Debre Berhan University

College of Social Science

Department of History and Heritage Management

Research on:

Life at the royal court of King Sahel Selassie of Shewa (Ethiopia) r. 1813-1847

By

Yeshiwas Eskeziaw (M.A in History and Heritage Management)

Bezanesh Dawit (M.A in History and Heritage Management)

Tamrat G/Maryam (M.A in History)

A research submitted to Research and Community Service Coordinator, College of Social Science, Debre Berhan University

September, 2021

Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

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Acknowledgements

First, and for most our deepest gratitude goes to our almighty God for his unlimited mercy and bless. In the course of preparing this research we have received unreserved support from individuals and institutions. Our great thanks go to Debre Berhan University, College of Social science and Research and Community Service Directorate for funding, writing letters to concerned offices and stakeholders and different support during whole process of studies.

We are also grateful to all Institute of Ethiopian studies and Centre Fracais des Etudes Ethiopiennes Liberians and workers, who treated us kindly and facilitated things to consult the available documents. This research work also would not have been completed without the substantial support of many memorable persons whom we would like to express our genuine thanks for their contributions.

Last but not least, we are also indebted to all the respondents (*Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot H/Wold, *Melaek Mihirt Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh, Ato Mulatu Akililu and Ato Assefa Zenebe) who participated in the interview sessions. We thank you for your invaluable information, precious time, enthusiasm and unreserved support.

Abstract

A royal court is an extended royal household in a monarchy, including all those who regularly attend on a monarch, or another central figure. Ethiopia in it's a long political history royal courts were the main social, economic and political center. The main purpose of this research is to investigate, document and reconstruct the daily activities that was held in the royal court of Negus Sahle Selassie of Shawa (r.1813-1847). This research attempts to outline the historical process of royal court in Ethiopia. Further it addressed the royal court structures, administration, royal banquets or sereat geber and other functionalities. In addition, the researchers provide the daily activities and lives in the royal court of Negus Sahle Selassie. The researchers utilized a qualitative research method by gathering primary and secondary sources from archival centers and libraries. In addition, field observations in different royal court center particularly in Ankober and Angolela were held. We also tried to acquire oral information from knowledgeable clergies and old aged individuals. The research makes clear that the royal court of Negus Sahle Selassie experienced different political, religious and social activities in every day to day operation including military parade, religious festivity, and the lavish royal banquets. The finding of this research is the royal court of king Sahel Selassie in the kingdom of Shawa, had developed a well-organized structure of administration and personals. Moreover, royal court experienced daily detailed activities to run the royal court in particular the kingdom at large.

Key Words: Daily life, Royal court, Sahle Selassie, Sereat geber.

Glossary

Afero: Distributer of *dergo*, royal messengers

Ato: A title of gentle men

Dej Agafari: Chief doorkeeper

Dergo: Daily allowance of food

Elfegn: private living residence of the king

Liqe Kahnat : Head of priests

Liqe Mequwas: king's deputy (viceroy)

Meslene: Royal stewards

Nigus: King

Chapter One

Introduction

The Region Ethiopia and the Horn is referred as the cradle of humankind. It is also a region where early civilizations including food production, making tools and religion took place. According to Pre historians the beginning of the domestication of plants and animals took place about 11,000 or 10,000 B.C.(Before birth of Christ) In the horn of Africa first to be cultivated was *ensat*, later there grew in the Northern part of the Ethiopian region the cultivation of the two most important grasses indigenous to the region *teff* and *dagusa* begun some 7,000 or more years ago. About 4,000 or 3,000 B.C two other cereals, barley and wheat were introduced into the Ethiopia region.[1]

Farming has thus a very old history in Ethiopia these developments would in turn eventually lead to societies begin divided between landowners and slaves. The external trade relation contributed to the social evolutions, economic formations, and socio-cultural and political settings. As state formation is a concomitant development of division of communities in to economic classes the ancient states of Ethiopia had big cities. Rulers, merchants, artisans, soldiers and many unemployed poor lived in the towns and ports. Ancient stone inscriptions and other archaeological findings in the Northern Ethiopia indicate that some forms of state had already started to emerge there as far back as two thousand five hundred years ago. [2]

1. The History of State, Towns and Royal Court in Ethiopia

1.1. Pre-Aksumite Period

There were many states older than Aksum where indigenous art and architecture flourished. Their names and the exact territorial extents are still unknown. Remains of archaeological evidence; pottery, cooking utensils, metal tools, inscriptions from places near Aksum suggest that long before the emergence Aksum this region was very close commercial and cultural contact with Mediterranean and Arab world. Particularly the contacts between Pre-Aksumite and Sabaean or South Arabian, their range in commercial, linguistic or cultural interaction were significant.[3] It may be that the Sabaeans were able to establish themselves in Ethiopia in the

[1] Fuller, Dorian and Hildebrand, Elisabeth, *The Oxford Handbook Of African Archaeology, Edited By Peter Mitchell And Paul J.* (Oxford University Press: July 2013), PP. 571-574; David W. Phillipson, *Foundations of an African Civilisation: Aksum and the northern Horn, 1000 BC–1300 AD*, (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: James Currey, Boydell and Brewer, 2014),p.12.

[2] Christopher, Ehret, "On the Antiquity of Agriculture in Ethiopia", *Journal of African History* 20 (1979), pp. 161-64; Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp.4-5.

[3] Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*,(Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1972),pp.21-22; Fattovich, Rodolfo, ‘’Remarks on the Pre-Aksumite Period in Northern Ethiopia’. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 23 (November 1990), p.2.

first place because both their civilization and that of mid-1st millennium Ethiopia already had something in common; it has been suggested that earlier migrations or contacts might have taken place between the two areas which allowed the later contact to flourish easily. Most recent proposal presented in a different view of the Ethiopian/South Arabian contacts based on material culture and linguistic/ Paleographic information.

> *One group of Sabaeans would have left north Arabia for Ethiopia in about the eighth or seventh century BC under pressure from the Assyrians; they then continued on into south Arabia. A second wave of emigrants, in the sixth and fifth century, would reign over the kingdom of Da'amat (D`MT), and would have been accompanied by Hebrews fleeing after Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem; an explanation for the later Ethiopian traditions with their Jewish and Biblical flavor, and for the Falashas or black Jews of Ethiopia. These Sabaeans too, in their turn would have departed for the Yemen, taking there the writing and architecture which they had first perfected in Tigray. In the fourth and third century BC the remaining Sabaean émigrés would have left Ethiopia for the Yemen, leaving elements of their civilization and traditions firmly embedded in the Ethiopian's way of life.*[4]

Other supposed that these pre-Aksumite states the more prosperous ones, and therefore the one which left behind them more archeological sites and relics, were located in northern Ethiopia. The reason for this is not the traditional explanation which says that northern Ethiopia was first colonized and settled by south Arabians or other Semitic peoples. Rather the reason lies in the nearness of the sea to plateau where ivory, the slaves and the animals for export were available. Another tradition which, in the recent archaeological findings and linguistic analyses, must be corrected is the one that emphasized the Semitic, Sabean to be specific, origins of Aksumite culture and civilization. Aksum was not a state created by Sabean settlers and Aksumite culture was not derived from that which the Sabean had developed in South Arabia. Aksum and the surrounding region were part of another state which had flourished earlier and declined for some reasons we do not know. To conclude the argument Aksum did not create a new culture

[4] Munro-Hay, Stuart *Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp.58-60.

but simply inherited one from the states or cities which preceded it like; Punt, DM'T, Haelti-Melazo, Yeha, Matara, Seglamien, Addi Galamo and other. [5]

The earliest evidence we have indicating the existence of a state called Punt comes not from archeological findings in the horn but in Egypt. Hieroglyphic writings at times accompanied by vivid paintings tell of a series of naval expeditions which the Egyptians sent to a land they called Punt. The first documented expedition took place C.2700 B.C. during the last and the famous queen Hatshepsut (1490-1468 B.C). The paintings depict the king of Punt Called Perehu, his wife and his followers. [6]

According to Fattovich, the development of urbanism in the northern Horn of Africa divided into three main stages; the early pre-Aksumite Stage, the middle pre- Aksumite Phase and the late pre-Aksumite Phase.

The Early pre-Aksumite Stage (c. 1000–800/700 BC): In this stage, the pre-Aksumite cultural range was clearly partitioned into two locales: (a) central Eritrea and northern Tigray and (b) western Tigray. They reflected a chiefdoms or social division of the level going back to late ancient times. It is conceivable that chiefdoms as of now existed but no secure archeological prove of them is however accessible. In the western Tigray who were certainly in contact with the southern Arabians worked iron, as we will induce from slag found at Gobedra shake shield near Aksum. In this stage Ninety pre-Aksumite destinations are directly known. They incorporate towns, ceremonial centers, towns, and/or camps. Towns have been made apparent at Matara in central Eritrea and Yeha in western Tigray and another town was likely found at Kaskase in central Eritrea. They are found in open fields appropriate for Agriculture. [7]

[5] *Ibid*., pp.56-58;Sergew Hable Selassie, 1972, pp.59-60.; Fattovich, Rodolfo, ''The Development Of Urbanism In The Northern Horn Of Africa In Ancient And Medieval Times'', *Marazzani Visconti Terzi*, EMA (1988),pp.12-14. Fattovich, Rodolfo, '1990, p.19.

[6] Kitchen,K. A, ''Punt and How To Get There'', *NOVA SERIES*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1971), pp.185,192.
[7] *Ibid.*; Fattovich, Rodolfo, 1988, pp.6,13-14.



Fig. 1: General Map of Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea with location of the sites quoted in the text

Figure 1: Source: Rodolfo Fattovich, "*The Architecture of Power in Tigray (Northern Ethiopia) and Eritrea in the 1st millennium BCE – 1st millennium CE''*, in "Der antike Sudan. Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin e.V. Sonderheft", 2014.

In the early pre-Aksumite times, the site was occupied by a sedentary village, with an archaeological deposit about 2 m deep. In 1959, the Ethiopian Institute of Archaeology undertook investigations on the site of Matara. During the campaigns several architectural assemblages were revealed: four residences, two churches and a sector of around thirty ordinary houses. The quality of the construction indicate that which was an upper class residence, judging from its architectural arrangement and the particular care given to the masonry, indicating the undoubted social importance of its occupants.[8]

[8] Rodolfo Fattovich, "*The Architecture of Power in Tigray (Northern Ethiopia) and Eritrea in the 1st millennium BCE – 1st millennium CE''*, in "Der antike Sudan. Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu (Berlin e.V. Sonderheft" , 2014),p.9; Fattovich, Rodolfo, 1988, pp.13-15.



Figure 2: Matara Town; left to right from top: Entrance to the Adulis Axum tunnel, Hawulti Obelisk, ruins of a palace.

The Middle pre- Aksumite Phase (c. 700/600–300 BC) in this phase the kingdom of Da'amat appeared. Its territory stretched from western Tigray to central Eritrea. Inscriptions recovered from various sites that exhibit South Arabian cultural features introduce to the existence of a Kingdom of Da'amat. Sites with large /South Arabian temples, such as Yeha, Kaskase, and Matara are believed to have served as principal centers of the kingdom. Yeha was inhabited mainly during the pre-Aksumite times. In the early pre-Aksumite times, a settlement with sedentary inhabitants, with an archaeological deposit about 70 cm deep arose at this site. The pottery suggests contacts with different south Arabian peoples. In middle pre-Aksumite times, the town was about 50 hectare in size. A south Arabian-like temple and a 'palace', together with other stone buildings, were built at this time. A 'royal' cemetery was located to the south of the temple.[9]

[9] Fattovich, Rodolfo, 1988, p.6.; Rodolfo Fattovich, 2014, p.9. David W. Phillipson, Foundations *of an African Civilisation: Aksum and the Northern Horn, 1000 B.C – 1300 (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: James Curry, Boydell and Brewer, 2012),* P.24.

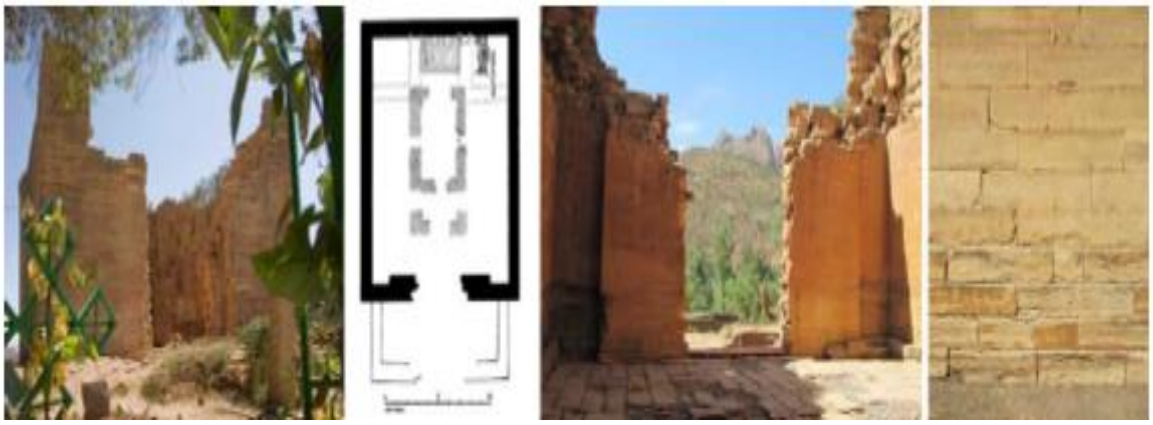


Figure 3: Sabean Temple at Yeha

Source: Pedro Guedes (2010) AXUM – Welcoming and engaging visitors – Design report.

The Late pre-Aksumite Phase (c. 300 BC–100 BC/AD 100), the kingdom of Da'amat collapsed, but petty kingdoms probably survived on the plateau. In this period the southern Arabian influence practically disappeared and local traditions emerged again in this phase. In the late pre-Aksumite times, the settlement was characterized by buildings made of schist (metamorphic rock).

In the late pre-Aksumite times, an urban society probably survived in Eritrea, as we can infer from the Matara evidence. In western Tigray, Yeha was still an important ceremonial center. Minor ceremonial centres occurred at Hawlti and Melazo, near Aksum. The settlement pattern in this region was characterized by scattered regularly spaced hamlets and villages.[10]

Period	*Elite Residences*	*Palaces*	*Total Estimated Population for Period: All Community Types & Elite Structures*
Early Pre-Aksumite	0	0	7,115
Middle Pre-Aksumite	0	0	12,892
Late Pre-Aksumite	7	0	5,732
Early Aksumite	26	6	18,716
Late Aksumite	12	16	43,983
Early Post-Aksumite	2	3	11,063
Late Post-Aksumite	0	0	635
	Total: 47	Total: 25	

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Elite Dwellings by Period, and Total Estimated Population for Period: All Community Types & Elite Structure

Source: Joseph W. Michels. *Changing Settlement Patterns In The Aksum-Yeha Region Of Ethiopia: 700 BC - AD 850.* (The Basingstoke Press, England, 2005).

[10] Fattovich, Rodolfo, 1988, pp.6-7.

1.2. Aksumite Period

In the early first millennium AD(Ano Domini) a new state, the kingdom of Aksum (c.100–1000 AD) arose on the Tigrean plateau. It included most of Tigray and Eritrea. The origins of the Aksumite kingdom and culture are still obscure. Most likely, Aksum was a petty kingdom of the western Tigray that imposed its dominion on the neighboring ones in the third century AD. The rise of the kingdom of Aksum marked a new stage in the development of urbanism on the plateau. About one hundred and fifty Aksumite sites have been recorded, so far, in Eritrea and Tigray. [11]

The settlement at Aksum was established only in early Christian times. Recent excavations, however, suggest that a proto-Aksumite settlement was located on the top of Bieta Ghiorgys hill, to the northwest of Aksum. In the early Aksumite times (c. AD 100–400), a residential area, about 32 ha in size, was located in the western sector of the site. It was associated with three elite cemeteries marked by monolithic steles to the northeast, east and west. At this time it was probably a ceremonial center connected with the cult of the royal ancestors. A skin and/or ivory working area was possibly located in the western sector of the town. This phase corresponds to the formation and initial expansion of the kingdom, up to the introduction of Christianity. At this time, the eastern plateau (central Eritrea and eastern Tigray) and the western plateau (western Tigray) were distinct regions of the Aksumite cultural area. The western region was characterized by the use of carved stele to mark royal and elite cemeteries. The kingdom was already included in a network of contacts with the Roman Empire, and coinage was introduced in the third century AD. [12]

In the early Aksumite times, towns appeared on the eastern and western plateau. In western Tigray, at least three towns arose at Aksum, Adi Asaso and Misfad Meru. They were surrounded by small villages and isolated elite residences [13] In the towns of the middle Aksumite times, villages and hamlets were scattered over the whole territory of the kingdom. Towns consisted of a number of elite ‘palaces’, ordinary houses and some churches. Villages are the majority of the Aksumite sites, but no one is, so far, excavated extensively. [14] In middle Aksumite times (c. AD 400–700), the town was about 100 hectare in size. The church

[11] Munro-Hay, 1991, pp. 62-63.; David W. Phillipson, 2012, pp.47-48.
[12] Sergew Hable Sellassie, 1972, pp. 82-83; Rodolfo Fattovich, 2014, p.13;Munro-Hay, 1991, p.96.
[13] Fattovich, Rodolfo, ‘1988, p.15.
[14] *Ibid.* Michels, Joseph W, ‘’Review article on Excavations at Aksum by S. Munro-Hay’’, *African Archaeological Review*. No.8. (1990), pp. 188-190.

of Maryam Tsion, in the eastern sector of the site becomes the focal center of the settlement. At this time, the town consisted mainly of elite 'palaces' were including the royal one. Eventually, ordinary houses were located along the cliffs of Bieta Ghiorgys hill. Another town, about 21 hectare in size, was located on the top of the same hill. This phase corresponds to the period of major expansion of the kingdom. Coinage was widely used. Churches were widely scattered over the territory of the kingdom. Syrian influences can be recognized in the architecture of this period.

In the late Aksumite times, the settlement was only 49 hectare in size. It was located in the western sector of the site. The area around Maryam Tsion was inhabited, as well. The late Aksumite settlement pattern is virtually unknown. The scarce available evidence suggests heavy drop in the population of the plateau. Aksum was apparently a large village with few elite residences, surrounded by smaller villages and hamlets[15]

In the late first millennium AD, Islamic urban settlements arose along the coast. Some evidence was recorded at the er-Rih Island and Dahlak Kebir. During the Late Aksumite phase corresponds to the decline of the kingdom. Therefore, no proper town probably existed on the Tigrean plateau in the post-Aksumite times. Very few settlements of this period have been recorded and are mostly scattered small villages. In particular, about twenty villages, less than 1 to 3 ha in size, were clustered around Aksum. The occurrence of many masonry and rock-hewn churches possibly dating to eleventh to twelfth centuries AD, mainly in the eastern Tigray, might suggest that this was an important political and religious region at this time.[16]

1.2.1. Social Classes

It is difficult to provide comprehensive information about land-tenure systems in Aksumite times, though gifts of land by the king to the gods or to the church are mentioned, the former in inscriptions, and the latter in both inscriptions and land-charters. Social class may well have been based on the ownership of land. There is a possibility that the early charters might be genuine transmissions; they all include Christianized sanction clauses which resemble those on the Aksumite inscriptions. Individuals might have been similarly rewarded by the kings with estates and villages to support their rank, and that land registers of some sort were maintained. The only actual `land-grant' we know of from Aksumite times is that of king Ezana to the six Beja chieftains. However, it does illustrate that the king possessed land to bestow, as we might

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*

expect from the *Monumentum Adulitanum's* statement about conquered peoples; "I reserved for myself half of their lands and their peoples. . . ." [17]

Slaves, peasants, and artisans comprised the lower section of social hierarchy. Kosmas seems to imply that the majority of slaves at home and in the hands of foreign merchants came from Sasu and Barbaria, roughly the western Sudan and south-eastern Ethiopia or Somalia. Such unskilled basic tasks as field work and rough quarry work, hauling, and domestic work could be expected for them.

Life in Aksumite times was based on the work of the peasant toiling in the fields and very likely the land he worked was part of another's estate from which he could take only basic subsistence products for himself. The specialist potter, metalworker, leather-worker or other artisan, in the urban setting, may similarly have lived in a relatively humble house, and exchanged his work for food or money at one or other of the markets, or he may have travelled, doing work where needed. Whether those peasants or artisans who lived and worked in defined areas were obliged to join the armies when required is not known, but seems very likely.[18]

The merchant in the larger centers, the larger independent farmer (if such existed), and the various civil officials may have constituted a middle class, dwelling in rather better houses, perhaps like those illustrated by the clay models found at Aksum. These were apparently equipped with wooden doorways and window surrounds, and layered thatch roofs. A greater quantity of tools and fittings, with some occasional luxuries, can be imagined among their possessions. Good quality pottery, some glassware and decorative metalwork, jewelry, and meat and wine on the table are the sort of extras to be expected. They may have employed artisans and servants, or been able to afford a few slaves. Possibly the burial goods found in a tomb in the Gudit Stele Field belonged to someone from this level of society. [19]

In the central area of the towns, and in country mansions, the landowners and rulers of the dominant class would have led a rather more pleasant way of life, surrounded by households comprising slaves and servants living in the outer wings of their houses where the domestic offices probably were. The great distinction among the élite residences appears to have been one of size, and, as one might expect, the largest were the metropolitan palaces. We can approximately divide the buildings into two groups, the very large `palaces' and the lesser

[17] Munro-Hay, 1991, pp.213-14.
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 214-15.
[19] *Ibid* .,p.215.

`villas' or `mansions', and these may reflect two echelons of the Aksumite élite; the rulers themselves, and the nobility and great officials.

The quality of the fittings would have varied with the rank of the owners, from the monarchs to perhaps different grades of noble or official. From tomb finds we can furnish these with gilded and decorated furniture, with vessels and other equipment of gold, silver, bronze, glass, and stoneware. To this we can probably add certain more costly furs and fabrics, perfumes and incense, carved wood and ivory work, and luxuries of the table both local and imported. Such establishments may have employed a number of specially-skilled retainers, such as musicians and singers, artisans of various sorts, clerks, accountants, bailiffs or stewards.[20]

The Aksumite kings used titles consisted of several separate elements;

- The personal name,
- The `Ella'-name- throne name
- The `Bisi'-name, a real or divine filiation, certain epithets, and ' may refer to a clan division in the royal family, or possibly to a military regiment

From the seventh/eighth centuries AD, the kingdom declined, mainly as a consequence of the Islamic expansion along the Red Sea. According to Ethiopian traditions, Aksum was destroyed by southern invaders in the early tenth century AD. When by the 1140 Aksum ceased to be the political center the Aksumite Empire was already divided into a number of petty states whose rulers vied with each other for hegemony over most or parts of Ethiopia. [21]

1.3. THE ZAGWE DYNASTY, C. II5O-I27O

In the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, a Christian kingdom, stretching as far as Shewa, arose in the Wollo region under the so-called Zagwe Dynasty. The capital was located at Adafa near Lalibela in Lasta. The founder of the dynasty was a local prince of Bugna, in Lasta, perhaps related by marriage to the preceding ruling house as some traditions have it. Besides their obvious patronage of Ethiopic literature and Christian arts, the Zagwe kings also seem to have started to expand the territories of the Christian kingdom. [22]

[20] *Ibid*., p. 216.
[21] *Ibid*. Sergew Hable Selassie, 1972, pp.239 - 240.
[22] Fage, J.D and Roland A. Oliver, *The Cambridge History of Africa V. 3*, (Cambridge University Press 6th Printing, 2008), pp. 112-113;Tekeste Negash, ‘’The Zagwe Period and the Zenith of Urban Culture in Ethiopia, Ca. 930-1270 A. D’’ *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione Dell'istituto Italiano Per l'Africa E l'Oriente,* Anno 61, No. 1 (Marzo 2006),pp.120-121.

The paucity of historical account and archeological excavation make difficult to reconstruct the history of the dynasty but we have considerable knowledge about the Zagwe's cultural and architectural achievements. In terms of architecture, the rock-hewn churches constructed during the Zagwe period were not only a further refinement of the Aksumite heritage, but also reproductions of traditional Aksumite style express. The dynasty continued using the titles of Aksumite kings. Following the custom of the kings of Aksum Tantawedem is introduced with three distinct names, as we have already mentioned: his baptismal name Tantawedem, his reign name Salomon, and his surname, Gabra Maden.

During the period of Zagwe dynasty the Political structures of Ethiopian state was divided into five regions, ruled by local leaders with considerable internal autonomy. Each region represented the basic unit of the whole political and military structure of the Aksumite and later the Zagwe state.[23] Despite this architectural and engineering renaissance, we have no documentary, oral, or archaeological evidence of urbanism at Lalibela.[24]

1.4. The Medieval Period (1270-1527)

From 1268 until the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ethiopia was ruled by the so-called 'Restored Solomonic Dynasty', an Amhara- (Semitic-) speaking group from the province of Shewa. The shift of the center of power from Lalibela to the district of Tegulet in Shewa was different from the earlier shift, i.e. from Aksum to Lalibela.[25]

The main distinction was that the ''restored Solomonic Dynasty'' over the Zagwe rulers had mobile capitals rather than fixed ones. Explaining the transition from permanent to mobile (roving) capitals, Hovrath has argued that the transition was primarily in response to military considerations. A series of threats from Islam, from the concerted and vigorous expansion of the Oromo's from their base area in the Ethio-Kenyan border and from Europe had forced the Christian Ethiopian state to introduce profound changes in the structure of the state 'where fixed capitals were replaced by the mobile capitals or guerrilla cities'. Also the post-Zagwe Ethiopian kingdom was too big to be ruled from a fixed capital. Although Hovrath conceded the relevance of other secondary factors, it is to the military hypothesis that he devotes the major part of his study. Before we proceed to assess Hovrath's hypothesis on the transition

[23] Marie-Laure, Derat, ''The Zāgʷē dynasty (11-13th centuries) and King Yemreḥanna Krestos'', *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Vol 25, année (2010), pp.157-159; Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, (Oxford University Press, 1972),p.95.

[24] C. Gamst, Frederick, ''Peasantries and Elites Without Urbanism: The Civilization Of Ethiopia'', *Comparative Studies In Society And History*, Oct., 1970, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Oct., 1970),p. 377.

[25] Sergew Hable Sellassie, 1972, pp.289-290;Taddesse Tamrat, 1972, pp. 66-68.

from fixed to mobile (or wandering, or nomadic) capitals, it needs to be stated that the transition meant the decline of urbanism and urban culture.[26]

The Ethiopian political machinery of the period lacked the technology as well as the bureaucratic basis. Although the Ethiopians, in contrast to their West African counterparts, had access to horses, the rugged terrain and the well-articulated regional sentiments appear to have made imperial rule from a fixed center very difficult. In addition to this structural dimension arising from the problem of scale, the geography and landscape of the country, which Hovrath considered as secondary factors, militated against the tradition of fixed capital. Geographically, the country was divided into five regions with distinct boundaries. Some regions such as Gojjam and Begemedir surrounded by the Blue Nile were virtually isolated from the rest of the country during the rainy seasons. As regionalism has always been very strong, loyalty to the king of kings demanded the presence of the sovereign in the region whose loyalty may be suspected.[27]

The wandering capitals of Ethiopia had the qualities of a 'quasi-city'. A capital of a state does not, of course, have to be a city since city as a 'permanent settlement'. The chief function of a capital is to serve as a seat of a territory's political authority and, as with Ethiopia's tent encampments; a capital does not necessarily need the external attributes of a city. Ethiopia's wandering capitals, although not true or relatively permanent cities nevertheless functioned in some ways similar to those of a city. The mobility of the imperial court made practicable the collection of taxes and the suppression of regional autonomy in a land where technological regression, economic depression, and social disorganization made impossible the effective control of the state from a fixed capital.[28]

These migratory camps could not have appeared 'overnight'. We have good accounts of the moving capitals whose populations fluctuated, possibly at times numbering as large as 30,000 to 50,000 only to shrink to a few thousand during the rainy season. Laid out on a plain, the encampment centered on the tents of the imperial household, usually placed on higher ground. Further out from the center were the tents and huts of various classes of commoners, including

[26] Horvath, Ronald J, ‘’The Wandering Capitals Of Ethiopia’’, *The Journal Of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1969), pp. 206-207.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Horvath, Ronald J, 1969, p. 206.

tradesmen and craftsmen. On the very outskirts of the camp were the tents of prostitutes and smiths.[29]

Travellers reached the high plateau following the fifteenth century. They commented not only upon the tent encampments, but also upon the total lack of urbanism in Ethiopia. Important contributions to our general knowledge about Ethiopia and the Horn come from Catholic missionary sources. One of the earliest and most useful is F. Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies*, ''In all the country there is no town which exceeds 1,600 households, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number.' (The estimate of houses would put the population of the largest town between 8,000 and 10,000.) Jerome Lobo, visiting Ethiopia during the early 1600s, noted that the Ethiopians did not have cities or houses since they lived in tents and in cottages only rarely built of stone. Visiting Ethiopia between 1624 and 1633, Manoel de Almeida said: 'Apart from the Emperor's camp there is no settlement in the whole empire that deserves the name of city, or even of town.

By the sixteenth century when the Portuguese visited Ethiopia, the country was devoid of towns Job Ludolphus, the seventeenth century German Ethiopianist was much nearer the truth, when on the basis of the Portuguese Ethiopian travel accounts and his Ethiopian informants (the monk Abba Gregory) wrote: ‘’After the king of Habessinia left Aksum they never had any constant mansion, nor palace, but contended themselves to live in tents.’’ Formerly they had practiced the art of architecture as was evident from the ruins of Aksum and the magnificent temples cut out of the live stone rocks of Lalibela. It is only towards the end of the sixteenth century that the wandering kings began to replace their tents with stone houses – a practice probably associated with the arrival and settlement of a couple of hundred Portuguese. [30]

According to an early tradition, King Amda-Siyon (r.1314-44) is said to have formally organized in his court fifteen ‘houses’ each of which had its own special responsibility. At the head of each ‘house’ were appointed a chief and an assistant chief who were directly answerable to the king for carrying out the specific responsibilities assigned to their house. It is interesting to note that the duties assigned to them with military activities. At least seven of these ‘houses’ were placed in charge of his special treasures of gold and vestments of honor, and three of them looked after his defensive armor, his various other weapons of war, and the fittings of the horses of the right and of the left. The establishment of these ‘houses’, with

[29] C. Gamst, Frederick, 1970, pp.378-379.

[30] C. Gamst, Frederick, 1972, p.379.

their special duties seems to provide an interesting clue to the organization of the whole court. It is apparent that the rest of the numerous retainers of the king, and his family, were also similarly organized in separate groups, according to their respective functions. Outside this inner circle of courtiers, whose special duties were mainly to look after the personal needs of the royal family, there came the political and military officials of the king with their numerous followers, consisting of the royal gourds and the various contingents of the army. Each of these officials and their followers were also accompanied by their own families and other dependents. [31]

The size of the court fluctuated with the seasons. In dry season, when local officials and vassal rulers normally brought their tributes, the court received huge reinforcements from the provinces. Another occasion when it was as its greatest was on the eve of major military expeditions, when provincial governors joined the court with their regional forces. During the rainy season, however, many of the king's court officials and their followers went to their home districts or to their official stations and the court was reduced to its smallest size.[32]

Taddesse Tamrat in his valuable book *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270*-1527 provide detail and illustrative account on the royal court organization of the medieval period. The private quarters of the king and his family consisted of two concentric enclosures at the heart of the huge conglomeration of the people assembled at the court. The inner enclosure, separated from the outer one with curtains, or with a fence in case of longer sojourn at the site was exclusively set aside for the use of the king, and all the tents pitched there served his personal convenience. The king's special confidants literally called 'inner pages', officiated here and provided for his personal needs. Thirteen separate exit, each with its own name, led to the outer enclosure. The principal exit, *Widinash Daj* , probably opened in westerly directions, in a straight line with the residence of the king at the center. On either side of this principal gate were six others equidistant from each other, and thus constituting the remaining twelve exits of the inner enclosure. [33] The division of the camp is organized in reference to the Royal tents in the center including its enclosure (*makbebiya*) and various gates. It can be established that there were fourteen gates in the inner enclosure, not twelve or thirteen as has been assumed

[31] Taddesse Tamrat, 1972, pp.103-104.
[32] *Ibid.*, p.105.
[33] *Ibid*., pp.269-271

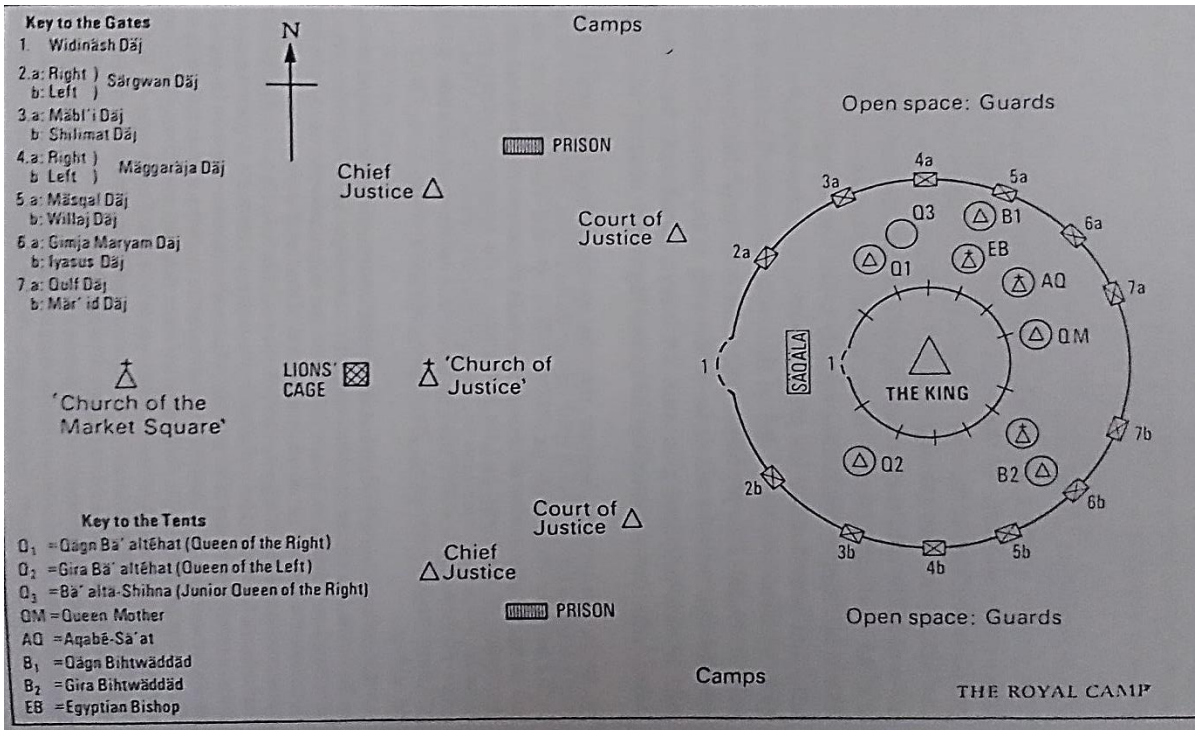


Figure 4: The Royal Camp Medieval Ethiopia

Source: Taddesse Tamrat,1972.

The organization of the royal court and of the king's officials, into those of the right and of the left is basically derived from this characteristics arrangement of the six gates on either side of the principal *Widinash Daj*. Each of this exist of the inner enclosure was closely guarded by high ranking officials of the royal guard. Admittance to the royal presence was by sole permission of the king, and the use of each entrance was prescribed for particular members of the royal court from outer enclosure. The outer enclosure itself was a direct duplicate of its inner counterpart. It had thirteen gates corresponding to those described above, and followed the same twin arrangement of the court into Right and Left. All around the fence of the outer enclosure, and particularly at the gates, were stationed numerous guards, specially assigned to cover particular sides of the court. The area within the enclosure between the *Maggaraja* and the *Jagol* was very extensive, and in it were pitched many tents on either side. The treasure houses of the king guarded and administered by a special group officials, formed a prominent part of the collection of tents. More important still were the tents of the Queen Mother, and those of the queens of the Right and of the Left. Normally, the number of the king's wives was three. Each with her own title: the *Gira- Ba' altehat* , the queen of the Left , who camped just outside the *Shilimat Daj* of the inner enclosure, and used this gate to communicate with the royal tents at the center; the *Qagn Ba' altehat* , the queen of the right had their tents just outside the *Mabl'i Daj* . The tents of the Queen Mother, who apparently kept some of the king's

children with her, were much more in the rear and were significantly pitched near the so called *Qulf Daj*, locked gate. Within the enclosure, the retainers of these queens only included their special guards, *Zandaraba*, their ladies in waiting and their household servants. Besides the royal kitchens, pitched within the Jagol on both sides of the court, which were responsible for the daily banquets, each of the queens also prepared food for the king's table in her own quarters.[34]

The royal chapels were also pitched within the *Jagol* on both sides. It is apparent that the leading members of the clergy serving each of these chapels also camped around them. But the most important ecclesiastical officials in court was the *Aqabe Sa'at* , the titular head of the island monastery of Dabra Hayq and his tents were often pitched near the chapel of St. Mary, on the Right. The Egyptian bishop used the *Masqal Daj* and probably kept an official tent near the chapel of the cross. Some of the highest military and court officials could also camp within the *Jagol*, though unaccompanied by their respective followers who had to camp far away outside the enclosure on the same side of the court as their masters. Among these were the two highest military officials of the kingdom, the *Bihtwaddad* of the Right and of the Left. The officials were thus given officials premise within the *Jagol* and outside, on the outskirts and protected the kingdom. Both for their admittance into the royal presence as stated above, and for their communication outside the *Jagol* , each of these camping units within the enclosure utilized corresponding gates specially assigned for it.[35]

The king's numerous vassals, his district and provincial governors who camped in the extensive field outside, each with his large following were also admitted into the *Jagol* through gates prescribed for them – either on the Right or on the Left. The two front gates each called *Sargwan Daj* on either side of the principal *Widinash Daj* were the most important, and were apparently in frequent use on solemn occasions. Admittance through them is explicitly said to have been possible by sole permission of the king. The tributary vassals of the king and his provincial governors passed through these gates to present their tributes, or whenever they needed to see their sovereign. Once admitted through, however, permission was specially required to leave the enclosure.

The royal Court maintained its meticulous rules and characteristics organization wherever it moved, and had exactly the same functions as a fixed city. Despite its mobility it was deeply rooted in the country. Whereas its own movements brought it to the different parts of the

[34] Taddesse Tamrat, 1972, pp. 269-274.
[35] *Ibid.*

Christian empire, the diverse elements of the king's subjects were also represented in the vast crowd always assembled around the royal enclosures. This ethnic and linguistic diversity is clearly brought out by Zar'a Yaqob's chronicler in his description of ceremonious acclamations of the royal troops in the presence of the King: 'And they sing (his glory) each in the language of his country.'

By the end of 16th century Sertse Dingil (r.1563-97) was attracted by commerce and trade route found at Lake Tana region and shifts his royal residence from insufficient resources area of Shewa to the Lake Tana region. In the mid-1570s, he erected the first Gondar-style buildings at a place called Guba'e, also known today as Guzara, in the district of Imfraz.

Accordingly, Emperor Fassiladas (r. 1632-1667) made Gondar his royal abode, besides its advantage of being surrounded by such fertile areas as Dambia and Wagara, was also an upland encircled with mountain ridges. Moreover, Gondar was healthier than the flat lands of Dambia, which, though fertile, were infested with malaria. Gondar marked the new birth of Ethiopian urbanism up until the building of Addis Ababa in the 1880s. In this regard the establishment of Gondar as permanent capital was a development of great historical significance. [36]

The foundation and growth of Ethiopian towns was the tradition of church building. When an emperor, king, *ras* etc., established his residence, a town, church or churches would also be built in the vicinity of the palace and in neighboring areas adding more quarters to the city. It is in such a way that church play a significant role in the evolution of Mändärs, or säfärs, or urban centers, side by side with the palace or the residence of the *rases* and other dignitaries.[37]

Gondar consisted more of a collection of small homogenous societies than of a diffused heterogeneous urban population. The city was divided into several quarters, each of which lived its own life. The imperial compound was of course foremost of these. The nobility resided in a quarter known as Gaing *Bet*. Abyssinians of lower rank lived in the more densely populated sections of Faras *Bet* and Denkake. The Christian hierarchy had its own quarters. The *Abun* lived with his retinue in one sector. Another area, *Ichege Bet*, was reserved for the Amhara monk who served as administrative head of the Church. Each church compound, moreover, was the focus of another residential section, where the clergy kept their modest huts. But this incipient urban development marginalizes rather than integrate to social life. Besides the

[36] Solomon Addis Getahun, ''Urbanization And The Urban Space In Africa: The Case Of Gondar, Ethiopia'', *Journal Of Ethiopian Studies*, December, 2012, Vol. 45, Special Thematic Issue On Urban History (December, 2012), p. 119; Tekle –Tsadik Mekouria, *Ye- Ityopia Tarik ke Atse Lebne Dengel eseke Atse Tewodrose* (Addis Ababa, 1972),pp.150-151.
[37] Solomon Addis Getahun, 2012, p.120.

Ichege, its residents included asylum seekers, both Moslem and Christians. Moreover, traders, artisans, crippled soldiers and nuns also constituted its population. The *Qagn Bet* which was the residence of the aristocracy was also situated nearby. Here, one notes class distinction that was not solely based on wealth but on birth hence the cohabitation of the aristocrat with the artisan. Other quarters like *Turkoch Mändär, Qusqwam, Gra bet* and Qäha existed as separate quarters where some of the residents had distinct characteristics.[38]

European travellers, missionaries left account on various aspects of life in Gondar. The French Charles Poncet, who had served as physician to Iyasu I(Iyasu the Great), offers us some sketchy passages on Gondar town at the end of the seventeenth century. After a not so flattering description of the houses, "the greatest part of [which] resemble a Tunnel with the Mouth downwards," he goes on to describe the market: ‘’ . . . All the Merchants meet in a wide spacious Place to treat of their affairs; there they expose their Merchandise to sale. The Market lasts from Morning to Night. All sorts of Commodities are sold there. Everyone has his own proper Place, where he exposes upon Mats what he has to sell. Gold and Salt are the money with which they traffic in that country.’’[39]

James Bruce (visiting 1770-1771), who visited Ethiopia just at the time of the final disintegration of the Gondarine kingdom, provides the most comprehensive picture of the Ethiopian kingdom and affords the historian a glimpse into areas completely neglected since the expulsion of the Jesuits. The legendary Bruce, so complete with gory details of carnal delight and political intrigue, has few illuminating passages about the town as such. After pointing out the commercial importance of Gondär and the pride of the Gondärines as the fashion-setters of the empire, conclude "Gondar is indeed the Paris of Abyssinia."[40] The town according to Bruce: "It consists of about ten thousand families in times of peace. On the west end of the town is the king's house, formerly a structure of considerable consequence; it was a square building, flanked with square towers; it was formerly four story’s high -- Great part of this house is now in ruins, having been burnt at different times; but there is still ample lodging in the two lowest floors of it, the audience-chamber being above one hundred and twenty feet long.

[38] *Ibid.* 123.; Merid Wolde Aregay, "Gondar And Adwa: A Tale of Two Cities ", *Proceedings Of The Eighth International Conference Of Ethiopian Studies* Vol.2 (1989),p.62.
[39] Bahru Zewde, *‘’*Gondär In the Early Twentieth Century: A Preliminary Investigation” *Journals of Ethiopian studies*, Vol. 21, (1988), p.59.
[40] Bahru Zewde, 1988, pp.59-60.

Bruce has interesting description of the Emperor's activities, particularly on court procedures; '' …his face was never seen, nor any part of him, excepting sometimes his foot. He sits in a kind of balcony with lattice-windows and curtains before him. Even yet he covers his face on audiences or public occasions, when in judgment. On cases of treason, he sits within his balcony, and speaks through a hole in the side of it, to an officer called *Kal –Hatze* (?), the voice or word of the king, by whom he sends his questions, or anything else that occurs, to the judges who are seated at the council table.[41]

The king goes to church regularly his guards taking possession of every avenue and door through which he is to pass and nobody is allowed to center with him, because he is then on foot, excepting two officers of his bed chamber who support him. He kisses the threshold and side posts of the church door, the steps before the altar and then returns home……There are six noblemen of the king's own choosing, who are called *Balamual* or gentlemen of his bed chamber; four of these are always with him. There is a seventh, who is chief of these called *Azelessa Camisha,* groom of the robe or stole. He is keeper of the king's wardrobe and the first officer of the bed chamber. These officers the black slaves and some others serve him as menial servants and are in a degree of familiarity with him unknown to the rest of the subject.'' Finally James Bruce's gives his famous description of a banquet at which the guest were served with raw of a banquet at which the guests were served with raw flesh from living cattle is also difficult to believe. [42]

The literary heritage of Medieval Ethiopia had suffered destruction from civil wars and invasions, and many documents were reproduced several years later from memories and/or fragmentary records. Emperor Amde'Seyon (1314 - 44) and Emperor Gelawdewos (1540 - 59) are among the Sovereigns who contributed to the reconstruction of Ethiopian literature. The chronicler of Emperor Iyasu the Great (1682 - 1706), also tells that his master summoned all the learned men and grand officials to rewrite the rules and regulations legislated and practiced during the reigns of his royal predecessors. From all indications it was a custom for the sovereigns to consult the elders and the learned ones on past practices whenever new problems cropped up. Thus, one would assume that the "Ser'ata Mangest" was rewritten and became

[41] Richard, Pankhurst, *Travellers in Ethiopia*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965),pp. 76-77.

[42] Richard, Pankhurst, 1965, p.72. He also provides information on the reign of Iyasu II. He mentioned Iyasu II who was still a child, it was his mother Queen Mentwab who controlled the state. Furthermore, she survived her son and retained her influence over a long period. Bruce has left us his impressions of the beautiful queen, who was getting on in years when he saw her.

prominent in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries when prosperous Gondar enjoyed its grandeur.[43]

The *Sarata Mangast* is neither a constitution nor a systematic collection of laws, customs, or royal decrees. It is a heterogeneous collection of documents of different types for regulating the following:

- The internal operations of the royal court,
- The major court ceremonies,
- The hierarchy of court officials,
- The list of high offices and their jurisdictions as well as the taxes and tribute pertaining to them, and
- The definition of the spheres of ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions

From the different sections operated under *Sarata Mangast* the *gibr Serat* the royal banquet-is one of the most important portrayals of royal wealth and power. As a social manifestation it belongs to the idea of conspicuous consumption which plays an important economic role in medieval Ethiopia. Officers concerned in these instructions may be the *Fitawraris* as those who had to choose the place of encampment and to supervise the position of the whole camp. The *Raq-Masere* is the master of ceremonies who had been responsible to arrange the banquets with the *Kantiba*. The contents of the *Sereat gibr* can be enumerated as follows: [44]

The tribute arriving is classified according to textiles, leather goods, metal vessels, arms, and other categories of merchandise. Each ware is stored separately in sixteen tents or store houses bearing the respective names of its contents which are repeated in the title of the keeper.

The special tribute of certain troops consists mostly of firewood (*enchat Ze mekremya*), literally wood for the camp during the rainy season) and wood for construction of fences and tents.

A detailed list of the daily royal table is given which is astounding for its variety of bread, vegetables, and drinks. The preparation of any of this food is the task of a special cook or brewer bearing the respective title. The list of these titles is the true reflection of the products

[43] Bairu Tafla and Scholler, Heinrich, ''SER'ATA MANGEST: An early Ethiopian Constitution.'' *Verfassung und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* , Vol. 9, No. 4 (1976),p.489.

[44] Kropp, Manfred ,''Notes on Preparing a Critical Edition of the Śər'atä mängəśt'', *Northeast African Studies* , 2011, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2011), pp. 115; Kropp, Manfred, '' The *Sər ʿatä Gəbr*: "A Mirror View Of Daily Life At The Ethiopian Royal Court In The Middle Ages", *North East African Studies*, 1988, Vol. 10, No. 23, Michigan University, p.52; Bairu Tafla and Scholler, Heinrich, '1976, pp.487-488.

prepared in the kitchen and the brewing houses. Different cuts' of the slaughtered animals are distributed according to rank and function.

The great banquet held at the end of the rainy season in the first days of *Maskaram* (September) during the feast of the prophets Mose and Jeremia. That is why it is called *mahbere nebiyat*, or at other times *mahibre muse*. We can distinguish the rank and the wealth of higher dignitaries of the court by counting and comparing the composition of their different contributions to the banquet. The common menu consists of rations which have a regulated numerical relation to each other. The banquet takes place over a period of two days or several periods of two days. The first day is called *matamya* , let us say the tasty prelude to the double-portioned second day entree. Only higher ranking officials are allowed to eat, from dishes employing knives. The hierarchical division is further indicated by black earthenware or terracotta dishes without ornaments (*leta gabata*) for the lower grades, silver and gold ornaments for the higher ones. [45]

2. Determinants of Royal court and Urban Settlement

Urbanization was directly associated with the royal camps of reigning monarchs. To govern the overall life in the imperial administration needs an institution or personnel in charge of duty with authority who provides the legal framework and enforcement. The creation, organization and function of space in the imperial court influenced the tone throughout the entire extent in its administration. Therefore, often times, it was not uncommon to see a change of rulers to be accompanied with a shift of capital. Traditionally, cities and towns in the core area of Ethiopia (the Amhara-Tigre areas) were feudal settlements within a feudal state.[46]

They can be identified by their use of clay bricks for housing and by their city walls. Besides the administrative and trade centers, other urban sites were also functionally differentiated. Yet, unlike Europe, the differentiation may not solely depend on occupation. Religion, sex and ethnicity also have a distinct role to play in African urban centers. The pre-twentieth century urban growth in Ethiopia was very much associated with the emergence of political power. Some Ethiopian towns, kätämas, emerged as centers of administration or as garrison towns while others came into existence as nodal points of caravan trade routes. Therefore, often times, it was not uncommon to see a change of rulers to be accompanied with a shift of capital. The

[45] Kropp, Manfred, 1988, pp.53-55.
[46] Horvath, Ronald J, 'Towns in Ethiopia', *Erdkunde*, 22 (1968),p.42; Solomon Addis Getahun, 2012, pp.119-121.

result was the establishment of a series of urban centers that dotted the Ethiopia landscape, exhibiting the shift of political power from the north (Aksum) to the south (Addis Ababa). [47]

In the historical process there are important factors could be taken in to account for establishment of urban settlement. The Political security and the availability of supplies factors surely affected this process. The need to control the local resources and trade routes most likely stimulated the territorial expansion of the pre-Aksumite and Aksumite states. Proto-urban and urban settlements were located along the routes connecting the plateau to the Nile valley and the Red Sea coast, or in crucial areas to control the local resources. Also in the pre-Aksumite times, Yeha was located close to the Mareb/Gash valley, connecting the lowlands to the western plateau. The town occupied a favorable position to control the resources of the western lowlands. In turn, Kaskase and Matara were located along the traditional route from the coast to the hinterland. In the Aksumite times, most recorded towns were located along the route from Aksum to Adulis. Towns were also located along the routes connecting the eastern plateau to the western lowlands and eastern Sudan. Aksum, particularly, occupied a strategic position as a gateway to the African hinterland. The choice of the site, the *Amba* overlooking the rivers of Qaha and Angereb, must have been determined both by its strategic location, at a crossroads of important trade routes.[48]

Similarly Gondar, Ankober were also located along the trade route and the source of items of export. Concerning the security most of all Ethiopian royal and urban settlement found in elevated and mountainous landscape. This help to defend and easily identify possible threat.

Environmental factors were less significant than the economic and cultural ones. Further the pre-Aksumite and Aksumite towns were located on the plateau, over 2000 m in elevation, in areas with good soils for agriculture. The moister climate of the region in the mid first millennium BC to the mid first millennium AD probably facilitated the establishment of the 'plough and cereal complex' on the plateau. It is possible that the generally reduced rainfall in the seventh to tenth centuries AD, together with the progressive exhaustion of the soils and deforestation by human activity in Aksumite times, caused draughts and famines with consequent epidemics. They might have affected the progressive depopulation of the plateau, pushing the population to move southwards. Moreover, the sudden abandonment of Adulis and Matara in the eighth century AD might point to a catastrophic event. Another aspect that

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Solomon Addis Getahun, 2012, p.119; Fattovich, Rodolfo, 1988, p.17.; ሀብታሙ መንግስቴ ተገኝ, *በራራ ቀዳሚት አዲስ አበባ (1400-1887 ዓ.ም) እድገት፤ ውድመት እና ዳግም ልደት*, (The Red Sea Press 2020),p.116.

influenced the foundation and growth of Ethiopian towns was the tradition of church building. When an emperor, king, *ras* etc., established his residence, a town, church or churches would also be built in the vicinity of the palace and in neighboring areas adding more quarters to the city. The ideological factors also another factor. It connected with the legitimation of the elite might have affected the ceremonial function of the main settlements; the case of Barara (the Present day Addis Ababa).[49]

[49] *Ibid.;* Mahtama Sellase Walda Masqal, *Zekra Nagar,* (Addis Ababa , 1962 E.C),p.1.

Chapter Two

Sahel Selassie and his Royal Court

2. The Growth of Shewa Kingdom

Within the 17th cent., Shewa was de facto isolated from the Gondarine kingdom. Herruy Welde Selassie mentioned that in 1699 Iyasu I (1682-1706) was crossed Shewa and arrived at Debre Libanos despising its demolished state; he had requested the "princes of Shewa." to come. From there on, the combination of Shewa and the development of the "principality" or "kingdom of Shewa" appear to have been started from Manz *Abeto* Negasi Kirstos Warada Qal. *Mered Azmach* Sebastiye was begun to repress the *balabbat* rulers of smaller areas around Manz and Oromo groups one by one. Within the 18th cent., this prepare was checked by the progressive moving of Shewa capitals southwards.[50]

At first based in Agancha Negasi afterward utilized Aya Bar; Ayne (Maryam) was established by him and utilized by Sebastiye. Doqaqit was set up by Sebastiye; beside Harr Amba, it was utilized as a home by Abbeyye. Ankobar and Afarbayne Takla Haymanot, an old place, was utilized by Amha Iyasus; Qwendi was utilized by Wasan Sagad. It is commonly accepted that an imperative period within the solidification of the control of Shewan rulers was the rule of *Negus* Sahle Selassie. He stabilized the Kingdom both military and political strategies. [51]

The organization was built upon the solid individual control of Sahle Selassie, who ruled specifically or through a framework of governors. As a result, European voyagers lauded as the foremost steady and affluent of the Ethiopian districts. The "nation" was separated into four primary areas, likely Ifat, Ankober, Manz and Merhabiete. Each of the areas was subdivided into a number of locale; for case, the territory of on the off chance that at comprised on the off chance that at legitimate, Geddem and Efrata; Manz kept up its previous divisions into Lalo-Meder, Mama Meder and Gera Meder; help the area of Morhabiete must have included Geshe to its north and Morat to the south. A representative was named to run the show each of these locales within the title and on sake of the *Maredazmatch*. It was the obligation of the governors to raise a neighborhood armed force and take after the *Maredazmatch* in his wars of conquest;

[50] Herruy Welda-Selassie, *Wazema*, (Addis Ababa:Goh Printing,2001),pp.75-77.
[51] Uhlig, Siegbert, Bausi, Alessandero, *et al*. *Encyclopedia Aethipoica* .Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag,Vol. 4: O-X, (2010);Tekle –Tsadik Mekouria, 1972, p.349.

the governors had the obligation to preserve and arrange their different areas with the assistance of the armed force beneath their control. [52]

2.1. The Reign of Sahle Selassie

The political desires of Sahle Selassie who conceived accomplishing preeminent control are reflected in his notion of the title *negus* around 1839. At the end of his rule the Kingdom of Shewa stretched from Yifat, Manz and Marhabete within the north to the Awash and Scoff Rivers within the south. Within the west it presently included Salale and bordered on the Gudar River. As with other Ethiopian masters, the rulers of Shewa had realized the importance of securing firearms. Within the late 1830s Sahle Selassie begun attempting to set up contacts with nonnatives and outside powers, first and first in arrange to procure military materials and political picks up. The Shewa court characterized by semi-mobile capital, not at all like the medieval Ethiopian courts that was totally versatile or the Gondärian fixed capital.[53]

Not one or the other settled at one capital, nor moving around the kingdom to nourish on each locale in turn. From the discernible town and authoritative center, Ankobar was the one in vast center, Angolala and Debra Berhan taken after continuatively. Indeed in case there benefit restricted other regal homes were moreover build up in Mahal Wanz, Qundi, Har Amba, Sela Dingay, Aleyu Amba, etc. All the courts of Shewa created around the home of administering ruler essentially arranged within the central portion of the kingdom. In the 1830 and the 1840s, Ankobar was the biggest but short lived town capital of the Shawa. Isenberg assessed the populace of town around 12,000, Rochet d'Hericourt in 1839 the occupants were 9000-10,000.[54]

Moreover, W.C.Harris in 1841 estimated up to 12,000-15,000. Another noticeable town of the kingdom, Angolala populace evaluated within the run of 2000-3000, which were, dwells in 400-500 hovels by Harris but Rochet assessed as 3000-4000 occupants. Krapf indeed on the off chance that he did not appeared the numerical value of populace within the town of Debra Berhan but detailed that the town contained few hundred hovels with thousands of occupants. The English traveler Johnston detailed that Aleyu Amba, the advertise town possessed a few 300 residences in a populace within the run of 1,500- 2,000.[55]

[52] R. H. Kofi, Darkwah, "The Rise of the Kingdom of Shoa, I8I3-I889", (Ph.D. thesis, ,SOAS, University of London, 1966),pp.35-36.
[53] Tekle –Tsadik Mekouria, 1972, pp. 365-369.
[54] Mikiyas Tewodros, "Bête Negus the Royal Architecture of Šäwa (1813-1886)'', (MA Thesis, Debre Birhan University, Department of History And Heritage Management, 2018),Pp.32-33.
[55] Mikiyas Tewodros, 2018, p.33.

The court settlement design by itself illustrates the space reasoning and organization of social status. Within the walled area comprises three yards, the higher reserved solely for the ruler and his royal official dignitaries and five hundred huts arranged. This upper court encompassed and filled with lion. The second court fenced by a thick divider, fortified at the beat with huge palisades almost eight feet tall. On the way of passing through, the internal court found, wherein arranged the house of the ruler Sahle Selassie, which was regularly diverse by tis plan design and development method from the others by built of two stories, the ground floor used as stables. The primary –floor, which is the King's home, the get to was on exterior wooden stairs which is build up.[56]

In the court political system, all officials structured based up on their hierarchal order, which significantly help us to understand how space created, organized and functioned in the royal court of the Šäwa. For the sack of convenience it is better to categorized the officials in to three divisions .1) with respect to the court order and the palace administration 2) their function to the king personal protocols and his family hood, 3) Related to the military activities and the court security system.

2.2. The Spatial Orientation of Royal Court of Sahle Selassie

Ankobar was the main town and the administrative center of the Shewan kingdom, situated on a hill in the eastern escarpment of the highland of Ethiopia and it was well-fortified.[57] Most of the population was in some way attached to the court: higher nobilities, servants, slaves, *dabtaras*, and craftsmen were some of these groups belong to the court life.[58]

The entire slope of the palace eminence is studded with thatched magazines and out-houses; and these, shame to the Christian monarch, form the scene of the daily labors of three thousand slaves. In one quarter are to be seen groups of busy females, engaged in the manufacture of beer and hydromel. Flat cakes of *teff* and wheat are preparing by the hundred under the next roof, and from the dark recesses of the building arises the plaintive ditty of those who grind the corn by the sweat of their brow. Here cauldrons of red pepper soup yield up their potent steam ; and in the adjacent compartment, long twisted strips of old cotton rag are being dipped in bees' wax. Throughout the female establishment the bloated and cross-grained eunuch presides;

[56] *Ibid.*
[57] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, *The Journals of C.W. Isenberg and J.L.Krapf*;(London, Printed by L. Seeley, Thames Ditton, Surrey,1843), p.467.
[58] W.C. Harris, *The Highlands of Ethiopia*;(London:Gilbert and Rivington Printers,1844,vol.2,second edition),pp.8.

and his unsparing rod admonishes his giggling charges that they are not there to gaze at the passing stranger.[59]

The houses are constructed chiefly of wood, with thatched roofs, generally surrounded by a garden, and disposed around the cone in a spiral form. The upper part of the town is hedged in with long poles connected by sprigs as by palisades, and on the top is the King's house, built of stone and mortar, with a thatched roof.[60]

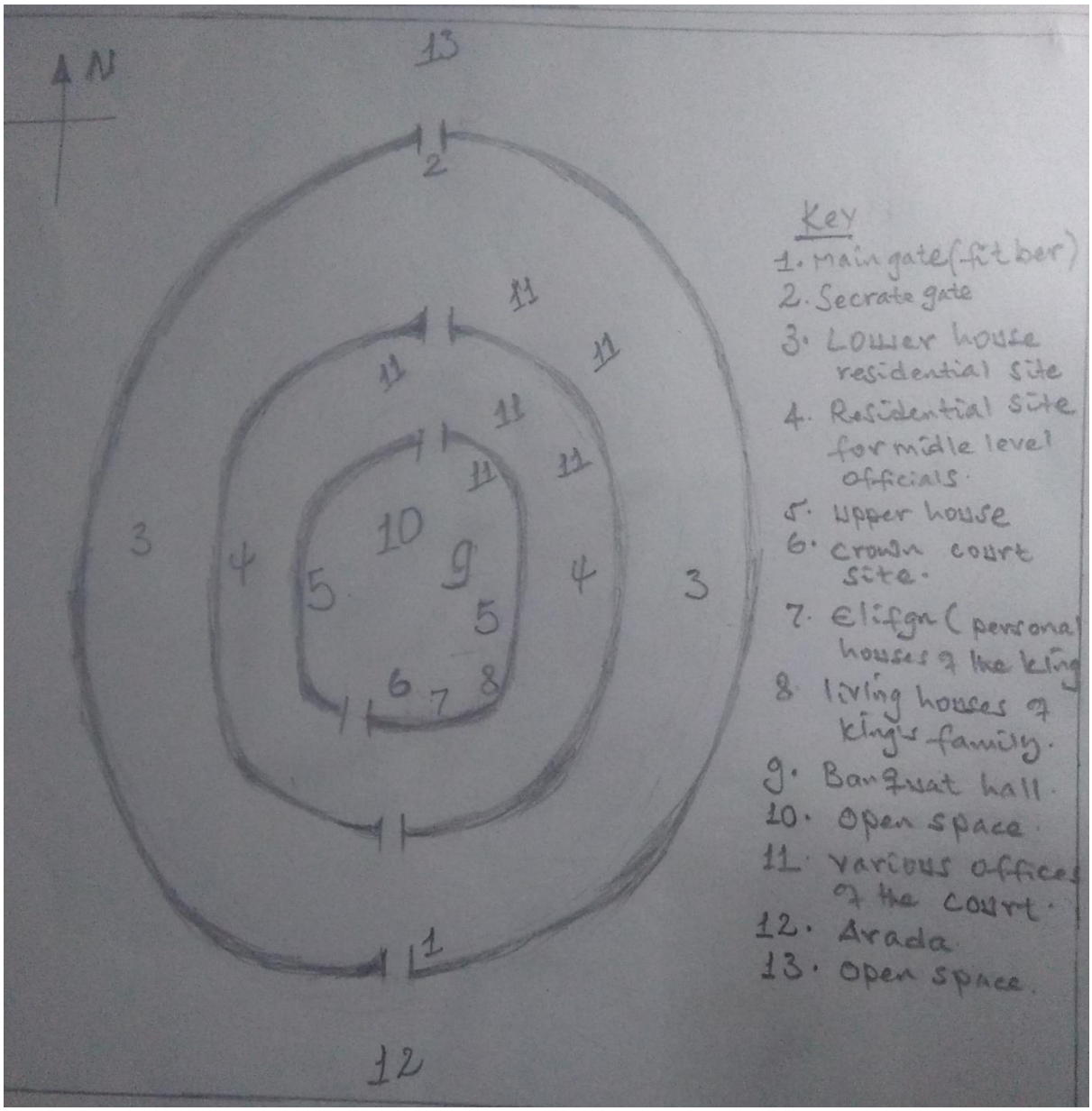


Figure 5: skich map of the royal court of Sahle Selassie (prepared by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw)

[59] *Ibid*.,p.257.
[60] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, 1843, pp. 56-57.

2.3. Royal Court Structure and its Function

The court comprised numerous groups with different functions in the palace organization and the political system. According to Seven Ege narration,[61] some order can be introduced by plotting the main categories along two axes:

1) Their standing at court.

2) Their functions, whether relevant to the political system in general or limited to the interior of the palace.

In the kingdom of Shewa, particularly in the period of king Sahel Selassie the palace was encompassing large number of residencies. According to Sven Egg in the palace ten thousand of the residents were reside with different duties and responsibilities. Some works in the kitchen, some other collect fire wood, even other engaging in guarding flour in the palace, and the like.[62] To run and administer this complicated palace work, organizational structures and personnel administration were probably instituted and employed.

The following discussion will seek to identify the main groups of palace personnel, i.e. persons with their specific duty at court. A great number of them were slaves, and court slaves will be discussed separately. Higher officials and savants are identified here, even if they were slaves, but the lower palace servants, constituting the majority of the court slaves, are left to the discussion of this institution.

2.4. The Royal Family (King's Wives and Children)

Around Sahle Selassie there was a number of high standing, whose position depended exclusively on their relationship to him. The most prominent was *Bazabish*, his main wife and mother of the only legitimate heirs to the throne. She had two sons, Hayla-Malakot (born c. 1827) and Sayfa-Selassie (born c. 1829), the younger being his father's favorite and for long considered the heir to the throne. The queen usually stayed at the palace, while the princes spent much of their time at monasteries. They were attended by nurse, a eunuch, and special servants reporting their activities to the king.[63]

[61] Sven Ege, *Class, State, and Power in Africa: A case study of the Kingdom of Sawa (Ethiopia) about1840*; (Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1996), p.104
[62] *Ibid*., p.199.
[63] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, J.L, 1843, p.282.

The other children of Sahle Selassie, daughters by the queen and children by concubines, lived secluded in the palaces or in other parts of the kingdom until they came of age: then they might be married to the favored chiefs or given some government.[64]

Another secluded group was the royal concubines were beautiful slave girls, partly daughters of important chiefs. It was generally agreed on that there were some five hundred concubines at the various royal establishments. At Ankober, seven lived in the royal enclosure, while another thirteen lived close by.[65]

2.5. Sahle Selassie and his Foreign Relation

The reign of King Sahle Selasssie, was taken as the heyday of the Shewa kingdom. He had developed relatively better strong kingdom and administration. His period also witnessed the enlarging his kingdom territorial, established strong ties with his neighboring chiefs, and moreover, his court experienced the existence of a number foreign travelers, missionaries as well as diplomat. He had great attempt to establish strong foreign ties with the then political powers of the world.

In this regard, one of the manifestations of Sahle Selassie's strong foreign contact in the late 1830's and early 1840's was his relation with Isenberg and Krapf. They were well-known German protestant missionary and traveler who lived in the court of Sahle Selassie from 1839 – 1842. Krapf particularly had strong contact with the king and had very strong knowledge about the people of the Shewa and the neighboring Oromo. The other important foreign individual was William Harris. He was a leader of British diplomatic mission to the court of Sahle Selassie who lived in the royal court of Shewa for a year and half.

In terms of his foreign relation King Sahle Selassie was peculiar from his predecessor. He tried to developed strong foreigner relation with great powers of the period. Even he was well aware of creating contacts with foreign powers.[66] He intended to use this foreign relation to acquire military armaments for the expansion of his kingdom.[67] The first half of the nineteenth century marked in Ethiopia region was the coming of many travellers and missionaries. One of the areas that were exposed to European travelers and visitors was the kingdom of Shewa.[68] Since

[64] W.C. Harris, 1844, p.108.
[65] William Cornwallis, Harris, *The highlands of Ethiopia*; (London: Vol.3, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), p.37.

[66] R. Pankhurst, "The Greeks and the Development of Early nineteenth century Technology in Šäwa (Ethiopia)" in Ekklesiastikos Pharos.Alexandria,1976,Vol.1and 2, (Miscellanean 5), p.147.
[67] AbétoNägasiKarstosWärädäQal," Encyclopedia Æthiopica, 2010,Vol.IV,p.466.
[68] Kofi.R.H.Darkwah,1975,p.57.

then different foreign craftsmen, armorers, builders, tanners and artists were arrived in Shewa.[69] They contributed for flourishing of craftsmanship in Shewa. The period of Sahle Selassie was considered as zenith of craft in Shewa. The king and his manufacturing center focus on the production of armorers, improved techniques of gun powder production were emphasized.[70] That is why the skilled Greek and Armenian gunsmiths came to Shewa for technical assistance to the satisfaction of King Sehle Selassie.[71] One of the earliest craftsmen, who arrived in Shewa in 1820s was a Greek armourer called Elias, who remained in the kingdom for almost a decade. During his stay at the court of King Sahle Selassie, he introduced the skill of gun repairing and trained Sahle Selassie's men in the court.[72] To improve the industrialization of Shewa, King Sahle Selassie wrote a letter in1840 inviting the British East Indian Company to assist for the advancement of his workshops.

"God has given me a good and large kingdom: but arts and sciences have not yet come to my country, as they have to yours. May it therefore please you to assist me, particularly in sending guns and cannons and other things, which i have not in my country. I do not state how much you shall send me. You may act according to your love and kindness, which are known everywhere. As to myself, I am ready to send to you things which are not in your country. You may please to tell me what you wish, and I shall send it to you."[73]

Taking their cue from the feelings of the people, the Shewan sorcerers gave out that Sahle Selassie was to be the last of the Ethiopian dynasty, descended from the house of Solomon, who should sit upon the throne of his forefathers, and that a foreign king would come by way of Aliu Amba to usurp the dominion.[74]

To improve the medication knowledge of Shewa, King Sahle Selassie frequently meets with the missionaries of C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf in his palace.

> *June 9: Lord's Day—Very early this morning we were called by the King, who asked us for medicine. We told him, that our particular business was to teach and preach the Gospel, and that we were no learned physicians; but that if he desired, we would assist him with medicine according to the best of om* knowledge. At the same time we took the opportunity to request him to give us*

[69] R.Pankhurst, 1976, p.147.
[70] S. Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1999, pp.168-169.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] R.Pankhurst, 1976, p.144.
[73] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf ,1843,p.251.
[74] William Cornwallis, Vol.3, 1844, p.34.

a number of boys, in order that we might instruct them in the doctrines of the Bible, and in other useful branches of knowledge. He promised to comply with our request. We thought it as well to make this application, in order to show him, at the commencement of our stay in his country, the good intentions we have for the welfare of his people. June 10—Very early in the morning we were again called by the King, who repeated his desire for medical assistance.[75]

2.6. Sahle Selassie and his Internal Affairs

Sahle Selassie's internal affairs administration of his kingdom approach was admired by European travelers and missionaries. Harris in this regard, said the king ruled his subjects in the principle of civic, national dignity and public love. He added that he did not involve in war with others. By fearing conflict he did not attempt to bring back his father's vast lost territory.[76] Krapf on the other hand said King Sahle Selassie was highly respected, experienced and intelligent leader.[77]

Krapf explained about king's relationship with the neighboring Oromo tribes. He said the king established very strong family relationship with Oromo tribe leaders and Oromo people. When Krapf expressed this relationship he said the king travel long distance with local rulers by climbing down from his mule like ordinary people. Harris also wrote similar idea. He said the king listens to all, foreigners or natives, men and women, rich and poor without discrimination. Every one possesses the right to appear before him and boldly to explain the nature of his case; and although the established usage of the land compels the subject to prostrate himself, and to pay rather adoration than respect, yet may he urge his complaint without the least hesitation or timidity.[78]

King Sahle Selassie had attempted to establish strong relationship with his provinces and district governors. This might have been probably helped him to maintain peace and order of the kingdom. For this purpose throughout his realm there were 51 *Abgazoch*(frontier guards). They are responsible for maintaining peace and order of their respective region and reporting any kind of treat against their localities to the king.[79]

[75] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, 1843, p.60.
[76] William Cornwallis, Harris,1844, Vol. 2, p.162.
[77] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, 1843, p.199.
[78] *Ibid*., p.21.
[79] Ibid., p. 88.

Therefore, the king had strong, smooth and peaceful relation with his regional governors, and the public at large. In addition, he established inclusive and participatory administration throughout the kingdom.

Chapter Three

Life in the Royal Court of Sahel Selassie of Shewa

3.1. The Palace of Ankobar

Several European travelers and missionaries give detail accounts about the existence of a number of royal seats in the kingdom of Shewa.[80] In this regard, Sven Egg expresses the rulers of Shewa used semi mobile capital.[81] These different royal seats of Shewan rulers were founded by different rulers of Shewa. Among these Ankobar was the most well-known seat of the Shewan kings.[82] It had very tied history with the kingdom of Shewa. The town reached its highest stage in the time of king Sahel Selassie 1813 - 1847.[83]

The principal seat of king Sahel Selassie, Ankobar is situated in the edge of the eastern escarpments of Shewan plateau. Its importance had grew gradually with the revival of the long distance trade which runs from south west parts of the present Ethiopia to the well-known trade center of Eastern Ethiopia since medieval Ethiopia, Harer and finally access to external world via Zaila. In addition, the existence of crucial market centers in the nearby areas had increased its importance.[84]

The residences of the Ankobar including the royal family were resided along the mountain slope of Ankobar. Harris stated that the palace of Ankobar comprises with different thatched magazines and outhouse. He added that the mountain slope also had a cluster of thatched houses with different size and shape. These houses were organized in very irregularities one found over the other. Each of them connected with very narrow - street and found under huge

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[80] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 23.87, ; C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.114

[81] S, Ege, 1978, p.96.

[82] *Mär'ed Azmač* Asfa Wäsän, was ruler of the Šäwa kingdom, from 1775 – 1808. He incorporated vast territories, which refer the old Šäwan regions. (Efrata, Gəšä, Märhabete and the plain area between Ankobär and Däbrä Bərhan.) See also R. H. Darkwaha, 1975, P. 13.

[83]There are different court residential sites, which were established and used by various rulers of the kingdom in different parts of the region. These sites were found in the various parts of the kingdom. In this regard, Angača, Doqaqit, Ayne, Ankobär, Kunde, Däbrä Berhan, and Angoläla. W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 8, 87.; C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 272.; S. Egg, 1978, P. 122. Täklä ṣädiq Mähuria, *yä Etiopiya tarik kä aṣe ləbnä Dəngl eskä Tewodros,* (Addis Ababa, 2000 E.C), p. 355, 357, 363, 365 *Bəlaten* Geta Hiruy, *Yä Ityopiya Tarik Kä Nəgstä Saba eskä Talaku Adwa Dəl*, (Addis Ababa, Central printing press, 2006), p. 50. ብላቴን ጌታ ህሩይ ወለደ ስላሴ፣ *የኢትዮጲያ ታሪክ ከንግስተ ሰባ እስከ ታላቁ የአድዋ ድል*፣ (አዲስ አበባ፣ ሴንተራል ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1999 E.C.), ገፅ፣ p. 50።
Egg, S

[84] Merid Wolde Aregay associates this town with its military strategic importance for the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia against lowlanders. It serves as a pass (*bär*) from the plain area of Adal to the tableland of Šäwa. Merid ; Merid Wolde Aregay, *Southern Ethiopia and The Christian Kingdom 1508 – 1708 with Special Reference to Oromo Expansion and their Consequence PHD dissertation*, (June, 1971), p. 41; S, Ege, *"Chiefs and Peasants: The Socio Political Structure of the Kingdom of Šäwa about 1840"* (Hovedoppgavediss: University of Bergen, 1978), p. 96.

hedgerows. In all sides of the mountain such kind's houses were numerous. Harris estimated the numbers of inhabitants in these traditional houses of Ankobar were reached fifteen thousand.[85]

The palace of the king situated at the top of the mountain. Harris in this regard described about some features of the palace. He said, the palace of the king is not elegant. It was fortified by spiral of wooden palisades. Even though, sources are not detailed and clear about the kind of the building of the palace of Ankobar and the materials which is used for the construction of different apartments in the palace of Sahle Selassie. However, in this regard, Harris stated that the palace luck attraction or in his clear senses he describes the palace as ungainly.[86] Charles also gave us similar descriptions about the kind of house found in Ankobar. The palace encompasses a number of thatched residents' houses with a wall used Tid and olive oil trees.[87] *Ato* Akililu Mulatu also suggested similar idea about the kinds of houses available in the royal court of Ankobar. According to him houses were built from local materials from wood and mud.[88]



Figure 6: Photo of the Ankober mountain hill. (Photo by Yeshiwas 2021)

The above description clearly shows us the palace of Ankobar was not architectural good enough. Europeans travelers were not surprised about the palace of Sahle Selassie. This might

[85] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 8.; 257.
[86] *Ibid*.,
[87] C. Johnston, *Travels in Southern Abyssinia Through the country of Adal, to the kingdom of Šäwa.* Vol. II, (London: Macintosh printer, 1844), p. 286
[88] *Ato* Akililu Mulatu is an informant who gives as detail account about the royal court of Ankobar. Who had good information about the court of Ankobar. He served now as a head of Ankobar Lodge that is found in Ankobar Mountain the original palace seemed to build.

have been because of great expectations of Europeans missionaries and travelers over Shewan kingdom in general in particular king Sahle Selassie. In this regard, the idea raised by all sources seems have plausible. One supporting idea hears is there was no still great edifies either still standing or ruined in Ankobar. Therefore, in terms of solid structures the reign of Sahle Selassie was not that much impressive.

From the book of Harris, Johnston and others we understand that the palace of Ankobar seems have organized based on social status. *Ato* Akililu Mulatu in this regard said that the mountain slope of Ankobar fully reside by residents who were resided based on their social classes. He said at the foot of the hill we found ordinary inhabitants of the kingdom. Next to them there were middle class and lower ranking individuals of the palace and governors. Finally, at the top of the hill we found the palace of the king and the house of his royal family as well as king's closest higher officials specially *ras*, *Liq Mekuas*, *Balderas* and the like.[89]

In the time of Sahel Selassie the palace of Ankobar had two known gets in Amharic called *ber* to access to the court of the king. The first one is served as the main get. Harris called it Great Get of the palace.[90] This is served as the main get of gests they came to the palace of Ankobar to visit the king. This is found south of the foothill of the mountain. In front of this main get there is an open space called *Arada*. According to Harris *Arada* is an open space crowded by gossips and a number of beggars. In the opposite of this main get there is an alternative get which is called secret get in Amharic called *Mistir ber*. This gets served to connect the palace with the cathedral of St. Mikael and square. It was founded by king Sahel Selassie in 1816.[91] Between *Mistir Ber* and the church there is a square. In the time of Sahel Selassie it was used to make declaration of military campaign and state proclamation.

[89] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 8. see also Ato Akililu Mulatu, he said at the top of the hell top official were lived specially the king and his families, *li' qe' mekuas, ras,* and other top officials were lived at the top of the heel.

[90] Ibid. p. 258.

[91] *Melaeke Mihiret Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh a young and well informed informant of Ankobar and the churches found in the *Worda*. Now, he served as a head of St. Michael church in Ankobar.



Figure 7: Photo of main gate (*fit ber*) of the palace of Ankober which accesses the palace to *Arada.* (By Yeshiwas Eskeziaw 2021)



Figure 8: Photo of Sehle Selassie square and secrete gate (photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw 2021)

According to *ato* Akililu Mulatu offices of the kingdom were also situated between the king palace (*elifign*) and a secrete get.[92] In contrast to the spatial orientation of royal court site of the medieval and post medieval Ethiopia the palace of Ankobar had only two gets. It might have been because of land scape of the palace which forced them to have only these numbers of gates or it might be being fixed royal court. As we know medieval courts were used a mobile capital. The king and his many thousand followers reside for some time in a certain place and after some time the whole royal court residents were left the site and travel until they got appropriate place for site. In addition, medieval courts used tents as a house. However, the

[92] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 8.; 257.; *Ato* Akililu Mulatu

palace of Ankober had used a permanent structure. Thus, in terms of spatial orientation the court of Ankober had very little similarities. Therefore, the court of Ankober had followed its own style of spatial orientation.

3.2. The Royal Court of Angolela

Angolela was served as the capital of the Shewan kingdom for the western portion of the kingdom. It was found in 1830 by the then king Sahel Selassie. It was the most preferable capital of the reigning king.[93] But sources said nothing why it was preferable by Sahle Selassie. It might have been partly because of its climatic condition. Ankobar was cold and windy when we compare to Angolela. Partly, because of its military strategic importance to made war campaign or check Oromo raids against his kingdom. Because of these or other the king spent most of his time at Angolela.[94]

According to Harris, in this alternative capital of the kingdom there were nearly 500 hats. These huts were built from loose stone walls and badly thatched. Near Angolela palace there was a historical church called *Kidane Meherat*. Harris gave detail narrations about the major layout of the palace. According to him, the palace defended by six rows of firm high palisades. He added that at the center of the palace campus there is a building of two stories. In the eyes of Harris the building lacks grace. The architect and builder of this palace was a man called Demetrius. He came to the kingdom of Shawa as visitor. Even though, Harris was not inspired by the palace architecture style but he said the palace of Angolala is superior in terms of architecture elements throughout the realm.[95]

Despite of Harris perceptions on the architectural elements of Angolela the archaeological remains shows us it was unique and fantastic in terms of its architectural elements. We have never seen such architectural achievement throughout Shewa until the first half of nineteenth centuries.

All the above discussion indicate us the king did not have amazing palace both in Ankobar and Angolela. His living residences and offices were made from local materials and they lack grace and durability.

[93] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 266.
[94] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.87.
[95] Ibid. p.88.

3.3. Administration Aspect the Royal court of Sahel Selassie

King Sahel Selassie was one of the strong rulers of the Shewa kingdom. Foreign sources show us his efforts to establish effective administer structure in his kingdom were so effective. Therefore, he established relatively firm and strong administrative apparatus to run his kingdom. These might have been helped the king and the kingdom of Shewa to have had superior political power over the neighboring people and political groups.

In this regard, sources in one way or the other shows the existence and running of the following administrative apparatus in the kingdom of Shewa.

3.3.1. Palace Administration

The royal court of Sahel Selassie had established firm and strong administrative structure and personals to run his kingdom as the whole in particular the palace daily routines. To run daily activities of the kingdom, there were various administrative offices and manufacturing units in in different parts of the kingdom particularly in Ankobar, Angolela and Debre Berhan. According to Harris, Krapf and Johnston the palace of Sahle Selassie encompass thousands of slaves who were working in different offices and manufacturing centers of the kingdom.[96]

They were engaged daily in the running of the day to day routines of the kingdom and producing different manufacturing goods and home utilities. In addition, the palace encompasses many thousands palace guards and warriors.[97] They helped to ensure smooth work flow of the palace. Ensuring peace and security of the palace and the kingdom might have been needed effective security structure.

In the day to day activities of the palace, numerous laborers and resources were also mobilized and utilized. In the time of Sahel Selassie there were monthly and annual holidays and seasonal festivity which also needed effective administrative structure. In this respect, European sources wrote about military ceremony in the day of Cross, religious commemoration days and regular military expeditions were best examples.[98] These all simply show us without firm palace administrative structure and harmonizing work flow such complicated duties could not be easily realized. Foreign sources mentioned different individuals with different responsibilities in the court of Sahle Selassie. Though we have limited sources about administrative structure of the kingdom we tried to develop the following structure.

[96] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 20.;see also C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.120. ; Charles, 1844, p.79.
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 20.;see also C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, pp.187-188.

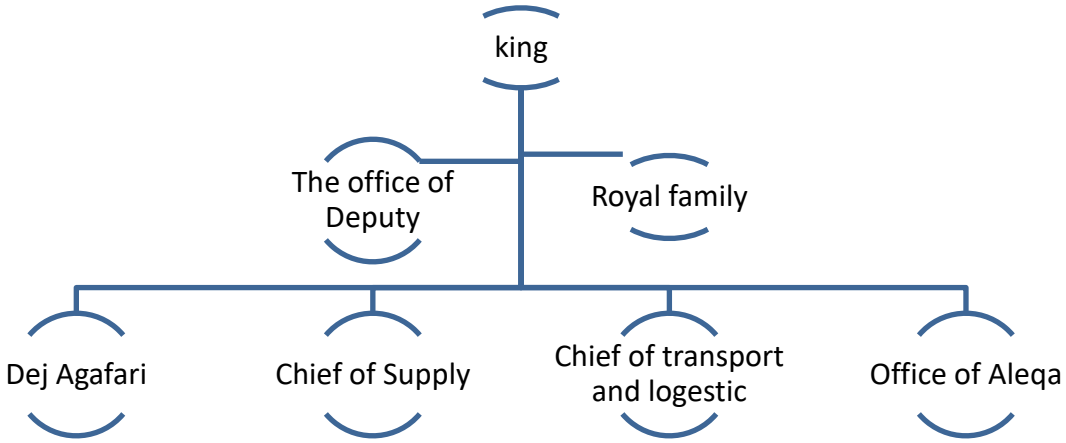


Figure 9: Chart of the administrative hierarchical structure of the royal court of Sahle Selassie

3.3.1.1. Higher Nobilities of the Kingdom

The king's *Meslene* or deputy bearing the traditional imperial title of *Liqe Mequwas*, had a special position among the court officials in the court of Sahle Selassie. Unlike money of the other high officials, he did not accompany the king when the king made military campaign. Rather the viceroy stayed at Ankober and maintained peace and order of the court. In the king's absence, he acted as king, took up residence in the palace and kept the town under strict supervision, being chiefs of the town guard. When the king was present he retired to his residence some distance behind the palace.[99]

In the traditional Shewan administrative structure *Dej Agafari* (guard), the chief of doorkeeper comes next to *Liqe Mequas*. *Dej Agafari* had many responsibilities in the court. One of his basic duties is introducing visitors to the king. The royal court had many local and foreign visitors. Thus serving these all guest were the responsibility of the office of *Dej Agafari*. In addition, he was serving as the master of ceremonies, royal herald and charge of the pages. The duties of *Dej Agafari* was not only limited to the palace. Since the holder of this title is known to have led considerable army detachments in the time of campaign.

Another important structure of the royal court is the office of *Azazh*. This office governed by a person under the title of *Azazh*. The *Azazh* or governor of Ankober was the chief supply official of the court. He was responsible for everything relating to the kitchen (*Me'ad-Bet*). He was responsible for the number of slaves in the kitchen, administration of tribute in which collected

[99] W.C. Harris, 1844,vol.2, p.40.

in the form of grain, sheep, poultry, royal store house and palace *me'ad- bet* through royal stewards (*Mislene*).[100]

When the *Azazh* took care of internal economy of the palace, he was supplemented by other officers, purveyor, for the distribution of the daily allowance of food (*Dergo*) to the guests of the court. This was a position of considerable political importance, since he was the chief of the *afero*, the crops of royal servants waiting on the visitors.[101]

The next two officers had military duties. The *Balderas*, "Master of the horse", commanded the house hold cavalry and was in charge of the royal stables, the harness and royal pastures. The potentially great power of the *Balderas* was checked by the royal body guard under the commander of a separate officer. Other court officials of some importance were the *Aleqas*, chief or officials appointed by the king to represent specific groups at court. Thus there was an *Aleqa* for the church, the primarily link between the king and local churches.[102] The *Aleqa* of the artesian, *tebebs*, was the chief smith, an important official who also acted as the king's body physician.[103] There was also an *Aleqa* for the royal herdsmen (*abilam*) , responsible for tribute in cattle and butter. Even the beggars had an *Aleqa*, a regular office with land attached to it.

3.3.2. Lower nobles and servants of the Royal court of Sahle Selassie

For proper functioning and running of the royal court and the political seat, there were numerous servants and lower court officials serving the king, engaged themselves in different duties of the palace administration and serving guests of the palace. In this regard, an interesting group of nobles group was called *balmuwals.* These were recruited from the sons of the nobilities. They were among the king's closest attendants and they were also appointed as *baldereba*, a guests' representative at court, their chiefs' supervisor is *Dej Agafari*.[104]

Another group of no less importance was the 300-400 *afros*. They were the distributer of *dirgo* under the authority of the purveyor general, they served as royal messengers and they accompanied important travelers. The *afro* also served as a king of secret police, an important part of their duty was to report each and every activities to the king which undergone in the kingdom.[105]

[100] *Ibid.*,p.40.
[101] *Ibid.*,p.13.
[102] William Cornwallis, Harris, 1844, Vol.3, p.24.
[103] *Ibid.*,p.158.
[104] *Ibid.*,p.160.
[105] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, 1843, p.280.

The clergy was represented by a number of priests, the dwarf father confessor having great influence with devout king. Furthermore, the relationship to the church was important factor in the politics of the kingdom. Also from an ecclesiastical background were the *debters.* They were non ordained students of theology. Many of them were engaged in copying sacred manuscripts, they also performed important tasks in the central administration, registering all tributes and writing letters to other princes.[106]

The court also included a number of choristers (*azmari*), 156 in all. They were divided in to groups serving one month each. They were employed both on state occasions, on campaigns and especially during the night, their song presumably guarding the king against evil spirits.[107]

3.3.3. Palace Soldiers and Police Forces

An important political structure in the kingdom of Shewa, was the military organization commanded by palace officials. Best known among these is the royal bodyguard, consisting of a thousand of musketeers, it was divided into three division. Each division served one week rotation, and was divided into four companies.[108] In addition to the regular forces, there was a reserve of older gunmen, called upon only for campaigns. Thus, while the number of musketeers on ordinary duty was 300 - 400, their numbers during campaigns increased to 500 or more.[109]

Due to the importance of this force, consisting both in its powerful weapons and in its access to the king, loyalty of the musketeers was crucial importance. They were rarely recruited from the Shewan population; the majorities were trusted slaves born in the king's service, while another element was made up of Wallo immigrants, until the latter were discharged in may1842. They also enjoyed a favorite position, both in honor and material benefits.[110]

The household cavalry, under the commanded of Malaku, is little known, may be due to the fact that its weapons were the same as the Shewan forces in general. It might have had high quality," the flower of the Christian lances", and was probably of no less size than the bodyguard.[111]

[106] C. Johnston, 1844, pp.290 - 291.
[107] C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, 1843,p.211.
[108] Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of Prices. The Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855*;(London, 1968),p.175.
[109] C. Johnston, 1844, pp.75 - 76.
[110] *Ibid.*,p.376-77.
[111] Major W. Cornwallis Harris, 1844,vol.2, pp.81; 175.

Another force being distinguished from the quotas of the territorial governors were the *abi lam*, the royal herdsmen. They did not mingle with the population at the large and performed army service under a special officer, a court favorite and renowned warrior.[112]

3.4. Running of the Royal court

One of the most important issues which required efficient administration in the royal court of Sahle Selassie was probably the question of how the palace supports life of big population who reside in and around the palace. This must be required efficient and enough resources administration and mobilization. One way of resources mobilization was described by S. Egg. According to him the palace had got agricultural resources from the state land (*gendebel meret)* in the nearby areas.[113] In addition to this, the kingdom mobilized huge amount of resources in the form of tax and tributes in his realm.[114]Harris on the other hand stated that king Sahle Selassie had huge granaries which used to accumulate resources which might have been brought in the form of tax and tributes.[115] He added that in the time of famine the king distribute grain from these stores for drought victims in his court.[116]

These all resources mobilized through different means had given the palace and the king the chance to provide enough rations to the guest who came to the palace in search of justice and visit. In addition, this also gives chance for the court to support the huge palace population who entirely depend on the palace economy.

Therefore, these and other activities undergone in the royal court of Sahel Selassie required effective administrative apparatus. In this regard, travellers of the period gave us some pictures about the existence of such structure and responsible bodies.

3.5. The Royal court Guests and Banquet Services

The palace of Sahel Selassie had visited by many local and foreign guests. Governors of his provinces were expected to come to his court to visit him regularly and sometimes they might be arbitrarily called by the court. Many residents of the kingdom also came to the court mostly for seeking justice. In addition to this, there were a number of foreigners who came and reside in the court of Sahel Selassie for personal interest or as an ambassador of their respective

[112] *Ibid*.,p.99.
[113] S, Ege, 1978, p.96.
[114]W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 275. See also Yeshiwas Eskeziaw, *A history of Gebr in the kingdom of Shewa: Taxation, tribute and State (18th – 19th C.)*, Unpublished MA Thesis (Däbrä Bərhan university, 2015), p. 80.
[115] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.18.
[116] Ibid.

government. Because of the absences of accommodation guests of the palace required daily provision from the king dining table or ration.

In the time of Sahle Selassie this provision which delivered for all guests administered by chief of supply of the royal court of Sahle Selassie called *Azazh* Walda Cherkos. He was responsible for the head of royal kitchen.[117] Krapf also mentioned names like Beru who communicate him with the king.[118] Krapf said Biru brought sheep and bread for us and he asked me what I want in the name of the king.[119] In addition, they mentioned a person called Sertse Wold who is a responsible for dealing about foreign guests in the court of Sahle Selassie. Probably, he was the head of the office of *dej Agafari* in the late 1830's and early 1840's. According to them, Sertse Wold ordered his boys (servants of his office) to delivered a house for them in Debre Berhan.[120] They expressed the kind and amount of ration they received from this person in the name of the king. Local guests were also got their daily food from the royal kitchen of the king. For foreigners daily food (ration) services were delivered by porters of the palace door to door in the living residence areas of the guests.[121]

In addition to this, the king kitchen gave services for the residents of Ankobar once daily. However, sources failed to discuss how Walda Cherkos run this daily service from sorting out those guests who allowed to participating and how they engaged in banquet of the king.

Even though, we said we are not clear enough about how each and every activities going on regarding ration distribution. However, it must have clear structure and responsible individuals who were working with the leadership of Walda Cherkos. There were some indications for the existence such structure and responsible individuals. Probably relating to this duty like identifying, registering, providing resting room, and communicate these guests with the king might have been the daily duty of the office of Walda Charkos.

Johnston in this regard said until the king being ready and allowed to see guests; guests were stayed in a hall which was built outside the palace enclosure for this purpose.[122] Johnston himself was stayed in this hall until he was allowed to enter to the palace enclosure. The responsible personals were began to arrange the issue and guests according to their rank and transferred the issue to the office of the king. Finally, the issue which is critical might be

[117] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 40.
[118] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 112.
[119] Ibid.
[120] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 122. See also C. Johnston, 1844, p. 164.
[121] *Ibid*.
[122] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 286.

seriously deal by the king and his office. They reached agreement and consensus about the issue. Then they communicate with their guests according to their rank. The king and his personnel gave direction and justice for their visitors. In doing so, they provide food and other services to the guest from the king kitchen and royal store daily until the king left the court.[123]

Therefore, from the above discussion we clearly understand that the issues of guests were administered by its own administrative structure.

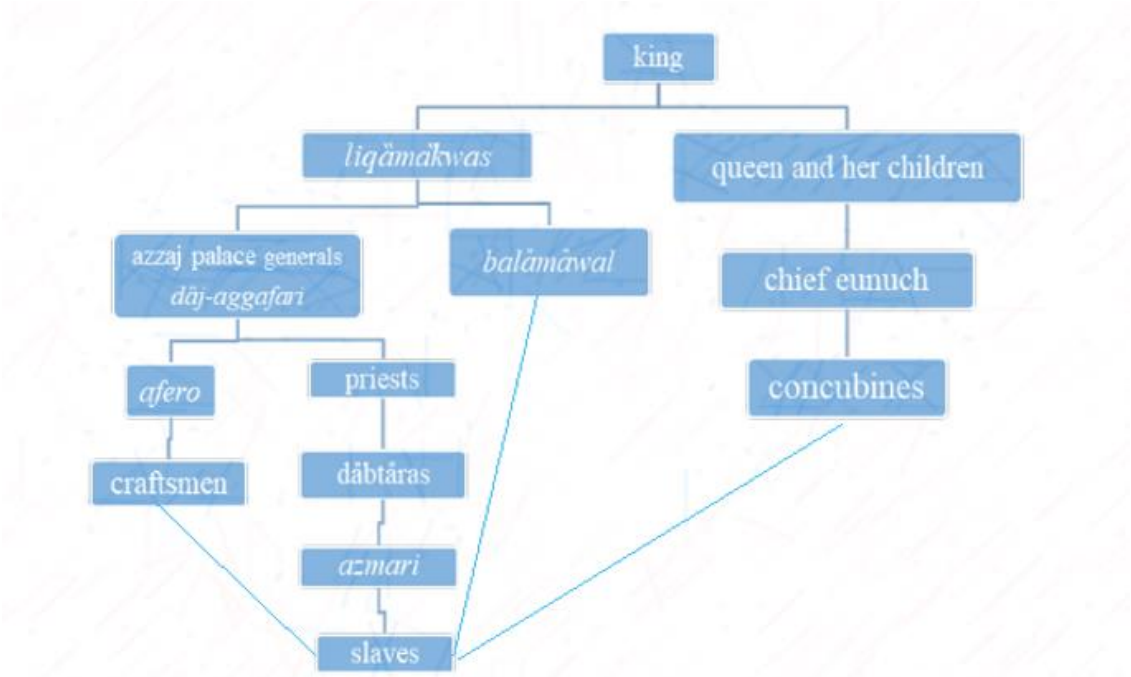


Chart. 2. Hierarchical order of the Šäwan royal court

Figure 10: Palace Personnel according to status Source: Mikiyas Tewodros. "Bête Negus the Royal Architecture of Šäwa" (1813-1886).'' (MA Thesis (Debre Birhan University, Department Of History and Heritage Management 2018).

3.6. The Issue of Administering Peace and Security of the kingdom

The other aspect of administrative structure of the royal court of Sahle Selassie was how the court in particular, the kingdom in general maintains peace and order of the people. In this regard, Isenberg, Johnston and Harris stated that the kingdom had developed in Ankobar town strict surveillance of strange individuals in each entrance of the town. Harris in this respect stated that, a group called *afero* or Janissary was assigned as spy over each action of the foreigners. Each and every action of these strangers was report to their immediate supervisors'

[123] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 222. See also C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 183.

purveyor general.[124] Nobody allowed entering to the town without the permission of the king or viceroy.[125] This idea strengthens by krapf. He told us he was stopped by guards of the town when he tried to enter to the town of Ankober in his return back from Angolela.[126]

In addition, Johnston also told us the measures taken by governors when any one violates the laws of the state. He wrote about the detaining of his Ethiopian agent when he brought him to Angolela without the permission of the king.[127] This clearly indicates us, there was strict peace and security maintaining culture in the town and throughout the kingdom. On the other hand, guests were allowed to enter and left the town of Ankabar by the recognition of the palace.

This simply shows us the palace had clear structure with responsible individuals to administered peace and order of the town and the kingdom. In the absence of the king this duty run and administered by *Ato* Kidana wold. He was the viceroy of the king.[128] In addition, there seems have a structure established in the kingdom to supervise robbers. In this regard, Krapf told us about a person whose name is *Ato* Lebeshi(probably Shibeshi) who is responsible in chasing and handling of robberies throughout the kingdom.[129]

3.6.1. The Office of Pen

According to Charles Johnston, one of the strong offices of the court of Sahel Selassie was the office of pen. He said this office was responsible for maintaining historical and religious records. Manuscripts which were available in the kingdom of Shewa written by Ge'ez literature were transcribed by the clerk of the king. He added that the king was cautious about historical significance of ancient manuscripts and he rigorously working to protect from any kind of damage and lost by copying the materials which was considered important. He added that the king invest his huge amount of his resources for this purpose.[130]

One of such instance was clearly describe by Charles Johnston. He described that the king sent his scribes to us to write what we are doing. Thus, this clearly indicate us the court of Sahel Selassie follow the medieval Ethiopian culture of recording the daily activities of the King. What make special to king Sahel Selassie was his devotion to record his government activities.

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[124] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 18
[125] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, pp.114. W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.259
[126] *Ibid*.
[127] Ibid. 1843, p. 193.
[128] He is alone and nether wife nor child. Sixty years old. Governor of Ankobar and president *madibet* . Controller of all the royal porter and the house hold slaves. He is also receiver general. An administrator of the interior economy of the palace. W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, pp. 38 – 39.
[129] *Ibid*.
[130] C. Johnston, 1844, pp. 290 – 291.

Even though, there was a good culture of scribe in the reign of Sahel Selassie. But, we still could not find detailed local records about king Sahel Selassie and his reign. Most sources about his period get from European sources. Though, Johnston said the king invests his resources on transcribing and recording documents but there is no archive to ensure this historical commitment of the king in Ankobar or elsewhere. It might have probably these documents were taken by king Tewodros II in his campaign against Shewa in 1855.[131]

3.6.2. Justice in the royal court of Sahel Selassie

Justice system had a very firm tradition in the history Ethiopia. Francisco Alvarez in his famous book in title *Etiyopiyan Portuguezoch Endayuat* which was translate by Girma Beshah told us deep description about justices system in medieval Ethiopia particularly in the reign of Lebne Dengel(1508 – 1540). According to Alvarez's description in medieval Christian kingdom of Ethiopia justices system was structured from lower level to ultimate crown court (*zufan chilot*) of the king. He gave us detailed practical justices practices at each stages of the justice system. He adds that the justices system of the kingdom dealt the issue with verbal means. The procedure lacks record in written form.[132]

Though, Ethiopia had very long history of written tradition and its various system of the state also relied on written and customary laws. But, Alvarez told us the justice system lacks recording of the issues presented in various levels of court throughout the kingdom. Contrary to this, in those old days the system employed modern justice technics like appointment. Appointment in justice system might have been difficult to practice without written recording system.[133] Therefore, Alvarez description in regarding documentation using written materials seems have been missed some issues.

James Bruce also described about the prevalence of king crown court in the Gonderian period. He said the king sit down for delivering justices for his people in the castle of Gondar

[131] Ritta Pankhurst, *The library of Emperor Tewdros II at Meqdela* ,school of Oriental and Africa studies, 1973, Vol., 36, No., 1, Cambridge University Press.

[132] Germa Bäshah, (*trans*.) ኢትዮጲያን ፖርቱጋሎች ኦንዳይዋት: ሊዝበን፡ ሴነተሮ ዲ ኢስቱዶስ፣ 1966 E.C.(F. Alvarez, trans. Germa Beshah, *Etiyopiyan portugaloch Endayut.* Lisbon, Centro de Estudos, 1966 E. C.), pp. 325-326.

[133] *Ibid*.

immediately after he eat his breakfast.[134] Similarly, in the royal court of Sahel Selassie similar tradition was existed in the kingdom of Shewa.

In this regard, Krapf described about king Sahle Selassie's justice system. He said the king take a seat at stage to deliver justices with unusual appearance with many decorations in the door his palace. The king accompanied with his respected governors and judges. And they were covered by Persian and Turkish curtain.[135]

The contemporary European visitor of the court of Shewa, Charles Johnson gave more description about the justice system of king Sahle Selassie. Charles said before the sun is raising I heard a sound "*abeit, abeit, abeit*….". When I asked about the issue they told me they are the people who came to the palace in search of justices from the king crown court. They continued like this until the king messenger came and listen theirs grievance and took their petition to the king. He added that they came to this final crown court by presenting their issues through each levels of court found indifferent structure of the kingdom. In addition, he says the king is easily accessible, listener and good judge of his people.[136]

Johnston added that issues came to crown court were the most selected ones. According to him issues like theft is not came to the king crown court. An issue related to theft is most of the time treated at the local level. Most of the decisions against theft were made confiscate the property of the thief and return back the looted property for the right owner. In addition, the theft might have been faced physical punishment.[137] Such kind of punishment is common throughout medieval and early modern Ethiopian history.[138] Though issues related with bribery mostly treated at local level. But, Charles said those victims who need to appeal their issues to the crown court they have full right to do so.[139]

In addition to, the above formal justices system of the Shewan kingdom, Johnston described about the traditional approaches of settling disputes in the community. In this regard, the role of elders and religious personnel were treated well. He says the accused and the accuser gave

[134] J. Bruce, *Travels to discover the source of Nile in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771,1772 and 1773*, Vol. 3., (Edinburgh: J. Ruthven, 1970), P.265.
[135] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 134.
[136] C. Johnston, 1844, pp. 141 – 142.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Girma Beshah, 1966. pp. 311 – 312.
[139] Charles, J. 1844, p. 316.

their oath by putting their hands on the Bible. After that, elders and religious persons tried to mediate the accused and the accuser and finally they tried to solve the issue.[140]

In Ethiopia court tradition, courts are highly respected institution like the king. In this regard, Girma described how court is respected in medieval Ethiopia. According to him, anybody who made walk along the street of the court in the time of Lebne Dengel(1508 – 1540) they are obliged to climbing down from their mule and nobody allowed to enter to the court room without permission.[141]

There seems to have similar tradition in the time of Sahel Selassie. European sources show us Sahel Selassie's crown court done at square in front of his palace residence. Johnston and Krapf describe how the litigation between the accused and the accuser conducted in the palace.[142] *Liqe kahnat* Kalehiwot H/wold a well-known informant about a history of Ankobar and the Shawan kingdom gives us a very detailed account about justices system of the court. His descriptions attested existence ceremonial like justices system in the court of Sahel Selassie.[143]

According to him in the court of king Sahel Selassie there was an organ which runs justice system of the kingdom. This organ is called "*Ye Hizb Shengo*" or people council. It seems a council of people. According to *Liqe Kahanat* Kalehiwot H/wold this organ existed since ancient time. He explains how this organ runs it duties. He said the accuser came and presents his issues to *Ye Hizb Shengo* and the people began to challenge the issue. The judges simple observe and lesson the critics forwarded by the crowd who gathered in the people council. However, according to *Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot H/wold the final decision is given to the professional judges who sat in their chairs or if the king is present the ultimate decisions were made by the king. The informant tells us this council was not elected representative of the people. Rather people who gather in court square have the right to attend and gave their opinion about the issue presented in the court. However, the idea have seems not plausible. Because, to give comment about legal issues awareness and knowledge about legal procedure and related issue. If this structure existed as the informant thought it might be worked based on selected literate representatives of the people.

[140] *Ibid*.
[141] Girma Beshah, 1966. P. 325.
[142] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, P. 183., . C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 222.
[143] *Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot H/wold is a well-known oral informant about a history of Shewan kingdom in particular a history of Ankobar. He is also known in his religious knowledge in the area. He has responsibility in the werda synods.

He added that there was another structure in the Shewan justice system which deals about slave and slavery of the kingdom which is called "*Yenetsa Bariya Dagna*" or Judge of Free slave.[144]

According to *him,* judge of free slaves worked on issues related to slave. In the kingdom of Shawa there were a number of slaves who gave different labor and technical service for the kingdom and personal slave holders. Slaves who claimed victim can have the right to apply for judge of free slaves. The judges have the right to decide as far as made slaves free for life from slavery.[145]

Therefore, these all sources indicate us the royal court of Sahel Selassie seems had its own well established justice system. In addition, the time seems had very fair system of justice and judge which were easily accessible for victims' even slaves.



[144] *Ibid*.
[145] *Ibid*.

Photo10: The remains of Crown court site of Sahle Selassie. (Photo by Yeshiwas Ekeziaw, 2021)

3.6.3. Entertainment in the royal court of Sahle Selassie

Entertainment is one aspect of life in the royal court of Ethiopian kings. It encompasses huge amount of residents with different responsibilities. They were engaged with varies tiresome activities to run the court life properly. However, we are not clear enough about what kinds of leisure time were commonly practiced in the palace community especially the royal family.

Mehateme Selassie in his book entitle *Zekre Neger* described about the well-known entertainments and leisure time which commonly practiced by the nobles and royal families in the history of Ethiopia. He categorized them as plays and even some of them were consider as skill. Sons of medieval Ethiopian kings, higher nobilities and lords were expected to have such skills.[146]

Though, Mehateme Selassie and others did not mention such skills are important for assuming political position and get respect from the community. But in reality enjoying these plays and being capable of these expected skills had brought respect and social recognition in the state and the community as well.

Mehateme Selassie in his respected work gave us good explanation about these play and skills which practiced in royal families and nobilities in medieval and post medieval Ethiopia. He grouped horse riding, swimming, hunting, and table play are skills and he grouped *mekt (ምክት)* , *Kimemetosh* (*ቆምምጦሽ*) , *Shimt* (ሽምጥ), *Gena(ገና), Regeta(ረገጣ)* and the likes under plays. There were also skills grouped under mathematical play were *Akandira*(*ኦከነደራ*), *Gebta*(*ገበጣ*), and *Teleten(ቴለቴን).* Furthermore, *Mesenko, washint, kerar*, and *embelta* grouped under melody skills.[147]

Ideas which are rose by Mehateme Selasssie's book supported by *Liqe Kahnat* Kelehiwot Habtewold. According to him especially hunting was the common practices of nobles and

[146] Mahtämä Səllase, 1962. E.C., pp. 887 - 889.
[147] *Ibid.*

kings. He said a man who cannot kill a wild beast called *Yeye(ፉፉ)* could not consider as a hero in his community.[148]

In the court of Sahle Selassie the king and his family as well as his close relative chiefs were also participated and enjoyed different kinds of entertainments. In this regard, the contemporary European missionaries and travelers who visited the court of Sahle Selassie give us much description about how residents of the royal palace enjoy their leisure time. In this regard, Charles Johnston stated that King Sahle Selassie takes rest from government responsibilities one or two times a year for about fifteen days.[149] He added that the king built a Mylones kind of house for this recreation time.[150] Though he failed to tell us what he did and enjoy his leisure time in this recreation week.

Krapf also narrated when the king made his campaign against neighboring territories; he was accompanied with twelve singers. According to him these singers celebrate the king and his soldiers since midnight and continued until the sun is rise. He added that in Ankobar there were 156 musicians (*Azimaris*). They pleased the king and the virgin Maryam.[151]

Though Krapf says the king enjoyed the traditional music when he made a military campaign and even in his palace with numerous musicians in the court. But this explanation seems vague. Because, Krapf descriptions seems have not plausible. Is this a traditional music or religious hymens used to honor the king and religious icons? As we know in traditional Ethiopian religious individuals always accompanied kings and his army in their campaign. It might have been this tradition was also continued in the reign of Sahle Selassie.

Krapf added about the king leisure time. He said the king enjoyed his spare time by hunting wield animals like Buffalo. In this regard, he described his engagement in hunting buffalo and elephant while his was in campaign against his neighbor.[152] Krapf said that hunting in the people of Shewa was a highly celebrated and respected practice.[153] Harris also described about traditional instrument which made from horse hair, wood and other materials which commonly called *Mesinko.*[154] He said *Mesinko* is used for celebrating the king and his family.

[148] *Liqe Kahinat* Kalehiwot Habtewold.
[149] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 287.
[150] Ibid.
[151] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, P. 211.
[152] *Ibid*.
[153] Ibid, p. 213.
[154] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.80.

Therefore, like medieval Ethiopia kings the residents of the royal court enjoyed their leisure time by using traditional music and musical instruments as well as through engaging themselves in hunting practices. Sources clearly indicate us king Sahle Selassie had numerous traditional musicians with their own traditional musical instruments. He was accompanied with these musicians when he made military campaign.

3.6.4. Religious life of Sahel Selassie

Religion and Ethiopian kings have strong ties since long time. Particularly, in medieval Ethiopia state and church had close relation for mutual benefits. This idea strongly supported by many Ethiopian and foreign writers. Medieval kings of Ethiopia sponsored the church in different aspects whereas the church also expected to bless the state and its rulers.[155]

Sources indicate us like his predecessors king Sahel Selassie had strong attachment with the Church.[156] He spent his much resource in constructing churches in his realms and also provides different gifts for different churches of the realms. According to *Liqe Kahn* Kalehiwot H/wold king Sahel Selassie was take his kingship in the church of savior of the world (*Medhanealem*) in Ankobar in Oct. 22 1813. He added that the king invest his resources to build 41 churches throughout Shewa. Among these churches St, Michael was the first one which established in 1816.[157]

According to *Melaeke Mihret Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh the head of St, Michael church, the king had strong connection with this church. St, Michael church is located north of the king palace in the nearby. The priest said the king had attended Sunday morning pray in this church when the king was present in his palace in Ankobar.[158] Similar tradition also described by James Bruce in Gonder. He said the king had visited the church usually in the morning.[159] *Memhir* Zenebe added that there is a religious book which is used to pray by the king in the church of St. Michael. In addition, king Sahel Selassie handover his crown and different manuscripts for the church. Moreover, the king had brought religious painter from Gondar to decorate St. Michael church with religious painting which is still exist in St. Michael Church.[160]

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[155] Taddesse Tamrat, 1972, p. 107.

[156] Abbiye was to eager to replace some of the churches destroyed by the war of Ahmed Gragn. One of the church built by Abbiye was St. Michael Church of Doqaqit. This is one of the seat of the Shewan kingdom before he pushed his territory established its capital at Har Amba. Abbiye was ruler who remember in the history of Shewa who asserting the independence. Donald N. Levin, *Wax and Gold: tradition and innovation in Ethiopia*(Chicago, the university of Chicago press,), p. 33.

[157] *Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot Habtewold

[158] *Melaeke Mihret Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh head of Church of St. Michael at Ankobar.

[159] J. Bruce, 1770, Vol. *III*., p. 265.

[160] *Melaeke Mihret Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh.



Figure 11: The current picture of St. Michael Church in Ankobar. (Photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw in 2021)

Harris and Krapf described about Sahel Selassie's religious engagement in different churches of the Shewan kingdom. Harris said the king go to St, Michael church early in the morning and return back after blessing.[161] He added that when he made campaign he took the ark of covenant of St. Michael cathedral church with him.[162] Krapf also stated about the king engagement of the celebration of *abune* Tekle Haymanot commemoration on the days of Aug.30 in Ankobar which was the second church which was built by King Sahle Selassie. Krapf added that the king invite us to visit *Debre* Libanos Church which was construct to honor *abune* Tekele Haymanot the well-known religious personality of medieval Ethiopia later he was honored as saint. He is commemorating on the days of Aug. 30 every year. Krapf said the king told us I came here to protect followers of the church from any kinds of raids. And Krapf added that, he even directly engaged in providing holy water for the participant of the feast by using his own objects.[163]

[161] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.20.
[162] Ibid, p. 167.
[163] C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 103.; 255.

Moreover, the king had great attention for religious hymen. He follows and attended religious honor and hymens which made by religious men for the king and God. In addition, the king kissed the cross in different occasion when he met the *comuos* or *abun*. [164] Harris in this regard stated that the *comuos* the head of the church of the kingdom was highly respected by the King.[165] When the king return back from his military expedition priest made warm reception by singing religious hymens in the get of Angolela town.[166]

Harris, Krapf and oral informants indicated us when the king commemorate these religious days he afford gift for the needy people who were come to the church. The king provided cloth, salt, money and other gift for these destitute subjects.[167]

Moreover, Krapf gave us description about how epiphany celebrates in the town of Ankobar in the days of Sahle Selassie. Krapf said five churches of Ankobar begun to ready for celebration of epiphany. They came out from their respective church and met at a place called *Arada* in front of the main get of the palace. The governor of the town received them in honor. The people and religious men who gathered at *Arada* wear white cloth. They celebrate by hymens and traditional music. And they descended downward to Ayrara River. Here they plant their own tent alongside of the river and spent the whole night by singing religious songs.[168]

Travellers and missionaries also gave us description about how the king spent fasting days particularly the feast of St. Maryam (*Filseta*). Krapf said the king went out of Ankobar to the church which found in the *Mehal Wonz* to spend the fifteen days of feast. William Harris on the other hand said in the time of feast the king and the people of Shewa completely abandoned from eating animal products.[169]

These all points clearly indicate that king Sahel Selassie had strong connection with the church and he had great devotion and commitment for veneration of religious principle of his religion. And therefore, he invests his all resources to expansion of the church and gave due attention for the church and its believer.

3.6.5. Slavery in the court of Sahel Selassie.

[164] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 255.
[165] Ibid, p. 18.
[166] Ibid.
[167] *Ibid*.; W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.255.
[168] . W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, pp. 183 – 184.
[169] Ibid, p. 85, 87.; W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.223.

Slave and slavery had a very important position in the socio economic and political life of human society. Particularly in ancient and medieval even recent modern world economy and political system entirely depend on labor source which obtained from slaves. In ancient and medieval times of human history agricultural, home labor, transportation and other economic sector needed extensive engagement of slaves in most parts of the world.

It is also similar in the case of Ethiopia. Slave and slavery had played key roles in the socio economic life of traditional Ethiopia. Slaves in Ethiopia were mostly engaged in labor related engagement. Both male and female slaves were common in each house hold of rich individuals and nobles as well as the royal family of Ethiopian society.

Similarly, in the kingdom of Shewa, slaves were important personnel of the kingdom. Travellers, missionaries and other sources gave us detailed account about the number and role of slaves in the reign of Sahle Selassie. All sources agree that there were many thousands of slaves in the court of Sahel Selassie. According to Krapf, Charles and Harris most of the labor needed and craft manufacturing related activities were done by slaves. They added that in the kingdom of Shewa, significant numbers of soldiers were also recruited from slaves.[170] This indicated us slaves were engaged as a military combatants of the kingdom.

Krapf added that in the different seats of King Sahle Selassie there were hundreds of slaves and they were engaged in different labor and skill required duties. He said that there were 300 slaves engaged in grading, similar number of slaves engaged fetching water, 200 cookers and this much number of slaves engaged in preparing hydromel[171] and *tela*[172]. Most of these slaves were females. He said male slaves were mostly engaged themselves in collecting fire wood.[173] Harris also wrote similar idea about slaves. He gave us detailed account about where they live.[174] According to Charles Johnston most of these female slaves were lived in the king palace. However, Charles says significant number of slaves were lived outside the palace.[175] But this idea does not mean there were no slaves lived in the court of Sahel Selassie.

[170] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.228.; see also W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.120.; Charles, J. 1844, p. 79.
[171] An alcoholic drink which is locally manufactured from honey which is commonly called *tej* in Ethiopia. Mostly found and used by noble and respected individuals.
[172] It is a kind of weak alcoholic drink manufactured from sorghum and maize. Contrary to hydromel it is found in most ordinary peoples of Ethiopia.
[173] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, pp.120-121.
[174] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.257.
[175] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 79.

Harris stated about kitchen and manufacturing centers which mostly staffed by slaves of the court. He said in one quarter of Sahel Selassie palace under a single kitchen roof there were a number female slaves whom they were engaged in preparing hydromel/*tela*, in the next room there were slaves engaging themselves in preparing flat cakes[176], in the other room there were slaves engaged in grinding. In the other section of manufacturing room there were slaves engaging in preparing wax. This is badly needed as source of light for the palace and court residents as a whole. Even though, Harris highly criticized the durability and the services of the wax. Harris said it is only lasted for ten minutes. He said because of this it is seriously challenged their daily writing and reading activities. He added that there were also slaves engaging in tailor, curriers, blacksmith and other activities in the other section of the manufacturing room.[177]

From the above discussion we clearly understand that slaves had key role in the socio economic and political life of the Shewan kingdom. Most of the daily routine activities related with preparation of food and alcohol drink for the king and all residents of the palace was imposed upon slaves' labor.

In addition, they exhaustively engaged in preparing tents and clothes for the king, royal families, soldiers and the like. They also engaged aggressively in the preparation and maintenances of transport and war materials for expeditions for combatants. Therefore, in the reign of Sahel Selassie slaves were important for healthy functioning of the kingdom.

3.6.6. Daily Life in the Court of Sahle Selassie.

3.6.6.1. Royal Kitchen (*Me'ad Bet*)

Until the reign of Haile Selassie I regime the royal kitchen had expected to provide food provision for large number of people. According to M, Kropp banquet in traditional Ethiopia seen as a means to share the national resources of the kingdom to its people. The king seems have responsibility to provide provisions for his court residents, respected guests, governors and others a banquet services in his royal kitchen daily and in holidays.[178] This tradition has seems had big and expected responsibility of Ethiopian Kings.[179]

[176] Foreign sources gives some descriptions about a traditional diet mostly food in Ethiopia they called flat cake. This is made from sorghum and *teff*. This commonly referred to us *injera*.
[177] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 258.
[178] Manfred Kropp, 1988, Vol. 10, No. 23, Michigan University, p, 51
[179] Mahtämä Səllase, 1962, pp. 7-8.

In this regard, sources indicate us in the reign of Sahle Selassie this tradition was also common. His kitchen was busy in providing food and provisions services for a number of residents of the court, guests and many thousand palace guards' ones daily.[180] This population have engaged in royal banquet from the king table. They eat *shrow wot* with *Injera.* In occasional festivals the royal banquet provides raw meat with special ways.[181] William Harris the head of British mission in the court of Sahle Selassie had provided highlight about the royal kitchen of Sahle Selassie. He said the royal kitchen (*me'ad bet*) is found in one quarter of his court. This idea is strengthen by my informant *Ato* Akililu Mulatu.[182]

In this royal kitchen there were different sections which are responsible for processing different kinds of diet and beverage. Harris said the first apartment is engaging with manufacturing of beer and hydromel. In the other class there are servants engaging themselves in making flat cakes (*Injera*). There is also a section people engage in grinding corn.[183] In the other compartment there were also people engaging themselves in preparing red pepper. According to Harris in each section of the kitchen rooms there were supervisors who control the proper running of the Kitchen activities. These responsible bodies were called eunuchs.[184]

In related to this point Charles Johnston also described about the source of energy for the kitchen of royal court. He said firewood is the major sources of energy for the kitchen of royal court. It is collected from the nearby forest from *kundi*[185] and *wuf washa*[186] forest. Many hundred male slaves were engaging in collecting olive oil and *tid* tree for fire wood. He added that the king kitchen had never used the manure of the animals.[187] That is common among the ordinary people of the kingdom.

In addition to this, Krapf raised related idea with royal kitchen. He said when the king made military campaign he a campaigned with his 20 wives who were responsible in preparing his daily food.[188] This might have clearly indicated us servants and equipment required for preparation of food were also transported with the campaigners'. Krapf failed to describe either

[180] C. Johnston, 1844, p.77.
[181] Ibid.
[182] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 286.; see also *Ato* Akililu Malatu..
[183] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.286.
[184] *Ibid*.
[185] Kundi is one of the highest mountains in the eastern escapement of the Shewan Plateau. This is found near Ankobar and served as one of the seat of the shewa Kings.
[186] It is the reserved forest area since medieval post medieval Ethiopia. It served as a source of firewood and construction material for the royal court of Shewa.
[187] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.78.
[188] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.188.

food is prepared in each camping site or transported already prepared food and drinking materials from Ankobar and Angolela royal court.

In this respect, Alvarez in medieval Ethiopia said in the time of Lebne Dengel(1508 – 1840) while the king made travel to different places accompanied with one pot of hydromel, hundred full straw basket flat cakes (*moseb injera)*. These activities have six waiters and supervisors.[189] According to our informant *Liqe Kahen* Kelehiwot H/wold in the kitchen of Sahel Selassie there were thirteen thousand slaves who were engaged directly or indirectly in the process of preparation of royal diet. He added that there were serious labor divisions among these servants. He mentioned a section called *malefiya bet.* It was responsible for preparing a soup (*wet)* from liquid butter, *Wergenu*(butcher) a place prepared for slaughter of six thousand cattle, *Doyo bet* is also a kitchen responsible for processing food for fasting time. Moreover, there was a section for manufacturing hydromel and the like.[190]

Moreover, there were also sections in the court responsible for producing different utilities for the court by using byproducts of the kitchen. The first and the most important one is preparing candle (*Tuof*) for the royal court residents. Honey which is collected indifferent means especially in the form of tribute[191] was used for manufacturing hydromel. In addition to this honey is served for producing traditional candle.[192] Hides and skins also collected from butchers of the palace and transferred to section responsible for the preparation of writing manuscripts and bed sheet.

3.6.6.2. Food items in the Royal Court of Sahel Selassie

Ethiopia has developed its own unique food culture since ancient time. There is a peculiar food preparation method by using pouring different spices. Medieval sources particularly, the book of Alvarez gave us detailed account about food items which commonly found in the court of Lebne Dengel 1508 - 1540 in the early sixteen century. Similarly, other travellers and missionaries who visited the court of various Ethiopian kings in northern Ethiopia gave us description about diet type commonly found in Gonder and Shawan courts.[193]

Different missionaries and traveler documents as well as oral informants attested the continuation of this long established food culture in the reign of Sahle Selassie. Though sources are very limited how and what types of food tradition was dominated in the court of Sahle

[189] Girma Beshah, 1966. P. 231.
[190] *Liqe Kahen* Kalehiwot H/Wold.
[191] Yeshiwas Eskeziaw, 2015, P. 72.
[192] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.257.
[193] Girma Beshah, 1966. pp. 169 -170. See also; J. Bruce, 1770, Vol., pp. 265-266.; C. Johnston, 1844, p.193.

Selassie. However, there were fragmented sources about what is the major food items commonly found in the court of the king.

Almost all travellers and missionaries who visited the court of Sahel Selassie had got there daily food provision from the king kitchen. These travellers and missionaries repeatedly express the amount and types of food they received from the court of Sahel Selassie. In this regard, Krapf says the king sent bread and sheep for us and he asked me what I need.[194] Charles Johnston on the other hand described when he was at Angolela he received a white wheat bread through straw basket.[195] In the other occasions he said the king sent a goat, a westerner like bread, butter, and hydromel in the evening.[196] In addition he also mentioned about receiving a flat cake commonly called *Injera.* Even, lemons also send for European guests as a gift from the royal court.[197]

On the other hand Charles Johnston also gave some descriptions about the kind of diet the king eat. According to Johnston the king eat a diet prepared from fatten goat through salt and sorghum.[198] Moreover in the time of fasting people were eating bread, vegetable and stinging nettles.

The above discussions clearly show us the most common food in the court of Sahel Selassie was the products of animals' specially cattle, goat and sheep. *Injera*, bread, and *shero wot* was also common in the royal court of Sahle Selassie. On the other hand, in regard to drinking hydromel (*tej*), local beer called *tela* was commonly used.

3.6.6.3. Style of Cloth the court of Sahel Selassie.

In Ethiopian traditions the local society had their own dressing style which commonly referred to us cultural dress. This cultural dressing style continued as a dominant dressing style of the local people until western dressing style introduced. Most of the cultural cloth of the country is made of cotton. The local society called it *Shema*. Medieval sources indicate us the king, royal families and top nobilities were wear relatively decorated, expensive and sometimes imported cloths and shoes from the Far East and Mediterranean world.

In this regard, Alvarez stated that king Lebne Dengel in medieval Ethiopia wears long overcoat decorated with gold and the whole body of his mule also covered with decorated cloth. He

[194] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.112; 161.
[195] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 193.
[196] Ibid.; p. 163
[197] Ibid.; p. 139.
[198] Ibid.; p. 308.

added that when the king travel he climbed and ride his mule, put his crown over his head and there is also a cross in his hand.[199] When he expressed the dressing style of top nobilities, he said when they came to visit the court of the king until they allowed seeing the king they will dress poorly. They have not cloth above their heap, and put the sheep skin over their shoulder.[200] When the king allowed to see them they wear in good manner and accompanied with many followers.

Though, sources have not clear descriptions about the existence of such decorated cloths in the time of king Sahle Selassie 1813 – 1847. But, there are some limited descriptions about the dressing style of the royal court of Sahle Selassie's reign. King Sahle Selassie had very good attention for craftsmen and technology. According to Donald N. Levin most of the artesian work was done by *Flasha*[201] artisans. He added that they supported the kingdom to improve the quality of agriculture and warfare in Shewa.[202] One of the other focus areas which had given due attention in the eyes of Sahle Selassie was cloth producing unit of the court. According to Charles Johnston there were hundreds of women engaged in producing fine traditional cloths from cotton for the king, his families, his closest relatives and king's loyal governors.[203] The head of this fine cloth manufacturing unit was the wife of *Debtra* Gebre Selassie.[204] Charles Johnston described about the price of best cloth in Shewa. He said nice cloth in Shewa valued 30 dollars.[205] One occasions the king sent a precious cloth to queen victoria which was manufactured at Debre Berhan manufacturing Center.[206] He also sent a gift of Abyssinian dress and tiger (*gessila)* skin for the governor of Aden.[207]

Krapf also said the king send Ethiopian traditional cloth for each of us.[208] The king said the air condition is so cold. This might be meant you need cotton cloth locally made. Similar idea also raised by Charles. He said a traditional close send for me from the palace. And I wear Ethiopian dress. He gave us some description about the kind of the cloth the king offered for him. He said I wear a petticoat, a soft rope kind of belt around my waist and my leg below the

[199] Girma Beshah, 1966. p. 291.
[200] Ibid.; p. 330.
[201] Flasha are peoples of Ethiopia. Who originally lived in North West part of Ethiopia and they were very well known in crafts. Nowadays they are found in small group in different parts of Ethiopia. One of this group found around Ankober.
[202] D. N. Levine, 1965, pp. 33 – 34.
[203] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 80.
[204] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 120.
[205] *Ibid*.
[206] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 80.
[207] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p. 255.
[208] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.94.

knee is totally free. He added that there is a cloth called *meqenet* which round my body up to my shoulder. It is a long thin cloth made from cotton for supporting the body and used as a belt.[209] This is probably a kind of cloth commonly called *Shemma* (a kind of cloth made from cotton).

In addition, sources indicate us there was imported cloth which is used by king Sahel Selassie. The king used a red slipper and socks coming from Turkish. However, the king mostly used his traditional cloth when he was out of his court. He is mostly found in his bare foot.[210]

3.6.6.4. Royal Court Utilities in the Reign of Sahel Selassie.

One of the untouched issues in Ethiopian studies is objects which commonly used in traditional Ethiopia houses from local house to the palace. The kingdom of Shewa in general, in particular the reign of Sahel Selassie relatively well documented in different historical issues by foreign documents. There are historical issues still yet do not treat well. Artifacts are one of this.

In this regard, there were different artifacts used in the day to day life of the royal court of Sahle Selassie. There were some fragmented documents about these artifacts which were used in the royal court of Sahle Selassie.

Charles Johnston said when I met with the king to make conversation with him an ox skin laid down over a bedstead like structure which is little raise over the surface.[211] This is mostly used as setting chair and sleeping bed in traditional Ethiopia. This is commonly called *medeb*. This might have been clearly indicating us chair and a table for the guest were little furnished even in the royal court. In traditional Ethiopia skins which get from cattle, sheep, goat and other animals had multiple used. Skin is used for making poor dress, lead down over the bed (bedstead), and bag as container. In this regard Johnston said when the people made travel they used a bag made from goat skin as a container to transport their utilities.[212]

Charles Johnston on the other hand gave as some descriptions about the different kinds of utilities in the house of Mesqelo who is one of the upper nobility in the court of Sahle Selassie. He was the head of slaves of the court. Johnston described the house of Mesqelo as follows. He said his house is made of splinted ted and has two circular walls and four feet distant far

[209] C. Johnston, 1844, p. 305.
[210] *Ibid*.
[211] Ibid, p. 306.
[212] Ibid, p. 164.

way each. In one section of the house there was a bedstead covered with Ox skin. In the other section of the house there were a number of jars containing *tela*, grains, and water. In one sections the house there is a pedestal hand mills and the like.[213] This indicated us most of the home utilities made of clay soil, skin and stone. Harris in this regard raised similar idea. He said the kitchen of the palace particularly there daily dish prepared by using circular pot.[214]

Liqe Kahnat Kalehiwot H/Wold described about the common utilities found in traditional Shewa houses especially in the royal court of Shewa kings. According to him, the traditional drinking commonly called *tela* is drink by using a cup made of ox and buffalo horn. A cup made of ox horn used for ordinary people. Whereas, a cup made of Buffalo horn is used for top nobilities including royal families. He added that hydromel brought for the guest through a service called *ankabo*. This is a cup made from wooden material which used for men. For females a bottle which commonly called *shuribe birle* was used.[215]

In this regard Charles Johnston described similar idea. He said hydromel presented for the guest through Venetian bottle. He added that hydromel brought for the guest through a pot. According to him it contains 10 to 12 cups of hydromel. It is probably similar idea with the container *Leqe Kahnat* called *ankabo*.[216]

Liqe Kahnat Kalehiwot H/wold described the king and top nobilities used a bed made from metal and cloth. Skin which is processed traditionally used to spread over the bed. The skin is decorated through color. However, the commoners used bedstead and skin. This is used as abed throughout the kingdom. In the case of the royal family it might have been bed are made of metal and a belt cloth spread over the bed. Though our sources did not mentioned wood as an element for making home objects in the royal court of Sahle Selassie.

But we thought that wood might have been used as a basic component to produce different kinds of objects. Partly, wood resources were abundant in the nearby areas. On the other hand there were many artisans in the court of Sahle Selassie. Moreover, there was a long established culture of using wood for making different kinds of furniture. Therefore, we might have been found different kinds of home utilities made of wood including chair, bed and home utilities. There was a chair and bed which is made of wood frame and skin belt were net over the bed

[213] Ibid, pp. 166 – 167.
[214] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.181.
[215] *Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot H/wold
[216] *Ibid*.

and chair frame. In general, the court of Sahle Selassie metal, cloth, skin and other manufacturing activities had got due attention and produced different kinds of utilities probably which made it the production is possible.

3.6.6.5. Medication in the Royal Court of Sahle Selassie

Foreign sources in the late 1830's and early 1840's told us about medical aspects of Shewa in the reign of Sahel Selassie. All most all sources clearly indicate us the royal court members and the local community had practiced old established traditional medication system of the land. According to Krapf, Harris, and Johnston religious related medical treatment was common and implemented without class disparity from ordinary citizens to the royal court of Ankobar.[217]

In this regard, they mentioned repeatedly about the religious related treatments used by the people and the royal families. Harris said that the people used the golden shower against their physical and mental illness.[218] On the other hand, Krapf mentioned about patients are used a mineral water which found in Debre Libanos Tekle Haymanot Church. He added that they used this water against rheumatism and paralysis. When Charles Johnston himself affected by fever and he was unable to cured by using medicine he had brought from Aden. Then he was advised by the local people to use holy shower as a medication.[219]

In addition to using this holy water as a medical treatment Harris mentioned about the skills of the people to produce traditional medicines which made from seed of certain herbs which produced to treat hydrophobia and disasters. He added that head ach treated by traditional medicine made from blue paper local people.[220]

Moreover, Harris told us about Small pox which frequently occurred in the land of Shewa. This is the most frequently occurred disease in Shewa. Though, it was the most devastate infection in Shewa but the local people develop a vaccine kind of treatment for this illness. According to Harris, to treat small pox the local people used a mixture of lymph of the victim with honey.[221] Even though, Harris seriously criticizes the existing medical treatments of Shewa. He added, the coming of British medical officers in Shewa had positive influence in Shewa. In fact some indications show us how the people including top officials and their families were

[217] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.155.; see also C. Johnston, 1844, pp.126 - 127.; W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.121.

[219] *Ibid*.
[220] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, p.158
[221] Ibid, p. 158.

eager to get western medication from foreign individuals who came to the court of Shewa in contrary of using indigenous medicines.[222]

Sources show us the court had chiefs' physician. He was called *Ato* Habte.[223] He was the head of the people called *Tebiban* these were the people who were actively engaged in manufacturing of utilities. When infections occurred in Ankobar different preventive mechanisms were employed. In this regard, Krapf stated that when infections occurred in the court the king go to *Mehal Wonz* to isolate (ወሸባ) himself.[224] He added that when infection was occurred in Ankobar merchants, and travelers were forbidden to enter to Ankobar.[225] This is simply a very advanced method of prevention of high communicable disease in modern world used today was applicable in the kingdom of Shewa.

On contrary to this, Harris stated a very traditional and backward method of treating a decay tooth in Shewa. According to him, surgery of curious teeth is mostly removing through hammer, punch, and pincers of the blacksmith.[226] In addition, surgery was also common in Shewa under the leadership of *Ato* Habte.[227] Even though, this medication was found in a very rudimentary level of practices.

From the above discussion we understand that in the kingdom of Shewa traditional medical treatment was the dominate kinds of treatments practiced by most people of Shewa including royal court. Isolation and vaccination was commonly practiced as prevention and treatment in Shewa. The king himself engaged actively in prevention and medication of traditional medicines. In addition, the traditional physicians also actively participate in producing different traditional medicines from different plants. However, we could not deny how much the King and the local people of Shewa were suffered from lack of better medical treatment in the kingdom of Shewa in the time.

[222] Ibid, p. 155, see also W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, p.120; C. Johnston, 1844, p.126.
[223] *Ibid*.
[224] W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, 1843, pp. 169 – 170.
[225] *Ibid*.
[226] W. C. Harris, 1844, Vol. II, pp.156 – 157.
[227] *Ibid*.

Conclusion

Royal Court life was an important historical aspect of the Christian kingdom of medieval and post medieval Ethiopia. Royal courts were the main economic and political center of Ethiopian kingdom. In the royal court of medieval and post medieval Ethiopia, the court encompasses thousands of people who were reside in and around the court. It was not simply a home of king and his courtier in Ethiopia rather it was a center of everything. Politics, economic and religious activities of the kingdom dictated by each decision comes from the king and his courtiers in the royal court. King had an absolute power over his subject, relatively the affluent person in the kingdom, main sources of redistribution, and even important person in religious life of the kingdom. These and other crucial issues were dictated by the well of the king and the top nobilities in the court. Because of these and other related factors royal court had a very important place in Ethiopian history.

The Shewan court had used a semi-mobile, neither fixed at one capital, nor moving around the kingdom. King Sahle Selassie had several residences, but all were situated in the realm. To some extent this pattern eased the maintenance of the court, each palace drawing much of its supplies from state lands in its immediate vicinity. Equally prominent was the distribution of different resources of the kingdom for the residents of the royal court. The reign of king Sahel Selassie in the kingdom of Shawa, had relatively a well-organized administrative structured and personnel. Because of this and other reasons his reign in the kingdom of Shewa consider as a heyday of Shewa.

There are well identified sites of royal courts of Shewan kingdom, particularly in the reign of King Sahle Selassie (1813 – 1847). His royal court both in Ankober and Angolela had a very important place in the history of his reign. Ankobar was the main town and the administrative center of the kingdom. A palace of Ankober was a center of politics, social, economy and spiritual life. In which important decisions were made, served as place of store and distribution of important resources, and religious figure reside and guide religious life of the kingdom. Moreover, a place of residence for many thousand populations, they lived in coexistence and close interaction.

Concerning political system of the royal court, all officials structured based up on their hierarchal order, which significantly help us to understand how space used, organized and functioned in the royal court of the Shewa. For the sack of convenience it is better to categorize

the officials into three divisions. Firstly, with respect to the court order and the palace administration, secondly, their function to the king personal protocols and his family hood, thirdly. Related to the military activities and the court security system.

Regarding the everyday life in the royal court of Sahle Selassie, the kings and his dignitaries of the court experienced different daily activities like; welcoming foreign and local visitors of the kingdom, delivering justices, conducting royal banquet, enjoying leisure time, and providing food and clothes in the form of *dergo* system.

Therefore, the royal court of Sahle Selassie had developed relatively a well-organized administrative structure run by powerful personnel. These administrative structures efficiently lead the daily routines and occasional festivals of the royal court king Sahle Selassie.

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List of Informants

No	Name of Informants	Sex	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	*Liqe Kahnat* Kalehiwot H/Wold	M	65	25/06/2014	Ankober	Well known informant about the history of Shewa rulers and Ankobar and serving as the head of worda *bête Kihnet*
2	*Melaek Mihirt Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh	M	38	26/06/2014	Ankober	A priest who serves as Head of St.Mikael Church.
3	*Ato* Mulatu Aklilu	M	35	26/06/2014	Ankober	The Manger of Ankober lodge
4	*Ato* Asefa Zenebe	M	32	27/06/2014	Ankober	Head of Ankober wereda Culture and Tourism Office

Appendix I

Some pictures about Ankober Palace and its surrounding



The mountain hill of Ankober(photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw:2021)



The other view the mountain hill Of Ankober



Upper House of Ankobar palace.(photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw 2021)



Ankobar Lodge which construct in the symbol of Menilik II Palace. Photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw 2021)



The Tombs of Sahle Selassie rest in this building found in the enclosure of St. Michael Church. The man is *Melaek Mihirt Memhir* Belayneh Getaneh head of St. Mechael Church of Ankober. While he gave us description about the church.(photo by Yeshiwas Eskeziaw 2021)