

# The Annole Monument and *Negus Menelik's Expedition towards Arsi: A Bibliographic Essay*

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## Abstract

*The formation of state in every society passes through different stages and mechanisms. In most cases, state formation involves one of these three forms: peaceful, forceful or a mixture of both. The current Ethiopian state is the result of all three forms. In the second half of the 19th century, Emperor Tewodros II (r.1855-1868) appeared in the political scene with a stronger vision to rule Ethiopia with one central administrative system, and culminated in the Era of Princes. The centralization project continued during the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV (r.1872-1889). In the last quarter of the same century, when the unification motto was common in Italy and Germany, Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) strengthened the project and amalgamated different regions of northern and southern Ethiopia into his empire including Arsi. Many of the regions in southern Ethiopia were incorporated into his empire through forceful as well as peaceful measures between the years 1870 and 1900. These measures formed the current territorial shape of Ethiopia.*

*There are two major different views concerning the process of state formation of the modern Ethiopian empire. These are the reunification and the colonial views. The colonial view maintains that until its incorporation, Oromia was an independent state and it was historically and culturally different from the northern part of Ethiopia. Thus, the expedition was colonial in its motive, nature and consequences. The reunification thesis on the other hand, advocates that the Oromo and all the people in the south had for ages been part and parcel of Ethiopia and lived together. Accordingly, the expedition did not have any colonial motive or nature. It aimed at reincorporation and protecting the people from external threat, extraction of natural resources and bring peace and stability. The paper examines how scholars addressed this issue in their publications in the 1980s and 1990s (G.C.). This paper does not attempt to endorse or reject any of these views. Instead, this essay aims to critically examine how scholars discursively understand and reflect the same issue differently.*

Keywords: Ethiopia, Expedition, Reunification view, Colonial view, Annole

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## Introduction

The state formation in Ethiopia has taken a long process and followed a familiar pattern as in many parts of the world. The process involved both forceful and peaceful ways. In this regard, in the modern history of Ethiopia, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed an important turning point at least in two ways. First, the period witnessed the end of the *Zemene-Mesafnt* and emperor Tewodros II's coming to power with a stronger vision to bring Ethiopia under one rule. Second, the period also saw the intense efforts of *negus* (later emperor) Menelik II, who carried out various expeditions into the southeastern and southwestern parts of Ethiopia. The expedition of *negus* Menelik towards Arsi was part of this mission which finally ended up with the incorporation of Arsi into the empire in 1886.<sup>1</sup> However, there are debates among scholars on the motives, nature and effects of Emperor Menelik II's expedition to southeastern and southwestern part of Ethiopia. These views can be summarized into two broad perspectives: 'reunification' and 'colonial' thesis.

The first group, the reunification view, is espoused by a considerable number of individuals who sought to look at the expedition of Emperor Menelik II, in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, into south, southwest and southeast Ethiopia as an aspect of incorporation of the lost territories of Ethiopia. Many of the scholars are from Addis Ababa University, mainly the Department of History and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and a few amateur historians, who addressed the issue as such by overlooking the situation on the ground concerning the culprits. According to these scholars it was during this time that Ethiopian rulers developed their obsession to expand to the rich and fertile lands in the south and eventually were able to subdue and incorporate the vast territories of the region.<sup>2</sup>

The second group is the advocator of the colonial view. Scholars in this group have sought to look at this episode as an aspect of European colonialism. This group comprises ethno-nationalist scholars, mostly Oromo nationalists. They addressed the same issue, the expedition, as a typical European colonialism that is imposed on the southern half of Ethiopia by emperor Menelik II and his followers. Thus, such an interpretation has been considered as an anti-thesis to the forgone conclusion on Ethiopian historiography.<sup>3</sup>

There is also a third group of scholars who first, in their MA and dissertation works in the 1980s and 1990s (G.C.), advocated the reunification view and, later, became proponents of the colonial

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<sup>1</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*, (2nd Edition) (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> Bahru Zewde, "Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia (1916-1935)," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, XVII (1984), p.13; Indium, *A History of Modern Ethiopia...*, pp. 62-63; Indium, "A Century of Ethiopian Historiography," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2(2000), p.4; Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, *Atse Tewodros ina ye Itiyopiya Andenet* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz publishing Press, 1981EC), pp.97,153; Indium, *Atse Menilek Ina ye Itiyopiya Andenet* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1983EC), pp.209-210,609-610; Indium, *Atse Yohannis ina ye Itiyopiya Andenet* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1982EC), pp.173, 285.

<sup>3</sup> Abbas Haji, "A History of Arsi 1880-1935," (BA Thesis Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1982), pp.17-22; Asafa Jalata, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian Colonialism, Global Hegemonism and Nationalism, 1870s-1980s," (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, Department of Sociology, 1990), p.76; Assafa Kuru, "Fate of Conquered Peoples and Marginal Lands under Imperial Rule: The Case of Awash River Basin," *Journal of Oromo Studies*. Vol. II. No.1 (1997), pp.30-50.

view. These individuals, while conducting their research in their localities, reflected the same issue with middle position. Plentiful studies conducted by students of Addis Ababa University for the fulfillment of their BA, MA and PhD awards are in line with the reunification view. Immediately after they attain the award, they usually shift from reunification view to colonial view, explaining the expedition of Emperor Menelik II into the south on their respective locality from the colonial point of view. They consider it as all rounded imposition (political, social and economic) of the Amhara from the north onto the south, southwest and southeast Ethiopia. Thus, the second and third groups have produced many articles in line with the colonial view and most of them have been published in the *Journal of Oromo Studies*.<sup>4</sup>

These scholars and their different views still influence the historiography of Ethiopia. The prevalence of different interpretation on this historical development makes the subject more important, as these authors have been writing using highly evocative language and extreme narratives of the 'conqueror' and the 'conquered'.

Therefore, interpreting the issue mainly from secondary sources can provide an insight into the historiographical arguments on the historical episode under discussion. Thus, first the paper primarily deals with the scholars' views on the major reasons behind Menelik's expedition to the south in general and to Arsi in particular. Second, the paper discusses the views of scholars on the overall features of Emperor Menelik II's campaign to the south, southwest and southeast part of Ethiopia. Third, the discussion mainly focuses on the arguments of scholars in relation to the encroachment of the Menelik's troops on to the interior of the Arsi. In the fourth part, the paper deals with the views of scholars on the consequences of the expedition of Emperor Menelik II. Fifth, the paper examines the interpretation of scholars about the monument which was erected at Annole in Arsi in 2014. Finally, after having a thorough assessment of the causes, the course and the consequences of this historical development, I attempt to windup the review with a concluding remark regarding the two competing discourses regarding the nature of Ethiopia's state formation.

### **The Underlying Reasons Behind Menelik's Expedition to Arsi**

In this part, the paper primarily deals with the views of scholars about the major reasons behind Emperor Menelik's expedition to the south in general and Arsi in particular. This is an important issue in the scholarly discourse which has currently reached its apogee. This is because the historical development has had a profound effect not only to understand the history of the past, but also to comprehend the way the modern Ethiopian history is written and understood. As a

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<sup>4</sup> Yasin Muhammad, "A Historical Study of the Land Tenure System in Highland Ilu-Aba Bora , c.1889-1974," (MA thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1990), pp.60-65; Ketema Mesqela, "The Evolution of Land Ownership and Tenancy in Highland Balie: A Case Study of Goba, Sinana and Dodola to 1974," (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2001), pp.31-34; Benti Getahun, "An Overview of Some Factors Limiting the Migration of the Oromo to Addis Ababa," *Journal of Oromo Studies*. Vol. 8 (New York, 2001), pp.155-172; Tsegaye Zeleke, "The Oromo of Salaalee A History (C. 1840-1936)," (MA, Thesis Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2002), pp.53-69.

result, the paper will attempt to critically analyze and evaluate the themes of these various approaches.

As stated above, different individuals hold different views and propose different interpretation about the gravitating forces that pushed Menelik II to arrange expeditions to control the rich and fertile lands in the south. Understandably, today the subject has become so fundamental that it routinely engenders heated scholarly debate among historians and other scholars who endeavor to comprehend the overall historical development of the period under discussion. Here, it is worth noting that most of the current socio-political problems of Ethiopia took their roots, by hook or by crook, in this period.<sup>5</sup>

There are significant numbers of historians and other scholars, both Ethiopians and foreigners, who have begun to demonstrate strong interest in understanding the primary motives that lie behind Menelik's expeditions, and these writers have been producing their work using the colonial theoretical framework. The proponents of this approach consider all the texts produced in favor of reunification view, in the historiography of Ethiopia in general and the Oromo people in particular, as outdated, elite-centric, corrupt and misleading. On the other hand, they assume that all works that have been produced recently that adopt the colonial thesis are always refined and free from any scholarly bias.

The leading proponents of the colonial approach laid the basis of their argument with that of the scramble for Africa by the European colonial powers. In other words, these groups of people have devoted themselves in explaining the motives behind Menelik's territorial expansion by associating it one way or another to the scramble for Africa. The advocates strongly argue that the major solitary motive behind the expedition was to colonize and exploit the manpower resources and the rich and fertile land of the south in general and of Arsi in particular.<sup>6</sup>

The preceding argument is partly accepted by the proponents of the reunification view; i.e., one of the motives behind the expedition of *negus* Menelik to the south was emanated from the agreement between Emperor Yohannes IV and *negus* Menelik at Leche in March 1878. It was in this deal, *negus* Menelik agreed to pay huge amount of tribute to Emperor Yohannes IV annually. *Negus* Menelik's domain, however, was not sufficient enough to collect the annual tribute to himself and the emperor. Thus, expanding the territory to the resourceful areas was one of the options for *negus* Menelik.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gada Melba, *Oromia: an Introduction to the History of the Oromo People* (Minnesota: Kirk House Publisher, 1988),p.67; Asafa Jalata(ed), *Oromia: Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The search for freedom and Democracy*( Asmara: The Read Press,1998),p.108.

<sup>6</sup>Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian..",pp.88-89; Indium, "Oromia Nationalism...", p.99; Indium, *Oromia and Ethiopia*,(Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers,1993), pp.234-235; Melba,p.89; Getahun Dilebo, "Emperor Menelik's Ethiopia 1885-916: National Unification or Amhara Colonial Domination,"(PhD Dissertation Harvard University 1974), pp.74, 84-88.

<sup>7</sup> Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (London: University of California Press,1994),p.79; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia....*,pp.46,61; Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia, 1844-1913*( Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1995),p.57.

They further contend that the expedition of Menelik to the south in general and to Arsi in particular was an attempt to reunify the lost territories under Menelik. According to the proponent of this view the main motive of the expedition of Emperor Menelik II was to reincorporate the territories which were historically under the same political unit. In the Medieval period, based on the ability of the kings, these small states, at one time or another, were tributary to the Christian highland kingdom. For instance, Damot, Enarya and Bizamo were tributary states of the Christian highland kingdom. These small states were assumed to include territories such as Southern Gojam, Wellega, Keffa, Southern Shewa (Enner Guragie), Kenbata, Dawuro, Wolayita, Maraqui, Hadiya, Gamo, Goffa, Mello, Maalle, Basketo and Yem. They further argue, for instance, the Christian highland kingdom under the commander of *Ras* Hamalmal fought Luba Michile at Dago in the modern province of Arsi around 1560 and kept them and the adjacent territories under the Christian empire. Such authority over southern Ethiopia, however, was interrupted because of two fundamental episodes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: the invasion of Ahmed Ibn Ibrham Algahzi and the territorial expansion of the Oromo to the interior and northern parts of Ethiopia. Therefore, Emperor Menelik II raised the issues once again in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> However, such arguments have their own limitation that considers the unification of Ethiopia is the result of the expedition or the movement of people from the north to south. It may be sound to combine the two, i.e., the movement from the north to the south and the vice-versa brought the final unified state, Ethiopia.<sup>9</sup>

Asafa, one of the leading proponents of the colonial view, states that some scholars call and argue that Menelik's 'conquest' was a reunification process of the Ethiopian Empire. For him these arguments are naive and unacceptable. He counters persuasively that "Oromia was not part of Ethiopia before its colonization in the last decades of the nineteenth century."<sup>10</sup>

He and his associates argue that the Oromo have always been historically, culturally and linguistically different from peoples in the northern and the interior part of Ethiopia. Thus, the expedition had a colonial ambition that brought the colonial administration to the south, southwest and southeast part of Ethiopia, similar to the colonial endeavors of France, Britain and Italy in other parts of Africa.<sup>11</sup>

On the contrary, the proponents of the reunification thesis enthusiastically argue that Emperor Menelik II did not have any ambition to subjugate the people rather he had an aspiration of building a big empire. Accordingly, they firmly believe that Emperor Menelik II had scarcely a

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<sup>8</sup>Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp.301-302; Harold Marcus, "The Corruption of Ethiopian History," *Proceeding of the Six Michigan State University Conference on North East Africa*(1992),pp.58-59; Bahru Zewde, *The History of Modern Ethiopia...*,p.60.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of Multi Ethnic Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 441. see also Tesfaye Habisso, "A Short History of the Kambata People of South-Western Ethiopia" (MA Thesis Addis Ababa University, 1978),p.27. Merid Wolde Aregay, "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian kingdom 1508-1708 with Special Reference to the Galla Migration and their Consequences," (PhD Dissertation, University of London, School of African and Oriental studies, 1971),pp.43-49.

<sup>10</sup> Asafa, *Oromia and Ethiopia...*, p.54.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

colonial ambition; he instead must be celebrated as the founding father and artifact of Ethiopian unity.<sup>12</sup>

In order to appreciate the significance of this heated scholarly debate, one has to critically read and weigh those points raised by both parties. For instance, despite the existence of numerous cases in favor of the forgoing position, it would be premature to accept it at face value. Because the aforementioned claims from the upholders of the colonial view seems a feeble argument and barely different from the myth that people in the northern and central part of Ethiopia were alien to the people in the south Ethiopia.

Rather, according to the proponent of reunification view, the peoples of Ethiopia have shared ample experiences and maintained cultural contacts through a historical process in the period between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the form of trade exchange, territorial expansion and rivalry. Mohamed Hassen supports this argument and states “the Oromo had had contact with Amhara since at least the thirteenth century, contacts which alternated between peaceful coexistence and warfare.”<sup>13</sup> The rivalry between the Christian highland kingdom and the Muslim sultanate of Adal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is worth mentioning here. Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Algahzi expanded his territorial occupation from Harar to northern Ethiopia as far as Eritrea which facilitated enormous interaction and experiences among the Ethiopian peoples. Next to this, another big development witnessed in the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was the expansion of the Oromo population from their center Med Walabu in southern Ethiopia to northern Ethiopia. This was another landmark that brought an opportunity to the peoples of Ethiopia to know more each other's culture, politics and economic experiences.<sup>14</sup> The following extracts tell us the details

*...it is from this region that the many different sub-divisions of the expanding Oromo nation began their massive invasion of Ethiopia in the sixteenth century, sweeping relentlessly in wave after wave into the Christian highlands where the embattled Amhara and Tigreans were unable to check their advance. Those Oromo who moved into the rich central highlands, such as the Macha and Tulama, abandoned their nomadic economy and became sedentary cultivators; others such as the Arusi and Guji in the less favored southern areas combine both modes of livelihood. Many became Christians adopting Amhara culture: others embraced Islam although this was not necessarily incompatible with adopting other aspects of Amhara culture.*<sup>15</sup>

Thus, it may be legitimate to support the reunification thesis which argues that the presence of some socio-cultural differences between the Oromo and the Amhara people cannot be sound justification to claim that the expedition of emperor Menelik II had colonial motives. Accordingly, the expedition had no intention of segregating the natives from northerners.

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<sup>12</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia...*, pp. 60-61; R.H. Darkwah, *Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889* (London: Bulter and Tanner Ltd, 1975), pp.95-96.

<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Hassen, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, 1300-1700* (Rochester: Jams Currey Boydel Berewey Ltd Inc, 2015), p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Tadesse, pp. 301-302; M. Abir, *Ethiopia: the Era of Princes. The Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire, 1769-1855* (London: Frank Class and Company Limited, 1968) p.167; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia...*, pp. xiii, 37; Levine, p.41.

<sup>15</sup> I. M. Lewis and P. A. Jewell, “The Peoples and Cultures of Ethiopia [and Discussion]” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series B, Biological Sciences*, Vol. 194, No.1114 (1976), pp. 8-9



Menelik's expedition did not have a colonial agenda which necessitated the establishment of a color bar, a color school, separate living quarter or prohibit color assimilation through marriage. Rather, it brought integration and nation-building.<sup>16</sup> To show that the expedition motive was internal and not foreign, the advocates of the reunification thesis point out that the expedition included a significant Oromo participation. Marcus explained the Oromo actors were key to the 'conquest'.<sup>17</sup>

*The Oromo who participated as native Menelik's troops were active initiators and consolidators of the expansion, as shown by the eminent role of Ras Gobena, who was more of an ally than a subordinate. Gobena was not only a full member of the Shoan aristocracy, but also led the greater part of the expeditions among Oromo people. The Oromo involvement suggests an internal inspiration aiming at uniting the Oromo under the authority of the Ethiopian state in light of their political fragmentation.*<sup>18</sup>

More importantly, the adherents of the reunification perspective associate motive of Menelik II's expedition with the issue of external pressure. They argue that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century external powers, including Egyptians, were coming near into Ethiopian territories. Later, European colonial power, based on their own interest, partitioned Africa on paper at the Berlin Conference held 1884/5:

*The period was beset by a number of problems, many of them stemming from the expansion of European influence in northeastern Africa ... Thus, Menelik II further expanded and consolidated the state, fended off local enemies, and dealt with the encroachments of European powers, in particular Italy, France, and Britain. Italy posed the greatest threat, having begun to colonize part of what would become its future colony of Eritrea in the mid-1880s.*<sup>19</sup>

Emperor Menelik II apprehended ahead the dangers of the coming of new fresh colonial forces to Africa. He then marked and announced his country's boundaries to European powers through his letters.<sup>20</sup> Paul Henze writes that "Menelik consciously extended his borders to include all the territories that had formed part of the medieval empire of Amde Tseyon (r.1314-44)."<sup>21</sup>

The advocates of this view insist that Menelik II had an aspiration of becoming an emperor of Ethiopia and in the vein of his predecessors had a dream to reunite the northern and southern provinces of the empire. In order to depict Menelik's ambition of creating a big empire and so as to make their argument stronger and substantive they refer to his claim that the historic Ethiopian empire extended up to Lake Nyassa in the south and Khartoum in the East. In his letter to

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<sup>16</sup> Messay Kebede, "Eurocentrism and Ethiopian Historiography: Deconstructing Semitization," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2003), pp.12-14; Messay Kebede, *Survival and Modernization: Ethiopia's Enigmatic Present* (Asmara/Newjersey: The Red Sea Press,1999), pp. 25-26.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*..., p.79.

<sup>18</sup> Massay Kebede, "Euro centrism and Ethiopian Historiography," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2003), pp.17-18.

<sup>19</sup> John, Turner, *Ethiopia a Country Study*, (Federal Research Division,1991), p.4.

<sup>20</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*...,p.152; Paulos Ngongo, *Aste Menelik Bawuch Hagerat Yetsatsafuachew Debidabiwech*,(Addis Ababa: Aster Nega Publishing Agency, 2010),p.31.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Henze, *Layers of Time. A History of Ethiopia* ( London: Hurst & Company, 2000), p.152.

European Powers, Menelik spelt out: "I shall endeavor, should God of his grace grant me the years and the strength, to restore the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia as far as Khartoum and to Lake Nyanza beyond the lands of the 'Galla' [Oromo]." <sup>22</sup> For supporters of this view, the letter shows his prevailing desire to re-unify the lost territories and establish the big 'Abyssinian' [Ethiopian] empire. According to them, to realize his dream of creating a big empire, Menelik had to engage in different activities to build up his strength, both militarily and economically. Consequently, Menelik formulated a plan of expansion using different methods. From the methods he had employed, his ambition to increase manpower and natural resources by means of territorial expansion and 'conquest' was the most determinant one. <sup>23</sup> As Marcus remarked on this point, Emperor Menelik II believed that he was the legitimate successor of the 'Solomonic' line and thereof, getting hold of the throne and creating a united Empire was not only his right but his duty. <sup>24</sup>

It is apparent that the texts in the letter and the statement Marcus presented as evidence are strong and reliable justifications due to a variety of reasons. To begin with, it is not difficult to accept the claim as there are strong evidences which can confirm the alleged territories were once part and parcel of the ancient 'Abyssinian' [Ethiopians] empire. In addition, most of the territories which were claimed by the Emperor such as, Bali or Dewaro are compatible with the reality at present. Here, it is worth underlining the fact that describing Menelik as the 'founder of modern Ethiopia,' based on the claim discussed above may not be possible. Of course, the expedition of Emperor Menelik II brought the incorporation of not only lost territories to his kingdom but also added new territories which were not touched by his predecessors. <sup>25</sup>

The adherents of the reunification view explain that Menelik's expansion was motivated by an internal political need, the need to culminate the *Zemene Mesafint* (Era of Princes). In some of the texts which were produced in favor of the reunification view, it has been argued that the empire building process was started during the reign of Emperor Tewodros II, who subdued different regional lords and brought them under central administration system and ended up the Era of Princes. This project continued in the reign of Yohannes IV, who adopted a federal system of administration in Ethiopia. And finally, Emperor Menelik II founded modern Ethiopia. <sup>26</sup>

At this juncture, on the other hand, the proponents of the colonial view argue that the state formation project was merely the affairs of the northern part of Ethiopia and consider the above interpretation as feeble and unbearable. However, it is essential to remember that the crisis was not geographically limited to the northern part of Ethiopia but that the power struggle took place not only among the northern lords but also the Oromo themselves were highly involved within it. Thus, one can, therefore, clearly understand that the event was not merely the affairs of the 'northerners'. The Oromo, whether they adopt or not adopt the Christian and Amhara culture,

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<sup>22</sup> A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroea, *A History of Abyssinia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.142.

<sup>23</sup> Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian...", p.106.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus, "The Corruption of Ethiopian History...", p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia...*, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Reid, "The Trans-Mereb Experience: Perceptions of the Historical Relationship Between Eritrea and Ethiopia," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, (2007), pp.240-241. Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia...*, pp. 11-13; Donald Crummey, "Tewodros as Reformer and Modernizer," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1969), p. 459.



played a significant political role in the court of Gonder and during the *Zemene Mesafint*. They were not merely subordinates to the Amhara but also king makers in their own right.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from this, proponents of the colonial thesis interpret the motives behind Menelik's expedition as 'conquest' as it had been carried out in the name of "civilizing mission". They associate the expedition in line with the previously discussed point concerning the scramble for Africa. Citing that the Europeans also used to preach they had a "civilizing" mission, these historians and scholars tried to explain the case of Arsi along the line of the colonial thesis. Thus, opposing the "civilizing mission", theoretical approach most, possibly all, advocates of the colonial thesis regularly underscore that 'Ethiopians' were not, in terms of civilization, more advanced than the Oromo.<sup>28</sup>

### **General Features of Menelik's Expedition and Success in Arsi**

In this section the discourse about the overall features of Emperor Menelik II's expedition to the south will be critically examined. Besides, the factors which contributed to his military success will be discussed briefly.

Most, if not all, proponents of both views of reunification and colonialism – convincingly present the unique features of Menelik's expedition to Arsi. Unlike those campaigns conducted in the south, most scholars converse in a similar way that, "...the campaign to Arsi had faced the most sustained and the bloodiest resistance before he was coroneted as an Emperor in the 1889. In the expedition of December 1883, *negus* Menelik personally led his troops and narrowly escaped with his life."<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, most of the circumstances that characterize the nature of various campaigns employed by Menelik eventually helped him in one way or another to win the contest. Both the proponent of reunification and colonial thesis confirm that *negus* Menelik used different strategies to subdue the people of Arsi. First, he successfully lobbied some of the known clan leaders of Arsi, Suffa Kuso and Damu Usu and allowed them internal autonomy. This proposal, however, was rejected by other clan leaders of the Arsi Oromo. Likewise, as we shall see later on, there is a consensus among scholars on most of the challenges the Arsi resistance movements faced that lastly made their endeavor in vain.<sup>30</sup>

The exact date that *negus* Menelik had started an attempt of incorporation of Arsi, is still a subject of dispute among scholars. Some sources describe that Arsi was controlled by Menelik's army between 1878 and 1879. Many, however, illustrate that the process was started in the early years of the 1880s. From then onwards, Menelik employed protracted campaigns which eventually became successful in subjugating the Arsi Oromo.<sup>31</sup> To this end, different writers

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<sup>27</sup> Levine, pp.83-85; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., pp.11-13; Tekle Tsadiq, *Atse Tewodros ina...*, p.97.

<sup>28</sup> Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1994), p. 2; Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian...", p.89.

<sup>29</sup> Bairu Tafla, *Atsma Giyorgis and His work. History of the Galla and the kingdom of Sawa* (Stuttgart, Franc Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), p.726; Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian...", p. 95; Darkwah, pp.103,108.

<sup>30</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., pp. 62-63.

<sup>31</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., pp. 62-63.

have identified various factors that were attributed to the military victory the former had won over the latter.

Most, perhaps all, of the literature consulted for this paper single out the disproportionate number and firearms as the major reason for the military defeat of Arsi Oromo. As many scholars stated, it was only Menelik who had a large army and the Arsi were outnumbered, outgunned and divided. There was also an internal strife among the Arsi which developed in the course of the struggle.<sup>32</sup> Menelik's army had more experience and he was highly assisted by European military experts. His military strategy was of enticing the Arsi Oromo into areas that were properly fortified by his forces.<sup>33</sup>

Here, it is worth noting that, in addition to Menelik's experience in warfare and access to firearms from Europeans, the resources of the previously incorporated territories were also pivotal in strengthening Menelik's military and economic might. Apart from this, the incorporation and assimilation of the Oromo elite's on the one hand and the collaboration of Oromo individuals on the other were instrumental for the success of *negus* Menelik in Arsi.<sup>34</sup>

In line with this, Abbas distinctly mentions that "...the local inhabitants like Robele played a major role in guiding the Arsi area and leaking invaluable information to the enemy line."<sup>35</sup> Still, there are scholars who claim that Menelik's diplomatic persuasion and the resultant political marriages arranged by him were crucial in supporting his travel to Arsi.<sup>36</sup> In the final analysis, the combination of all these and other factors paved the way to Menelik's success in most of the territories of the south in general and in Arsi in particular.

### **Encroachment of Menelik on Arsi vis-à-vis Resistance**

This part of the paper deals with the encroachment of *negus* Menelik's troops on to the interior of the south in general and Arsi in particular.

Most scholars agree that *negus* Menelik started his campaign by sending an expedition to Arsi in December 1882. From this time onwards Menelik made successive campaigns to Arsi against a formidable resistance from the local people.<sup>37</sup> Bahru and Teshale in this regard, remark that his attempt to incorporate Arsi had faced very strong resistance.<sup>38</sup> As it has been said, Gebre Selassie himself wrote that Menelik's life was at stake in some instances of his expedition to Arsi.<sup>39</sup> In explaining the issue Darwrkh asserts

*.... Of all the campaign, which Menelik's conducted before he became emperor in 1889 perhaps the most sustained and the bloodiest were those against the Arsi 'Galla' [Oromo]. It took six different campaigns conducted between January 1887*

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<sup>32</sup> Getahun, pp. 87-88,

<sup>33</sup> Melba, p. 54; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., pp. 62-63; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, pp. 83, 102.

<sup>35</sup> Abbas, "A History of Arsi...", pp. 19-25

<sup>36</sup> Melba, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> Bahru, "Economic Origins of the...", p. 28; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 62.

<sup>38</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*..., p. 62; Teshale Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia, 1896-1974* (Newgersy: The Red Sea Press Inc, 1995), pp. 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> Gebreselassie Wolde Aragay, *Tarik Zemene Ze Dagmawi, Menelik Neguse Negest Ze Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Birhan ena Selam Press, 1959), pp. 101-102.

*to conqueror that vast region. The success of the Arsi resistance was due partly to the extensive nature of their country and partly to their numerical strength....*<sup>40</sup>

From the sources reviewed, it is evident that the people of Arsi well understood Menelik's aspiration and they did not remain reluctant to the situation. To this end, in response to the Menelik's territorial 'conquest' and 'annexation', the Arsi Oromo employed different techniques of resistance ranging from surprise night attacks to direct confrontations. For instance, according to Darkwah, on May 12, 1886, the Arsi fighters made a surprise attack on the camps of Menelik's force and ambushed 2,000 men.<sup>41</sup>

In the final analysis, the combination of all these and other factors paved the way to Menelik's success in most territories of the south in general and Arsi in particular. Though the resistance in Arsi was so fierce due to those factors mentioned earlier, the Arsi Oromo force collapsed at the battle of Azule in 1886.

### **Consequence of the 'Conquest'.**

The views of scholars who argue that the expedition brought not only disasters and conflicts, but also new opportunities and development, and those who argue the expedition of *negus* Menelik was totally disruptive will be critically examined here. Side by side, in this part of the paper, the conditions of the incorporated people will be elaborated.

In the history of mankind territorial 'conquest' and 'annexation' by the stronger over the weaker has been common from time immemorial. Hence, this process – be it by the white skinned people over the black or one ethnic group over its neighboring ethnic group – was clearly conducted for the benefit of the 'conqueror' over the 'conquered'. The fact mentioned has been, however, facing some challenges in interpreting Menelik's expedition to the south from the proponents of the reunification thesis. According to the reunification thesis the case of Emperor Menelik's expedition to southern, southwest and southeast parts of Ethiopia is slightly different from the colonial invasion of Britain, France and Italy who came to Africa only for their own sake. His expedition, however, not only secured his own economic and political interest, but also protected the people of Ethiopia from the brutal colonialist invasion. Of course, it was an undeniable fact that Emperor Menelik II benefitted economically from his expedition and from incorporating the southern territories, including Arsi.<sup>42</sup>

Some argue that Menelik's expansion have had its own benefits to the incorporated people. In this line a British army officer Wellbly travelling through Arsi in 1899 made the following observation.

*All these Oromos[Oromo] have quite recently come under the sway of king Menelik. The result of this had been that with their independence they have also lost all inter-tribal strife, for peace reign throughout the land. Of course, the*

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<sup>40</sup> Darkwah, p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 212.

<sup>42</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*...,p. 60,111.

*tribes vary considerably in their condition according to as they accept their role with good or ill grace.*<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, Huntingford explains that before the expedition there was sharp tribal warfare among different clans of the Oromo for honor and social necessity. Therefore, the incorporation had brought relative peace in Arsi and the surrounding areas.<sup>44</sup>

Others further argue that emperor Menelik II aimed at, and for the most part succeeded in ruling with justice, not with interference, with the customs and habits of the subjected people. Throughout his reign, he was tolerant toward Muslim subjects. He organized special courts to take care of litigation arising in Ethiopia's Muslim population. He made the religious policy in the Ethiopian Empire to be flexible and accepted the Muslims with a guarded tolerance.<sup>45</sup>

Tesema Ta'a cites foreign scholars that the incorporation of the various regions to the empire brought significant peace and stability in the country. Traders transported commodities safely from north, south, southwest and southeast parts of Ethiopia to Addis Ababa and across different regions of Ethiopia.<sup>46</sup> It was Menelik who laid the base for further expansion of schooling in Oromifa, Italian and Amharic language, other infrastructure and agricultural investments in the newly incorporated areas in the later days.<sup>47</sup>

Contrary to this, Mohammed Hassen denies all the developments after the incorporation; the presence of relative peace, expansion of garrison towns and trade in the region. In the introduction part of his book he explains that Menelik's territorial 'conquest' and 'annexation' of the south brought the imposition of Amharic language and the resultant Amharization process carried out over the peoples of the incorporated territories. He further explains that the 'conquest' made the history of the local people full of myth and legend. In a nutshell, he and other advocates of the colonialist thesis argue that the incorporation brought colonial domination on the local peoples and the empire building process was more damaging.<sup>48</sup>

Contrary to this, the reunification view contends that it is understandable that there were some forms of subjugation in the process of administration but not in the colonial form. Adopting one culture was a common practice in historical process which was witnessed even before the actual expedition of *Negus* Menelik to the south in general and to Arsi in particular. Regarding this Marcus states:

*During territorial expansion of the Oromo, some segments of the Oromo population adapted by changing their mode of economic life, their political and social organization, and their religious adherence. Many mixed with the Amhara*

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<sup>43</sup> Marcus, "The Corruption of Ethiopian History...", p. 276,

<sup>44</sup> Huntingford. G.W.B , *The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdom of Kaffa and Janjero. Ethno Graphic Survey of Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1955), pp. 225-226.

<sup>45</sup> Harold Marcus, "Motives, Methods and Some Results of the Unification of Ethiopia during the Reign of Menelik II," *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa* (1969), p. 278.

<sup>46</sup> Tesema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries," (Ph.D Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986), pp. 158-159.

<sup>47</sup> Terrefe Woldetsadik, "The Unification of Ethiopia (1880-1935) Wälläga," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1968), p. 84.

<sup>48</sup> Mohamed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*..., p. 1.

*(particularly in Shewa), became Christians, and eventually obtained a share in governing the kingdom. In some cases, royal family members came from the union of Amhara and Oromo elements. In other cases, Oromo, without losing their identity, became part of the nobility. Some were Christian, spoke Amharic, and had intermarried with the Amhara. Other Christian Oromo retained their language, although their modes of life and social structure had changed extensively from those of their pastoral kin. At the eastern edge of the highlands, many had converted to Islam, especially in the area of the former sultanates of Ifat and Adal.*<sup>49</sup>

One of the advocates of colonial view, Smith, describes the condition of Arsi Oromo as follows:

*Where was the country teeming with lost wave like people? Certainly not there! What we found was only the natives presenting the most object appearance imaginable. Only four years ago, they must have been a fine race of men, they loved to tell us of their former glory their eyes would light up, and they would forget for the instant present condition...The Arsi Oromos here, as elsewhere regarded in the market as slaves, and were even in the market as such.*<sup>50</sup>

Similar to this interpretation, the upholders of the colonial thesis ardently argue that the incorporation of Emperor Menelik II was a new phenomenon for the Oromo's that adversely affected the overall development of the 'conquered' people. The leading proponents of this thesis passionately agree that Emperor Menelik II's rule over Arsi was totally disruptive and the process deformed the core of the uniqueness of the Oromo society. Emperor Menelik's 'conquest' and 'annexation' therefore, created a rift in the history of the south in general and the Arsi in particular.<sup>51</sup>

With the consideration of his power, Emperor Menelik II had challenged the local institutions of the incorporated people. Abbas noted that the democratic and republican form of the Gada institution lost its social and political significance and was replaced by a tyrannical and exploitive administration.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the Arsi Oromo faced inhuman treatment by Menelik and his generals. To this end, right after the battle of Azule, the greatest mutilation and brutal incident took place in Annole. Abbas, based on his study of the oral tradition, in his BA thesis, states that Menelik II and his uncle Darge selected strong male and female Oromo and cut off their hands and breasts respectively.<sup>53</sup> In his book on page 158, he adds the following without citing any source:

*..... a year after shattering defeat at Azule on September 6,1886, the Arsi strong men and women were assembled under the pretext of concluding peace. All the*

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<sup>49</sup> Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*...,p. 37.

<sup>50</sup>Smith, Donald. "Expedition through Somali Land to Lake Rudolf," *Geographical Journal* (1986), pp.123-127.

<sup>51</sup> Tesema, pp.165-166.

<sup>52</sup> Abbas, "A History of Arsi...", p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Abbas, "A History of Arsi...", p. 52; Abbas Haji, "Arsi Oromo Political and Military Resistance against the Shoan Colonial Conquest (1881-6)," *The Journal of Oromo studies* V, II Number 1and 2(1995), pp.1-22,13. Indium "A History of Arsi...",pp.18-43; Asmarom Legesse, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System*( Asmara: The Red Sea Press, Inc. 2000), p. 21.



*men and women present, whose exact number was unknown, perhaps more than a thousand people were mutilated; their right hands and breasts were cut off. As a further form of humiliation, fear and terror the mutilated breasts and hands were tied around the neck of the victims who were sent back to home.*<sup>54</sup>

Surprisingly, the issue of cutting breast was never found in any of records of literature before him. However, after him this statement has been cited in many of Oromo scholar's works which are mainly published in the *Journal of Oromo Studies*.<sup>55</sup> Surprisingly, all these authors are silent about the mutilation practices and experiences which was committed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Similarly, Asafa in his dissertation states that one of the consequences of the war of 'conquest' was a massacre and enslavement of the indigenous people. This reduced the 10 million Oromo people to five million people.<sup>56</sup>

Though the number of casualties is debatable, the reunification view advocates still argue that large numbers of fighter were killed (more from the indigenous) in the warfare and because of famine, but they strongly reject the claim about the mutilation of breasts and hands of the indigenous Oromo in 1887, a year after the battle of Azule. It may be difficult to accept this claim that people who have an Oromo blood line, Emperor Menelik (half Oromo), Ras Gobena, Ras Darge, Jima Abaj Jifar and their followers committed such brutal act over the already defeated Oromo a year before. According to the reunification view, it was very rare that one can boast of purity as only Semitic led the expedition. When it comes to ethnicity, all of them who participated in the expedition were ethnically mixed, Cushitic and Semitic. Through historical processes most of the Amhara in Shewa had a strong Oromo blood in their genes and vice versa. So, there are no credible evidences that a year after the defeat of the Oromo in Arsi, the soldiers cut their relative's breast.<sup>57</sup>

C. F. Rey, who writes about the sixteenth century Oromo expansion, explains that "their method of warfare was cruel, even for that age, and it was they who introduced the horrible practices of mutilating the dead, even the wounded and prisoners."<sup>58</sup> Other scholars present some traditional practices of the warrior Oromo as a witness. The Oromo warriors after a victory of a certain war wear on their foreheads a replica of a male reproductive organ during traditional or cultural ceremonies. Therefore, these scholars contend that during Oromo expansion people who resist

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<sup>54</sup> Abbas Haji, *Conquest and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire, 1880 - 1974: The Case of the Arsi Oromo* (Boston: Brill publishing Press, 2014), p.158.

<sup>55</sup> Mohamed Hassen, "A Short History of Oromo Colonial Experience (Part One 1970-1935)," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, volume 6, Number 1 and 2(1999), p.137; Mekuria Bulcha, *Flight and Integration: Causes of Mass Exodus from Ethiopia and Problems of Integration in the Sudan*(Stockholm: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988),p.41; Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian..." pp. 96.

<sup>56</sup> Asafa, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian..." p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia...*, p.79; see also Heran Sereke Brhan, "Building Bridges, Drying Bad Blood, Elit Marriage, Politics and Ethnicity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Imperial Ethiopia,"(A Dissertation, Michigan State University, Department of History,2002), p.120.

<sup>58</sup> C.F.Rey, "The Arussi and the Other Galla of Abyssinia," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.23, No. 90 (1924), p. 86.



had been killed, exiled, and even brutally mutilated. Besides, through *moggasa* and *guddifecha* system other peoples outside the Oromo lost their identity.<sup>59</sup>

The colonial thesis supporters argue that the Shewa Amharas under the leadership of Menelik were accountable to the annihilation of the 'conquered' people's civilization. Asafa enthusiastically agrees on this point and explains the issue in his own words as follows: history demonstrates that Ethiopians, mainly Amhara, had committed cultural genocide by eliminating Oromo cultural experts, dividing Oromia into different colonial administrative regions, replacing Oromo institutions by Ethiopian ones....<sup>60</sup> While I may not be as passionate as Asafa, it is important to state my own point of view on the issue. Like him, I principally acknowledge that the expedition has resulted in the death of people in Azule and other parts of the 'conquered' territories, and the exploitation of manpower and natural resources in Arsi. On the other hand, however, Asafa's argument of making Amhara responsible for the event is a sweeping generalization. On the contrary, the expedition which brought the incorporation of the south in general and Arsi in particular to the central government was, therefore, inspired and completed by indigenous forces. There may be a loser and a winner, but there was no colonial subordination.

The advocates of both the reunification and colonial view further argue that in the south, the soldiers and lords took the majority of the cultivators' lands and made the local people *gebar*. Habtmu argues that though the Gonderian legal tradition that governs *zegoch* and landlord relationships similar with the Emperor Menelik's administration in the south. The local people were suffering from burdensome tributes and labor services to be delivered to these lords. Of course, it seems different from the north that there was ethnic difference and the cultivators' had inheritable right over land, which continued until the collapse of the 'Solomonic' state of Ethiopia in 1974.<sup>61</sup> But understanding the severity of the situation of alienation of the indigenous people from their lands by the soldiers and the lords in 1890 emperor Menelik announced a decree that forced the lords and the soldiers to restore some portion of the land to the cultivators.<sup>62</sup>

In relation to religion the advocates of reunification view argue that the colonial thesis advocates mistakenly associate all the campaigners under the leadership of Menelik II had only one identity that was Amhara (with Christian religion) who were intolerant of other religions and people. However, in reality many Amhara and Oromo who had Islamic identity participated in the expedition and administration over the newly incorporated areas.<sup>63</sup>

They further argue that the Amhara *en mass* were not responsible for the decline and disintegration of the Gada system, the socio-political institution of the Oromo. The bureaucrats

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<sup>59</sup> Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia*..., p. 62; Habtmu Mengestie, "Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia, 1636-1900," (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2011), p. 238.

<sup>60</sup> Asafa, *Oromia and Ethiopia*..., p. 28.

<sup>61</sup> Bairu Tafla, "Some Aspects of Land-Tenure and Taxation in Sälalé under Ras Dargé, 1871-1900," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2(1974), p. 5; Habtmu, pp. 202-203.

<sup>62</sup> Brian James Yates, "Invisible Actors: The Oromo and the Creation of Modern Ethiopia (1855-1913)," (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, B.A. Morehouse College, 2009), pp. 210-211.

<sup>63</sup> Guluma Gemed, "Gomma and Limmu: The Process of State Formation Among the Oromo in the Gibe Region, C. 1850-1889," (M.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University Department of History, 1984), p.169.

from the north and Oromo lords were taking the lion's share for the disintegration of the local institutions. The Gebie and Wollega areas were good examples for the disappearance of the Gada system. They established a monarchical form of government at the expense of the Gada in their own localities before the actual expedition of *negus* Menelik towards Arsi.<sup>64</sup> Of course, in the process of administration, there were various forms of impositions on the indigenous people. In this regard W. E. D. Allen argues

*"From time to time certain Galla [Oromo] districts resented the corrupt or vicious government of individual Amhara officials and revolted; but these revolts were the common phenomenon of a feudal state of society rather than the beginnings of a conscious Galla[Oromo] movement against an alien Amhara rule."*<sup>65</sup>

To this end, Melba from the colonial view remarked that "...it is the Ethiopian colonial system and not the Amhara masses which must be under critical consideration."<sup>66</sup> Which is I think partially a more plausible approach in interpreting the event. Darkwah and Mohammed further strengthened this case as follows. Both of them underscored that Menelik had an imperial motive and the civilizing mission was fabricated by Amhara elites to denigrate the material culture of the Oromo people and eventually served as the façade for Menelik's expansion and 'annexation' of southern territories including Arsi. For Mohammed "... this has been a common cry of colonizers and it is nonsense historically."<sup>67</sup>

In general, it is apparent that in the process of the 'conquest' Menelik had acquired the real wealth and most scholarly discourse on this specific topic seems settled. In this regard, most scholars agree that the traditional interest, from time immemorial, the protection of natives from external threat, the control of land, tribute, and trade route were manifested in Menelik's 'conquest' of large territories.<sup>68</sup> Here, it is also important to note that due to the contending powers in the north Menelik, strove hard to build up his reputation and military strength by means of territorial expansion.<sup>69</sup> In this case an African Watch Report states:

*Emperor Menelik doubled the size of the empire within a few decades and established the boundaries of modern Ethiopia, and established the supremacy of the Shewan Amhara, not just over the Oromo and other southern groups, but over the Gonder, Gojjam and Wollo Amhara and the Tigray as well.*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mordechai Abir, "The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Enarea and Jimma in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 6, No. 2. (1965), pp. 207-208; Alexandro Trulzi, Neqemtie and Addis Ababa the Dilemmas of Provincial Rule in Donald Donham and Wendy James(eds), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology African Studies Series*( Oxford: Ohio University Press, 2002), p. 52-53.

<sup>65</sup> W. E. D. Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 101, No. 1,(1943), p.11.

<sup>66</sup> Melba, p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Darkwah, p. 96; Mohamed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*..., p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Darkwah, p. 96; Bulcah Demeksa, Haile Laribo and Shumet Shishagn, Interview on DW Radio, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5HbkxaVpi0>, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Mohamed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*..., p. 96.

<sup>70</sup> Africa Watch Report, "Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia," (New York, 1991), p. 20.

### The Annole Monument

In Ethiopia, the tradition of construction of monuments for different purposes is as old as civilization itself. We may find the monuments which were built in different places during the pre-Aksumite period, such as Hawilti Melazo, Yeha and Cole are some examples. Such tradition also continued in the period of Aksumite civilization in which the obelisks or the Stele were constructed in Aksum. The purpose of the construction of these monuments and buildings was not exactly known, most of them, however, had religious, residence and indication of the civilization purpose of the period.<sup>71</sup> Though the tradition of construction of monuments continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Ethiopia, the purpose of construction has dramatically changed that the monuments are mainly erected to in memory of the vanquished Ethiopian by other Ethiopians. It mainly tells how Ethiopians were butchering one another.<sup>72</sup> In this regard leave monuments which were constructed the period before 1991, we have found many monuments in the country which were constructed during the EPRDF government of Ethiopia. Monuments erected in Bahir Dar, in Mekele, and in Adama cities administration, that honor those who died fighting the Derg government (1974-1991) and the Annole monument which commemorates the Oromo victim who fought against Menelik II in Arsi are worth mentioning. In this part of the paper, the discussion mainly focuses on the scholar's views about the Annole monument which was constructed in Arsi in 2014. Some scholars, based on oral traditions, like Abbas argue that the Shewan force under the leadership of Ras Darge called the Arsi people for peace negotiation in 1887, a year after the battle of Azule. Then, to terrorize the people he selected many strong men and women of Arsi Oromo from the crowd and mutilated their hand and breast respectively. Abbas and his associate's support that the erected statue in Arsi is a right presentation; a cut off hand holding a mutilated breast. This, argument is supported by the government spokesman in his interview when he explains that the purpose is to commemorate the mutilated Oromo people, by *negus* Menelik force.<sup>73</sup>

Other scholars, however, argue that Abbas did not answer the question why the force of *negus* Menelik did not mutilate the warriors of Arsi during the four year war engagement rather than instead of waiting until 1887. So, what is the need for mutilating local forces a year after their defeat go. Thus, the mutilation is likely to be a fabricated history. First, in Ethiopia, the tradition of the practice of breast mutilation was never recorded in any of the literature by traveler accounts, chroniclers, and modern writers before Abbas coined it. Second, some scholars like Getachew Haile argue both the Muslim and Christian tradition did not encourage such brutal action over women and was not recorded even during the Muslim-Christian rivalry, the territorial expansion of the Oromo or in the territorial expansion of Emperor Menelik II. Thus, this narrative aims at discrediting the contributions of Emperor Menelik II in the fields of politics and modernization. Though there were winner and loser in the war and many warriors had lost their lives, there are no credible evidences about the 1887 incident of breast amputations.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Mulualem Daba, "The Pro and Counter Narratives of Annole Memorial Monument in the Ethiopian Polity," (Department of Public Relation and Communication Studies, Wolaita Sodo University, 2017), p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Abbas, *Conquest and Resistance* ..., p. 158.

<sup>74</sup> Mulualem, p. 44; Bewketu Siyom, *Ka Amen Bashager*, (Addis Ababa: Far East trading Private Ltd association, 2008 Ec), pp. 178-191; Getachew Haile, Bahru Zewde, Beyan Soba, Birhanu Mengistu, interview on VOARadio <https://youtu.be/JXlKehVczjg?t=181>, 2014.

The Annole memorial has varying meanings. Government representatives say that it is a tribute to the victims of the Oromo people by the *neftegna* system during the campaign of Emperor Menelik II, the Shewan Amahara. They argue that the '*nefetegna*' were expanding from their center to south and 'conquered' many territories. This implies that the Oromo were entirely victims and, on the other hand, the winners were the Amhara from Shewa. However, Abbas argues that it was not only the Amahara that incorporated the Arsi and other Oromos but many Oromo's were highly involved in the campaign on the sides of Emperor Menelik II's force against Arsi.<sup>75</sup> Getachew Haile remarks that Ethiopia is the gift of the '*nefetegna*' which stands for the Oromo, the Amhara, Hadiya and others who accompanied Menelik in his campaigns.<sup>76</sup>

Some scholars, including Bahru Zewde and Getachew Haile interviewed on Voice of America (VOA) radio disagree on the mutilation issue. They argue that many people were killed from both sides throughout the four successive years of fighting. Finally, at the battle of Azule in 1886 the local war leaders submitted to the forces of Menelik. Many people from Shewa, Selalie and other areas accompanying the troops of Menelik had relatives in Arsi. Besides, major figures who participated in the expedition of emperor Menelik II to Arsi and other areas had an Oromo blood like *ras* Darge (half Oromo), Gobena Dachc, Jima Aba Jifar and others. Thus, the question, here is, how the people committed such a crime over their relatives who had already submitted a year before. Based on these arguments the statue with a cut off hand holding a mutilated breast is a fabrication or a legend not a real history.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

In this section of the paper, it is important to note that the opposing views discussed above are important to understand the very essence of Emperor Menelik's expedition to the south in general and to Arsi in particular.

In this regard, one should bear in mind that whatever their ideological position; the emerging literature has its own significance in bridging the existing gap in the historiography of the country. Most of the literature and individuals supporting the colonial view merely intend to propagate the notion of Oromia's separate history from Ethiopia. They overlook the long history of cultural and political interaction of the Ethiopian people before the 19th century. On the other hand, the reunification view advocates the long history of cultural and demographic interactions and integrations among the whole peoples of Ethiopia including the Oromo. In some of their works they fail to see the details of administrative subjugation of Menelik's expansion on the incorporated territories. My intention is, therefore, to indicate a genuine history of a certain society will create a long lasting confidence. Thus, I would like to remind historians about the great responsibility that they have in interpreting and transferring historical knowledge from one generation to the other.

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<sup>75</sup> Muluaem, p.44; Abbas, *Conquest and Resistance* ..., p. 158.

<sup>76</sup> Getachew Haile, Bahru Zewude, Beyan Soba, Birhanu Mengistu, interview on VOA Radio <https://youtu.be/JXlKehVczjg?t=181>, 2014.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

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