly different spellings: Läqämt and Näqämt. Both refer to the same town. Laqamti is also the spelling used by *Balambaras* Giyorgis; see Ricci, 1990.

throne and beg you so that I [i.e. Habtä Maryam], your *deha* servant, will not perish because of this. I bow eleven times and say may the Saviour of the World keep you in good health. Your Majesty's servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. (n.d.)

2

wa/mu/2/1-2

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen's people left the area according to Your Majesty's orders, but *Fitawrari* Haylä Sellasé, *Fitawrari* Guwangul, *Fitawrari* T'uré, *Fitawrari* Wäldäyes, *Balambaras* Shibäshi, *Grazmach* Guwangul, *Qäññazmach* Anbaw, Haylé Shibäshi and Dästa Negusé did not want to obey. They said they are *Däjjach* Wäsäné's servants (*ashkäroch*), their guns belong to Your Majesty, and they are slaves (*baroch*) of the Government. Hence, they do not want to go on following *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen's men. They said: "If His Majesty calls us, we will go to him. We have sent a message to His Majesty by phone. We will wait here until we get a response from him. We were mistreated even before. We shall live by cultivating our land and obeying His Majesty. But we will not go back to *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen", and they signed a petition. Hence, I informed Your Majesty about it, and I am waiting for your orders. I sent the petition to Your Majesty, but their land is under my control, and if Your Majesty tells me to send them away, I will obey and do so per your orders; hence I am waiting for your response by phone. I bow ten times and wish the Holy Saviour may keep you in good health. Your Majesty's servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, Tahsas, 1925 E.C./December 1932–January 1933.

3

wa/mu/2/2-3

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I have already made it clear to Your Majesty, both verbally and in writing, that *Shäykh* Hojälé does not like me.⁶ He hates us because my father wanted to obey God and Your Majesty, so they were not in agreement. My father's [ancestors] got landed property from the government in exchange for their service, which cost them their lives. *Shäykh* Hojälé wanted to cheat me, giving me gold and silver and take my land. I said I

⁶ There were several reasons for the 'dislike' between the two local rulers who competed for royal favours and for the predominance of their own chiefdoms within western Wallagga. One was the acceptance and participation in extending imperial rule over the western marches, the second, no less important, was the acquisition or extension of the ancestral land.

will never do that. If I am found guilty, Your Majesty can take it back. I know if I were willing to give him a piece of land, *Shäykh* Hojälé would like me more than anyone else. But he hates me because I was not willing to be cheated. I said I will never give property in land in exchange for gold and silver. Currently, however, I have pardoned the *gäbbar*, and, consequently, all those who went from my territory to his region and even those who fled from Qélläm to his area came back to my region. Hence, he hates me. As soon as I arrived in this region to comply with Your Majesty's orders, he called *Fitawrari* Yohannes, the son of *Däjjazmach* Joté, to his house, gave him gold and silver, and sent him to Addis Ababa. At about the same time he misinformed his brother, called *Fitawrari* Osäna [Joté]. I trust Your Majesty's judgement is as accurate as that of Christ. I bow [before your throne] and beg you to be cautious about the misinformation from my enemies, so that your servant will not be unnecessarily hurt. I bow eleven [times] and say let the Saviour of the World keep you in good health. Your Majesty's servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. (n.d.)

4

wa/mu/2/3-6

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Earlier, I reported to you by phone and in writing that a man called *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam, *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen's representative (*endärasé*), had looted the region. Your Majesty does not want the poor [subjects] (*deha*) to be hurt and ordered the return of the looted property in front of the judges that were sent. But he [*Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam] is not willing to return what he looted and has fled to Addis Ababa. As soon as I heard this information, I reported the list of wrongdoings of *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam to Your Majesty as indicated below.

As I crossed the borders of my region to obey your orders, the poor people gathered and appealed to me on my way. I wrote a letter to him [*Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam] saying: "I found the *balabbat* and *qoro* imprisoned. Why are they imprisoned, in spite of His Majesty's orders and the *shumshir* of offices?⁷ Even now, the *deha* are saying that their property has been looted. But I will not report this to His Majesty until I know from him what is true and what is false". Accordingly, I wrote a letter to him [*Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam] which contained these and other friendly words. However, I did not get any response from him. He left on the first day of *Hedar*. On the 12th, he sneaked away to a place that is two hours away from where I was. This was the time when I passed my second

⁷ Periodic reshuffling of appointees was a typical measure of successive governments in Imperial Ethiopia.

night in a place called Fincho, which was on the opposite side of the *fitawrari*'s town. The people who had been looted said: "You promised us you would ask the looter to give us back our properties. But he left the town taking our cattle, slaves, and even *yäsäw lij*⁸ with him. You are only cheating us". Twice or thrice I sent him a message. I cannot believe how he sneaked away. So I sent a horseman to check and only then I believed that he had gone away. On the 12th of *Hedar*, when I was in Fincho, I sent him a message. I also sent a copy of it to Your Majesty so that you can see it. I sent my servant together with this letter. Hence, my servant told him orally in addition. He promised me to come early in the morning. Thus, on the 13th of *Hedar* I waited for him until 10 o'clock because I thought he was telling me the truth. But later on, I realised that he was cheating me and I decided to enter the town. As a response to an appeal of the poor and their request for the return of the children of four *gäbbar*, I sat in court the following day, i.e., on *Hedar* 14th. I did it because if I did not do I would be seriously punished by Your Majesty.⁹ I found representatives of *Däjjach* Mäkonnen whose names are *Fitawrari* Daññé and *Qäññazmach* Shäwayé and told them the following: "During the time of His Majesty, even the slaves got their freedom. How on earth could *yäsäw lij* be enslaved? In addition, they are not adults. To free myself from all this, I will report to His Majesty that you have taken three children, aged three, eight and nine years old", I told them this in front of His Majesty's servants, such as *Fitawrari* Wäldä Mädhén and *Fitawrari* Amdä Mika'él. They said that they did not support what *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam had done and asked me to give them some men so that they could go together to persuade him to give back what he had taken. I told them that it was His Majesty who ordered me to be on guard. I do not need to give them other men [to convince him], but they have to bring him here. According to them, it will also affect *Däjjazmach* [Berru Wäldä Gabre'él],¹⁰ *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam's boss, and for the sake of his friendship, I was asked to send men with them. I am purposely delaying [sending men] until I get a response to the message I sent Your Majesty on the 14th of *Hedar*. I asked the above-mentioned government servants (*shambälloch*), who could be witnesses, to go. But they said there is no use trying when we know it is fruitless. Among them I sent their *mäto-aläqa*, *Grazmach* Mäkuriya and *Qäññazmach* Tayé, together with my men, to *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam. Earlier I sent Your Majesty's servants. But he refused to accept, claiming they were not fit to be witnesses. I

⁸ Lit. 'children of man' (see fn1).

⁹ The detailed description by Habtä Maryam (HM) of *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam's rebellion may be due to the fact that HM presided over the provincial court's sessions and its witnessing procedures.

¹⁰ See below letter 5.

sent you a letter on the *Hedar* 17th to show you his mischievous deeds. His first response was negative. On the 17th and 18th, however, he gave back (returned) only some of what he took, and on the 19th he left the place. He kept the signatures of these few persons with him and claimed that he had given back them all. Your Majesty! He [Haylä Maryam] was engaged in looting from *Genbot* to *T'eqemt* (May to October). During 5–6 months' time he looted so much that it is impossible to give all of it back in two days. On the 17th of *Hedar*, he wrote to me that he will not receive the men I sent him. On the 18th of *Hedar*, he deceived some men to get their signatures and claimed that he finished giving back the looted property and on the 19th of *Hedar* he left the area. First, he refused to receive my men, and only two days later he said he had given back the loot. It is impossible to give everything back within two days. On *Hedar* 14th, I reported to Your Majesty regarding the loot. On the 20th of *Hedar*, you told me that [judges] will be sent [on the 20th of *Hedar*] to see the return of the loot. I informed him of this, and he came on the 19th of *Hedar*, i.e. one day before the coming of the overseers [judges]. I told him I will wait for the judges. He came ahead of time; hence Your Majesty told me to detain him. The judges reported to you by phone that he sneaked out on the eve of their arrival. Currently, *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam has brought back three of *yäsäw lij* he had enslaved. One of them was returned before the coming of the judges, and another one called Täshomä is being brought after the arrival of the observers. The third one, a female, is returned with the help of my servant, *Fitawrari* Gäläta, and the guards at Yubdo toll station. For this, I have sent Your Majesty the letter from the Yubdo chief. They are all freed from a situation on the verge of slavery. Apart from the 28 slaves captured in Doräni, I have copied from a written list of slaves in which signatures of the chiefs, who claim they will win [the case], are also put and I sent it [them] to you. I beg Your Majesty to notice the number of humans he took, in addition to the cattle he looted. The list is not complete. You will feel very sorry after seeing the whole list of petitioners. On the copy that shows the return of *yäsäw lij*, we put signatures on my behalf and on behalf of the judges to express our views that neither God nor government like what *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam did and sent it to you. I beg you to see it. You ordered him to give back the loot. On the contrary: (1) He did not want to meet me. He left the place and disappeared; (2) He took slaves and *yäsäw lij* although the law doesn't allow this; (3) He ran away when he heard that the judges were coming; (4) Your Majesty ordered him to give back (what he had looted), he did not want to obey. Instead, he went to Addis Ababa. This is because he is confident [he can do what he wants] with the money he looted. Before the institution of the law [i.e., the 1931 Constitution], the people of Wallagga were afraid to come to Addis Ababa to appeal against arbitrators and secure reparation (*guma*) even if their own relatives had been killed, [thus] he

is confident that they would not argue for their rights. It is only you, Your Majesty, that feels pity for the *deha*. As far as I am concerned, I have shown the record with the list of petitioners to the judges. You can ask *Däjjazmach* Bäyänä and the others about this. The charity and the power are only in Your Majesty's hands. I am only reporting. I bow down ten times and say let the Saviour of the World keep you in good health. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abher (n.d.)

5

wa/mu/2/7-8

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Your Majesty sent me to Qélläm. As soon as I arrived, I wanted to inform you that your poor people (*dehochiwo*) are seriously affected. In Qélläm, the *qälad*¹¹ system of land measurement is not done in accordance to His Majesty's [Menilek II] rules and regulations (i.e. land is not measured by *qälad*). Thus, during the time of *Fitawrari* [*Däjjazmach*] Berru,¹² after *Däjjach* Joté had left the country, the rich and the poor were counted and were assigned [to the soldiers]. The rich were counted as land equivalent to 5–10 *gasha*¹³ and the poor 3–5 *gasha*. Although counted [and distributed to the soldiers as resources to live on], the people had a good life even during the time of *Fitawrari* Berru. But later on, things got worse. Head of household and servant (*lolé*), husband and wife, father and child were separated and were assigned to soldiers. Consequently, a *gäbbar* called Balcha Bullo was assigned as a *gäbbar* to *Grazmach* Täsämma, *Däjjach* Mäkonnen Wosäné's servant (*ashkär*), to pay him tribute. Balcha Bullo had lots of cattle before. He became poor because he was paying tribute in terms of honey, steer and other castrated animals. He could not abandon the area because he had land. But he used to move from place to place in search of jobs because he had to get money. One day a soldier went to Balcha's house to get the remaining two *birr* of his salary from him. As he did not find Balcha at his house, he took his four-

¹¹ Lit. 'thong', unit of land measurement equivalent to a rope 67 metres in length; the Amharic word *qälad* (also referred to as *gasha*) represents the system of land measurement and/or measured land introduced by Emperor Menilek in the conquered regions. Despite the general trend in many parts of Ethiopia's south, the *qälad* system was not introduced immediately after Qellem's inclusion into the Ethiopian empire. A unit of land eight ropes in width and eleven in length constituted a *qälad* or *gasha*, roughly forty hectares. For further details see letter 19 below, and Tesema Ta'a, 1984.

¹² Berru Wäldä Gäbre'él, the Amhara governor who ruled Qellem on behalf of the central government in 1917–1920 and 1922–1927, was already a *däjjazmach* at the time of his appointment as Governor of the southwestern Wallagga province.

¹³ See above letter 4.

year-old daughter in exchange for two *birr*. For three years she was with him in his house. Finally, he said he would not give her back to him because she was no longer with him and claimed that she got lost. Hence, I asked the *qoro* why he did not appeal for all those four years, when the child was kept at [his] home. I was told that he had asked not only *Fitawrari* Haylä Maryam, but also went to Addis Ababa and appealed to *Fitawrari* Jämanäh. So I am waiting for the judge that you are going to send me. Secondly, in another case, a father and his son were given to different soldiers as *gäbbar*. The father died. The son could not inherit his father's cattle since the soldiers believed that the cattle of their *gäbbar* belonged to them. Besides this, the son made all the necessary preparations to betroth his sister and get the dowry. However, the soldiers told him that it is they who decide to betroth the daughter of their *gäbbar* and get the dowry. Since the people causing the harm were Janhoy's settlers (*tikläññoch*) I have ordered his opponents to come to me, but the final verdict is not still given. Your Majesty, may God show you [the truth]. Your justice is all over Ethiopia. It gives freedom even to slaves, it makes you and God feel sad that your people in Wallagga province are under the yoke of slavery. There are things worse than this. I decided not to write about what I heard and am informing you only of what I saw. If you let this country be governed by others, its people will be divided and treated like slaves. This is because the *qälad* was not measured. It seems to me that the serious damage I mentioned so far is because the land measurement was not undertaken [here] and the *qälad* system was not implemented, which would have been to the advantage of the *gäbbar*. But those who want to treat the *gäbbar* as slaves undoubtedly hate it. You are spiritually very generous and do not make any difference between poor and rich. In fact, there are [two] advantages that can be found in the *qälad* system of land measurement. First, the landowner (*balärist*) will take his *siso*, which is one out of four, and the rest can be sold and become a revenue for the government. Secondly, the soldiers will not be disadvantaged since they will be allotted 1/5 (*yäshaläqa-mircha*). Besides, the Church will get 1/10 (*yäsämon-qälad*). This is what my father did according to Janhoy's [Menilek's] orders.¹⁴ What I have written is what my father had done according to the *qälad* system of land measurement regulations of his country [Leeqaa-Sibuu]. If Your Majesty tells me there are improvements (to make), everything will be done accordingly. Thirdly, the 1/5 share to be given to the soldiers is not little, because Qélläm is not like other parts of our country. Cereals and coffee collected on 1/3 of the *qälad* will make a soldier's life by far much better than before. Fourth, if the *gäbbar* are made to pay 1/5 to soldiers, a soldier will not take a *gäbbar*'s child

¹⁴ This is an interesting view of the merits of the *qälad* measurement as it had been applied in Leeqaa and Sibuu country by HM's father, Gäbrä Egzi'abhér (GE).

just because the *gäbbar* does not pay tribute to soldiers. Hence the *gäbbar* will happily pay their yearly tribute and say ‘Long live the King!’ The charity of Your Majesty is limitless. Your slaves are crying because they lost their children for the sake of their land and taxation. This is very painful not only to Your Majesty but also to any foreign Christian who observes it. I am just reporting what I saw and heard, and the last solution and decision depends on Your Majesty. I bow in front of your throne and ask for mercy for being so boring by writing such a long letter (*räjjim qal*)¹⁵ to you. I did it because the cry of your poor people will make me vanish both in Heaven and on Earth. Your slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, *Tahsas* 5, 1925 E.C./December 14, 1932.

6

wa/mu/2/9

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. In this land, Ethiopia, a constitution has been issued by Your Majesty’s charity. The whole of Ethiopia is under Your Majesty and we were hopeful that no one, however rich and deceitful he may be, could unlawfully take away our land. But *Shäykh* Hojälé bought land from *Fitawrari* Märdassa and took land from Qélläm by beseeching the governors without Your Majesty’s knowledge. If an engineer could see it, it may be half of the Arab land, while the *gäbbar*, if counted, could be more than that of the Arab land. As if all this was not enough, now he [*Shäykh* Hojälé] wants to take the Qélläm region. Even though no signature so far is put, reliable sources say that he made an agreement with *Fitawrari* Yohannes Joté to take hold even of Gidami town. He [*Fitawrari* Yohannes] stayed with him [*Shäykh* Hojälé] and was given money and Sennar donkeys, and he came back after making to visit Addis Ababa. Your Majesty’s land is taken by people who think they can do it because they are rich. It is not used for the establishment of your riflemen [*näft’ännöch*]. It is taken by *Shäykh* Hojälé and no taxation is paid for it. I am reporting to you [this] because they are taking it for nothing. The land of Qélläm taken by *Shäykh* Hojälé without Your Majesty’s permission and without paying tax to Your Majesty is half the land I took from *Däjjach* Mäkonnen Dästa. For this I have witnesses, and you can also ask a true Christian to verify it. I would like Your Majesty to note that they are taking the tax collected from the Arab country for themselves and pay the tax of this area only. If Your Majesty decides the border between our regions should be the original one, I will call elders who properly knew my father and the appropriate borders. Actually, it is my father

¹⁵ In fact, the length and tone of these long missives to the imperial court are remarkably different from the previous correspondence exchange.

and *Däjjach* Joté who demarcated the borders. *Shäykh* Hojälé has forced the entire country of Qélläm to be converted to Islam. They [the people from Qélläm] went to their area to escape from the evil rule of the *shaläqa* [here] but I would like to report to Your Majesty that I know they are changing their religion to get acceptance [there]. *Tahsas* 5, 1925 E.C./December 14, 1932.

7

wa/mu/2/9-11

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I got a telephone message from Your Majesty which prohibits the hunting of wild animals. I will strictly obey your orders, but let also God help me. However, I am reporting to Your Majesty the following and I think the information will help us in prohibiting wild animal hunting. You can read them and tell me what to do with them. We can prevent only the highlanders from hunting. It is impossible to prevent the Abigar and Yambo Shanqella¹⁶ from the lowland, because they live in the lowland together with the elephants. We cannot go from the highland and protect the elephants from being hunted.¹⁷ The guards who are sent from the highland cannot stay there throughout the year. They cannot live there during the rainy, cold and cloudy season. At that time there is acute malaria disease. Hence, they stay there only during the summer season and currently the Shanqella keep on hunting. They hunt primarily because they live on elephant's meat. Secondly, they hunt it for ivory. Their rifles are numberless. They hunt every day. Your Majesty had forbidden buying and selling rifles. This was to your people's advantage but some people and even some governors believe that they must make a profit at the expense of the people. Ivory is expensive but they get it cheaply. Smaller ivory (tusks) and bigger ivory (tusks) are exchanged for five and ten bullets respectively. One gun is exchanged for several ivory (tusks). All this is done illegally. The elephants' ivory became their enemy and many of the elephants have gone to the area controlled by the British. This illegal trade is run not only by Ethiopians but also, it seems to me, by foreigners. In western Wallagga, this kind of illegal trade is run by buying ivory from the Shanqella. It is false that the Shanqella sell their ivory in *birr*. If Your Majesty really wants to abolish hunting of this wild animal, ivory trade must be totally abolished. All those

¹⁶ The term 'Shanqella' is a blanket derogatory name used by the highlanders to refer generally to Nilo-Saharan and Omotic peoples, in this case, the people of Gambella and those living along the Dhidheessa River basin.

¹⁷ See below letter 21. On the hunting of elephants in Wallagga, see CGC to Naqamtee, letter 82. In a few lines, HM argues cogently here that Shanqella and elephants live in the same lowland territory and it is hard for highlanders to protect elephants (and Shanqella) from being hunted.

involved in ivory trade must sell their ivory within a limited period and stop [it]. Then anyone found with ivory will be punished. If, after the prohibition, ivory trade continues, it means people are involved in hunting elephants. We cannot say people are selling and reselling the already existing ivory, because foreigners are buying and taking it to their country. The quantity of ivory is no less than before. This shows that they are still killing elephants. If Your Majesty believes the prohibition of elephant hunting in Ethiopia could be harmful to trade, it is still an advantage to limit it to Western Wallagga. If the Shanqella kill the elephants, no one will buy their ivory, and finally they will be fined and the ivory will be confiscated and sent to Your Majesty. If we do this, our wealth will not go to the British. Otherwise, it might be impossible to see an elephant in our country, Ethiopia, and that is why I am reporting this to you. For me it would be an advantage, like previous governors were doing, to let the ivory trade continue and send you ivory and make you happy.¹⁸ But it makes me feel sorry to see elephants being totally depleted from our country. I am reporting this to Your Majesty so that you can act charitably (*sic*). *Tahsas* 17, 1925 E.C./December 26, 1932.

8

wa/mu/2/11-12

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The Ministry of Commerce sent a person called Abäbä Efreem to teach my men serving in my country's customs relevant rules and regulations. They told me to provide him with monthly food expenses (*qälläb*) and housing. May God show you [the truth], *Janhoy*. All over Ethiopia trade business is run in accordance with the rules and regulations concerning customs. The customs office sends its men to the regions, but 16 years ago, when my father was alive, you told him that his region would be an exception. You sent him the customs' seal, the rules and regulations that my father should follow in the market and in the regional borders. Until now we are using the same rules and regulations that you assigned to my father. Your Majesty, when you made an exception for my father, he was also aware that the tribute was a fixed one.¹⁹ Whenever the tax collected was less, he believed he should sell his coffee and make a supplement. He always wanted the development of his

¹⁸ For the growing role of poachers and international ivory traders, along with the interest of governors, who included the trade of ammunition in the ivory trade, see Garretson, 1986, pp. 207–12. For the roles of Jootee Tulluu and *Shaykh* Hojälé in the ivory trade between the boundaries of Wallagga, Beni Shangul, and Sudan, see Johnson, 1986.

¹⁹ HM clearly follows his father GE's footsteps when invoking the old 'exception' of local autonomy allowed by the *madbét* status that prescribed fixed tribute and no taxes. See CGC to Naqamtee, letters 1, 20, 22, 33, 41.

region. He always wanted to attract merchants. Thus, merchants outside his region used to pay 1 *birr* for four cattle, while merchants in his region were paying one *birr* for two cattle. In all aspects, he made his income less and prioritized the advantage of the poor. As a result, the market of our region, which was the smallest in Ethiopia, began to develop. The famous big market areas south of Gondär had [all] customs' duties. They either disappeared [literally] or got diminished when they came under the Amhara. My father knew all this and decided to let the merchants pay little tax, to attract them and develop his region. I am following in the footsteps of my father. Thanks to Your Majesty the market and the border areas are in good condition. They did not disappear as in other areas. The Billo, Gutäma, Sup'ë, and Gimbi markets and the border areas earlier had high customs duties in my region. After they have been put under the Amhara their income was either diminished or disappeared. From Qélläm, the income tax of Dämbidollo—apart from customs from foreigners—is not like it was before. Earlier, all these were market areas bigger than Addis Ababa. But because they are under the Amhara now, the income of some of them is diminishing while others have completely disappeared. Even the market under my control is in danger. During the time of His Majesty Menilek a man called *Näggadras Särs'äwäld*²⁰ came to control the customs and started to work with my father's men. The result was nothing but a disaster. His Majesty Menilek heard about this and immediately removed Särs'äwäld from our country. It took my father a very long time to normalize the devastated ones [markets]. May God show Your Majesty the truth, if Your Majesty wanted me to do the things in the right way, allow me to send one or two of my men to get training in Addis Ababa. I [will] entice the merchants from outside my region. If you send me an Amhara, I will lose these merchants. *Tahsas* 17, 1925 E.C./December 26, 1932.

9

wa/mu/2/12-14

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Regarding Säyo's and Qéllam's public administration, I will report to Your Majesty what seems [just] to me and what I saw as follows:

(1) Since we never interfere [with the local administration] except for those people given as *madäriya* to the *shaläqa* and *hamsaläqa*, they did all kinds of injustice to the people.²¹ Hence the country is [has been] devastated, and people

²⁰ On *Näggadras Särs'äwäld* see CGC to Naqamtee, letter 56.

²¹ On *Shaläqa*'s misgovernment in Qellem, see the Chronicle of the Warra Bakaree (Ch. 3), fol. 16v, and Etana Habte Dinka, 2022.

were forced to leave and settle in *Shäykh* Hojälé's country. For instance, at the time you ordered me to come, it was said that *Balambaras* Chali, the *qoro* of *Fitawrari* Abba Rébu's son, went to *Shäykh* Hojälé's land with twelve other men. For the future too, I will let you know the ones who left their country. In the case of the people from your *madbét*, I will let the *qoro* sign; in the case of the *täkläñña* [military settlers] the *shambäl* or his representative will sign and then send the list of people who disappear[ed] from their region. When you see the list, I think you will be very sorry. Your soldiers did not get advantage from being here. I think 1,000 soldiers are enough. If 1/10 of the cereals and monthly stipend are given for guarding the region, your *gäbbar* will be saved from leaving their places of origin. (2) If the settlers in *Däjjach* Joté's country are not transferred to other areas, not only the people of that area but also the people of your *madbét* will be forced to leave their place of origin.²² Whenever they face difficulties, they cannot move from one *shaläqa* area to another one. They cannot take refuge in some *qoro*'s domain where they have relatives. Whenever they do that, they are forcefully taken as slaves. This does not bring development to your *madbét*, it only brings devastation. I am forbidden by ancient tradition (*dämb*) to protect the ones who come to the *madbét*. For any action in the future I will wait for Your Majesty's orders. (3) When your *gäbbar* are divided, different mothers, fathers and their sons are assigned to different soldiers. If a man or a woman dies and their children come to inherit their parents' property, they are forced to pay the tax for their parents. It is difficult to pay tax for their fathers, for their mothers and for themselves. Whenever they are not able to pay tax in two or three places, the soldiers have the right to inherit the property of the *gäbbar*'s parents. I know it is unfair, but I am forced to follow old rules and regulations and say that *gäbbar* must pay tribute to three different soldiers on their behalf, on behalf of their mothers and on behalf of their fathers. Each one pays tribute to three soldiers. Each *gäbbar* brings wood, makes fence, grinds grain, pays 1 *birr* and a cup of butter for three holidays, pays 2 *birr* and 1 *shambo* of honey for serfdom, and 4.4 *birr* as a yearly salary for each soldier. Besides, each soldier takes five *qunna* [about 50 kilos] of grain. I am obliged by the existing rules and regulations to condemn the *gäbbar* and say the soldiers will take their properties unless they pay all these different taxes to them. Hence, I am expecting a response from Your Majesty. It is unfair to lose one's parents' inheritance just because of taxation. Unless the soldiers grant remission, it is difficult to pay all these taxes for one person, let alone for three. If one soldier takes all this, it means he can also take everything the *gäbbar*

²² For both peasants and traders, outmigration appears to be one of the primary mechanisms for the people of Qellem to deal with oppressive governance. See Etana Habte Dinka, 2019, pp. 28–29, 49.

produces in his entire life (*addafaññ*) let alone collecting tributes under the form of building fences, serving in his house or making flour for him.²³ (4) *Shäykh* Hojlälé tells those who migrated to his country that he will help them develop their lives. But many citizens (*zéga*) in his region fled and got shelter in a foreign country [South Sudan]. Someone should investigate and protect your people. (5) The workers at the border and in the market areas in *Däjjach* Joté's country worked there for a long time, and have created relationships with the people and are doing their own business with the Abigar. Hence, the merchants are ill-treated and must be transferred. (6) If the *gäbbar* in this region become *madbét*, people who have migrated from their region will certainly return. The tribute will be doubled. People leave their father's land (*rist*) and emigrate only because of difficulties. If their region becomes *madbét*, like ours, they will certainly be back since no foreign country is as good as one's own country.²⁴ (7) Thanks to your generosity, I will not divide [assign] them by [different] *gasha*. I issued a decree regarding [prohibiting] all unlawful acts such as bringing wood and *gésho* [a plant whose leaves serve to make local liquor], grinding grains, making fences and houses, ordering them to carry too many things and other similar things, and announced that it should be in accordance with Your Majesty's proclamation. Thus, all those *gäbbar* who had emigrated are returning. However, *Shäykh* Hojlälé made a custom's post [*kélla*] on a river called Däti and blocked all those who wanted to return. The people are in distress because they cannot pass and are sending messages to me. I lie down in front of your throne and ask you to tell *Shäykh* Hojlälé to let your people stay wherever they want. I bow down and salute ten times in front of your throne saying let the Saviour of the World keep you in good health. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. *Tahsas* 22, 1925 E.C./December 31, 1932.

10

wa/mu/2/15-16

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. It is the people of our region (*agär*) who know the benefits and problems of this country. For a long time, the people called this region an *awraja*. Even now it has retained this name". This is because of my father, the honourable [*kebur*] *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér,

²³ Donald Donham provides an overview of the challenges for the *gäbbar* as peasants paying tribute in kind and labour to settler-soldiers. Whereas those within the same culture, speaking the same language, and with the same social networks had more recourse in cases of abuse, addressing people coming from other regions, who had fewer cultural and community connections, was more of a challenge. See Donham, 1986, pp. 38–42.

²⁴ Naqamtee's *madbét* status is forcefully proposed by HM to solve the misgovernment in Qellem and to favour its autonomy ("like ours").

who was the earlier caretaker-governor (*balä-adära*) of the *awraja* and knew the problems and conditions of this country. My father attended the daily activities. He was not running for his [own] interests. He solved the problems of the people and the people started to work in the interest of the departments [*kifil*]. Offices representing the Ministry of Commerce were willing to accomplish their work in accordance with the country's rules and regulations. If the Ministry of Commerce says things will go wrong unless offices work according to its guidelines, we can make everything in accordance with the rules and follow them. We have the list of trade items produced in this region, those that are brought from outside and those taken to other regions and the daily, monthly and yearly general statistics shall be in full agreement with the rules and regulations issued by the Ministry of Commerce. Starting from earlier times to the present, I never had any rules and personnel that are problematic to the people of my region and to the traders who come to my region. I only follow rules passed on to me by my father and which help my people and traders to develop. The workers I assign in every office are serving the people of the region and the long-distance traders honestly. Whenever the Wallagga people farm, plant coffee, trade or practice handicraft, I will not make them pay more taxes. I want them to develop. The region does not have revenue from stations [*kella*] on the borders. What is produced in the region is only used for consumption. Long-distance traders do not pay much taxation. This is because my people get what they want without difficulties. Until now, we are using receipts for each expenditure and income and putting them in a register. Everything is done per the rules. But if employees are given other regulations, they are ready to use them too. I know Your Majesty only wants to develop and establish [the welfare of the] people. But I suggest that transferring employees will only harm the people. The employees I assign in this department are doing their work faithfully and without problems. I am saying this because I do not want any disagreement and hatred among your people. As a governor, I could say that the employees in different departments serve the people and the government very well. I would like to report to Your Majesty that my employees are from this region [are indigenous] and they do not harm the people and the government to pursue their advantage. You made me responsible for all these people, and the people have no problems because the employees are responsible and they do care for their names. Your Majesty, I am saying this because I want to follow my father. My father wanted to develop his region and never cared about his income. In the same way, I am not telling this for my benefit, and Your Majesty knows this. Now I am asking your benevolence so that the poor will not be disillusioned and divided. Allow me to administer them using my own employees in accordance with their tradition. Allow me to try it for one year using the existing rules and show it to you. I bow down and salute You ten

times, saying may the Holy Saviour keep you in good health. Your servant and slave, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. *Tahsas* 22, 1925 E.C./December 31, 1932.

11

wa/mu/2/16-17

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Regarding the tax collection from Qélläm, you told me by phone, as soon as I departed from [left] my region, that it must not be too much (excessive) for the poor. Hence, in order to identify the rich and the poor, I made a list of taxpayers. Then I called the *balabbat* and [*abba*] *qoro* and asked them about their earlier complaints. Thus, I made due corrections and adjustments, and all the *balabbat* and the people gladly accepted to pay the amount of taxes they agreed on. The tax to be collected, in this manner, will at least be 50,000 *birr* if not more. The list of *gäbbar* is with me, and, instead of troubling the poor, I sent my servants to identify the amount of taxes the rich - taking their property into account - and the poor - taking their labour power into account - could pay. Besides, I made the *qoro* and *alänge*²⁵ swear and take the responsibility of identifying how much each peasant is able to pay. My secretary and officer, together with the *qoro*, will collect the tax. The *balabbat* is willing to collect tax from each *qoro* and I am sending you one of the papers on which he put his signature. All the *balabbat* of Qélläm did the same way. Some have started to pay 1,000 *birr* while others have paid 500 *birr*. It is a very good start. They have signed and assured me they will make similar payments in future. However, all *gäbbar* and *balabbat* have been highly exploited [in the past]. We have no advantage in forcing and imprisoning them. If I say they should pay immediately, they will not do it. Thus, I gave them some time for the tax payment.²⁶ In fact, they have started paying and this I am reporting to Your Majesty. I continue doing my work while expecting your Majesty's response. *T'err* 23, 1925 E.C./2 February 1933.

²⁵ A more equitable system of taxation appears to be the 'soft' way HM suggests if Qellem is to maintain the *gabbar* and *balabbat* system in an area where government misrule and violence have prevailed. The mention of *qoroo* and *alange* as supportive units of administration speaks well of HM's approach in this difficult area of government.

²⁶ For an overview of tax collection in Qellem, see Daniel Ayana, 1995, pp. 125–52.

12

wa/mu/2/17-18

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Däjjach* Joté was punished [by the government] for what he did. We, the people of Qéllām *awraja*, were not allowed to be Your Majesty's *madbét*.²⁷ We were regarded as slaves, as *gasha*, we were assigned to the [imperial] soldiers who divided us among themselves. But why is all this (happening to us)? Did we do anything against Your Majesty's government? It is only our governor who did wrong. You know perfectly well that we are being punished because of our governor. While we were under *Däjjach* Joté, we the *balabbat* paid our tribute in gold. We did this starting from the time of *Ras* Gobäna. We fought on the side of *Leul Ras* Mäkonnen against the Arabs. We were on the side of *Ras* Dämessäw in Kwayina [Koyina]. We fought in Abigar and in Yambo lands. In all these wars we shed our blood for the government. There is not one among us who did not lose his father or brother in these wars. Despite all this, we are suffering. This is not because of you, but [because] God wants it to be. It is only a matter of luck. We are your slaves. We want to be your *madbét*, pay our yearly tribute to you and live in freedom.²⁸ We are separated from our children and wives. The soldiers are treating us like slaves. We are like sheep with no shepherd. Now Your Majesty has assigned *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam to protect our region. We think that, like in other parts of Ethiopia, justice will prevail in our region too. We hope we will be free from slavery. We are exposed to slavery because in our region the *qälad* system of land measurement has not been implemented. The tribute we are made to pay to soldiers is too heavy. The soldiers take our children whenever we are not able to pay the tribute to them. Many people who were very rich earlier have now become poor. They lost the lives of their dear ones. These poor people were rich *balabbat* like us before. After some time, we are also going to be like them. We appealed to *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam to ask you on behalf of us to save us from slavery but we are not sure whether the application reached you or not. We also asked *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam to tell you about our way of life and administration. *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam told us that he sent [wrote] it to you. But had the application reached your Majesty, we would have got a response from you. For different reasons, every year we pay too much an amount of tribute to the *mälkäñña*. We are being treated like slaves.

²⁷ Daniel Ayana, 1995, p. 128. Cp. Leeqaa Naqamtee, which was made *madbét* by Emperor Menelik.

²⁸ The plea for *madbét* appears to be the only forceful issue of this formal petition sent by the *balabbat* and *qoro* of Sayyoo, Qellem and Anfilloo to Emperor Haylä Sellasé. It is interesting to note the political rhetoric of the application which strongly resembles Naqamtee's own line of defense in maintaining its *madbét*, and possibly extending it to Qellem.

We want to be your *madbét*, pay tribute to you, and be saved from slavery. Today we are happy because *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam informed us that you ordered him to send you the amount of tribute we need to pay to Your Majesty. The amount of tribute that *balabbat* and *gäbbar* pay could be no less than 50,000. If you give us the opportunity, we will prove to you that we can pay the amount immediately. If the *gäbbar* are exploited and impoverished, they may delay the payment. In addition to the tribute we pay, we are forced to serve in terms of labour force and we are enslaved. We beg Your Majesty to save us from this slavery. The amount of tribute mentioned above is paid from us, who are from your *shaläqa madbét*. If the tribute paid from our brothers, separated from us and given to other *tikläññoch*, is taken into consideration, the amount will double. They are not included in our petition. This is an application from the *balabbat* and *abba qoro* in Qéllam, Säyo and Anfillo. Sent to Your Majesty on *T'err* 14, 1925 E.C./January 22, 1933.

13

wa/mu/2/18-19

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The border between the region (*gizat*) of Illubabor and the country (*agär*) of Qélläm was delimited during the time of *Ras Täsämma* and *Däjjach* Joté. The place where the customs' office of Gambélla is found is in Qélläm and was made to be part of Illu Abbabor [Illubabor] later on. This was said to be to the advantage of the government. On our borders, at a place where the Gämbéla's customs' office is found, the government has given land to the British. Now an employee of *Näggadras* Wäldä Sämayat [from Illubabor] called *Ato* Abäbä Märawi crossed the land given to the British and has taken land from Qélläm. In ancient times, during the time of *Däjjach* Mäkonnen, it is said that they [the governors of Illubabor] crossed the borders, but were driven back. Now that they crossed the area given to the British and formed a station for the collection of taxes, it is quite likely that the British will also change the boundary. In Säyo *awraja*, the collection of taxes is being done in accordance to the regulations of Your Majesty. Thus, I think forming a station between Gämbéla and Säyo is unnecessary for tax collection. If Your Majesty insists that there must be one [for tax collection], as that land belongs to Qéllam, it must be collected by tax collectors from Säyo. However, no matter who collects it, the income belongs to Your Majesty. My intention is only to inform that this land was part of my region during the time of *Däjjach* Joté, during the time of *Fitawrari* Berru and during the time of the

lately appointed and dismissed *shaläqa* [Haylä Maryam Chäre].²⁹ I am waiting for your response. I bow in front of your throne and beg Your Majesty to give me your just response. *Yäkkatit* 21, 1925 E.C./February 28, 1933.

14

wa/mu/2/20

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The tax and other incomes collected from the Qéllam *awraja* are 33,000 (*birr*). Details of the income are herein attached. The tax is collected as intended because they [the people] have difficulties paying [in cash]. Hence, I preferred to allow them to pay their taxes. At first, they were reluctant. They chose a wait-and-see approach. In fact, they thought I may take their money. Now they are convinced to pay the tax. Besides, they saw their region had started to develop and observed the *qälad* system of land measurement. So, they are expressing their happiness [satisfaction] and have started paying, and the collected tax will be sent to Your Majesty as soon as possible. Regarding the *qälad* system of land measurement, I discussed it in a meeting with the *balabbat* and *qoro* of Säyo, Anfillo and Qélläm. Just as you told me, I am sending you a letter that contains their views.³⁰ As far as their problems are concerned, they are as I told you before. As they were counted [and distributed to soldiers] as *gasha-gäbbar*,³¹ in the past it caused boundless problems for them. I am not writing about it to avoid repetition. But Your Majesty's promise made them extremely happy, and they are saying [now] 'long live the Emperor'. However, they are hoping that the promise will be fulfilled soon. Furthermore, Your Majesty ordered me to inform you of the amount of tax collected and use it to buy gold. But, Your Majesty, may God show you [the truth]; it has been very difficult for me to pay tax in gold. It is very difficult to find gold. I am always willing to give everything, including my life, to you. It would have been an opportunity for me to pay tax in gold and make you happy to my own advantage. But I cannot find gold. Hence, instead of keeping the money with me and finally tell you it is not possible to find gold, it is better that you make use of the money now. But if there is any chance of

²⁹ Here HM's political revendications are clearly articulated in relation to the customs office appropriation: if there is to be one customs office in Qellem its jurisdiction belongs to the Naqamtee leadership that has always prevailed over that of Qellem.

³⁰ See above, letters 12 and 15.

³¹ *Gabbaarii-gaashaa* in Oromo. The *gasha-gäbbar* system (lit. 'gäbbar/tax payer of *gasha*', which was considered the symbol of Amhara rule over annexed territories) was a variant of the *näft'añña-gäbbar* system practiced in Qellem during the period 1917 to 1933. On the *näft'añña-gäbbar* system in general, see Mantel-Niecko 1980a, pp. 469–78; 1980b, pp. 133–48; Marcus, 1975; Mahtäma Sellasé Wäldä Mäsqäl-Bairu Tafla, 1969, pp. 283–301.

finding gold, I will do anything possible and send it to you. I, your servant and slave, bow and beg Your Majesty to accept this proposal. *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, *Yäkkatit* 21, 1925 E.C./February 28, 1933.

15

wa/mu/2/21

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. We the *balabbat* and *qoro* of Qélläm, Säyo and Anfillo are suffering very much. This is because the *qälad* system of land measurement has not been implemented in our region. In other parts of Ethiopia land has been measured and divided in *qälad*. The soldiers divided us among themselves and treat us like slaves.³² Our suffering is different from any other part of Ethiopia. Earlier, we told *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam to inform you of our problems. Later, we sent you a letter to inform you that we are in great difficulty. We are not sure whether it reached you or not. We, your people in Qélläm, have heard of your promise, through *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam. We hope this will help those who left to return to their region and will also bring development to those of us who are in Qélläm. We hope it will free us of our problems and poverty, which existed for a long time, and we bow and say long live Our Majesty. We again beg you for the *qälad* land distribution in our region which is being practiced all over Ethiopia, because that will bring development to our region and richness to the *deha*. But we, your Majesty's *deha* people, have been so much impoverished, our money was looted. Hence, we are afraid someone could buy all our fathers' land. We beg your Majesty to order that our fathers' land may not be sold to others before one year so that we can get time to collect money and buy it ourselves. Secondly, we ask you to let us follow the law of your Majesty's state and take a third of the income from our fathers' land and also the *anbifäta* [*hambifataa*]³³ of the *qoro*. This will make us feel stronger for

³² With fewer recourses to kinship and community ties, as well as shared cultural and religious mores, there were more opportunities for imperial soldiers in the conquered south, where they lived on the exploitation of the *gäbbar*, who provided tribute in labour and in kind (Donham, 1986, p. 40). The potential for soldiers to take *gäbbar* as unpaid labour became more pronounced in areas at the farthest frontier of the Ethiopian Empire like Maji, where many soldiers "collected as many of the *gäbbar* as they could to take north as slaves", or else captured livestock. See Garretson, 1986, pp. 199, 202.

³³ Derivative of the Oromo word *hambifachuu*, meaning 'to retain'; *anbifäta* here refers to the *siso* portioning of land according to the *qälad* system according to which the *balabbat* or any local elite retained a limited number of *gäbbar* families for themselves and collected one-fourth of their produce from them while demanding one day's labour per week. For more details, see further letter 19.

Your Majesty people's tax collection. We know you are righteous, we are saying this only to remind you. *Yäkkatit* 21, 1925 E.C./February 28, 1933.

16

wa/mu/2/21-22

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The main *balabbat* of Abigar, known as Koryon and Ñaññang, together with eight *qoro* came to meet me and brought eight bulls. I asked them why they had come to me. They told me that previously, during the time of *Däjjach* Joté, their land belonged to Ethiopia. The border with the British was far away from them. But later on, they [the British] passed beyond the previous border and took their brothers and relatives, and now only a few of them remain there. Furthermore, the English deceived their leader called Koryon and took him with them. He lived there for a long time. But he hated their system of government and returned to his country. They say now that they came back because they want their government i.e. the Ethiopian government. They begged me not to neglect them and give them to the British. They insisted that they will not wear the clothes I gave them until they get a response from you regarding their land which was taken by the British. But I insisted they should keep their clothes on hoping that even their relatives who are under the British will be sympathetic to us. I observed that what they said was very touching and is even better than those [words] spoken by wise people. From the area that *Däjjach* Mäkonnen took before I came, from Agäre [Gäre] River on the upper side of Jikaw River in Abigar country, I will not let them take even a span, like earlier times.³⁴ But I would like to inform you that the Abigar land found on the side of the river was Ethiopian territory and is now under the British. It was an area where patriots (*arbäññoch*) used to step on and wave our flag. I was told that the area is wider than the area left in the hands of the Ethiopian Abigar. It would be better to take back our land. But if that is not possible, we must delimit our borders so that what is in our hands will not be taken. Hence, I gave promise to the Abigar hoping Your Majesty will respond soon. *Yäkkatit* 21, 1925 E.C./February 28, 1933.

³⁴ The territory around Gambella belonging to the Abigar (local name for the Nuer people) was strongly contested at the time by the neighbouring British Sudan. The letter contains useful geographical information concerning the upper limits of Ethiopia's western marches, and the suggestion that Naqamtee overrule over this troubled area would help restore peace and justice.

17

wa/mu/2/23-25

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I informed your Majesty by phone of the coming of the Abigar and the reasons why they came. You ordered me to ask and report to you about the area that the British occupied from us and the name of the area which remained under the Ethiopian Abigar and the names of the rivers found in this area. I got your telegram on *Yäkkatit* 23, 1925 [March 2, 1933], I am sending words of a report received from the Abigar and their *balabbat* who remained under Ethiopian territory—Koryon, Tut and Ñaññank [Ñaññang]—on *Yäkkatit* 24, 1925 E.C./March 3, 1933 as follows. They live in a cool upland bound by the Gäré, a river separating Anfillo from Qélläm. In the lower part of Abigar, it is called Jikawo. They are on this side of the Jikawo river. The watershed by the Gäré Jikawo flows to the Baro. It is only the area up to here that remained to us. Their original ethnic group (*zär*) is said to be called Shintar. Secondly, I asked them to give me the list of *balabbat* who live in the area taken by the British and the rivers bounding the area. But they told me the *qoro* are too many that they cannot finish listing their names even in a week's time, hence they gave me the names of their ethnic groups (*zär*). Only the above mentioned single Shintar remained to us. The others, who are found beyond the Jikawo and who were Ethiopian tributaries during the time of *Däjjach Joté* are now claimed by the British. These are the Shawo ethnic group which has many *qoro* but we do not know how many, Chärät which are also many, Chinkañ and Chiluñ. The River Mächar is found right next to them. The watershed by the Mechar River joins the Baro River. The area until the Baro belongs to *Däjjach Joté* while the other side of the Baro is said to belong to *Ras Täsämma*. Even now, the area crossing the Mächar River belongs to *Ras Mulugéta*. It is a pity that this part is intruded upon. Those on the other side of the Mächar River used to pay tribute to *Däjjach Joté*. This region of Gagiok ethnic group is very wide and is said to be equivalent to [or even wider than] a region of one head *Fitawrari*. Next is found River Loñ and next to this river we find an important [big] clan [of Abigar] called Gonk. According to Abigar tradition, members of this clan will not have a slit on their forehead. I was told that this is because Gonk is the eldest of the Abigar, and he prescribed a slit for the Abigar. All the people mentioned above are special Abigar who in earlier times used to pay tribute to *Däjjach Joté*. However, the part of our country [Ethiopia] our patriots used to move on and have our flag waved is probably more than this. Thirdly, the highland area of *Däjjach Joté*'s region [*agär*] is divided into three parts. The lower lowland of Yambo area that belongs to the Säyo *wäräda* where I am now, reaches Baro [River]. The Anfillo region bounded by the Gäré River also reaches Baro. The Abigar that remain for us now are in this area. Qéllam *wäräda* is *Däjjach Joté*'s birthplace and where his

hometown Gidami is to be found. Léqa *wäräda* was, in earlier times, said to reach Baro. If verified, this will prove to be true. But now all the areas mentioned above are not ours. In fact, all the Komo ethnic group living in the highland above the Abigar [who are] under British (control) were paying tribute to us during *Fitawrari* Berru's time: [these are] the Chila ethnic group, living on the bank of the Gere River, the Bilegu ethnic group, on the side of the River Chirächa, the Fami ethnic group, the Kägäl ethnic group, and the Wägära tribe. They are said to be as many as the Abigar. The British has taken these all. But earlier, during *Däjjach* Joté's time, they say they were serving as [his] household slaves. They are close to his town Gidami. I got this information by asking the Abigar. The British Consul in Western Ethiopia, while returning from *Shäykh* Hojälé region (*agär*) came through Säyo and met me in Tabor Town. They showed me maps regarding the boundary between the British Sudan and Ethiopia. The maps show that the areas I say are under the British are included in their territory. But I did not say anything as far as the border is concerned. We just had a friendly discussion. In fact, they told me that the Ethio-Sudan (British) border lies in Gémi Mountain. They also told me there is a sign in this mountain which has been pitched while we were demarcating the boundary. This Gémi Mountain as one can see from the map, is no more than 5 hours from Gidami. Thus, all the above mentioned Abigar and the people called Komo *wärägara* will be included in their territory. The British also told me that they intend to construct a road that crosses Gémi and reaches Sennar and open a trade station[there]. They also told me that they will have a station in Gémi. I am supplying you with this information so that, should they construct the road and put a station [there], I will be ready to accomplish whatever you order me to do. Fourthly, as is written above, Säyo *wäräda* of *Däjjach* Joté reaches Baro, and Anfillo *wäräda* reaches Baro. But I asked myself as to why Qélläm *wäräda*'s lowland does not cross Jikawo and reach Baro. Your Majesty's justice is to all Ethiopians, and if you examine this issue I hope the truth will be known. Fifthly, my father made an expedition with *Ras* Dämissäw to the Koyna on a border delimitation mission, and lost several men and relatives.³⁵ My father caught malaria and was very ill for seven months. If Your Majesty permits me to do it, I would like to, at least, go to the edge [of the border], use binoculars or read according to the map, and identify the places and collect tax before the coming rainy season. It will be too late if I wait for your letter. So please let me know the response by phone. I will only keep the area known as Jikawo which reaches the Gäré River, and wait for your response. In the direction of Qéllam, the area from Jikawo to the highland and Gémi Mountain is controlled by the

³⁵ Triulzi, 1986, pp. 61–64; Pankhurst–Ezekiel Gebissa, 1988, pp. 82–93.

British. But I bow to Your Majesty and say that this happened before I came to protect the area. *Yäkkatit* 26, 1925 E.C./March 5, 1933.

18

wa/mu/2/27-28

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I reported to you that Almahdi, the son of *Shäykh* Hojälé, is creating problems to the traders who pass through Benishangul back and forth from [a place called] Nust'a and Khartoum. You also sent a message to Hojälé Al-Hassän regarding this. But they are not willing to obey. They sent a letter to *Däjjazmach* Haylu and others who, in turn, sent it to me. The letter shows that Hojälé Al-Hassän is hesitating to obey your orders. I am sending this letter to you so that you can see it. What they are creating is only a pretext in order not to allow the movement of traders. Little gold is found in my country [*agär*]. Thus, the gold tribute that I pay to Your Majesty is mainly brought [here] by traders from the Arab country [Benishangul] and from Khartoum. They did not [allow] traders to pass because they do not want traders of my country [*agär*] to bring the gold and do not want that I pay tax to you in gold. They are saying that I am spying on them by sending my men to *Däjjach* Mähämmäd sons. This is because I used to send my men to look for gold that I pay for my tax. Now that traders are in difficulty, it will be a shame for me if I do not let you know. Secondly, they are saying that my men must not go to the Arab region because they want Your Majesty to be angry with me when I am not able to pay tax to you in gold. They want me to be a victim, but they do not understand that failing to pay the gold tribute is harmful to the country.³⁶ I lie down [bow] in front of your throne and ask you to look into what *Shäykh* Hojälé and his people are doing in order to harm me. Your slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on *Mäggabit* 22, 1925 E.C./March 31, 1933, sent in the hands of Beñña Béha Adi.

19

wa/mu/2/30

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Regarding the introduction of the *qälad* system of land measurement in Qélläm, you told me to call the *balabbat*, the *qoro* and the key representatives (*ch'äwa*) of the people to discuss the matter

³⁶ The payment of tribute in gold, and how to get hold of it beyond trade, appears to be the main issue here. As the Najjoo gold was not enough to provide all the gold needed for the payment of the yearly tribute, to encourage or discourage traders coming from the north was a constant issue in the quarrel between Asosa and Naqamtee.

with them and send our opinion to you.³⁷ You also asked me to tell you the details of how many plots of land [out of four] did [the *balabbat* or any local chief] take [as their *siso*] since the *qäläd* system was implemented in my country; how much *siso* taxation is paid after each person takes his share, how much tax each person pays per *qäläd* of land, what is the cost of each type of land, i.e. *läm-märét* ['fertile land'], *läm-t'äf* ['semi-fertile'], and *t'äf-märét* ['wasteland'], and for how much will each *qäläd* be sold in the future. I discussed with the *balabbat* and *qoro*. I am sending their written agreement to let you know. Some have put their seal on it, but those who did not have the seal [with them] only put their signatures. Secondly, regarding the *qäläd* system of land measurement in my country, one *gasha* is equal to 11 ropes of 67 metres in length [i.e., 11×67 m] and 8 ropes of 67 metres in width [8×67 m]. This is equal to 1 *qäläd* [$11 \times 67 \times 8 \times 67 = 1$ *qäläd*]. If there are two or three houses in a *qäläd*, it is taken as *läm-t'äf*, if it has more than three houses, it is regarded as *läm*; if it has no house, we call it *t'äf*. All of this has been registered. After this is done 1) in a land designated *läm*, 1/20 is put as *sämon* [church land]; 2) the *qoro* obtains 1/4 [as his *siso*]; 3) 1/5 is given out for settling (lit. 'planting') the *Shaläqa* soldiers. The sixth part is assigned as *gäbbar* land where the owner of the *rist* (*balä-rist*) would sell it as follows: the *läm* will cost 50 *birr*, the *läm-t'äf* will cost 25 *birr*, and the *t'äf* will cost 10 *birr*. Regarding the tax, 15 *birr* will be for the *läm* and 10 *birr* for *läm-t'äf*, but for five years there will be a yearly tax increase of 1 *birr* for the *läm-t'äf*, so that after five years the tax will be equal to that of the *läm*. In the case of *t'äf*, taxation will vary from 6 to 15 *birr* and be no more than that. The *deha* will have a chance to slowly make their land *läm*. The *siso* tax of the *qoro* will be paid by all the members who own the land. Out of this *siso* tax, the *qoro* controlling the region will get a share. This may be one, two, or three *qäläd hambifäta*.³⁸ This depends on the type of *qoro* and the amount of tax. Since *madäriya* is given in lieu of salary no tax is paid on it. However, the people who get land in accordance to *siso* will pay 15 *birr* per *gasha*. This is the tradition in my country [*agär*].³⁹ But, it can be modified or changed for it all depends on the will of Your Majesty. May the Holy Saviour give you health. I bow to you ten times. Your slave, d. H. Ma. G. E. *Yäkkatit* 22, 1925 E.C./ March 1, 1933.

³⁷ Tesema Ta'a, 1984, pp. 179–97.

³⁸ The same as the *ambifäta* used in letter 15 above.

³⁹ This detailed description of *qäläd* measurement as (it is argued) was carried out in Naqamtee is a useful frame of reference to the land apportionment through *qäläd*, and an interesting example of self-promotion by HM.

20

wa/mu/2/32-33

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Earlier you told me that according to letters from the Ministry of Commerce and the Minister of Pen, the chief of commerce [*näggadras*] in Säyyo called *Ato Gäbrä Mädhēn* is doing his own business and is creating problems to other traders. Hence, you ordered me to clarify [investigate] it and inform you. I made a serious investigation and sent you evidence of his involvement in an illegal coffee trade which bears his signature. I also sent you evidence of his involvement in ivory trade bearing the signature of his accomplice, who is a foreigner. But, the Minister of Pen told me that [stolen] ivory must be caught red-handed. Even though 13 *färäsula* of [stolen] ivory was caught, I was told to return them to him. But, it was not acceptable to me to give your property back to others, and hence I bought the ivory to give it back to you as a present. Now I found 35 *färäsula* of ivory hidden in a town called *Gidami*. I sent my men to collect them. *Ato Gäbrä Mädhēn*'s men did not allow them to enter the house, let alone take the ivory, and, as a consequence, there was a great quarrel between my men and his men. *Ato Dhaba Berru*, who was coming back from his journey, helped to settle the dispute and 35 *färäsula* of ivory were found hidden. The fact that a receipt (*iräffitya*) was found in the name of *Ato Gebre Mädhēn* shows that it is his. A copy of it, on which *Ato Dhaba*'s signature and the eyewitnesses' names are written, is sent to Your Majesty so that you can see it. The receipt shows that the [stolen] cattle had been hidden and written after the ivory was caught because the receipt is always with them and they can write whatever they like on it. It is four months since Your Majesty gave me the responsibility to control the market areas, and my loyal men are controlling them. In *Gidami wäräda* [district] my appointee (*ashkär*) called *Fitawrari Balläh* is assigned. If it had been written on the 22nd of *Mäggabit* my followers would have seen it. If it were legal, there would be no reason to hide them from my followers and create a dispute. To show Your Majesty that my men had faced many problems in getting the ivory and had problems entering the area where you gave us responsibility to control, I am sending you a letter written by *Ato Gäbrä Mädhēn* which forbids my men from entering the market area they are responsible to control. This letter shows that the letter found hidden is his. There is no one but he and his aide *Fitawrari Osäna* who gave bullets to the *Abigar* to kill elephants on the western side for their illegal ivory trade. The amount of ivory caught so far is 48 *färäsula* and the amount of ivory hidden in *Fitawrari Osäna*'s house is probably more than that. If this much ivory is taken every year, no wild animals will be left. *Ato Gäbrä Mädhēn* is a simple government employee responsible for this case. If he forgets his responsibility and only focuses on his own interests, it is [not] surprising if others follow after him. Whether I should take him to prison or set

him free, I am waiting for Your Majesty's orders. May the Holy Saviour give you health. I bow in front of you ten times. Your obedient follower, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. *Miyazya* 1, 1925 E.C./April 1, 1933.

21

wa/mu/2/33-35

To *Janhoy* the Judge,

May God show you [the truth]. The people of Limmu, Horro, Gidda, and Gudru districts (*wäräda*) used to make expeditions to our forest region of Läqämt [Naqamtee] for many years to raid and kill elephants and buffalos [until] this was prohibited by your Majesty's orders. They used to do it for a long time, even when my father was alive. Immediately after the death of my father, I appealed to Your Majesty verbally when I was in Addis Ababa and in written form after I came back. Your Majesty had also issued a countrywide decree regarding this.⁴⁰ Starting from *Ras* Habtä Maryam's time until now, we have summoned the culprits to justice at the *Shaläqa* court; [but] no one received punishment comparable to the damage done, and the hunting of wild animals is increasing every year. Before last year, during *Ras* Habtä Maryam's time, I employed attendants to protect wild animals. The attendants saw the poachers and tried to catch them. But the poachers killed one of my servants known as *Balambaras* Turé. I informed Your Majesty and made an investigation (*afärsata*). The matter was clarified, and *Däjjach* Asfaw took an oath to bring me the criminals. While we were in process, he was transferred. Now, when they knew that Your Majesty ordered me to come to this area, all these people went to the forest, refusing to give in, and fought against my guards, whose head is *Fitawrari* Tayé. Some of the guards were killed, and some others were wounded. The *hamsa-aläqa* [of the guards] *Balambaras* Nägäri was wounded and was in Läqämt [Naqamtee] Hospital, and nobody knows whether he is dead or is still alive. Soon after the death of my father, the number of elephants in our region was no less than 400 or 500. Now, they may be no more than 50, and I swear in your name, Hailä Selassé, that their number will not reach 100. I am writing such a long letter to you because the attendant [the guard] employed to look after the wild animals fled [from his post] and came to me saying that the poachers are too many, that he cannot defend even himself, let alone the animals, and informed me that the wild animals can be protected from the raids only if the whole population of my region is assigned to the area. So that I may protect them. The attendant also informed me that too

⁴⁰ In 1908 Emperor Menilek had issued an edict (*awaj*) prohibiting the hunting of elephants in Ethiopia. See CGC, letter 123, *Ras* Täfäri to Habtä Maryam, *Mäggabit* 18, 1916 E.C./27 March 1924.

many wild animals were killed by the poachers. This area, known as Handäq,⁴¹ a wild forest region, during the Galla [Oromo] era was the land property of my great grandfather [Bakare Godana]. Then my grandfather *Däjjach* Moroda inherited it from him. My father *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér told His Majesty Menilek that it [Handäq] was a forested and unclaimed land and was allowed to buy it for just 500 *wäqét*⁴² of gold. For a long time, it has been the property of our family, and the wild animals in it were protected from being hunted.⁴³ Some of the advantages are the following: (1) The area is highland-like, i.e., with no malaria; (2) The area is not sandy as in the lowlands, and there is plenty of wood and grass. After every 15 minutes' walk, water is available. It is suitable for wild animals, there is no food problem and they can easily multiply; (3) The fact that it is only, if no less than, nine hours from Läqämt [Naqamtee] Hospital shows that it is highland. If an important person wants to see it, it is easy to take him there; (4) It does not share its boundaries with a foreign country. On all four sides, it shares its boundaries with other regions of Ethiopia, and hence the wild animals cannot flee to other countries [outside Ethiopia]. As I informed you while I was in Addis Ababa, *Ras* Haylu let the Shanqella settle on the other side of the Abbay to protect the elephants. The Wämbära region, the area below the region of *Däjjach* Banjaw, has a common border with the British and elephants may flee to the region governed by the British. In ancient times elephants used to flee from our country, as the [Sudanese] land has a common border with ours. I will let the Shanqella settle on the bank of the river to protect the elephants from going away, kill those who attempt to run away, and give the ivory to Your Majesty. This area is the place where the elephants used to live, and once they return [there], they will not abandon the area because it is very suitable to them. If the elephants settle in this central part of Ethiopia, they can only flee to neighbouring countries [areas]. I do not think there are other areas where so

⁴¹ On the importance of the Handaq 'forest' see GEC letter no 40 and the Chronicle of the Bakaree family, fol. 4r (Ch. 3).

⁴² One *wäqét* is equivalent to some 30 grams. Gäbrä Egzi'abhér (letter 109) describes this purchase, listing the cost at 550 *wäqét*.

⁴³ GEC letter 145 refers to these restrictions being made by the Bakaree family and confirmed with the central government by Menilek II. Bairu Tafla refers to this same policy with economic as well as conservationist incentives (Bairu Tafla, 1969, p. 11). According to Bairu's account, after blessing a new *gadaa* assembly, Bakaree had requested a "huge nearby uninhabited forest area, so that he would be able to command its wealth—grass, wood, wild animals, honey, and so forth". By controlling these products, "Bäkäre levied a sort of tax on all people who grazed their cattle, fetched wood, hunted elephants, or collected honey on his land". Tesema confirms the economic benefits the Bakaree family sought through controlling and regulating access to the Handäq forest whose wild animal population was a source of luxury goods for long-distance trade (Tesema Ta'a, 1976, pp. 9, 14).

many elephants are to be found and which are not disputed by countries governed by whites. This area is special, because even when they [the elephants] flee, they can only go to another part of Ethiopia. But for Your Majesty, it is all one country, your country, and we are under the obligation to unite and respect your orders. I am writing this only to remind you of what we discussed earlier with you and will obey your orders. May God show You [the truth], the very purpose why a man buys a *rist* [land] and why a father buys and preserves it for his children is to cultivate it, live on its produce, and pay the government tax with the remainder. My father knows [knew] all this. But for him, the interest of the government had a priority over his personal interest. Thus, he never used it for agriculture because he wanted to protect the elephants. Since the time he bought (the land), he did not farm it and did not get even a *qunna* [about 10 kilos] of grain from it. The idea was to protect the interests of the government. But the people of Gudru have killed so many wild animals. The rest [of the elephants who are still alive] may be more than 50 but will be no more than 80 or 100. If you think these are too few in number and are useless, let no other bandit kill and finish them. Permit me to kill them and give the ivory to you, farm the land, and pay tax to Your Majesty. Earlier, my lawyer won a court case with *Ras* Habtä Maryam and *Däjjach* Asfaw, and if Your Majesty thinks it is useful, I beg you to send the culprits with a *qurañña* guard to me. Last year, when *Lij* Iyyasu escaped, I ordered all my men to go to the forest and be attentive, while my guard called Jägura, who used to take care of the forest for 27 years, betrayed me and fled to Limmu region together with other 50, all armed men. He also took away the tax he collected to be sent to Your Majesty. Even now he is killing the wild animals, and I beg you to send him to me so that I can get justice. For the future I want Your Majesty to say: “the wild region belongs to *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam, the people of your region are killing wild animals, and you must have a guard to protect them”. If a bandit (*wämbädé*) kills a wild animal, it is not only the bandit who must be punished, but also the *balabbat*, *qoro* and the *qälad* owners who are not able to catch him. Otherwise, I will not be able to protect the wild animals. It would be a lie if I were to say “I will protect them”, when I can do nothing to protect them, and the wild animals will all be killed. I wrote a long letter because I feel pity for the wild animals, and the blood of Christians is being spilled over in vain. Hence, I bow down in front of your throne and present my petition to you. (n.d., presumably Miyazya 1925 E.C./April 1933).

22

wa/mu/2/36-37

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. When *Fitawrari* Yohannes Joté went to Addis Ababa via *Shäykh* Hojälé [country], he left his brother *Fitawrari* Osäna as his representative (*wäkil*) in Qélläm. As we had a [good] relationship for a long time, I was quite confident that he would help me not only in his area but also in other parts of the region. I waited for one month hoping that he would one day come and ask me about the work (to be done). Apart from what is due to him, he took the share of the demoted *shaläqa* in the region where they were appointed, receiving 1/5 of the cereals, cotton and coffee, a tithe for bee hives, weavers' holes (*yäshämané gudguwad*), blacksmiths, and a mineral water (*ambo*) tax. Both I and the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, *Ato* Indälw, wrote Osäna to let us do our job. He is so dishonest that he appears [to agree] but runs to *Shäykh* Hojälé whenever my men go to meet him, and has become an obstacle to our work. In other areas of my administration, everything is going smooth. But I would like to inform Your Majesty that I did not get even a coin from him. I cannot catch him and force him to pay because he can flee to *Shäykh* Hojälé from his town [Gidami], since it takes only one hour to reach there. Last time I informed Your Majesty that apart from what *Shäykh* Hojälé bought earlier, he also sold his town to him *Shäykh* Hojälé. [Regarding the territories under question] I will demarcate the boundaries with the help of a judge you sent me. But now his representative *Fitawrari* Yohannes is here, and I want Your Majesty to ask him. I want to make clear that I am not responsible for the delay. In fact, he was misinforming the people outside his area saying that he will collect and pay tax to Your Majesty. However, thanks to God, I am almost through collecting tax from my people outside his area [Qélläm]. Except Qélläm [which is under him], all the *balabbat* enthusiastically agreed to apply for the change to *qäläd*. This is because they were advised by *Shäykh* Hojälé that it will minimize the tax to be collected and given to Your Majesty. The application by the *balabbat* is already with you. However, he [*Fitawrari* Yohannes] tried to go against the application of the *balabbat*. The people know what is good and what is bad and did not accept him [his advice]. I will do not only what is good for the government, the enslavement of your people also worries me. Whatever problems my people have, I wish Haylä Sellasé eternal life because they are now free from slavery. Even though they interpreted it in a negative sense, I did it for the well-being of the people. Please, do not see their negative way of interpretation. I beg you to do it for the well-being of your people, as you are used to. Besides, the British claimed that Gémi Mountain is theirs. I saw it, and it is very close to our house. I have sent a letter to you and am waiting for your response. But until then, I have assigned a guard to watch over the situation. The man assigned is very mature, and there will be no conflict

due to border problems. We will wait for your response. Further *Fitawrari* Osäna and *Näggadras* Gäbrä Mädhén are both involved in the illegal ivory trade in Western Ethiopia. Thus, unless a real Christian who really works for the interest of the government and not for his own advantage is assigned to the post, the wild animals will not be protected. *Miyazya* 4, 1925 E.C./April 12, 1933.

23

wa/mu/2/37-39

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Pen wrote to me [saying] that I must investigate the fact that the chief of Säyo, *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén, is only interested in running his own trade affairs and is doing injustice to other merchants. Assuming that it was for the wellbeing of the country, I worked hard to get the evidence [proving] that he was involved in coffee trade, and this is well known to Your Majesty. As far as the ivory trade is concerned, I found the signature of a foreigner who is a collaborator of *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén, and I sent this evidence showing that he himself is involved in ivory trade. Regarding the thirty-five *färäsula* of ivory found in Gidami, I have shown the receipt written in his name to several witnesses, and I made much effort to get his signature on the copy. I did all this in order to comply to orders from higher officials. I do not think that what *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén is doing to your people in Säyyo and Qéllām is fair and I repeatedly informed you about this because I was not sure whether you had received the evidence I sent. Besides, injustice is being done to your people as far as trade is concerned. I am not asking to substitute *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén, because the post [assignment] Your Majesty gave me is in excess [enough]. As if the region of my father were not enough, you gave me another responsibility, and I came. Whoever you send, I will accept. What is important is that the employee must be faithful and accomplish the work assigned by you. As long as the employee is willing to do the work assigned by Your Majesty, he is more than a brother to me. Furthermore, *Ato* Haylu Lāwt'é who came to control the customs was in good faith. In fact, he has provided a [good] service to the people and saved them from being exploited. On the other hand, *Ato* Haylu's presence has become a disadvantage because *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén has alienated him, not only from his colleagues, but also from the Qéllām traders. *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén is so close to the director, the secretary, the *bäjerond*, and the telephone operators, that he sent messages to different offices to reduce [decrease] the income and share the profit between themselves. Consequently, the income has become very low soon after the arrival of *Ato* Haylu. They have become an obstacle to *Ato* Haylu Lāwt'é's work. *Ato* Haylu does not have full authority and only sits in the customs house. *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén goes wherever he wants,

just as before, and your people in the countryside did not get rid of their problems regarding trade. Because of the controller, the revenue is highly reduced, and from this low revenue, *Ato* Haylu's salary is deducted, and so his presence has become only a disadvantage. Apart from the suffering of the people, the income tax is illegally being taken by anybody else [somebody else]. Some say the income tax during *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén's time was 70,000 and was talked about among the people as a miracle. The situation in Ethiopia is no longer what it was. If we compare the revenue of some 27 years ago with that of today, we see that every six months it is increasing. It is evident that the revenue, together with the excise and school taxes in Säyyo could nowadays be more than 100,000 *birr*. This can be asserted as a valid fact if an investigation is carried on *Ato* Haylu for a month or two. As if he does not know that you are the only one to appoint or demote, *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén goes to his foreign collaborators and asks them to select him and sign for him. He did this when he suspected that *Ato* Haylu Läwt'é was coming. I feel sorry for this because he knows you are the only one to appoint or demote. *Ato* Haylu told me that *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén and his collaborators monopolized the work situation, and he is not allowed to mix with the workers and create a good working condition. *Ato* Haylu is afraid that others will not have confidence in his work. However, I did not discuss what I wrote above with him [with *Ato* Haylu]. I wrote them independently. My intention is to accomplish what you ordered me to do here and go back to my country. But I would like to inform you that *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén will not be helpful for the increase of revenue and the welfare of the people as long as he is to remain in Qélläm. This is unthinkable. I am very hopeful that Your Majesty will assign someone to help your people. May the Holy Saviour keep your health. Your slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, says I bow down and salute ten times. *Miyazya* 12, 1925 E.C./April 20, 1933.

24

wa/mu/2/41-42

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. You told me to send you the money found in the Säyo Customs House collected during the time when Qélläm was under *Däjjamach* Mäkonnen until *Miyazya* 24. You also told me to take the money from the *näggadras* and send it to you. Hence, I took eleven thousand and two hundred *birr* from *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén and sent it to you, while I also informed you that the customs and the boundary and markets in Qélläm region produce no income. I am not saying [this] to harm *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén but because I believe that the tax paid to Your Majesty is the wealth of the country and is not an individual property. Now that *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén is caught for his misdeeds

and is taken away, Your Majesty has ordered me to take over the responsibility. I am working with *Ato Haylu Läwt'é* and *Ato Dämmäqä Kidané*, a veteran in this field. During *kerämt* [rainy season], the income is usually less. Fortunately, in *Säné* [June] and *Hamlé* [July] alone we have collected six thousand and four hundred fifty-nine and ten *mähallaq* [which is] more compared with last year's *Säné* and *Hamlé*. In fact, the tax of *Hamlé* is not entirely collected. When all the tax income of *Hamlé* is collected from every *wäräda*, the excess will be, I assume, 7,000 *birr*. The income tax of *Säné* and *Hamlé* of the last year, 1924 E.C. [1932], was 7,752 *birr* and 7 *mähallaq*, while the income tax of *Säné* and *Hamlé* this year, 1925 E.C. [1933], is 7,000 *birr* more than that of last year. This shows that *Ato Gäbrä Mädhén* had taken half the money for himself, i.e. he has shared the income tax with Your Majesty equally. During the past years, the income tax paid to you was even less than that of 1924 E.C. If he took this much from two months' income, you can imagine how much tax he took for himself during the past years. I got the evidence from a record I copied, put my signature and that of three employees on it, and sent it to you. *Ato Haylu Läwt'é* and *Ato Dämmäqä Kidané* did not acquiesce with *Ato Gäbrä Mädhén's* misconduct. In fact, they were genuinely helpful and they both stood by me. Hence, I asked Your Majesty to give them their due reward. In the past, when things were going wrong, *Ato Dämmäqä* was present and was applying for full authority as a director. He has recommendations from his chiefs. *Ato Haylu* has worked so much to accomplish his work and thanks to him it is finally [well] accomplished. If he is given full authority, I think about one hundred thousand *birr* of income tax will be collected in a year. I have asked him information regarding this, and I have sent you the letter written by him. However, it all depends on the will of Your Majesty. As soon as *Fitawrari Ashänafi* comes, I will deliver to him all according to the rule, make it known to Your Majesty by telegram, and leave. May the Holy Saviour give you health. Your follower and slave, *Däjjach Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* says I bow down and salute you ten times. *Nähasé* 7, 1925 E.C./ August 13, 1933.

25

wa/mu/2/44-45

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. In 1922 E.C. [1929]⁴⁴ I went to Addis Ababa to participate in the first Crown Coronation Anniversary, the day of happiness God brought all over Ethiopia. In 1923 E.C. [1930] I went to Addis Ababa thinking that I would be extremely sorry if I did not participate in the

⁴⁴ Possibly a mistake or a typo in the Amharic text, as Haylä Sellasé's coronation ceremony took place on *T'eqemt* 23, 1923 E.C./November 2, 1930.

second-year Crown Coronation Anniversary. While I was in Addis Ababa, the price of gold started rising, and I got permission from Your Majesty to go to the Abbay region and look for gold. I lived in my Lāqāmt [Naqamtee] house for one month. Then I went to the Abbay region and lived there for two months looking for gold. I came back because I was ordered to make contributions to the Bank,⁴⁵ and I lived in Nājjo for three months to fulfil these orders. I informed Your Majesty about the problems of the region in relation to bank contributions, the amount of money collected, the rising price of gold, and the increasing taxation and its consequences. As I have finished the work on the contribution for the Bank, I went back to my house in Nāqāmt [Naqamtee] and lived there for two months. Soon after that, in 1924 E.C., I was called by Your Majesty for the task of the Ethiopian Constitution that you benevolently formulated for your people. I came in *Sāne* [June]. On *T'eqemt* 23 of 1925, E.C./November 2, 1932. Your Majesty ordered me to go to Qéllām region and on *Mäskäräm* 20 of 1926 E.C./September 30, 1933.⁴⁶ I went back home. For four years, I was moving from one place to another. I am eager to see and present myself in front of you. I wish to be present in all of your assemblies. But for 4 years, the work was left in the hands of my followers. I want to control things in my administration and make an account of the expenses and the money collected. If things are not going well, they will have dire consequences for me and you. Thus, I beg Your Majesty to permit me not to come to Addis Ababa. *Mäskäräm* 11, 1926 E.C./September 21, 1933.

26

wa/mu/2/45-46

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. If Gäbrä Mädhen's disobedience is certified by the judges, you said that he should be arrested and be sent to Addis Ababa. You also ordered me that, together with him, I send my men who know the case sufficiently to *Bitwäddäd* Mäkonnen. I got your message by telegram earlier and immediately sent my men, who know the matter very deeply, to *Bitwäddäd* Mäkonnen. *Bitwäddäd* Mäkonnen investigated the matter and found the truth. He saw the letters sent by the Ministry of Pen and the Ministry of Commerce

⁴⁵ I. e., the Bank of Ethiopia. The Bank was inaugurated shortly after Haile Selassie was crowned in 1930. The new Bank, previously Bank of Abyssinia, a *de-facto* branch of British-owned National Bank of Egypt, was the first indigenous bank in Africa. It was established by an official decree on August 29, 1931. See Bahru Zewde, 2002a, pp. 102–03; Pankhurst, 1963, pp. 64–120.

⁴⁶ “When Berru fell ill and was taken to Addis Ababa in March 1927, *Däjjazmach* Häbtä Maryam was made a caretaker governor and prevented the departing Berru's *näft'añña* from taking “the children of the local Oromo as slaves with them”. See Daniel Ayana, 1995, p. 125.

that gave me the responsibility to investigate Gäbrä Mädhén's involvement in illegal trades of wax, skins, ivory, etc., and he was punished for his disobedience by the jury of law formed by Your Majesty. My representative told me all these facts. Your Majesty! I started to look into this matter because I was ordered to do so. I sent the result of my investigation to the Ministers who ordered me by telegram. I was ordered to arrest him, and I did so, and sent him together with the evidence. But now there is no need for such evidence, as he has admitted that he himself did it. However, I did not do it to harm him or to benefit myself, and this you and your God know. On the 3rd of *Hedar* [November 12], the Ministry of Pen wrote me a letter which reached me on *Hedar* 11 [November 20], before I entered Tabor Town. I was ordered to examine the case of Gäbrä Mädhén by this letter. Before this time, I did not know him. In fact, I had never seen him before this time. I can sacrifice even my life to comply to your orders. Had it not been for your orders, I would have lived with him peacefully. I know how to live with people peacefully. But I must let things go in accordance with Your Majesty's rules and regulations. Even if you do not see, your God knows it. The responsibility you gave me is so big that even the elders could not do it perfectly, let alone a very young person like me.⁴⁷ I am not intending to take the post of *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén, for my authority is already big and is enough for me. You and the Almighty God know that I am not exposing *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén to get additional prestige. The Almighty God made it clear to me that *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén was corrupt. I told you the amount of tax I collected during the months of *Sané* and *Hamlé* and repeating it will only create monotony. But I put the signatures of the director, the secretary and accountant on the copy I sent you. I am writing all this not for my advantage but to comply with your orders. Not knowing all this, several people are spoiling my name. These are the brother-in-law and relative of *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén called *Ato* Dubalé Berru and his collaborator called *Ato* Bezuwärq, who is a telephone operator of Dämbidollo, and foreigners [Greeks] who collaborate in sharing the income tax which is due to Your Majesty. *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén will also stand against me if he is released. You are the true judge assigned by God, and I beg you not to be misled by the information these people are disseminating. I can risk even my life to fulfil my responsibilities and do not mind if *Ato* Gäbrä Mädhén or any other person hates me just because I carry out my duties. It is only God and Your Majesty who can evaluate my work. I bow down in front of your throne and beg Your Majesty's justice to save me from being hit by the bad news that is being disseminated [against me]. *Mäskäräm* 6, 1926 E.C./September 16, 1933.

⁴⁷ In 1933 Habtä Maryam was 23 years old.

27

wa/mu/2/46-47

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Unless Your Majesty, with your kindness and benevolence, formulate a constitution which could be applicable to all Ethiopians, your people will not move from place to place even when they are oppressed and mistreated by their governors. Whenever they flee from their oppressors to avoid exploitation, they are forced to go back and be punished. The tenants of one governor must remain tenants of that person even under the worst mistreatment, and in case they flee, they are returned to their former governor and are punished for trying to avoid oppression. The same thing is happening to the people of the Arab *awraja* [Benishangul]. They did not know that there is freedom of movement in Ethiopia. They do not know that they can freely move to other parts of Ethiopia. They think the only alternative to avoid oppression is to flee to the Sudan. They assume that they will be forced to go back to *Shäykh* Hojälé and be treated as slaves. They flee to the Sudan, not because they hate the fertile land of Ethiopia, but to avoid slavery and sufferings.⁴⁸ Many told me that these Ethiopians do not like to flee to the Sudan because they are forced by the Sudanese to let their slaves be free. I am writing this to you because a family of the Wäzäruq clan, who are well known rivals of *Shäykh* Hojälé in the region and who used to pay tax regularly, informed me they were intending to go to the Sudan. This is because they are long-time enemies of *Shäykh* Hojälé and are being mistreated. I explained to them that the system is changed and they can come to him [me] if they want to. They do not want to go to the Sudan and lose their slaves, and hence they crossed the Dabus River and reached my region. I beg Your Majesty not to be misled by the wrong information from *Shäykh* Hojälé. They are coming to you to appeal the case. I ask you not to listen to *Shäykh* Hojälé, nor to hand them over to him. If they are sent back to *Shäykh* Hojälé, other Arabs will flee to the Sudan and will never move to other regions of Ethiopia, whenever they feel they are oppressed. I beg Your Majesty to give them due punishment if you think they did something wrong. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhé. *Mäskäräm* 15, 1926 E.C./September 25, 1933.

28

wa/mu/2/47-48

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Part of my region known as the *Sibu wäräda* is on the other side of the Didéssa [River]. It goes on the right side of

⁴⁸ Misgovernment was the basic reason for people leaving Beni Shangul under *Shäykh* Hojälé as they did earlier leave Qellem to go to Beni Shangul.

Didéssa down to the Abbay confluence and from the Abbay up to the confluence of the Dabus [River]. In this area the *Shanqella* had settled according to their own respective families and clans. The left side is a highland, while the right side belongs to them. This year one of these families who live in Näjjo town rebelled and killed many men. Recently, they suddenly came to the highland cliff of an unsettled region and massacred twenty young boys and girls who are [free] sons of man (*yäsaw lij*), looted their cattle and burnt their houses, then went away. While I was in Qélläm to comply with your orders, they killed people, and others were wounded. I can send my men to arrest them; there will probably be no problem. But I am informing you in case they are not willing to surrender. Formerly, they were paying tribute, but now each of them every household (*t'is*), has bought guns. If these assassins are not caught and punished, others will follow their example, and it will be dangerous for us. I am waiting for a response from Your Majesty. (n.d., presumably *Mäskäräm* 1926 E.C./September 1933).

29

wa/mu/2/48-49

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Shäykh* Hojälé's people have taken over part of Qélläm by cheating its *balabbat* and entreating the governors without the permission of Your Majesty. On the 5th of *Tahsas*, 1925 E.C./December 14, 1932, I wrote to you a letter that contained the details to make the matter clear. In your letter number 190 of *T'err* 2, you mentioned that I informed you about the seizure of some parts of Wallagga by *Shäykh* Hojälé, and you told me that judges such as *Däjjach* Haylu were sent to *Shäykh* Hojälé's land. You ordered me to inform you as soon as they came back and promised me to add some people to them to help them settle the border dispute. I am pleased to hear that. The territories of the Arabs and the Galla [Oromo] are different. I waited for the return of the mediators and informed you by telegram as soon as they reached Beggí, a town that *Shäykh* Hojälé took by cheating. As Your Majesty told me earlier, you sent me *Qäññazmach* Kassa Wuqaw to settle the border dispute. However, thinking to frighten me, he [i.e., *Shäykh* Hojälé] wrote to *Qäññazmach* Kassa Wuqaw that the boundary will never be delimited unless they discussed the matter of money first. But I wrote to him about the need to delimit, for I am a representative of Qélläm and my country is a *madbét*. The judge says we must comply to Your Majesty's orders and the border must be delimited. He [*Shäykh* Hojälé] refused to obey. On the 23rd of *Genbot* 1925 E.C. I sent a lot of evidence to Your Majesty, including that of the Haräwé region that, as you know, was registered in my father's name. On the 15th of *Säné*, protocol number 288, you responded that you will inform the representative

appointed in the Harāwé region. Your Majesty, may God show you the truth. Despite Your Majesty's orders, the people of *Shäykh* Hojälé are not willing to let the border dispute be settled, and this is clearly because they know that they took a territory that belongs to a *Däjjazmach* by cheating. They are afraid of the truth because, if an honest judge comes, they will lose. The boundary between the Arab country and that of *Däjjazmach* Joté was demarcated during His Imperial Majesty Menilek II. He sent his servants, a judge, and other notables (*ch'äwa*) together with my father. This old boundary has been known to the elderly Amhara and Galla [Oromo] men. Since then, *Shäykh* Hojälé has gradually taken over half of Qélläm country.⁴⁹ I have given a note to *Fitawrari* Ashänafi which clarifies the matter. I have given him a note which clarifies the idea and the secret and came back hoping that he [*Fitawrari* Ashänafi] will help resolve the matter with a true spirit in accordance with Your Majesty's trust. The reason I have made him know this is Your Majesty's telegram order that says both of us [me and Ashänafi] are working for You [the government]. From the very beginning, I wanted Your Majesty to know the matter for my own benefit, and I don't mean to harm anybody. Perhaps, as nothing remains hidden from God and Your Majesty, if the news reached You through rumours before Your loyal servant can report the truth to you, it would be embarrassing to me. For the time being, I would lose the appreciation of my friends (*wädajoch*) but I fear more Your Majesty's wrath than losing the love of my friends. Secondly, *Shäykh* Hojälé has been pocketing taxes he collected from the greater part of the Arab country without paying any tax on it. He believes he is getting it by cheating the people of his country. All this you know, but if I may add, it would have been better if *Shäykh* Hojälé had gratefully acknowledged that You have done it out of Your benevolence rather than thinking about the soldiers' *madäriya* and the income of the government. It should be according to Your Majesty's, my lord's benevolent act. Written on *Mäskäräm* 10, 1926 E.C./September 10, 1933.

30

wa/mu/2/50-51

Janhoy,

May God show You [the truth]. The governors at the borders of my country have started to crush thieves (*léba*) and outlaws (*wämbädé*). I have never stopped appealing to Your Majesty so that I could seize the bandits (*shiftoch*)

⁴⁹ Internal borders are just as important as international ones to neighbouring powers. Again, the history of border demarcation at the time of Menilek and GE is espoused and set as a historical record. *Qäññazmach* Käba is the trusted Naqamtee officer appointed to run the country while HM was away in Qellem.

who had previously run away from my country to the frontier territory at the time of *Ras Habtä Maryam*. I have also presented this request orally to you when I was in Addis Ababa. However, after Your Majesty had seen the damage done to the country and sent *Däjjazmach Amdä Mika'él* to Wallagga, the thieves completely disappeared; but since the whole of Wallagga province was not fully under his hands, the thieves used to migrate and settle in Gudru, Horro and Limmu. But now, as the honourable *Bitwäddäd Mäkonnen* has held the whole province under his control, the thieves and rebels have nowhere to go as he has crushed them. As I, following Your Majesty's order, went to Qélläm for work, they [the thieves and bandits], seeing that I was not at home, thought they could enter and hide themselves in my own country. But as they knew that the people of my country would not allow them to hide in their midst, they [the thieves and the bandits] begged *Qäññazmach Käba*, whom I had appointed to run the country in my absence (*wänbär*), [for pardon] and became his [*Qäññazmach Käba's*] servants (*ashkär*). As I returned home I found them living on his *qälad* land and residing in his house as [his] servants. Among these, there is one *shifta* and robber (*fängay*) named Bayisa who is residing in Billo *awraja*. He is well known for his *shifta* activities in Sibu district in *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen Endalkachäw's* country and in Billo town. In *Bitwäddäd [Mäkonnen's]* country he is also recognised as a *shifta*. He therefore was arrested in this country and was detained there. However, he broke the metal chain [around him] and forcefully took a Mauser rifle from one of *Däjjach Gäbrä Mädhén's* servants. He then entered the territory of *Qäññazmach Käba* as his servant and stayed there. *Bitwäddäd Mäkonnen* wanted to capture him. So, he begged *Däjjach Gäbrä Mädhén* to arrest him, so that he would not escape, and informed him that he had become a servant of *Qäññazmach Käba*. I tried to arrest the said thief and make investigations on him, but he said that *Qäññazmach Käba* had taken the weapon from him. Yet, when I investigated *Qäññazmach Käba* he swore to me in the name of Haylä Sellasé that he had not seen it. I sat in court (*chilot*)⁵⁰ where I heard the dignitaries [*makwannent*] report that they had seen him [Bayisa] carry the weapon and follow him [Käba]. I also heard that he [Bayisa] gave the rifle to his son-in-law after scratching the rifle's serial number [*wug*]. Then I sent a guard secretly to the son-in-law and arrested him together with his father and investigated them both. The father of the son-in-law disclosed that there was a rifle and that it was *Qäññazmach Käba* who had given it to his son. He confirmed that the rifle was at home and asked me if he could bring it. Then I sent him with a guard and he brought the rifle from the bush where it was hidden. I investigated the father and the son after securing the

⁵⁰ Again, a legal issue brought to Court (*chilot*) becomes a source of detailed report in the HM Correspondence on individual cases of theft or robbery.

weapon. The son said: “*Qäññazmach* Käba took away the automatic rifle (*mäträyä*) of my father and gave me this one’. His father also confirmed that he had given the rifle to his son. Meanwhile I asked him whether the rifle still had a serial number (*wug*) on it [and he answered:] ‘it had a serial number”. *Qäññazmach* Käba told me to remove it and label it in the name of *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér and hold it [like this]. He took the rifle to the smith and told him to remove the old serial number and print a new one on it. He [the smith] asked him to give him money. He then returned the weapon and put it back in *Qäññazmach* Käba’s house. ‘When I took the rifle [from the smith] for a second time, he gave it to me with its serial number scratched.’ These were the words he uttered under investigation. Then after the people of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Mädhén appeared in court, I told them to discuss the case. He [Bayisa] requested that the written file of the investigation should not be read to him in public and that the court record be invalidated, he again appealed that he should not be investigated. He also claimed that it was the *däjjazmach* who had made him write false evidence against him, hence the file should not be registered. At court, where one thousand people of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Mädhén had gathered, the truth of the matter was investigated and revealed. They told him [Bayisa] not to argue in court insulting his lord and claiming that he had given false evidence; they also advised him that he would be punished for his words. He repeatedly insulted me by saying: ‘the one who produced false evidence should be punished not me’. Thus, he remained detained after the people in court from corner to corner had decided unanimously that he should stay in detention. *Janhoy*, may God show You [the truth]. His [Bayisa’s] acts were very disorderly; he undermined my fame and disrespected me (*awarädäññ*) in court. Although it was me who sat in court at that time, it was the court who got insulted and Your Majesty, my lord. Thus, the punishment should be decided by You. For this, I am looking forward to the response of Your Majesty. May the Saviour of the World give you health and bow down to salute you ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. Written on *Mäskäräm* 30, 1926 E.C./October 10, 1933.

31

wa/mu/2/52-53

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. When my father *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér was alive, even though the price of gold kept rising, the price of one *wäqét* [ounce] of gold did not go beyond 30 *birr* in our country. After the death of my father, I bought gold at this price and paid my tribute (*geber*). Other than the tribute paid in other items, I did not pay more than thirty thousand *birr* [each year]. In 1922 E.C./1929–1930 the price of gold suddenly rose to sixty *birr*. So

I spent 60,000 *birr* to buy one thousand *wäqét* of gold. From that year onwards, the price of gold continued to rise until now when it has reached eighty *birr* per *wäqét*. For this reason, the lot of your poor *gäbbar* has hardened. From time to time, I have appealed to Your Majesty, my Lord, and have made this known to you. Yet, the price of gold continued to increase, and I begged and troubled Your Majesty to change the payment of my tribute from gold to *birr*. Before the gold concessionaries wholly occupied the area of the gold mine, not only for my benefit but particularly to pay my *geber* to your Majesty, I wanted to work with the people of my country and to import gold mining machinery myself to get the amount of gold equivalent to my gold tax. If it is less, I will fill it by purchase; if it exceeds the amount, it would be the fruit of our work and to honour your Majesty. I humbly appealed to your Majesty, my Lord, [to be entrusted with] a site for gold mining.⁵¹ In 1922 E.C. I received a written order from your Majesty stating that until the gold site had been surveyed, the [concessionary] agreement (*wul*) should be kept in my house, and nobody should touch it. Thereafter, in spite of my repeated visits to Addis Ababa, the promise that Your Majesty, my lord, gave me has not been fulfilled, and I stayed idle. But now I realize that, unless I myself handle the work together with my people, to pay tribute every year by purchasing gold at the current price will damage the people. Therefore, I enclose the letter Your Majesty wrote to me in 1922 E.C. with your own words regarding the gold area before the concessionaries took it. I am therefore still waiting for your promise to be fulfilled as I bow down in front of your Throne. Written on *T'eqemt* 14, 1926 E.C./October 24, 1933.

32

wa/mu/2/54-55

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I received the instructions and questionnaire that you sent on *T'eqemt* 3 [1926 E.C.]/October 13 [1933] requesting me to summon four or five very old men from Wallagga-Läqämt and ask them separately seven questions concerning the history [of the country], and send you [all] what they say, without distinguishing between good or bad, true or false.

In 1906 E.C./1913–1914, when my father *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was alive, seeking to write down the genealogy and history of the whole Galla [Oromo] people, he brought together elders from our country [region] and from

⁵¹ Only foreigners were given concessions for gold mining at this time. HM's request for being assigned a gold site to be owned and not just monitored or surveyed is based on the need to have one's own gold to pay the yearly tribute.

the neighbouring areas right and left, and he asked them the genealogy and history (*yätewuledachäwun tarik enna zärachäwun*) of all the people called Galla, [which he] wrote down in a register [*mäzgäb*].⁵² And now I have copied it down from this *mäzgäb* because it seems to me that [the response to] the seven questions that Your Majesty sent to me to be asked are all to be found [there].

Secondly, since he [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] collected from the same elders the history of Wallagga-Läqämt and had it written down in a separate *mäzgäb*, I also had it copied down [and] sent [it together with] the history of the life of my father up to his death [which I recorded] by asking [the country's] elders.⁵³

Thirdly, as I was instructed by the fifth question [paragraph] of your directive to find out who, among the former Amhara kings, were known in Wallagga, it seems to me, from what I saw [read] in the *mäzgäb* that my father had written down, that it was Emperor Téwodros. Moreover, as it was written in the history [of my father], Emperor Téwodros sent to my great-grandfather, Bäkäré Godana, a gift [consisting] of two spears decorated with silver-plate and one pair of trousers (*geldem*).

Fourthly, what my father obtained from old men and put in writing I copied and sent it to your Majesty. If this does not please your Majesty, I can look for more people and interview them according to your order and send it in writing. For this I will wait for Your reply.

Fifthly, concerning the Galla genealogy which I copied from my father's record,⁵⁴ some of it appears to me to be untrustworthy. But, when I asked old people from various *wäräda* they told me that what my father had recorded was held by the elders to be true, because at that time there was no sorting out between true and false. And whatever has been recorded has been truly uttered by the elders and I have sent it all as it was recorded. Your Majesty also told me that I should not make any changes but send you whatever old men told me. Thus, I am sending what they said according to Your Majesty's order. Let the Saviour of the World give you good health. I bow down repeatedly. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Sent on *T'eqemt* 24, 1926 E.C./November 3, 1933.

⁵² See Ch. 4 and GEC letter 222. In this letter, after depicting his motives to "preserve [history] for the next generation", GE asks *Ras Täfäri* for permission to print these documents. For more information about the process of producing these documents, see Triulzi, 2006, pp. 43–55.

⁵³ See Ch. 3.

⁵⁴ See Ch. 4.

33

wa/mu/2/57-58

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The oxen you ordered to be given to *Shäykh* Hojälé were rejected because the disease might kill them. These oxen, three hundred and forty-three in number, were bought from the Horro-Gudru highlands through *Näggadras* Täfära Negusé. Twenty-six of these oxen are in my hands. In total, they are three hundred and sixty-nine. If *Shäykh* Hojälé does not accept them as soon as they are brought from the highlands by *Näggadras* Täfära Negusé, they cannot adjust to our country. Moreover, as the cattle disease has already entered our country, is it not better if these oxen stayed at their original place rather than dying here? The reason why I appealed to you is that they would not adapt easily here. They lived previously in a highland area [swamp] called *ch'ommän* and were fed a type of grass called *ch'omo* in *galliñña* [i.e., Oromo language] from [this] *ch'ommän* area. (I am told) that all cattle, cow or horse that graze this *ch'omo* would not adjust easily to any other area. I received Your Majesty's order that these oxen should stay in my country and have directed them to this country. Later, as the cattle disease⁵⁵ spread in the country and killed the oxen, I am worried that these oxen will be ruined due to the disease. Therefore, the oxen would perish without being used for the intended purpose. Secondly, after reporting to Your Majesty that thirty oxen had died, I received Your Majesty's word (order) which says "If all the country's cattle are finished by the disease, what if our own also died?" So, after that, I left [the matter]. Thirdly, I was ordered by Your Majesty to go to Qélläm even though, when I was there, my servants (*ashkäroché*) told me that half the oxen had died failing to adjust to the country, and even though I reported to Your Majesty, my lord, through a written application by telegraph, you ordered me that the oxen should be brought to my place and I should retain them and keep them with me because the rainy season had already started and it would be damaging to send them to you in the muddy rainy season. I thought it would be better to send them when the land gets drier and the grass dries up. Now I am sending two hundred sixty-nine oxen out of three hundred sixty-nine. Sixty-six oxen remained here because they were seriously affected by the disease and they could not move and reach Addis Ababa. It is not known whether they would die or survive. If they survive, I will feed them and send them later on to you. I will also identify and inform you which oxen may eventually die. The oxen that died previously were thirty-one in number. May the Saviour of the

⁵⁵ In October 1906, GE reported to Addis Ababa that he had been monitoring cattle health at the gates of Naqamtee since the rinderpest epidemic that killed several heads of cattle by the close of the 19th century. Consequently, GE claimed no single case of cattle disease in his domain. No subsequent correspondences highlighted the prevalence in Naqamtee of any cattle disease, hence we are unclear on HM's mention of the cattle disease.

World give you health and I bow down to salute you ten times. Your servant and slave *Dä[jjach]* Ha[btä Maryam] Gä[brä] Eg[zi'abhér], *Tahsas* 25, 1926 E.C./January 3, 1934.

34

wa/mu/2/58-59

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. When my father *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was alive, the price for one *wäqét* of gold was below thirty *birr*.⁵⁶ As the price did not exceed thirty-three *birr*, he [my father] used to purchase gold to pay his tribute of one thousand *wäqét* which he paid with no discrepancy every year until his death. At that time the price of gold remained stable as Your Majesty might have heard. It was only during the reign of *Janhoy* Menilek II that the price of gold arose to fifty and sixty *birr* and, the local people being disturbed, through the benevolence of the King, my father was allowed to pay his tribute in money instead of gold which amounted to forty thousand *birr*. After that, as the price of gold fell and one *wäqét* was priced below thirty *birr*, he used to purchase gold and submit it in kind. Later on, after my father's death, I have paid my tribute by purchasing gold for a total amount of one thousand *wäqét* of gold in spite of its price rising from thirty-three to seventy and eighty *birr*. Although I wished to continue paying in this way and sought to pay tax in gold, I searched for it but could not find any up to the Arab country [Benishangul] and the Qélläm people. In spite of my searching I could not collect the needed quantity and I failed to pay my tribute all at once as I previously did and felt sorry about it and pledged to pay the full tribute as I got more gold. It is a pity that I could not pay my tribute collecting it from my own country. I am sorry for this unfortunate event and have not lost time in reporting this problem to Your Majesty, my lord. Indeed, there is gold in our country and in our rivers. However, among the local people who have been gathered to pay gold for this country, half of them could not find (enough) gold, and half of them were only able to collect three to four *mähalläq* (one fourth of a *wäqét*) after working from one to four and sometime five months. As this was insufficient to pay our tribute working from one to four and sometime five months, as my father did, I used to buy additional gold to pay my tribute. By the way, it is the local people known by the name of Sibu who reside in Näjjo (*Awraja*) who are proficient in the work of gold panning. The major clan called Léqa [Leeqaa] who are occupying

⁵⁶ See letters 31 and 37 in this exchange lamenting the lack of gold in the country in October 1934.

the largest portion of my country do not have the know-how of gold work.⁵⁷ This inability is attributed to the nonexistence of gold in their land.

Therefore, starting from the period of my father up to now, we have forced them [the Leeqaa people] to pay money for their tax and we bought gold to pay our tribute. But now, rather than suffering from an inflated gold price, we suffer from gold shortage and we will try to collect it from all areas as soon as it becomes available to us. Although this may take much time, I have never failed to pay whatever amount needs to be paid as a tribute to Your Majesty, my lord. Your Majesty can ask my neighbours left and right whether gold is available or not in my country, and whether I failed to buy as it was done traditionally. Before the proclamation (*awajj*) which prohibited gold trade in Addis Ababa, I used to buy gold in town but now, since it is prohibited by law, even if I wanted to borrow it, it is a wealth which cannot be found. Therefore, as I received your telegram on *Yäkkatit* 9 ordering me to pay all my tribute in gold, i.e., one thousand *wäqét* of gold for the year 1926 E.C./1933–1934, within twenty days through *Bäjerond* Haylé, since I became worried to secure all the one thousand *wäqét* as I did in old times, I beg Your Majesty to grant me a few days of extension so that I can work day and night to look for it. If you say that I should send whatever gold I have got, I will send it quickly. I hope to find the money in *Mäskäräm* and *T'eqemt* without forcing local people and within three months up to *Yäkkatit* I shall buy 1000 *wäqét* of gold. But, if gold is not found in the country, I hope Your Majesty would benevolently give me some time to buy the gold and submit it. Let the Saviour of the World give you health and I bow down ten times. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, *Yäkkatit* 19, 1927 E.C./February 26, 1935. These words have been written to *S'ähafe Te'zaz Wäldä Masqal*, *Qäññazmach Täklä Marqos*, *Bäjerond* Haylé, and *Fitawrari Mäshäsha*.

35

wa/mu/2/59-60

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Concerning the land that *Shäykh* Hojälé wants to take from my father's possessions across the Dabus [River], I never stopped informing Your Majesty, my lord, through oral and written

⁵⁷ The main labour force employed in various gold panning sites in Western Wallagga came from the Shanqella who were brought up to the highland and served as cheap labour and local peasants recruited either to serve for free or very low compensation. On this, see GE letters 17, 22, 32.

applications.⁵⁸ Last year, Your Majesty, my lord, gave me *Qäññazmach* Kassa Wuqaw as a judge for this case; although he [*Shäykh* Hojälé] knew that *Qäññazmach* Kassa is a true Christian and a judge of Your Majesty, my lord, he relied on the large amount of money he has and refused to demarcate the boundary according to your words. Even now, his child Babäkär [Abubaker] went to Addis Ababa to take a judge for this case. *Janhoy*, may God show you [the truth]. The boundary between the Galla and the Arab land is known to all Ethiopians ranging from high officials to soldier level and they [Hojälé's people] will not take away from me the land I have inherited and held from my forefathers by cheating or through money. Thus, do not provide a separate judge for the son of *Shäykh* Hojälé to be assigned to us for this case. When a real and fair judge of Your Majesty, my lord, is ordered for this case for both of us to be decided at Court, my servants *Fitawrari* Märsha and *Fitawrari* Olani together will receive the judge on my behalf and will accompany the judge you delegated and will come with him to me. I request this by prostrating myself in front of your throne. If the son of *Shäykh* Hojälé receives a separate judge on this case, the judge will say that he has been ordered (assigned) to *Shäykh* Hojälé, and he will quickly execute the proposal of *Shäykh* Hojälé. I, your poor servant, fear that I will remain with nothing. If the judge is ordered from the frontier country, I again request by prostrating myself in front of your throne to provide me with a written order of Your Majesty similar to that which will be issued for *Shäykh* Hojälé. Let the Saviour of the World give you health, I bow down ten times to salute you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on *Yäkkatit* 18, 1926 E.C./ February 25, 1934. The same words have been written to *Qäññazmach* Täklé Marqos.

36

wa/mu/2/60-62

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. The Holy Saviour gave us Your Majesty, as the light of Ethiopia, as stated in the Constitution you established, to avoid the yoke of the *gäbbar* of your country. In the past, the ruler of the state harassed your people of Ethiopia, and the servants, in the ancient system of rule, used to sit patiently under duress against their will, as they were detained being recognized only as *gäbbar* who were forced to go back to the former governor and were exposed to more punishment and harassment to the extent of having their flesh damaged [wounded] and even their lives. But today, ranging from the poor to the rich, from the child to the elderly, with your unlimited humility,

⁵⁸ See, e.g., letter 29 of September 1933 concerning the takeover of the town of Beggii by *Shäykh* Hojälé.

you provided freedom to all people in Ethiopia and gave them legal provisions. A *gäbbar* who lives on his farming labour, a trader who lives on trade and hates theft and all other sins that God and Your Majesty hate can live anywhere in Ethiopia, avoiding harassment and punishment in their region. And, believing in Your Majesty like God, they [can] cross over from one region to another and settle at a suitable place they can find by begging, long life and health to Your Majesty.

Moreover, as your people residing in the country of *Shäykh* Hojälé, the Arab *awraja*, have been exposed to oppression and misery for a long time, they have crossed over to British Sudan to escape such harsh rule. Because a person who faces a lot of misery at any time shall try to escape by moving even to a deep gorge, and this is not because the sandy country of the Sudan is better than evergreen Ethiopia. When we ask them why they crossed to a foreign country, they complain that they will not escape from *Shäykh* Hojälé's, as his hand is too long. They say that even if we escape to your country, you will send us back. While those people who have doubts in me left for the Sudan, the remaining people from six *qoro* territories [village administrative units] moved en masse into my country, four of whom were separated [from us] and settled in *Däjjazmach* Abdärahman [Abdirahman] and *Däjjazmach* Must'afa's country. The other two *qoro* settled in my territory. These people, as I stated in the first paragraph, declared that they were the slaves of Your Majesty, our lord, to whom they pay *asrat* on their farms and tax for their trade. I present my application after prostrating in front of your throne, that these people were not convicted of any offense as *Shäykh* Hojälé might have misinformed you.

Janhoy, may God show you [the truth]. These Arab people who entered my country relied on Your Majesty like God, indeed not on me. If I call these people convincingly false (it is not) for my own benefit, but for the knowledge and judgment of Your Majesty who can investigate everything and enquire into the situation of the Arab country with the civil servants of the Benishangul *awraja*. As for me, may God keep the rule of the throne of Haylä Sellasé forever, I do not think the *gäbbar* living in my country as your *madbét* are small. I shall become prosperous on my own [*gäbbar*], let alone counting on *Shäykh* Hojälé's Arabs [as a source of wealth] and thinking of them as a benefit to your government. And this, your God knows well. However, I am sorry for those Ethiopians who crossed over to a foreign country. I thought the [revenue to be generated from] these migrant *gäbbar* will be secured by Your Majesty and their citizenship will remain Ethiopian if they live in Ethiopia moving from one region to another. And I, as Your Majesty's slave who hears and obeys your

orders throughout my life, made them settle here for this reason and not for lack of *gäbbar* [in my country].⁵⁹

Secondly, in order to prevent these Arabs to cross over into my territory, *Shäykh* Hojälé stationed his son Almähadin as a guard who prohibited them crossing the border at gun point in the month of *Yäkkatit*. Although they prevent those who move from one part of Ethiopia to another and who like our government, I don't think they [can] prohibit those who are migrating abroad. Therefore, let alone the fact that *Shäykh* Hojälé used his guards for the benefit of outlaws, he prohibited lawful *gäbbar* to cross over towards the government of the [British] Sudan although no one really wants to go to the Sudan. The realities of this case shall be known unless I receive a judge who will count the large number of those who had previously taken refuge in the Sudan and that I made return to that part of Ethiopia. I only wrote this thinking that a person discloses his inner secrets to his Creator and Lord. I rather follow the order of your Majesty, my lord, and I shall perform all that your Majesty tells me to do. Let my servant Märsha present the rest of my appeal orally. Written on *Mäggabit* 4, 1926 E.C./March 13, 1934.

37

wa/mu/2/62-64

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. Several books of history testify that during ancient times our country Ethiopia was the leading country in knowledge and civilization from among the world nations. In order that our country, which was leading in civilization, will not fall behind and become the last one, the benevolent Saviour of the World visited it with eyes of redemption and gave His blessing empowerment to Your Majesty, King of Kings, as the true and enlightened leader. One of the major activities Your Majesty has performed for our beloved country is to re-establish the Bank which was operating under another government, which pretended to work for the benefit of the people but rather was a disease and which your Majesty named Bank of Ethiopia and made it operate in Ethiopia manned by Ethiopians.⁶⁰ It is known that this is an unforgettable accomplishment, and it will be remembered by today's generations and those of the future. Therefore, regarding the case of purchasing the Bank, I received Your Majesty's order that declares your spiritual proposal generated from the Holy Spirit in 1923 E.C., and at that moment I wished every

⁵⁹ The moving away of 'migrant' *gabbar* from one region to another appears to be a recurring theme in the unsettled conflict between the Naqamtee ruler and the leaders of the 'Arab country' (Beni Shangul).

⁶⁰ See above letter 25.

leaf and grass had turned to be money for this relief grant initiated to my delight. Let alone the case where the benefit is going to be mine and that of my country, it is my pleasure if I can execute anything that Your Majesty, my lord, thought even if the money is expended with no return and I will be lifelong obedient to your orders. In response to this order, I myself first sent fifty thousand *birr* and then enforced the local people to pay hundred thousand *birr* which I collected and remitted it to Addis. This took place at a time when gold became suddenly expensive and the price of one *wäqét*, which could be acquired previously with thirty-three *birr*, rose to seventy and eighty *birr*. Since then the price has risen and, until now, I bought gold and paid the tribute. I presented my appeal both orally and in writing to Your Majesty regarding the damage incurred on the poor of my country concerning the total amount of money expended from my country. As gold has become short all over the country, the poor suffered much, and my gold tribute became incomplete. Thus, in fulfilment of this discrepancy in my gold tribute for 1924 E.C., forty thousand *birr* were transferred from the money allotted for the Bank deposit, calculating the price of one *wäqét* of gold for seventy *birr*. The year before last, that is two years ago, Your Majesty with unlimited benevolence and as per the rule provided to the Ethiopian people allowed me, your slave, to receive a share of the money given by myself and my country and I promptly sent my servant *Fitawrari* Märsha. He then informed me that you decided to give one hundred thousand *birr* in the name of the country's shareholders, but forty thousand was reduced from my account and was added to the tribute, and you told him (Märsha) to accept the share of only ten thousand *birr*.

Janhoy, may God show you [the truth]. As the tribute is the discrepancy due to the gold price inflation, the fulfilment for the tribute shall be calculated from the hundred thousand drawn by the country. Thus, I am presenting my appeal bowing down in front of your throne to request that my share should not be denied violating public rule for what I have paid and what I have at my home for the relief of my country relying on Your Majesty, my lord, just like my God. I say, Let the Saviour of the World give you health, and I bow down ten times to salute you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, *Mäggabit* 17, 1926 E.C./March 26, 1934.

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. I received Your Majesty's word written me by your benevolence with first copy and ref. no. 148 regarding the customs gate

workers and the market⁶¹. Your Majesty, I have troubled you writing all these details in order to make my government bountiful with the energy I do possess today, and for my happiness and to show my lifelong loyalty, as well as the honesty and honour I derive from your benevolence. In order not to limit the case in short, at my absence and with the error of the workers, I consider it offending and shameful before Your Majesty, and God is my witness, that there is no other party that protects me, your slave, except Your Majesty under the rule of Christ. It was for this reason that I requested your unlimited benevolence to delay the revenue of one year collected by me. By asking you to prevent the coming to my country of an alien customs officer that, due to my lack of Your Majesty's benevolent eye, I believed would potentially dismantle the town and market developed by poll tax collected from poor merchants (*deha*) of various countries since the times of my grandfather and my father up until Your Majesty appointed me in lieu of my father, I did not mean there is a difference between Ethiopian people. Your Majesty, someone who is not a resident, who comes like an alien to the area does not care for the damages done to the poor; he would only care about his own benefit and fame. I present this application for the reason that my name should not be wrongly cited and make unnecessary name-calling and blackmailing regarding my administration. The third is that I have no other relative except Your Majesty, my lord and the Creator, hence people who pick up my name every day and night with an offence considered as if it was decided adversely and it would be a moral boost and psychological satisfaction for them when they hear that another man is appointed in my country.

Rather I fear that the appointee coming by order of Your Majesty shall report intangible actions that I never executed, giving unnecessary reasons and will let your Majesty, my lord, get annoyed with me and create uneasy feelings between us. As God knows, I would never secretly hurt Your Majesty. May God keep your government from generation to generation. I would like to be your first slave in physical character, and I am your trusted son. I do not doubt that your benevolence is sufficient worldwide like the sun that will never be short over me.

Now, I also accept the order that comes from Your Majesty with endless benevolence, bowing down in front of your throne, as there is nothing that exceeds the power of God and Government. Let the Saviour of the World (*Madhanä 'aläm*) give you health, and I bow down and salute you ten times.

⁶¹ This letter and the following one are in reaction to the appointment of *Näggadras* T'umä Lessan over Naaqmtē's gate workers and market and to the work of his secretary, *Ato* T'wafé who, against the advice of 'higher bodies', is accused of changing the 'ancient tax rules' in the region thus nullifying Naqamtee's financial autonomy.

Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Written on *Hamlé* 28, 1926 E.C./August 4, 1934.

39

wa/mu/2/68

Janhoy,

May God show you [the truth]. *Näggadras* T'umä Lessan was sent to my country by order of Your Majesty for the customs' and markets' work. When he came, he declared that the secretarial work was delegated to a man called *Ato* T'wafé. He handled the secretarial service and used it as a gate tax, which he should not do without the permission of the *näggadras*; by his own free will, he prohibited the workers from enforcing the taxation rules. He produced new rules instead and allowed them not to tax at the old gate en route, where several taxes used to be generated, rejecting the advice of the higher bodies like *Ato* Mäkonnen Habtä Wäld, and then *Näggadras* T'umä Lessan stated that the taxation should be made using the ancient tax rules of *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam until the new tax regulations are declared. Subsequently, he allowed about three hundred freights to pass through the tax gate one day without paying any tax out of his own free will.

After that, I will periodically sum up the total amount of freight he has allowed to go through the gate with no taxes paid and report to Your Majesty. He reduced the amount of taxes that should have been collected devising such a strategy [and therefore] has disrupted improperly the prosperity of my country. May God show you [the truth]. If it is for the secretarial service, and for the benevolence of Your Majesty, I have educated youngsters who can work more than or the equivalent of him [*Ato* T'wafé], and I request Your Majesty to permit me that these youths can work under the *näggadras* or otherwise replace him with another person for me. To run the work correctly, there are skilled youth and *Näggadras* T'umä Lessan should be asked if he could work on his own and let him give his suggestions to Your Majesty, my lord, so that he may know this. I present my application prostrating myself in front of your Majesty's throne to declare that he [*Ato* T'wafé] is not a suitable worker for the job, and that he should be replaced. Let the Saviour of the World (*Madhanä 'aläm*) give you health, and I bow down ten times to salute you. Your servant and slave, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. *T'eqemt* 27, 1927 E.C./November 6, 1935.

2.

Central Government to Naqamtee

2.1. – Correspondence (1887–1928 E.C./1895–1936)

The official correspondence exchanged between the Imperial Court and the Naqamtee Provincial Government is contained in a leather-bound ledger-book (mäzgäb) at the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum of Naqamtee here identified as wa/mu/3.¹ The mäzgäb contains 146 official letters exchanged from the early 1890s to 1928 E.C./1895-1936. All letters are reproduced here from their originals. Most of them carry the official seal of the ruler in charge. In addition, twenty-two other letters were copied from the private collection of Wäyzäro As'ädä Habtä Maryam, and one addressed to Abba Jifar was offered by Tesema Ta'a. No letter written before 1895 has been found in the Naqamtee collection. The letters are numbered in serial order at top left; numbers at top right correspond to the ledger identification number at WEM. The original letters have been pasted each on a different page of the mäzgäb without chronological order. Letters not coming from the Museum mäzgäb are referred to according to the people who shared them, respectively AHM for Wäyzäro As'ädä Habtä Maryam and TT for Tesema Ta'a. The imperial seals are usually placed at the top of official letters, while the seals of junior officials no matter their rank, including that of Haylä Sellasé until he was crowned Emperor, are placed at the bottom. All seals are put in square brackets. The owner of the seal is specified only when the name does not appear in the body of the letter. Letters are reproduced in chronological order.

The original English translation of AHM correspondence was first provided by Hussein Ahmed of HSIU History Department back in the early 1970s. Later translations and new edits were offered in time by Tesema Ta'a and Etana H. Dinka.

¹ In WDOCS, the letter exchange of mäzgäb 3 was put at the beginning of the correspondence exchange. It has been returned here to its initial registration order.

1²

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I received the forty *wäqét* of gold you sent [me] as tribute.³ But I have sent [written] to you the other day swearing and saying that, because I was in difficulty, I gave my arm bracelet to a smith and had it made [melt]. And now, let the remaining [gold tribute] follow quickly and come to me. Also, the gold handle that came is found to be a league (mixed with iron) and worthless. And although I told you to stop [bringing] gold lumps and bring me rings instead, you started bringing them and moulded into rings here. Is this good? Now also I have sent back to you the gold [found to be] of poor quality and worthless. If you bring such kind of gold next time, it will not be [received]. Check it by melting it and bring the good one. Written on the 2nd day of *P'agumé* 1887 E.C., the Year of Mercy/8 September 1895, in the town of Addis Ababa.

2⁴

TT

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach Abba Jifar, how have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Up to now, I made you pay tribute from your country and received it from you.⁵ Now that all the country beyond yours is also in our hands, from now onwards I shall give you guns (*näft'*) and will regard you like *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis*, *Däjjazmach* Täsämma, and *Däjjazmach* Bäshah and no longer will treat you like a Galla.⁶ But today I need money. In your country, everyone is a merchant and I am sure that you can easily borrow from them twenty thousand *birr*. If not, borrow ten thousand *birr* from any rich man. If even this is not possible, just bring five thousand or three thousand *birr* in person. You must

² Corresponding to letter 2 in WDOCS, p. 1.

³ This is the first of several letters in CGC (letters 1, 20, 22, 33, 41, 52) reminding the Naqamtee rulers that payment of tribute in gold was essential for western Wallagga to maintain its special status of *madbét* (lit. "kitchen") for the immediate needs of the Royal Palace which involved a significant degree of local autonomy for the Naqamtee rulers. See Triulzi, 1986, pp. 55–59.

⁴ Corresponding to letter 1 in WDOCS, p.1.

⁵ The offer of local autonomy or *madbét* status was earlier offered to Jimma when it peacefully submitted to Menilek's empire in 1882. For more information regarding Jimma's relationship with the central government from the 1880s to the 1920s, see Guluma Gameda, 1996, pp. 152–59.

⁶ The term 'Galla' is commonly used in the correspondence in lieu of Oromo, often in the accented derogatory meaning of the time.

help me at a time of problem and need, otherwise, how can you possibly be of use to me? Make sure you do not forget the words I am sending you [in this letter]. This letter I sent you with a seal, is your witness. You shall keep it carefully so that it does not get lost. You asked me when you should come. You should come as soon as possible after collecting the sum of money that you will carry with you. Otherwise, come together with *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis* when he comes [here]. Written on *Nähasé* 11, 1887 E.C./17 August 1895, in the city of Addis Ababa.

3

wa/mu/3/107

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I read [in your letter] that you intend to give *Musé Kāmbäl* [Monsieur Comboul] four sheep per month. This will be enough for him, but you must not stop doing so regularly. Written on *Mäskärām* 4, 1890 E.C./15 September 1897 in the town of Addis Ababa.

4

wa/mu/3/207

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning *Fitawrari* Gullélat who lives at Dul, send three hundred *dawulla*⁷ of grain quickly to him, having loaded it [on pack animals], as far as the country of *Shäykh* Hojälé. When it reaches there, *Shäykh* Hojälé will have it transported so as to reach *Fitawrari* Gullélat.⁸ Written on the 23rd of *Säné* 1891 E.C./1 July 1899 in the city of Addis Ababa.

5

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks

⁷ One *dawulla* is equivalent to 167 kilograms.

⁸ *Fitawrari* Gullelat, 'who lives at Dul', appeared to oversee the region on behalf of *Ras* Mäkonnen to whom *Shäykh* Hojälé had submitted the year before.

be to God, am well. Since I have told *you* to put a person at Billo⁹ and have it guarded so that traders who go out from or come into your territory will not go without paying customs duty at Billo, let him put a person at the gate of your town (*kätäma*). Do not stop [refuse] him. Written on *Hamlé* 2, 1891 E.C./10 July 1899 in Addis Ababa.

6

wa/mu/3/19

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The people called Juqa Bäkä and Gämmäda Tobbo, who are Galla [Oromo] from Bonayya claim that seven of them have been wrongly imprisoned for a whole year. In fact, two of the fellow inmates died while still in prison. They were imprisoned by the Abba Qoro named Ligdi Säfi because he had accused them of having evil-eye (*buda*) and of being responsible for the death of his son. From among the accused, five of them were released after a year. But they feel they have wrongly been persecuted and have been denied justice. So, send them to me with their opponent and I shall investigate the matter. Written in the month of *Hedar* 1892 E.C./November 1899 in the town of Addis Ababa.

7

wa/mu/3/17

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The messenger of the Arabs going to the *Aräb agär*¹⁰ must not be someone whom we do not know and who does not bear *Däjjach* Dämess[äw]'s sealed [letter]. Have the [customs] gates well-guarded in order to prevent such a person from leaving. However, anyone

⁹ Billo was the main customs gate at the border of GE's territory in the direction of Addis Ababa. The gate signaled the end of GE's right of taxation outside his own area. *Näggadras* Yeggäzu was sent to check tax revenues and illegal passing of goods and peoples through the Billo gate. On the "matter of gates," see GEC letters 22, 38, 41, and 53.

¹⁰ *Aräb agär* is the common name used in the Correspondence to refer to the region of Beni Shangul. At this time the region was under the direct control of *Däjjach* (later *Ras*) Dämessaw, as the Beni Shangul Chiefs (respectively Abdurrahman Khojali [Tor el Guri], Mähämmäd Mahmud, and Khojali [Hojälé] al-Hassan) were kept in Addis Ababa, allegedly for consultation on the international border then under discussion with the British-ruled Sudan Government. See Triulzi, 1981, pp. 167–79.

coming into the country must not be prevented [from entering]. Written on the 28th of *Miyazya* 1892 E.C./8 May 1900 in the city of Addis Ababa.

8

wa/mu/3/38

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I am told that the houses of *Musé* Kāmbul [Monsieur Comboul] are leaking and all the goods are going to be spoiled. Now, before the rainy season begins, quickly see to it that the roof is well covered and repaired. Written on *Genbot* 8, 1893 E.C./18 May 1901 in the town of Addis Abāba.

9

wa/mu/3/167

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. You said that *Näggadras* Yeggäzu should not interfere with [your] right of [collecting] customs duties at markets.¹¹ The taxes are always and ever yours. However, if a person is found having passed secretly through the gates without paying the tax, I have told him [Yeggäzu] to place men to guard [protect the gates]. I have told him not to interfere in taxes or customs duties. His jurisdiction over men [traders] who pass the gates without paying the duties depends on your justice. This is not something that should be difficult for you. Written on the 26th of *Genbot* 1893 E.C./15 June 1901 in the town of Addis Alām.

10

wa/mu/3/104

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning gold, I have ordered that a tithe [tax] should be imposed; therefore, have [this regulation] observed strictly in your territory and have the taxes—one out of ten—be levied and collected.

¹¹ The right to collect customs and tax revenues within his own domain is strongly defended by GE in the Correspondence but will be gradually eroded by the Central Government following the 1910 land apportionment. See Tesema Ta'a, 1984. The multiplicity of customs posts (*kēlla*) scattered throughout the country was equally lamented by state officials and reforming intellectuals of the 1920s. See Bahru Zewde, 2002a, p. 119 and GEC.

Written on the 4th of *Nähasé* 1893 E.C./12 August 1901 in the town of Addis Aläm.

11

wa/mu/3/99

[Seal of Emperor Menilek]

To anyone who buys [or] sells mules, horses, donkeys, and horned animals in towns and the countryside. One who buys [one of the above] in towns should go to the Customs Office; the one buying in the countryside should go to the market, and have the names of the purchaser, the seller as well as the intermediate agent recorded in a register-book [*mäzgäb*], give the commission and [then] exchange [buy or sell]. In default of which, if a person wants to buy or sell in a village through witnesses or a [local] judge and exchanges [in this manner], and he is brought to me, I will leave the mule [or whatever has been bought or sold] as a permanent possession to the one who brings [the accused]. Also, if a person, after buying a mule through a village judge, not in the market or at the Customs Office, finds the mule claimed by an accuser, he will have to leave the horse [mule] to the accused if the register-book of the Customs Office in the town where he has bought or that of the market in the countryside testifies against him. He will be punished [having been charged] of robbery. If he says that he could win [his case] by producing a judge as a witness, it will not be considered for him. It is the register-book that is the proof of all this. Written on the 8th of *Mäskäräm* 1893 E.C./20 September 1900 in the city of Addis Ababa.

12

wa/mu/3/61

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. *Musé* Kombol [Monsieur Comboul] and his men who will extract gold have arrived and I have sent them. As for the machine they brought for extracting gold, it is on its way after I had issued a free pass paper [so that there would not be obstruction on the way]. I have already written to you about the construction of the house. Henceforth, let them start doing their work promptly as soon as they arrive. Written on the 18th of *Mäggabit* 1894 E.C./29 March 1902 in the town of Addis Aläm.

13

wa/mu/3/40

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your special gift (*mättaya*)¹² of ten *wäqét* of gold has reached me. Let God reward you. You brought down those Shanqella from their dwelling caves in the cliffs and settled them on the plains to live on farming.¹³ What you have done is commendable. This way, the whole country will grow prosperous. Written on *Mäggabit* 20, 1894 E.C./31 March 1902 in the town of Addis Aläm.

14

wa/mu/3/93

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. From the money that you received from the peasants for [the tax collected for] sheep and goats give *Musé* Kāmbol [Monsieur Comboul] one hundred *birr*. Written on *Hamlé* 28, 1894 E.C./6 August 1902 in the town of Addis Aläm.

15

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How are you? I, thanks be to God, am well. I received the letter you sent me. You have done well in telling the Arabs [i.e., the Beni Shangul chiefs] that they should not move around saying that it is a campaign and that they should settle down quietly. Now also, until the case of the boundary is settled, be strong, trustworthy, and guard [the country] properly.¹⁴ About the matter of the boundary also, I will see the map

¹² The sending of gifts (*mättaya*) on special occasions as a request for benevolence or protection is a political practice which must be kept separate from the yearly tributes due to the government. Further examples can be found in letters 13, 76, 110, 111, 113, 129.

¹³ There are several references in the Correspondence of 'Shanqella' being dislodged from the well-watered highland hills and brought down to the hot plains south of Daabus to work in the fields and the gold mines. The Oromo considered Nilo-Saharan people as *diina*, enemies, to be fought or enslaved. See GEC and Tesema Ta'a, 1984, p. 182.

¹⁴ Between 1898 and 1908, Menilek negotiated his empire's external boundaries with the British-ruled Sudan Government, while internal boundaries within western Wallagga were internally renegotiated by local rulers. See Triulzi, 1981, pp. 167-79.

and send it to you in fifteen days' time. About what you told me, that *Shäykh* Hojlälé is building a house, it is good as it is going to be on our side after the border is demarcated. Even if it is going to be on the other side also, we will do it after the matter is known. So, it is good, let it wait. About what you told me, that the person who demarcated the border of *Shäykh* Hojlälé and *Däjjach* Joté asked you to pay him for his demarcation (*dañña égér*), do not pay him now. Let it wait. Alternatively, we will see the case when he comes and tells me about it. Written in the town of Addis Aläm on *Mäskäräm* 30, 1895 E.C./12 October 1902.

16

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. With the aim of making a carriage (*mānkorakur*) to transport wood and other items from Addis Aläm to Addis Ababa, we have begun building the road¹⁵. For this work I have ordered the people of every region. Since 4,100 cubits [*kend*] was found to be your share of the work, collect your men, the soldiers, and countrymen [*balagär*] without leaving any one behind. Bring them here when the men of *Däjjach* Dämessāw start from there and come here along with them. Since all your men will not come unless you come, it is better if you bring them yourself and after they reach here, you will go back to your work soon. Written in the town of Addis Aläm on *T'eqemt* 17, 1895 E.C./29 October 1902.

17¹⁶

wa/mu/3/97

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. I wrote you not long ago to come with your men for work. Now, however, do not come

¹⁵ Road-building and, more generally, transport were among the first aims of the expanding Ethiopian empire. Contributions from the different regions, including the newly-incorporated ones, helped build the political ethos of the empire in addition to drawing the resources of the hinterlands into the economic and administrative center. On the Addis Aläm-Addis Ababa road see letter 124. On the Djibouti – Addis Ababa railway, see GEC letter 57. The bridge over the Dhedhessa River, built under the supervision of GE, was also a part of this project. See letters 95 and 106.

¹⁶ Corresponding to letter 18 in WDOCS, p. 8.

yourself; send your men for work with an official. Let the honey stay [there] for the moment. You will send it later to me. You said the Shanqella coming to work might be held up at the [customs] gates; but who would do this to them as they are coming for work, as campaigners (*ende zämach*)? No one will do that [to them]. Written on the 11th of *Hedar* 1895 E.C./22 November 1902 in the town of Addis Aläm.

18¹⁷

wa/mu/3/42

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you wrote me concerning your wish to send oxen and till [the land] in the country of the Arabs has reached me. Your plan is good. Have one hundred pairs of oxen yoked [to till the land] in the territory of *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman, a hundred pairs of oxen in Mähämmäd's territory, and a hundred in Hojälé's territory. We will increase the number in the course of our discussion. As for your request to go to Näjjo, you will do so when you return, having brought the men here for work. Written on the 22nd of *Hamlé* 1895 E.C./31 July 1903 in the town of Addis Aläm.

19

wa/mu/3/105b

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning the grain *asrat* [tithe],¹⁸ you used to give *Däjjach* Dämessäw one hundred dollars in *Säné* [June]. However, since he is now in [financial] difficulty give [him the same amount] when you get this letter. Later on, you will give him in *Säné* as in former times. Written on the 3rd of *Mäggabit* 1895 E.C./14 March 1903 in the town of Gännät.

20

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I,

¹⁷ Corresponding to letter 17 in WDOCS, *ibid*.

¹⁸ On the collection of the tithe (*asrat*) in GE country following the land apportionment act, see Tesema Ta'a, 1983, pp. 182–83.

thanks be to God, am well. I have received the gold you sent for the tax of the year of Yohannes. But the gold is not as good as the previous one.¹⁹ Therefore, from these one thousand *wäqét* [gold rings] we have taken twenty-two *wäqét* as a balance for its poor quality. Now also, since twenty-two *wäqét* of gold is to be taken from the tribute of the year of Yohannes, let it be brought. From now on, let the gold not be of bad [quality] as the present one, and let the good one be chosen and be brought. Written in Addis Ababa on *Nähasé* 10, 1897 E.C./18 October 1903.

21

wa/mu/3/67

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. And now *Asallafi* Ayyälä told me about everything in person. As for the matter concerning the Arabs about which you had written to me, discuss it there with *Däjjach* Dämessäw. Written on the 23th of *Hamlé*, 1895 E.C./1 August 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

22

wa/mu/3/102

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The three hundred *wäqét* [of gold] that you bought and sent to me as well as the twenty *wäqét* [which you sent] as a gift have reached me. May God compensate you for me. We have also received the one thousand and eight hundred *birr* which you sent for [in place of] honey. Written on the 23rd of *Hamlé* 1895 E.C./1 August 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

¹⁹ This is the first reference in the CGC of the yearly tribute of 1,000 gold rings (*wäqét*) the Central Government expected from its Naqamtee *madbét*. The earlier tribute was five hundred. The gold had to be of good quality, otherwise it was rejected. See above letter 1. For the doubling of tribute, see GEC letters 86 and 128.

23

wa/mu/3/28

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II. Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I was very glad when I heard that gold was discovered in the region called Säyyo.²⁰ I have told *Däjjach* Dämess[äw] to look for men who can sift the gold and continue with the work; hence, collect all those in your country who can do the sifting and get them to sift [the gold] for me. I have written to *Däjjach* Dämessäw to give five *birr* to a person who has sifted one *wäqét*. Since you are going to receive this [cash needed to pay the workers] from him, sift a thousand ounces of gold for me. I have likewise written to *Däjjach* Joté. If *Däjjach* Dämessäw is not ready there [or does not set out], do not set out without doing what I have ordered you to. I say this not only for the sake of the money but because I collect gold in other countries in the form of taxation. [Now] instead of giving [the mining concession in Säyyo] to foreigners, I want to appoint my own men [to oversee the work] and own it [the gold] for myself. Written on the 15th of *Nähasé* 1895 E.C./25 August 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

24

wa/mu/3/105

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you spent the *kerämt* [rainy season]? I, thanks be to God, am well. *Däjjach* Joté wrote me saying, “*Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has given me a judge concerning the order you gave me so that the officials (*shumoch*) of *Shäykh* Hojälé would return to me [the property] that they robbed from me. But they returned some and refused to give me the rest”. Hence, have it [his property] restored to him. Written on the 12th of *Mäskäräm* 1896 E.C./25 September 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

²⁰ The discovery of gold at Lalo Qilé (Laaloo-Qilee) in the region of Sayyoo brought new prospectors and workmen to the region ruled by *Däjjach* Jootee under the governorship of *Ras* Damessaw. On gold works in the area see letters 27, 31, 35. In addition to Laaloo Qilee in Leeqaa Qellem, there were mines in Wallagga at Najjoo, Yuubdoo and Kattaa. See MS Addis Ababa, IES 1888 [ATFN LN-S-3]. Interview with Najjoo Elders, 1972.

25

wa/mu/3/34

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek, II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since I have been told that Leqa Abba Diso, Dinigadé, Danu Käna [and] Gälan Yadäta are engaged in improper religious teachings, send them to me immediately. Written on the 5th of *T'eqemt* 1896 E.C./18 October 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

26

wa/mu/3/90

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since the road construction we started last year requires the covering of the road with pebbles (*korät*), collect as many men as necessary to do the work by turns and send them together with an able official (*shum*). Written on the 7th of *T'eqemt* 1896 E.C./20 October 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

27

wa/mu/3/84

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. Concerning your request to bring a machine for [extracting] the gold discovered in Säyyo, we will have it brought, although it will take some time. Concerning the Arabs about whom you had written me, I wrote you about everything [dealing with them] not long ago, although [the letter] may not have reached you. Written on the 2nd of *Tahsas* 1896 E.C./14 December 1903 in the city of Addis Ababa.

28

wa/mu/3/81

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The money of the Arabs like *Shäykh* Hojälé which you have sent has finally reached here. It amounts to six hundred and eight *birr*, two big and eight small pieces of ivory, five mares (*bazra*), and one stallion (*dängula*). Written on the 10th of *Miyazya* 1896 E.C./ 20 April 1904 in the city of Addis Ababa.

29

wa/mu/3/6

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter concerning the arrest of Ibrahim Mähämmäd has reached me. It is good that he was arrested. I have read the letter that the English Governor sent you and which you forwarded to me. [The letter] he wrote to you mentions the various sites where Ibrahim Mähämmäd's wealth is to be found. [The letter] also intends to give counsel concerning [issues of] trade in the country. Since the English and we are presently on good terms, send them well-composed and friendly letters in reply to theirs so that our friendship will grow. The reason for his [the governor's] request that a person be sent to him to Dul may have been because of this [his desire to establish friendly relations]; therefore, send a responsible man to Dul on the day that he [governor] has fixed and have him hold talks with him. If they want to sign an agreement, it will not be done without me [my approval] and you have to report the matter to me. As for other minor affairs, you can execute them yourself thereby corresponding in a friendly manner, an act that cannot be considered as ignominious. I am sending herewith the letter that the Englishman sent back to you. Written in the town of Gännät on the 15th of *Mäggabit*, 1896 Year of Mercy E.C./26 March 1904.

30

wa/mu/3/83

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. It is said that a sorcerer called Doti died having refused to eat food because of the matter concerning *Däjjach* Dämessäw. And now, in order to reach an agreement with his [Doti's] sons, you become the arbiter and having collected capable men as witnesses, help them [the sons] get whatever amount of money they ask for and have both parties declare a solemn reconciliation immediately. Write down the names of the witnesses [present] during the reconciliation and, having put your seal on it, send the agreement to me promptly. Written on the 4th of *Tahsas* 1897 E.C./15 December 1904 in the city of Addis Ababa.

31

wa/mu/3/85

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. You said that because the work [extraction] of gold at Lalo Qilé was done without a machine, the men suffered in vain. Accordingly, I will have the machine brought promptly. What is the amount of gold obtained there up to now? Write me a reply to this [question]. Written on the 6th of *Tahsas* 1897 E.C./17 December 1904 in the city of Addis Ababa.

32

wa/mu/3/62

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since I have run short of household servants,²¹ find [get] about thirty of them for me. Written on the 2nd of *Miyazya* 1897 E.C./12 April 1905.

33²²

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received one thousand *wäqét* of gold you sent me for the new year (*Zämänä* Yohannes). But the quality is not as good as [the one] you sent me before. So, as a compensation, you should send us another twelve *wäqét* of gold of the best quality. Thus, we consider that from the new year's tax, that is one thousand *wäqét*, it still remains [to be paid] twelve *wäqét* gold. It should not be of bad quality as you have sent us now. Send us the best possible quality. Addis Ababa, *Nähasé* 10, 1897 E.C./18 August 1905.

²¹ 'Household servants' is a reference to enslaved persons who were in demand at the Ethiopian court and wealthy families through the early 1920s, despite international criticisms and the diplomatic difficulties it posed. "Slavery" was used as a pretext for the Italian Fascist aggression of the 1930s. For further evidence, see letters 36, 93, 100, 122. See also GEC letter 156.

²² Corresponding to letter 34 in WDOCS, p. 13.

34²³

wa/mu/3/98

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. It is said that *Näggadras* T'änna Gashaw's men²⁴, who are guarding [preventing] the contraband merchants [from] illegally passing through markets and [customs] gates located in your territory, are using the money they get by waiting for and arresting [the said merchants] to buy their provisions. If it [the money] is not collected on our behalf, what gain could there be if they use it [to their own advantage]? And now, provide them with provisions (on our behalf) so that the money will be saved for us. Give [enough] grains for seven men every month. Written on the 20th of *Nähasé* 1897 E.C./28 August 1905 in the city of Addis Ababa.

35

wa/mu/3/108

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have seen the letter you have sent from *Näjjjo* concerning the gold business [at] Lalo Qilé. And now you have to deliver to *Däjjach* Dämess[äw] there the gold dust [impure gold] which you have already extracted. Inform me of the amount you deliver. As for the countrymen who went out for work in the gold [area], however, make them leave and return to their places, as you have said. We will do the work some other time. I have written the same thing to *Däjjach* Dämess[äw]. Written on the 14th of *Nähasé*, 1897 E.C./22 August 1905 in the city of Addis Ababa.

36

wa/mu/3/53

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The thirty house-servants [who hold torches] that you sent me have reached me. May God compensate you on my behalf. However, concerning an Arab called *Abba* Mäch'afa whom you said

²³ Corresponding to letter 33 in WDOCS, *ibid*.

²⁴ *Näggadras* T'änna Gashaw takes over from *Näggadras* Yeggäzu as the central government overseer of tax revenues in the region. GE laments his conduct from the very beginning. See GEC, letters 7 and 97.

entered the English territory after killing an elephant, the English have not mentioned the matter to me before. If they tell me about it, I will write to you about everything. Written on the 24th of *Nähasé*, 1897 E.C./1 September 1905 in the city of Addis Ababa.

37

wa/mu/3/100

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. A certain Shifāraw, the servant of *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis*, has rebelled in the Galla [Oromo] country. He is, I am told, now preparing to cross over to Gojjam. You should give particular attention to the area following the banks of the Abbay [Blue Nile] to the border of the Shanqella country. You must arrest this man. If he escapes, he is likely to be dangerous, as I was informed he has over fifty guns [i.e., armed men] with him. Written on *T'eqemt* 18, 1898 E.C./30 October 1905 in the town of Addis Alām.

38

wa/mu/3/64

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The men of Dägoro, Gebi Gada and Bäsära, five of them altogether, pleaded with me saying that a *qoro* called Ayyäntu Jelo was keeping for himself half the tax (*geber*) he collected from them and, by arresting and releasing them, he had them pay what they did not use to do before; they also said that when they informed *Däjjazmach* [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] they failed [to get a solution]; therefore, call your officials now and investigate their case. Otherwise, send them together with their enemy [the accused]. Why does he [the accused] make the people (*deha*)²⁵ pay tax (*geber*) while they are paying individually? Written on the 4th of *Tahsas*, 1898 E.C./16 December 1905 in the town of Ent'ot'o.

²⁵ Lit. 'poor'. *Deha* was a common term the Ethiopian emperors and the Naqamtee rulers used in reference to their subject people. See GEC letter 1 and note.

39

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since our guests are becoming too many and honey is not available, I have ordered all the notables (*mäkwannent*) in the peripheral regions to pay honey every year. But when I asked, I was told that you had not brought it yet. How [why] was it not brought [to me] up to now? Now also, since I have said that you should pay six hundred [*birr*] every year, pay this [amount] soon. From now on also, since this is your yearly tax, think about it and bring it every year. Written in Addis Ababa on *T'err* 10, 1898 E.C./20 January 1906.

40

wa/mu/3/64

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have made the concession of tobacco and cigarette paper my own. Except those whom I have ordered [authorized], no one should henceforth buy or sell tobacco and cigarette paper in the villages as in former times. I am now sending you the original paper on which we made the proclamation here. Announce this same proclamation and have [the selling/buying of tobacco and cigarette paper] be prohibited. However, men who [are authorized] to sell tobacco near the markets are coming to those who buy and smoke it, so that the buyer and seller will have no difficulty. Let all those who grow tobacco and trade in it sell it [their produce] to them. Let anyone found selling tobacco secretly be caught and pay the fines in accordance with the proclamation and his tobacco be confiscated. Also, to those who come to sell the tobacco they [legally] bought, give them places on which to build [temporary] houses at the edge of the marketplaces, so that they will not lack places where they can sell their tobacco and stay. Written on the 4th of *Yäkkatit* 1898 E.C./13 February 1906 in Addis Ababa.

41

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received one thousand *wäqét* of gold you sent as tribute and the one hundred *wäqét* of gold you sent as a present. Thank you.

How is your illness? Do you feel better now? Now also, let God make it light [easy] for you. *Mäggabit* 17, 1898 E.C./28 March 1906. Written at Gêdo Säfär.

42

wa/mu/3/79

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning the levying of cattle, I have said, as in former times, that it should be levied in each region. You [should] have one head levied out of forty heads of cattle, whether it is a castrated ox or fattened cows.²⁶ It should be one [head] free of disease. When levying, have the one or two heads that a person possesses be counted together with the ones another person has, so that there would be forty heads, and levy the one head from the person who owns more heads of cattle. The owner of a head or two of cattle should pay his share [in proportion]; let not a head be levied on him. A calf that is not yet one year old should not be counted. Also, concerning sheep and goats, since I have said that one *birr* should be raised [from the owner of] ten sheep and [or] goats, do collect the same amount. Inform us in a letter about the cattle and the money you collected, and when we order them [cattle/money] to be brought here, [make sure] they will be brought. Written on the 13th of *Nähasé* 1898 E.C./21 August 1906 in the city of Addis Ababa.

43

wa/mu/3/73

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning your wish to supervise as you do in Näjjo the Englishmen who are extracting gold, it is good if they have really begun to extract gold. Supervise and have each day's produce weighed and recorded. They shall not refuse when you ask them to be supervised. Written on the 5th of *P'agumé* 1898 E.C./12 September 1906 in the city of Addis Ababa.

²⁶ The levying of cattle (one out of four) and the tithe on land (*asrat*) were two of the most important measures for tax revenues from eastern Wallagga. For the buying and selling of livestock, see letter 11. See GEC letters 16, 34, 89, 91, 99, and 151.

44

wa/mu/3/65

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning the regulations of tobacco and cigarettes, about which you have written to me, we will send you [the regulation] through a letter. Written on the 29th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./11 October 1906 in the city of Addis Ababa.

45

wa/mu/3/92

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Those Englishmen who prospect for gold in the Dabus [area], you say, have asked you to lend them mules, as they would like to go to their own country and return later. You also say that you have lent them four mules for their journey. I have seen the letter they wrote to you. There is no problem whatsoever, let them go, but place guards at our own gold site for tight security. Written on *Mäskäräm* 29, 1899 E.C./11 October 1906 in Addis Ababa.

46

wa/mu/3/59

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since I have written to *Balambaras* Bäqqälä to come with his [baggage] caravan, give him your seal so that his caravan may not be held up in the various (customs) gates. Written on the 30th of *Mäskäräm* 1899 E.C./12 October 1906 in the city of Addis Ababa.

47

wa/mu/3/49

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I saw the amount of money [i.e., the price] of the cattle, sheep and goats [in the letter] that you sent me. I told you to buy the gold because I thought it would be cheaper [in your province]. If you now say that an ounce costs thirty *birr*, do not buy the gold; have the money

sent [to me] instead. If, however, you can buy an ounce for twenty-seven *birr*, do so. If it costs more than that, do not. Written on the 10th of *Miyazya*, 1899 E.C./20 April 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

48

wa/mu/3/66

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The man called Asäné has said that, having agreed with the Arabs to obtain ivory for lending them silver and gold, they refused to give him [the ivory] which they had agreed, and they told him instead to take back his original money. Therefore, help him get whatever has been agreed upon. Moreover, he has said that an Arab called Yäsuf has refused to give him his money back; help him to obtain that too. If he [Yäsuf] refuses, send him together [with Asäné] to me. Written on the 16th of *Miyazya*, 1899 E.C./26 April 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

49

wa/mu/3/115

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I saw the letter you have sent concerning the number of *Shäykh* Hojälé's men who entered the territory of the Arabs. I showed the letter you sent to me to the Englishmen who are here, and they have written to their government. Written on the 22nd of *Miyazya* 1899 E.C./27 May 1907 in Addis Ababa.

50

wa/mu/3/60

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you sent me, having received it from *Musé* Kāmbol [Comboul], has reached here. However, he [Comboul] wrote me that he did not have enough workers. Since he wrote to me that the workers I sent [to work] with him said that they went there to give instructions, not to work, force them [the ones I sent from here] to do it. Moreover, provide him with as many labourers, smiths and other workers as he needs, so that he will do his work quickly. In order that the men you give him to work can become skilful,

have the ones that you give him in a group to stay on the work; do not change [them] every day (to his disadvantage). I would have preferred that you go and supervise the work yourself had it not been for your illness. Written on the 23rd of *Säné*, 1899 E.C./2 July 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

51

wa/mu/3/71

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. You may recall that Danno had given his sister in marriage to Nägäri. But, soon after, the husband claimed that he had found his newly married wife sleeping with another man. But *Afä Negus* Nässibu, the Chief Justice, tells me the issue has [already] been settled by him in favour of Danno. Hence, Danno should not pay cattle as the guilty party. However, you must count the cattle of Nägäri and his father, make him produce two guarantors, put them under oath and send them both to me on the day of Abbo²⁷ in *Mäskäräm* [i.e., *Mäskäräm* 5]. Written on *Säné* 29, 1899 E.C./8 July 1907 in the town of Addis Ababa.

52

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received one thousand *wäqét* of gold in tax from your region and six hundred *wäqét* from the Arab region.²⁸ But what you told me, the fear that people will go to the other side of the border if you force them to pay the tax in full, and that part of the region was left to the other side because of the boundary demarcation, is true. It must be done slowly so that the people who went there earlier will come back. Otherwise, as you said, it is no

²⁷ According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) tradition, the fifth of every month is dedicated to Abbo, i.e., *Abuna* Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus.

²⁸ In 1907, the Beni Shangul chiefs *Shäykh* Hojälé, *Däjjach* Abdurrahman and *Fitawrari* Mähammäd were kept in Addis Ababa in the period following their surrender to *Ras* Mäkonnen in 1898. They remained in the city until 1908, even after negotiations over the borderlands between Sudan and Ethiopia were concluded in 1902. See Triulzi, 1981, pp. 178–79. During this period the region was entrusted to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, who paid an additional annual tribute of 600 *wäqét* of gold to the central government. On *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's complaint about the tribute he paid on Beni Shangul, see GEC letters 23, 45, and 178.

good to force people to pay their taxes in full. Written in Addis Ababa on *Nähasé* 1, 1899 E.C./9 August 1907.

53

wa/mu/3/103

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have seen the letter you sent me concerning the country called Koyna.²⁹ You said that I should inform you [of what is to be done] after looking at the map so to know the boundary, whether there is [some territory] left there [in Koyna] or there is some on our side. I will do so, having looked at the map when it is convenient [for me]. Written on the 20th of *Nähasé*, 1899 E.C./28 August 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

54

wa/mu/3/69

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have seen the letter you sent (me). You wrote about the return of the money the Arabs had borrowed from Hasān, an affair I told you to execute in order to have the Arabs pay [their debts], but, since *Abba* Mäch'afa was the regional representative of the Customs Office,³⁰ you were afraid to arrest by force the debtors in his territory. Even if he is a regional representative, he is there for other tasks and [should] not fail to pay other people's money. You (also) said that you would not order a man [a regional representative] in your own territory. Would that not be considered an act of foolishness (*buwalt*) [to your disadvantage]? Written on the 20th of *Hedar* 1900 E.C./2 December 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

²⁹ First mention of GE's strong interest in keeping within his direct control the Koynaa area within the Sibuu region south of Daabus where the Handaq forest was located (see GEC letter 18). On the importance of the Handaq forest for the Bakaree family, see letters 76, 81, See also GEC letters 56, 109, 145, 203, and 229, and HMC letter 37. The Bakaree Family chronicle (Ch. 3) confirms that Handaq was a rich source of wealth for the Bakaree family. See also Bairu Tafla, 1969, p. 11.

³⁰ *Abba* Mäch'afa was a *ch'iqashum* and the regional representative of the Customs Office in Beni Shangul. He is referred to as administering a *qoro* there (GEC letter 25). See below letter 107.

55

wa/mu/3/106

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since [people] told me that the five wives of *Shäykh* Hojälé are with you, hand them over to him. Written on the 11th of *Tahsas* 1900 E.C./23 December 1907 in the city of Addis Ababa.

56

wa/mu/3/76

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The reason why *Shäykh* Hojälé and his men have been imprisoned till now is because of the undefined boundary in the direction of their territory: that is why we kept them.³¹ But now it has been a long time since the matter concerning the boundary was concluded. Therefore, now that the matter concerning the boundary has been concluded, I have returned *Shäykh* Hojälé's territory to him, and he is about to go there and [I am writing this] so that you know about the matter. *Shäykh* Hojälé said that he would send Hamid here as soon as he [Hojälé] enters his country, and I have sent Särs'äwäld³² along with him to bring him [Hamid] here. Provide provisions to Hamid when he passes through your territory while coming here. Written on 3rd of *T'err*, 1900 E.C./14 January 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

57

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia Let it [this letter] reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. You said that you started collecting the money that should be paid according to cattle heads but that you do not know

³¹ In January 1908 the Beni Shangul chiefs *Shäykh* Hojälé, *Däjjach* Abdurrahman, and *Fitawrari* Mähammäd were finally released and went back to their respective countries. As *Shäykh* Hojälé was considered to be more trustworthy than either Mähammäd or Abdurrahman, he was allowed to 'enter his country' (Asosa) first. See letters 54, 63, and 66.

³² *Ato* Särs'äwäld, who was then serving as an intermediary for *Näggadras* Haylä Giyorgis (GEC letters 25, 27), would later be put in charge of the other crucial customs office (*källa*) of Mandii, the northern limit of GE's territory bordering with Beni Shangul. The Mandii and Billoo customs offices were considered to operate outside GE's taxation rights. See below, letters 57 and 80.

how to collect the payment according to the land owned, for the *qälad* is not measured in your region. I have said that even if a person has land and cattle, he should only pay for his cattle and you should not tell him to pay for the land after he had paid for his cattle. So, you should do it according to this rule. But if a person has no cattle but only land, you should collect the money saying “let so-and-so pay this; let so-and-so pay that” according to the extent of the land and to what he can afford [to pay]. Written in Addis Ababa on *Yäkkatit* 28, 1900 E.C./9 March 1908.

58

wa/mu/3/72

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have seen the letter you sent concerning *Shäykh* Hojälé. As for the tribute (*geber*) and all other matters, he just went to his country; he has not come back yet. What can be said now? As for the tribute coming from the country of the Arabs, we would not require them to pay tribute at the moment but at some other time when we [issue] an order to require its collection. Written on the 23rd of *Yäkkatit* 1900 E.C./4 March 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

59

wa/mu/3/46

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. If there are people who have run short of money to pay their contribution for the railway work and cannot pay it all at once, do not hurry them to pay it all at once. Let them pay gradually and calmly when they get [the money]. Written on the 2nd of *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./12 April 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

60

wa/mu/3/77

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I saw the letter you have sent. You said [wrote] that because they [the people] caused you [much] trouble by hiding the cattle we said should be counted, you started to have it counted a second time. You did

well. And now, when the counting is over, send me soon the record-book with the number of cattle against the names of their owners so that I will see it. Written on the 2nd of *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./12 April 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

61

wa/mu/3/56

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Give some responsible headmen (*ch'iqashum*) to *Näggadras* T'änna so that he will be able to guard the markets and [customs] gates in Läqämté and prevent the thief [contraband] merchants who do not have the Customs Office seal [from entering]. Give the *ashkär* residing there their provisions. Written on the 7th of *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./17 April 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

62

wa/mu/3/88

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since I have sent *Mus[é]* Fréd Markwat to extract gold together with the gold-extracting machine, provide him with one hundred male slaves [Shanqella] to dig the ground [as a preparation] for the work promptly. Written on the 7th of *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./17 April 1908 [in] Addis Ababa.

63

wa/mu/3/89

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since I have sent *Däjjach* Abdurrahman and *Fitawrari* Mähämmäd to go [back] to their country, have their caravans [luggage] loaded when they reach your [place], and having them escorted, send them up to the border of their territories. Have your man who has been guarding their territory withdraw [from his post]. Written on the 7th of *Miyazya*, 1900 E.C./17 April 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

64

wa/mu/3/54

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Although I have told you to give *Musé* Fréd Markwat, the engineer in charge of the gold mining, a hundred Shanqella to help him with the work, you suggested that, since it is inconvenient to keep one hundred Shanqella permanently, you wanted the countrymen to work on a shifting basis. It is a good idea. It is better to do it that way. However, in order that he [the engineer] may not complain about not being provided with the labourers and hence stop working, see to it that you do not fail to execute whatever you were ordered to do and that your men go to work on a shifting basis. Written on the 19th of *Genbot*, 1900 E.C./29 May 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

65

wa/mu/3/80

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning your wish to have the countrymen work on a shifting basis in the extraction of gold directed by the engineer *Musé* Fréd Markwat, place a capable person as a guard to [help] *Musé* Markwat, so that the men going to work shall not be mistreated, and see to it that he [Markwat] will not make them do his own work. Written on the 22nd of *Genbot*, 1900 E.C./1 June 1908 in the town of Ent'ot'o.

66

wa/mu/3/58

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since we have returned to *Shäykh* Hojälé the money [wealth] that was confiscated [from him] and when he was brought here, hand over to Hamid the money that is with you. Written on the 30th of *Säné* 1900 E.C./9 July 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

67

wa/mu/3/96

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since *Shäykh* Hojälé's caravan is coming from Abba Jifar's country in the direction of Limmu, get it from *Däjjach* Dämessäw and, having provided the [pack-]animals for the transport of the luggage and having ordered reception gifts to be given wherever they pass the nights, have it delivered to *Shäykh* Hojälé. Written on the 30th of *Säné*, 1900 E.C./9 July 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

68

wa/mu/3/94

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The two hundred Galla³³ male and female together with their children have safely arrived as written in your letter. Written *Hamlé* 25, 1900 E.C./3 August 1908. Written in the town of Addis Ababa.

69

wa/mu/3/95

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. It is said the daughter of an Arab called Abba Musa was the wife of *Shäykh* Hojälé. It is [also] said that while he [Hojälé] was in prison in this country, he had not yet divorced her but [so] her father took and kept her at his house together with his [Hojälé's] property and children. And now, bring Abba Musa over to your house and restore to *Shäykh* Hojälé his wife as well as his children and property.³⁴ Also, while *Shäykh* Hojälé was in this country, Abba Musa and Wäzäruq's children who had *quarrelled* with Hamid refused to pay allegiance to *Shäykh* Hojälé today. Since they have incited all the

³³ The term 'Galla' is ambiguously used in this correspondence, as well as in the GEC, to refer to the Wallagga Oromo; in this case, however, the term 'Galla' stands for enslaved persons. More broadly, in addition to referring to Oromo people, it may refer to non-Christian, non-Muslim "pagans." For this reason, they were considered enslavable. See Donham, 1986, p. 13.

³⁴ *Shäykh* Hojälé had more than one wife but Musa's daughter was the most important one. For the formal reconciliation between Abba Musa and *Shäykh* Hojälé, see letters 83–84 below.

people of the country [to mutiny] and are causing trouble, have them reach an agreement if they accept [such a proposal]. If they refuse, however, have them handcuffed and send them to me. Written on the 2nd of *Nähasé*, 1900 E.C./10 August 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

70

wa/mu/3/138

[From] *Bäjerond* Mulugéta, Ministry [Minister] of Finance of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Out of the *chira* money³⁵ that has just been raised, give ten thousand *birr* to *Shäykh* Hojälé, five thousand *birr* to *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman, and five thousand *birr* to *Fitawrari* Mähämmäd. The total sum is twenty thousand *birr*. I will write it for you here as deposited and then drawn out. Written on the 12th of *Nähasé*, 1900 E.C./20 August 1908 in the city of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

71

wa/mu/3/82

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. You said that the Arabs [of] *Däjjach* Abdurrahman do not have a seal and ask you to allow [their] slaves to pass without a seal. I have written to the Arabs they must have a seal as a testimony [proof]. Written in *Mäggabit* 1901 E.C./March 1909 in the city of Addis Ababa.

72

wa/mu/3/31

[Seal]

The Conquering the Lion of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Here I have sent a letter to *Däjjach* Abdurrahman with my seal about the case of a Muslim man whose name is Hasané who has complained for not getting back the money he had lent to some Arabs and eventually was paid all but one. [Written in] *Däbrä Libanos*, *Tahsas* 15, 1901 E.C./24 December 1909.

³⁵ Tax money collected on heads of cattle. See letter 42 and note.

73

wa/mu/3/57

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. I have sent [to you] *Ato* Mulatu and *Ato* Hayläññaw as overseers who will see to it that the people (*deha*) are treated legally and the officials do not commit offense against the country; therefore, let them write to us in the course of their supervision. They shall not under any circumstances be involved in any other matter except the one they have been authorized. They shall not interfere in disputes or councils. They shall not pass judgments during *chelot* [court proceeding]. However, give them [food and] lodging so that they will not be hungry and thirsty. Written on the 29th of *Genbot*, 1901 E.C./6 June 1909 in the city of Addis Ababa.

74

wa/mu/3/91

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. The tobacco trade in our country, the territory of Ethiopia, has been our government's monopoly and we had made Hanaré to be in charge of the work. At present, however, we have made Kébirkof in charge of the tobacco business on behalf of our government. The whole account of the price of tobacco sold since the time Hanaré left his job up to now, and all the unsold tobacco with its value, should be handed over to him [Kébirkof]. He should work in the same capacity as during the time of Hanaré, and no one except Kébirkof should conduct the tobacco business, and no one should bring in [tobacco] from abroad and sell it. To this effect, you must have a proclamation made and have it strictly respected. Moreover, since the work is ours, that is [it belongs to] our government, help him in all aspects. Written on the 15th of *Hamlé*, 1901 E.C./22 July 1909 in the city of Addis Ababa.

75

wa/mu/3/11

We, the chief directors of the Ethiopian Association for the Development of Commerce and Agriculture, acknowledge the receipt of one thousand *birr*, which is the equivalent of one fourth of the price of fifty shares, as earnest money, from *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. However, the shares have not been taken out; they are in the Association's office. Written on 14th of *Nähasé* 1901 E.C./20 August 1909 in the city of Addis Ababa.

[Seal of the Association]

76

wa/mu/16

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Menilek II, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have read your letter. I also received the thirty *wäqét* of gold you sent me. Let God reward you. You claim that Sibü (land) is your *rist*³⁶ and that you would like us to give it to you. You also say that you are quite willing to pay the necessary tribute (*geber*) for it. Unfortunately, we have already given this land to another person as *madäriya*. It is inconvenient to dispossess this person now. Written on *T'err* 3, 1902 E.C./11 January 1910 in the town of Addis Ababa.

77

wa/mu/201

[From] *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma, Representative Plenipotentiary of the government of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning Hojälé's money [property] that has been confiscated, return to him what is left with you. Since he [Hojälé] said that *Janhoy* had told him that his men would be restored to him but were not, let [them] be restored to him if he [*Janhoy*] really said so. Otherwise, talk to *näggadras* Berru and conclude [the matter] with him. If you do [can] not conclude, send a responsible person who will discuss [the matter with me] and I will investigate [the matter myself]. Until the time that the matter is over, let the Mao over whom you had quarrelled stay in the hands of *Näggadras* Berru. Return the hitherto confiscated money [to Hojälé] under the judgeship of *Näggadras* [Berru]. Written on the 3rd of *Genbot*, 1902 E.C./11 May 1910 in the city of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

78

wa/mu/147

Sent from *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma, Representative Plenipotentiary of the Government of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. This [man called] Wacho had earlier entered my land [having come] from yours. Since he has now told me that he would return to his country, return his father's land to him and let him

³⁶ According to the Bakaree Chronicle, the Bakaree family was not originally from the Naqamtee region but from the Sibuu area around Najjoo. This explains GE's claims to Sibuu land as being his *rist*. See the Bakaree family chronicle, fols 2v–4v regarding contests between Sibuu and Leeqaa for the control over these areas.

live under you as in former times. Since he said that *Fitawrari* Kiteḥ had confiscated seven slaves from him, have [them] restored to him. If he [Kiteḥ] refuses to return, send him to me together with [Wacho]. Written on the 13th of *Genbot* 1902 E.C./21 May 1910.

[Seal]

79

AHM

Office of the Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture
Kāntiba Wāldā S'adeq

Let it reach His Excellency *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhēr. How are you? How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. To collect the tithe (*asrat*) from your region, good persons are chosen from every part of the country and for this I appointed *Ato* Haylé³⁷ to be their chief; now that they have come to you, let them collect carefully according to the rule. Written on *T'eqemt* 12, 1903 E.C./22 October 1910 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

80

wa/mu/139

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhēr. I prostrate myself before you, wishing that He may give you health. It is said that, having removed *Ato* Yegālāt'u from the Customs Office at Māndi, you have taken it yourself. Earlier, when *Janhoy* left [the right of] taxation at the [customs] gates and markets in your country, it was excepting the Customs Office. And afterwards, when you informed *Janhoy* that the Māndi Customs Office had not been restored to you, we wrote you twice in *Janhoy's* seal that it was difficult to remove the Customs House. And now, since [the market/customs gates at] Māndi is a place where the traders going from Shewa to the Arab region and vice versa pay taxes which go to *Janhoy* according to [the regulations of] the Customs Office, he [Menilek] says that you should hand Māndi over to *Ras Bitwāddād* Täsämma's servant (*ashkär*), Bantewalu.³⁸ Moreover, since *Ato* Särs'äwäld's men living at the Marāch gate are arresting the merchants who travel without carrying the seal of the Customs Houses of Māndi and Säyyo, and we have sent a letter to you with *Janhoy's* seal [saying] that this [Särs'äwäld's men activity] should not be

³⁷ *Ato* Haylé was the Central Government officer who had been charged with overseeing the complex operation of land measurement. According to Tesema Ta'a, 1983, p. 186, *qālad* was resented at ground level as it favoured the rich landowners who maintained the *siso* right over their land.

³⁸ Here again, GE's claim over the Mandii Customs Office is rebuked by Addis Ababa, Mandii being the northernmost important *källa* for merchants heading to and from the *Arab ager*. Bantewalu was to be the Central Government man in charge.

prohibited since Bantewalu is having [the Mändi Customs] guarded, he should not be prevented [from doing so]. Written on the 23rd of *Hedar*, 1903 E.C./2 December 1910 in the city of Addis Ababa.

[Seal of *Aläqa* Gäbrä Sellasé]

81

wa/mu/3/199

Oh, my master!

You have written to me asking to send you the letter I received from the *afä negus* with his seal on it concerning the sale of Handäq. Last year when *Qäññazmach* Afäwäraq and I told the *afä negus* about this matter, he said that he would give us his [sealed] letter after we had paid the full amount and brought to him [a paper] from the government that the matter had been completed. And now, when I asked him [*afä negus*] to give me [his sealed letter], having received your seal [letter], he refused to do so unless we brought a paper from the government to the effect that we had paid the full price. Moreover, you wrote me to ask the *afä negus* if the proclamation concerning the disabled was an old regulation or if a new regulation had been made. There is no additional [new] regulation for the disabled. There is nothing extra. It is the [same] old [regulation]. Both the seller and buyer of slaves will [have their property] confiscated.³⁹ The seller's [property] will also be confiscated. Also, one who steals a slave, if found with evidence, will pay twice as much [the price of the slave] to the slave owner, and his cattle will be confiscated, [but] the judge can pardon him if he sees it wise to do so. Concerning compensation (*kasa*), if a person's master appoints him as *shambäl* (captain) [in command of] ten [armed men], the compensation for him is twenty-five *wäqét* [of gold]. Below this, [the compensation] for a *mäto-aläqa* is fifteen *wäqét* of gold. Below this, it is ten *wäqét*. This is for ordinary compensation. If a person, having insulted another person saying that the latter is a tanner, a slave, or evil-eyed, contrary to the person's family background, and is proved guilty, the compensation [that such a person pays] is the same. As for what remains [to be said], I will send you a letter, having asked people and thought myself [about it]. I prostrate myself [before you] ten and ten times wishing that the Saviour of the World gives you health. Your servant, *Balabaras* [sic] Tura, says [this]. Written on the 26th of *T'err*, 1904 E.C./4 February 1912.

[Seal]

³⁹ First mention in this Correspondence of Central Government regulations aimed at curbing the buying and selling of enslaved persons.

82

wa/mu/149

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abbhé. How have you been my brother? I, thanks be to God, am well. I asked *Qäññazmach* Assägé to spend time with me instead of going to Gojjam. However, he insists on going there unless he is permitted to hunt elephants.⁴⁰ Now the desert is hard and the sickness [Malaria] one can contract is dangerous, particularly at this time of the year. I beg you to let him hunt elephants when the weather improves after the rains. This is the only way I can tempt him to stay with me. So please send him a letter with the promise that you intend to allow him to hunt as soon as the rains are over and the farmers have cleared the ground with bush-fire in order to plough. I also want you to intercede on my behalf by writing a letter to persuade him to stay. If God wills, we shall see each other alive and well. Written on *Genbot* 6, 1903 E.C./14 May 1911 in the town of Gätäma.

[Seal]

83

AHM

The year 1905 E.C. (1912–13) [the following *mäkwannent*], *Shäykh* Wäjäälé [Hojälé] and *Abba* Musa, Almähdi Abba Bäkir, Kalil Mänsur, Yétman Mähämmäd, Babikir Musa [agreed] to reconcile with one another. [The terms of reconciliation are as follows]. These persons would gather all their men and return to their previous places so that they will be administered under *Shäykh* Hojälé as before. *Shäykh* Wäjäälé [Hojälé] should return these persons' money, which is [was] found in their hands, except that of the dead. If there is anybody in the territory of *Shäykh* Hojälé whose money has been taken, *Shäykh* Hojälé should be the judge and have the money returned to them. They should return the money [wealth] of *Shäykh* Wäjäälé [Hojälé], except that of the dead, which is found in their hands. If there is anybody in the territory of *Shäykh* Hojälé who claims that they have taken his money, they should return it after seeing the case, the judge being *Shäykh* Hojälé. Claiming that Abba Musa owed him four hundred eighty-five *wäqét* of gold, *Shäykh* Hojälé advocated his case at the Crown Court and Abba Musa made *Däjjach* Mähämmäd his guarantor for the four hundred eighty-five *wäqét* of gold. *Shäykh* Wäjäälé [Hojälé] should not hold the guarantor responsible until Abba Musa enters his region. Abba Musa should

⁴⁰ Elephants and elephant hunting come at various points in the Correspondence, as ivory was of crucial importance both to GE (re: to the Handaq forest) and to Menilek. Ivory and honey were supplementary sources for the yearly tribute when gold was lacking. In addition, elephant hunting provided social benefits to successful warriors who hunted them. According to Tesema Ta'a, 1980, pp. 41 – 43, elephants were so integral to this area that "the other local name for Handäq was actually *Ejjuma Arba*, which literally means 'the home of elephants'".

also pay the gold to *Shäykh Wäjälé* [Hojälé] when he enters his region. Like their fathers, we made them swear on the Islamic book [Koran]. Following their fathers' book, *Shäykh Hojälé* should leave [divorce] the daughter of Abba Musa whom *Shäykh Hojälé* married. If the book does not make *Shäykh Hojälé* leave [divorce], *Abba Musa* should return his daughter to *Shäykh Hojälé*. They agreed on this, saying, "in the name of Menilek". We have made them reconcile. The interceding judge is *Ras Dämessäw*.⁴¹ The judges (*wämbäroch*) are *Qäññazmach Zämädkun*, *Qäññazmach Matäbé* and *Qäññazmach Kasa*. The witnesses are *Däjjach Berellé*, *Fitawrari Haylu*, *Fitawrari Bäqabil*, *Fitawrari Tasäw*, *Fitawrari Däbay*, *Fitawrari Täfarra*, *Fitawrari Mäkonnen*, *Fitawrari Mäshäsha*, *Fitawrari Habtä Maryam*, *Qäññazmach Yergu*, *Qäññazmach Qunch'é*, *Qäññazmach Boru*, *Qäññazmach Dargé*, *Qäññazmach Abbä Waso*, *Qäññazmach Azalä*. These are all. Written on *T'err* 6, 1905 E.C./14 January 1912 in Arjo Town.

[Seals of *Ras Dämessäw* and *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*]

84

wa/mu/141

Sent from *Ras Dämessäw*. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been, my brother? I, thanks be to God, am well. Concerning the quarrel between *Shäykh Hojälé* and Abba Musa, we had made them reach an agreement by which Abba Musa would, together with his men, enter his old place and live under *Shäykh Hojälé* as in former times. But now, because of the matter concerning the fact that *Däjjazmach Mähammäd* became the guarantor to Abba Musa who owed *Shäykh Hojälé* four hundred eighty-five *wäqét* of gold and Abba Musa became the guarantor to *Däjjazmach Mähammäd* who owed *mägädäm* [*muqaddam*] Abdallahi [some] money, they tugged each other, and it looked as if their earlier agreement would be null. Whereupon *Däjjazmach Mähammäd* said that he would produce another guarantor to [pay] *mägädäm* Abdallahi's money and that he would be his own guarantor, in the name of Menilek, if he did not find one. Also, Abba Musa's charge has been dropped by the accuser, since he said that he would be his own guarantor to [pay] *Shäykh Hojälé*'s money. [This he said] in the name of Menilek. We brought peace between them with such an agreement. Having taken the responsibility of paying their respective debts, *Däjjach Mähammäd* released Abba Musa of his [the latter's] guarantorship. And Abba Musa released *Däjjach Mähammäd* of

⁴¹ The formal act of reconciliation within *Shäykh Hojälé*'s family terminated a long series of claims and unpaid debts incurred during his absence from the region. It is interesting to note that *Ras Dämessäw*'s role is acting as 'interceding judge' (*yazämäd daña*) in the region and that the complex acts of reconciliation, jointly sealed by *Ras Dämessäw* and *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*, were to be carried out by them jointly. See also letter 85.

his guarantorship. I am sending you the letter of agreement by which they reconciled with each other. Have Abba Musa present himself before you and conclude the matter for them according to the agreement and give both your sealed [letter]. However, if *Däjjach* Mähammäd, having been unable to find a guarantor, says he would be his own guarantor, let him give something in addition (*egocha*) and leave. We are elderly arbiters. Collect many men [witnesses] and conclude [the case] in agreement with them. Also, since the time that *Däjjach* Abdurrahman and *Shäykh* Hojälé were in prison, the tributes that went to *Däjjach* Abdurrahman were returned to *Shäykh* Hojälé and this *Däjjach* Mähammäd agreed to do, while *Shäykh* Hojälé agreed to return the tribute belonging to *Däjjach* Abdurrahman, which had gone to him, to *Däjjach* Mähammäd, so that each of them would not in future take the other's tribute. To this they agreed, through our intervention, and each accuser dropped the charge against the other, and is coming [to you]. So, conclude [the case] for them before people [in front of witnesses] in accordance with this word [letter] written on the 13th of *T'err* in the year 1905 E.C./21 January 1913.

[Seal]

85

wa/mu/23

I, *Ras* Dämessäw, having returned all that I obtained from the inherited property of *Däjjach* Abdurrahman, am left only with five thousand five hundred and sixty-three different types of cartridges, thirty-nine black Gras muskets, a heavy old musket with gunpowder, sixteen fine-quality cartridges silk, a javelin, a pointed spear. These are what I have with me. The guns and old muskets were burnt when my storehouse caught fire because of thunder (*yäsämay qut'a*), *Fitawrari* Yebsa Dejeno had repaired the burnt house. I will hand over these guns and old muskets having notified my master, *Lij* Iyyasu, about the matter. The cartridges are of the Gras, Snider, and Remington guns. Written on the 17th of *T'err* 1905 E.C./25 January 1913 in the town of Arjo.

[Seal]

86

wa/mu/142

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been my brother? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received your letter and the five *wäqét* of gold you sent me. Let God reward you. I am sending a message so that you can hear the good news. Nevertheless, I know that you are facing a difficult year and you should not have bothered to think about me. I sent you a letter by a Galla [messenger] not to make you think of [sending me] a good news gift. I was ready to send you back the gold but was afraid to hurt your feelings. From

Dängäb you claim that the Shanqella were robbed and I want you to follow the matter closely and send me a message. You also claim that a group of *Gondaré* came from Limmu and were responsible for robbing the Shanqella. I have sent a message to the servant of *Fitawrari* T'assaw and *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha. I expect a definite response within a few days. Whatever happens, I will tell you everything. If God wills, I hope to see you alive some time [in the future]. Written on *Genbot* 17, 1905 E.C./25 May 1913 in the town of Arjo.

[Seal of *Ras* Dämessäw]

87

wa/mu/144

Sent from *Ras* Dämessäw. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I entreat you, my brother, to have all the *gäbbar* which went to your territory be restored to the *Gondaré*.⁴² "We had agreed earlier that if your *gäbbar* went to our territory, we would return [them to you] and that if our *gäbbar* went to your territory, you would return them [to us]. And now we found that our *gäbbar* have dispersed and our territory is ruined"—said the *Gondaré* who are dejected. Hence have the *gäbbar* of the *Gondaré* which went to your territory be returned to them. I entreat you very much. Written on the 4th of *Hamlé*, 1905 E.C./11 July 1913 in [the town of] Arjo.

[Seal]

88

wa/mu/22

[Seal]

[in Ge'ez] This letter is sent by [*Abunä*] Matéwos, Archbishop of the State of Ethiopia, Servant of Jesus Christ, Son of the Apostle Saint Mark. May it reach my son, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to the Lord and [and to St] Mark, am well. The clerical regulation *Janhoy* made concerning the Church in the Galla country is seven priests [*sämonañña*] with land, one priest-administrator of the local Church (*gäbaz*), a chorus-leader (*märigéta*), and nine priests. And now the deacon Alämu pleaded with me saying, you [have] dispossessed him of the land on which he lived as a conductor of the Mass for three and half years, in favour of the chorus leader. Give the *märigéta* another [piece of land]. How could he [Alämu] be

⁴² This is the first time the term *Gondaré* appears in this Correspondence. The *Gondaré* of this letter refer to the soldiers of *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw stationed in Arjo. On the *Gondaré*, see GEC letters 24, 82, and 86 for example.

dispossessed having conducted the Mass for so long? May God bless you. Written on the 1st of *Genbot*, 1906 E.C./9 May 1914.

89

wa/mu/21

Let it reach the Honourable *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? How is your health? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter and the three Galla [slaves] you sent me have arrived. Let God reward you. In addition, the sixty-three *birr* which you say was a contribution from the owners of the four heads of cattle but was somehow delayed, I can assure you that it has been delivered to the Addis Ababa Treasury (*gwada*). *Yäkkatit* 5, 1907 E.C./12 February 1915, Addis Ababa.

[unreadable seal]

90

AHM

Sent from *Fitawrari* Habtä Giyorgis, Minister of War. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Pursuant to the order that one *alad* and a quarter be collected for [possession of] every firearm, I have received the one thousand five hundred *birr* and three *rub* (quarters) which you collected and sent, and which has been deposited. Let God keep us longing to see each other in person. Written on *Nähasé* 19, 1907 E.C./25 August 1915.

[Seal]

91

wa/mu/114

Sent from *Lij* Iyyasu. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since *Däjjach* Andargé said that [you] have now refused to give him the nine hundred *birr* which you used to give to *Däjjach* Achamyälläh every year, give now as in former times to *Däjjach* Andargé the nine hundred dollars as you used to give to *Däjjach* Achamyälläh earlier.⁴³ If you say that, although in earlier times you gave [such amount of money] to *Däjjach* Achamyälläh, the same cannot be applied now [against your wish] and you will not give it to *Däjjach* Andargé, you will have to make an appeal. Written on the 8th of *Säné*, 1907 E.C./15 June 1915.

[Seal]

⁴³ *Däjjach* Andargé and *Däjjach* Achamyälläh appear to be military commanders of the *Gondaré* soldiers under *Ras* Dämessäw, governor over the Guduruu and Arjoo districts. GE previously encountered Achamyälläh when he was trying to arrest *gäbbar* abandoning Dämessäw's region and obtained their expected payment. See GEC letter 84.

92

wa/mu/200

[*Lij*] Iyyasu, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you sent me concerning the men of Abdurrahman reached me. Send them a capable judge and let him [Abdurrahman] come to me with some important ones. Let him bring them [treating them] well so that they would not quarrel over anything whatsoever with the men of *Shäykh* Hojälé on their way. Written on the 9th of *Yäkkatit* 1908 E.C./17 February 1916 at Jili.

[Seal]

93

wa/mu/137

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The forty-five slaves (*baroch*)⁴⁴ male and female arrived. They make me very happy. Let God reward you. *Hedar* 15, 1910 E.C./24 November 1917.

[Seal of *Ras* Täfäri]

94

wa/mu/125

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you sent me has reached here. Concerning your complaint that *Qäññazmach* Kefyäläw was not agreeable to you in the judiciary work, we made *Afä Negus* T'elahun to hear [cases] and to be in charge of the judgeship in your territory. As to the judgeship for murder cases in your territory that *Janhoy* [Menilek] gave you earlier, we permit you at present to [exercise the same prerogative and] have the advantages [accruing therefrom]. We will send you, moreover, a judge who will pass [cases from] Sibu over to you. The ten *wäqét* of gold that you sent me with *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam reached me. May God compensate you on my behalf. The reply did not reach you until now because I wanted [to send it] when they finish their business [here] and come [to you]. However, since their business is going to keep them [here] for some time, I had to send you [this letter] as a reply. Written on the 1st of *Mäggabit*, 1910 E.C./10 March 1918 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

⁴⁴ First mention of the word *barya*, "slave", in this Correspondence. For earlier use of this term, see GEC letters 10, 11, 45, and 105.

95

wa/mu/117

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, Empress of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have seen the letter you sent me concerning the construction of the bridge.⁴⁵ If the people (*deha*) are willing, it is alright with me. I am also sending you back His Majesty's letter. Written on *Miyazya* 30, 1910 E.C./May 8, 1918 in the town of Addis Ababa.

96

wa/mu/198

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Since *Shäykh* Hojälé said that he did not use to pay taxes on farm oxen that he took to cultivate the land, but now he was told to do so, let him have his farm oxen pass without paying dues as he used to at the time of *Janhoy*. Let him not be prohibited. [Written] on the 10th of *Genbot*, 1910 E.C./18 May 1918 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

97

wa/mu/122

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. *Balambaras* Täsämma claims that you have stopped giving him his salary, food, and other benefits which his predecessor, *Balambaras* Bäqqälä, enjoyed. Pay him his due, including the arrears up to now, and make sure that he should not be denied in the future. Written on *Genbot* 24, 1910 E.C./1 June 1918, in Addis Aläm.

[Seal]

98

AHM

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received the letter you sent to me. About the dry seal, let it be. We give you permission [to use it]. As for shields, I have received twenty shields.

⁴⁵ This is the first letter by Empress Zäwditu to GE. The bridge over the Dhedhessa River was completed in 1921. See letter 106.

Thank you. But for the future, let it [the shield] be brought being black in colour and small in size. Written on *Hamlé* 4, 1910 E.C./11 July 1918 in Addis Ababa.
[Seal]

99

wa/mu/129

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The two *Shanqella* [slaves] who escaped from your country [and came to us] claimed that they were owned by your brother, *Fitawrari* [L]igdi;⁴⁶ they were admitted here, and put to work in the palace compound (*gwada*). While working there they managed to steal two guns, one with a printed code and the other without a code, two pairs of clothing, and fifty *birr*, and once more they escaped. Their names are *Agäré* and *Wäldä Gäbre'él*. We have been told that their parents still live in your country and the two culprits are likely to head that way. Search for them, arrest them, and send them to us escorted by a guard as soon as possible. *Tahsas* 9, 1912 E.C./19 December 1919.

[Seal]

100

wa/mu/134

Let it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been my brother? I, thanks be to God, am well. The twenty-one Galla [slaves] who were previously presented as a special gift of allegiance (*mättaya*) to *Lij Iyyasu* by *Fitawrari* Burayyu and kept with you have reached here. Written on *Säné* 30, 1912 E.C./7 July 1920 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

101

AHM

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Elect of God, Empress of Ethiopia, *Zäwditu*, Daughter of Emperor Menilek II. Let it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. Beginning from the early days up to now, when the Great Kings of the World died after doing good deeds, all the elites—the *mäsafent*, the *mäkwannentoch*, the *balabbatoch*—the common people, officers and other soldiers, traders and farmers of the respective governments contributed money

⁴⁶ Ligdii was one of Morodaa's brothers, hence *Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* [Kumsaa's] uncle. According to several sources, Ligdii opposed Morodaa's decision to negotiate with Shewan forces in the early 1880s. See Cerulli, 1922, p. 74 and ATFN.

of their own free will and built memorial houses in the main cities [capital cities] and made the name of kings to be called [remembered] forever. Since a king for whom a memorial house or a statue is not built is a king who did not do good things for his country, the people will only be happy and will not contribute money even if forced, let alone of their own free will. By this it is known that he was a cruel king. Also here, in our country Ethiopia, there is no other king who died being praised for his good deeds as much as His Majesty Menilek II. By Menilek II, the border [territory] of Ethiopia became very wide from east to west and from north to south. By Menilek the children of Ethiopia went on growing with education and wisdom. By Menilek, the traders with their trade, the farmers with their farming, and the soldiers with their shields got money and became very rich. By Menilek we heard with our ears and saw with our eyes the good things of Europe which our ancient fathers did not hear or see. By Menilek the Ethiopians who were separated from one another by borders and boundaries, by territories and languages, became one. The things we wrote here are only a few of the many and a part of the whole. Otherwise, we cannot finish writing all the good deeds Menilek II made for Ethiopia and his people. What we listed above is a little reminder [of the numerous deeds Menilek II did for his people and country], you all know it in your heart. This was only meant to be of help to you. Now also, since His Majesty Menilek II did all these good deeds and died before us, we thought of building memorial houses, first in Addis Ababa and later in places where we need to have his name to be called [remembered] forever, like the great European kings with the aim of repaying his good deeds for us. When we notified all the *mākwannent* about this idea of ours, everyone was happy and began contributing money. So, you also notify all the *mākwannent*, *balabbatoch* and soldiers, except the common people, with a seal and collect the money that they will contribute according to what they can afford for the memorial house of Menilek II. You will collect this money by writing the amount against their names on a register, and after adding what you give for this work, bring it to us soon. When you collect this money, let all give a quarter dollar (*rub*), or half a dollar (*alad*) or a *birr* according to what they can afford and of their own free will and do not force them to contribute. If you are found forcing and ordering them to contribute or if you say to them that they should bring this or that more money, you know that you will be [held] responsible for the matter. The names of all those who gave money to this [purpose] and the amount given by each one will be written and kept on the register of the memorial house to be built so that their good deeds will not be lost [forgotten].⁴⁷ Written on *Nāhasé* 12, 1912 E.C./18 August 1920.

⁴⁷ Wallagga's contribution to Menilek's Memorial will amount to 5,250 *birr*. See letter 112.

102

wa/mu/51

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been my brother? I, thanks be to God, am well. The letter you wrote me on *Nähasé* 14 concerning the gold has reached here. It has been weighed. Please think about the gold that was brought to me and its cost. It is many days now since *Grazmach* Ayyälä has been sent to you. With the remaining *birr*, please buy gold as soon as possible and send it to me as fast as you can. You must not forget the message I sent you through *Grazmach* Ayyälä. You must always keep me in your mind. This year, I am confronted by many problems. The matter concerning His Majesty's saying—that they should be paying four Gallas per each Galla [*sic*—you should send whatever you can lay your hands on and send them as soon as the rain subsides. You should do this immediately after the rain stops. Written on *Mäskäräm* 7 [1913? E.C.]/17 September [1920?].

[Seal of *Qäññazmach* Yebsa]

103

wa/mu/118

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received your letter concerning the pack animals. I have no intention of troubling you or others. I know that this country of yours has been free of war campaigns for long. That is why I believe that such pack animals may be easily found. If you think that it will create undue difficulties, the matter can wait and you can send me the money back. However, you claim that, given time, you can fatten the pack animals that you purchased and send them to me later; this is also very thoughtful, and you may do that. [Written on] *Hedar* 28, 1913 E.C./7 December 1920.

[Seal]

104

wa/mu/130

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received the message concerning gold, which I need very much. That is why I was forced to send a messenger to ask you to buy it for me. As you know, you are nearer to its source than I am. In short, it is easier and cheaper to buy gold in your country.⁴⁸ If need be, you can send someone to Qélläm or to

⁴⁸ The need for gold is a recurrent theme in the Correspondence. The Heir to the Throne, *Ras* Täfäri, who is no less in need of gold than his predecessors, clearly explains to the Governor of Naqamtee why gold is 'easier and cheaper' to buy in Wallagga rather than in Addis Ababa.

Shäykh Hojälé's country to buy the gold. You must make sure that it reaches me within two and a half months. As you know, you have sent me the price of gold previously, and so I am now sending you sixty-six thousand *birr* to buy two thousand *wäqét*. *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä, the bearer of this letter, will give you the money. I sent you the money because I was told that you may not have so much cash at hand. Written on *T'err* 6, 1913 E.C./14 January 1921 in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

105

wa/mu/131

Ras Tafari, the Crown Prince of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. [*Shäykh*] Hojälé says that while he was imprisoned, his chief clerk, a certain Ahmed Hamid, took away his cattle, slaves, horses, mules, and other valuables and went over to Mähämmäd Mahmoud. Send an important official as a judge and your personal representative and ask him to return the properties to the rightful owner. If he says he is not willing to do so, accept whatever he is willing to give. As for the rest, send him along with Hojälé to me under oath. *Hamlé* 24, 1913 E.C./31 July 1921, written in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

106

AHM

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I received the letter you sent me. I returned well from the journey by the good will of God and your prayer.⁴⁹ The army also returned well with me. You wrote to me saying that the work on the Dédessa bridge is finished and that the work done is very good. I am very pleased by your thought [concern] for the government and the subject people (*deha*). Let God keep us longing to see each other in person. Written on *Nähasé* 8, 1913 E.C./14 Aug. 1921 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

107

wa/mu/148

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter concerning a certain *Abba* Mäch'afa, *ch'iqashum* for Särs'äwäld, has reached me. You claim that his man trespassed into the

⁴⁹ The Amharic word used here (*hazän*) literally translates 'sorrow'.

British territory and killed six elephants. You further claim that when asked why he did so, he simply said he had an understanding with the British. At any rate, the reply to the first letter, i.e., the one prior to the *Abba Mäch'afa* affair, is contained in His Majesty's letter. It is a letter that expresses anger and I did not include the words here. You can find them there. Concerning your message about the Bidu Gäda affair, you will have to be patient until he returns. May we meet in peace sometime in the future. Written on *Hedar* 29, 1914 E.C./8 December 1921.

[Seal of *Qäññazmach* Yebsa]

108

wa/mu/110

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. We have seen your letter in which you state that you have been instructed to entertain the guests of honour by taking your turn from *Bäjerond* Sahlä Dengel on the 10th of *T'err*. If you find it inconvenient to prepare the banquet, we have told our palace servants to do whatever is necessary to make your guest happy under the supervision of your own servants. But you should pay for the expenses. Written on *Tahsas* 17, 1914 E.C./26 December 1921.

109

AMH

[Seal]

The conquering Lioness of Judah, Elect of God, Empress of Ethiopia, Zäwditu, Daughter of King of Kings Menilek II. Let it [this letter] reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I received your letter. The money you sent has also reached here, and your *ashkär* has received a sealed receipt and has gone back.⁵⁰ It is good. About the remaining money, we will arrange *Däjjach* Yeggäzu to be asked. I have also seen what you wrote me about the case of the *färänji*: since the *färänji* cannot be found, we have begun a search in every Legation. We will inform you when we find him. Written on *Tahsas* 27, 1914 E.C./5 January 1922.

⁵⁰ The Amharic word used here literally translates 'has come'.

110⁵¹

wa/mu/3/145

[Seal]

[in Ge‘ez] This letter is sent by [*Abunä*] Matéwos, archbishop of the state of Ethiopia, servant of Jesus Christ, son of the apostle Saint Mark. Let it reach my beloved son *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to the God of Saint Mark, am well. The coffee and the two *wäqét* of gold you sent me have arrived. My son, may God reward you. May Jesus Christ pay you back in heaven for all that you have given me. May God always be with you, bless and reward you. Written on *Yäkkatit* 5, 1914 E.C./ 12 February 1922.

111⁵²

wa/mu/3/9

The Crown Prince of Ethiopia, *Ras* Täfäri. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The one hundred and three *wäqét* of gold you sent me through *Qäññazmach* Est’ifanos have reached me. *Mäggabit* 5, 1914 E.C./15 March 1922, Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

112⁵³

AHM

Crown Prince of the Ethiopian Government, *Ras* Täfäri. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. We have received five thousand two hundred and fifty *birr* you sent as a help [contribution] for the statue. What you sent is not small. It is enough. Let God think for you. You should not be worried thinking that this is small. You never spared yourself in such contributions. *Mäggabit* 6, 1914 E.C./15 March 1922.

[Seal]

113⁵⁴

wa/mu/3/10

The Crown Prince of Ethiopia, *Ras* Täfäri. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your special gift (*mättaya*) of ten *wäqét* of gold has reached me. May God reward you.

⁵¹ Corresponding to letter 113 in WDOCS, p. 41.

⁵² Corresponding to letter 110 in WDOCS, p. 40.

⁵³ Corresponding to letter 111, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Corresponding to letter 112, *ibid.*

Qäññazmach Est'ifanos has also told me your verbal message.⁵⁵ *Mäggabit* 9, 1914 E.C./18 March 1922, Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

114

wa/mu/3/112

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. We have read your letter concerning the slave hunters (*fāngay*). You said you know where they are located. You say that a judge should be sent to you so that you can have them arrested and tried. We have given orders to *Liqāmākuas* Mäkonnen to go to the country of *Däjjach* Mäkonnen Tāwänd Bälay. Being there he will preside over the cases of people sent from *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér with the help of *Däjjach* Mäkonnen. A letter has already been sent to him so that he will cooperate with you. Prior to all that, you should send a responsible person to *Liqāmākuas* Mäkonnen as your personal representative. Written on *Mäskäräm* 12 1915 E.C./22 September 1922.

115

wa/mu/3/113

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received the fifteen *wäqét* of gold you sent me. May God reward you. Written on *Hedar* 20, 1915 E.C./29 November 1922 in the town of Addis Ababa.

116⁵⁶

wa/mu/3/111

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach*

⁵⁵ *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos appears to be not just one of GE's scribes, but also one of his most loyal intermediaries (*balderabba*) at the Ethiopian court. Local elites communicated with the central state in Amharic, often their second languages, so the role of an Amharic-speaking secretary and scribe for both written and oral communication was especially significant. See GEC letter 153.

⁵⁶ Corresponding to letter 117, WDOCS, p. 42.

Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. I have also read your comment concerning the construction of the road. Everyone is building roads nowadays, and it is inevitable that you will have to do the same. Written on *Tahsas* 14, 1915 E.C./23 December 1922.

117⁵⁷

wa/mu/3/75

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received your letter and noted your comment about the bandits (*shifta*).⁵⁸ We have informed *Däjjach* Habtä Mika'él to arrest all the *shifta* that were released under false pretexts together with the official who was responsible and to send them here. Written on *Tahsas* 14 1915 E.C./26 December 1922.

118

wa/mu/3/70

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter and the ten [*wäqét* of gold] have reached me. Written on *T'err* 4, 1915 E.C./12 January 1923 in the town of Addis Ababa.

119

wa/mu/3/27

Ras Tafari, the Crown Prince of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The bearer of this letter, Mr Alberto Pras [Prasso], Italian, has been given permission to prospect for mining in your region along the banks of the Birbir River from its source up to its junction with the Baro River. He is allowed to dig the bed of the Birbir River itself within a distance of fifty km. each left and right along its banks. Since he has been given permission to prospect, he should not be forbidden to carry out his work. You should also assign him enough soldiers for his security and to help him do his job. He will of course pay them, and you should let him decide how many people he needs. Nevertheless, you must not forget to have your own men to see and follow up on what is being done. Do

⁵⁷ Corresponding to letter 116, WDOCS, *ibid*.

⁵⁸ On local *shifta* in various parts of Wallagga see further letter 120 and GEC letters 204-13, et al.

not let your soldiers trespass into your neighbours' territory. Written on *T'err* 13, 1915 E.C./21 January 1923 in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

120

wa/mu/3/52

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zāwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me, and I have noticed your message about the bandits (*shifta*). Concerning the bandits, when I asked your servants to tell me whether they had committed any crime, they were unable to do so. They said that they knew nothing about it and were here simply to bring your letters. Now, I am asking you to tell me why the bandits were able to stay at large for so long after they killed innocent people, robbed money, slaughtered the people's cattle, etc. In short, I want your immediate reply explaining the reasons. Written on *Hedar* 8, 1915 E.C./17 November 1922.

121

wa/mu/3/20

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Empress Zāwditu, Elect of God, Daughter of Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. Your letter has reached me. About your complaint against the chief (*balabbat*) of Anfillo, whom you claim borrowed money from you but refused to pay you back, I have written a letter to *Däjjach* Berru [Governor of Qélläm], and he will handle everything. Written on *Hedar* 2, 1916 E.C./12 November 1923.

122

wa/mu/3/128

Ras Tafari, The Crown Prince of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The remaining three [out of 50] male and female servants⁵⁹ brought by *Azazh* Wārāta have reached me. *Tahsas* 18, 1916 E.C./28 December 1923.

[Seal]

⁵⁹ Although the Amharic word used here, *agälgay*, literally translates 'servant', the people referred to in this letter were supposedly enslaved (Miers, 2003, pp. 66–86).

123

AHM

The Crown Prince of the Ethiopian Government, *Ras Täfäri*.

Let it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I saw [read] what you thought and wrote about the border of the Arab region, and I was very pleased. Your thinking so much about a region that is not within your jurisdiction is an unforgettable debt for the government. About what you said, that you will hunt elephants for the ivory we asked you for, let the elephants of your region not be touched whatsoever. Let it stay as prohibited.⁶⁰ We sent to you asking if there was any at home. Written on *Mäggabit* 18, 1916 E.C./27 March 1924.

124⁶¹

wa/mu/3/136

Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior.

Let it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*.

Concerning the construction of the Addis Aläm road, your assigned share is one thousand four hundred and sixty-seven metres long. The cost of the completed portion is one thousand six hundred eighty-seven *birr*. The amount required for the completion of the remaining portion of the road is three thousand four hundred and twenty-five *birr*. The total cost of the road is five thousand one hundred eight *birr*. You are required to pay the remaining balance within fifteen days. However, if there are other additional expenses such as rent, or money which is not included in the above expense list, please send a responsible personal representative with a signed and sealed letter authorizing him to check the accounts here in person. We would like to inform you further, *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*, that you are not to pay out rent money or any other additional payment. Such payments are to be directly paid in the hands of the Ministry of Interior in the future. However, if you have other contributions for the same purpose collected from the local peasants (*balagär*), you have to send us the total amount immediately. *Mäggabit* 22, 1917 E.C./31 March 1924, Addis Ababa.

[Seal and signature by the Minister of Interior]

[Seal]

⁶⁰ The letter confirms the prohibition of elephant hunting in the country, which GE had sought to regulate since 1907 (GEC letters 40, 76, 185) and which HM maintained (HMC letters 7, 21).

⁶¹ Corresponding to letter 125 in WDOCS, p. 45.

125⁶²

AHM

Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Finance, Receipt N° 5 of the Addis Ababa treasury (*gwada*) for twenty-five *wäqét* of gold.

Today on *T'eqemt* 21, 1917 E.C./31 October 1924 *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos has deposited twenty-five *wäqét* of gold that is given as present by the chiefs (*balabbatoch*) in the country of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, in the Addis Ababa treasury.

Secretary of the Main Register
Gäbrä S'adeq

Secretary of the Treasury
Wäldä S'adeq (signature)

Head of the Treasury
Wäldä Manél

126

AMH

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Elect of God, Empress Zäwditu of Ethiopia, daughter of King of Kings Menilek II. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have received your letter. The one thousand *gundo* of honey you sent as a tribute and the five hundred ploughs and two hundred *wägäl* you sent as presents have all reached me. Thank you. Written on *Hamlé* 22, 1917 E.C./29 July 1924.

127

wa/mu/3/152

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Elect of God, Empress Zäwditu of Ethiopia, Daughter of King of Kings Menilek II. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. The priests in Wällägga who are under your rule had a religious dispute with other [priests]. They have come here and the dispute has been settled on their behalf by our Holy Father, the *Abun*. The essence of the dispute and its future development and implications have been printed by them and sent to you. It is the duty of a son to take up his father's place and improve his role. Hence, help the Church from being ruined and the priests from being dispersed. They should not be molested or harassed. Written on *Hedar* 1, 1918 E.C./10 November 1925.

⁶² Corresponding to letter 124 in WDOCS, p. 44.

128

wa/mu/3/177

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Henceforth, the Empress and the Crown Prince have decreed that all the lords (*mäkwannent*) of the land are to come to Addis Ababa on a monthly basis to consult with them and give advice concerning the affairs of the state. Your turn to do so will be in the month of *Mäggabit* and *Miyazya*. Therefore, please come to Addis Ababa on *Mäggabit* 23, or a week earlier, in order to consult with them and receive further instructions on how to carry out your duties. It was officially ordered to convey this message to you. Please find also a copy of the new rules signed and sealed by the Crown Prince. *Nähasé* 4, 1918 E.C./10 August 1926.

[Seal and signed by Minister of Pen]

129

wa/mu/3/173

Ethiopian Government

S'ähäfe Te'zaz Wäldä Mäsqäl, Minister of Pen.

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Please allow me to present to you my respectful greetings. The ten *wäqét* of gold you sent me have reached me. Let God reward you. Written on *Nähasé* 28, 1918 E.C./3 September 1926.

[Seal]

130

wa/mu/3/12

[Seal]

The Conquering Lioness of Judah, Elect of God, Empress Zäwditu of Ethiopia, daughter of King of Kings Menilek II. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. I have read your message concerning the gold tribute. Gold has become so scarce this year, even we ourselves are facing difficulties. Hence, you must pay your gold tribute. May God reward you for the special gift (*mättaya*) of five hundred *birr*. Written on *Mäskäräm* 9, 1922 E.C./19 September 1929.

131

wa/mu/3/143

[Seal]

[in Ge'ez] This written message is sent by the Archbishop (*liqa p'app'asat*) Matéwos of Ethiopia. Let it reach my beloved son *Däjjach* [Habtä Maryam] Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, how have you been? I, thanks be to the God of Saint Mark, am well. The gold you sent us was found to be only sixty *wäqét* and seven *tämun*; so your servants had to pay the balance in *birr*. If the gold you sent us

was correctly weighed at first but was later reduced by your servants' corruption, you must rebuke them. God be with you and bless you. Written on *Mäggabit* 19, 1922 E.C./28 March 1930.

132

wa/mu/3/181

Decr.

From time to time, false rumours (*wäré*) which are fabricated and circulated are responsible for unnecessary conflict and the spilling of blood among us. The rumours also harm the country. From now on, anyone airing such baseless rumours will be punished. For those who are found guilty, the fine will be two hundred *birr* for a government official and one hundred *birr* for an ordinary person. Half the money will go to the plaintiff and the remaining half to the Government. If the accused person is not capable of paying the fine, he will be imprisoned with hard labour for a period of time commensurate with the fine imposed. *Genbot* 30, 1922 E.C./7 June 1930.

(Seal of the Ministry of Interior)

133

wa/mu/3/164

Ethiopian Government, Ministry of the Palace (*gebbi*)
Addis Ababa

No. 1797

Nähasé 7, 1922 E.C./August 13, 1930

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

There is a shortage of honey for the official coronation of His Majesty. When I reported this matter to His Majesty and told him that the honey tribute from Läkämt [Naqamtee] had not been received, he told *S'ähafe Te'zaz Wäldä Mäsqäl* to telephone *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér and order him to send the honey tribute immediately. Unfortunately, so far he failed to do so. *Ato* Haylä Sellasé, the chief of the honey store, has informed me in an official letter Protocol number 201, that the shortage is great. Therefore, the tribute should be paid in total within ten days.

[Seal of Ministry of Palace]

134

wa/mu/3/165

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah, Haylä Sellasé I, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? I, thanks be to God, am well. We had told you to buy 1,000 oxen from your country and deliver them to *Shäykh* Hojälé. *Fitawrari* Biftu,

who was the official controller of the transaction has confirmed by an official letter that you have done the job. Written on *Nähasé* 26, 1923 E.C./1 September 1931, Addis Ababa.

135

wa/mu/3/179

Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, Addis Ababa Ref. no 25
Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

Members of various organizations who prospect for gold and other minerals are harassed or molested by provincial, regional, district governors, their representatives or some other minor officials, and are made to pay passage money or other kind of tribute. This harassment has been reported to His Majesty who has ruled henceforth that these people [prospectors] are to be strictly left undisturbed. They are not to be molested by anyone while going to and from work to their homes or while travelling from a district, region or province for duty. The only thing they should require is a letter from the Department of Mines stating that they are employees of one of these prospecting organizations or societies. It is to be remembered that a circular letter, numbered 103, has been written to this effect by the authorities on *Hedar* 24, 1924 E.C./4 December 1931.

Please inform all our administrator and customs officials to act accordingly. *Hedar* 21, 1924 E.C./1 December 1931.

[Sealed and signed “Le Secrétaire Général”]

136

wa/mu/3/24

I, the undersigned, *Musé* Dimitri Nikis, have agreed to become the engineer for the construction of St Mary's Church in Naqamtee.⁶³ The Church will be built with the design and plan attached with the contract. It will be built with white lime and chiselled stones. The agreement is concluded between me and *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam who has agreed to pay me 250 *birr* per month as my salary. The Church will have two rooms as basement, and, once the constructed walls emerge from the ground, it will have two doors and will be exactly similar to the Holy Trinity Church in Harar in design and style.⁶⁴ If the Church breaks down or falls apart for faulty construction with the exception of natural causes such as earthquakes, I will take full responsibility to re-build the

⁶³ On the Maryam and Iyäsus churches built in Naqamtee by Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, and their relation to the urban growth of Naqamtee, see the two religious hymns (*sälam*) addressed to Kumsaa Morodaa by *Balambaras* Giyorgis in Ricci, 1990, pp. 257–58.

⁶⁴ The Trinity Church in Harar was built by *Ras* Mäkonnen.

Church at my own expenses. Of course, construction materials will be provided by His Excellency [*Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam]. If shortage of building material such as sand, lime, stones, etc. for some reason or other do not occur, I shall complete the stone construction work in ten or eleven months. Once this segment of the work is completed, the woodwork roof construction will begin by *Musé* Babene (*sic*) under my personal supervision. This agreement between me and *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam was concluded and signed by both contracting parties whose seven signatures appear at the end of this contract letter. When we signed this contract, the witnesses were *Musé* Mikirdich, *Musé* Espirosi, *Musé* Nesirnu and *Musé* Papene (*sic*). May Haylä Sellasé die [if parties do not comply]. 3 *T'err*, 1924 E.C./12 January 1932.

[Signatures]

137

AHM

Ministry of Interior

Ref. no 997

Let it reach His Excellency *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Since the Imperial Ethiopian government has started to work for the freedom of slaves with strong determination, we are sending you the below instruction so that you will also do this strictly in your region. The formation of a special free guards (*näs'a zäbāñña*) is permitted to stop in every *wäräda* the slave trade which people are doing by selling and buying human beings thus breaking the law on the freedom and administration of slaves. The *näs'a zäbāñña* will be formed to ensure also that the work for the freedom of slaves is done very carefully. This will also be done in your neighbouring regions. The guards who will be chosen for this job will be from fifty to one hundred depending on the size of the region they would work in. Among these chosen guards, let six persons who are very trustworthy be chosen as secret guards.

Second

Let these persons who are chosen to be guards receive their salaries and wages as usual, holding the *madärya* and wages they had earlier.

Third

The duty of the guards is to protect the borders of every *wäräda* so that persons who buy and sell slaves would not pass from one region to the other for slave trade. They should also keep watch on main roads, short cuts and hidden tracts. They should go to every customs' post [*källa*], marketplace and village and notify the people that the government is checking out on this duty. They should ask where such things are done and visit that place day and night. They should do their duty by contacting the guards of their neighbouring domains and talk on their duties from time to time.

Fourth

When these guards catch a *fāngay* [slave trader] and bring him to the free judge (*näs'a dañña*) of the region and after it is known that that person is really a *fāngay*, the guards should be given from five to ten *birr*, or even up to twenty *birr*, right away according to the seriousness of the crime of the *fāngay*. This will be given as a reward for their carefulness in guarding so that they will do their duty thoroughly in the future. The judge should not rule that they will be paid in the future from the fine that the *fāngay* will pay, otherwise the guards will go on waiting for it and stop working.

Fifth

Until the person who is going to be the chief of these guards is sent from here, let him be appointed from there for the time being and let the work begin soon. Let the work be done thoroughly with you being the controller of the work by talking to the chief of the *zäbäñña* about the work and by checking the work done, that is, by seeing what this matter [slave trade] was before the foundation of the *zäbäñña* and what it is like after the foundation of the *zäbäñña*. You will also send us the report that you have already recruited the *zäbäñña*, what they did and what the working condition is after one month of operation. In the first paragraph we said that the *näs'a zäbäñña* will be recruited from fifty to one hundred [in number]. But if the region is very wide and needs many [more] persons, the fact that we said from fifty to one hundred should not be taken as a limit, and the work should not be spoiled because of this. Since it is possible to choose even up to two hundred *zäbäñña* by seeing how much is enough for the region, let it be done according to this. *Miyazya* 17, 1924 E.C./25 April 1932.

[Seal of Ministry of Interior]

138

wa/mu/3/160

Ministry of Pen

Ref. no 8179

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. From the honey tribute that used to be submitted from Billo to the Palace, three hundred *gundo* [a measurement for honey] has been deducted and given to *Bitwäddäd* Mäkonnen. It has been ordered that an equal amount of honey is to be sent from Wällägga-Säyyo [Qélläm], as a tribute to the Palace. Send the honey to us. *Miyazya* 5, 1925 E.C./13 April 1933.

[Seal]

139

wa/mu/3/33

Ministry of the Pen, Addis Ababa

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Those foreigners who prospect minerals in Wällägga under licence are being harassed

by various district and local governors to pay additional transit fee such as *kotté* or *mätälaläfiya*. This harassment has become so intense that the people of the Tiras Company were forced to appeal to His Majesty in an official capacity through their Embassy. Henceforth, a new certificate will be issued and given to these legal prospectors so that they should be left in peace to do their job. The only tax they are required to pay is the one due to the Governor of their place of residence. Otherwise, it has been ordered by His Majesty that they are to be left in peace when they travel from one district to another or are returning home from their place of work, etc. To give an example, certain officials were arrested while demanding transit taxes and were brought here for questioning. Written on *Säné* 21, 1925 E.C./28 June 1933.

[Seal]

140

wa/mu/3/169

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Pen
Addis Ababa

To *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. We appointed you to rule your father's country (*agär*) because we felt that you were capable of following modern trends while at the same time fulfilling our commands without difficulties. Since we must rectify damages [caused to the country], you should be more alert and aware of the criticisms of our neighbours concerning these problems. In fact, it is our duty to be always ready to do what must be done in this regard. Now, we want you to give us an immediate reply to the following enquiries: 1) What is the total amount of your annual tribute for the country in your possession? 2) What is the exact amount of your tribute in gold and cash that you owe to our Treasury per year? 3) What amount do you retain for your personal and administrative use? How many gun-bearing soldiers are there at your command? 4) We would also like to know the exact number of gun-bearing soldiers (*näft'añña*) under each chief (*balabbat*) at your command. How many peasant households (*madbét*) does each [*balabbat*] have? 5) We also would like to know as soon as possible the total amount of the annual tax and tithe which you are collecting from the ordinary people both in cash and kind. We are asking you all these questions so that you can follow our instructions.⁶⁵ The money obtained from your country, i.e., aside from the money paid to our Treasury and the money retained for your use, the rest should be spent to improve the country by building roads, organizing soldiers, etc. You will receive our exact

⁶⁵ The instructions by the Ministry of Pen were clearly aimed at restricting the rights of provincial governors and the rather ample autonomy allowed by their *madbét* status. See Bahru Zewde, 2002a, p. 119.

instructions for this. We might have sent customs officials (*näggadras*) or other representatives to come to your county to obtain this information for us. We did not do so because we feel that you are capable of doing the work by yourself. Since the information we requested [can be answered easily] by copying from official record book, you must send us the information within one month. You will realize the benefit of [transferring the information to us] both personally to you and to your province when this information you receive the rules and regulations for carrying out your responsibilities. (n.d.)

141

wa/mu/3/202

1927 E.C., 27th of *Tahsas*/5 January 1935.

I, *Däjjazmach* Must'äfa, have reconciled with *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. Written below is the pact of reconciliation. In former times, during the time of *Ras* Täsämma, my father, *Däjjazmach* Mähammäd, crossed over to this side of the Dabus River and started a border dispute with *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. And my father, who realized while still alive that he undertook a wrong dispute, informed me that [the disputed land] was their [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér family's] *rist*. And now, since the whole country knows that this side of the Dabus is *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam's, I also will not [try to] create boundary disputes, claiming that his territory across the Dabus River is my *rist*. I have yielded, in Haylä Sellasé's name. Although my father started the conflict on the boundary settlement, the territory has been *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam's since [the time of] *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.⁶⁶ This paper with the pact of reconciliation has the same content but is written in three copies, the first of which is [to be] deposited with the arbiter-judge, *Ato* T'wafé, the second with *Däjjazmach* Must'äfa, and the third with *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. I have reconciled through this pact as a chief [member of my family, i.e. on behalf of my family], and if my brothers and relatives or others who want to create boundary disputes on this *rist* appear, I will return [prevent] them as one who is responsible in the name of Haylä Sellasé. I bear witness through my signature and seal to the fact that I have willingly reconciled in accordance with the words written above, having had [the pact of reconciliation] read to me by an interpreter. [I say this] in the name of Haylä Sellasé.

[Seals and signatures of dignitaries]

⁶⁶ This formal 'pact of reconciliation' between *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam and *Däjjazmach* Must'äfa Mähammäd clears the way to the long-held dispute over the Sibuu's northern border in western Wallagga and to the final recognition by the Central Government that the Sibuu region was within the Naqamtee rulers' *rist*. See letter 142.

142⁶⁷

wa/mu/3/158

Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Commerce

Gouvernement Impérial Ethiopien, Ministère du Commerce

The Sibū who were formerly governed by *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen have been given to you. However, your officials are not willing to give the taxes that have been collected to *Näggadras* Mäshäsha Gäbrä Maryam who in turn has been instructed to submit the money to the Ministry of Finance. *Näggadras* Mäshäsha has further written to us to say that the Sibū officials were not willing to cooperate with him. Thus, we were forced to write a letter to a higher authority, namely the Ministry of Pen. The letter of instruction written to you by the Ministry of Pen n. 1079 and our cover letter n. 2770 have been sent to you some time ago. So far, you have not managed to answer our letter let alone co-operate with us. *Näggadras* Mäshäsha has further informed us by telegram that you failed to send your orders to your officials in due time. As a result, the tax revenue could not be collected in time. He also claims that is why you imprisoned the village heads and removed the able and experienced judges from their posts. We believe it is our duty to follow the rules and regulations made by the Government, otherwise, it will impede the smooth functioning of our work. We, therefore, respectfully beg you to order your representatives in writing to carry out the directives sent by the Ministry of Pen and send this letter to us. *Yäkkatit* 30, 1927 E.C./9 March 1935.

[Seal]

143⁶⁸

wa/mu/3/155

Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Pen

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. You may recall the letter n. 10079 in which we had ordered you to collect the government taxes and submit them to the Billo customs. The Minister of Finance in another letter of his own n. 3770, however, has informed us that you have replaced the judges with your own men. Now, your men are doing the work and forcing the village headman (*ch'iqashum*) to submit to them the collected taxes. We are instructing you to see to it that all the collected taxes are submitted to the Billo customs. We are also asking you to send us a report as to why the newly appointed judges were removed from their official posts. *Mäggabit* 4, 1927 E.C./13 March 1935.

[Seal of Ministry of Pen]

⁶⁷ Corresponding to letter 145 in WDOCS, p. 55.

⁶⁸ Corresponding to letter 142 in WDOCS, p. 54.

144⁶⁹

wa/mu/3/154

Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Commerce
Gouvernement Impérial Ethiopien, Ministère du Commerce

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. We salute you respectfully. All the tax revenue derived from the Sibu region which was formerly under the jurisdiction of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen, has not been submitted to us by your officials. In fact, all the legally appointed judges in the area have been removed from their posts and the tax money forcefully collected from the village headmen (*ch'iqashum*). We have repeatedly written to you to straighten up the matter but we were not able to get a reply. Hence, we were forced to write and appeal to a higher authority to resolve the matter. Now we are sending you a letter written by the Ministry of Pen so that you can give strong directives to your officials. We hereby respectfully beg you to order your officials to give all the collected money to *Näggadras* Mäshäsha Gäbrä Maryam so that he can submit it to the Government [treasury]. *Mäggabit* 7, 1927 E.C./16 March 1935

[Seal]

145⁷⁰

wa/mu/3/153

Billo and Gudru District Customs
Administration de la Douane

Mäggabit 16, 1927 E.C./25 March 1935

Let it reach the Honourable *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Concerning the Sibu region tax income, I am sending you two official letters, one from the Ministry of Finance and the other from the Ministry of Pen. The first letter n. 3.813 was written by the Ministry of Finance on *Mäggabit* 7/16 March, and the second, n. 10152, on *Mäggabit* 15/24 March. The latter deals with receipts. Both letters request you to see to it that all the tax revenues collected are submitted to the Billo customs (house). Please order *Fitawrari* Olani so that this is done promptly.

[Seal of Billo and Gudru customs]

146

wa/mu/3/14

[Seal]

The Conquering Lion of Judah Haylä Sellasé, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia.

⁶⁹ Corresponding to letter 144, *ibid*.

⁷⁰ Corresponding to letter 143, WDOCS, p. 55.

Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Mängäsha Yelma. Concerning the provisions for our chiefs, we ordered *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér to collect contributions from the people of his country as food assistance to the departing armed forces to the war front.⁷¹ However, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam sent us a message claiming that he had not been able to carry out his orders because the peasants ran away to hide in the country of *Däjjazmach* Mängäsha without paying the money they were ordered or even without paying their annual land tax tributes. Hence, arrest all those who failed to pay their dues and are hiding in the country of *Däjjazmach* Mängäsha together with their cattle and give them back to *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. Those who can get guarantors can be released. Written on *Yäkkatit* 26, 1928 E.C./5 March 1936.

⁷¹ The last letter of this Correspondence refers to the March 1936 call of the Central Government to provide food assistance to the departing imperial army to the northern front to face the Italian Fascist invasion.

2.2. – Receipts of Taxes and Tributes Submitted to the Addis Ababa Treasury (1902–1928 E.C./1909–1936)

This section reproduces the correspondence exchanged between Naqamtee and Addis Ababa related to taxes and tributes for the years 1902–1928 E.C./1909–1936. All texts reproduced in this section derive from mǎzgāb wa/mu/4 hosted together with the rest of the royal correspondence in the Ethnographic Museum of Wallagga in Naqamtee under the title ልዩ ልዩ የገቢ ግብር ደረሰኞች ከግዕዝላዊ መንግስት ለደጃች ገ/እግዛኅብሔር እና ለደጃች ሀብተ ማሪያም የተሰጠ [Various Receipts Issued to Däjjach G/Egzi’abhér and his son Däjjach Habtä Maryam by the Central Government], accession code 4/ወ/መ–ነቀምቱ 025.17.¹

Mǎzgāb wa/mu/4 gives evidence of tributes, taxes and other regalia sent from the ruling house of Naqamtee to the central government in Addis Ababa during the crucial years of administrative inclusion of the western province within Imperial Ethiopia. During this period, Wallagga was a gold-producing western wǎrada administered by a local authority (a member of the ruling Naqamtee family) who was appointed as governor (gezhi) by the Crown in exchange of political allegiance expressed by a symbolic yearly tribute (geber) of 1000 wǎqét of gold. The raising of gold tribute by the Naqamtee rulers was at times problematic as shown in the correspondence below, and various stratagems were employed by the ruling Oromo family to have the yearly gold tribute condoned, diminished, or substituted by an equivalent value in money (birr), honey (mar) or ivory (yāzehon t’ers). The correspondence about fiscal matters is quite interesting as it provides detailed information on taxation, tribute-making and diversified forms of feeding the vast and punctilious Addis Ababa Treasury (Gwada) that supervised the complex registration and accounting of the incoming money and acquired property.

As the correspondence relating to fiscal matters was glued at different times on the right-hand-side pages of mǎzgāb 4, fiscal documents are presented here in chronological order; from the first acknowledgment formally sealed by the Court treasurer, Gwada Shum Dästa, for the tribute paid in gold by Gäbrä Egzi’abhér for the year 1900, “the year of Qeddus Yohannes” (Hamlé 19, 1902/July 26, 1909), till the simple acknowledgment by the Ministry of Finance for the 30 wǎqét of gold sent as a gift (mättaya) to the Ethiopian Court by Däjjach Habtä Maryam on 15 Hedar 1928 E.C./November 25, 1935.

¹ Cf. Solomon Alemayu Gutema, 2020, pp. 71–73.

All receipts and the related correspondence of mǎzgāb wa/mu/4 are signed and/or sealed by the respective sender or receiver. The individual documents are serially numbered at the top left; at the top right, the numbering corresponds to the registry number attributed to mǎzgāb 4 by the Ethnographic Museum cataloguers (4/wa/mu/025.1714967), a number which has been kept in the Amharic version (WDOCS) but has been here substituted by the three final numbers identifying each individual document. English translation for this section was provided by Etana Habte Dinka.

1

wa/mu/4/208

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. We have received your tribute for the year 1900 E.C./1907–1908, i.e., the year of St John, amounting to one thousand *wäqét* of gold. Tributes for the years 1901 E.C./1907–1908 and 1902 E.C./1908–1909 were all unpaid.² Let them be paid quickly. Written in Addis Ababa on *Hamlé* 19, 1902 E.C./July 26, 1909.

[Seal of the Treasurer, *Gwada shum* Dästa]

2

wa/mu/4/292

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. May the Saviour of the World (*Mädhanä Alām*) give you good health. This is to inform you that I have received four hundred *wäqét* of gold from the sale of the land. Written on *Yäkkatit* 10, 1903 E.C./February 17, 1911 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal of the Treasurer, *Gwada shum* Dästa]

[Seal]

3

wa/mu/4/294

[*Lij*] Iyasu, Crown Prince of the Ethiopian government and son of Emperor Menilek II of Ethiopia [to] *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. [With reference to] two hundred *gasha* of land you claimed to have bought in Sibü from *Fitawrari* Tayé, and

² By the year 1900 E.C. Naqamtee’s yearly tribute had been settled at 1,000 *wäqét* of gold. The gold tribute was however irregularly paid till the early 1920s, and various arrangements and negotiations were deployed to cover the frequent delays. For a summary background to Naqamtee’s applications for arrear payments, see letters 23, 59 below. The yearly tribute in gold was raised in 1933 to 1,200 *wäqét* of gold. See below, letter 84.

you complained (to me) that it was taken away (from you) by *Däjjach* Gugsä, (you may know) pay tribute for the same two hundred *gasha* of land to the governor of the territory. I have blessed it for you. Written on *Yäkkatit* 27, 1904 E.C./March 6, 1912.

4

wa/mu/4/277

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? How is your health? Thanks be to God, I am well. The money you borrowed on the 26th of *Tahsas* 1906 E.C. reached me in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Gäda. And I sent you its documentation in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Wäldä Maryam. May God help us to meet alive. Written on *Yäkkatit* 27, 1907 E.C./March 6, 1915.

[Seal]

5

wa/mu/4/233

May it reach the honoured and beloved friend *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am well. Your annual gold tribute, amounting to forty-one thousand *birr*, that I submitted to the treasury borrowing it on your behalf has now been paid in as the money reached me in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Wäldä Maryam. But as *Bäjerond* Yeggäzu is not in town you will calculate and pay the remainder of the interest when he comes back. It is also better if you prepare and send tribute for the last (year). Written on *Mäggabit* 11, 1907 E.C./March 20, 1915.

[Seal]

6

wa/mu/4/270

May it reach the honoured and beloved friend *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How is your health? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your message about *Shäykh* Hojälé has reached me. We sent you (the message) so that you will make [the payment] ready. Otherwise, we did not instruct you to pay it right now. We will remind you one more time to get ready [for the payment] and you will submit it [to the Treasury] the moment we instruct you to do so. Then we will record it on your name in the State Register [*mäzgäb*] when you start handing it over and tell us about it. Written on *Miyazya* 6, 1907 E.C./April 14, 1915 in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal of *Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis].

7

wa/mu/4/271

May it reach my lord *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. I salute you in respect. Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your request to register what you claimed to have been ordered by the seal of *Le'ul Lij* Iyasu to give [the amount of] one-year tribute to *Shäykh* Hojälé to be registered on your behalf as having been paid in and withdrawn from [the Treasury] cannot be done right now as my Lord (*Lij* Iyasu) has not notified it to me. It can be done after I consult with him later on. Written on *Miyazya* 6, 1907 E.C./April 14, 1915, Addis Ababa.

[Seal of the Minister of Palace, *Azazh* Mätafärya]

8

wa/mu/4/210

Number: 5

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of the Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this 11th day of *Hedar*, 1910 E.C./November 20, 1917, *Grazmach* Lämu, with the seal of *Azazh* Mätafärya, has submitted *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's annual tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold to the Addis Ababa treasury.

Clerk of the State Register

Gäbrä Sellasé

(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury

Wäldä S'adeq

(Signature)

[Signature of the *Gwada Shum* Dästa]

9

wa/mu/4/229

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine.

I have received your letter. I have also received the [special gift] of 10 *wäqét* of gold [you sent me]. May God bless you. You requested me to obtain 700 *gasha* of land in Sibü, if available, otherwise just 200 [*gasha*] in exchange for the same size of land within your domain. Your request has been granted. We hereby approved it for you so that you can use the 100 *gasha* of land you bought [in the past, which is now in your hand] as your father's *rist* in Sibü. In

exchange for this, give out 200 *gasha* of land in your country.³ We shall send a judge for this. Concerning the other matter, we gave Sibu country's tithes to *Däjjach* Gétachäw. You complained that tenants are bringing you letters (from Addis Ababa) when you administered justice over them and now even some others who did not face such judgment started doing the same. You must continue in your old task [of delivering justice]. I have informed the judges here that people who did not receive justice from you should not get the paper they may bring to you. Concerning your complaint [seeking] to have the judges removed, you are expected to bear with them for some time. Written on *Tahsas* 25, 1910 E.C./January 3, 1918, in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

10

wa/mu/4/297

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. We are hereby sending [to you] a judge [to rule over] matters of the people who represented themselves with *Fitawrari* Déréssa as their attorney and all the issues they agreed and disagreed on. Regarding your request to obtain 200 *gasha* (of land) in Sibu in exchange [for the same size of land in your domain], we are hereby sending you *Däjjach* Haylu as a judge for 6y6this matter to be dealt with, get it done. Let God help us to meet alive. Written on *Säné* 8, 1910 E.C./June 15, 1918 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

11

wa/mu/4/290

I, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, according to the words of Empress [Zäwditu] and of *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government, received 146 *gasha* of land in Gutto from *Qäññazmach* Boräna, and 54 *gasha* from the *qoro* of *Qäññazmach* Nämärra. In total I have received 200 *gasha* of land from *Fitawrari* Abébé in the presence of *Däjjach* Haylu as a judge. Written on *Hamlé* 24, 1910 E.C./July 31, 1918.

³ On the complex exchange of land involving 200 *gasha* in Sibuu territory, see GE's correspondence to CG (letters 162, 215) and letters 13, 15 and 45 below.

12

wa/mu/4/279

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter has reached me. Regarding the land [you obtained in] Sibü [in exchange for the same size of land in your domain] it is good that you and *Fitawrari* Abébé agreed with one another. I have also sent a letter to him [confirming the exchange]. Written on *Mäskäräm* 11, 1911 E.C./September 21, 1918, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

13

wa/mu/4/300

I, *Fitawrari* Abébé, with permission from *Ras* Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government, have sold 200 *gasha* of land for 2000 *birr* to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér from my Sibü country. These [200 *gasha* of land] extend from the boundary with the country of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér at Uke River down to the Angär and up [the hill] to the country of *Qäññazmach* Nämärä where the *qälad* [system of land measurement] was laid down. The [200 *gasha* of land] I am now selling to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér lies in the lowland forest territory of mine that I govern through *Qäññazmach* Nämärä. I hereby confirm with my seal that I sold the land to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. The tax payment has been registered in the government ledger book. No *Shaläqa* should be appointed over this land. All lands lying beyond this 200 *gasha* are mine. *Qäññazmach* Käba represented *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér during the agreement. [Written on] *Hamlé* 4, 1911 E.C./July 11, 1919, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

14

wa/mu/4/228

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The land you requested to buy from *Fitawrari* Abébé in the lowland forest territory he governs through *Qäññazmach* Nämärä has been approved. Concerning the amount of tax [you would be required to pay] on the land, it is registered in the ledger-book that you should pay 30 *gundo* of honey until it becomes productive and add 20 more [*gundo* of honey] once it becomes productive and pay a total of yearly tribute of 50 *gundo* of honey. Written on *Hamlé* 6, 1911 E.C./July 13, 1919.

15

wa/mu/4/301

I, *Fitawrari* Abébé, have received 1,000 *birr* from *Qāññāzmach* Kāba, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s representative, regarding the sale of the [200 *gasha* of] land. It has reached me. Written on *Hamlé* 9, 1911 E.C./July 16, 1919 in Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

16

wa/mu/4/278

Sent from *Däjjazmach* Wäldä Gäbri’él, the Ethiopian Government Minister of Palace. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. I have safely returned back from where I was sent because of your prayer (*wuqabi*). Your letter has reached me. I have now completed the [process of] registering the land you have exchanged with *Fitawrari* Abébé, it has now been registered in the [government] ledger book. It is delayed to this day because the letter you sent last time [to request the registration] bears [a wrong] date. And yet, as the God of Israel is generous and merciful, let him help us meet alive. Written on *T’eqemt* 19, 1912 E.C./July 16, 1919.

[Seal]

17

wa/mu/4/276

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How has your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. *Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis has confirmed that you did not get a receipt after paying him back the money you borrowed from him. But he [*Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis] stated that he lost the receipt when his residence was taken and thus he had sent you a letter confirming safe receipt of the money. Now he reaffirmed to me that in case there is something more you want him to do to replace the receipt, he promised me to do whatever you ask him to do. So, if there is anything you want him do beyond producing the letter he sent you, send me what you think he should do and I will make him do it. *Yäkkatit* 21, 1912 E.C./February 29, 1920.

[Seal]

18

wa/mu/4/212

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach*

Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The letter you sent me concerning the death of *Däjjach* Haylä Maryam has reached me. His death is so disappointing even for those [of us] who are around and had attended [the funeral and the mourning] let alone for those [who were far away] and only heard the news. The fact that he and his brother died one after another made it even more distressing. We cannot do anything about this [death], since it is the final fate of all human beings. I have received your tribute of 1000 *wäqét*. Thank you. Written on *Mäggabit* 9, 1912 E.C./ March 18, 1920, in Addis Ababa.

19

wa/mu/4/282

Number 6

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance
 Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury
 For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Mäggabit* 13, 1912 E.C./March 22, 1920, *Fitawrari* Wäldä Maryam has submitted *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's annual tribute for the year 1907 E.C. amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold to the Addis Ababa treasury.

Chief clerk of the State Register
 Gäbrä Sellasé

Clerk of the Treasury
 Bäshah

Head of the Treasury

20

wa/mu/4/299

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How has your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Concerning your request about the tithes of the country [land] of *Fitawrari* Abébé, since the country is under your governorship, let the tithes be collected in your hands. But let the people of *Däjjach* Gänämé be informed of the amount collected so that they are aware of it. *Qäññazmach* Käbbädä has delivered to me the oral message you told him. I too sent you an oral message.⁴ Written on *Miyazya* 1, 1912 E.C./April 9, 1920, in Addis Ababa.

⁴ Additional oral messages frequently accompanied the written content of the letter exchange. In this letter the practice of accompanying written messages with oral ones is openly stated by *Ras* Täfari and acknowledged by Gäbrä Egzi'abhér.

[Seal]

21

wa/mu/4/224

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. How has your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The 1000 *wäqét* of gold you have sent as [your annual] tribute has reached us. Written on *Miyazya* 4, 1912 E.C./April 12, 1920 in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

22

wa/mu/4/298

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. Your letter reached me. You requested to register the hereditary *shaläqennät* you said you had received by the generosity of *Janhoy* (Menilek) in the government ledger book. There is no time now to investigate and take care of lands where the *qälad* [system] was introduced, and relevant stakeholders obtained *siso* shares because of the campaign (*zämächa*) we are in. Let it remain as it was, and you will get it done after the size [of the land] is known, either through an investigation of the former ledger book or by applying the *qälad* [system] once again when we return from the campaign. You have also requested to get tribute out of the land you have obtained in *Sibu* in exchange [for the land in your domain] and have it registered in the ledger book. As the *balabbat* of the region have submitted a petition on this matter, send us a representative to remind us the matter after their [*balabbat*’s] case is settled. Then we shall do something about it. Written on *Miyazya* 26, 1912 E.C./May 4, 1920.

23

wa/mu/4/273

[Seal]

Empress *Zäwditu*, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. How have your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. We have seen the letter you sent us concerning the debt of gold tribute with you.⁵ We have completed everything and sent it you a letter with the seal of

⁵ First mention in this *mäzgäb* of GE’s tribute indebtment with the central government.

S'ähafe Te 'zaz Wäldä Mäsqäl and you will get it in there. But as we are in serious scarcity of butter to be used for the *täzkar* of *Janhoy*, let you collect it from the peasants and send us 500 *gundo* of butter quickly before the end of (month of) *Tahsas*/December. Written on *Tahsas* 9, 1913 E.C./December 18, 1920.

24

wa/mu/4/272

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How has your health been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. You have complained to *Etégé* (Zäwditu) and to *Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government, that “as *Ras Bitwüddäd* Täsämma added 13,000 *birr* on my regular annual tribute accurately fixed by *Janhoy*, its burden has prevented me to pay my tributes on time. Let the small amount of gold remaining with me from my tribute be cancelled so that I can adjust myself to the difficulties. Henceforth, I will not fail to pay my tribute in full”. Now quickly pay your tribute for the year 1912 E.C./1919–1920, your tribute in gold prior to that year has been graciously cancelled. Nevertheless, as we are in serious scarcity of butter to be used for *Janhoy's* *täzkar*, they [the Empress and *ras* Täfäri] have ordered that you raise quickly from your country and send us 500 *gundo* of butter (*qibé*) (up to the day of) *Tahsas Mädhane aläm* in the form of aid. Since the assignment to do this is just for you and the *täzkar* is planned at the beginning of (the month of) *T'err*, it would be good if you could think about its arrival. Written on *Tahsas* 1, 1913 E.C./ December 10, 1920, in the town of Addis Ababa.⁶

[Seal]

25

wa/mu/4/274

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Thanks be to God, I am fine. How have you been? Your letter has reached me. I have also received the 4,000 *birr* you sent as aid for purchase of butter for *Janhoy's* *täzkar*, 100 *wäqét* of gold and 250 cups. May God

⁶ At the end of the letter, a note in Ge'ez and Amharic claims the following: *Malakä Sälam Wäldä Mäsqäl zewe 'etu s'ähafe te 'zaz zäre 'zen sämi'a läyesmas yämil mahtäm.*

bless you. Let God pay you from His [*Janhoy's*] blessings. Written on *T'err* 14, 1913 E.C./January 22, 1921, in the town of Addis Ababa.

26

wa/mu/4/281

Number 5

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Yäkkatit* 24, 1913 E.C./March 3, 1921, *Grazmach* Berru has submitted *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's annual tribute for the year 1908 E.C. amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold to the Addis Ababa treasury.

Chief clerk of the State Register
(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury
Bäshah

Head of the Treasury
Wäldämanél T'amqé

27

wa/mu/4/221

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent in as your annual tribute has reached us. May God bless you. Written on *Yäkkatit* 28, 1913 E.C./March 7, 1921.

[Seal]

28

wa/mu/4/213

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Thanks be to God, I am fine. How have you been? The 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent in as your annual tribute has reached [us]. Written on *Mäggabit* 1, 1913 E.C./March 7, 1921, in the town of Addis Ababa.

29

wa/mu/4/211

I, *Mämher* Habtä Wäld, have begged *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam to give me a plot of land to build a house in the town of Gimbi and he gave it to me out of his *rist*. The land, handed over to me by the judge, *Qäññazmach* Aga

Lämmi, is in the permanently established *qälad* area [of *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam]. Thus, I will not claim it to be a land granted to me [in lieu of salary] as a government appointee. The *rist* belongs to my Lord *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam, I will leave the land any time I may be asked to do so. I vow it by Haylä Sellasé's death. *Nähasé* 27, 1913 E.C./September 2, 1921.

30

wa/mu/4/223

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta. How have you been? When *Fitawrari* Abébé was governor of Sibu, Gäbrä Egzi'abhér applied to us saying, "let me get that land added to my country and give another one in exchange from my territory". We approved his request and he took it with our permission. Now *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér sent a complaint that you jailed his chief and robbed the territory. Free the jailed man, leave the land, let the robbed money be returned as we have given the land by our own free will, and on your part, take the exchange for it from *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. If you claim that there is anything else in it, leave the land free and let both of you send your respective attorney to argue here on the matter. Written on *Mäggabit* 1, 1914 E.C./March 10, 1922.

31

wa/mu/4/295

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter has reached us. We have seen the case you have presented regarding the land you took in exchange from Sibu where you said "*Däjjach* Mulugéta has occupied [by force] my land". We informed him by telephone [i.e., by telegraph] that he should leave the land free and what has been taken away must be returned. On your part, give the land's equivalent in exchange for your country. If you claim there is anything beyond this, let both of you send your respective attorneys to argue here over the matter. Written on *Mäggabit* 1, 1914 E.C./March 10, 1922, in the town of Addis Ababa.

32

wa/mu/4/225

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Mulugéta. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine.

When *Fitawrari* Abébé was governor of Sibü, Gäbrä Egzi’abhér applied to us saying, “let me get that land added to my country and give another one in exchange from my territory”. We approved his request and he took it with our permission. Now *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér sent a complaint that you have jailed his chief and robbed the territory. Free the jailed man, leave the land, let the robbed money be returned as we have given the land by our own free will, and on your part, take the exchange from *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. If you claim that there is anything else in it, leave the land free and let both of you send your respective attorney to argue here on the matter. Written on *Mäggabit* 2, 1914 E.C./March 11, 1922, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

33

wa/mu/4/283

Number 6

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Genbot* 11, 1914 E.C./May 19, 1922, *Qäññazmach* Est’ifanos⁷ has submitted *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s annual tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold to the Addis Ababa Treasury.

Chief clerk of the State Register
(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury
(Signature)

Head of the Treasury

34

wa/mu/4/222

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you have sent as your tribute has reached us. *Genbot* 22, 1914 E.C./May 30, 1922, Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

⁷ First mention of *Qäññazmach* Est’ifanos being charged of submitting the gold tribute in this correspondence. On *Qäññazmach* Est’ifanos, see GEC, letter 152.

35

wa/mu/4/293

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. You sent me a message saying: "let *Qäññazmach Käba* not represent me for the dispute about the lowland forest territory of *Handäq* for which *Qäññazmach Mänker* and *Qäññazmach Ta'i* have accused me. I will either send my attorney or come myself". It is alright, you may send your attorney and handle it in the autumn. [Written on] *Säné* 16, 1914 E.C./June 18, 1922, Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

36

wa/mu/4/214

[Seal]

Empress *Zäwditu*, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*, daughter of Emperor *Menilek* of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold has reached [us]. Written on *Säné* 21, 1914 E.C./June 23, 1922.

37

wa/mu/4/254

[Seal]

Empress *Zäwditu*, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*, daughter of Emperor *Menilek* of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* says that⁸ "a lowland forested land called *Handäq* was my father and grandfather's territory they had been protecting for its being a habitat for wild animals. Later on, I consulted with *Janhoy* [Emperor *Menilek*], and made an official edict (*awaj*) that prohibits both hunting and crossing through this territory. And then, when *Däjjazmach Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay* came as the governor of *Däjjach Dämessäw's* country, I told the Empress that he knew very little about the past edict as he is a guest [here], hence I handed over to him a sealed imperial letter stating that he has to leave the territory untouched as in the past. And he proclaimed the edict (to his

⁸ The *verbatim* quotation of *Gäbrä Egzi'abhér* in Empress *Zäwditu's* letter concerning GE's long-cherished *Handaq* property shows both the wide use of direct quotations in the official exchange and how the *Naqamtee* ruler cared for the family territory. See GEC letter 109.

country) so that no one would go there [for hunting]. In the past month of *Nähasé* a man of *Däjjazmach* Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay killed four buffalos and returned home. Then, I ordered my guards to arrest anybody who may come thereafter for stealing [wild animals]. Again, on the 24th of *Mäskäräm* [1915] E.C./October 4 [1922] somebody fired at one of my buffalos and when my guards arrived, after hearing the sound of gunshot, the people who had just killed a buffalo were caught red-handed. Then my guards attempted to arrest them, but they refused and instead killed two men from my people, after which my people killed six and arrested eight of them”. We now told him to send us the people under arrest with a sealed letter. You must also send the right person who may argue on your behalf concerning this matter. For the future, do not touch and forbid your countrymen from approaching that territory. Written on *Hedar* 20, 1915 E.C./November 29, 1922.

38

wa/mu/4/254

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter has reached me. How is your health? Are you not well? The tribute you sent has reached (here). Written on *Säné* 2, 1915 E.C./June 9, 1923.

39

wa/mu/4/280

Number 10

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of the Addis Ababa Treasury

For One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Säné* 8, 1915 E.C./June 15, 1923, *Grazmach* Eticha has submitted to the Addis Ababa treasury *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s annual tribute for the year 1915 E.C./1923–1924 amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold.

Chief clerk of the State Register

Clerk of the Treasury

Gäbrä Sellasé

Wäldä S’adeq

(Signature)

(Signature)

Head of the Treasury

40

wa/mu/4/226

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am

fine. Your letter has reached us. The gold tribute you sent has reached us. Written on *Säné* 17, 1915 E.C./June 24, 1923, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

41

wa/mu/4/284

Number 10

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Miyazya* 7, 1916 E.C./April 14, 1924, *Qäññazmach* Est'ifanos has submitted to the Addis Ababa treasury *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's annual tribute for the year 1914 E.C./1921–1922 amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold.

Chief clerk of the State Register

Eshété Kenfe

(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury

Bäshah

(Signature)

Head of the Treasury

Wäldämanél T'äyqé

42

wa/mu/4/288

I, *Grazmach* Abdi Käba, have received 300 *birr* from *Grazmach* Efa Bärki only to give it to *Qäññazmach* Käba. It has reached me. Written on *Genbot* 24, 1916 E.C./June 1, 1924.

[Seal]

43

wa/mu/4/275

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. We have seen the letter you sent us concerning your debt of gold tribute. We have completed everything and sent [a letter] to you with the seal of *S'ähafe Te'zaz* Wäldä Mäsqäl, you will get our response there. But as we are in serious scarcity of butter to be used for the *täzkar* of *Janhoy*, let you collect it from the country and send us 500 *gundo* of butter quickly before the end of *Tahsas*. Written on *Tahsas* 10, 1916, E.C.

I, *Fitawrari* Märsha, have received a total of six letters from the hands of *Fitawrari* Mäkonnen. These are, first, a letter from *Bitwäddäd* Haylä Giyorgis (written above); second, a letter from the Minister of Palace *Azazh* Mätafärya; third, a letter from *S'ähafe Te'zaz* Wäldä Mäsqäl; two letters from Her Majesty

Empress Zäwditu, fifth, one letter from His Majesty *Janhoy Ras Täfäri*, Heir to the Throne [of the Ethiopian Government]. Written on *Mäggabit* 5, 1917 E.C./March 14, 1925. Märsha (Signature)

44

wa/mu/4/227

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent in the hands of *Qäññazmach Est’ifanos* has reached me. *Miyazya* 7, 1917 E.C./April 15, 1925, A.A.

45

wa/mu/4/216

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. I have seen the letter you sent me concerning your land in Gänji. *Däjjach* Mulugéta went to the country of the *färänji* accompanying *Ras Täfäri*. So, bring us the case when he returns home. Written on *Miyazya* 24, 1916 E.C./May 2, 1925.

46

wa/mu/4/285

Number 13

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Miyazya* 14, 1917 E.C./April 22, 1925, *Qäññazmach* Aga Lämmi has submitted to the Addis Ababa treasury *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam’s annual tribute for the year 1915 E.C./1922–1923 amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold.⁹

Chief clerk of the State Register

(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury

Bäshah

Head of Finance

Wäldä S’adeq

⁹ First mention of *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam submitting Naqamtee’s annual tribute in lieu of *Däjjach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér starting with the year 1915 E.C./1922–1923.

47

wa/mu/4/217

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached [us]. Written on *Genbot* 10, 1917 E.C./May 18, 1925.

48

wa/mu/4/230

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached [us]. Written on *Genbot* 11, 1917 E.C./May 19, 1925, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

49

wa/mu/4/218

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached [us]. The 9,000 *birr* you sent [us] because of a tribute in honey added to you last year also reached [us].¹⁰ Written on *Genbot* 23, 1918 E.C./May 31, 1926.

50

wa/mu/4/231

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent reached [us]. The 9,000 *birr* you sent because of a tribute in honey added on to you last year also reached [us]. [Written on] *Säné* 8, 1918 E.C./June 15, 1926.

[Seal]

¹⁰ The yearly tribute in honey for Naqamtee is later attested (see below, letter 67) in 1,000 *birr*.

51

wa/mu/4/286

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? All the following [notables in your domain] *Fitawrari* Tä'a, *Fitawrari* Qänä'a, *Qäññazmach* Guta, *Qäññazmach* Dité, *Qäññazmach* Aga, *Qäññazmach* Tärfaša and others, 28 in total, have submitted a petition that their power, *rist* and wealth have been taken away illegally without any misdeeds on their part. Send a sealed letter to somebody who may represent you on this matter. Mention his name specifically in the letter. The man should arrive in Addis Ababa by *Mäskäräm* 17, 1919 E.C./September 27, 1926. Written on *Nähasé* 16, 1918 E.C./August 22, 1926, in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

52

wa/mu/4/287

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. *Fitawrari* Qänä'a, *Qäññazmach* Aga and the other [notables] who petitioned complaints against you have come to you agreeing to the words of the elders who arbitrated [between you and the notables]. You also need to agree to this genuine (*chäwa*) word that was arbitrated between you [and your adversaries]. *Tahsas* 10, 1919 E.C./December 19, 1926, A.A.

[Seal]

53

wa/mu/4/219

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? The annual tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached [us]. *Miyazya* 15, 1919 E.C./April 23, 1927.

54

wa/mu/4/232

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. Let it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. A tribute of 1,000 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached [us]. Written on *Miyazya* 15, 1919 E.C./April 23, 1927 in the town of Addis Ababa.

[Seal]

55

wa/mu/4/220

Number 5

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of the Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Säné* 19, 1920 E.C./June 26, 1928, *Qäññazmach* [Est'ifanos?] has submitted to the Addis Ababa Treasury, confirmed with the seal of *Basha* Wäldä Yohannes, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam's annual tribute for the year 1918 E.C./1925–1926 amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold.

Chief clerk of the State Register

Clerk of the Treasury

(Signature)

(Signature)

Head of Finance

Wäldä S'adeq

56

wa/mu/4/252

Ras Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter has reached me. Happy New Year for you too. Let [God] help us with his grace to reach the coming year in peace together. The New Year (*Enkut'at'ash*) gift of 15 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached me. Written on *Mäskäräm* 19, 1921 E.C./September 29, 1928, A.A.

[Seal]

57

wa/mu/4/252

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Your letter has reached me. Happy New Year to you, too. Let [God] help us with his grace to reach next year in peace together. The [New Year gift of] 15 *wäqét* of gold you sent has reached me. Written on *T'eqemt* 2, 1921 E.C./October 12, 1928, A.A.

58

wa/mu/4/250

[Seal]¹¹

Negus Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government, and *Endärasé* in full authority of the Ethiopian government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter and the 10 *wäqét* of gold you sent have reached me. May God bless you. *Tahsas* 16, 1921 E.C./December 25, 1928.

59

wa/mu/4/234

May it reach *Bäjerond Zäläqä Agedäw*, Minister of Finance. *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has applied to His Majesty *Negus Täfäri* concerning the unpaid tribute for the years 1919 E.C./1926–1927 and 1920 E.C./1927–1928. Accordingly, *Fitawrari* Haylu Wäldä Rufé, *Ato Wäldämanél T'änqé*, *Basha* Gäbrä Mika'el, and *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam himself were nominated to calculate the balance. His father Gäbrä Egzi'abhér had applied to Her Majesty the Empress and His Majesty the *Negus* to have his debt of gold tribute accumulated on him for the years up to 1912 E.C./1919–1920 cancelled, which had been granted.¹² Thus, he [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] was informed to pay for the years after 1912 E.C./1919–1920, but the cancellation letter was not brought to the Treasury resulting in your [Minister of Finance]written letters of 1917 E.C./ 1924–1925 and 1918 E.C./1925–1926 requesting [*Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam] to pay the debt of gold tribute for the years 1912 E.C./1919–1920 and 1913 E.C./1920–1921. And now, since you have written wrong letters in 1917 E.C./1924–1925 and 1918 E.C./1925–1926, make some marks [on the Treasury's tribute record] for the years 1919 E.C./1926–1927 and 1920 E.C./1927–1928, and if it can be proved that he [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] had been granted tribute cancellation for the years after 1912 E.C./1919–1920, enter into the government record what you have been told to write down. Nevertheless, for the years after 1921 E.C./1928–1929, you must do [the tribute recording] and receive it as you were ordered to do in the past, including the

¹¹ Note that Täfäri's seal, like Empress Zäwditu's letter 57 above, is positioned on top of his letter to Habtä Maryam as Täfäri is now *Negus* and no longer *Ras*.

¹² This appears to be an internal note sent by the Treasury to the Minister of Finance clarifying tribute cancellations for Naqamtee's accumulated debts for the years 1912 E.C./1919–1920 and 1919–20 E.C./1926–1928. See Receipt 63 below for the gold tribute paid for the year 1921 E.C./1928–29. For the more stringent norms of the 1930s see below, letter 84, Haylä Sellasé to Habtä Maryam, 10 January 1933.

use of the seal of the Ethiopian government *S'ähafe Te 'zaz*, and the signatures of *Bäjerond Zäläqä* and *Haylä Maryam*. On the 24th of the month of *T'eqemt* E.C./November 3 [1928], *Qäññazmach* Kaba received it from *Bäjerond Zäläqä*, gave it to the chief clerk of the Treasury, *Wäldä Mäsqäl*, and had it attached to the King's Register after making sent a copy of it. In case of problems arising from this matter, as stated above, the draft is just there. [Written on] *Mäggabit* 9, 1921 E.C./March 18, 1929.

60

wa/mu/4/240

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace
 Receipt of honey tribute from *Shaläqa* provinces
 Country: *Sibu* under the governorship of *Fitawrari Nämärra*
 Country Governor: *Däjjazmach* *Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*
 Chief of the *Shaläqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* *Käba*
 Amount of honey submitted: 60 *gundo* cups
 Reason for payment: Annual tribute for 200 *gasha* [of land]
 Written in: ledger book___ Page___ Number___
 Remark: Years 1920 E.C./1927–1928 and 1921 E.C./1928–1929
Tahsas 5, 1921 E.C./December 14, 1929
Bäjerond Zäläqä Agedäw
 Minister of Finance
 (Signature)

[Seal]

61

wa/mu/4/253

[Seal]

Negus Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government and *Endärasé* in full authority of the Ethiopian government. May it reach *Däjjazmach* *Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér*. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter has reached me. The New Year [gift] of 15 *wäqét* of gold and the letter you sent have reached me. May God bless you. Happy New Year for you too. Written on *T'eqemt* 6, 1922 E.C./October 16, 1929, Addis Ababa.

62

wa/mu/4/258

Number 32

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance
 Receipt of items registered at the Government *Eqa bét*

Eqa bét (Commodities Warehouse)

Name of the person who submitted the items	Types of item	Purpose for which the items are submitted
Submitted by hand from <i>Qäññazmach</i> Birratu, but belonging to <i>Däjjazmach</i> Habtä Maryam	One ivory weighing 513 <i>wäqét</i>	Donation
	One ivory weighing 596 <i>wäqét</i>	
	One ivory weighing 401 <i>wäqét</i>	
	One ivory weighing 486 <i>wäqét</i>	
	One ivory weighing 402 <i>wäqét</i> . <i>T'eqemt</i> 18, 1912 E.C./October 28, 1929. Signature.	

63

wa/mu/4/239

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: One thousand *wäqét* of gold

Today, on this day of *Hedar* 18, 1922 E.C./November 27, 1929, *Qäññazmach* Käba has submitted to the Addis Ababa treasury *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam's annual tribute of the year 1921 amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold.

Chief clerk of the State Register

Clerk of the Treasury

(Signature)

(Signature)

Head of the Finance

(Signature)

64

wa/mu/4/255

To the Honourable *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Your letter, written on *T'eqemt* 26, has reached me. The receipt confirming submission of your annual tribute for the year 1921 E.C. will reach you [soon]. I have also received [the gift] you sent me. May God bless you. Let [God] allow us meet alive. Written on *Tahsas* 5, 1922 E.C./December 14, 1929, in [the town of] Addis Ababa.

65

wa/mu/4/235

Number 19

Ethiopian Government Special Court

Receipt for money held for the deliberation of justice

From *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam, for debt of Bälay AlämayähuReceived from the hands of *Qäññazmach* Käba

To be paid for the Bank of Abyssinia

I have received 1,000 *birr*.*Tahsas* 10, 1922 E.C./December 19, 1929

(Signature)

Wäldä Täklé

66

wa/mu/4/244

Negus Täfäri, Heir to the Throne of the Ethiopian Government and *endärasé* in full authority of the Ethiopian Government. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The yearly school aid of 200 *wäqét* of gold and 8,000 *birr* you sent in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Käba has reached me. Happy New Year to you, too. Written on *Tahsas* 23, 1922 E.C./January 1, 1930, in [the town of] Addis Ababa.

67

wa/mu/4/236

Number 38

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace

Receipt of honey tribute from *Shaläqa* provinces

Country: Näqämt[é]

Country Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhérChief of the *Shaläqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* Käba

Amount of honey submitted: 10,046 *gundo*, at the cost of 12 *birr* [per *gundo*]

Reason for payment: Annual tribute for 1046 *birr*

Written in: State Register Page 1 Number 8

Remark: Year 1922 E.C./1930, 163 out of the annual tribute of 1,000 *gundo* of honey, has been weighed at the cost of 12 *birr* [per *gundo*], at the total cost of 1,954, and expended [sent to *Negus* Täfäri]. That is done according to the words of *Negus* Täfäri. The remainder has been submitted [to the Treasury].

Balance: *gundo* cupsThe (tribute of) the year 1922 is only 1,000 *gundo* [of honey].Year 1922 E.C., *T'err* 1/January 9, 1930.

[Seal]

68

wa/mu/4/238

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Your letter has reached me. Happy New Year to you too. The annual tribute you sent for the year 1921 E.C. amounting to 1,000 *wäqét* of gold has reached [us]. Written on *Yäkkatit* 24, 1922 E.C./ March 3, 1930, A.A.

69

wa/mu/4/237

[Seal]

Empress Zäwditu, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, daughter of Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Your letter has reached me. The 10,046 *birr* you sent in lieu of the annual tribute in honey for the year 1921 E.C. has reached me. Written on *Mäggabit* 2, 1922 E.C. (Signature)

70

wa/mu/4/242

[Seal]

Haylä Sellasé I, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of Judah, Emperor of Ethiopia.

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Thanks be to God, we are fine. Your letter has reached me. The reason why you were told to pay the tribute necessarily in gold and that you cannot replace it with *birr* is the fact that the Minister of Finance has reported [to me] that there is no other place [in the Ethiopian empire] able to pay tribute in gold.¹³ Nevertheless, there is nothing bad if I do not get the gold I asked [you] to lend me.

Concerning what you wrote me about a certain Bäyyänä Sharäw, there is nothing that forbids you and your people not to mine gold. It would be inevitable to take back the gold bearing land if it has been leased as concession to

¹³ This letter confirms the importance of Naqamtee as a gold-producing region.

the *färänji* in the past and is still in their possession. This we may do through [court] argument. *Miyazya* 21, 1922 E.C./April 29, 1930, A.A. (Signature)

71

wa/mu/4/247

Number 88

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace

Receipt for any money and items to be submitted to the Palace *Chäw* House

Source area and reason (for payment)	<i>Näimra</i> of the paper	Number of the items	<i>Dawulla</i>	<i>Qunna</i>	<i>Qate</i>	<i>Kubayya</i>	Money <i>Birr Mahl</i> cents
Sent from <i>Däjjazmach</i> Habtä Maryam according to <i>Janhoy's</i> words by telephone, ordered and signed by <i>S'ähafe Te'zaz Afäwäraq</i> and sent in the hands of <i>Qäññazmach Wäldé</i>		124					
Total 124	In number						

In words: One hundred and twenty-four.

Submitted to the *Chäw* House on *Genbot* 2, 1922 E.C./May 10, 1930.

Signature of the clerk

Seal of the receiver at the *Chäw* House

Signature of the person who submitted it

[Seal]

72

wa/mu/4/246

Number 2002

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of the Addis Ababa Treasury

For: Four thousand *birr*

Today, on this day of *Genbot* 4, 1922 E.C./May 12, 1930, *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam's servant, *Fitawrari* Märsha, has submitted to the Addis Ababa treasury as the help of 4,000 *birr* for the *täzkar* of Her Majesty Empress Zäwditu.

Chief clerk of the State Register

(Signature)

Clerk of the Treasury

(Signature)

Head of Finance

(Signature)

73

wa/mu/4/245

Number 87

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace

Receipt for any money and items to be submitted to the Palace *Chäw* House

Source area and reason (for payment)	Number of the paper	Number of the items	<i>Dawulla</i>	<i>Qunna</i>	<i>Qate</i>	<i>Kubayya</i>	Money <i>birr mahl cents.</i>
Sent from <i>Däjjazmach</i> Habtä Maryam according to <i>Janhoy's</i> words by telephone, ordered and signed by <i>S'ähafe Te'zaz Afäwäraq</i> and sent in the hands of <i>Qäññazmach Wäldé</i>		350					
Total 350	In number						

[The amount] in words: Three hundred and fifty

Submitted to *Chäw* House on *Genbot* 7, 1922 E.C./May 15, 1930.

Signature of the clerk
Mäzgäbu Wälädä'ab

Seal of the receiver at *Chäw* House
Signature & seal of the person who submitted it
[Seal]

74

wa/mu/4/241

[Seal]

Haylä Sellasé I, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of Judah, Emperor of Ethiopia

May it reach *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. The money and *mäsob* you sent to help for the *täzkar* of Her Majesty [Empress Zäwditu] has reached [me]. May God bless you. Written on *Genbot* 25, 1922 E.C./June 2, 1930, Addis Ababa. (Signature)

75

wa/mu/4/243

Number 242
Ethiopian Government Ministry of Pen
Addis Ababa

May it reach the Honourable *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam.

The four thousand *birr* and four hundred seventy-four *mäsob* you sent as help for the *täzkar* of Her Majesty Empress Zäwditu have reached [us]. And for this, we sent you a letter with the seal of *Janhoy*, which you may find it enclosed here with this letter. Written on *Genbot* 25, 1922 E.C./June 2, 1930. (Signature)

[Seal]

76

wa/mu/4/257

Number 84
Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

A Receipt to be issued for any person who pays expected money

The person who submitted the money: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér

Reason for Payment: Support for the Crown Festival [coronation of Emperor Haylä Sellasé I]

Source Area of the Money: Sent from Naqamtee in the hands of *Qäññazmach* Birratu

Amount of the money: Twenty thousand and nine hundred *birr*.

[Amount] in number: 20, 900.00 *birr*

(In the month of) *T'eqemt* 14, 1923 E.C./October 24, 1930¹⁴

(Signatures)

77

wa/mu/4/259

Number 33

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

I have received commodities listed here under

Warehouse (*Eqa bét*)

Name of the person who submitted the commodity	Type of Commodity submitted	Goods intended under the title of
<i>Däjjach</i> Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér in the hands of <i>Qäññazmach</i> Birratu	One head of Buffalo with its horn, one head of bush-buck (<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>) with its horn, one saddle ornament of olden days, two cups made of wood and plates, four cups of gird made of horn for drinking <i>champagne</i> , other two smaller ones from here (Addis Ababa), four wooden stick of ornamental tail, four combs made of ivory, four hair pins (<i>wäläba</i>) made of ivory, another <i>wäläba</i> made of iron, three saucers made of horn, one food basket (<i>agälgil</i>) ornamented with beads, two saucers made of fronds, four Galla spears, two small Shanqella spears, four spears for stabbing elephants, one ancient bronze spear (<i>ankassé</i>) of girls, two Shanqella spears (<i>qäst</i>) with their bows, two swords. <i>T'eqemt</i> 10, 1923 E.C./October 20,	Donation

¹⁴ Receipts 76 and 78 show the support of Naqamtee's administration for the Coronation of Emperor Haylä Sellasé on 2 November 1930. In May 1930 *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam had sent 4,000 *birr* and 474 *mäsob* of food for Empress Zäwditu's state funeral (*täzkar*). See above, Receipts 74, 75.

	1930.	
One wooden land clearing tool, four hand whip and those [made] of elephant [skin], two neck bracelet made of ivory.		

78

wa/mu/4/260

Number 34

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance
 I have received commodities listed here under
 Warehouse (*Eqa bét*)

Submitter name	Type of Commodity submitted	Goods intended for
	One fur-stilted lion skin with mare (<i>gofäre</i>)	Coronation
	Two fur-stilted lion skin	
	One non fur-stilted lion skin	
	Four wooden food table (<i>mäsob</i>), one old <i>mäsob</i> , a big wooden pot (<i>gänbo</i>)	
	Six three-legged wooden chairs (<i>bärchuma</i>), three chairs	
	Wooden iron, one circle glass ornamented with woollen cover	
	Two wooden light stands, three three-legged food plates, another four wooden food plates.	

	Four tiger skins, two <i>agälgil</i> , four wooden food plates without covers	
	One small wooden <i>agälgil</i> , one small milk pot (<i>chocho</i>), another old but ornamented milk pot, two traditional carpets, two oblong cups made of horn, three swords of olden time, one cup made of ivory. <i>T'eqemt</i> 18, 1923 E.C./October 28, 1930.	

(Signature)

79

wa/mu/4/261

Number 121

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace

Receipt of Tribute Paid in Honey by *Shaläqa* ProvinceCountry Name: Naqamtee *wäräda*Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhérName of *Shambäl*Chief *Shaläqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* Kaba

Reason for Collection: annual tribute

Amount of honey submitted: one hundred fifty *gundo* cups

Money Paid in lieu of honey:

In words: 150 *gundo*Remark: [Tribute of] the year 1923 E.C./1930–1931¹⁵Clerk allowance: a quarter [of *gundo*]

Seal and signature | Signature of the clerk | Signature of Receiver | Signature of superintendent

Invalid unless it bears signatures of all these four.

80

wa/mu/4/263

Number 125

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace

Receipt of Tribute Paid in Honey by *Shaläqa* ProvincesCountry Name: Naqamtee *wäräda*

¹⁵ The yearly tribute in honey was often paid in different installments. See below, receipts 80-83.

Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér
 Name of *Shambäl*:
 Chief *shalaqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* Kaba
 Reason for Collection: annual tribute
 Amount of honey submitted: Three *gundo* cups
 Money Paid in lieu of honey
 In words: 3 *gundo*
 Remark: [Tribute of] the year 1922 E.C.
 Clerk allowance: a quarter [of *gundo*]
 Written on Mäggabit 21, 1923 E.C./March 30, 1931, Addis Ababa

81

wa/mu/4/262

Number 126

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace
 Receipt of Tribute Paid in Honey by *Shaläqa* Province
 Country Name: Naqamtee *wäräda*
 Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér
 Name of *shambäl*:
 Chief *Shaläqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* Kaba
 Reason for Collection: annual tribute
 Amount of honey submitted: thirty-seven *gundo* cups
 Money Paid in lieu of honey:
 In words: 37 *gundo*
 Remark: [Tribute for the] Year 1923 E.C./1930–1931
 Clerk allowance: a quarter [of *gundo*]
 Written on *Miyazya* 01, 1923 E.C./April 9, 1931, Addis Ababa

82

wa/mu/4/264

Number 135

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Palace
 Receipt of Tribute Paid in Honey by *Shaläqa* Province
 Country Name: Naqamtee *wäräda*
 Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér
 Name of *shambäl*:
 Chief *Shaläqa* who submitted the honey: *Qäññazmach* Kaba
 Reason for Collection: annual tribute
 Amount of honey submitted: seventy-four *gundo* cups
 Money Paid in lieu of honey:
 In words: 74 *gundo*

Remark: [Tribute of] the year 1923 E.C./1930–1931

Clerk allowance: a quarter [of *gundo*]

Written on *Mäggabit* 21, 1923 E.C./March 30, 1931, Addis Ababa

83

wa/mu/4/265

Number 74

Tobacco Buyer [Authority] of the Ethiopian State

Body Who Entered the Agreement: Matic Keorkoff Company

Receipt

Money Received: Two thousand *birr* (*deux mille thaler*)

Country Name: Naqamtee (*pays Lekamti*)

Governor: *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam (*pour Dedjaz Haptemariam*)

The Chief who submitted the money: *Fitawrari* Märsha (*Fiteurari Mercha*)

Paid for the years: 1922 E.C./1929–1930 and (19)23 E.C./1930–1931.

Year submitted: *Nähasé* 13, 1923 E.C./August 19, 1931.

Do not give money to any person without this receipt.

Addis Ababa

(Signature)

84

wa/mu/4/266

Sent to *Fitawrari* Märsha in the hands of Gutäma, 3rd true copy of number 256. Haylä Sellasé I, Elect of God Conquering Lion of Judah, Emperor of Ethiopia. May it reach *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam. How have you been? Thanks be to God, I am fine. Concerning your demand for the cancellation of the tribute, we are also in trouble here [at the Addis Ababa Palace] because of increased expenses. But as [your] country's problem is ours too, we have cancelled 229 of the 400 *wäqét* of gold remaining with you from last year's tribute. We expect the tribute for the year 1924 E.C./1931–1932 [i.e., 1,000 *wäqét* of gold] to be paid in full and a further 200 for the year 1925 E.C./1932–1933, the total sum of which is 1,200 *wäqét* of gold. [The first installment] of the 600 [wäqét of gold] must reach here by *Ledäta Yäkkatit* [*Yäkkatit* 21, 1925 E.C./February 28, 1933]. You must send the [second and last installment] of the 600 [wäqét of gold] by *Säné Ledäta* [*Säné* 21, 1925 E.C./June 28, 1933]. If it these due dates will not be met, beware that you will bring debt with your own hands upon your country. As I also sent you this instruction by telephone [telegraph], let it be done accordingly. Written on *T'err* 2, 1925 E.C./January 10, 1933.

85

wa/mu/4/267

Number 392

Treasury of the Ethiopian Imperial Government, Ministry of Finance

Receipt of the *bétä rist* warehouseSize of the commodity in number: 571¹⁶ gold *wäqét* and 9.5 *mähaläq*Name of the tribute payer: *Däjjazmach* Habtä MaryamName of the country: Wallagga, Naqamtee *Wäräda*

Type of the tribute: country paying [annual] tribute in gold

Name of the person who brought (the tribute): *Grazmach* SahléSize of the commodity in words: five hundred seventy-one gold *wäqét* and nine and a half *mähaläq*

Reason for payment: annual tribute for the year 1924 E.C./1932-33.

[PS] Billo treasury has sent forty thousand *birr* in the hands of Dästa Wärru, which he has submitted to the treasury. For this service, he has been paid one *wäqét* of gold, which is estimated at the cost of 70 *birr*. *T'eqemt* 16, 1925 E.C./ October 26, 1932. Chief clerk has signed on behalf of Ato Gäbrä S'adek, Signature of the treasurer, Alämu. The chief superintendent is Bälehu. The seal reads, "tribute receiver, Addis Ababa". The date on which Gutäma received (this letter) is *Genbot* 24, 1924 E.C./June 1, 1924.

86

wa/mu/268

Number 1328

Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance

Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury

For: Fifty-eight thousand *birr*

Today, on this day of *Säné* 1, 1925 E.C./June 8, 1933, *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér has submitted fifty-eight thousand *birr* by the hand of *Fitawrari* Märsha. This money was collected from custom tax, deliberation of justice and other related [governmental] services in Säyyo which was hitherto *Däjjach* Makonnen Wäsäné's [domain]. He has submitted this amount from the sixty thousand *birr* he [*Fitawrari* Märsha] was supposed to submit [on behalf of *Däjjach* Habtä Maryam].

Chief clerk of the ledger book

Head of Finance (Signature)

Clerk of the treasury

(Signature)

¹⁶ This number has been corrected on the basis of internal evidence in the same letter, i.e. the figure entered in words.

87

wa/mu/4/269

Number 135

The Ethiopian Government Ministry of Finance
 Receipt of Addis Ababa Treasury
 For: Two thousand *birr*

Today, on this day of *Säné* 5, 1925 E.C./June 12, 1933, two thousand *birr* have been received in the hands of *Fitawrari Märsha*.

This money is the remainder of 60,000 *birr* the honourable *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér gave me to submit [to the Addis Ababa Treasury], 58,000 of which I had submitted on *Säné* 1, 1925 E.C./June 8, 1933, number 1148. The money itself was collected from custom tax, deliberation of justice and other related [governmental] services in Säyyo which was hitherto *Däjjach* Mäkonnen Wäsäné's [domain].

Entered into the Addis Ababa Treasury | The remainder has been submitted.

The chief clerk of the book ledger
 (Signature)

Finance clerk
 Zäläqä G/Heywät

Chief head of Finance
 (Signature)

88

wa/mu/4/248

1st Receipt Number 9

Her Majesty *Etégé Mänän*
 Receipt of the Addis Ababa Treasury

Wäräda.....Country.....	Notice	
Written by.....		
Name of the payer: <i>däjjazmach</i> Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér		
By the hands of <i>Lij</i> Wäldä Gabri'él		
Reason for the payment	<i>Birr (wäqét) mähaläq</i>	
A gift of one hundred [wäqét of gold] (<i>mättaya</i>)	100	
Total	100	

Total in words: One hundred *wäqét* [of gold] only

On this day of *T'err* 26, 1927 E.C./February 3, 1935

Signature of the head clerk | Signature of the receiver | Signature of the Secretary.

89

wa/mu/4/209

Number 2474

The Imperial Government of Ethiopia
The Ministry of Finance

Type of Revenue	Gold	
Special gift (<i>mättaya</i>)	30 <i>wäqét</i>	
Total money	30 <i>wäqét</i>	

By the hands of *Grazmach* Sahlu
Amount of the money in words: thirty *wäqét* of gold only
For: We have received [30 *wäqét* of gold], which *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi’abhér sent as a special gift (*mättaya*).
Income order number: 717 | Addis Ababa, *Hedar* 15, 1928 E.C./November 25, 1935
Signature of Income clerk | Signature of Income receiver | Signature of Superintendent | Chief head of the Treasury, Gäbrä Maryam.

– Part Two –

LOCAL CHRONICLES

3.

Chronicle of the Warra Bakaree

The untitled MS which narrates the traditional history of the ruling house of Naqamtee till the early 1920s was first shown to Alessandro Triulzi (AT) by Wäyzäro As 'ädä Habtä Maryam (AHM), a prominent member of the Morodaa Bakaree family, as he visited her in the family compound in Addis Ababa in the Fall of 1971. AT was then preparing for field research to take place in the Naqamtee and Asosa areas of Wallagga in the Spring of 1972 and 1973. The original Amharic MS, composed of 46 folios written in the elaborate style and calligraphy of the Ethiopian Annals, was brought to his attention by AHM together with the official correspondence exchanged between her grandfather, Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér (Kumsaa) Morodaa and the Ethiopian court in Addis Ababa at the beginning of the twentieth century. AT was granted permission to make copies of both sets of documents that are reproduced in their English translation in this volume.

In the course of time, several draft translations of the Bakaree chronicle were made in a cumulative attempt to provide an annotated English translation of this important documentary source. An early English draft prepared by an Addis Ababa history student, Bekele Osby, in the mid-1970s was later revised by Negaso Gidada, then a PhD student at Hamburg University, during two research visits he conducted in Naples and Rome in June-November 1983-1984. A new annotated translation of this MS was then prepared by Negaso as he was finishing his Hamburg PhD dissertation and comparing the sources he had collected in the field with those derived from the Naqamtee collection.¹ Negaso's final translation of the Bakaree Chronicle is reproduced below, his profuse comments being indicated by the initials NG in the footnotes.² As the Amharic text of the Bakaree family is often unclear, the English translation is interspersed by several brackets: round brackets indicate alternate transla-

¹ See Negaso, 2001, p. xii.

² ATFN, Negaso Gidada, "Bakaree Family Chronicle" [English translation and comments, handwritten copy, 66 fols [mid-1980s].

tions or linguistic clarifications, while square ones add missing terms or supplementary information by the editors to the original text.

(fol. 1r) (...) [Someone] called [...] ³ conquered⁴ many regions. [He] is called Kara Boni. His [name is] Boni Fat'o. He is the son of Fat'o Godana. [Also] Sa'a Faro [and] Anno Faro took possession of the land and made it their own (*rist*) at Boni, next to Abba Fat'o.⁵ Abba Fat'o, in addition, occupied (*aqänna*) large amounts of land at Gäré Abo, called Gäré. Going further, he also occupied Ya'a which is called Kura. Abba Fat'o settled there at Qélläm. After bringing up the children of his children for three generations, since he was becoming old, he said: "I am homesick (*naḞäqäññ*) for my country Wama! Let us go back to my country Wama". And his children said [among themselves]: "This man has become too old (*jajjä*). At times he says '[let's go] to Wäläl'; at times he says "[let's go] to Gibé"". So, they said that they would not go with him, and disobeyed him.

Seeing his children had disobeyed him, he cursed them. All vanished as a result of the curse. Even today, his descendants (*zär*) do not have any property and they are poor.

And while he [Abba Fat'o] was saddling his mule and was rising to come here [Gibé], his junior wife called Agäya, [...] whom he had married last, rose to go with him saying 'I will go back to my country'. He had many servants (*lolé*). One of his servants, called Kara Himo, while leading his mule and saying, "Let me take my master to his place of destination and come back", rose to go with him. In addition, two blacksmiths (*tumtu*) and *däbänansa*⁶ rose with him, and leaving their belongings behind, they said, "we will take our master

³ Incipit of the Amharic MS is torn, first words are missing, including the name of the original occupier. The genealogy of the Bakaree family appended at the end of the Mäccaa/Booranaa Genealogy (fol. 23v) gives Kura Hédo (Kuraa Heddo) as the founder of the family.

⁴ The Amharic word used here, *aqäḞ* is unclear: possibly a misspelling for *aqänna*, derivative of *mäqnat*, "to occupy, conquer", but also "to uproot, develop, colonize". The term is employed here to refer to the first settler (*aqñi*) in the region, occupying the land and extending Oromoo rule over non-Oromoo peoples.

⁵ Abdissa Mosa (Commentary to Bakare MS, pp. 1–2) referred to Godana Sinika, otherwise known as Abba Fat'o, as an energetic, brave, and able ruler and war leader of the Leeqaa who first settled on a Wama'a plain rich of good pasture.

⁶ On the term *däbänansa*, "blacksmith," there is a rich literature. See particularly Bartels, 1983; Negaso Gidada, 2001.

to his destination and come back”. This servant, who is called Kara Himo, is the father of [...] Yada, Yada Jilo, Jilo Gun [...], Gun Kara, Kara Himo.

And *Abba Fat’o* (fol. 1v) stayed there. His wife, the one who came with him called [Agäya], had not given birth to a child yet. She was barren. Therefore, he [*Abba Fat’o*] adopted a child for her. He sat under an oak tree and performed a *moggasa* [ritual].⁷ An oak in Galleñña⁸ is called *Qilt’u*. Therefore, they gave this name to the *moggasa* child and named him after this tree and called him *Qilt’u*: Balcha Jirata; Jirata Shomo; Shomo *Qilt’u*; *Qilt’u* Godana.⁹

And as *Abba Fat’o* built a house and lived at a place called Bakké *Abbaa Fat’o*¹⁰, he became ill with smallpox (*fänt’at’a*) and died from this sickness. When he died of smallpox, everybody ran away [abandoned him]. Therefore, these two *dübänansa* who had come from Qéllām and the servant Kara Himo buried him there on his *rist* called Bäcké *Abba Fat’o*.

And when Godana Sinika also died, Ammo Faro became the head¹¹ of his brothers’ family Mänä-Ñä’a.¹² [And] Ammo Faro took a wife, her name was Dadi Fulé. She was from the lineage (*zär*)¹³ of Qumburo. And from this lineage, her clan was Ilu. Her descendants are to be found today in the Sasigga area: Kumsa Biftu, Biftu Dä räba, Dä räba Dä’imo, Dä’imo Dämé, Dämé Ilu

⁷ Name-giving ceremony for an adopted child. See, among others, Asmarom Legesse, 1973; *Id.*, 2002.

⁸ It is important to note that the author, presumably an Oromo himself, uses here the old term Galleñña in reference to the Oromo language, today better known as *Afaan Oromoo*.

⁹ It is common among Oromo oral historians to count the genealogy of each important person mentioned in their accounts. The generation counting usually begins from a living descendant of the concerned person.

¹⁰ Comment by Negaso Gidada (NG): “Literally the field of *Abba Fat’o*; Bakké, ‘field’ or ‘open place’, is the opposite of *daggala*, ‘bush’ or ‘forest’”. Abdissa Mosa (AM) similarly refers to this place as Bakkee Abbaa Faxoo, a “very flat plain” which was suitable for “pastoral purpose.”

¹¹ Lit. ‘the governor’.

¹² It appears from the narrative presented in the Bakaree Chronicle that the original founder of the Naqamtee dynasty belonged to another branch of the ruling family. Here the shift to the Ñä’a branch of the family is smoothly evidenced by the classificatory term ‘brothers’. In fact, this change of headship in the family will produce more than one rift in the Naqamtee ruling family. See Abdissa Mosa, Commentary to Bakaree MS, pp. 1-19.

¹³ The author uses the Amharic term *zär* for ‘race’, ‘descendant’, roughly equivalent to the Oromo *gosa*.

[and] Dadi Fulé, Fulé Ilu. They [i.e., their genealogies] meet here.¹⁴ Ammo Faro got four sons and one daughter from Dadi Fulé. The eldest (*angafa*) is [was] Dägago Ammo. The next in line is Bärarti Ammo. Next is Godana Ammo. Next is Guté Ammo. The female child is [was] called Bésho. The *balabbat* (chief) of Nonno gave a large sum of money as dowry and was engaged to her. [But] five days before the date of the wedding, a man called Waqo Dubbisa kidnapped and took her [with him].

(**fol. 2r**) Indeed, the wrongdoing of Waqo Dubbisa cannot be written down in full. When Ammo Faro was informed by his children that Waqo Dubbisa had kidnapped and taken Bésho with him, he was so shocked that he died from it. He was buried there, at Goji Birbirsä Ammo.¹⁵ [And] Dadi Fulé became old and died after living many years after Ammo Faro's death. She was buried there [too], at Goji Birbirsä Ammo. When Ammo Faro died, Bärarti Ammo became the head of the Mänä-Ñä'a.¹⁶ [Bärarti Ammo] gave birth to Dägago Bosho. Bosho gave birth to Rufo. Rufo gave birth to *Grazmach* Nämärä.

Bärarti gave birth to Jijo. Jijo gave birth to *Fitawrari* Mosa. Godana gave birth to Bäkäré. Bäkäré gave birth to Moräda. Moräda gave birth to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. But Guté Ammo is not counted among the Mänä-Ñä'a genealogy. They cast him out and made him an alien by the *bokku* (sceptre) and the *séra* (law). He did not even share the land with us.¹⁷ The reason why Guté was separated from us is [as follows]:¹⁸ The three children of Ammo—Bärarti, Godana and Guté—went down [to the lowlands] together to hunt in a forest in the wilds called Bonga.¹⁹ When they reached Qélläm they sepa-

¹⁴ Comment by NG: "i.e., both the descendants of Dadi and the descendants of Dä'immo, the son of Dammi—which includes Kumsa Moroda Bakaree, the main subject of the chronicle—meet genealogically here (in Ilu)".

¹⁵ The actual place name is Goji. At Goji, Ammo supposedly rested under the shade of a *birbirsä* (Juniper) tree (*Podocarpus gracilior*).

¹⁶ Comment by NG: "According to tradition, the *angafa* (first born or senior child) should have inherited the headship of the group. The *angafa* in this case was Dägago and not Bärarti. Dägago must have either already died or must have been a *Qaalluu* (spiritual leader) while Bärarti became the main political and economic leader. Or possibly there was usurpation".

¹⁷ Here, the author suggests he is a member of the Naqamtee ruling house, Mana Ñä'aa.

¹⁸ The author confirms he was a member of the ruling house.

¹⁹ Comment by NG: "Bonga and Baqo are two popular names which appear in traditional songs (*geerarsa*) where they are used to define names of hunting areas/grounds in the direction of

rated: Godana went down to a desert area called Gugu, Bärarti and Guté went down to Bonga. There at Bonga, when Bärarti Ammo became ill,²⁰ he [Guté] left his brother, the child of his own mother and father, and went home saying that he [Bärarti] had died. Because of this, they [the Mänä-Ñä'a] said that he no longer was their brother and cast him out from their relatives. But Ota Mi'ésso nursed [took care of] him [Bärarti] and brought him home a year after it was said that he had died.

Before him [Guté] all the children of Mäch'a were one *gosa* (group, clan). They were governed by one *séra* (law). All the Mäch'a say that they are related to each other and are children of the same father.

(**fol. 2v**) There is no *dina* (enemy) among them. They do not refer to each other as *dina*. They say the *dina* are three: the elephant, the buffalo, and the Shanqella. One who kills one of these will be anointed with a trophy; otherwise, if a man kills another man, if a Mäch'a kills another Mäch'a, it becomes *guma* (a crime) for the killer. Therefore, he cannot anoint himself.

The boundaries of the Mäch'a are in the south, Jämjäm up to the Abbay, up to Kafa and below here [in the west], up to the boundary of the Arabs [Beni Shangul]. All this is one Mäch'a. They are governed by one *séra* (law). At that time, there was an evil person. He was called Waqo Dubbisa. He was (born) from the Léqa of Bonäyya. His house was on an open field (*méda*) of the Wama of Hormat. When the cattle of the Sibü went down to the lowlands to drink mineral water (*ambo*), he [Waqo Dubbisa] confiscated all the cattle. He blocked the way by robbing everybody who was passing by his house. All the evil deeds that Waqo Dubbisa committed cannot be written down in their entirety.²¹ It was because of him being (so) evil that the brothers started quarrelling. The Sibü and the Léqa fought each other. They killed each other, called

Ilu Abbaaboor (Ilubbabor), Kafa and Dembidollo. They could be general names given to different hunting or forest areas, not necessarily the forest of Bonga in Kafa”.

²⁰ Comment by NG: “Many hunters died or became ill in the lowlands. The two most common illnesses were typhus and malaria. This is why successful hunters boast (after returning from a hunting expedition) and why they are honoured. The *geerarsa* mentions the difficulties one faced on hunting trips: long distance, lack of shelter, diseases, attacks from wild animals, attack from wind, and bites from insects; danger from deserting spirits. Many legends are filled with such stories like that of the children of Ammo. Hunting must have been an ancient tradition of the Oromo”.

²¹ According to Abdissa Mosa (Commentary to Bakaree Chronicle, pp. 14-16), Waqoo Dubbissa was a wealthy Leeqaa leader whose misdeeds led his death and to a series of conflicts between Sibü and Leeqaa.

each other *dina* and anointed themselves with it [i.e., with the trophy of the killed one].

Before the Léqa and the Sibü started fighting [each other], the boundary of the Léqa *rist* was this side of the Ch'oqorsa river. At Tuqa [region], there is a place called Bishan Gubba on this side. And there is another [place] called Gutto Bishan Mutt'i from this side. All this was the property (*rist*) of the Léqa. [And] the Sibü made the Léqa flee and took all this [land] because of Waqo Dubbisa. And the Sibü came upon Waqo Dubbisa before he could run away and killed him while he was at his home at Hormat as he had underestimated the danger, thinking it would be the same as in the olden days. After killing him, they [the Sibü] took away from him all the property (*gänzäb*) that was there. His four children ran away on horseback and went to Qubä.

(fol. 3r) There they were all finished up by an epidemic (lit. 'disease'). Today, there is no one on earth, being it male or female, who can claim descent from Waqo Dubbisa. So Waqo Dubbisa and all his descendants vanished due to his evil deeds. The birthplace of Waqo Dubbisa is in Bonäyya. And among the Bonäyya [*gosa*] they say that his birth is from the Fardisa [lineage]. Because of him the Sibü, after burning all of Wama and devastating it, crossed over to Nägésso and burnt his possessions. He [i.e., the Sibü] burnt the *Warra* [people of] Gurgur also. In the direction of Däga, they burnt as far as the place where the Näqämté Church—Maryam Church—is to be found [today]. They also burnt Humbi that is below the Haro of Jibat. In the direction of Sasigga they burnt up to Tullu Dalätti. Observing [i.e., following the example of] the Sibü, the Nonno began to burn from below [in the south] the territory of the Léqa in the direction of Giyo. At that time the four children of Ammo were powerful and brave [men]. They consulted with each other saying "how could the Sibü burn and take our *rist* while we are still alive?". While they were at Gojji, Godana got a wife. Her name was Muggé, the child of Butta Dicho. Her birth is from the Bata [lineage]. [And] Muggé Butta gave birth to four sons and eight daughters to²² Godana Ammo. He did not marry any other woman except Muggé. And she did not marry any other husband. The sons Godana begot from Muggé are [the following]: the first (*angafa*) is Jorgo, next Qon-nora, next come Bäkäre Godana and Adäba Godana. And the names of the

²² Comment by NG: "According to tradition, a male son is born for the patrilineage as he will strengthen his father's lineage. In the Amharic text this is represented by the alphabet *lä* (first order), meaning 'on his behalf'. Note the difference with adoption (*moggaasa*, mentioned in fol. 1v), which is usually indicated to strengthen or support the mother's material life".

daughters are: Ammé, next Guddo, Amojé, Juré, Ilbise Hadha [mother of] Iggu Shobbot'é.

(**fol. 3v**) (...) “Why should the Sibü burn and take our *rist* [from us] while we are living?” said the four children of Ammo after they consulted with each other. They agreed that Dägago Ammo should guard their *rist*; Bärarti Ammo should live at Nonno towards the frontier (*mogga*) and guard it against them; both Godana and Guté Ammo should guard Nonno from the direction of Näqämté and Wama.

Following this agreement, Bärarti Ammo went to the market of Billo and made a proclamation: “You Léqa, why do you keep silent? Help me! Let us fight the Nonno”. And Godana went to the market of Gätäma and proclaimed: “Help me, Léqa! Let’s go to the forest of Mokofa with our belongings. Let us build houses in Mokofa forest (*dän*) and guard it [against the enemy]”. And because of this, the Léqa said: “This is true. Why should the Sibü take our *rist*? Let us help each other. Let us go with our belongings and build houses in Mokofa and guard it”, so they rose in one heart with Godana. And as they arose with their belongings to go to Mokofa to build houses, as the Sibü were also campaigning, saying, “We shall chase away the rest of the Léqa at Digga [west of Näqämté]”, they met each other at the Ch’iracha [River]. There they fought, and the Sibü were defeated.

From all the people – from those on foot and those on horseback – only a slave of Nägäwo Nonno called Tiksa²³ managed to escape; all the others were totally finished. And Tiksa escaped by climbing up a tree and hiding till the evening. [Then] he climbed down from the tree and went home. It is said that it was because of this that Tiksa escaped and went back home. In this way, Guté and Godana went and built houses in the forest that had been cleared and lived there.

(**fol. 4r**) At that time, when they went to Mokofa and built houses, Bäkäre Godana was born and was two months old. And the Léqa, all those who arose with them to build houses at Mokofa, went back home without building houses there saying, “What if the Sibü massacre us?” And when Godana Ammo made a proclamation again asking the Léqa to help him, the Léqa went to his help. He [then] inflicted a sudden attack on the Sibü on the open field of Hor-mat, before they could hear or see [that Léqa was out for campaign in support of Godana Ammo].

²³ From the Oromo word *tiksuu*, “to herd cattle”.

So, they [the Léqa] burnt all the houses of the Sibü from below Gordomo and Märäta, captured all the cattle that were there, and went home taking their cattle with them. The slave of Nägäwo Nonno, called Tiksa, who had previously escaped by running away was killed in this battle. Someone called Waqäyyo Lémäti killed him. And Bärarti Ammo lived alone (by himself) on the frontier (*mogga*) towards Nonno. We²⁴ also lived alone at Mokofa. All those whose *rist* had been taken away by the Sibü entered the Handäq [forest] and lived there.²⁵ And Bärarti and Godana²⁶ went to Handäq saying: “We will stay alone here and die”. It is said that there was no malaria and sleeping sickness (*gändi*) in Handäq at that time. They say that when Bärarti cursed or blessed people, the curse or blessing was soon fulfilled. At that time, when Bärarti said: “You Léqa, bring me a black bull so that I can slaughter it and bless you”, they did so: He then slaughtered the bull and said: “Turn your clothes inside out”.

(fol. 4v) And all the people who had assembled there turned their garments inside out. Then Bärarti Ammo and Godana Ammo cursed the soil of Handäq saying: “As we turned our garment inside out, we have turned Handäq from good to evil. [You Léqa] if you do not come and build houses at Mokofa, on your *rist* which the Sibü took away from you, may Handäq be a disease to your cattle and to your body”. Within a week a disease called Yuma²⁷ came down on them and exterminated all the cattle. The cattle which was killed was only that which was at Handäq—[at the place] where they [Bärarti and Godana] had made their curse—and this disease called Yuma did not touch the cattle of other countries. When the disease killed all their cattle, because of this, those [Léqa] whom the Sibü chased away from Näqämt[é] left Handäq and returned to Näqämt[é]; those whom the Sibü chased away from Sasigga returned and went back to Sasigga; those whom the Sibü chased away from

²⁴ The author, allegedly *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér (alias Kumsaa Morodaa), claims legitimacy here for the Warra Bakaree, the ruling family of Naqamtee. See Triulzi, 2006, pp. 49–50.

²⁵ This is the first mention of Handaq in the Chronicle. For further mentions of the Handaq forest, see GEC, letter 18, and CGC letter 53.

²⁶ In an earlier passage (fol. 3v) it is stated that Godaanaa and Guutee lived together at Mokofa while Baraarti stayed at the periphery (*moggaa*) of Noonnoo.

²⁷ Perhaps a variant of *yumi*, “fowl pest”, an epidemic that spreads among chicken. See Tilahun Gamta, 1989, p. 608.

Wama returned [back] to Wama to their ancient *rist*, settled (*kätämä*) and built houses there.

When he got people who could help [give enough supporters] Godana Ammo became strong and defeated the Sibü. Godana waited for [and ambushed] them at Wama [river] and defeated them. [But] near here, in the direction of T'iggé, the Sibü crossed over and began attacking successfully the Léqa because there was no one to guard [the area]. There is a mountain called Tullu Ijollé. The Sibü built houses and settled (stayed) there at Tullu Ijollé. [Then] Godana invited all the Léqa from below the Gibé to help him in war including someone called Shorro Gälät[a]. They [the Léqa] went quickly during the night and made a surprise attack early in the morning—they burnt all their [the Sibü's] houses and killed all the people. Not even one remained [alive].

(**fol. 5r**) On that day they [the Léqa] did not spare any male child. They did not capture them but slaughtered them all. Therefore, they named that place Tullu Ijollé [children's mountain]. That place is, therefore, called Tullu Ijollé to this day. And Bärarti Ammo, after getting old, left the place where he was guarding the frontier (*mogga*), founded [a settlement] and built a house in the same place where *Fitawrari* Mosa later built his own. And Godana Ammo became lame from a wound which he had received when his leg was hit in a spear-fight, as he wanted to separate people who were fighting each other. When Godana became an invalid, and Bärarti became old, a man called Fido Bokkisa, who was emboldened [by Godana and Bärarti's incapacity], began to confiscate the *rist* of the Mänä-Ñä'a. At that time, a Léqa law-making assembly (*séra mäquräch'a*) was called. When they invited him [Fido Bokkisa] to the *séra mäquräch'a*, he refused to come and continued to take their [land] by force. At that time, when he was still at Mokofa before he moved to Kombo, he got a wife. He first married the mother of *Däjjazmach* Moräda. And then he married the mother of Rorro Bäkäre. The mother of *Däjjazmach* Moräda was called Urgé Ch'inch'o. Her lineage was from the Warra Kura [the people of Kura]. Within that group, she is from Qunqunté: Urgé Ch'inch'o, Ch'inch'o Aräddo, Aräddo Bayimo, Bayimo Qunqunté, Qunqunté T'inno, T'inno Bukko, Bukko Kura.

And the mother of Rorro Bäkäre was called Ijjé—the child of Jarso Ir-rélé—and her birth [lineage] was from Wät'i. And in this way, Fido Bokkisa refused [to appear] at the law-making assembly (*séra mäquräch'a*) when they invited him and took their [land] by force. Because of this Bärarti Ammo went to someone called Nägäwo Nonno who was the *balabbat* (chief) of the Sibü, (**fol. 5v**) and they reconciled themselves and swore (made an oath) to abide by it. Bäkäre Godana had by then reached maturity. So Bärarti Ammo called Bäkäre Godana and sent this [message]: “Come and get reconciled with

Nägäwo Nonno and swear with him. I shall bless you if you come, [but] will curse you if you refuse". And Bäkäré answered: "How can I alone get reconciled with the Sibü and live? Let me get advice with the Léqa. It would be better if I took counsel with my father Godana too. [But] when Bärarti said: "This shall not be, [or] I will curse you", [Bäkäré] was afraid of his curse and said that he will not go against his permission [i.e., will not disobey], so he got reconciled and swore [took a solemn oath] with Nägäwo Nonno.

Then Bärarti Ammo planted his spear on the ground and held it there with both hands. He told Bäkäré to pass between his legs and under his arms. Bäkäré having passed under his arms and between his legs, he [Bärarti] blessed him: "I have given you all the *wuqabi*²⁸ that I have" while at the same time he predicted on the spot: "Take courage, you shall overcome Fido Bokkisa. Not only Fido Bokkisa, you shall also rule over (*mägzat*) the Léqa and Sibü together". He then took Bakaré Godana [to Nägäwo Nonno] and had them swear [peace] to each other. And they made a great [solemn] oath saying: "Let our oath not be destroyed [fall out] up to the time of our children's children". The oath of Nägäwo Nonno with Bärarti Ammo is still standing without being violated by their children.

And the land of Fido Bokkisa at Kombo was the land of *Qoratti*.²⁹ He had confiscated and built a house on it. When Fido Bokkisa heard about the reconciliation and the swearing between Nägäwo Nonno and Bärarti Ammo, he built a house at Komto at [near] the place where the house of *Fitäwrari* Dima is situated.

(fol. 6r) And this land was the land of Garjo. He [Fido Bokkisa] built a house at that place. But, before Fido Bokkisa moved in, Bäkäré Godana destroyed the house during the night. The Mänä-Ña'a gathered and built thirty houses within a day on the site where the house of Fido Bokkisa was destroyed. They covered the houses with grass and moved in on the same day with Bäkäré Godana. When he heard that Bäkäré Godana had built houses at Korommi, Fido Bokkisa burnt his own house which he had built at Kombo and built another one here at Qota, where *Fitawrari* Amänté's house is located.

²⁸ *Wuqabi* is the Amharic term for "guardian angel", somewhat equivalent to the Oromo *ayyaana* or spirit. In fact, the author is using the Amharic word *Wuqabi* as a replacement for the Oromo *ayyaana*, so that it would be understandable to his main audience, the imperial court. For a comprehensive analysis of Oromo *ayyaana*, see Gemetchu Megerssa Ruda, 1993, pp. 59–65, 137–60; Gemetchu Megerssa–Aneesa Kassam, 2019, pp. 116–30.

²⁹ Or. for "thorns".

ed. The Mänä-Ña'a cleared the bush and built a house for Bakaré Godana at Kombo, on the spot where Fido Bokkisa burnt his house. And Bäkäré left Mokafo, the place of his father, and settled at Kombo. While Bäkäré Godana was in Kombo, and before he and Fido Bokkisa fought each other, the date on which Fido Bokkisa and Bäkäré Godana would slaughter the *butta* arrived, it [just] happened that the period during which they slaughtered the *butta* coincided. At that time, for the whole Léqa from below Gibé and above Dédessa, the *séra māqurāch'a* was at the meadow (*ch'affee*) of Käräkät [or Kaarra of Kat]. It was only the Léqa who assembled at Käräkät to make the law.

When the Galla slaughtered the *butta* every eight years, they [used to] elect a person who would bless the country and the period [year ahead]. This person who blessed the country and the year ahead should be someone whose father and mother were still alive; who had killed an elephant or buffalo and had been anointed for it; one whose wife was still alive; who had fathered children and his children were still alive; one who had not stolen money (*gänzäb*) belonging to others; one who had not stolen other peoples' cattle; one who had not consumed (lit. 'eaten') them, (**fol. 6v**) one who had lived by consuming his own money (property). Such a person would be elected from among the *Luba*³⁰ every eight years and would bless the country and the period (year).

The Léqa, saying "We like (prefer) you [Bäkäré] for the blessing. You (will) be the one [elected by] us", appointed Bäkäré Godana for this [blessing].³¹

And Bäkäré Godana said: "Alright! If you are willing to elect me for blessing, I shall bless. If you [decide to] elect (appoint) me for blessing, let me beg (ask) you something [in compensation] for my blessing. Give me something (in return) for it.

They [Léqa] asked him to tell them [what he wanted]. He then asked them to resolve [decide] by *séra* [law] and give him the lowlands (lit. 'desert')³² of Handäq, claiming that Handäq was not the *gult*³³ of anyone else. As

³⁰ A reference to *gadaa* classes that succeed 'each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities.' For more details, see Asmarom Legesse, 1973: 90; *Id.*, 2002, p. 31.

³¹ Bairu Tafla (1969: p. 11) reiterates this same story with an emphasis on the role of Bararti Ammo's advice in Bakaree asking for Handaq. Abdissa Mosa (Commentary to Bakaree MS pp. 7-12) repeats the same story but contradicts the Bakaree chronicle by asserting that Handaq was a common hunting ground for all the Leeqaa.

³² The chronicler appears to minimize here the new land possession by using the Amharic word for desert (*bäräha*) for what was actually a wooden area or forest.

they [the Léqa] did not consider (Handäq) to be of any value, they said: “Let the Handäq lowlands be a *gult* for Bäkäre and for the children of his children”. And by saying: “*Kottu! Dhufe!*” to each other,³⁴ and concluding according to the *alünga*³⁵ and the *séra* procedure, they [the Léqa] gave Handäq to Bäkäre Godana. When they gave Handäq to Bäkäre Godana, it was not the Wayu only who gave it to him. It was the five Léqa: Léqa-Lalo, Warra Babbo, Bonäyya, Bata, and Wayu: all these together gave it to Bäkäre Godana according to the *séra* procedure. Therefore, the Handäq lowlands became the *rist*³⁶ of Bäkäre Godana up to the children of his children.³⁷ [And] at Kombo, Urgé Ch’inch’o gave birth to two male and two female children to Bäkäre Godana. First, she gave birth to Wäre, the mother of Jimma Bullo. Next to her she gave birth to *Däjjazmach* Moräda, then to *Fitawrari* Dibaba, finally she gave birth to Toki.

(**fol. 7r**) After coming back home from the *butta*, Bäkäre Godana called upon Nägäwo Nonno to demarcate his land since they were now reconciled by oath. Thus, they demarcated their land. Here, in the direction of Kombo and Immo, there is a river called Uké.³⁸ Beyond Uké the territory belonged to the Sibü while this side of the river was the Léqa’s. They decided [agreed] that Uké becomes [would be] the boundary demarcating their land. And in the di-

³³ It is interesting to note here that the author uses the Ethiopian land terminology of *gult* (“state fief”), but *gult* was introduced later in the area during Emperor Menilek’s rule.

³⁴ The ritual formula *Kottu!* (lit. ‘come!’), *Dhufe!* (lit. ‘I have come’) opens all public assembly among the traditional Oromo society. According to NG, this formula was already in practice since the 14th century among the Laaloo who lived in northeastern Shewa. See Negaso Gidada, 2001, pp. 43, 155, 162; Bairu Tafla, 1969, p. 11 also includes *kottu-dhufe*.

³⁵ Lit. ‘whip’. Traditionally, each new or reformulated law proclaimed during the Oromo public assembly was enacted by the beating of the ritual *alangaa*. *Tumaa seeraa* or *seera tumaa*, lit. ‘the beating of the law’, is a necessary component of traditional law-making among the Oromo.

³⁶ Again, the introduction of the Ethiopian term for private property is intended here to emphasize the legitimacy of Bakaree’s traditional land holding in the region.

³⁷ In addition to referring to Leeqaa rivalling Sibuu for control over Handaq (fol. 4r–v), the chronicle asserts Handaq as the *rist* of the *angafa* in the Bakaree family (fol. 20v) and of GE specifically (fol. 22r). See also GEC letter 145, regarding controlling access to Handaq, and letter 203, asserting Handaq as his *rist*.

³⁸ Comment by NG: “Uké is a tributary of the Angär River north of Näqämté at ab. 30° N and 35° 50’ E”.

rection of Gulliso, there is a river called Lägä Oda.³⁹ This side of Lägä Oda became Léqa's [territory]. Wärräbbo beyond Lägä Oda went to Nägäwo Nonno. Thus, Lägä Oda became the boundary line.

In the direction of Dimo and Hormat all the open fields of Dimbo⁴⁰ became Léqa's territory. Tullu Dalätti which is beyond Läga Bor⁴¹ became the boundary line. And two thirds of the Hormat open field became Léqa's territory while the other one third went to the Sibü. Kusaye of Hormat became the dividing line. [But even] after they (Bäkäre and Nägäwo) demarcated their boundary, Tuqa, Gutto and Siré still remained the *rist* of the Léqa. Saying: "How could Bäkäre Godana partition the land of the Léqa and give [part of] it to the Sibü without our permission", all the Léqa arose against him. And when all the Léqa assembled, a man called Basso Jarra, the father of Abdi Basso, sent the following message to Bäkäre Godana: "Nullify the oath and cancel the line of demarcation. What power would you have (left) if you separate [yourself] from the Léqa and make an oath with the Sibü?" Basso Jarra was a friend of Bäkäre Godana. In many ways he tried to convince him.

(fol. 7v) [But] Bäkäre Godana refused to heed, saying that Bärarti Ammo would curse him and, since he was afraid of his curse, he would not nullify his oath. And the Sibü, with the exception of the Wärräbo, who were his relatives (*wägänoch*), all stood against Nägäwo Nonno, saying, "How could he get reconciled, enter an oath, and demarcate territories without our permission?" And while Bäkäre Godana was here at Qota [in the region of Quta, Northeast of Näqämté], Fido Bokkisa left him and went to help the enemies of Nägäwo Nonno. Because Nägäwo Nonno had become [by this time] an old man always staying at home, Bäkäre Godana himself went to support the children of Nägäwo Nonno. A man called Bujura Moti who was the *balabbat* (chief) of Jénni faced Bäkäre Godana [in battle] but was defeated and ran away on horseback to get shelter from Bushan Miju in Amuma. Bäkäre Godana then left for Kombo after securing the country [of the Sibü] in the hands of Nägäwo Nonno.

Before this time no Léqa had anointed himself after killing another Léqa in fighting. One could only anoint himself for killing an elephant, a buffalo, or

³⁹ Comment by NG: "Laga Odaa is a tributary to the Waamaa River east of Naqamtee and Guuttee at ab. 9° 15 N 37° E. This river should not be confused with the Odaa River in northeastern Sibü Siré district which is a tributary of the Angar".

⁴⁰ Spelled Dibo.

⁴¹ *Daga*, "place" or "land"; *Bor*, personal name.

a Shanqella. And all the Léqa from the region of Digga, Wama, Nāqāmté, and Qumba⁴² met at a place called Lafto-Qat'äro beyond the market of Gätäma.⁴³ They resolved that Bäkäre Godana be considered a *dina* (i.e., an enemy) since he had split himself from the Léqa by making an oath with the Sibü. By making such resolution according to the law (*séra*), they came to fight Bäkäre Godana right away.

(fol. 8r) At that time a person could not be circumcised before slaughtering *butta*. So, one got circumcised after slaughtering *butta*.⁴⁴ As Bäkäre was laying on bed after being circumcised, all the Léqa made a sudden attack on him thinking that it was the right moment to get rid of him. But Bäkäre Godana tied his wound [body] with a girdle, got on his horse and confronted them. Thus, when they found out that Bäkäre was not in bed, they became like a flock of sheep intruded (lit. 'entered') by a fox. They all fled. Fido Bokkisa escaped to his house in Qota. A man called Gäda Guré, a respected *balabbat* and the father of Luch'a Gäda, died from the side of Fido Bokkisa. A relative of Bäkäre killed him. A famine followed during that period. All the Léqa declared in marketplaces [passed word] that it was forbidden to sell any crop to Bäkäre Godana. But after a while they declared in the market: "Why should we avoid money? Sell [your] crops to him. But sell [only] roasted grain so that he would not get [access] to seeds to save for the next farming (lit. 'rainy') season". There was a friend of Bäkäre called Basso Jarra. He secretly sent eight donkey loads of crops for Bäkäre Godana in the night. By Basso Jarra is meant the father of Abdi Basso. They [the Léqa] tried also to burn him in his house. Thus, they encircled his house and put it on fire three times. But God saved him. They burnt the three houses, assuming that Bäkäre Godana would be in any one of the three houses. But it was found out that he had spent the night somewhere else. [But] the wife of Bäkäre was burnt when they [the Léqa] set fire to his house.

(fol. 8v) Thus, they continued attacking Bäkäre, and when they killed anybody from his side they anointed themselves. But Bäkäre prevented his men from anointing themselves when they killed people from the side of Fido Bokkisa, saying that his men should not anoint after killing their brothers. In

⁴² Comment by NG: "respectively in western, eastern, northern, and southern Leeqaa country".

⁴³ Comment by NG: "Gatamaa is a marketplace south of Diggaa and Naqamtee and Northwest of Arjoo".

⁴⁴ i.e., at the age of 40.

the long run, however, Bākäre's people also started anointing themselves after killing. The side of Bākäre then went on to become stronger. And the side of Fido Bokkisa became weaker. Thus, Fido Bokkisa left Qota and went to Dargé. Before long, the Dargé fought and chased him away. From there Fido Bokkisa moved to Digga.

Thus, they [Bākäre's people] left aside [the issue with] Fido Bokkisa and turned against the Sibü. Except Bushän Miju and Allé Tuqa, all the Sibü submitted to Bākäre Godana, saying that they could not confront him in battle and received the *médhicha* from Bākäre Godana. Allé Tuqa also took *médhicha* from Bākäre Godana. Although he did not receive [it], he declared allegiance (submitted) to Bākäre Godana and became his subject (*zéga*). After the Sibü became subjects of Bākäre Godana, the Jimma began fighting against the Sibü. Bākäre Godana met the Jimma at T'allo and defeated them. It is said that T'allo at that time was like the open fields of Wärab, without trees and empty. When they [Bākäre's soldiers] became victorious by chasing the Jimma on horseback, a person called Dibaba Ugga, the *balabbat* (chief) of Gännäti Gobo, together with his men escaped on eight horses.

(fol. 9r) There was then a very young servant (*ashkär*) of Bākäre Godana called Golja Hanno. While he was killing the Jimma from morning to evening, his spears⁴⁵ were all broken and his sword [knife] had fallen to the ground. Being without spears, he killed two people by knocking them down with his shield.

And besides Dibaba Ugga, there was a man [from the Jimma side] called Abdi Mi'o. His horse was called Ch'äno. He also escaped running away alone. When [Abdi] escaped and reached home, he kissed the hoof of his horse. Because of this he composed a song⁴⁶ as follows:

Oromo	English
Xaalloo halalee ⁴⁷ kana	This Xaalloo is <i>halalee</i> (intoxicated)
Halalee lafaa kana	This <i>halalee</i> [of the whole] land
Bakaree gowwaa ⁴⁸ kana	This good [in fact foolish] Bakaree

⁴⁵ Comment by NG: "Fighters usually took along with them several spears as they were easy to carry in battle".

⁴⁶ Amh: *agärrärä*, from *agwarrärä*, "to boast, praise oneself". Hence, the Oromoo *geerarsa*, "to sing".

⁴⁷ Comment by NG: "*Halalee* or *alalee*, usually employed for a donkey in heat, is a disparaging term also used to refer to a youngster wild in character".

Gowwaa Booranaa kana
Baga⁴⁹ yaa Chano!

This good [in fact foolish] Boorana
It is good that we escaped, oh Chano!

Saying this [Abdi] sung this poem in Galleñña. After Godana had defeated the Jimma at T'allo and had gone back to Kombo, Bärarti Ammo became old, sick, and died. He was buried at Gimbi where the house of *Fitawrari* Mosa is now located. It is said that when he heard Bärarti Ammo had died, Fido Bokkisa cursed⁵⁰ Bärarti Ammo very much. Soon after, Fido Bokkisa went down⁵¹ saying he would destroy [kill] Ayäru Boyyé. He fought Ayäru Boyyé. In this battle of [with] Ayäru Boyyé, their people killed Fido Bokkisa with a spear. It is said that when he heard the death of Fido Bokkisa, Bäkäre Godana wept and lamented very much and mourned till the evening refusing to eat.

(**fol. 9v**) After the death of Fido Bokkisa, his son, called Ammäch'a Fido, became as strong as his father and started to fight Bäkäre Godana [but was defeated]. Within a few days [of fighting] he was defeated, so he left Digga and sheltered himself in Bändi. Bäkäre Godana followed Ammäch'a into Bändi. The people of Bändi supported Ammäch'a against Bäkäre. [As a result] fighting resulted at the Fododdo field where many people from both sides lost their lives. Neither Bäkäre nor Ammäch'a got the victory. [After that] Bäkäre Godana went back to his home. Ammäch'a Fido stayed at Bändi and started to say that they [Bändi people] were his subjects (*zéga*) and should respect his order and accept his rule. He stayed and ordered them. But the Bändi people protested saying that he was only a fugitive who had come there to save his life. They said that they would hand him over to Bäkäre Godana rather than being ordered by him. When he heard that the Bändi people were going to hand him over to Bäkäre Godana, he [Ammäch'a] took his horse and escaped to Danno Béra⁵² in Qumba. When Bäkäre Godana went to Bändi with his forces,⁵³ the people were frightened and declared their allegiance to him. They

⁴⁸ Comment by NG: "The Booranaa are usually characterized as good, people who do not know intrigues. Their character is usually defined with the Oromo term *gowwaa*, good, innocent. In the song, however, the term is employed sarcastically, meaning foolish".

⁴⁹ "It is good, I am happy".

⁵⁰ Instead of mourning. Contrast the opposite reaction by Bakaree Godana after learning of Fido Bokkisa's death.

⁵¹ Meaning: "he went to the lowlands".

⁵² Daannoo Beeraa was the chief of Arjo.

⁵³ *Askäteto* (Amharic), from *ketät* "to mobilize for war".

handed over to Bākāré Godana all the property (i.e., animals) that Ammäch'a had left in Bändi and went to Danno Béra. Upon counting the animals that Ammäch'a left behind it was found that pack animals only—donkeys and horses—were five hundred.

(fol. 10r) But no one could finish counting the sheep and the goats. Later Bākāré Godana sent a message telling him [Ammäch'a] to send people so as to have his animals brought (back) to him. [Bākāré] explained that he would not make use of his money (i.e., animals) and that they were brothers, although God had made him fall. [But] Ammäch'a persistently refused as he did not believe [Bākāré's words] to be true. [Therefore] Bākāré Godana had the animals driven by people from here [Näqämté] to be sent to Ammäch'a up to Qumba. The number of animals was so high that by the time the first animals were in Qumba others were still to start from Näqämté. When Ammäch'a Fido disappeared from Digga, all the countries (regions) which formerly said that Bākāré Godana was a *dina* and thus supported Ammäch'a Fido became afraid of Bākāré and submitted to him after swearing an oath [of allegiance]. The Digga, the Bonäyya, the Hin'ne, and the Lalo of Hin'ne, all these⁵⁴ declared their allegiance to Bākāré Godana. And as there was an ancient oath of allegiance with the Jimma, the people of Jimma received Bākāré Godana with joy when he defeated the Léqa and came up to the boundary of Jimma. Except for the Warra Béra, the *gezat* (lit. 'government') of Bākāré Godana extended up to the confluence of Wama and Dédessa Rivers. Bākāré then began fighting Danno Béra⁵⁵ crossing the Nágéssu river. He crossed the Nágéssu and established a camp at Imbatu. While Bākāré was in Imbatu, Osana Jilo, and Gärbi Jilo, the *balabbat* (chiefs) of Billo, two brothers from the same father and mother, fought against each other. The small [junior] one defeated the big [senior], chased him and forced him to flee from the country [of Billo].

(fol. 10v) Gärbi Jilo then came up to Imbatu and appealed to Bākāré Godana for help. Thus, Bākāré Godana left Tokkon Sida as keeper/guardian of Imbatu and went to help Gärbi Jilo. When Osana Jilo heard that Gärbi Jilo had come with Bākāré Godana, he left the region and crossed the Gibé into Jimma territory. All the [people] of Jimma living beyond Gibé came to help Osana

⁵⁴ All these regions are south and southwest of Naqamtee.

⁵⁵ See the Warra Beeraa Chronicle (Ch. 5).

Jilo and camped at a hill called Gémbera⁵⁶ across Billo and there they confronted Bākäre Godana in fighting. On this occasion, the Jimma who had come to help Osana were defeated. Many people on the side of Osana were killed and captured, but Osana Jilo ran away with a few men and escaped by crossing (back) the Gibé. They [Gärbi and Bākäre] killed all the people up to the Gibé. Thus, Bākäre restored the country of Gärbi Jilo and returned to his country.

While Bākäre Godana was at Billo, Tokkon Sida, the man whom Bakaré had appointed to guard the *kätäma*, left for Imbatu and went down to Wama to drink *butta täjj*. Danno Béra found the *kätäma* without a keeper and burnt it to the ground. He then annexed the territory beyond (south of) Nägésso River.

At this time the father of Bākäre, Godana Ammo, whose horse was named Dinki, with which he is said to have captured and killed eighty people, became old, sick and died. He was buried on his own *rist* at a place called Komto Jato in the territory of the Mänä-Ña'a.

(fol. 11r) At that time, during the period when Godana Ammo died, Fido Bokkisa also died within a month of Godana's death.⁵⁷ While Bākäre Godana was at home mourning the death of his father, Fido Bokkisa went down saying he would destroy Ayäru Boyé and died battling him. After that Bākäre Godana eradicated thieves and outlaws (*wämbädé*). He ordered that Sunday should be respected [as a day of rest]. After that if a person was found farming on Sunday, one of the two oxen used for farming the land would be [confiscated and] slaughtered, and the yoke and plough would be chopped up [to be used] as firewood, and the meat of the ox would be roasted with it. People would gather and eat the meat, cut the skin into bands,⁵⁸ share them and go home.

At that time, except slaves (*barya*), human beings (lit. 'children of the country') were not sold. If someone was sold [bought] and brought from the

⁵⁶ Comment by NG: "There is a locality S ab. 8°55' N and 37° 5' NE of Billoo, not far from the upper Gibee".

⁵⁷ The sentence is confused as it appears to contradict the passage on fol. 9r where Fidoo Bookkisa's death is reported to have taken place before the war over Biilloo which followed Barartii Ammoo's death.

⁵⁸ Comment by NG: "Animal skins, particularly that of cattle, pigs, buffalos and hippos, were valuable materials out of which leather ropes were made and valued for their practical and decorative use. These ropes, *teepha* in Oromo, were used for loading, for tying farm equipment such as whips, and to make beds and chairs' seat".

country of [free] men (*sic*)⁵⁹ to his territory, Bākäre Godana used to send him to his country [of origin]. At that time, the traders from the territory of Bākäre used to go to Gojjam country for trade. Once Emperor Tewodros suddenly came to the market of Yäjubé before anybody could hear of his coming in advance. There he rounded up everyone, children of men who had come to sell [products], slaves to be sold and slave dealers, and captured them all. He ordered the slaves to be sold and the slave dealers to be brought to him. All of them were brought to Emperor Tewodros.

(**fol. 11v**) And Emperor Tewodros began asking all of them where they came from and from which country they were sold and came [to Yäjubé]. When he asked if there was any place in the country of the Galla where human beings were not sold, they told him that there was one person called Bākäre Godana, and that in his country no human being (*yäsäw lij*) except slaves were sold. He [Tewodros] then ordered people to be reassembled in the market and those coming from the country of Bākäre Godana be looked for. Two traders were found out. One of them was called Fälfälu Mäch’a. Both were taken to Tewodros. He asked them if what he heard from traders, [namely] that no children of men except slaves were sold in the country of Bākäre Godana, was true. They replied that it was true and told him that the children of men were not sold, and that anyone found selling [trading in humans] would have his animals confiscated and that he himself would be thrown into a gorge. Thus, Emperor Tewodros gave to Fälfälu Mäch’a two spears with silver rings on them, a traditional pair of trousers (*geldem surri*), and one *janno*⁶⁰ to take to Bākäre Godana. When Fälfälu brought the materials [gifts] sent by Emperor Tewodros, Bākäre sent [in exchange] a leopard [*gessilla*] skin and gold through Fälfälu Mäch’a. And Bākäre Godana built a house at Wärangur.⁶¹ He built another house at a place called Digga Wädabo.

(**fol. 12r**) While he [Bākäre] was ruling thus and was at Hinni Digga without problems, the Wayu, the Sasigga and the Wama made a secret agreement with Danno Béra and took arms in revolt [*shäffätä*]. The Sasigga [people] from below the Ch’anch’o River revolted. In the direction of Wama, peo-

⁵⁹ Or. *Biyya namaa* or *biyya ormaa*. The text being in Amharic, the author simply writes here *yäsäw agär*.

⁶⁰ A traditional garment with red stripes at the margins along the hem.

⁶¹ Comment by NG: “Waraanguur is north of the Nageessoo River bend. The name is made up of two Oromo terms, *waraana*, ‘spears of war’, and *guur*, ‘to collect in mass’”.

ple revolted from below the Adiya River. The Wayu of Béndi, refusing to be ruled except by Bākāré Godana, all gathered on the Béndi hills and stayed there. They, being surrounded by the Béndi, Dap'o,⁶² and Léqa, stayed there for two years without going to markets and thus without eating salt and pepper and without getting clothes. When the people of Danno Béra went to force them down from the hills, they [Wayu of Béndi] killed many of his people, captured [many prisoners] and took many horses. In these two years Bākāré Godana defeated all the Léqa who had revolted, pacified the Digga, and joined the [Wayu of] Béndi in the second year. Therefore, Bākāré uprooted⁶³ those who had revolted from their land leaving them only half of it. He appointed⁶⁴ his servants on the land that was confiscated from the rebels. [On the other hand], except the Handäq lowlands which the Béndi [Léqa] had given [to Bākāré] in earlier times, all their highlands were left untouched for them up to today. And Bākāré gave all his animals and *rist* to Däjjazmach Moräda Bākāré while he was still alive.

(fol. 12v) He [Bākāré] also said that he [Moräda] could give it to anyone of his relatives after his death and said that he had given all [his property] to him [Moräda]. After that, defeating the Wayu who had revolted, he [Bākāré] successfully advanced fighting Danno Béra. When he reached the present boundary between the Warra Wayu and the Mänä Nā'a,⁶⁵ Bākāré was wounded on the battlefield on a Wednesday. He was wounded on Wednesday [in the month of] *Hedar* and died on a Wednesday,⁶⁶ a week after he came home. Bākāré Godana was a *Moti* in his country. *Moti* in Galleñña means *Negus*.⁶⁷

⁶² Comment by NG: "Name of location is uncertain (Daaphoo Gumbii? Daaphoo Hannaa?). By this time Bakaree had not crossed the Dhidheessa River, so Daaphoo must be somewhere east of this river and north of Arjo".

⁶³ Amh. *Näqaläwu*, from *mānqal*, "to pluck", or "to pull out".

⁶⁴ Lit. 'planted', *täkkälubbät*, from *mätkäl*, "to plant".

⁶⁵ Comment by NG: "The Oromo terms *warra* and *mana* are used alternatively here. Both terms mean 'people of', but *mana* would imply members of the same lineage or family, while *warra* implies people living within a given territory".

⁶⁶ Comment by NG: "As the real date of Bakaree's death is probably unknown, the choice of selecting a Wednesday in the month of Hedar is a possible reference to the much-revered Christian celebration of St Mary (*Maryam*) which is celebrated on 21 *Hedar* (November 30 or December 1)".

⁶⁷ Comment by NG: "*Mootii* from *mo'uu*: 'to triumph, to overcome, to defeat, to keep under control'. *Mo'aa*, 'one who rules, a triumphant, victorious, or successful person'. *Mo'a Anbässa* [the Ge'ez title for Ethiopian Emperors]: 'the powerful and ruling Lion'. Iyäsus Mo'a was

He died after begetting thirteen sons and twelve daughters. Bäkäré Godana died six years after the death of Emperor Tewodros.⁶⁸ Bäkäré Godana, before he died, cursed his children if they would [ever] smoke tobacco. *Däjjazmach* Moroda did not proceed [expand] beyond where Bäkäré Godana had reached. Up to today, the frontiers [limits] remain the same as those reached by Bäkäré Godana. There was no one who was afraid of sins more than him. Even if he was not baptized as a Christian, there was no one who feared God and sin more than he did. He was like a Christian. He did not tax merchants at the gates (*bär*), nor did he collect tax from market exchanges and mediation (*däl-lala*).⁶⁹ Let alone taxes, he did not even take the presents (*mättaya*)⁷⁰ merchants brought to him. Was it not because he feared that God would cause something [bad] happen to him that he remained up to the end without taking (lit. ‘eating’) presents? There were no guns during the olden times of Godana Ammo. Guns came during the time of Bäkäré Godana.

(fol. 13r) The guns which came at the time were *balä-quad*, *balä-bulad*, *bälä-kämsur*, and *Sinadir*, all of which came during the reign of Emperor Menilek.⁷¹ The people who were the original owners were dispossessed of half of their land because they had rebelled on the land where the vassals [of Bäkäré] were appointed. They [the evictees] came and asked him to give them at least

the teacher of *Abuna* Täklä Haymanot in the 13th century”. It is clear that the intention of the author here is to equate the Oromo title of *mootii* to that of Ethiopian kings (*negus*)”. On Iyasus Mo’a of Lake Hayq as the teacher of *Abuna* Täklä Haymanot, see Tadesse, 1972, p.160. For an apparent relation between Oromo *Mo’aa* and Ge’ez *Mo’a Anbässa*, see Negaso Gidada, 2001, p. 194.

⁶⁸ i.e., 1868. According to this source Bakaree began ruling in 1851 and died in 1874. Yämané Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s unpublished Amharic manuscript, “Séna Wära Bäkäré”, suggests that Bakaree died in 1863 E.C./1870–1871, aged 47. See Yämané Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, unpublished MS, 2010, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Taxation at customs’ posts (*bär* or *källa*) was a major source of income for those who ruled at this time.

⁷⁰ Refers to the payment or gift given to someone in power which allows to meet or obtain a favour from the desired person (bride, in-law, chief, king, etc.). It was common for Moräda, Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, and Habtä Maryam to send *mättaya*, mostly in gold, to Ethiopia’s imperial court in Addis Ababa on occasions of public holidays as well as at critical moments when they wanted a favour on taxes or tributes missed or due, or when they wanted support of the court to win over local contenders within or beyond borders of their respective domain. See REC letters 88-89; CGC letters 13,113, 130; GEC letters 39, 156.

⁷¹ For identification of firearms during the time of Emperor Menilek, see Pankhurst, 1962; *Id.*, 1977b.

money for the land so that they would bless [confirm ownership] of the land for him. He [Bäkäré] gave them money, bought the land, and made it [his own] *rist*. When Bäkäré Godana died, after these deeds, Moräda Bäkäré took the throne (*alga*) of Bäkäré Godana in the twenty-fifth year after his birth. Even though Bäkäré Godana had given all his property to *Däjjazmach* Moräda [when] he [Bäkäré] died, saying that *Däjjazmach* Moräda will do no less than what had been done in the old days, called all his brothers to share the property of his father. He divided the animals and the *rist* according to the share each should have based on the traditional rules. During the sharing of the *rist*, all the elders he had gathered to divide the property [among Bäkäré's children] testified that the Handäq lowland was a *qop'a*,⁷² which, during the time of the Galla and according to their *séra*, was an exclusive ownership right of the eldest son (*hangafa*) and given to him [the eldest son] and not for his brothers and would thus be not shared. Therefore, *Däjjazmach* Moräda owned it [Handaq] privately. Two months after the death of Bäkäré Godana, *Däjjazmach* Moräda confronted Danno Béra in a battle in Digga. A chief of Nolé called Dägago Hora, father of Jorgo Dägago, came and declared an alliance with *Däjjazmach* Moräda and received *médhich'a* [a mark of adoption] from him. All of Bonäyya, including those of Sirba, came and declared allegiance to *Däjjazmach* Moräda, saying that he [Danno Béra] is going to destroy them and thus they appealed to *Däjjazmach* Moräda for help.

(fol. 13v) [And] the Haru and the Sibü began to fight against the Léqa [of] Wallagga burning the Léqa [country] and all the Marräch⁷³ up to the lowlands. Sorä Dämbi came and appealed to *Däjjazmach* Moräda [saying] that he was also one of the Léqa, thus his relative, and that the Haru and the Sibü had attacked his country, burnt it and chased him away. Moräda, saying that Danno Béra would not [attack] him unless he himself [would], and that half his force would be enough to keep the country against Danno Béra, he sent the other half of his force in support of the Léqa of Wallagga under the command of Didé, a slave (*barya*) of Bäkäré Godana. This force which went with Didé fought against the Haru and chased them away from Gimbi. But a few days afterwards, the fighters deserted Didé and went home without saying farewell to him. Didé remained in Léqa Wallagga with only a few men. Two years after the death of Bäkäré Godana, *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent a large force to Wal-

⁷² Oromo word for separate, exclusive or alone. The word's standard Oromo spelling is *qophaa*.

⁷³ Comment by NG: "Marräch is Northeast of Gimbi, immediately west of the Dhidheessa River at about 9°14' N 36° 24'".

lagga [west Wallagga] under the command of *Fitawrari* Dibaba. *Fitawrari* Dibaba crossed to Wallagga and defeated the Haru when they confronted him. A person called Kiti Amili mobilized the people living beyond the Birbir [River] and confronted *Fitawrari* Dibaba at Siba. Within a short time, he [Kiti] was defeated and escaped on a horse. The Léqa [of] Wallagga living above Hula Urgessa felt happy because *Fitawrari* Dibaba had defeated the Haru and came to declare allegiance to him. Thus, from the time of their submission, the Léqa [of] Wallagga never revolted.

(**fol. 14r**) There was a man called Odé Gäda living at Dongoro Dissi. Didé and his men crossed into Wallagga [west Wallagga], Odé sent [word] to *Däjjazmach* Moräda that it was revealed to him in a dream that *Däjjazmach* Moräda will conquer Wallagga below [i.e., west of] Dédéssa and thus appealed to him to spare himself, his house and his property when this would happen. Thus, *Däjjazmach* Moräda made a *séra* for [on behalf of] Odé Gäda that nobody was allowed to touch the house of Odé Gäda saying that his house was his [Moräda's]. When Arrojji and Dongoro were attacked, the house of Odé Gäda remained untouched. The people of Arrojji and Dongoro made a fierce fight and hindered *Däjjazmach* Moräda from gaining victory for more than a week. But *Däjjazmach* Moräda finally gained victory over them. When they heard about [the victory] all the Säyyo, the Nolé Kabba, Dap'o, Gacho, Siba, and Jorgo living above [east of] the Birbir [River] came and surrendered to *Däjjazmach* Moräda. It was the Nolé Kabba who submitted [paid tribute] first (*gäbäre*).⁷⁴ The *balabbat* of Dap'o named Tato Täمامo also came and submitted to *Däjjazmach* Moräda and received the *médhicha*. Thus, *Fitawrari* Dibaba returned home to Näqämt[é] after conquering the region (lit. 'countries') above Kingi. Before Bäkäre Godana's death there was correspondence between him and Oncho Jilcha, king of Guma, and they came to be acquainted. Oncho Jilcha came and attacked Nolé Kabba that was a territory under *Däjjazmach* Moräda. *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent a message asking him why he had attacked Nolé Kabba, his [own] territory. One year after that, *Fitawrari* Dibaba conquered Dongoro Dissi and came back, *Däjjazmach* Moräda put up a large force under *Fitawrari* Dibaba and sent him [to the west]. And

⁷⁴ The Amharic terms *gäbbar* ("peasant, tenant") and *gäbäre* ("farmer"), as the Oromo term *gabbara* ("to pay tribute") are closely connected. The equivalent Oromo term for analogous pre-conquest Oromo practices is *muude*, "to submit". The term *Muuda* implies the act of paying tribute as a sign of submission. For the conceptual analysis of *muuda*, see Negaso Gidada, 2001, pp. 76–77, 146–47, 208.

Fitawrari Dibaba made a campaign (*zämächa*)⁷⁵ there. In a two-year campaign, *Fitawrari* Dibaba conquered all the countries above [east of] Mändi. Babbo [of] Gambél resisted one full day but he [Dibaba] defeated it shortly afterwards.

(**fol. 14v**) And after this (conquest) *Fitawrari* Dibaba had the people pay tribute and brought many slaves and a large quantity of gold to *Däjjazmach* Moräda. In the same year Oncho Jilcha the king of Guma died. His son called Jéwé Oncho became the ruler taking the place of his father. *Däjjazmach* Moräda and Jéwé made friendship by exchanging messages and demarcated the boundaries of their territories. The boundary was as follows:⁷⁶ there is Muka Hant'ät'i in Dap'o Ch'ämän. Below Ch'ämän, Dap'o Dingir became the territory of *Däjjazmach* Moräda. The highland above Ch'ämän and across Dabäna River and Haru Mako became Jéwé Oncho's territory. Siba Jorgo and Homa Raba were also added to Moräda's territory. The area called Wato Birbirso Gäda remained for Ch'ämän, while the area above Wato became Jéwé Oncho's. They [Moräda and Jéwé] became reconciled and demarcated their territories. [But] Tucho Danno kidnapped the wife of Jéwé Oncho while she was being taken to Jéwé's home and slaughtered a *räko*⁷⁷ for the young girl. Jéwé Oncho's territory was on the other side of the Dédéssa River and had nothing on this side. Because of this [kidnapping] Jéwé Oncho planned to cross the Dédéssa and attack Tucho Danno. Because of this *Däjjazmach* Moräda warned Jéwé Oncho not to cross the Dédéssa and attack Tucho Danno since Tucho was a Léqa as Moräda was. If he [Jéwé] defeated Tucho today, he would have to confront Moräda the day after. Thus, he [Moräda] warned in advance [Jéwé] that he will side with Tucho should a fight take place.⁷⁸ Jéwé Oncho rejected the warning, came to the territory of Jimma Arjo and camped

⁷⁵ It is interesting that the author uses here the same term (from the Amh. *Zämmätä*) describing the yearly expeditions of the imperial court.

⁷⁶ The following territories are around the Dabana and Birbir Rivers.

⁷⁷ Comment by NG: "Rakoo is the slaughtering of a sheep at the entrance of the bridegroom house during a wedding. Here the bridegroom has to be anointed with the blood of the animal which she steps over to join the family of her husband. This ceremony is followed by the bridegroom's taking possession of the bride. Once these ceremonies are performed the two are legally married". For more details on *rakoo* ritual, see Bartels, 1990, pp. 261–62; Negaso Gidada, 2001, p. 149.

⁷⁸ See the song quoted in Cerulli, 1922, p. 35 suggesting Moroda's challenges in maintaining neutrality between two competing loyalties in conflict.

at a place called Kusayé,⁷⁹ *Däjjazmach* Moräda mobilized all the forces he had including Gärbi Jilo, the chief of Billo, and went to fight against Jéwé Oncho.

(fol. 15r) And they camped at Qumba. Toward the evening, *Qäññazmach* Tucho and Nägäwo Gärbi confronted the forces of Guma and killed many people from Jéwé Oncho's side. Jéwé Oncho consulted his men saying that, should a serious blow be inflicted on his force [army] by Tucho and Nägäwo, and should Moräda's forces be added to this, none of his men would manage to escape. Thus, Jéwé Oncho ran away during the night, crossed the Dédéssa and went back to his own territory. Moräda was ready to face Jéwé Oncho early in the morning, but it was found out that Jéwé's camp had been evacuated. Léqa horsemen were sent to go after Jéwé Oncho. The horses of the Léqa went up to the Dédéssa in vain. They only managed to catch up with the weak ones who were with the provisions, and killed some of them, captured others, and returned.

During this period, *Negus* Täklä Haymanot crossed the river Abbay and invaded Amuru and Gudru. During this period also, *Däjjazmach* Joté became engaged to the daughter of *Däjjazmach* Moräda after sending people [elders]. When *Däjjazmach* Moräda heard about the coming of the Amhara, he sent the following message to all the rulers below Gibé: "The Amhara has come to invade us. Let us full-heartedly get reconciled and swear for each other. We should either fight united or submit together". When all those who were fighting each other heard this they swore [allegiance] to each other and became reconciled. Horro, Jimma, and Gindäbärät stood against *Negus* Täklä Haymanot but they were completely destroyed. After destroying these, he [Täklä Haymanot] came here and camped at Tullu Amara.⁸⁰

When all the rulers below Gibé heard this, they wholeheartedly consulted among themselves and said that they were not able to stand against him [*Negus* Täklä Haymanot] since he had defeated them and thus agreed to submit. But Jéwé Oncho and Bushän Miju, the father of Génda Bushän, disagreed and said they will fight. Then, *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent word to Jéwé explaining to him that he could not resist alone against the Amhara since all the others had agreed to declare allegiance.

⁷⁹ Kusaayee is a locality Southeast of Arjo at the source of the Nageessoo River.

⁸⁰ Originally Tulluu Marraa, Tulluu Amaaraa is the name of both a mountain and the neighbouring territory in Guduru (east Wallagga). See Bairu Tafla, 1987, pp. 415, 417, 979; Oljira Tujuba, 1994, p. 3.

(fol. 15v) But Jéwé refused [disagreed]. When Jéwé disagreed, *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent *Fitawrari* Legdi and *Fitawrari* Ch'ibsa saying that it was better to consult (with him) even if he had disagreed [to his proposal]. So Jéwé Oncho agreed [to the meeting] and came up to Dap'o on the boundary between their territories. They [Moräda and Jéwé] met there and *Däjjazmach* Moräda told Jéwé: "When all the Galla say that they cannot fight against the Amhara and agree to submit, you cannot fight by yourself alone; therefore, I advise you to submit". But Jéwé Oncho replied that he would rather have his neck cut than submit without fighting. When *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent [a message] to *Dajjazmach* Joté, *Dajjazmach* Joté sent tribute through *Däjjazmach* Moräda to the Amhara. And *Däjjazmach* Moräda also sent tribute to *Negus* Täklä Haymanot at Tullu Amara through Jijo Yada and thus submitted. When the people below Gibé paid tribute, the father of Génda Bushän, Bushän Miju, refused to pay tribute. When *Negus* Täklä Haymanot staying at Tullu Amara sent people to fight Bushän Miju, *Däjjazmach* Moräda appealed to *Negus* Täklä Haymanot that the force that was sent against Bushän [Miju] should not cross into his [Moräda's] territory and make an attack, explaining that the territory of Bushän Miju and his own had a common boundary. Thus, *Negus* Täklä Haymanot sent thirty men to stay on the boundary between the territory of Bushän [Miju] and Moräda so as to safeguard Moräda's side of the territory. Thus, the thirty men were posted on the boundary from Wälo to Handäq. After that, he [*Negus* Täklä Haymanot] sent a force and destroyed the territory of Bushän Miju. Bushän Miju escaped from his house and went into the forest where he piled [heaped] ivory left and right and [until] he was killed in the forest while sitting on his piled ivory.

(fol. 16r) During that period, after destroying Bushän Miju, *Negus* Täklä Haymanot went back to his country and remained there for the rainy season. In the autumn (*t'ebi*) of that year *Däjjazmach* Moräda went to Jimma and met with *Negus* Täklä Haymanot. *Negus* Täklä Haymanot crossed the Gibé River, destroyed Nonno and led Limmu Abba Bägibo to submit. He [Täklä Haymanot] appointed *Ras* Däräso to rule over the territories below Gibé. He also appointed *Ras* Bäzzabeh, *Däjjazmach* Bäläw, and *Ras* Warqé, over Horro, Jimma and Gudru [respectively] as regent (*mogzät*). He [again] crossed over to his country Gojjam and stayed there [for the rainy season]. And *Ras* Däräso camped (*kätämä*) at a place called Digga Wädäbo which was in the territory of *Däjjazmach* Moräda and spent the rainy season there. There, *Ras* Däräso had Moräda baptized as a Christian, appointed him, and gave him the title of *Däjj-*

jazmach. When Moräda became a Christian,⁸¹ the country [people] was happy and voluntarily accepted to be baptized as Christians. In the autumn (*t'ebi*), *Ras Däräso* marched from Digga, and *Ras Wärqé* from Horro, they met each other in Nonno, and made a campaign against Guma. *Abba Jobir* confronted them on the Dédessa River but was quickly defeated by the Gojjamé. *Abba Jobir* was killed on the battlefield. His brothers and all his relatives were completely wiped out together with their forces. *Däjjazmach* Moräda, who had lagged behind and did not take part either in the battle or in the campaign, caught up with *Däjjazmach* Däräso in Guma after the fighting was over.

(**fol. 16v**) When *Ras Däräso* crossed Gäbba and the two Sor rivers⁸² on his way to Gojjam and arrived at a river called Sésé, Emperor [Menilek] caught up with him on the Sésé River, saying that all the territories up to the River Abbay belonged to him and the Gojjamé had no reason [right] to campaign there. He then told *Ras Däräso* through messengers to release all those he had captured and peacefully go back to his country. He promised *Ras Däräso* that he will not touch him and allowed him to eat grain but forbade him from taking even a grain of salt from the countryside people (*balagär*). Thus, people were assigned to the front and rear of *Ras Däräso* to check that he would not touch the country and its peoples. Thus, *Ras Däräso* was going in front while Emperor Menilek was following from behind. In this way, he [Menilek] escorted him [Däräso] up to Gojjam. At this time *Däjjazmach* Moräda was ill from smallpox (*fänt'at'a*) and remained behind. *Ras Gobäna*, therefore, accused *Däjjazmach* Moräda of staying behind because of his love for [allegiance to] the Gojjamés and because he did not want to see Emperor Menilek eye to eye, not because he was really ill. Thus, *Ras Gobäna* sent fifteen horsemen to go and see what was wrong [with Moräda]. *Däjjazmach* Moräda gave fifteen *wäqét* of gold to the horsemen who came to see him. When *Janhoy* Emperor Menilek drove *Ras Däräso* up to Gudru and was about to return to Shewa, *Negus Täklä Haymanot*, saying, “I am coming for you”, crossed the Abbay and came to attack Menilek.

⁸¹ This act implied that Däräso was Morodaa's godfather. It was *Däjjazmach* Gabra Egzi'abhér who was christened by Emperor Menilek in 1889; see “Gäbrä Ḩgzi'abəḩer Moroda” in *Eae*, vol. II (2005), pp. 608b–09a.

⁸² Comment by NG: “There is only one Sor River in fact, but there is a place where the River bends 180° and crosses the old road between Sayyoo and Naqamtee twice. That is perhaps what the author refers here as the two Sor Rivers.”

(fol. 17r) Although Emperor Menilek informed *Negus* Täklä Haymanot that, as Yohannes was ruling (over the country), they should debate over the case in his presence and therefore should abstain from fighting, since *Negus* Täklä Haymanot disagreed (over this), he came up and confronted Emperor Menilek at Embabo [i.e., June 6, 1882]. Emperor Menilek was victorious and *Negus* Takla Haymanot was defeated. Thus, after spending the rainy season, in the following spring *Däjjazmach* Moräda sent *Fitawrari* Dibaba to Emperor Menilek to pay tribute.⁸³ Two years after the Battle of Embabo, *Däjjazmach* Moräda himself met Emperor Menilek and paid tribute. The amount of money *Däjjazmach* Moräda took with him at that time was uncountable. He took a large amount of ivory, gold, civet (*zibad*), leopard (*gessilla*) skin, lion's mane (*gofar*) for Emperor Menilek. Emperor Menilek too gave him [Moräda] lots of presents. At that time, all the Galla living below (i.e., west of) Gudär paid tribute to Emperor Menilek. *Däjjazmach* Joté also sent his brother with *Däjjazmach* Moräda and paid tribute.⁸⁴ [But] within a short time, all the Galla who had submitted by paying tribute [to Menilek] betrayed and fought against the Amhara. But *Däjjazmach* Moräda, *Däjjazmach* Joté, and *Abba* Jifar said that they would not betray and refused [to fight]. Therefore, he [Menilek] took away [plucked out] all of them from their lands and appointed *shaläqa*⁸⁵ over them. The territories of these three rulers [Moräda, Joté and *Abba* Jifar] remained in their hands till today. Except for the territories of *Däjjazmach* Moräda and *Däjjazmach* Joté, he [Menilek] gave all the lands [countries] below Gibé to *Ras* Gobäna.

(fol. 17v) And *Ras* Gobäna built a house and settled at Bonäyya [of] Hinne above (north of) Gätäma. He changed the name of the place, which was formerly called Bonäyya, and named it Roggé. By that time *Däjjazmach* Joté had not yet subdued Anfillo. And the country above Débio [Débia] was also not yet in the hands of *Däjjazmach* Joté. *Däjjazmach* Joté had married the

⁸³ i.e., 1882.

⁸⁴ Jootee's brother who accompanied *Fitawrari* Dibaabaa to Menilek's court on this occasion is not clear, but Jootee usually sent *Fitawrari* Ammayyaa, one of his brothers, for such crucial undertakings.

⁸⁵ Military title, a commander of one thousand soldiers. These commanders were settled with their followers throughout the territories annexed in the conquered south. In imperial Ethiopia's lexicography, *shaläqa* is a reference to commanders of military colons whose services were vital for the very survival of the empire. On their mismanagement in Qellem's administration see HMC, *passim* and Etana Habte Dinka, 2022.

daughter of *Däjjazmach* Moräda. At that time the Arabs [of Beni Shangul] and *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman were helping *Däjjazmach* Joté to attack the country of the Säyyo Galla. The Arab *balabbat* who helped *Däjjazmach* Joté at that time were *Däjjazmach* Abdurrahman, Shäykh Hojälé, Fadulé Tuta, Yasin Ch'urqa [Ch'orqa], Awudun Jäguba. Their agreement with *Däjjazmach* Joté was like this: two-thirds of the taken booty was for the Arabs; one third for *Däjjazmach* Joté; the Arabs would conquer the country and hand it over to *Däjjazmach* Joté. With this agreement they [the Arabs] used to come and fight for him [*Däjjazmach* Joté]. At that time *Däjjazmach* Joté crossed over the river called Garé, taking the Arabs with him, to fight Anfillo. But the Anfillo wiped out the people of *Däjjazmach* Joté. They also exterminated the Arabs who had come with *Däjjazmach* Joté. Thus, *Däjjazmach* Joté came to *Däjjazmach* Moräda and told him that the Anfillo had exterminated his people and asked him for help.

(fol. 18r) But he [Moräda] told him to appeal to *Ras* Gobäna. And *Däjjazmach* Joté gave a large amount of presents (*mättaya*) and appealed to *Ras* Gobäna. *Ras* Gobäna right away appointed *Däjjazmach* Joté as *däjjazmach* (*sic*) and made a proclamation for the campaign. By crossing the Dabus [River] through [by way of] Gämbél, *Ras* Gobäna destroyed the Mao [of] Tullu Arba. Returning from there, he made a campaign to Anfillo on his way back. Camping⁸⁶ at a place called Amara Ch'äbi⁸⁷ and crossing a river called Läga Bowa he confronted the Anfillo who came to face him. Because the area was densely forested, the Anfillo blocked the way for two days.⁸⁸ Thus, *Ras* Gobäna took a detour through a place called Gofgofi⁸⁹ and camped at Gärgéda.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Comment by NG: “the author uses the verb *säffära*, implying that the camping was only temporary”.

⁸⁷ Comment by NG: “South of Walal mountain, several Oromo clans collectively called Amaara settled at Cabii, Kanchii, Caakkuu, Bakaddii and Budinii rivers. Other Amaara clans settled in the northern part of the territory of *Abeetoo* Abbaa Dhasaa of Galaan country, a contemporary of Jootee, Abbaa Gimbii, Gumaa Oshoo and Morodaa”.

⁸⁸ Informants told NG that when Gobäna started wondering about the strong resistance of the Anfillo, he was told that Shanshi Gai, the *qaalluu* of the Mao, was helping *Abba* Gimbi. See Negaso Gidada, 2001, pp. 238–40.

⁸⁹ Comment by NG: “Gofgofii was in the northwestern part of Galaan where Abbaa Dhasaa had one of his residences”.

⁹⁰ Comment by NG: “Probably Garjeeda, one of the six sub-groups (*gosa*) of Sayyo in Qellem beside Daallee, Laaloo, Haawwaa and Galaan”.

The ruler of Anfillo called *Abba Gimbi*⁹¹ came to Gärgéda and paid tribute to *Ras Gobäna*. He [Gobäna] tied up his [*Abba Gimbi*'s] hands and gave him over to *Däjjazmach* Joté right away before the coming of the night. Then he [Gobäna] returned to his *kätäma* at Roggé and, saying that the country was too large for *Däjjazmach* Moräda and that he needed areas where he could settle his followers (*lolé*), he took the following areas away from *Däjjazmach* Moräda and settled his soldiers [there]: from above [east of] Dédéssa: Sibü Gibé, Bonäyya Digga and the territory of Legdi Säfi; from below [west of] Dédéssa: Dap'ö Dingir, Siba Jorgo, Homa Raba, Nolé Kabba; from above [east of] Birbir: Säyyo, Jarso, Gämbél, Babbo Gämbél; from below [west of] Kujur: (fol. 18v) all the Mänä Sibü, Babbo Gitän. He [Gobäna] took away all of these territories from *Däjjazmach* Moräda and 'planted' (*täkkälubbät*) on them his followers (*lolé*). Saying that he was uprooted without giving offence, *Däjjazmach* Moräda appealed to *Janhoy* [Emperor Menilek] in writing. He complained that *Ras Gobäna* had uprooted him. *Janhoy* sent Moräda a letter answering that he [Moräda] should come [to see him] when *Ras Gobäna* also comes, so that they could be made to agree. The servants of *Ras Gobäna* who were posted in his country mistreated (*bäddälu*) the poor [peasants] very much. In those days, the poor could not go and appeal to a judge [in the capital Addis Ababa] and thus had to leave the country and flee [as refugees]. Five *balabbats* (chiefs) of Sibü Wallagga became exiles (*täsäddädu*) in the country of the Därbush [dervishes] because of the Amhara [appointees] of *Ras Gobäna*. They gave allegiance [submitted] to the Därbush who had destroyed and settled in the countries of Abdurrahman and [*Shäykh*] Hojälé. And these five chiefs (*qoro*) brought the Därbush who then burnt the Léqa and Sibü of Wallagga up to Gimbi from above Dabus. The Därbush crossed over through Gänji and burnt Nolé Kabba and Gänji (*sic*). The Därbush who came at that time was called Amir Kälil [Khalil]. He went down, returned, and built a house at Jarso Gämbél. He counted [one] thousand riles [riflemen] and posted them to guard the town (*kätäma*) [of Jarso]. Saying that he was called by his master,⁹² Amir Kälil went to Mätämma. Through continuous plundering the Därbush destroyed everything below [west] of the Dédéssa and made it a complete desert.

⁹¹ Abbaa Gimbii was the king of Anfillo ruling over the Busase and the Mao. For further information see Negaso Gidada, 2001; Daniel Ayana, 1995.

⁹² Wrongly spelled *aläto* instead of *Abéto*. Khalil's master was Khalifah Abdullahi of Khartoum.

(**fol. 19r**) The Därbush remained at Jarso for one year and three months and [from there] ruled Sibu Wallagga. *Ras* Gobäna who had spent the rainy season in Shewa came back and went to expel the Därbush who were guarding the house. They, having heard that *Ras* Gobäna was coming, moved from Jarso to a mountain called Qämi and confronted *Ras* Gobäna at the foot of the mountain [at the battle of Guté Dili]⁹³. *Ras* Gobäna defeated them and their leader escaped on [his] horse.⁹⁴ Saying that it was the Sibu Wallagga who had brought the Därbush, *Ras* Gobäna slaughtered all the [people of] Sibu Wallagga. He went as far as having all males slaughtered. Except those who ran away and escaped, all the remaining were slaughtered. He [*Ras* Gobäna] went back after capturing all their cattle and burning their houses. *Ras* Gobäna burnt [Sibu Wallagga] in October (*T'eqemt*) and an epidemic which finished the cattle came in *Miyazya*.⁹⁵ In addition to this came the evil days (*Kefu Qän*)⁹⁶ of famine. Thus, the remaining Sibu of Wallagga perished through hunger. The Sibu of Wallagga perished and [the country] became a desert. Few days after the return of *Ras* Gobäna to Roggé, Emperor Menilek ordered him to make a campaign against a person called Asan Wänjäbo [Hasan Enjamo] who had revolted. *Ras* Gobäna went and confronted [H]asan Wänjäbo. Many of *Ras* Gobäna's soldiers perished in the battle with [H]asan Wänjäbo.

(**fol. 19v**) *Ras* Gobäna returned to his home at Fallé but before long he died. Shortly after this, Emperor Yohannes died on *Mäggabit* 2, 1881 E.C. in battle while fighting against the Därbush. It was also then that the perishing of cattle took place. And *Däjjazmach* Moräda, after begetting seven males and six females, and after bringing the *Tabot* of Iyäsus from Gojjam but before consecrating it, died on the 43rd year since his birth after ruling for fifteen years. He died on *Genbot* 28 of that year [1881 E.C.] on the day of [St] Amanuel. And *Ras* Gobäna handed over a *qallicha* called *Abba* Ch'affé⁹⁷ to *Däjjazmach* Moräda to have him imprisoned. Because *Abba* Ch'affé refused to move into a house in which someone else had lived, and demanded a new

⁹³ On the Battle of Gute Dili see Triulzi, 1983, pp. 215–35.

⁹⁴ On Mahdist raids in Wallagga, see Cerulli 1922, pp. 82–83.

⁹⁵ Wrongly spelled *Mazya*.

⁹⁶ The *Kefu Qän* (lit. 'evil days') is the Amharic appellation for the Great Famine of 1888–1892.

⁹⁷ Lit. 'the head of the assembly' for the shaded tree area where Oromo gathering takes place; see Bassi, 2005. Enrico Cerulli reports a legend that *Abba* Ch'affee predicted Morodaa's death, Goobanaa's death, and his own death all to take place within one week (Cerulli, 1922, pp. 87–88).

house, *Däjjazmach* Moräda had a new house built for him. *Abba* Ch'affé died before moving into the house built for him. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér had then the *Tabot* of Iyäsus moved into that new house built for *Abba* Ch'affé. Below [west of] the Gibé, be it in our territory or in the territories of others, the first [Ethiopian Orthodox Church] was Iyäsus of Näqämté. There was no other church built before it. During this period, all horned animals died, and people could not find [oxen] for ploughing. Thus, those who were clever (lit. 'who knew') farmed with an iron hoe (*gäso*). Those who were not clever (lit. 'who did not know') began using horses and donkeys for ploughing instead of oxen. *Däjjazmach* Moräda died and was buried near his house at Sombo.⁹⁸

(**fol. 20r**) When *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér informed Emperor Menilek of the death of *Däjjazmach* Moräda, Emperor Menilek sent him a reply in which he told him that the territory of his [father] will remain in his hands and that he [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] should come to [see] him in the autumn (*t'ebi*). At the time when *Ras* Däräso spent the rainy season at Digga, he had *Däjjazmach* Moräda baptized as a Christian; it was said that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér had crossed over to Gojjam so that *Negus* Täklä Haymanot would baptize him as a Christian. But *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was not baptized as a Christian [then]. [It was] *Däjjazmach* Moräda [who] was baptized then in the autumn (*t'ebi*), and in the same autumn (*t'ebi*), *Negus* Täklä Haymanot and Emperor Menilek fought each other at Embabo.⁹⁹ *Negus* Täklä Haymanot was defeated, and Emperor Menilek became victorious. Explaining that it was because of this [incident] that he was not baptized, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér requested Emperor Menilek through messengers to be baptized as a Christian by him. Emperor Menilek answered him that this would be done [take place] in the Autumn (*t'ebi*) when he [Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] comes [to Addis Ababa]. While *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér was on his way [there] with a large quantity of ivory and gold as presents to Emperor Menilek, Emperor Menilek was crowned as *Negusä Nägäst* of Ethiopia on the 25th of *T'ege*mt [1882 E.C.]. Shortly afterwards, in [the month of *Hedar*], Emperor Menilek began his march for the campaign against Tegré. Two days after Emperor Menilek began his journey, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér joined him at Sululta and travelled with him for two days. Emperor Menilek then had *Däjjazmach*

⁹⁸ Morodaa Bakaree died aged 43 on *Genbot* 1881 E.C./May 1889, after ruling for 15 years. Yämané Gäbrä Egzi'abhér reports that Morodaa Bakaree died of smallpox on *Genbot* 29, 1881 E.C./June 5, 1889, aged 47; see Yämané Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, 2010, p. 70.

⁹⁹ Wrongly spelled *Ebäbo*.

jazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér baptized as a Christian in a tent at Jidda on a Sunday.

(**fol. 20v**) At 3 o'clock [9 a.m.] of the same day, Emperor Menilek had the drum beaten (lit. 'taken out')¹⁰⁰ and declared that he had given the territory (lit. 'country') of *Däjjazmach* Moräda to his servant, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, and bestowed upon him the title of *däjjazmach*. In the evening of the same day *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér requested Emperor Menilek to give him the *Dawit* [i.e., the Psalter]. But Menilek asked him what use the *Dawit* would be to him since he had been baptized that day and was not a learned man yet. And *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér said that he had already learned [the Bible] and could read its writings. Then, Menilek had the *Dawit* brought so that *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér could read it in front of him. And *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér read the *Dawit* in front of Menilek. Emperor Menilek then said that it was written in the book(s) that a child should study for three years and then get baptized and thus the only person who had obeyed the words of the book was *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Thus, Emperor Menilek marvelled a lot. Then and there *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér appealed to Menilek that he had been uprooted from half of his father's territory without offending. Menilek ordered that Sibu of Wallagga below [west of] Kujur River be returned to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. Emperor Menilek told him [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] that Nolé Kabba, Dap'o, Sibu Gibé and Siba Jorgo were not *Däjjazmach* Moräda's territory and that he had told *Däjjazmach* Balcha, the servant (*lolé*) of Ras Gobäna, that these areas were for the settlement (*mätäkyä*, lit. 'planting', 'posting') of Ras Gobäna's servants. After coming home from there [Jidda], *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér shared all the land and cattle with his brothers.

(**fol. 21r**) As the women [daughters] were left out, he shared it with the men only. At that time, in accordance with the custom (*dämb*) of the Galla, daughters did not share their father's cattle and land (*rist*). After that, at the time of the Koyna expedition, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér proclaimed that, beginning from that time, daughters should also share their fathers' cattle like the Amhara. When *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér shared the *rist* with his brothers, the Handäq lowlands remained as the *angafa*'s [first son] additional right for *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér because the Handäq lowlands had be-

¹⁰⁰ Official announcements and decrees were accompanied by the beating of the royal drum.

longed to *Däjjazmach* Moräda as exclusive [ownership] right of the firstborn since the sharing of *rist* with his brothers.

And *Ras* Gobäna had imprisoned a *qallu* called *Abba* Ch'affé who had been handed over to *Däjjazmach* Moräda to be guarded. And because *Abba* Ch'affé had refused to move into a dirty house that had been occupied by others, *Däjjazmach* Moräda had a new house built for *Abba* Ch'affé. But *Abba* Ch'affé became ill and died before moving into the house built for him. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér then moved the *tabot* of Iyäsus into that house built for *Abba* Ch'affé and in [month of] *Sané* [June] *Balä Egzi'abhér* was celebrated in it. Thus, the first [Ethiopian Orthodox] Church [to be introduced to the region] below Gibé was Näqämté Iyäsus. Next to it the Maryam [Church] of Näqämté was founded.¹⁰¹

(**fol. 21v**) At that time *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér made a proclamation saying: "Let alien worshiping disappear from my country. Do not worship the sun, the moon, the *qallicha*, the trees, the mountains and the rivers. Be baptized as Christians. Worship in church. Let the *qallu* go out of my country, let them come and be baptized as Christians abandoning their being *qallu*. If they refuse, let them leave my country". Some of the *qallicha* who preferred to remain in the country became baptized as Christians and all those who refused left the country and became exiles. Those who became exiles went to the territories of the Amhara which were to the right [north] and to the left [south] [of Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's territory] and remained there as *qallu* up till today, being honoured and getting tributes. Famine then took place. People from Gojjam,

¹⁰¹ This paragraph is a repetition of what has already been narrated above in fol. 19r but reveals interesting discrepancies. The main subject of the story, *Abba* Caffee, referred here (fol. 20v) as *qaalluu*, in fol. 19r is described as *qallicha*, two different representations with considerable differing meanings. *Qaalluu*, the hereditary ritual and spiritual leader in traditional Oromo society, is a figure that enjoys substantial power 'in the local organization of authority in general as a judge, as an expert on customs, and as the one person who can give authoritative answers to many different problems' (Knutsson, 1967, p. 5). Although the term *Qallicha* appears similar to *Qaalluu*, the former refers to roles which are in stark opposition to those played by the latter, as the *Qallicha* within Ethiopian society has played an anti-traditional and anti-social role both in the past as well as the present. The alternate use of *qaalluu* and *qallicha* in the same text shows the ambivalence of the author—and of the ruling house of Naqamtee—towards traditional Oromo society and its inclusion within the expanding Ethiopian empire. For a systematic study of the *Qaalluu* institution in relation to the Gadaa system, see Asmarom Legesse, 2002, pp. 133–94. For a comprehensive study of the *Qaalluu* institution, see Knutsson, 1967, pp. 65–207; Gemetchu Megerssa–Aneesa Kassam, 2019, pp. 236–59.

Shewa, and the Galla countries came as refugees to the country of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér because of the famine. Bäkäre Godana and *Däjjazmach* Moräda had stored a lot of grain. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér ordered that this stored grain should be given to the refugees. The granaries were opened and the grain fed¹⁰² not only to the refugees but also all local people who had been famine-stricken for three years. Hearing this, Emperor Menilek sent two hundred *Gondäre* to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér asking him to feed them at least for one rainy season. *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér received and fed them. But Emperor Menilek continued to ask that they be fed for one year more. In this way the *Gondäre* remained as settlers (*tekläñña*) up to the present.¹⁰³

(fol. 22r) At that time, when cattle perished, the same epidemics (lit. 'disease') which exterminated the cattle also exterminated the wild animals: buffaloes, pigs, *bähor*, and gazelles. Lions could not find game and thus were forced to eat plants. When things became worse, lions came running after humans and ate them. The famine was not for one year only. It lasted four years in all. Not only human beings but also birds, small and big wild animals were famine-stricken. Even the crops that were planted by hoe were eaten up by horses and donkeys when they sprouted. What survived the rats, was eaten up by the birds. What remained from the birds was eaten up by other animals, an-

¹⁰² Comment by NG: "The term used is *qälläb säfürullät*, from *qälläb*, 'food', and *säfürä*, 'to measure out grain from the granary' (*gotära*)".

¹⁰³ We are not certain about the date of composition of this chronicle but the statement "the *Gondäre* remained as settlers (*tekläñña*) up to the present" provides some internal evidence which may be useful for the dating of the document. According to this statement, the *Gondäre*—i.e., Menilek's soldiers—were still in Naqamtee when this chronicle was authored. The *Gondäre* in fact were to remain in Naqamtee until *Lij* Iyyasu visited the province in 1913. Even then, instead of having them recalled to Addis Ababa, they were only moved to the neighbouring Arjoo province administered by *Däjjazmach* Dämessäw Näsibu. After the removal of the *Gondäre* from his domain, Gäbrä Egzi'abhér still had to pay thirteen thousand birr each year for their provisions. The fact that the *Gondäre* remained in Naqamtee 'up to the present', i.e., the time of the composition of this chronicle, suggests that this document might be authored in or around 1913. Alternatively, if we want to interpret 'up to the present' in connection with Gäbrä Egzi'abhér's obligation to pay thirteen thousand birr every year into the treasury of the governor of the neighbouring Arjoo province, the document can be assumed to have been composed any time between 1913 and the death of Gäbrä Egzi'abhér around 1925. For a detailed approach to the date and modality of composition of this chronicle, see Triulzi, 2006. See also, GEC letters 86, 114, 122–123, 128, 134, 140, 150, 161, 166, 176, 179.

imals that did not eat crops before but had begun to do so as a result of God's wrath: rabbits, foxes, gelada baboon (*ch'ano*), porcupines, pigs, civet cats, wild pigs and wild cats (*anär*), all these ate up the crops during the night. No one could tend for the crops because lions and leopards ate people. It was not only lions and leopards that attacked people. There were many animals which were not known before they came out [from the forest] and killed many people. Lions used to roam around in herds of twenty or thirty just like cattle. Thus, people were afraid and did not go out to look after the crops. The crops were thus eaten up by the animals. Unless a group of at least five men accompanied women when they went out to fetch firewood or water, the women would be eaten by wild animals. Only after people began to pray God did He have mercy on them. Thus, cattle were born and multiplied from the very few which survived the epidemics. People began to have enough food from the crops which they planted with the help of hoes.

(**fol. 22v**) After the days of all these troubles passed, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér planted (founded) many Churches both above [east] and below [west of] the Dédéssa. And through proclamations he ordered people in different parts of his territory to plant plants and vegetables (*atkelt*) of various sorts. He also had a bell in the marketplace which was rung every hour so that people would know what time it was. A person with a watch was appointed to do this and rang the bell. Because of this those who wanted to pray prayed. The poor who did not have watches could then distinguish the different times [of the day]. Those who had watches corrected their watch according to the bell. The bell was rung seven times [a day], at three o'clock [9 a.m.] in the morning, at six o'clock [12 p. m.], at sunset [6 p.m.], also after sunset when it is [was] the time to sleep, at midnight, and two hours before dawn. *Ras* Gobäna confiscated Bonäyya at Digga from *Däjjazmach* Moräda and posted [settled] his followers [there]. As the settlers (*tekläñña*) mistreated the poor, the latter fled the country and the land was deserted. When *Ras* Gobäna died, Emperor Menilek gave this land to *Fitawrari* Lulsägäd. With the permission of Emperor Menilek, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér bought this land—Bonäyya Digga—from *Fitawrari* Lulsägäd with sixty *wäqét* of gold. When land was measured by *qälad*, he [*Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér] secured his *siso* [one third] and took the land reserved for the *Shaläqa*. He then sold the rest to the poor.

(**fol. 23r**) The Handäq lowlands remained the property of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. He had taken this land being his family's first-born (the *angäfa*) because it was an exclusive privilege of the eldest son. And also, after the land was measured according to *qälad*, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér bought large areas of land from Emperor Menilek with five hundred and fifty

wäqét of gold. This land was above [east of] Dabus and below [west of] Dängya; on the right hand [north] it was up to the Angär and Wuké rivers; on the left hand [south], in the direction of Jarso Bändi up to Ch'irach'a River. When he bought this land, he had it recorded in the [imperial Ethiopia's] Government Register and in the records of six judges [*wänbäroch*]. The six judges on whose register the land purchase was recorded were *Afü Negus* Est'ifanos, *Qäññazmach* Käfalaw, *Qäññazmach* Naqi, *Qäññazmach* Wändim, *Grazmach* Wäldä Yohannes and *Qäññazmach* Haylä Mika'él. The usher (*Aggafari*) who represented the seller was *Janhoy's* servant, *Grazmach* Yeggäzu.

Däjjazmach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér also bought two hundred *gasha* of land in the Tuqa and Gutto regions of Sibü, from *Fitawrari* Tayyé with the permission of Emperor Menilek. Furthermore, *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér bought two hundred *gasha* of land in the lowlands of Gutto from *Qäññazmach* Nämärra with two thousand *birr*. The latter was done with the permission of Empress of Ethiopia, Zäwditu, and of the Crown Prince of the Ethiopian Government, *Ras* Täfäri. The officials who represented the permission of the Government at the time of the purchase were *Fitawrari* Abébé and the judges were *Ligaba* Wädajé and the usher (*aggafari*) Wäldä Maryam. The boundaries of the land were: [in the west] (*bätach*) it was up to the Angär [River]; [in the east] (*bälay*) it was up to *Abba* Gudär; on the frontiers of the territory of Génda Bushän it was up to the Lukko River.

(fol. 23v) The person who had the bridge of Dédéssa constructed was *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér. The construction began in the year of Mercy 1910 E.C. [i.e., 1917], two years after the daughter of *Negusä Nägäst* Menilek of Ethiopia, *Negest* Zäwditu, was crowned and *Ras* Täfäri became the Crown Prince [Heir to the Throne]. The construction was completed in the year 1913 E.C. [i.e., 1920]. The work was done through contract by a *färänj* [Yani Míngos].¹⁰⁴ The people of the country refused to work as employed labourers because they were afraid of malaria. Thus, the labour was done by the slaves of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér from the beginning of the construction up to its completion. The construction cost was exactly sixty-five thousand *birr*. The person who had it constructed was: Kumsa Moräda, Moräda Bäkäré, Bäkäré Godana, Godana Ammo, Ammo Faro, Faro Sinika, Sinika Nä'a, Nä'a Doro, Doro Kolobo, Kolobo Wayu, Wayu Léqa, Léqa Kura, Kura Obo, Obo Dalle,

¹⁰⁴ For details about the planning and construction of the Dhedheessa bridge, see GEC letters 42, 153, 160, 163.

Dallé Dafa, Dafa Mäch'a, Mäch'a Rayya, Raya Kura, Kura Heda. Tuläma is the son of Kura. Kura Heda begets both Mäch'a and Tuläma.

4.

Genealogies of the Macca (Boräna)

“Genealogies of the Boräna” is the English title of the Macca lineages listed in MS Rome, ANL CR 48, hosted in the Conti Rossini Fund at the Accademia dei Lincei. The MS was catalogued by Stefan Strelcyn in 1976 under the title “Généalogies des Galla par le Däggäč Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Ēgzi’abəher”.¹ The Amharic MS was sent on 5 September 1937 by Colonel Giuseppe Fasulo, Military Commander of Naqamtee during the Italian occupation, to Martino M. Moreno, then Secretary General of the Italian-ruled Governorate of Galla-Sidama in Jimma. The Amharic text was accompanied by a rough Italian translation, rather a long summary of the text, which claimed the MS had been composed by the ruler of Naqamtee Däjjach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér and continued by his son Habtä Maryam.² Carlo Conti Rossini himself started a new and more accurate Italian translation of the “Galla Genealogies” keeping this title, but did not go beyond fol. 5r.³ In his accompanying letter to Martino M. Moreno, Colonel Fasulo claimed that the initial MS had been “commenced” on 29 Hamlé 1929 E.C./30 July 1937 “at Horr Wälabu in the country of the Boräna”. Yet the MS appears to be a copy of the original “genealogy and history of the Galla” the head of Wallagga-Naqamtee, Morodaa Bakaree, alias Däjjach Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, had originally compiled in 1906 E.C. by writing it down in a family register (mäzgäb) after “bringing together old men from our country [region] and from the neighbouring areas right and left”.⁴ It was from this mäzgäb that a copy of the “Galla Genealogies” was sent by Gäbrä Egzi’abhér’s son, Habtä Maryam, to Emperor Haylä Sellasé on T’equet 24, 1926 E.C./November 5, 1933. A polished handwritten

¹ Strelcyn, 1976, pp. 144–46.

² As stated in the Italian title of the translation: “Traduzione del Manoscritto della Storia dei Galla redatto a cura del Degiac Gabresghier ed Aptemariam” (MS Rome, ANL CR 48, translation A). This last one is reproduced in Di Lauro, 1939, pp. 22–32.

³ “Dağgäč Habta-Märyām Gabra-Ēgzi’abēhēr / Genealogie dei Galla” (MS Rome, ANL CR 48, translation B). Text B consists of three loose leaves.

⁴ See HMC letter 32, *passim*.

copy of the *Genealogies*, with a few language corrections presumably ordered by Carlo Conti Rossini, is to be found in the CR Fund and is listed in Strelcyn's *Catalogue of the Ethiopian MSS at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* under a different shelfmark (MS Rome, ANL CR 81) and title ("Généalogie des Borana, Boräna Yätäwällädubät").⁵

As MS ANL CR 48 is a written rendering of oral testimonies, it is a very problematic documentary source. Various interpretations were provided in time. An early draft translation into English was originally carried out by the late Hussein Ahmed of the History Department of Addis Ababa University (AAU). This early draft was later revised by Tesema Ta'a during his research visit to Rome and Naples in the early 1990s. The original Amharic MS was largely used by Negaso for his PhD dissertation (Gidada, 1984, Chs 2–3).⁶ The MS was further explored, queried, and annotated by the current editors when the English translation of the Wallagga documents was resumed in the years 2019–2021.

(fol. 2r) In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the one God. Genealogy (lit. 'birth')⁷ of the Boräna.

(fol. 3r) It is said that the genealogy of the Boräna is like this: the land where Boräna was born is Omu Wälabu.⁸ So were Mäch'a and Tuläma. They are all from the same father. However, [although] their origin is in Omu Wälabu, it is said they originated in this way. [As] a Christian [is] for a Christian, there was a certain rich and honoured Christian. His daughter was betrothed. Accordingly, when he was about to make the preparations for the

⁵ For a description of both manuscripts see Strelcyn, 1976, pp. 144–46 (MS ANL CR 48) and pp. 207–09 (MS ANL CR 81). For the historical background of these MSS, see Triulzi, 2006, pp. 43–55. As neither MS was retrieved among the Bakaree Family papers hosted in the Wallagga Ethnographic Museum of Naqamtee in July 1997, MS 48 of the Conti Rossini Fund in Rome appears to be the only available copy. See Appendix, Fig. 10.

⁶ See Negaso, 2001, p. xii.

⁷ It is represented in the Amharic original as *Boräna yätäwällädabät*.

⁸ The name 'Omo Wälabu' reappears as 'Hor[o] Wälabu [Haro Wälabu]' later in the document (see fol. 39r). Based on oral traditions transmitted by local elders, the Boräna Genealogies identify Omu Wälabu, or Walaabu, as the original homeland of the Oromo people. Omu Wälabu is used here as a place name, although its exact geographical location is not stated. See, among others, Gemetchu Megerssa Ruda, 1993, p. 111; Bairu Tafla, 1987, pp. 310–11; Hudson–Tekeste, 1987, p. 63. Mohammed Hassen, 2015, pp. 122–27.

wedding of his betrothed daughter, it is said that God made him aware, through a revelation to him, of all the things that would happen. So, he advised the members of the bridal group who had come for the wedding, saying: “When, after taking my daughter, you are on your way [back home] do not let her rest under the shade of a juniper tree. Since there is water (river) called Galla,⁹ do not let her drink from the water”. He thus advised them by saying that. So, the bridal guests left with the bride, and while travelling, the girl got thirsty and was about to die on account of the aridity of the land. Fearing that she might die from thirst, forgetting and disregarding what her father had warned them against, they collected some water from the Galla River and let her drink it. They also rested her under the shade of the juniper tree. It so happened that immediately after drinking the water of the Galla River, she was impregnated by an evil spirit (*ganén*) and refused to stand up, whereupon believing that she had changed into a beast and being unable to do anything for her, the men who were travelling with her, [i.e., the bridal guests] abandoned her by the river and went away.¹⁰ While she was living in [near] the river, she gave birth to nine children in one [delivery]. She carried them and wandered about from one river to another and brought them up by feeding them fish and other things which she collected.¹¹

(**fol. 3v**) These children abandoned their mother tongue and began to speak Galleñña [i.e., Oromo language]. They grew up, and when they came of age, they began hunting and lived on the meat of wild animals. When they hunted wild beasts, they used to stick the horn of an antelope on a piece of

⁹ The “Galla River” is translated by Conti Rossini as “Fiume dei Galla” (transl. B, fol. 1).

¹⁰ In his written critique (Commentary to CR MS 48, p.2), Abdissa Mosa writes: “But in my judgment, this seems a myth and even could not make sense, for it is impossible to attest its authenticity, for its author could not prove the engagement she made with a devil, and if a devil at all exists.”

¹¹ This story shows some similarity with the Christian legend of Oromo origin provided in *Tarik zäGalla wära'eyä Lebnä Dengel* (“History of the Galla and Vision of Emperor Lebnä Dengel”), also known as ‘*Wäyzäro Agaya's Book*’ (MS Addis Ababa, IES 2598). According to As'mä, the document was originally composed at the time of King Zär'a Ya'qob (1434-1468) by a certain *Liqämäkwas Zämäläkot*, grandson of *Azazh Märqoréwos*, who was *s'ähafe te'az* of Zär'a Ya'qob. When the author of the “Boräna Genealogies” states further (fol. 25v): “What we have not heard from our forefathers but we heard since Emperor Menilek became *Negusä Nägäst* of Ethiopia was found in a book [written by an] Amhara (...)”, may suggest that he had access to one of the many versions of the *Tarik zäGalla*, although no evidence is provided. For further details, see Bairu Tafla, 1977, pp. 137–79; Caquot, 1957, pp. 123–43; Gäbrä Sellasé, 1959 E.C., pp. 28–31; Fitsum Woldemariam, 2009 E.C., pp. 42–58.

wood and aimed at the wild animal as if taking aim with a musket. When they saw the wild animal, it appeared as if it was struck down with a bullet and would fall down dead by itself. When it was dead, they would slaughter it and eat its meat. They [grew up] in such a manner. They had no house; so, while they were wandering about with their mother from one river to another, a locked-up basket (*agälgel*) came down carried by the current. When they opened the basket, [they found] *enjära*, some *koso*¹² and a knife for eating meat. These had been taken away by water from a travelling man. When they found and opened it, they saw and found in the basket *enjära* and *koso* as well as a knife used for eating meat. The drinking of *koso* was unknown before that time; they had not been familiar [with the practice]. Their mother let them taste the *enjära* and drink the *koso*. Then they set out from the place where they had been and going up in the direction of the current which carried that basket, they travelled from one river to another and caught up with the Amhara¹³ who had struck camp and settled.¹⁴ When the Amhara, who had struck camp and settled, saw them, they thought that they were wild animals, and, leaving their belongings and cows, they fled away. Among the fleeing Amhara whom they pursued, they captured thirty men and many women.¹⁵ That is why they said: *Saddomman garbaa salgan Booranaa* (i.e., “thirty are the *gärba* [*gäbäro*] and nine are the Boräna”).¹⁶

(fol. 4r) On that day thirty men were captured; that is why they are called *Saddomman garbaa* (“thirty *gärba*”, i.e., *gäbäro*). On the day that the thirty

¹² *Hagenia abyssinica*, used as a medicine for tapeworm treatment.

¹³ The mention of forlorn Amhara groups being submitted, enslaved or adopted by the Oromo in the sixteenth century has been explained in Ethiopianist historiography, as in this text (fol. 4v), with the poor conditions of post-Grañ Ethiopia. Recent works emphasizing internal developments within Oromo society, however, associate the 16th-century Oromo military victory to internal transformations, including militarisation of the Oromo *gadaa* system. See, among others, Mohammed Hassen, 2015, pp. 138–221; Mekuria Bulcha, 2016, pp. 65–130.

¹⁴ The 1937 Italian summary of the original Amharic MS only mentions the enslavement and adoption of ‘neighbouring peoples’ in the region (transl. A, fol. 1). In his handwritten translation of the same document, Conti Rossini mentions the killing of “many Amhara” and the submission of several others through a leather ring imposed around their forearm with the ritual formula “This is my *mēdhiččā*” (transl. B, fol. 2).

¹⁵ See fn. 7 above.

¹⁶ A more frequent formula in Eastern Wallagga is *Salgan Booranaa sagaltamman garbaa* (“nine Boräna and ninety *gärba* [*gäbäro*]”); see Bartels, 1983, pp. 161–65. For a discussion of *boräna-gäbäro* relationships, see Triulzi, 1996, pp. 251–64.

Amhara were captured, there were also many women captives. Those nine *boräna* married those women, grew in number and lived [together]. Those thirty men who had been captured, they named them *gäbaro* and referred to themselves as *boräna*. So, they gave them the name *gäbäro*. Then they lived in Omu Wälabu, their number having increased. While these *boräna* were living there, many Amhara submitted to them. So, when the Amhara submitted to them, they used to say: “This is my *médhich’a*”,¹⁷ and after slaughtering animals and taking the *médhich’a* they used to put them on the arms of the Amhara. While still in Omu Wälabu, many tanners and smiths from the Amhara submitted to them. Those *boräna* did not till the land and did not consume grain except meat and milk. They used to move here and there looking after their cattle. Even at present, the *boräna* who had remained there, do not take anything but meat and milk. When the *boräna* were in Omu Wälabu, they chased out the Amhara left and right; when the Amhara had gone, the country turned into desert and wild beasts began to appear. So, some of the *boräna* stayed in Omu Wälabu while others set out from there and, crossing the Wabé River, settled at Oda Näbé. The *boräna* crossed the rivers Wabé and Awash and tied the *médhich’a* on the forearms of the Amhara who, having fled from Grañ [Ahmäd ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi], were living in caves and mountain hiding, saying: “It is my *médhich’a*, my *dhäläta*”, and competing with one another to do so. While still at Oda Näbé, the Mäch’a and Tuläma lived together for many years, up to four and five generations.

(fol. 4v) The father of Mäch’a and Tuläma is known as Kura Hédo. While these two brothers were staying at Oda Näbé, having settled there, among the young herdsmen, two boys had a fight in the field. The son of Mäch’a made a cut with a knife on the knee of Tuläma’s son. Because of this Tuläma said to Mäch’a: “Since your son cut my son’s leg with a knife, let us have a judgement”. So, the Tuläma began to help each other and the Mäch’a did likewise. In the meantime, none was found to pass a judgment, and Mäch’a and Tuläma fought each other. A battle took place because of which Tuläma defeated Mäch’a and evicted him from Oda Näbé and chased him out. Mäch’a [then] settled in T’equr Meder and founded a [new] settlement (lit. ‘town’). Tuläma pursued him up to T’equr Meder and engaging Mäch’a in battle, drove him

¹⁷ The Italian summary of the Genealogies translates the term *meedhicca* (spelled *Medaccià*) “come un figlio” (i.e., “like a son”) and describes it as “a strip of skin taken from a cow’s ankle”. It further comments: “Before, those who had submitted were considered plebeians; after taking this bracelet, they were considered real Borana” (transl. A, fol. 1).

away. Mäch'a then settled in and made Bisil [his] new settlement. Again, for a second time, Tuläma chased Mäch'a from Bisil by sending *Abba Ch'ulullé* as the commander of the troops and Tuläma came to Bisil on a campaign. Here, Mäch'a and Tuläma fought. Ña'a Doro killed twelve of Tuläma's men as well as a thirteenth man, *Abba Ch'ulullé*, the commander of Tuläma's troops. After the latter's death, Tuläma did not return to fight Mäch'a again, whereas Mäch'a, after the death of *Abba Ch'ulullé* (**fol. 5r**) became strong militarily and rejected Tuläma by force from Bisil. He [Mäch'a] pushed him [Tuläma] back defeating and forcing him to turn further up until he reached Qäch'en Jämjäm. So Qäch'en Jämjäm became the boundary marking [the territory of] Mäch'a and Tuläma as it is until today.

The offspring of Mäch'a are five and those of Tuläma four. That is why they are called *sälgan Boräna* [the nine Boräna]. One of the *sälgan Boräna* is Wäyt'o.

The genealogy of Wäyt'o is like this: Wäyt'o in Galleñña [Oromo language] is Wata. In Amharic it is Wäyt'o. As to the origin of Wata, it is one of the *sälgan Boräna* (i.e., the nine Boräna). In olden times the Wata of Boräna used to hunt wild animals from rivers and eat their flesh. They did not eat grain. So, until the present time they hunt wild animals and eat the flesh; it has remained so. This is the matter concerning the Wata.

Among the children of Mäch'a, the first and eldest is Obo. The next is Jawwi, next Liban, next Jedda, and next Hulé. The Hobo are three; although the Hobo are three, their father is the same. Their mothers are different and three. The eldest son of Hobo is Limmu followed by Gudru. The mother of Limmu and Gudru is the same. Among the sons of Limmu, the eldest is Sap'ira followed by Dima, (**fol. 6r**) Diyati, and Iggu. Hanu Manguta is Limmu. The children of Dima are Warsu followed by Dämbö, Däräso, Hach'o, and Aru. Also, Läta's *médhich'a* are Särba, Ebso, Hulo. The children of Diyati are Dha'e, and Hébbäno. The children of Iggu are Hanno, Mäné, and Bäräso. The mother of Léqa, Säyyo, and Chälliya¹⁸ is the same. Her name is Dadhi. The mother of the three: Tume, Sibü and Nonno, is the same. Her name is Dadhi. Tumé means the three: Bunno, Dap'o, and Dima. Limmu, Gudru, Léqa, Säyyo, and Ch'alliya, Ébantu,¹⁹ the Tumé, Nonno, Sibü—these are called Hobo. Also, the children of Jawwi are four: Amuru, Horro, Jimma, and Jedda. The children of Horro are two: Guta and Abolé. The child[ren] of Guta are Akayu, Oborra, Wararo, Iggu, Abilé, Hanno, Däga, and Amuma. The chil-

¹⁸ Wrongly spelt as Ch'alli'a.

¹⁹ Wrongly spelt as Yäbantu.

dren of Abolé are Doro, Dalé, and Dulächa. The children of Jimma are Gudäya, Tibbé, Wayyu, and Nunnu. The offspring of Jidda is Liban who begot Ammäya, Dädä, Habébé, Wäro, Doro, Kutayé, Wälliso, Achäbär, and Adya. What was written down above about the genealogy of Horro and the offspring of Guta and Abolé was narrated to us by an elderly man in Horro Bulluq, and we thus wrote it down as he told us.²⁰ The Horro living in Qélläm told us this: since, as time goes by, names are forgotten and mistakes are made in different names, the Horro of Bulluq and the Horro of Qélläm are from the same father. Horro had two offspring: Guta, the eldest, and Abolé, the next one. Guta's offspring are Akayyu, the eldest, and the next ones are Wayyu, Wärradäro, Hanno, Iggu, Däga, Däyyo, and Qunach'o. Abolé's offspring are Dallé, the eldest, followed by Eggi, Däro, Qänj, Alchayya, Harbuqi, and Mubesi Mibäsi. This was what the one [informant] in Horro and Qélläm made us write down. The genealogy of Gidda is as follows: Gidda means [is] Jawwi. Gidda begot three [children]: KIRAMU, the eldest, followed by Idoro and Dha'i. KIRAMU begot three [children]: the eldest is Babbo followed by Hagäya and Dängoro. Dha'i's offspring [are thus]: the eldest is Abébé followed by Dima [and] Bulbulo. Dha'i begot two children: Bejjeti and Yayya.

(fol. 6v) Hulé's children are Akäko, Guma, Géra, Goma - these constitute the five (*sic*) Mäch'a. However, Mäch'a, the fifth one, may have died without [having] offspring. His name is not known. Akäko's three offspring are: Hagärsu,²¹ the eldest [*angafa*], followed by Jimma and Sädächa. Hagärsu's offspring are called Jarso, Alga, Obbo, and Hirä. Jimma's offspring are Billo, the eldest, followed by Agalo and Qoré. Sädächa's offspring are known as Buru, Dänbäqä, and Soläni. Also, the genealogy of Bädi [is]: Bädi is Sädächa's [female] offspring, an unmarried girl. While in her parents' house, she became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy who was concealed from her parents and was secretly left in a field. He was found and brought up by them (*sic*) who gave him the name Bädi.²² Digo is Billo's offspring. Digo is from the family of *Abba* Jifar.

²⁰ This is consistent with *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam's report that the Boräna Genealogy was based on information collected from local elders as requested by the imperial court in Addis Ababa. See in this volume HMC letter 32 to Emperor Haylä Sellasé, sent on *T'eqemt* 24, 1926 E.C./November 3, 1933.

²¹ Wrongly spelt as Harsu.

²² Lit. 'someone who got lost'.

(**fol. 7r**) The genealogy of Gudru. The eldest [offspring] is Mululé, followed by Loya, Luku, Ilamu, Särba, and Guto. These are [his offspring]. The next one is Emili.

(**fol. 8r**) The genealogy of Ch'älliya is like this: The son of Ch'älliya is Gälan. The eldest son of Gälan is Danno. Next is Guta, then Ilu, then Gärjéda. They are four. Among the sons of Danno, the eldest has eleven *bälbäla*.²³ The *bälbäla* of Guta is [are] five, that of Ilu four, and that of Gärjéda four. The sons of Dina are Ika, Jäju, Abayo, and Häfälu. The sons of Guta are these: Babbo, Jarso, and Mida. The sons of Illu are Iban, Ña'a, Bukko, [and] Däga.

(**fol. 9r**) The genealogy of Sibü [is] Sibü, Nonno, and Tumé. The mother of these is called Baso. Sibü is the brother of Tumé; he is not called Tumé. Among the sons of Sibü, the eldest is Abadho followed by Jerru and Sibü. The eldest son of Abadho is Amuma whose eldest son is Mänä Léqa. The eldest son of Mänä Léqa is Qämäch'o. The sons of Abadho are Babbo, Gida, Jarso, and Kutäla. Babbo's eldest son is Abono, then Mana-Jarté and Iggu. The next is Mänä Amuma. The eldest son of Mänä Amuma is Qot'é. Iggu [begot] six [offspring]: the eldest is Abbechu, then Allé, Gaga'o, Wama, Jammo, and Wäraö. The sons of Amuma are these: Baddéso, Mana Ch'affé, Hagälo, Mänä-Kätto, Mänä-Bushäné, and Boré. The eldest son of the Wärra Jerru is Bäkara, [then] Anno, Siqu, Limmu, Adiya, and Warra Mida. Aguli is the *gäbäro* of Wärra Jerru. The eldest son of Mänä Sibü is Buké, [then] Wärra Abbäy[i], Guyyo, and Mänä Akko. The sons of Buké are Häräwwi, Tälamso, Iggu, Bafäno, Doyyo, [and] Oborra. The sons of Wärra Abbäy[i] are Lému Bari, Bäch'ara, and Buyyäma. The son of Guyyo is Wajäti. Idoro is the son of Buké and Wärqé is the son of Babbo. He is Boräna. The *médhich'a* of Abadho are Gidano, Innämay, Gombo, Dängoro, Abidaro, Agäyo, Holé, Fich'é, Bädi, Wat'é, Sarko, Ch'ächa Kili,²⁴ and Däräbé [Darobo]. Näjjo, Shumakari, Borädo, Yandäli, Moto, Muraramé are *médhich'a*. They are the *médhich'a* of Abbap'o [Babbo]. Also, Harrojji belongs to Abadho. It includes *boräna* and *gäbäro*. The sons of Guyyo, the *boräna* ones, are Ch'ora, Qäfäyyi, Angéta, (**fol. 9v**) Qeno, Allé, T'aro, Muké, and Akkiya. The *médhich'a* of Guyyo are the following: Sin[i]cho, Ganqa, Gombo, Fudäro, Mayicho, Wajäti, Bot'i, Sunkaro, Mané'i, Amado, Gudomi, and Kombolcho. Also, among the Warra Abbay, Baräyä is Tuläma. Among the Bukké Awisi is Boräna. Among the

²³ Lit. 'door'; in many parts of Oromia the term *balbala* (*bälbäla* in Amharic script) stands for 'lineage'.

²⁴ Ch'ächa Kili may be an Amharised form of Mach'äkili.

Mänä Sibü, Jäwäja is the *médhich'a* of Iggu. The sons of Babbo are *boräna*. These are Ala, Akiya, Aläku, Hidhabu. They were born twins with Abono. Since they looked alike and it was impossible to distinguish them, on the arm of the one who was the first born, the eldest, Hidhäbu, they put a bracelet (*ambar*). On account of this Abono begged him, saying: “Since you are the eldest, you are given grain and water, food and drink first, whereas for me deprivation is getting worse; so lend me your bracelet”. Hidhäbu gave the bracelet on loan to his younger brother, Abono. Abono wore the bracelet on his arm, and after a few days, Hidhäbu asked him to return the bracelet he had lent him. Abono said that it was his and not his brother’s and refused to give it back to him. Hidhäbu told his mother, saying: “He took my bracelet on loan and when I asked him to return it to me, he refused”. Since his mother did not distinguish their faces, she said that she always saw the bracelet in his hand and testified for Abono. So, Abono kept on wearing the bracelet as a mark of seniority.

(**fol. 10r**) Also the *médhich'a* of Babbo are these: Damot, Tänsi, Jäwäjä, Nägädärä, Dängoro, Wayyu, Tarfi, Särsäro, Wänkjilo, Sijo and Maräqo. The genealogy of Sibü Jarso is like this: Amuma, Babo, Kutala, Gida and Jarso are brothers. Their father is known as Abono, who is Sibü, who was the son of Tumé who in turn was the son of Obo. The offspring of Jarso are Adä’a, the eldest, followed by Hidhäbu, Tuqu, and Gido. The son[s] of Adä’a²⁵ are Morowa [Marawwa] and Limmu. The offspring of Hidhäbu are Ila, Yayyo, and Tekuro. The son of Tuku is Etäyya. The sons of Gédö are Akäyu, Sorgu, Quyyo, they are *boräna*. Also, the *médhich'a* of Adä’a are: Janjawati, Awasi, and Gombo. The *dhalata*²⁶ of Hidhäbu are Amara, Gärjo, Alängo, T’alo, Dämawo, Dhaga’a. The *dhalata* of Tuqu are Amara, Abasi, Wämobära [Wämbära?], and Bot’i. The *dhalata* of Gédö are Qoratti and Bera, Dade.²⁷ These *dhalata médhich'a* (lit. ‘the offspring of the *médhich'a*’) are *gäbäro*.²⁸

²⁵ Wrongly spelt as Adän.

²⁶ Also spelt *jalata*. The term *dhalata* means “offspring”. See further, fol. 13r.

²⁷ Possibly an Amharised form of *Daadhii*.

²⁸ The insistence of the whole document on primogeniture birth (*dhalata*) and ritual adoption of non-Oromo groups (*meedhicca*) makes it clear that Oromo society, particularly at its western marches, had to cope with various forms of dual membership based on the ‘junior’ *gäbra* or *gabaroo* and the ‘senior’ *boorana*. For further details, see Bartels, 1983, pp. 133–65.

(**fol. 10v**) The genealogy of the Sidam Jälla²⁹ is like this: first, the *dhäläta* of Mäch'a is Sidam Jälla [i.e., the Mäch'a fathered the Sidam Jälla]. The first generation of this Sidam Jälla [people] consisted of workers, smiths and weavers. When the Boräna set out from Omu Wälabu, the Sidam Jälla stayed behind. In order to follow the Boräna, they abandoned their tools. Today the *däbänansa* are smiths and weavers [because] the tools abandoned by the Sidam Jälla were taken by them. When the *däbänansa* set out in order to follow the Boräna, they picked up the tools left behind by the Sidam Jälla because they needed them to work with. They carried them and arrived late. The Sidam Jälla, having abandoned their tools came empty-handed and crossed the Wabi River. The *däbänansa* picked from the ground and carried the tools left behind by the Sidam Jälla and crossed the Wabi River. After the Boräna crossed the Wabi River, with leather whips in their hands, saying *Kottu! Dhufé!* ("Come! I have come!"),³⁰ they declared that those in whose hands the tools were found would become *däbänansa* and those without would become *gäbäro*. Saying this, they made a law (*séra*) [to enforce it]. That is why the Sidam Jälla became *gäbäro*. Those who kept the tools in their hands became *däbänansa*. And until today the *däbänansa* are weavers and smiths. The offspring of Sidam Jälla are these: Adiyya, Abalo, Wärrä Säyyo, Ekuléta, and Gänji.

(**fol. 11r**) The genealogy of the Léqa is like this: Among the sons of Léqa the eldest is Wayyu followed by Babbo, Lallo, Bata, and Bonäyya. Wayyu's mother was barren; she had no children. Since Léqa and Sayyo were brothers, Léqa took Wayyu, the son of his brother, Säyyo, and made him *guddisa-moggasa*.³¹ Wayyu and Dalle are brothers, and their mother is the same. At

²⁹ The name Sidam Jälla is a generic term for Sidama craftsmen who were integrated within Oromo society. The Oromo word spelt here derives from *jal'aa* (lit. 'bent, twisted, crooked', by implication also 'troublemaker'). The term may also refer to conquered people who rebelled against the *gadaa* system being imposed on them. *Boorana-gabaroo* tensions surfaced at various points in time within the western Oromo groups. The 1618 rebellion of the Yaabbata (also spelt in some sources as *Yahbat*, *Yahabata*) *gabaroo* cavalry throughout Maccaa territory represents one such recorded example. See Mohammed Hassen, 1990, pp. 64–71.

³⁰ The formula *Kottu! Dhufé!* ("Come! I have come!"), commonly recited at the opening of each *gadaa* assembly, ritually announces the transfer of power from the outgoing *gadaa* class to the incoming one. It is also used for the proclamation of every new law (*seeraa tumaa*) by the *Gadaa* Assembly. See Negaso, 2001, pp. 154–56.

³¹ *Moggaasa*, from *moggaasuu* ('name-giving'), the Oromo institution of group adoption and integration, appears to be of enormous significance in determining the rapidity and breadth of the Oromo expansion within Ethiopia. Oromo adoption had two forms: *guddifacha* and *mog-*

that time there was a man called Dawi Käräyyu. Before he became old, while still a young man, Dawi Käräyyu's children and grandchildren up to the fourth generation died of old age. However, he lived for many years; although the number of years is unknown, it is said that he lived many years. They also say that if Dawi Käräyyu gave his blessings to, or cursed, anyone, it would be fulfilled. So Léqa took Wayyu's mother to Dawi Käräyyu to ask for his blessings so that she would bear him a child. She then went to him accompanied by a female slave and her husband. Dawi Käräyyu gave his benediction and (ritually) spat on her wishing her to bear a son. However, saying 'Why is this old man spitting on me?' she wiped his spit off her and rubbed it on to the slave who had followed her. As Léqa had an affair with this slave [girl], she became pregnant and gave birth to Babbo. Léqa, worried that Babbo, his son, would be [considered] a slave, freed the slave [girl] who bore Babbo and slaughtered a *räko* [*rakoo*]³² for her. Having done so, he made her his wife. As for Lalo's mother, she was a virgin. After Wayyu's mother [and] before the birth of Babbo, (fol. 11v) he [Léqa] married her. She bore [him] Lalo. He then married another girl, mother of Bata. Before she had a child, she [the newly married girl] ran away from him and married Nonno to whom she bore three children. Then she left her two children and, carrying the third on her back, she returned to Léqa and became his wife again. He called the child she carried on her back Bata. Bata in Amharic [also in Oromo] means a child carried on one's back. The genealogy of Bonäyya is as follows: An abandoned infant was found by Léqa in a pile of dung. The time was the dry season. He named him Bonäyya. *Bonä* in Galleña is [the equivalent of] *bäga* in Amharic. Since the child was found during the dry season, he was named Bonäyya. The five Léqa are

gaasa. While *guddifacha* was and still is a reference to fostering an adopted child, *moggaasa* was the practice of adopting and integrating non-Oromo clans, lineages, and ethnic groups. The combined usage of the two words, *guddisa-moggasa*, as they appear here, is not clear. For a detailed discussion of *moggaasa* and *guddifacha*, see particularly Mekuria Bulcha, 2016, pp. 418–21; Tesema Ta'a, 2006, p. 53.

³² In Oromo wedding, the *rakoo* is the sheep that is ritually slaughtered when the bride arrives at the house of the bridegroom. *Rakoo* symbolizes the unity and division that arises between family members after weddings. It represents unity because it symbolizes the creation of a new familial union but also represents division because it is a symbol of the bride separating from her parents' lineage, as she will be part thereafter of the family lineage of her husband. In this particular case, where Leeqaa took Wayyu's mother to Dawi Käräyyu to be blessed, Léqa's affair with a slave girl who bore him a child, leads to the *rakoo* securing freedom for his new wife and his newly born son, Babbo [Baabboo]. See Tilahun Gamta, 1989, p. 496; Gragg, 1982, p. 341.

Wayyu, Babbo, Lalo, Bata, and Bonäyya. Their father became old and died. Wayyu said that, as he was his *moggasa* and eldest son, he would claim the inheritance and chieftaincy (*elqenna*) and since his mother was the senior [wife], he was entitled to it. Lalo opposed this and said that since he [Wayyu] was only a *moggasa* [adopted child] whereas he was his father's real [biological] son, he could not make that claim and the chieftaincy was his by right. At that time Mäch'a and Tuläma were in Oda Näbé where they had a legal battle. At that time, as plaintiff and defendants (*balänägär*) gather every eighty days, **(fol. 12r)** there was a tree under which they used to gather for their [judicial] council. At midday, on the spot where the tree's shade fell, a [piece of] stone used to be placed. If the man with a case failed to come at midday and the tree's shade had reached where the stone was, the man would lose and the case would be closed. At the time of the dispute between Wayyu and Lalo over seniority and chieftaincy, on the appointed day, Wayyu's mother whose house lay along the road had prepared a feast with food and drinks and had slaughtered an ox. She invited to her house her sons, Wayyu and Lalo, to have some food and drink before going to the [judicial] council. She then secretly sent off her son Wayyu to the council. While Lalo spent the day eating and drinking and chatting with the other people, night fell. After spending the day at the meeting, Wayyu asked the members of the council to see whether the tree's shade had fell on the stone since his brother had failed to come on the appointed day. It was found out that the shade had passed beyond the spot where the stone lay. They then decided by law (*séra*) and the holding of *alänga* (whip) that, since Wayyu had come while his brother Lalo had failed to do so, since time was passing by, the seniority and chieftaincy should go to Wayyu and Lalo should be his junior (*qut'isu*). Thus, Wayyu's seniority and chieftaincy was officially recognized. Before Babbo, Lalo, Bonäyya, and Bata had children, Wayyu begot six sons. It was said previously [that] this man [Wayyu] had usurped seniority from Lalo out of ill-will and by ruse and now, before they had any children, how come he begot six children? They envied him and the four of them slaughtered a bull (*dullächa*) [ox], they anointed themselves with blood under oath, and decided to separate from him.³³

³³ The account of a dispute between Lalo (Laaloo) and Wayu (Waayyuu) over seniority is both challenging and fascinating. It is challenging because it does not conform to the standard idealized description of conquered people being adopted and easily integrated within the advancing western Oromo. Mohammed Hassen argues that "the adopted son was looked upon as a real son, and [that] he enjoyed all rights of a true son. Even if foster parents had a son of their own after they had adopted a son, the first remained *angäfa* (the eldest son) with all the rights and privileges" (Mohammed Hassen, 1990, p. 21). The story of 'usurpation' of Laaloo's sen-

(**fol. 12v**) These four broke away and became known as *arfän dullächa* while Wayyu remained by himself. That is how they separated from each other. The name of the man who gave them the *dullächa* that was slaughtered on that day was Gudu Abono. The name of the *dullächa* which was slaughtered was *fäjjes*. That is why it is referred to as Dulläti Godu, Abono Fäjjes Gafa Qoññe.

The genealogy of Wayyu's children is as follows: The number of Wayyu [offspring] as we heard it from people in olden times³⁴ is six. However, today, when we searched for and asked old people, we could not find anyone who said it was more than four. The names of the four are Kolobo, Gida, another Gida, and the father of Allé Gida, Mäta. These are the four. Among these four, the eldest is Kolobo, then Gida, then another Gida, and Mäta, the father of Allé Gida.³⁵ The matter concerning the Mana Mäta is as follows: how he came to be known as Mäna Mäta. When Wayyu became ill and was almost dead, they went to prepare his body for burial and found that his penis was erect. Then he died physically but his penis remained erect. The men went and asked Dawé Kärräyyu what to do about it. Dawé Kärräyyu said that since he [Wayyu] would get well and die only after begetting a child, they should look for a girl who had reached the age of marriage and marry her to him. As Dawé Kärräyyu said, they married him to a girl and he begot this man called Mäta and died before having a second one. This is how Mäta was born.

(**fol. 13r**) The children of Kolobo are four. These are Mutulu, the eldest, then Doro, Iggu, and Dallé. Mutulu and Doro have the same mother while

iority by his adopted brother Waayyu appears to support Negaso Gidada's long-held argument that traditional Oromo people was not an egalitarian classless society (Negaso, 1984; *Id.*, 2001). The story also suggests that the removal of seniority by adopted non-Oromo individuals or groups was possible if it was approved by the *Gadaa* Assembly. Although Negaso Gidada's argument has largely remained unrecognized in Oromo historiography, the innovative ideas introduced in his work do not appear to be without foundation. Such developments might have contributed to the rise of leaders who eventually undermined the *gadaa* system leading to the rise of monarchical states among the western Oromo. See, Negaso, 1984; *Id.*, 2001.

³⁴ Here again we have the author's confirmation that the Genealogies were mainly composed on oral information provided by local elders (see HMC letter 32 to Emperor Haylä Sellasé, sent on *T'eqemt* 24, 1926 E.C./November 3, 1933). The Näqämté ruling house carried a substantial effort to make the Genealogies appealing both for their legitimacy vis-à-vis local contenders and the central government in Addis Ababa. See Triulzi, 2006.

³⁵ It is not clear why the author repeated this sentence.

Iggu and Dallé have also the same one. These are called the four Kolobo: Odé Mutulu, Ōa'a Doro, Ayaru Iggu, and Babbu Dallé. Mutulu's and Doro's mother is the same. Mutulu begot Odé whose mother is called Kuli. Doro begot Ōa'a. The mother of Ōa'a Doro is called Buya Didu. Dallé and Iggu have the same mother. Dallé begot Babbu. Iggu begot Ayäru. These are the four Kolobo. The offspring (*dhäläta*) of Mutulu are the following: Sumo, Adiyya, Wädäbo, Gombo, Fech'ibädi, Hora, Wayyu, Abalo, Boadam [Bondawo?], Gänji, Ajämäri [Ijamari], Jato, Nämäyyo, Kura, Bantu, Abono, and Dänbäli. Bosäné is a *boräna*. He is the *moggasa*-son of Mutulu. The *dhäläta médhich'a* of Mänä-Ōa'a are the following: Mälko, Gunjo, Gombo, Gämbalo, Yayya, T'alo, Tänsi [Tagasi], Loya, Bäroy, Sano, Qasimi, But'é, Qälbo, Gambo, Tälké, Qoratti, Hinara, Ch'igo, and Gärjo. The genealogy of Ayäru is as follows: The eldest [son] of Ayäru, who was a *boräna*, is Horo, then Lugo, Tänbaro, and Hawäya. The *dhäläta médhich'a* of Ayäru are these: Gumo, Si-qu, Gäsäso, and Guji. As for the genealogy of Babbu, the *boräna* are Wärra Abbay, Barri, T'up'o, Guday, and Labo. The genealogy of Burayyu is as follows: Burayyu is [the same as] Jedda. Wayyu called his two sons Jedda. So, whenever he called Jedda, his eldest son and the younger one would answer. Jedda is the name of the two brothers.

(fol. 13v) In order to distinguish between the two, the father gave Jedda, his elder son, the name of Burayyu, which was his mother's name. The children of Jedda are two: Gosé and Gondo. The eldest child of Gosé is Galéssa; Mägalum is his brother and [he is] a *boräna*. The *dhäläta médhich'a* of Gosé are Wayyu, Muli, Digo, Mälko, Doyyu, Adami, Bochiso, and Gosiyo. Among Gondo's children the *Boräna* is Kura; the other is Ch'eqli. Gondo's *dhäläta médhich'a* are Allé, Much'ech'o, Wälinsu, But'é, Wälido and Tosiwo. Within Jedda, Wayyu, Muli and Allé are Sidam Jälla. Gida,³⁶ Wayyu's son, begot three children: Allé Gida was the eldest (*angäfa*); next is Arya Gida; the youngest is Säyyo Gida. The eldest son of Allé Gida is Akiya. Akiya Allé's *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Elamu, Dälo, Gallo, Suwo, Wajäta, Luku, and Yämalägi. Arya Gida's *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Amara, Abujäni, Ch'äliya, T'arano, Gämé, Sijo, Hich'o, Akäko, Adäro, Boré, Waqo, Sa'o, and Domo. Wärrä Säyyo's genealogy [is]: Elamu the *boräna* is the eldest; next is Bägidido, then Goljé, who is also a *boräna*. However, Bägidido had a *dhäläta* offspring as well as a *boräna*. The *dhäläta médhich'a* of Wärrä Säyyo are Sogido, Qasimi, Mäkano, Järodu and Gajo. However, Mäkano was found un-

³⁶ Wrongly spelt as Gido.

der a tree called *bäkänisa*; that is why he was named after it. The tree called *bäkänisa* is known in Amharic as *mesanna*. This is the genealogy of Wärrä Säyyo.

(fol. 14r) The genealogy of Mänä Mäta is as follows: Mäta's children are Miñña, a *boräna*, Wärra Kura³⁷ and Digo. Miñña's *dhäläta médhich'a* are Qeburo and Dägali. The offspring (*dhäläta*) of Kura are Qunqunté, Kirämu, Bukko, Adiya, Dagoyo and Guso. Qanqa is also the offspring (*dhäläta*) of Wärra Kura. In olden times, Miñña had no offsprings. Qumburo, Dägali and Kirämu were at first the offsprings (*dhäläta*) of Digo. Miñña mischievously took away Digo's *dhäläta*. Miñña advised Digo saying: "This *dhäläta* who came after us surpassed us in strength and wealth. Let us destroy him and take his money". Digo thought he was sincere and agreed. When he asked him when they will carry out their plan, Miñña said they would start the following morning. Miñña told him to start after he had finished [killed] his *dhäläta* and when a vulture fell on the corpse in his compound. They agreed on this. Miñña, in order to do more mischief, got up early in the morning and slaughtered a cow. Vultures began to descend upon the meat of the slaughtered cow. Digo, thinking that he [Miñña] had slain his *dhäläta* hurriedly killed his own. Qumburo, Dägali and Kirämu survived, fled and became the *dhäläta* of Miñña. Within Qumburo, there is [a clan] called Sinit'é Qent'érsa. *Qent'érsa* in Galleñña is *t'enqesh* in Amharic: it is a cane. While the Amhara were travelling, they left a small child under this cane; he was later found and called Qent'érsa. This is how the matter came to pass.

(fol. 14v) The genealogy of Wärrä Babbo is like this: Babbo's children were two: Angoyé and Miñña. Angoyé's children were seven: Amumé, the eldest (*angäfa*), Alaku, Horda, Jarso, Harqo, Dalle Quyu and Diko Abono. Horda's children [are] Achabu, Ajamo, Kura, Bunt'é, Haräwi, Diko, Berberso, and Mänguta Horda. Horda's *dhäläta médhich'a* are Qomasi, Däné, Däyo, Badha, Hawäyu, Dima, Amara, Galcho, and Guji. Harqo was originally a son of Engoyyé; later on, he belonged to Miñña. Harqo's genealogy [is thus]: Harqo's son was devoured by a buffalo that died afterward. When this happens, it was the custom for the victim's relative not to eat the meat of the buffalo. However, the men of Mäna Engoyyé ate the buffalo's flesh that died after killing and eating Harqo's son. Because of this, Harqo went over to the Mäna Miñña, since they ate the flesh of his enemy (*dina*), the animal that had eaten

³⁷ Wrongly spelt as Wärra Kuru.

his son. So, he relinquished his blood relationship with them. Accordingly, he [Harqo] was declared to belong to the Mäna Miñña, not to the Engoyyé. They did this by saying: *Kottu! Dhufé!* (“Come! I have come!”) to each other and agreed on this according to the *alänga* and the *séra* (law) procedure. Because of all this, Harqo came to belong to the house of Miñña.

(fol. 15r) Jarso’s *dhäläta médhich’a* are these: Gullisa, Yokäm, Säkägombo, T’älosi,³⁸ Konchi, Madäré, Much’ech’o, and Sumano. Amumé’s *dhäläta médhich’a* is Garjéda. Mamo was originally Enango by birth. Enango was originally created [born] Muslim before he came to the country of the Léqa. Mamo and Totosi were brothers, and they did not come together. Totosi came first and submitted to Dibbi Miñña. Mamo was Totosi’s elder [brother] and he came later and submitted to Dibbi Miñña. Mamo, who came later and submitted to Dibbi Miñña, claimed seniority as he was senior in his own land. However, Dibbi Miñña said that since Totosi had submitted to him first, he [Mamo] could not claim seniority because he submitted later, therefore, Totosi should be his senior. Mamo refused to be a junior to his younger brother and became the subject of Mäna Engoyyé. Then it was [officially] declared by *Kottu! Dhufé!* (“Come! I have come!”). According to the *alänga* (whip) and the *séra* (law) procedure, that Mamo did not belong to Dibbi Miñña but to Mäna Engoyyé. So, Mamo became a subject of Mäna Engoyyé. Diko’s *dhäläta médhich’a* were Suntalawo, Kawo, Shechengawo,³⁹ T’up’inäwo,⁴⁰ Boso, Galäwo, Qanäwo, Saläwo and Embiraro: these were Ganqa and were Jarso’s *dhäläta médhich’a*. Diko’s *dhäläta médhich’a* were Terengi, Däbälo, and Dädé. Jarso’s *dhäläta médhich’a* were Kärräyyu, Harawi, Girosi, Gätni, Ch’igo, and Gunjé. Hordo’s *dhäläta médhich’a* were Abibo, Gich’a, Ganqa, Solé, Bärnas, Bot’i, Qunasé, Jämé, Boro, Sidama, Wärrä Mabo, Garjéda, and Wärrä Hullufo.

(fol. 15v) [Here is] the genealogy of the Mäna Miñña. Dibbi Miñña’s children were three: Sind[o], Bärosi and Watäyu. Dibbi Miñña’s *dhäläta médhich’a* were Tatosi, Lilu, Yähansi, Maru, Madiré, Wäté, Kullo, Bäqäto, Kombolcho, Allé, Aburdi, Uragi, Soqo, Abé, Buso, Nagiso, Hat’os, Roma’a, Kosané, Korné, Bushano, Dembaro, Dibasi, Bislo, Hagälo, Qoyé, Wach’la,

³⁸ Standing for Xanoosii.

³⁹ Standing for Cuqqinawo.

⁴⁰ Standing for Tuqqinawo.

Gäbano, and Qomasi. These were Enango. Enango was originally Muslim in his land. When the Galla were in Oda Näbé, (the) Enango came and submitted to Dibbi Miñña. Before long he also submitted as a servant (*lolé*) to Odé Bäké. Odé Bäké was Sibü Allé's. So Dibbi Miñña said that he [Enango] was his *dhäläta médhich'a*. Odé Bäké said he had submitted to him. So, they spent eight years fighting because each claimed that he [Enango] was his. In the eighth year, with Obo initiative, they said *Kottu! Dhufé!* to each other and agreed on this according to the *alänga* and the *séra* (law) procedure declaring: "If Enango settled in the country of Sibü, he would become Odé Bäké's [subject]; if he settled in the Léqa country, he would become Dibbi Miñña's". So, whenever Enango stayed in Sibü country, he used to say he was [belonged to] Allé; when he stayed in the Léqa country, he would say he belonged to Dibbi Miñña. He stayed at both places until the present time. This is the matter concerning Enango. Enango was [were] numerous [in number]; it is said that following a quarrel with the Faqi (tanners), the latter killed them (*fäjjäw*) [in large number]. Because Enango and Faqi had become a source of the problem, the son of Mäch'a, having said *Kottu! Dhufé!* made a law [*séra*] which declared: "Let the Faqi not carry a spear when going to the market and let Enango do the same".

(fol. 16r) So the Faqi, together with many of his followers, having wrapped and concealed his spear in a hide, went to the market. Enango went out barehanded. They quarrelled at the market and Faqi killed the Enango [in large numbers]. Faqi drove Enango out [of the market], and Enango ran away and fled. The Faqi proclaimed to the other Faqi: "Kill the fleeing Enango but not those lying on the ground". So those Enango who survived by fleeing, thinking they would be spared by lying low, did so. They were then killed on the spot. So Enango's number decreased. Formerly they were very numerous. Later on, an antelope was found eating the intestines of those Enango who the Faqi had killed. So, until now, the descendants of Enango do not eat antelope's meat and do not drink out of the same container used by the Faqi. Warago is the *dhäläta médhich'a* of Abu Rom'a. Abu Rom'a is the offspring and *médhich'a* of Dibbi Miñña. Wärago's father is Sinni. Wärago was found on the Däbäna River, at the confluence of the Dédéssa and Däbäna. Léqa went to Däbäna where Wärago was staying and engaged in battle. Wärago defeated and drove Léqa out. Wärago had a daughter who was old enough to get married. Her name was Jemato. Léqa, after his defeat in battle, was in difficulty. So, Abu Rom'a asked Wärago to give him his daughter Jemato in marriage and Wärago gave his daughter Jemato in marriage to Abu Rom'a.

(fol. 16v) Thus they [Abu Rom'a and Wäraḡo] became relatives. After he [Abu Rom'a] had stayed for some time, he had all the Léqa swear not to fight his Wäraḡo in law whom he said he would bring over to his side because of his marriage. Wäraḡo submitted to Abu Rom'a because of their relationship. Abu Rom'a tied a *médhich'a* on him and Wäraḡo became the *médhich'a* of Abu Rom'a. The Léqa, while crossing the Däbäna River together with Wäraḡo, passed in the direction of Ambälta and crossed the river of Wäraḡo. So, the area which Léqa crossed with Wäraḡo became a [trade] route. That is why it is still called Mälka Wäraḡo.

(fol. 17r) The genealogy of Lalo is like this: it is said that Lalo begot a son called Baba; Baba's eldest child is Dha'i.⁴¹

(fol. 18r) Bata's genealogy is thus: the following are Bata's children: Bukko, a Boräna, is the eldest, followed by Iggu and Wayyu. Bata's offspring and *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Akona, Yämalogi, Jämé, Doro, and Guso.

(fol. 19r) Bonäyya's genealogy is as follows: there are two Bonäyya; the eldest is Mäléko, followed by Allé.⁴² The men of Qélläm, Bonäyya's children, are four; Mäléko and Bidaru are brothers. It is said that they have the same mother. Mäléko's child[ren] are Heyo and Luch'ä. Mäléko's *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Busano, Harojji, Nolé, and Limmu. Allé's offspring is Ebido. Ebido's child is Albula. Furdisa is also Allé's child. Däbomo is Ebido's child. Allé's *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Edaré, Diko, Alängo, Dénta, Dägoyé, Wädaj, Aftiro, Wänaga, Bäddéso, Damot[a], Nébo, Soradi,⁴³ Gumbo Abusi, Wajéto, Nägädäri, Jäno, Kälé T'ombi, and Gedami. Gombo's *dhäläta* are these: Baro, Lalo, Fat'o, Derbo, and Dicho. Allé's *dhäläta* are Kulayé, Boch'olo, Bultum, Kam, Shubulé, Gobaya, and Garado. This Haftir was originally from the Sidam Jälla. Dägoñ Gajo, Adäm Gajo, Da'ito Gajo and Suwo Gajo: these four have the same father. Originally, they are from Gojjam, from Däräbé in particular, more specifically from Wajéta. Gudämo and Däräbé are from Wajéta. However, since Suwo was Gajo's child, he was not from Bonäyya.

⁴¹ Standing for Dhaa'ee.

⁴² Wrongly spelt as Ollé.

⁴³ Wrongly spelt as Säras'i.

(fol. 19v) He [Suwo] is Allé Gidda's *dhäläta*. He is Wayyu. Däre Gembi is also from Wajéta and is Gajo's child. The Léqa say he is from Wajéta. The Sibü also say Guyu is from Wajéta. Both are the same; they have the same father. When they came from Gojjam, some submitted to Sibü, some to Léqa. This is the matter concerning Wajéta. The five children of Bonäyya, Maléko, Bedaru, Allé, Abbäyi, and Aft'ir, they practice *moggasa*, bring up children and give freedom to slaves.

(fol. 20r) Haru's genealogy is like this: Haru is Dap'o's child. Dap'o is Tumé's child. Tumé's children are Bunno, Nonno, and Sibü. Dap'o's and Bunno's mother is the same; they are brothers. The eldest son of Dap'o is Dima, then [come] Haru, Abu, Diko, Tirsu⁴⁴ and Amuma. Haru's children [are] Bonäyya, the eldest, then Nolé. [These are] Bonäyya's children: the eldest is Erälé, then Dämbali, Homa, Baro and Siba. Baro's children [are] Baro, the eldest, then Kitoli, Gägäj, and Kubi. Baro's children [are] Gebi, the eldest, then Hano, Bäké, Digga, Lafto, Ch'äqorso. Gebi's children [are] Mändi'a, the eldest, then Bultum, Dännä, Macho, Bara, and Bofo. Hano's children [are] Boro, the eldest, then Guljé, Yodo, Doséy, Lubé, Qänsi and Dicha. Gebi's *dhäläta médhich'a* are Mäti, Ch'oräto, Gobäna, Ch'ago, Guj, Enango, Gäbäto, Garädo, Muchucho, Guy, and Bot'i. Dära Gota is Gebi, Luka's brother; he is his Boräna. Hāno's *dhäläta médhich'a* are these: Sädälä, Libäna, Sango, Bondäwo, Bodnawo, Ganqa, Eji, Nawo, Habiyo, Wäraki, Konchi, Saganano, Yawäsi, Bakalo, Gojo, Qallecha, Bushano, Därbolé Huloli, Sama, Sāno-ro, Soknawo, and Abu. Bäcké's *dhäläta médhich'a* are T'älono and Yenano. Homa's *dhäläta médhich'a* are Dälana, Gäbano, Ebraro, Gako, and Kusayé. Among Gebi's *dhäläta médhich'a* [are] Mänéti Kähano, Dhäläta, Sädali. [These] are by birth Sidam Jälla. Erélé's *dhäläta* is Imala.

(fol. 21r) Dago's genealogy is thus: [blank]

(fol. 23r) Nonno's genealogy is thus: he had six [children]. The eldest is Hurumu, then Halélu, Belo, Dhädelé, Mätu and Duwwiso. The eldest son of Duwwiso is Ilu, then Säl'i'e, Hagälo, Alga, Homodidu, Däga and Doräni. Duwwiso's children are seven.

(fol. 24r) Buno's genealogy is thus: [blank]

⁴⁴ Wrongly spelt in the Amharic volume as T'ersu.

(**fol. 25v**) Tuläma's genealogy is thus: the Tuläma are these: Kärrayyu, Jillé, Wällo, the Mida Galla, and Soddo. The Mida Galla are the Abichu, Gälan, Gida, Oborra, Guräné, Wayyu, Ņa'a, Gumbechu, Odäwo, Mulo, Ada'a, Mulo (*sic*) Gullällé, Méttä, Bächo, Jarso, Wäch'ali, and Däro. No one was found to distinguish the eldest from the youngest among these to enable [us] to write it down. What we have not heard from our forefathers, but we heard since Emperor Menilek became *negusä nägäst* of Ethiopia was found in a book [written by an] Amhara like this:⁴⁵ Tuläma's genealogy: Kärrayyu begot Arusi,⁴⁶ Adä[m] and Bito. Then [in his second marriage], he married Mo-hammad Yusuf's daughter and begot Tägorräñi Nure. When Arusi died, Adam inherited [his wife] and begot Suban, Degor and Goran. They occupied all the eastern country extending from Nib Gadäl to Aymälläl, from Adäl to T'eltal, and from this side of Tagor up to Ifat. They occupied all the east: Mägäg, Esibät, T'equr Meder, Ch'ärch'är, and Walal Wäläfän up to Tegré. Alko married Tuläma and she begot Abichu and Däqi. When Kärrayyu died, he inherited Muhammad Yusuf's wife and begot the Galla who are in Rayya. They are Tuläma. Jellé is also Tuläma's son. It is also said that he was an offspring from a *zar* and that he [Tuläma] raised him [Jellé] after he found him in a cattle kraal. Rayoto married an Adali woman who bore him Ekelo; then he died. Then Tuläma inherited and married his wife and begot Babu, Buran, Alo, Qallo, Hido, Katay, and Kalo. These are the Tuläma. They are called Wällo because they are offspring from inherited marriage [i.e., their father is a second husband of their mother]. Doch'o is Tuläma's son. He begot the 'four houses' of Abichu, the 'eight houses' of Gumbichu, and the 'seven houses' of Gälan. Also, Abichu begot Méta and Soddo living on the left side of Däwäro.

(**fol. 26v**) All of Mäch'a's sons have their main centre at Bisil Asolé. Bisil's names [are] is called Botoro, Duftu, (**fol. 28r**) Hidi, and Dida. While all the Mäch'a were at Bisil Asolé, they used to go out hunting wild animals. While hunting in the area inhabited by the Shanqella [of] Käfa where Much'ich'o lived, they [also] reached the area [inhabited by] Ayé, Agadi, and Ganqa. Much'ich'o's genealogy is thus: while a farmer was tilling his land, a woman carrying an infant who could not yet talk came up to him. When the farmer raised the whip over his head to whip up the ox, the whip gave out a loud noise and the woman got scared thinking that he was going to beat and whip her. So, she dropped the child in the farm and ran away. The farmer took

⁴⁵ See fn 2 and 9 above.

⁴⁶ An Amharised form for Arsii.

the boy she had abandoned; since he did not know where his parents were; he gave him to the king of the land. The king raised him up together with his other children. The king's daughter became pregnant before she got married. When the king questioned her about the person responsible for her pregnancy, it was discovered that it was the boy who had been picked up from the farm, taken to, and raised in the king's house. The king then decided that the person who had molested his daughter should be punished by having his testicles [lit. 'penis'] removed. The king ordered the *däbänansa* to carry out the operation carefully so that the person would not die. The *däbänansa* did not, however, do what he was ordered to do; instead, he removed a dog's testicle and took it to the king. When the king saw it, he said it was not a man's, but a dog's,

(**fol. 29v**) and became angry with the *däbänansa* whom he ordered to go back and get the man's testicles. The *däbänansa*, fearing for the man's life, removed one of his own and another of the man's [Much'ich'o's], and took them to the king. The king said that they were real man's testicles [lit. penis].⁴⁷ Again, the king's daughter became pregnant. The man called Much'ich'o disappeared together with the king's daughter whose pregnancy he had caused and with the *däbänansa* who had removed his own as well as Much'ich'o's testicle. He went up a mountain called Sägal Märmé and settled there. The king learned about this and sent his son Gibé with reinforcements to capture him. While Gibé was advancing towards Much'ich'o's place when he reached the source of the Gibé River, the king's son died. Therefore, those who had gone on the campaign failed to reach Much'ich'o's place and returned. They were too afraid to tell the king of his son's death. Meanwhile, a midget came up and said he would do it. He then had his head half shaved, leaving the hair on the other half. He went to the king to tell him about his son's death. When the king saw him, he asked him why he did not have his head completely shaved. The midget said that some campaigners were on their way home (**fol. 30r**) while others were not going to come back. The king then suspected that his son had died. So, he asked: "you midget, has my son died?" When the midget said that he had just heard it [that the king's son had died] from the king's own words, those present wept. The name of the king's son was Gibé. So, when he died at the source of the Gibé River, the river was named after him. It is said that the father of the dead Gibé was not called *negusä nägast*. After some time, Much'ich'o and his descendants grew in number while stay-

⁴⁷ The author uses the Amharic word *qula*, lit. 'penis', in lieu of 'testicles' till the concluding sentence where the proper term (testicle) is reinstated.

ing at the mountain of Sägäl Märmé. When the Mäch'a came to hunt wild animals at Sägäl Märmé, he saw Much'ich'o and waited to capture him. The place [Sägäl Märmé] had only one path leading to the mountain's top. Much'ich'o, to prevent other men from ascending it, spread on the path slippery materials and liquid mixture of flax (*tälba*) that had been stored in big jars. When the Mäch'a came to the mountain, Much'ich'o poured the slippery materials kept in the pots on the exposed path. When the men tried to walk over it, they slipped down and fell. Much'ich'o killed many men with spears and rocks. Unable to ascend Sägäl Märmé, the Mäch'a went back to Bisil where he [i.e., they] spent the rainy season, discussing and planning his [i.e., their] next move. It was agreed that if they surrounded the mountain which had no water, Much'ich'o's men would have to come down; so they launched their attack towards Sägäl Märmé and (**fol. 30v**) surrounding the mountain, they camped. While Mäch'a was camping there, nine serpents (pythons) were found surrounding the mountain. Mäch'a said that the serpents do not know the language of men and were ignorant of men's motives, that it was God who caused them to surround this mountain as a sign to forbid his men to destroy the people of the mountain. So Mäch'a sent this message to Much'ich'o. He [they] also swore that he [they] would not kill, capture or enslave him. Much'ich'o agreed and came down from the mountain with his possessions. The Obo said he [they] wanted to take away the Much'ich'o together with their possessions; Jawwi wanted to take him for himself and they quarrelled among themselves over this. They said that they had taken an oath not to kill, capture or enslave him [Much'ich'o's people], but not to share [them among themselves]. All the Mäch'a returned after sharing Much'ich'o's [people] among themselves. So, among the sons of Mäch'a one would find Much'ich'o in every country. Also, within the Much'ich'o there is Digata who is the offspring of Much'ich'o; he is not a Much'ich'o himself.

(**fol. 31v**) The territory [lit. 'country'] that was on the upper part of the Dédessa up to Gibé was inhabited by the Damot. The Mäch'a led a campaign with the Much'ich'o they brought along from Bisil and forced the Damot out of the area. On the lower part of the Dédessa there lived the Ganqa, Agadi, Käfa, and Senecho. Ganqa and Agadi are Christians: they have churches. However, their language is not Amharic. They have a different language. They have *tabot*. Their king's town was at Haru Makko. Makko is a person's name. Makko Bili was a Mäch'a. He [Makko] was the chief of all the Mäch'a and a leader of campaigns. Therefore, the place called Makko in former times had another name. While Makko Bili was going on a campaign, he died at Haru Makko. So, the place where he died has been known as Makko until now. This is how Makko Bili died. Makko Bili, as leader of campaigns, led all the

Mäch'a from Bisil to fight and destroy the Käfa. He camped near their town at Haru Makko. Käfa was the king of Damot expelled by the Mäch'a from the upper Dédessa, so they [the Damot] had gone and joined Käfa. Damot sent a message to Makko Bili asking him to come and collect tribute from him under oath and so become a Boräna like them [Makko Bili's men]. Makko Bili believed this and went alone to receive tribute, leaving the army and the Mäch'a behind. They [the Damot] caught and imprisoned him. They then brought out a sword to cut his head off. He appealed not to die alone but with the Mäch'a whom he said he would ask to come [forward].

(fol. 32r) Towards evening, they [Käfa and Damot] took Makko Bili and ascended the cliff from where Makko called out for the Mäch'a saying: 'make your fire [glow] like the stars; make yourself like a snake; bind a mare to a stallion.' Mäch'a bound the two [mares and stallions] and made a large fire. Käfa and Damot thought the Mäch'a were still in their camp and kept looking out. Mäch'a escaped in the evening. When they found no Mäch'a around the following morning, they cut off Makko Bili's head. After doing this, they feared that the Galla [Mäch'a] would not spare them. So Käfa went to the Käfa country; some of the Damot went with Käfa; some crossed the Abbay River and went to Damot country. Agadi left and crossed the White Nile [went to the adjoining area] where they are still living to this day. The Ganqa separated and settled in Näsi. The chief of the Ganqa was *Abba* Bisqano. Fearing that the Galla might attack him at Näsi, he built a double-stone wall around the house; he also had a double trench dug outside the walls. The walls he had constructed can still be seen today, as well as the trenches that have not filled up. *Abba* Bisqano used to have his cattle drink mineral water (*ambo*) at Gémber and built a reservoir near his house at Näsi so that the cattle would not have to go down to the lowlands. He used to have [the cattle] drink in turn from the *ambo* at Gémber and have the men who were standing to collect the water and pour it into the reservoir. Men were lined up from the *ambo* at Gémber all the way to his home in Näjjo passing pots of mineral water to each other until it would finally be poured into the reservoir built outside his home. This is how he used to have [his cattle] drink.

(fol. 32v) He had a beehive at his house. It was stolen and he asked his men to find the thief. They said they did not know who he was. So, he had fifty men hanged because of [the loss of] the beehive. When he thus became troublesome, all the Ganqa hated him. They sent for those who formerly used to go to the Galla country for trade and who spoke the Galla tongue [Oromo language] and lived as far as Bisil. They told them they would help them capture *Abba* Bisqano, reminding them not to kill and enslave him. They took

oath on this. So, the Galla led a campaign towards Näsī. *Abba Bisqano* was having a feast for his daughter's wedding. The Ganqa knew that the Galla were coming to attack; they even let them spend the night in their houses and provided them with food. *Abba Bisqano* did not know of all this. The day on which the bridal guests were to arrive was fixed and two Galla spies who had mixed with the group entered *Abba Bisqano's* house. He smelled something from the garments of the Galla that smelled like them. Since the men [of Ganqa] who had gone for the wedding knew about the presence of the Galla, they wanted to deceive *Abba Bisqano* and said: "The Galla are not like rain which comes down from the sky nor ants to come out of the earth. Where can the Galla come from?" So, the Ganqa opened the gate and let all the Galla in. The Galla entered *Abba Bisqano's* house and caught him. Because he resisted capture, they threw him out of the house and killed him the following day. They also captured the girl who was to get married on that day. The one who captured her was Léqa Wänjo.

He (fol. 33r) made her his wife. She gave birth shortly afterwards. Her descendants belong to seven generations and still live today at Lalo Wänjo. So they [the Galla] killed *Abba Bisqano* at Näsī. After his death, while the Mäch'a were living at Bisil, they began to discuss how to share out the land because their enemies had left the area as far as the Abbay, and Käfa up to the side of Dabus. So they could not agree about whose land they would take over and quarrelled. In the meantime, a certain man had a dream in which he saw his ox marking out their land to the right and to the left. So, he asked each of them to give him an ox. The man who saw the ox in the dream leading the men named it Karabicha. On it the possessions of the eldest member would be loaded as if it were a horse. Since the eldest was Limmu, they sent for him to come and load his goods on the ox. He sent back saying that his wife was ill and asked to be given more time. They gave him two weeks' time. At the end of the two weeks, he again asked for more time because his wife was still ill and sent Gudru, his younger brother, with this message. Gudru lied and said that his brother had sent him on his behalf to have his goods loaded on the Karabicha bull, and asked his men to proceed as he would follow later on. So they said: *Kottu! Dhufé!* to each other according to the *alānga* and the *séra* (law) procedure and decided to accept because they had sent for Limmu, but he had not come; instead, he had sent his brother. So, they made Gudru senior and Limmu his junior (*qut'isu*). This was agreed upon under threat of punishment.

(fol. 33v) "We will not set out without the *bokku*; the *bokku* is at Limmu's house". So, they sent messengers [to Limmu] to send them the *bokku*. Limmu

said he would not give his *bokku*. Then they proclaimed, *Kottu! Dhufé!* according to the *alänga* and the *séra* procedure, and declared Limmu an enemy. Then they brought out twenty *Karabicha* bulls so that they would [lead the way to] and assign the *rist* to split it into twenty parts.⁴⁸ They used to load the elder's possessions on the bull. The man who had the dream had instructed them not to lead the bull to the right or to the left even if they liked the *rist* (sic) on either side, and to follow the *Karabicha* bull wherever he went. So, they did as they were told. The bull used to lie down of its own will. If it lied down, they did not compel it to rise. They would settle where it lied. Sometimes, the bull used to lie down for two or three days, and they would become sad and pray to God. When it rose up, they followed [it]. They never beat the bull to rise. So the bull of the Ch'aleya [Ch'äliya] and Liban went in the direction of the east and they followed it. It led and directed them. The bull of Jawwi and Limmu Sokko led them to the right, to the Blue Nile. The bull of Léqa and Sibü led them both through Nonno Roggé and Enarya in central Dédéssa until (**fol. 34r**) it got drowned at Mälka Arirtu, nearby the Dédéssa River. Mälka Arirtu was named after the *Karabicha* bull by which name it is still known. In Galleñña, *arirtu* refers to a bull that has black and white stripes from the forehead across its back to tail. Sibü's *Karabicha* bull is also *arirtu*. That of the Léqa is grey. It is said that when they left Bisil for Mälka Arirtu, Léqa's bull crossed it on the right side, while Sibü's did on the left. This is how they crossed the Dédéssa River. Then they asked each other how it happened that from the time they left Bisil until they reached here, Léqa's bull was on the left and Sibü's on the right, but now the *Karabicha* bulls changed places and crossed the river. They discussed the matter and said that this is nothing but a sign of marking the division of the *rist*. Sibü's was on the right, and Léqa's on the left. So, it happened as they agreed and has remained so ever since they divided their *rist* with *Karabicha* bulls. In the direction of Mälka Arirtu, after crossing the Dédéssa River, the bulls led them to Guma. After that, it led them down to Haru Makko, in the direction of the Jorgo Mountain and NoLé Kabba up to Dalätti Wänjo (**fol. 34v**) where the *Karabicha* bull stayed for many days. It is said that they stayed for many days, in fact for three years. Since the bull refused to rise, they said it was God's will and that God was showing them that this was to be their *rist*. So Léqa and Sibü divided

⁴⁸ It may be worth comparing this process of following cattle to divide areas for settlement with *fora*, in which lactating cows were kept near communities, and young men took other cows to find new pasture lands. See fol. 39r; Asmarom, 1973, p. 57; Mohammed Hassen, 2015, pp. 46–47.

the *rist*. Léqa occupied the area from there up to Qéllām as far as Muka Mozälä. So did Sibu up to where it is now, up to Dabus. Léqa let the *Karabicha* bull cross the Dédessa in the direction of Sanga Léqa upwards to upper Dédessa up to Gimbi, all of which he occupied. Sibu did likewise in the direction of Mälka Dämbi crossing the Gimbi River up to Tullu Ch’ali, Kara Dama. There are nine generations since Mäch’a left Bisil and got his share of *rist* up to the reign of the *negusä nägäst* of Ethiopia, Emperor Menilek.

(fol. 35r) Léqa genealogy is thus: Léqa son of Kura, son of Abbo, son of Dallé, son of Dafa, son of Mäch’a, son of Rayya, son of Kura, son of Hédo. Tuläma is also the son of Kura Hédo. Mäch’a and Tuläma are the sons of the same father. They are related on Kura Hédo’s genealogical line.

Habtä Maryam⁴⁹

(fol. 35v) Kumsa Moräda, Moräda Bäkäré, Bäkäré Godana, Godana Amo, Amo Faro, Faro Sinika, Sinika Ña’a, Ña’a Doro, Doro Kolobo, Kolobo Wayyu, Wayyu Léqa.

Genealogy of Nädhi Wayyu who is at Näsi in Wallagga. Nädhi Wayyu, Wayyu Ña’a, Ña’a Guré, Guré Baro, Baro Fato, Fato Godana, Godana Amo.

(fol. 36r) Säyyo’s genealogy is thus: Säyyo and Léqa are brothers. Their mother is called Dadhi. Säyyo had two sons: Dullacho and Akkayu. Dullacho is the eldest and had two sons: Dallé, who is the eldest, and Lalo. Next [son] is Garjéda who is his [Dullacho’s] *moggasa* son. Säyyo is not his father. Afälo [Anfillo] is Garjéda’s *dhäläta médhich’a*. Akkäyu had three sons: Aläku, who is the eldest, then Awu and Gälan. These are the ‘Six Sayyo’.

(fol. 37r) In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, One God. With God’s help, I shall start copying, with corrections, the genealogy of the Galla⁵⁰ [on] *Hamle* 13, 1919 E.C./July 20, 1927. The country of the Boräna is Hor[o] Wälabu.

⁴⁹ The meaning of this insertion by Habtä Maryam is not clear. The unfinished three folios (fols 36v–40r) simply list the genealogies of a few clans, lineages, families and individuals with some emphasis attributed to the Naqamtee line of the Ña’a cadet groups coming to power, thus underlining Habtä Maryam’s legitimacy in asserting his family’s genealogy in the political history of the region. See Triulzi, 2006.

⁵⁰ It is here that the Genealogy makes a sudden change in nomenclature: the title ‘Genealogy of the Boräna’, used in the incipit on fol. 3r, is here replaced by ‘Genealogy of the Galla’. ‘Galla’ is the collective name by which the Oromo of Ethiopia were then known to outsiders and

(fol. 39r) The country of the Boräna is Hor[o] Wälabu (sic). Mäch'a and Tuläma are brothers. Their father is a Boräna. They used to tend cows, sheep, and goats and to move from one region to another in search of grazing land for their cattle. They used to live on milk and on meat [obtained] by hunting wild animals. While moving about from one area to another, they found in a river a tightly closed basket filled with *enjära*, meat, and a knife. Suspecting that there were people nearby, they went up the river and found many people who had camped there. They fought them and captured a large number of cattle and thirty men and many women, and they returned. They married the captive women and so their number increased. Among the offspring are five children of Mäch'a and four of Tuläma. These were called *Salgan Boräna*, and the descendants of the thirty captives were called *Soddommän Gärba*. Until today they are called Boräna [and] Gäbäro. While living in Hor[o] Wälabu, they became numerous and powerful. Their influence spread to the surrounding areas, and the neighbouring people came with many tanners, *däbänansa*, and weavers, and submitted to them. They then slaughtered cattle, removing the thin hides and the ankle of the animal with cartridges that they tied around the arms [of those who had submitted] and considered them their *médhich'a* as if they were their own clansmen. They despised the tanners, *däbänansa*, and weavers; but they used to make some of them *boräna* through *médhich'a*. After a long time, since their men increased in number, they left Wälabu together with some of them, crossed the Wabi River, and settled at Oda Näbé.

(fol. 39v) They continued to travel until they reached the Awash where they fought and captured whoever they found there. Those who submitted they called *médhich'a dhalätako* (lit. 'my *médhich'a* offspring'), which means 'he is [the son] of my clan' and made them *Boräna*. While they were still together, two herd boys quarrelled. The son of Mäch'a wounded with a knife Tuläma's son on the knee. Because of this the brothers quarrelled and engaged in a bat-

was often used by themselves as related in CGC. The ambiguity of this term, historically used and perceived as derogatory by the Oromo themselves, has remained in MS CR 48 description and title by Stefan Strelcyn, who fails to connect it to MS CR 81 (Strelcyn, 1976, pp. 207–09), which he properly titles "Généalogie des Borana" (*Boräna Yätäwällädäbät*). Strelcyn also suggests that MS CR 81 is an incomplete copy of a manuscript whose page numbers are indicated in pencil on the upper page margin of MS CR 81: this might be a possible reference to the original family *mäzgäb* described in fn 5. The connection between MSS ANL CR 48 and 81 still awaits further enquiries.

tle. Tuläma defeated Mäch'a and drove him out. Mäch'a fled as far as T'equr Meder where he built a [new] settlement (lit. 'town'). Tuläma pursued him there and fought him. From there Mäch'a fled to Bisil where he also built a [new] settlement. Again, Tuläma sent his warleader called *Abba* Ch'ulullé and fought him. Mäch'a became stronger and drove Tuläma out from Bisil killing thirteen men with their war leader up to Qäch'en Jämjam. This became, until now, the boundary between the two. The Salgan Boräna were thus separated by Qäch'en Jämjam. Since one of the Salgan Boräna is Wäyt'o, we will now write down [his genealogy].

Part 2. Wäyt'o's genealogy

What is known in Amharic as Wäyt'o and in Galleñña as Wata is one of the four sons of Tuläma. Because Boräna used to live by hunting wild animals, so it became a custom for Wäyt'o to live by hunting wild animals and anything that could be found. He does this until now.

Part 3. Mäch'a's genealogy

Among the Mäch'a the eldest is Obo, the next one [are] Jawwi, Liban, Gida, and Hullé. Obo's children are nine; since they have three mothers, Obo's children are known as the 'Three Houses'. Among these the eldest is Limmu, the next are Gudru and Yäbäntu. They have the same mother ... Among Limmu's children, the eldest is Säp'ira ... [unclear writing].

(**fol. 40r**) next [unclear line].

Then [follows] Dima, Diyati, Iggu, Hanu, and Manguta. Dima's children are: Warsu, Dämbo, Däräso, Hach'o, and Aru. His *dhäläta médhich'a* are Särba, Ebsa, and Hulo. Diyati's children are Dha'e and Hébanu. Iggu's children are Hano, Mäné, and Bäriso. Léqa, Säyyo, and Ch'äliya have the same mother. Her name is Dadhi. Tum'é, Sibü, and Nonno have the same mother whose name is Boso. The Tum'é are Bunno and Dap'o. The Obo are Limmu, Gudru, Yäbäntu, Léqa, Säyyo, Ch'äliya, Tum'é, Nonno, and Sibü. They are nine.

Part 4. About Jawwi's children

[end of the text]

5.

History of the Warra Beeraa

The original text of this family history, titled “The history and deeds of our relatives the Horda who are called Wärrä Béra”, was provided by the author, Ato Dessaleñ Qänä’a of Arjo, to AT during his fieldwork in Naqamtee and Arjo in January 1973. The original writing was handwritten in a student book paged 1–27.¹ The text was first located and summarily translated into German by Friedrich Klausberger in his Die Leqa-Horda: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Galla in Äthiopien).² In presenting the written document, Klausberger wrote that Dessaleñ Qänä’a spent three years collecting oral accounts from local elders, and that the main aim of his composition was to relate the ‘brave and cruel’ history of the Warra Beeraa, a leading family of the Leeqaa Horda.³ Contrary to the Bakaree family, the Horda lost most of their power and land due to the haphazard ‘deeds’ of their forefathers vis-à-vis their Oromo neighbours and the central government.

The present text was first translated into English by Wandemu Ummeta, an AAU Business graduate student from Naqamtee who became in time an active co-researcher of AT in the region. Text and translations were later revised and annotated by Negaso Gidada, then a PhD student of Prof. Eike Haberland at Frankfurt University, during a six-month stay in Naples and Rome in 1984 that allowed him to complete his doctoral work.⁴ The ‘Warra Beeraa Tarik’

¹ *Yäwägāné yäwārä Béra tābelān yāment’ārawunna Hordawoch tarikenna sera* [Amharic: የወገኔ የወረቤራ ተበላን የምንጠራውና ሆርዳዎች ታሪክና ስራ], ATFN, (Ja-Arjo 1-2), Amharic text and Interview with the author, Ato Déssälāñ Qän’a, 13.1.1973.

² Klausberger, 1971.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

⁴ Negaso 2001, p. xii.

was used by Negaso for chapters 3 and 4 of his PhD thesis. Footnote annotations marked NG are derived from Negaso Gidada's handwritten comments to the original Amharic text.⁵

(p. 1) I have written down the [history] of my relatives the Wärrä Béra known as the Horda which I collected from elders up to now, so correct me.⁶ The deeds of the Horda show [at the same time] bravery, cruelty, and disobedience with a sense of heroism. They were born in Shawa governorate-general (*t'äqlay gezat*), in Méch'a province (*awraja*), at a locality called Bisil⁷ where their kin are still located. One day they invited the highlanders (*dägawoch*)⁸ to a feast. The highlanders came and the food that was prepared and brought to them was *ch'oma*⁹ which had no red meat in it and *t'äjj* made thickly with only four jars of water.¹⁰ After they ate and drank this, they went out at night to get fresh air and they saw the well-fed oxen lying outside. They looked at them and when they touched the oxen, the oily fat on the body of the oxen due to the heat remained on their hands. So, when they saw this and knew that the region was a region where honey would be found in abundance, they became jealous and after deciding to conquer this region, they went back to their homes. In no more than seven days' time, they [the highlanders] came back and attacked the region. Since it [the attack] was undertaken during the rainy season they [the Horda] could not defend themselves from the sudden attack, so they fled. Some were wounded [i.e., taken away] by the Gibé water [river], and those who escaped entered Wallagga territory. As a response to the attack,

⁵ Negaso Gidada, "Notes on the History of Warra Bera", pp. 1-8, handwritten, undated [June-November 1984], ATFN.

⁶ The incipit of the Amharic text is repeated in the Ms' ending line, p. 26. As in most oral-based accounts, the historical events narrated in this family history are expressed through individual lives and ritual actions whose symbolic meaning is not always clear to the external reader.

⁷ Comment by NG: "Location unclear. Bisil, possibly to be located around the Basilo River, a tributary of the Gibe R. south of Gimbii and west of Geedoo. There is also a Basilo River between Shewa and Wallo".

⁸ The Amharic term used by the author to represent the highlanders (*dägawoch*) stands for the more appropriate *dägañnoch*. In his "Additional Notes", NG writes (p. 3): "They [the highlanders] are the Macca from the lineage [of] Fitawrari Olana. The Horda are also from the Macca."

⁹ *Ch'oma*, 'fat', both in Oromo and Amharic.

¹⁰ It implies that little water was added to it.

they [the Horda] said: “Let your clan [*zär*, lit. ‘seed’] never reproduce” and went. This curse was fulfilled, and since that time, the family of the [*h*]angäfa or their descendants on that side could not multiply. Thus they [the highlanders] went and asked for a wise man. And the wise man told them: “You should go and receive blessing from them [the Horda]”. While they sought ways to come and be reconciled with us, they made sure, through onlookers, that we had an unwed girl as they wanted to come to us through marriage.

Fitawrari (p. 2) Olana married Ayyäläch Rundasa, the daughter of *Fitawrari* Rundasa (*sic*). At the time of their wedding, they went taking along different kinds of *korma* [bulls], cows and some *enjära* in an *agälgil* [small box made of grass] secretly saying that it was their travel provisions. They spent two days at this feast and since they pleased *Fitawrari* Rundasa in terms of the dowry—clothes and money—they asked saying, “Let your clan [*zär*], everyone called Horda, children and wise men be gathered and bless us”. The Horda were gathered for them right away. Then they slaughtered the cattle they brought from Gêdo [Geedoo]¹¹ and Jibat and they ate the *enjära* from the *agälgil* and drank the *t’äjj* poured from the horn [cup]¹² during the blessing. Then they said “Farewell” and they went. They begot many children and their children have big positions at present. This is how we came out [i.e., our origin]. The children of Siré who began growing [became important] were Bandu Siré, Gäda Siré and Ota Siré. The mother of Bandu and Gäda was Embissi [Embilli]. Their settlement was like this: when Ota was living near the Nägésso [River] with Bandu, Gäda, Gäbäto and Garbi, Béra, the son of Ota, grew to be a wise person among them. Since he grew up and became the mediator to intercede between the people of the region [i.e., became influential], they became jealous and they [Bandu and Gäda] decided to kill this nephew of theirs. Since Béch’o, the place where people gathered for reconciliation, was under the *zegba* [*Odaa*] tree, he was going from Nägésso to Qumba and just as he passed Gärjéda someone [a boy] who was looking after the cattle said repeatedly: “you bird, you are going to die today”. Since Béra was a wise per-

¹¹ Comment by NG: “Geedoo is located Northeast of Basilo while Jibat is in the East. From this it is clear that the Horda were living around the Basilo River towards the lowlands while the so-called ‘highland people’ were from Gêdo or Jibat region”.

¹² [*Ibid.*] “*Qänd*, literally ‘horn’ (*gaafa* in Oromo) also called *kolba*. One of the respected utensils in traditional Oromo society was the cup (*wanch’a*) made of a buffalo horn; one of the reasons for (male) hunting horn was the high respect derived from killing a buffalo and get its horn”.

son, when he heard this repeatedly, he turned to the boy and asked him, “Is your father at home?” Then he went to the house of the boy’s father. After he reached there, the boy was called in and Béra said to the father: “I came to ask you something”. Since the person feared and respected Béra he said: “What happened?”. Béra then said: “When I was going my own way one bird called another bird and said ‘You will die today’. We both heard this.

(p. 3) Since this boy of yours also heard this, I wanted to tell you about this”. Then the boy said: “It was not a bird, it was me who said that”. And he told him [Béra] that his brothers were waiting to kill him. So Béra sent to the [Gada] Assembly people saying: “I cannot come today. Let it be postponed till next week”. And he turned his horse back to Nägéssso. Since they [Béra’s brothers, lit. uncles] were waiting to kill him at the place of the appointment, they became very angry when they knew that he was not coming and they went back to their homes. On their way back, they [attacked] the servants of Béra who were farming the land at Gärbi at that time. They [Béra’s brothers] killed six of them and the rest escaped. One brave person fled to their mother’s house. When this person entered the door, they reached him and pierced his back [with a spear] from behind instead of being merciful towards him. The wounded man entered the back room crying after he was wounded and fell there. There were water pots at different places in which they boiled coffee for the persons who came from the fight, and fire was burning for the coffee pots. The blood of the wounded person spilled into the fire and put it out. When the fire was put out its smell was felt outside. When Béra heard this, he sent men to Lalo and Bonäyya of Bäddo,¹³ and they in group followed these persons. They chased them up to Sifa¹⁴ lowland [*qolla*]. He also chased a person called Hursa who was a relative of people like Gurméssa Hirp’a who had conspired against him at the Assembly [court] along with his [Béra’s] brothers. He chased him to the Kombo[l]sha [River] Cave. When he [Béra] said: “Wait! Now you have escaped me”, the other said: “It is your horse Qusar who made me escape. Otherwise, you did not leave me [would not have spared me]”. Soon, during the night of that same day, when he went to Béra’s house and called in, Béra answered “Who is it?” Then the other answered “It is me. You can kill me but let me tell you one thing”. Béra said “What is it?” Then the man [Hursa] said: “Your sons will die; one while watering [cattle] at the *ambo*

¹³ Laaloo and Boonayyaa may be the highland (*Baddaa*) people living southeast of Naqamtee mentioned in the text.

¹⁴ A tributary of the Nageessoo River.

[i.e., *hora*, or mineral water] and the other in a fight. So, you better marry wives and increase the number of your descendants”. He advised him and departed in peace. Béra married Birillé who was from a strong warrior family. On the day of the wedding, while the people who came for the wedding were sitting in the back room (p. 4) a spark of fire shot out from the hall, passed over many people and dropped on the lap of Béra. He stopped the people from putting it out and let the fire shot burn his body after passing through his clothes and then put it out. He interpreted this right away. He said “She (Birillé) will burn [nag and irritate] me up to my death and her death. Her sons will also turn out to be fire in this region”. She gave birth to 1) Danno Béra, 2) Ammäyya Béra, 3) Abäku Béra and 4) Wägé Béra. The history of each of them is as follows. Danno, being the [*h*]angäfa [eldest], had his governorship consolidated, having succeeded up to Mulugéta, Tariku, Wärdofa and *Balambaras* Qän’a. During the time of both Danno and Tucho [son of Danno] their internal administration and punishment of criminals were full of cruelty. They used to tie all criminal[s], load him [them] with a stone for any small offense or rumour against another person and throw him [them] into a big sea [river]. They used to take the farm of other persons, even if that person had already ploughed and sowed, by dropping on the farm [soil] some seeds of their own so as to claim that the farm was theirs. If a feast was prepared for a certain holiday (*sänbat*),¹⁵ either they went themselves or sent their servants (*agäl-gayoch*) to be present at the feast and get the blessing. If they could not appear on that day the feast would be postponed to another date. Otherwise, the host or the person who prepared the feast could not celebrate the holiday without them. If a person gave his daughter in marriage, they took the dowry and got clothed [shared the dowry] as if they were the father of the girl. People could not sell their cattle peacefully. Weavers could not pass through the back-room (*sic*). This was a very strict rule. So people used to curse them saying, “Let your descendants not reproduce [grow in number and live for long]. As you turned us over and [disrupt] our farm let somebody turn you over and rule you”. So, we live to see today that they do not hold any office of importance, let alone getting the position of assistant governor. The reign of Tucho stopped here. Since Ammäyya was the equivalent of *abba dula* [‘Minister of war’], he had superiority from among the sons of Béra, he was also quite handsome. He was a good hunter, a person who took prisoners [captives] at war and conquered regions [beyond his own]. No army could stop him from marching

¹⁵ *Sanbata* (*Sänbät* in Amharic) is a traditional (Macca) Oromo religious holiday during which a bull (*korma*) is ritually slaughtered.

through any gate [*bär*] he came to. There was a person called Ammäch'a Fido who came from Wayyu Näqämté and lived here. On the wedding day of Lojo Béra, after the bridegroom and his company came in, Ammäch'a, showing that he was not a relative, hid among the singing girls and during the night took [stole] the bride away and took her along with him to Dabé. The next morning the bride was wanted for blessing but could not be found. Later it came to be known that Ammäch'a had taken her away.

(p. 5) Since he was also a brave person and nobody could fight him, our hero Ammäyya was sent to bring the girl back. When he reached there, she went out of her house, saw Ammäyya and said to Ammäch'a: "since it is Ammäyya who came, let me go. It is your being an outsider and my being a woman that makes us separate". So, she peacefully gave her hands to Ammäyya. Ammäyya brought her here and later married her. Ammäch'a was later charged for this crime and was brought to Béra by the prosecutor. When the verdict was to be pronounced all of them said that he should die, but Legdi said: "Let his cattle be confiscated and let him go out of the region". But Béra said: "Take him to Sibü, without taking his cattle or doing anything against him". After the verdict was given, Ammäch'a was happy and Béra went back to Nägésso after giving this order to his servants [*ashkäroch*]. But the sons of Béra, disobeying his order, imprisoned Ammäch'a and began sharing his cattle. When Béra asked news from the region, he heard about this and went quickly to Haro where his sons were to scold and punish them. Soon the sons of Béra dispersed when they heard about the coming of their father. Only Ammäyya remained. Ammäyya stepped on the leg [of his father] and drawing his spear and shield said: "Release him [let him go]. Release him". Béra then sat down and said: "It is known that no battlefield could stop you. Do you point the sharp side of your spear to me? From now on when you go to a fight, let not the sharp [edge] of your spear leave you". He said this and went away. The others became afraid and took Ammäch'a to [Sibü] along with the rest of his cattle, thus executing Béra's orders. During that week the *Näqämtöch* [people of Näqämté] came for a fight. Ammäyya went to fight, and, since no one could match him, he chased and made them cross the Nägésso [river]. After he chased them he started his journey back to Goto. There was a person from the side of the enemy who fled and hid in the forest. When Ammäyya was going back carelessly, while he was peacefully releasing his horse and being off guard, that coward who thought that Ammäyya would kill him threw his spear at Ammäyya, which pierced and killed him. This was according to the word [curse] that came from his father [i.e., the curse was fulfilled]. Since there was no such a brave person as Ammäyya among the children of Béra, his name is still remembered and his children are [were] like him.

(p. 6) Abbäku was a person known for being a [brave] warrior and for the trenches he made. Abbäku used to dig trenches and these trenches are still there, they are known as Gélla [*Kélla*] Abbäku, meaning ‘the gate of Abbäku’. Since he also held the rank of *Abba* equivalent to the one of ‘Minister of Finance’ as it is now called, on top of his heroic deeds, Béra and Danno used to respect him very much. The rank of Wägé Béra was like the *Abba* equivalent to ‘Minister of Fine Arts’ of the present day. He was a wise person. One day when he and his brothers shared the cattle they obtained through pillaging, each of them got 40 heads of cattle. After he got his share, Wägé bought two good horses from Tuqa¹⁶ together with the 40 cows and brought them home. When others asked him, “Why did you do this?” he said: “I have made my wealth under me [i.e., I am sitting on my wealth]. You will see”. When the people who bought cheap horses went fighting, he also went with his fast horse, quickly caught up [with the enemy] while boasting and killed and castrated them. When returning home, he rode back very fast without any problem. Thus, he became known as one “boasts when killing and one who runs [fast] when escaping. So he used to share half of the booty in cattle that any of his subordinates [from *Jala*, lit. ‘underneath’] pillaged for he was a hero in every battlefield. When their territory expanded to Illubabor and reached Déga,¹⁷ Darimu and Mäkkö, Wägé took over the reign being the *endärasé* of Danno who was the governor. The people of the region conspired against him saying, “Let him live [stay] for the time being. When the rainy season comes and he cannot go out of the region because of river floods we will fight him and take him as a prisoner”. But the wise Wägé used to ride one horse during the day and at night he would sit down always having a saddled horse ready [being alert at night]. When the local people went and listened near the house they heard a horse eating grass. They did not know that there was another saddled horse. So, thinking that it [their plan] worked, they started a quarrel with Wägé. Soon when they saw him come riding a saddled horse to fight them they fled in the moonlit night. At this time this song was sung for him:

Yawarra Källé lénch’a Oh [Wägé], the one with a lion’s skin [hide]

¹⁶ Northeast of Naqamtee.

¹⁷ Comment by NG: “Déga is West of the Dabana River at the head waters of Ducade (?) River (a tributary of Gabba), between Makko and Darimu. Darimu is Northeast of Déga and West of the Dabana River. Makko is Northwest of Déga and Darimu and West of the Dabana River”.

*Albasa*¹⁸ *färdén Déga*¹⁹ the one who frightens the horses of Déga

(p. 7) He was a good and wise person. He had lots of wisdom. When Béra was living with Berellé, since she was not compatible with his body, he wanted to marry another wife. Since at the time one had to look for a wife carefully and was not “I have seen you. Let me marry you” [i.e., as spontaneous] as it is at present, he started from here [presumably Arjo] and went up to Nonno. He arrived at the house of the governor of Geyo of Nonno who was called Shorro Gälät. He told Shorro: “The reason I came here is to marry a wife. Since I have heard that Kiti Sänu who is in your region has a daughter, I want to marry her”. When Shorro asked him “Who told you?”, he [Béra] said: “I saw her in my dream”. Since the decision of Shorro depended on that of his wife Bisha, he called Bisha and asked her “How is his dream [possible]?” She answered: “It is not a [real] dream”. So Béra became shocked and asked: “Why?” Shorro told him saying: “The girl whom you came to marry is going to marry today. The bridegroom and his party [have already entered the house”. Béra went to sleep feeling sorry for this. Kiti Sänu had chosen Shorro to administer [look after] the bridegroom and his company. So when he [Kiti] called for Shorro to come, Shorro sent a message saying “Since a guest who came to me is a person like Béra, I cannot come as he is [such] a big person [man]”. The people in the wedding party spent the evening drinking, eating and enjoying. Just at 5 a.m. in the morning the pot filled with *t’äjj*²⁰ meant for blessing the bride and the bridegroom broke and the *t’äjj* flowed [spilled] on the ground. Both the parents of the bride and the party of the bridegroom became very annoyed [disturbed] and began thinking [what to do]. They said: “Since a very wise person called Béra has come to the house of Shorro, let him interpret this for us”. So they went to the house of Shorro where Béra was sleeping. They reached there and said: “Awake the person called Béra for we have something to ask him”. Béra listened to them carefully and interpreted

¹⁸ *Albasa* (Oromo), lit. ‘to make someone defecate’ [NG]. The word is used to represent a spectacular victory.

¹⁹ The appropriate spelling of the Oromoo song is as follows: *Yaa warra Kallee Leencaa / Albasa Fardeen Degga*.

²⁰ Comment by NG: “The special name for *t’äjj* which is filled to the top and is separately kept for blessing occasions is called *dhaaba*. The content of the pot could be milk, *farsoo* (beer) or *daadhii* (Oromo for *t’äjj*) and could be put aside for any occasion, i.e., blessing of a new-born calf, of cattle, of a religious or social event. *Dhaaba* is only drunk by respected people. On marriage day, it is drunk by the bride and the groom and by their respective guests”.

the incident as follows: “A [jar] full of *t’äjj* means a girl. The person who marries her is like [a jar] filled with *t’äjj*.”

(p. 8) The jar filled with *t’äjj* meant that the blessing was broken and the marriage would not be carried out so that, even if they marry, their marriage agreement will not last. Let the people who marry and the party of the bridegroom say farewell without finishing their *t’äjj* in the *berellé* [goblets]. Let them say farewell and let the girl look for her bread [find her own life]”. At this time, when Shorro called Bisha and asked her: “What about his dream now?”. She answered: “It is a true dream now”. The next morning Béra went to the house of Kiti along with Shorro as a guest for the feast. He then asked Kiti: “Let me marry this daughter of yours, Gudi”. Kiti said: “All right, come and take [her] after 15 days”. He [Béra] put the wedding ring²¹ on her arm and took her by sending men on the fixed date. Gudi gave birth to Legdi, Wārji and Rumicho. The rank of Legdi was equivalent to the [present title of] Minister of the Chamber of Deputies.²² His duty was not to go ahead and fight but to give advice to the military leaders and soldiers. The forts [trenches] that were made in his name were the trenches called 1) Goto and 2) Gelan. He built these two gates since he was a striker of his enemy even if he did not physically go into the battle and fight, one day he took 300 cows with *bidiru*²³ to the *ambo* [mineral water], and when he was looking after the cows after watering them for a day and night, a person called Rufo from Sibu ambushed and robbed him of all [his cows] by force. When people offered to give him cows [one head per household], he said: “Be patient for three months”, and he prepared an army. He prepared experienced and trusted soldiers and, pretending to be marching somewhere else or toward Nāqämté, he marched through a rough road during the night and reached a plain called Hormat.²⁴ There he found many heads of cattle that were left to graze there by the people thinking that nobody would touch them during the rainy season. Since he [Legdi] had many men under him who knew how to swim and drive and lead the cattle un-

²¹ Ch’ach’u [caaccuu]: lit. ‘fertility ring’, equivalent of *kallacha*, head phallus for strength.

²² The author’s comparison of Legdi’s authority with imperial Ethiopia’s Minister of Chamber of Deputies can be equated in traditional Oromo society with the *Abbaa Gadaa*. However, since the path the author describes relates a time of transformation where the *Abbaa Bokkuu* undermined the *gadaa* system, the author’s use of the Minister of Chamber of Deputies appears closer to *Abbaa Duulaa* than *Abbaa Gadaa*.

²³ *Bidiru* [bidiruu]: a very large wood log which is dug out for watering cattle.

²⁴ i.e., made it appear that he was marching towards Naqamtee.

til they crossed [the river], they took 600 heads of cattle in one day. Until they reached Bidiru, the people of Rufo did not even hear the news. The shepherds were also taken prisoners along with the cattle.

(p. 9) After all the cattle were taken to the opposite side and the men were still crossing, they [the people of Rufo] ran after [the robbers] shouting and nothing could be done about it because it was a sudden accident that befell on them. So they returned to their houses. At that time the following song was composed for him [Legdi]:

Goto jala qat'ise

He²⁵ quietly walked at the foot of Goto
[hill]

Rufo Boshon Salp'ise

He humiliated Rufo Bosh.

When the Amhara came to conquer the region, since he [Legdi] was the advisor, when it was debated whether to fight or submit, it was agreed to submit peacefully so that other regions would be conquered along with *Ras Gobäna*.²⁶ Then *Ras Gobäna* appointed Abboyye Akkecha as his *endärasé* (representative) [there], built his palace at Kebele and told *Däjjach Moroda* and *Qäññazmach Tucho*: “You *Däjjach Moroda* secure the region towards *Näqämté*, and you *Qäññazmach Tucho* secure this region which you conquered. I will go and tell *As'é Menilek* and make you administer your respective regions. Until I return, you two governors feed this *endärasé* by bringing flour and butter in turn”. Thus, he trusted them as friends and went leaving only a small number of soldiers behind. The people of *Näqämté* pleased the soldiers by giving them barren cows, honey, sheep, butter, and firewood when their turn came. When it came to be the turn of *Qäññazmach Tucho*, the soldiers didn't get any food. So they called and imprisoned Legdi who was the *endärasé* of *Qäññazmach Tucho*. After he was imprisoned for seven days, he said: “Do not kill me. Let me go and ask them whether they are going to pay or not and bring the tribute if they give and tell you their answer if they do not. I will ask them tomorrow and come back the day after tomorrow”. So saying

²⁵ Most probably Legdi himself or one of the people who took part on the campaign sang and boasted so.

²⁶ Here, as in the Bakaree family history, the coming of *Ras Därsä* and later *Ras Gobäna* is a turning point in the history of the region. Submission or resistance to the advancing external force was decided each time on the basis of regional alliances and local competition. See Bakaree Chronicle, ff. 15v–17r.

goodbye to Abboyye he left. Without going to his own house, he went directly to the former main house of *Qäññazmach* Tucho which was at Dabbe. There, two cows were slaughtered and one bull (*korma*) was ready to be slaughtered. People were drinking, eating, singing and boasting in the house. When Legdi arrived, they said: “Welcome, we are glad that you escaped and came well” and being happy at his coming they brought him *t’äjj* in a [traditional cup] called *wanch’a* to drink and meat to eat. Without eating the meat and drinking the *t’äjj*, Legdi rose and said: “Let me tell you one thing. When the Amhara came, we submitted without fighting. Because you refused to pay the necessary tribute, I have been released from prison and have come here.

(p. 10) Our neighbours pay the tribute properly. Why do you eat and drink the *t’äjj* and *ch’oma* [fat white meat] which you cannot get tomorrow? Now let the tribute go along with me”. When Legdi spoke this loudly, all of them laughed at his speech because they were destined to pay for the crimes they did earlier during their period [of rule]. They laughed at him, and one of them [lit. a commentator] said to Legdi: “Legdi, you never push forward in fighting. We are happy that you are out of the hands of the Amhara. Gobäna went back to his region. How do we pay tribute to twenty-five soldiers? Why are you afraid? Sit down and drink. We are happy that you came. The Amhara have gone back, eat, drink and go home”. Then he said: “A very harsh rule like that of the Pharaoh which we imposed during our time is going to come on us. Goodnight”. They again laughed at him. He went directly to his house at Bech’o, feeling hungry as he had not been eating anything from the time he had come out of prison. There he called his children together and said: “Our region is taken away from us. We neither fought nor paid tribute. I will tell their refusal to the *endärasé* of Gobäna tomorrow. You will see my history first on my son, 2) on my grandson and 3) on my great grandson. No harm will come to you [i.e., the sins of our family will not fall on you]”. He made such a will [pronouncement] and planned to sleep without eating. But the mother of Déti scolded him saying, “It was better if I did not marry you and have children from you. Are you so afraid that you are going to die without eating? You are a coward of cowards”.

(p. 11) She scolded him and called her sons and made them slaughter a fat goat that evening. After preparing the meat, she brought it to Legdi and said: “Here, eat together and die tomorrow”. He ate, blessed his children, and slept. The next morning, when he was going to tell *Ras* Gobäna’s *endärasé* the message [about the people’s resistance] to, he heard that newcomers such as the soldiers of Tulluba Danno from the ruling side [Tucho] had attacked *Ras* Gobäna’s *endärasé* and wiped out the 25 Amhara soldiers from the region

since Legdi had already been released. When Legdi heard this he went back to his house. The attackers chased Abboyye Akkecha out of his camp and killed two of his *ashkäroch*. Abboyye escaped to Näqämté, *Däjjach* Moroda's region, and saved his life. The attackers, thinking they had defeated him, went back singing. Then Abboyye sent a letter to *Ras* Gobäna about this. When *Ras* Gobäna heard this, he became angry and said: "How should the region I conquered with such a great difficulty be invaded by rebels? I heard about their rebellious character from their neighbours even earlier". Being angry he crossed through Billo and came after crossing Wama. His coming was heard among the Horda and there arose confusion among them. Death shed its shadow on Qumba. They called the advisor Legdi and asked him what they should do. Legdi gave the following advice at the place where all the children of Béra and Danno had gathered. He said: "Earlier when we said that we should fight, you said we should submit, and when we agreed to submit, you refused to pay tribute. Instead of taking food (p. 12) to the *endärasé* of the government you attacked him. Now let the military commander [senior ruler], *Qäññazmach* Tucho, go and give his hands up before he [Gobäna] crosses over here. Otherwise, let alone us, even the land itself will be burned and destroyed". Later, when it was said: "Who should go with him?" he [Legdi] said: "I am old. The others are afraid to go with you as going with you means death. So, let my son, *Fitawrari* Rundasa, follow you". So they started their journey to *Ras* Gobäna and before they crossed Wama they reached a place called Bäcké Jäbbi in the region of Billo. There the army of *Ras* Gobäna came to [meet] them. At this time, when it was known that it was *Qäññazmach* Tucho in person, the trumpet was blown as a signal for the army to halt. *Ras* Gobäna sat on the chair which had been prepared for him and *Qäññazmach* Tucho was brought to him accompanied by a guard. Then *Ras* Gobäna asked: "Why did you come?" Tucho answered: "Because I heard of your coming". *Ras* Gobäna asked again: "Are all your soldiers with you?"; then Tucho answered: "All have deserted me". *Ras* Gobäna asked him: "Can you lead through a way which takes us to the camp without going through your region?" Tucho answered: "Yes, we will walk for the whole day today and be there tomorrow", and *Ras* Gobäna told him to lead them. When *Ras* Gobäna said this, all the subservient (*jälé*) who had joined them on the way and were ready to pillage Tucho's region were disappointed. The journey started with the law-abiding soldiers of *Ras* Gobäna and they went through the border of *Däjjach* Moroda's territory. They went through Oddo Beseqa, Gurangur,²⁷ Gätäma and entered

²⁷ It stands for Warangur, a locality Northeast of Naqamtee and Northeast of Gatamaa.

the camp at Kebel. The next morning *Ras Gobäna*'s court was in session. Then *Ras Gobäna* told Tucho to bring not the people but only the children of Danno [father of Tucho] and Béra, leaving no one behind, and sent him to Qumba telling him to return the following day. Legdi was called for counsel. He said: "I will go. Let your houses burn but you escape" and then when he saddled his horse and started to go, all of them including the old man Danno, the father of *Qäññazmach* Tucho, went to the court along with him. The court came into session.

Accuser: Abboyye Akkecha.

Accused: *Qäññazmach* Tucho and his officials.

(p. 13) The accused have attacked the government soldiers and killed them. So, they must die. Let me have justice". The accuser said this and the defendant [*Qäññazmach* Tucho] said: "Neither I nor my brothers went out of our houses, let alone fight. We did not kill anybody, and so we should not die".

The Verdict: "Since you said you did not kill, you can [i.e., should] bring the killers. Since you did not comply with the orders I gave, "You will rule your region like your neighbour *Däjjach* Moroda", until I come back after telling this to the King, you will give the tribute to my *endärasé* turn by turn, you are now demoted from governorship. You should hand in all your fighting weapons in three days. Since your weapons [include] horses, you should also bring your horses. Until this is executed, you should stay in prison". After this verdict was given, the guards of the *Ras*, holding their swords with one hand and loading their rifles, caught the hands of the prisoners and took them to prison. When they were thus taken to prison, the people of Jimma and Léqa whom they ruled before expressed their pleasure by shouting three times. Danno was very old, so they did not imprison him considering his old age. Thinking that the accused were being taken to death and being shocked by the hailing of the people, Danno said aloud: "Hear me. Hear me. What came upon you and made you happy so that you say 'Ilil' three times?²⁸ You, too, are going to be ruled. For no one knows what time brings, you will also hail when this government loses its power. *Ras Gobäna*, listen to this. Will it not be better if you kill my sons with spears instead of slaughtering them with swords?" When he sorrowfully said this, the governor *Ras Gobäna* felt sorry and said:

²⁸ Comment by NG: "*Ilil/ililta*: ululation, sound of happiness made by women during ceremonies such as the coming of the bride (three times), the birth of a daughter (five times) or that of a son (nine times)".

“You can send one of your men and see. They are not killed. They are just kept there”. So, Danno sent one of his men and his *ashkär* told him, after he went and saw, that they did not die and were just imprisoned. Danno was pleased. One of the guards came and said: “We have tied all of them, but we could not put one of them [Legdi] in chains”. He was told to bring that person. When the person was brought, Abboyye saw him and said: “He was imprisoned because he was the *endärasé* [but] he committed no crime. He was in difficulty”. So, it was said: “If the person is to be trusted, (p. 14) let him go and collect the horses found in his region under your guarantee”. He was released and was given five days’ time as he had asked for. So, he said goodbye to the other prisoners and went with Danno. He collected all the horses in the region and brought them to the camp. There he said: “First, here are my three horses. The rest have also come”. When he said this the prisoners were called in and were told, “Your horses and your region are confiscated [taken away]. *Mälkännä* will be allocated to it. It will be *madäriya*. You should bring the killers in three days. You are released now and you can go”. When Legdi was told to take one horse he said: “I will go on foot. With your permission, let *Qännāzmach* Tucho take the horse which you gave me”. At this, the *Ras* was touched and said: “Let one horse be given each, to him [Tucho] and to his officials (*mäkwannentoch*). Are they not the men who were not satisfied with thousands of horses in the olden days?” He sent them like this and they brought the killers to him within the fixed time. Soon they brought forth ivory, gold, good oxen and cows, flour in quantity, and other [goods] which should be given to a governor. Now also he [Gobäna] became merciful and gave Abboyye the following order. He said: “In the direction of Nāqämté up to the border of Midolle,²⁹ ask *Däjjazmach* Moroda for orders. Here, since the chief has been demoted, appoint one chief [representative] for every *gosa* and command them. As for Tucho and his brothers, the sons of Béra, I have given back Qumba [to them]”. For this reason, *qoro* were appointed in every locality. When he said this, those people, who felt happy and hailed when Tucho was demoted, became disappointed for Tucho was given back his original possession and was not demoted from Qumba. Like the other *mälkännöch*, *si-so* [one third of the land] was taken out, and it was made *madäriya*. *Qännāzmach* Tucho was appointed *balabbat* to administer and be administered without making it his *rist* like the other *mälkännöch*. After he [Gobäna] had appointed him a *balabbat*, he went to Addis Ababa. But later, since it became difficult for him [Tucho] (p. 15) to be administered in the region where he

²⁹ Médolle, properly Mädallé, Northeast of Gatamaa and Southeast of Naqamtee.

used to rule, and since he was confused by the kind [of taxes and dues] called *mälkäñña* (sic), [such as] *käramba*,³⁰ *gibir* and *yäshämmañé gudwad*,³¹ he went to Addis Ababa and appealed to As'élé Menilek. As'élé Menilek called Ras Gobäna, the person who conquered the region, and asked him why he did that. He [Gobana] said: "In the western region the Galla were ruling. But due to the crimes they committed, I have made them to be ordered and administered in their own region". Then As'élé Menilek said: "Because of the wrong deed they did, their whole region is taken from them. Now, let the place they hold to be their *rist* [gult]. What else can we do?" So, when his whole region became *rist* [*ristägult*] for *Däjjach* Moroda, only Qumba, a land of 315 *gasha* became *rist* [gult] for *Qäññazmach* Tucho.³² He began paying four *wäqét* of gold and four bulls as [yearly] taxation. He also built one house for the *shaläqa* every seven years. He was also made to pay only the tithe [*asrat*] to the Ministry of Agriculture and was relieved from feeding mules, building fences and houses, grinding grain and cutting firewood like the others. When he was living happily like this he died and the region went to *Fitawrari* Abdisa Tucho. When they were administering like this, the Sägälé campaign [1916] took place. Later they also went and served [fought] in the Mekelé campaign [1935] after which the enemy [Italians] invaded us. It was known to the T'alian [Italians] that *Grazmach* Asratä Birru and *Qäññazmach* Kumsa Birru, who were from the Horda clan and were the brothers of *Fitawrari* Abdisa [Mosa], had gone with the patriots along with *Lij* Yämané Gäbrä Egzi'abhér who is now *fitawrari*. So, the T'alian said: "You are the one who made them outlaws", and came to the house of *Fitawrari* Abdisa from Näqämté. When he [i.e., the Italians] saw that he was a sick person, they left one corporal [*assir-aläqa*] called Munt'az Désisa and 15 soldiers.

(p. 16) He [the Italians] also appointed *Fitawrari* Guta Dasa to govern the region. At this time some conceited servants (*ashkäroch*) from *Fitawrari* Abdisa's side insulted each other in front of the Italians. One of them was flogged

³⁰ It may stand for *birr ambar*, "silver bracelet", perhaps a reference to taxation imposed on smiths.

³¹ Comment by NG: "Literally 'hole of the weaver', referring to the hole dug where the weaving leg of the weaver hangs, perhaps alluding to a taxation imposed on weavers".

³² Out of the old Warra Beeraa's property and power, only Qumba, 'a land of 315 *gasha*' was left within the family. *Qäññazmach* Tucho, from being a potential rival of *Däjjazmach* Morodaa in the region (see further, p. 25), was reduced as a result of his rebellion to the status of a local government official or *mälkäñña*.

by the enemy. The enemy made appointments and removals [*shum sher*] and went back to Nāqāmté. The new appointee *Fitawrari* Guta, who depended on the *Banda*³³ force, lived in the house of a person called *Mämméré Gäbrä* which was in front of *Fitawrari* Abdisa's house and began giving strict orders by saying: "Bring your rifles. Bring mules and hand over thieves". He imprisoned all the Horda. At this time *Fitawrari* Abdisa wept a lot. At this time *Fitawrari* Rundasa Legdi, who lived in another region, came to sympathise, being angry at this matter. Since he was a branch [descendant] of Legdi in his wisdom, he consoled him by giving him some advice and sent a sympathising letter of regret [sorrow] to *Däjjazmach* Mosa. After recalling the past and the present, he [Rundasa] asked "Who will take the letter?" Everyone said: "We will not go. The Italians will kill us". At this time *Fitawrari* Rundasa said "Let *Balambaras* Qänä'a go". And so *Balambaras* Qänä'a went to *Däjjazmach* Mosa together with *Ato* Qabäta. There he [Qänä'a] told him about everything and gave him the letter. *Däjjach* Mosa, followed by *Fitawrari* Olani Yaddessa went to the office of the *Kumsaryato* [It. "Commissariato", i.e., Commissary]. He said [to the Commissary]: "You Italians, your government is going to cause people to finish each other. The other day you went to Qumba and appointed your *ashkär* upon *Fitawrari* Abdisa and came back. They are going to kill each other". The T'alian said "It is true. The *balabbat* is a sick man. Let alone his guarding [administering] the region, his own *ashkäroch* insulted each other in front of me. So, I came back after giving the region to *Fitawrari* Guta". Then *Fitawrari* Abdisa said: "Give me permission to go. Let me go and if the *balabbat* gets a representative let him give [appoint] an *endärasé* and if he cannot, I will come and (p. 17) explain the situation". The T'alian said: "All right, go and come back in three days' time after finishing this". Soon *Däjjazmach* Mosa arrived in Qumba. A meeting was made. He then said "You Horda were the *angäfa* and a great family. Should a stranger rule over you since there is no one among you who is strong enough? Now choose a person and give him to me". Everyone became afraid of being chosen. No one could be found to be chosen to go to *Däjjach* Mosa for fear of being killed by the Italians. A meeting was made at Haro. *Balambaras* Qänä'a and *Ato* Qabäta were chosen by the people and by *Fitawrari* Abdisa. They said: "We do not want to be chosen". *Däjjach* Mosa then said: "You were serving under the Amhara government and now you hate the T'alian". He also added that he was sorry to be under foreign rule. After he said this, he took the chosen persons and he handed them over to the Italian Governor; he accepted them. Soon they

³³ Italian for irregular armed band in support of the Italian occupation (1936–1941).

brought an order so that *Fitawrari* Guta should leave the region along with his *bandoch*. The day they [*Balambaras* Qänä'a and *Ato* Qabäta] brought this order was Sunday and it was market day in Haro. When they were passing through the market to go to the *gebi*, all the people of the market left the market place and followed them to hear the good news. The order was given to *Fitawrari* Guta in front of *Fitawrari* Abdisa and there was a lot of *ililta* [ululation]. Then they were charged of being relatives of *Grazmach* Asraté and *Grazmach* Kumsa and were brought in front of the *Tremon* [Tribunal] so that they would be killed. Since the people who were in the committee were people like *Fitawrari* Birru and *Fitawrari* Jirata Jito, it was said that they were not guilty and were released. They began to administer the region peacefully. Soon our [Ethiopian] flag came back [to be hoisted]. When the patriots were chasing the Italians who defended themselves, and when Jimma Tebbe [and] Goji were being burnt repeatedly, the wise *Balambaras* Qänä'a saved the region from being burnt and being allotted to the *zäbäñña* by seeing off the departing and receiving the newcomers peacefully. Qumba stayed respected by both the enemy and the patriots and was not touched [from either side].

(p. 18) Under the new administration they filled [registered] the *ristä gult* form by going through a lot of trouble and the region got its former honour. When things were so, the descendants of Bera got jealous and filed a charge in *Näqämté* saying that *Balambaras* Qänä'a and *Ato* Qabäta should be taken off from their position. They were defeated. Then the region was administered as a sub-district under the assistant governorship [*mektel gäzät*] of *Fitawrari* Birru. *Balambaras* Qänä'a then said: "We were their superiors. We will not be administered under them now". Then they were made to be administered under the assistantship [*mektelnät*] of *Qäññazmach* Nämomsa. Again, they said: "Since we are enemies, we will not be under him". Since at that time the *awraja* governor was H.E. *Däjjazmach* Däräjä and since he knew the history of the Horda and their superiority in the region, he wrote to H.E. *Ras* Asratä Kasa saying that their region should be one sub-district [*mektel gäzat*] and should be administered independently. Then when *Ras* Asratä Kasa asked for an able person to administer the region, he [Däräjä] chose *Balambaras* Qänä'a and sent him there. When he was taken to the Ministry of Interior and confirmed, *Balambaras* Mulugéta and *Ato* Qabäta Gemmechu went to Addis Ababa and reported to the Ministry of Interior that *Balambaras* Qänä'a should not be appointed over them while they were still there. When this was reported, the governor ordered saying: "Let *Fitawrari* Guta Dasa rule the region until the case is clarified". So the region was not given either to *Balambaras* Mulugéta and *Ato* Qabäta or to *Balambaras* Qänä'a but went to *Fitawrari* Guta who always dreamed to be the *balabbat* of Jarso and was once appointed

governor during the [Italian] occupation. When *Balambaras* Qänä'a became Governor and he drove out *Fitawrari* Guta by the power of *Fitawrari* Abdisa it was sung:

<i>Guta Dhasa nämä déra</i>	Guta Dhasa the tall man
<i>Makäjélta beyyā Béra</i>	Why do you dream of Béra's country?
<i>Qänno Détti dästära</i>	Qänno Détti is born
<i>Nämn séra</i>	He is the lawful one [the legitimate]

They ruled the region as they liked, the governorship passing from the father, *Fitawrari* Guta, to the son *Qäññazmach* Wädajo Guta. Later when *Ato* Zäwdé Haylä Giyorgis (p. 19) and *Emmät* [Wäyzäro] Dinqitu Tucho filed a complaint seeking that the *mälkäññanät* be given to them, the Horda supported their demand. So later the *mälkäññanät* of twenty *gasha* of land was confirmed by the three children of Tucho that it should be given from Legdi Deti's family to Qänä'a for their kindness and services. Since the region that was once respected did not have a satisfactory headship (*balabbatnät*), the *wäräda* governor *had the occasion of* travelling several times in the region instructing the local administration. When we look at *Balambaras* Mulugéta, Aggädäch, *Emmät* Denqitu Tucho, Tariku as well as *Balambaras* Qänä'a we see that they did not have any right to judge or have any satisfactory office and so they were seen going to every *ch'iqashum* and peasant (*ch'isäñña*) of every landowner thus lowering their honour. When the *Wärrä* Bäkäre and the *Wärrä* Joté came to be respected, the history of the Horda ended like this.

Since the history of every child of Béra is not complete, the history of Rumicho is like this. Rumicho was the Minister of Palace according to the present administration. Since Béra liked him very much, he was given [was appointed to] a lot of territory. He was a trusted person. The rulers of the four regions [i.e.,] Sibü, Gobbu, Billo and Näqämté, talked secretly with the people of Tebbe, Wayyu, Kaba, Nunnu, Kekku and Lalo who were here and rose against the Horda saying that they would drive out the Horda from here and make the Jimma territory (*sic*). Fäyisa Lämu was chosen as the commander-in-chief of the army. People like Ench'äbi Waqäyyo started from Wama and came through Wänjälä, Kombolsha and Nägésso while the commander-in-chief began his march from the direction of Näqämté. *Qäññazmach* Tucho called for a meeting and said: "Let Legdi and Abäku get into a defensive position [trench] and defend the army which came from the south, the west and the east.

(p. 20) I will go and fight myself against the strong and main army which came from the north. In this fight let anyone who died after being wounded from behind [while escaping] be cursed. This will be our last and final fight”. They said this and were allotted to every direction. About twenty thousand horses that were commanded by the commander-in-chief marched on and reached Digga. *Qäññazmach* Tucho told the soldiers: “We have made a rear-guard army [to protect us] from [the enemy] behind. The enemy who came against us will not only kill us but will also castrate us and will take [our genitals] to our wives to show them and boast. If it is God’s will that we win, we will go back home. If not, we should all remain dead in the battlefield and should not flee nor return”. He passed this order to all the four divisions. The enemy soldiers who came in the direction of Legdi and Abäku spent the whole day preparing themselves because they wanted to hear the result of the fight in the direction of Fäyisa Lämu for they knew the military power of the Horda and were afraid. When the commander of the army from all the regions who came in the direction of the main battle front by crossing through Näqämté reached Digga, and clashed with strong and determined soldiers, since the soldiers on our side never cared for their lives, they began stinging the enemy like bees. At this time when his follower told him that the people [country] were finished, he himself wanted to destroy the region at once and rode on [let the hoofs of his horses be heard] in an attempt to swallow the enemy [Tucho] at once with thousands of horses. Since our army was small, fear and discomfort caused some disorder among the soldiers. It was shouted out from the other side saying: “Get out of the way. Fäyisa has come”. Rumicho also said from our side: “To hell with his father. Let Fäyisa come”. Fäyisa then stared at Rumicho and asked:

(p. 21) “Who is he?” Then, when others answered: “He is Rumicho”, he said: “Oh, are you the one who put yourself on a saddle and came? Wait for me”. And he advanced underestimating Rumicho due to his short [physical] height. The two of them clashed. At this time, Rumicho killed Fäyisa as David killed Goliath. Then Wägé, the minister of Fine Arts, said to the military commander, Ammäyya and the governor (*sic*): “We have now killed the commander of the three armies and the person who came to take the whole of Wallagga, rule over Näqämté, and expand his territory beginning from Gibé holding all the regions including ours. The army is dispersed. They have fled and returned to their regions. Let us follow them and hold the regions on this side of Gibé or give me permission and let me chase them”. When he said this, they said: “We will come at another time”, and they went back rejoicing for their victory. This is the history of Rumicho Béra.

[And this is] the history of Wārji Béra: Wārji was like the Minister of Agriculture and Cattle Farming³⁴ of the present. More than that he served by taking part in every fight. Since it was Wārji and Abäku who brought good cattle and good food, thus supporting the palace whenever the soldiers of either Danno or Tucho were hungry, Danno or Tucho would not have any power if Wārji and Abäku had not been there. They were people who encouraged, consoled and strengthened. The history of Wārji ends here. The children [sons] of Muggé were Wirtu and Gondalé and they used to please Danno by going to every battlefield as leaders and serving their master [Danno]. The sons of Gudi [Guchi] were Birru, Gulma and Reqecho. How Gudi [Guchi] was wedded was like this. One day when Béra was going to Sibu Sire (p. 22) for administrative and council [meeting] purposes he spent the night at Ch'eng[i]. The family at the house where he spent the night received him as their guest and put a big chair for him outside. The daughter of the house, called Guchi, who had married and divorced went out to milk the cows, when she released the calves and returned after milking a little bit from each cow, asked her: "You girl, the calves finished all the milk. Why did you not milk the cows as well?" And she answered saying: "Milk is good for babies and old people. The babies grow with it. Old people will get strong by it". When she said this, he said to himself: "This [girl] is fit for an old man". He spent the night there and the next morning he turned his horse from the direction where he had come and went directly to his house. He reached his house, called his sons and said: "Even if I am old, I found a girl when I was going to Sibu. Since she will underestimate me for being old, let my son Ammäyya, who is good-looking, go and bring her for me saying that he himself will marry her". So Ammäyya was ordered to bring the girl for his father. Ammäyya went with trusted servants (*agälgayoch*) of Béra who were ordered to go along with him and brought her saying, "I am the one who marries you". In the evening when the bride came forward to be blessed as usual, she saw Béra taking the place of the husband and Ammäyya clothing her like the best man and brother. When she saw this, she wept very much. Béra said: "Do not weep. Is it because I am old? That is because I do not have flesh on me for the crows to eat" and stood up".³⁵ Thus Béra made her lose hope and they got married. Béra always went early in the morning to the court under a *zegba* [tree] where people gathered. After he settled people's cases there, he would go on to some other places i.e., for regions

³⁴ This office can be equated to the office of *Abbaa Sa'aa* in the Gadaa system.

³⁵ Comment by NG: The a. uses here two Oromo words (*qoma*, for chest and *lafe*, for bone) to imply that Béra's chest [heart] is 'like a bone'.

to confirm the newly made laws. His clothes were always brought to him under the *zegba* [tree]. He never had any breakfast. He always went around with an empty stomach and returned in the evening.

(p. 23) As usual, he sent a message to his house saying: “send [me] my horse and weapons. I will go [to the *shāngo* council] from here” in the next morning after his marriage. But his new wife Guchi sent back saying, “I never heard nor saw a man clothing himself outside. A man should be dressed [armed] in his house and so come and wear [your weapons] here. Otherwise divorce me”. Since she said this strongly, Béra became angry and came home. He angrily said: “Give me my cloth”. She said: “I never came across a husband who dressed himself outside his house. So come in and get dressed”. After he entered, she said: “My lord, if you go with an empty stomach and speak, your breath will be bad to others. So that your breath will not smell bad, eat something. Or else I will not give you your dress”. When she said this, he replied: “All right”. And she brought four kinds of dishes. She then fed him by the mouth from all four kinds of dishes. He ate three mouthfuls from each dish thus eating a total of 12 mouthfuls. When he ate this [much] he felt thirsty and she brought for him *t’ājj* in a big *ankola* [cup made out of gourd]. Since the food had made him thirsty, he drank the whole cup at once. She then said: “You drank, but what about me? Will I not feel thirsty?” He said: “drink”. She answered “A woman does not drink a full [cup]. Give what is left from you”. She gave him a full cup and when he was drinking part of that she [purposely] went aside and since he did not still quench his thirst, he drank the whole cup of *t’ājj* again. After he drank that, he went to the council meeting (*shāngo*). He did his usual duties and, since he was fed like this every day, he became physically strong. He became very happy. Guchi fed him and made him happy for the rest of his life. As the King of the World [Christ] has said “A bad wife is a chicken louse (*qinqin*) to her husband”. He [Béra] begot children from Guchi in his old age [and they were named] Birru, Gulumma and Reqecho, implying that he begot them in old age.

(p. 24) These sons of Béra were not big enough to take part in the fights of that period. Later, even if they could not fight and expand their territory because of the Amhara conquest and administration, Birru Béra said that they [the family] should submit to the Amhara and regain their territory. Thus, Birru had directly gone to As’*é* Menilek who was in Addis Ababa and said: “Let us get back our territory by being ruled by [submitting to] the Amhara. Our territory should not be taken from us because of *Qāññazmach* Tucho’s mistake. Your Majesty, we used to administer all the regions below Gibé in western Wallagga, as [we were] the main chiefs before the coming of the Am-

hara. We are now taken away [uprooted] from our [territorial] power by mistake. So let Your Majesty give it back to us". *Ras* Gobäna, the *endärasé* was called in and he explained the circumstances. Then Menilek said: "After you acknowledged your mistakes, I have given back all your territory. Since you are not in command, call your chief *Qäññazmach* Tucho and bring him here very soon". So Menilek gave him this hope and he went [to see] *Qäññazmach* Tucho to call him to Addis Ababa. As soon as he reached Dabe Gibé he said "*Yämisrach* [good news! I am happy and so be you]. Let us go to Addis Ababa. The region is given back to us. Let us all be happy". But since the misery [crimes of Béra and Danno] that was sown before was not ready to be harvested, the others said: "The Amhara will not remain here forever. So let us wait for some time". When they said this to him, he said: "My clan [people] has fallen. What will I be? What reply will I take when I go for my appointment?" and went to Addis Ababa filled with sorrow. He came in front of the government and said: "Since my chief did not come, give me a *baldäräba* (intermediary)". So, the King said: "What can I do? Since *Ras* Täsämma is permitted to conquer and administer Illubabor, let him be your *baldäräba*". And he sent him along. He went to Illubabor along with *Ras* Täsämma. Since he had the bravery inherited from his ancestors, Birru Béra began serving *Ras* Täsämma by going forward in the conquest of the region. So, *Ras* Täsämma appointed him *Qäññazmach* and gave him the *awraja* of Guma, (p. 25) which extends up to Bädällé, to govern as *wäräda gazhi*. After that *Ras* Täsämma entered his palace at Goré. While Birru was administering the region in favour of *Ras* Täsämma, honey traders from Qumba, Nunnu, Léqa and others who wanted to become his servants (*ashkäroch*) began coming [into the region] as the sins of his forefathers were still following him. One by one, many children of Horda like Reqecho Béra also went [came] and began getting a lot of respect due to their relationship with Birru. Due to their conceit they began to take and sell the weak [poor] inhabitants of Illubabor and Guma directly to this region and made them cross from here to Gojjam. Since the people of Illubabor did not know Amharic, they found themselves in Gojjam as slaves. The case was heard in Shawa, and the secret [mischief] was found by investigation. Since they followed Birru Béra and, after going to Illubabor, sold human beings as slaves due to their malignant character [*tänkol*] which they inherited from their forefathers, their bad deeds were discovered and they were taken away from their *administrative* posts in Guma and returned home. They left their office called 'Birru' (*sic*) and came here to the region of *Ras* Dämessäw. *Ras* Dämessäw felt sorry for them and gave them the region called Qeraru as *ristä-gult*. He gave 60 *gasha* of land to *Fitawrari* Rundasa. They defended [their land] as much as possible saying that they would not submit to the enemy [Italians]. Now they still hold a branch of the *balabbatmät*. The sons of Béra

who were born from Muggé were Gondolé Béra, Wirtu Béra and Goññi Béra and they served their father as Minister of Palace [*elfeññ askälkay*] according to the current standard procedure. Wirtu was also wounded in a battlefield during the war. Each of them was given permanent appointments. Since Reqecho Béra and Gulemma Béra were old enough for war they also had positions close to the governor fitting in the current system [of appointment] (p. 26) each had the rank of *däjjazmach* or colonel (*sic*) and they administered [ruled] with full respect. Wirtu, Gondolé, Birru, Reqecho and Gulemma also served as law councillors. The past history ends up here.

What made me think of this was the following. Before the Amhara came to conquer the region, the persons who divided among them and ruled Western Wallagga were 1) *Qäññazmach* Tucho 2) *Däjjazmach* Moroda and 3) *Däjjazmach* Joté and the superiority was Tucho Danno's. As everybody knows, they lived having a prominent position both in the olden days and during the [Italian] occupation. Now, as I stated above, leave alone their having a position like their friends [equals], they were mistreated under some branch governors. When I look back to their former deeds, I think their suffering was due to their cruel administration they carried out of ignorance for which God may have been disappointed. In Exodus 1:5 God said: "I will punish the sinners up to seven generations".³⁶ Since this cannot be passed [cancelled, removed] they suffer the consequences of their sins. They harvest, pile and burn the miseries they sowed. The region which was said to be *ristä-gult* lost its due respect and is seen now in the hands of the common *zäbäñña* (guards).

[Let it be, there will come a time when it (the Béra family) will also be like its friends. I stop here what I collected from the elders.

(p. 27) Brothers, sisters, children and fathers forgive me for what I missed and was not able to complete. I respectfully beg you to forgive [me].

I am Dessalegn Qänä'a, a native of Wallagga.

I hope it will be published.]³⁷

³⁶ Exodus 1:5 does not correspond to what the author states here, Exodus 20:5 is closer to his assertion.

³⁷ The above six lines in square brackets are crossed over in the Amharic original.

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INDEX

Legenda: (t) = toponym, (R) river, (F) forest, (M) mountain, (T) towns, (e) = ethnonym, (p) = personal name, (a) = modern author. Amharic and Oromo variants of the same name are separated by a slash (e.g. Bäkäré Godana/Bakaree Godaanaa); titles and other local terms are indicated in italics; patronymics are provided in square parentheses; supplementary information in round parentheses.

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APPENDIX



Fig. 1 – *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér Moräda [Kumsaa Morodaa], studio portrait, ab. 1910. Source: *YäWälläga yätarik sänädoch kä1880wochu eskä 1920wochu*, 2004, p. 58.



Fig. 2 – *Däjjazmach* Habtä Maryam Gäbrä Egzi'abhér [Hambisaa Kumsaa], open air portrait, ab. 1927. Source: Nordfeldt, Martin, 1935, *Bland Abessinien Gallaer*, Stockholm, p. 92.

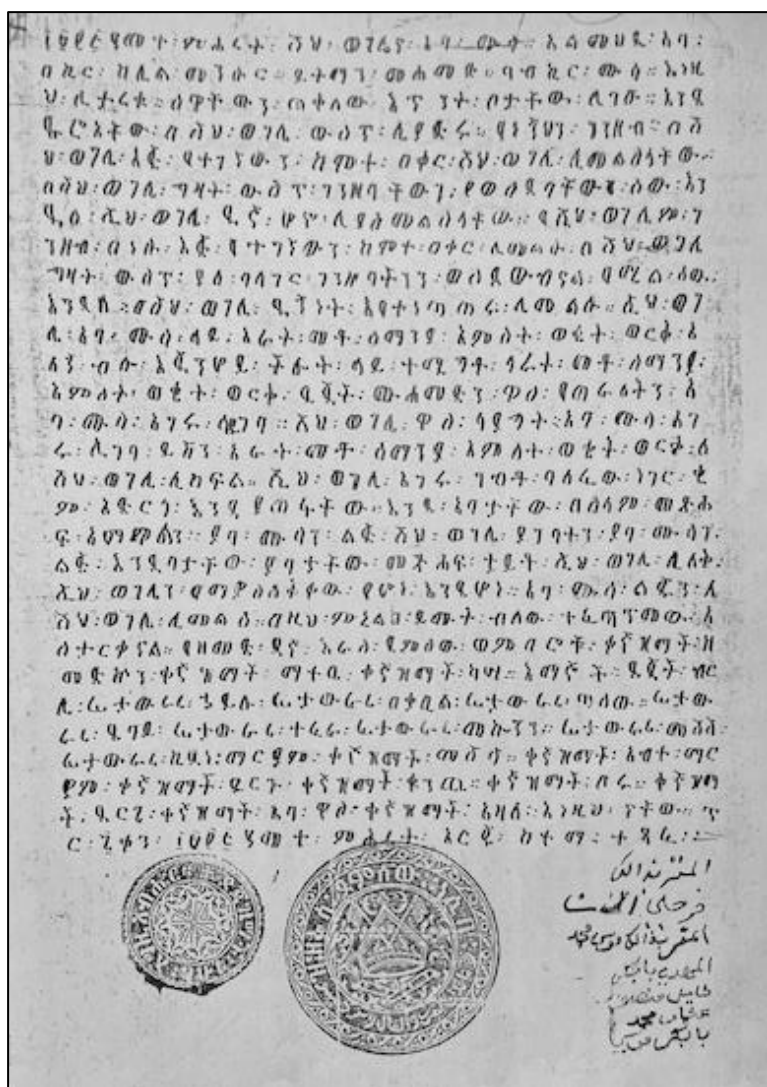


Fig. 3 – Agreement between Benishangul Chiefs, Arjo, T'err 6, 1905 E.C./14 January 1912
(seals of Däjjach Gäbrä Egzi'abhér and Ras Dämessäw;
at bottom right signatures of local officials).

Source: Collection of Wäyzäro As'ädä Habtä Maryam (AHM), letter 83, see pp. 215–16.

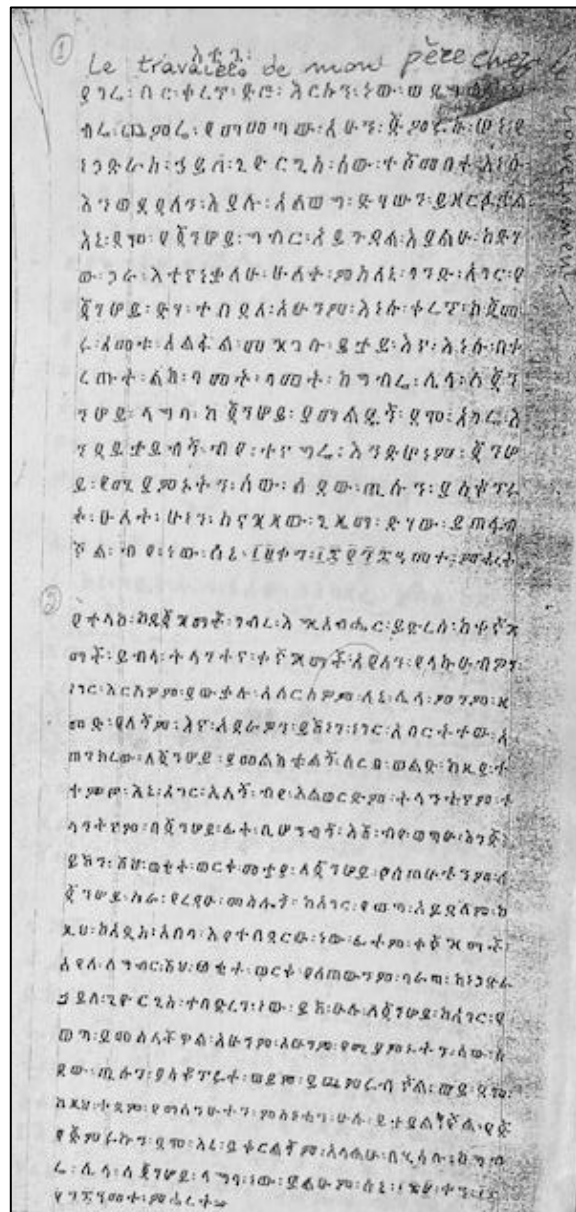


Fig. 4 – Copy-book of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, initial page, letters to *Etégé T’aytu* and to *Qäñnazmach* Yebsa over appropriation of customs duties, *Säné* 19 1898 E.C./28 June 1906.

Source: Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM), *mäzgäb* 1, letters 1–2, see pp. 4–5.

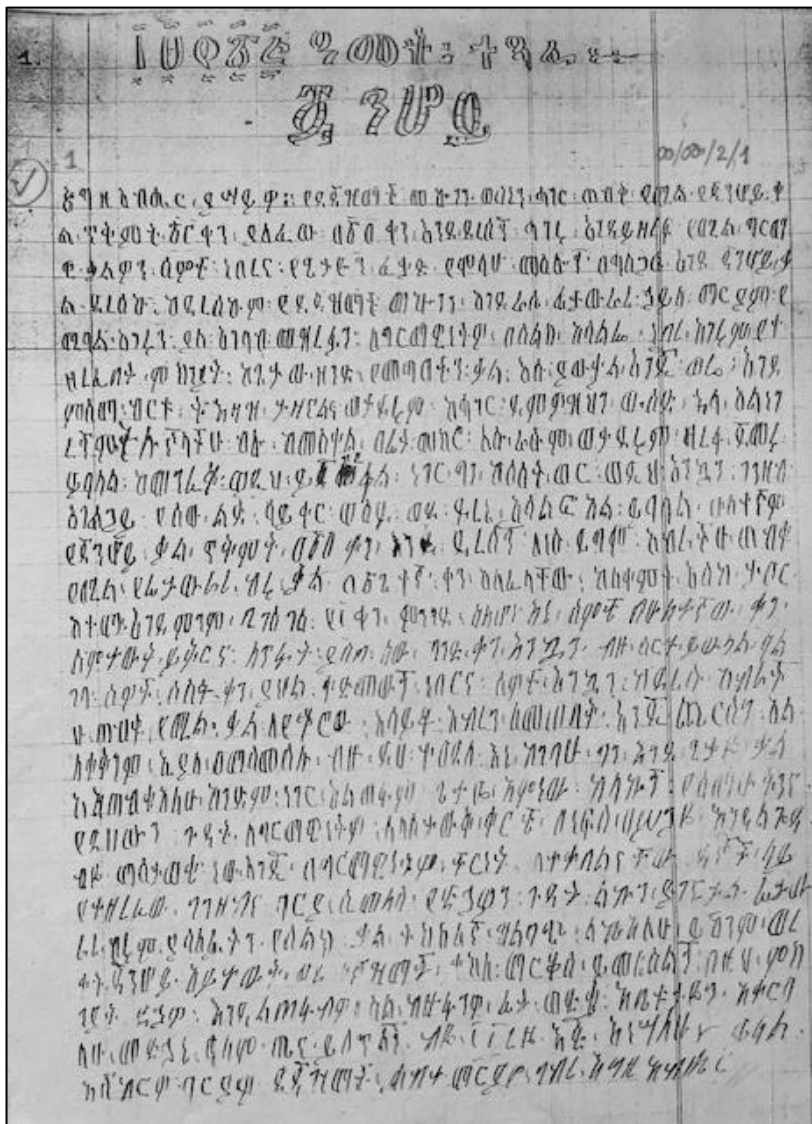


Fig. 5 – Däjjazmach Habtä Maryam, “Letters to Janhoy [on Qellem administration], 1925 E.C.” [1932–33]. Source: Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM), mäsḡab 2 (wa/mu/2), letter 1, see pp. 132–33.



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ሞገ፡ ሕንጻት ዘእም ነገዳ ደብዳቤ ልዩ ልዩ ምኒስትራን ሕግ ዚክበሩ
 ንግሥተ ነገሥታት ዘኢትዮጵያ ዘውጁት ወሰኑ ልዩ
 ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ ንጉሠ ነገሥት ደድረሩ ከዳጃቸ
 ገብረ እግዚአብሔር ኦገዱት ስንበት ሃል እኔ ሕግ
 ዚክበሩ ደመሰገን ደህና ነኝ ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ
 ስልኝ ስለመንገዱ ምሥራ ነገር ይህንኩም ቃል እ
 ይገባ ስሙ ሁሉም እኔ ዚህ ስርተሰፍ እንተም
 መሰረትህ እደቀርዎም ቃል ሰላም 10 ቀን 1915
 ዓ.ም. ምስረት 486

Fig. 7 – Empress Zäwditu to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi’abhér, on the importance of building new roads, *Tahsas* 14, 1915 E.C./23 December 1922, p. 194.

Source: Wallagga Ethnographic Museum (WEM), *mäzgäb* 1, letter 116, see p. 228.

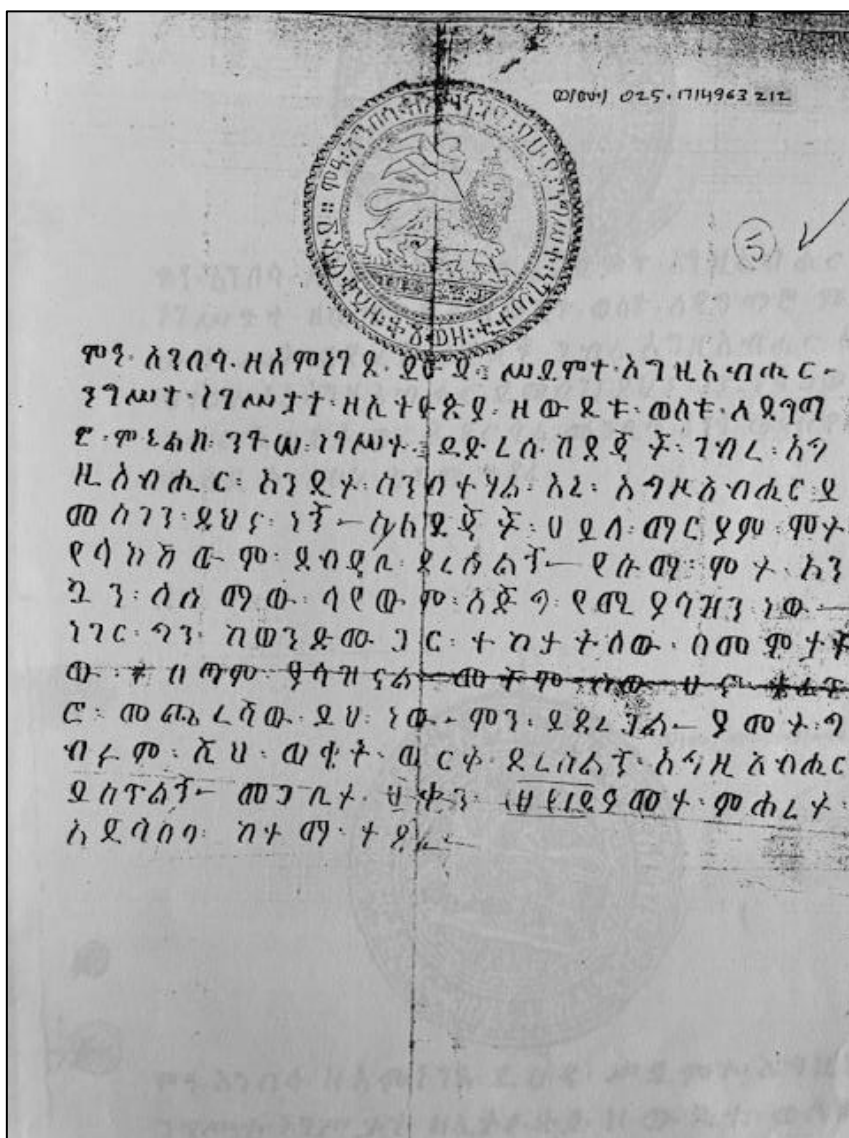


Fig. 8 - Empress Zäwditu to *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, condolence letter for death of *Däjjach* Haylä Maryam, *Mäggabit* 9, 1912 E.C./March 18, 1920.

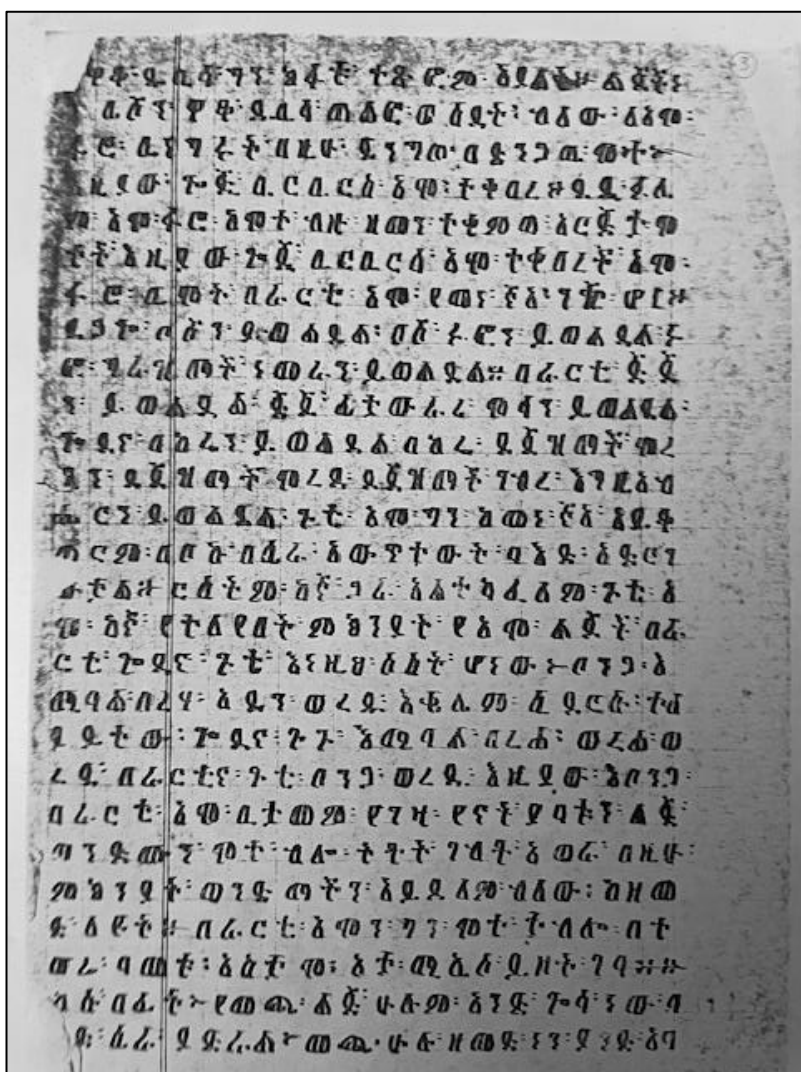


Fig. 11 – Family Chronicle of *Däjjazmach* Gäbrä Egzi'abhér, fol. 3r.

Source: Collection of *Wäyzäro* As'ädä Habtä Maryam (AHM), Addis Ababa [1972],
see p. 286.

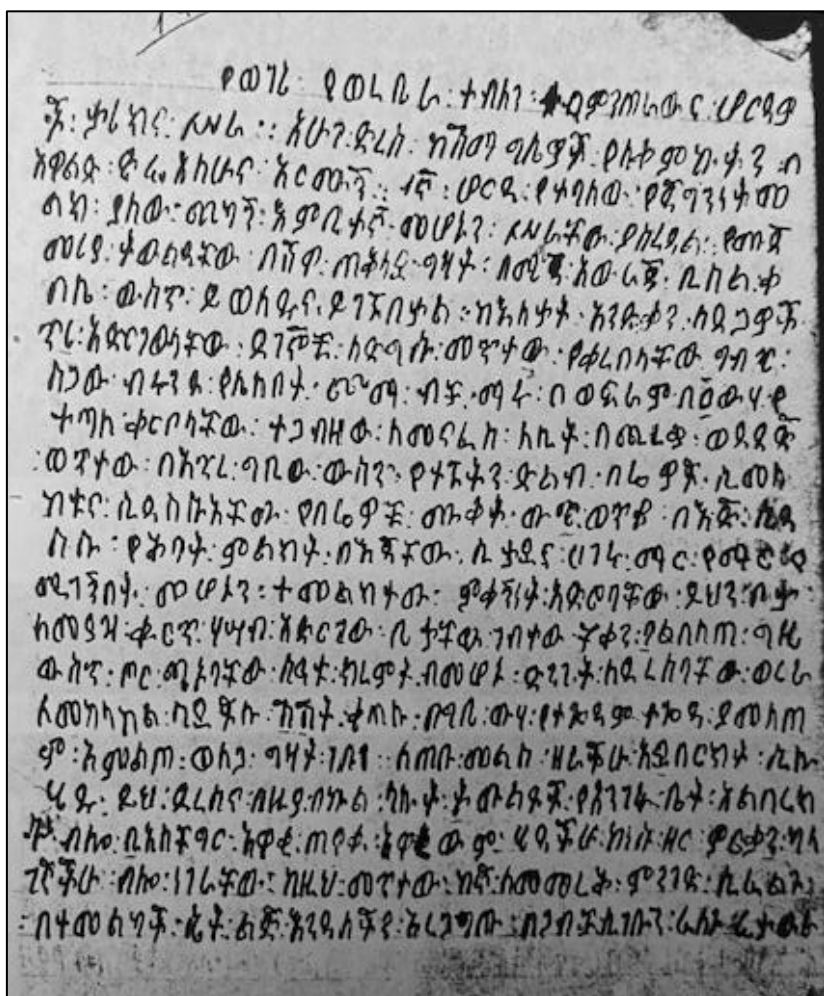


Fig. 12 – Chronicle of the Warra Béra, initial page.

Source: *Qaññazmach* Dessaleñ Qänä'a, Arjo, Wallagga [1972], see pp. 348–49.



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