

The Taxation System of Ras Haylu Täklä Haymanot of Gojjam: 1907-1932

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Abstract

Taxation is the base for any political power. Early 20th century Gojjam was under the business minded hereditary lord of Gojjam. He was one of the wealthiest persons of Ethiopia during the period. Haylu was also one of the powerful regional rulers. The bases of his power were his huge regional army and the wealth drawn from the people of Gojjam. Ras Haylu's Gojjam was one of the last autonomous provinces of Ethiopia. This paper examines the ways how Ras Haylu, as an upstart mercantilist ruler of Gojjam, was able to amass huge amount of capital, with particular emphasis on his taxation system. It also discusses some of the factors that led to his final arrest in 1932. A range of sources were used in the paper including secondary materials, archival, oral and published and unpublished primary sources. The data collected from these sources have been carefully selected, cross checked and examined for their authenticity. Then, the information drawn from authentic and credible sources were interpreted and analyzed so as to reconstruct the history of taxation in Gojjam during the period of Ras Haylu.

Key words: taxation, *asrat*, estate, Haylu, endärasé

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Introduction*

For centuries, taxation has remained the most important base of political power in Ethiopia. One of the main reasons for stationing military regiments in various parts of Ethiopia was for the purpose of enforcing the collection of taxes.¹ Since the period of Zamana Masafint (ca. 1769 - ca. 1855) regional powers started to act as a state and continued to collect taxes to maintain their regional political powers.² Emperor Tewodros II and his 19th and 20th century successors worked hard to achieve both political and economic centralization.³ However, during the early 20th century, largely due to the political power struggle in the palace of Menilek II since 1906, there were some economically and politically autonomous regional powers in Ethiopia under the rule of local dynasties. One of them was Gojjam.⁴

Early 20th century Gojjam was under the business minded hereditary lord of Gojjam, namely Ras Haylu Täklä Haymanot (r. 1907-32). He was one of the wealthiest persons during the period. Haylu was also a powerful regional ruler. The bases of his power were his huge regional army and the wealth drawn from the people of Gojjam. Ras Haylu's Gojjam was one of the last autonomous provinces of Ethiopia.⁵

Ras Haylu's first name was *Däjjazmač* Seyum which he changed in to Haylu (*Abba Hayyal*, in his horse name) in 1909 in commemoration of Ras Haylu the Great (1774-94) of Gojjam.⁶ Between 1907 and 1909 Seyum was the ruler of Gojjam Proper alone. However, in April 1909 Emperor Menilek made *Däjjazmač* Seyum Ras Haylu the governor of Gojjam and Damot by an imperial decree.⁷ By 1911, with the addition of Agäw Meder to his domain, Ras Haylu eventually became the governor of the whole river peninsula of Gojjam.⁸

Both the secondary literature and oral sources depict Haylu as the man with high avarice for money; and as a result, he over taxed the people of Gojjam until his arrest in 1932. Haylu's adoration for money earned him an epithet *Haylu Birru* (Haylu the Money minded).⁹ However, little has been researched on his initial motives, his relations with the central state especially during the ascendancy of Empress Taytu (1907- 10) and Lij Iyasu (1911- 16), as to why he failed to invest his money in Gojjam and the real motives of Emperor Haile Selassie in confiscating the entire property of Ras Haylu in 1932.

* The transliteration system of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) has been used throughout this paper.

¹Derese Ayenachew, "Evolution and Organisation of the Čäwa Military Regiments in Medieval Ethiopia," *Annales d'Ethiopie*, Volume 29, (année, 2014), pp. 89-92.

²Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991, Second Edition* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), pp. 11-15.

³Ibid, pp. 85, 87.

⁴Ibid, pp. 143-144.

⁵ Abdussamad Hajj Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy, 1901- 1935" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University Of Urbana, History, Illinois, 1986), P. 69; Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial Kings of Ethiopia", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (January 1973), p. 45. For Ras Haylu's Horse name, see, Mahtämä-Selläsé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, Bairu Tafla and Belatén Géta Mahetäma Selassie Wäldä Mäsqäl, "A Study of the Ethiopian Culture of Horse-Names / የኢትዮጵያ ግህረት ጥናት፡ ጃ ፡ በ ለ ጤ ፡" *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July 1969), p. 243.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Pawlos Nōñño, *Asé Menylek Bä Hagär West Yätätaṭafwačäw Däbdabēwäč*. Addis Ababa: Aster Näga Publisher, 2003 E.C., p. 543. This Proclamation is dated to *Miyaziya* 15, 1901 E. C. Ras Mängäša Atikem was removed from the governorship of Damot Proper by Menilek, see Pawlos, pp. 555- 556, 585- 586.

⁸Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 69; Bairu, p. 45.

⁹Among others see, Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power & Protest, Peasant Revolt in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press Inc., 1996), p. 165.

Methodologically, this paper involves a range of data collected from published and unpublished secondary and primary as well as archival and oral evidences. *Qäññazmač* Negatu Säyfu's hand written manuscript has been extensively consulted to collect information about the genealogies and the administration of Ras Haylu Täklä Haymanot. One of the sources consulted for this study, currently found in the hands of Ato Wärru Negatu—a resident in Bahir Dar, goes on to describe it as “the chronicle of Ras Haylu Täklä Haymanot”. The information drawn from authentic and credible sources were interpreted and analyzed so as to reconstruct the taxation system of Ras Haylu of Gojjam.

Ras Haylu's Taxation and Administrative Officials

Since his reinstatement as the ruler of Gojjam proper in 1907, Haylu made several measures all of which were destined to make suitable conditions for revenue collection. Among others, he divided the province of Gojjam in to 14 smaller administrative units called *wäräda* (district), each of which was divided in to *meslänéwoč* (equivalent to sub-districts). Each district was put under the governorship of Ras Haylu's *Endärasé*. The term *mesläné* was also used to describe the title of governors of each *mesläné* (sub-district).¹⁰

Ras Haylu had undisputed power over Gojjam, maintained interest in commerce, imposed various types of taxes and levies and built his own army which was estimated at 40,000 men armed with rifles by the late 1920s.¹¹ Citing the accounts of James Baum, a member of the American zoological mission that visited Gojjam in 1926, studies aptly confirm that “Gojjam as a whole belonged bag and baggage to Ras Hailu”.¹²

Ras Haylu was also *šumät Bäjjé* (appointment by my hands); that his, officials, unlike those in other parts of the country, had no chance to travel in to Addis Ababa for appointment. He frequently made *šum šeer* (promotion and demotion). Haylu also removed the officials of his father and that of Ras Mängäša Atikäm (since 1910) and appointed his own favorites.¹³ He used his officials namely the *endärasé*, *mesläné*, *gultä gäz* and *čheqa šum* as administrators, judges and tax collectors at the district, sub district and parish levels. They were also responsible for the maintenance of peace and order and the proper functioning of Haylu's *hudads* (estates) in the various districts of Gojjam.¹⁴

The *gultä gäz* were the rulers of parishes (rural localities) in the district. In the absence of *gultä gäz*, the *čheqa šum* (village chiefs) administered their respective parishes efficiently. In addition, the *gultä gäz* and the *čheqa šum* were responsible for the collection of *asrat* (tithe). Together with the district governor, the *gultä gäz* was also expected to accompany Ras Haylu in a campaign as the head of his own soldiers. In return for their services all the above officials were given several *gult* lands. They were also generally free from government taxes.

¹⁰Nebeyu Eyasu, “Administrative History of Gojjam: 1941-1974” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 2004), p. 11. ; Dawit Ayalew, “A History of Méčha Wāräda of Bahr Dar: 1935-1991” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 2010), p. 8.

¹¹Abdussamad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy”, pp. 27, 79.

¹²Habtamu Mengistie. *Lord, Zéga and Peasant: A Study of Agrarian Relations in Rural Eastern Gojjam, FSS Special Series, No 1* (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2004), 190; Abdussamad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy”, p. 197; see also James E. Baum, *Savage Abyssinia* (New York: J. H. Sears & Co., 1927), p.191.

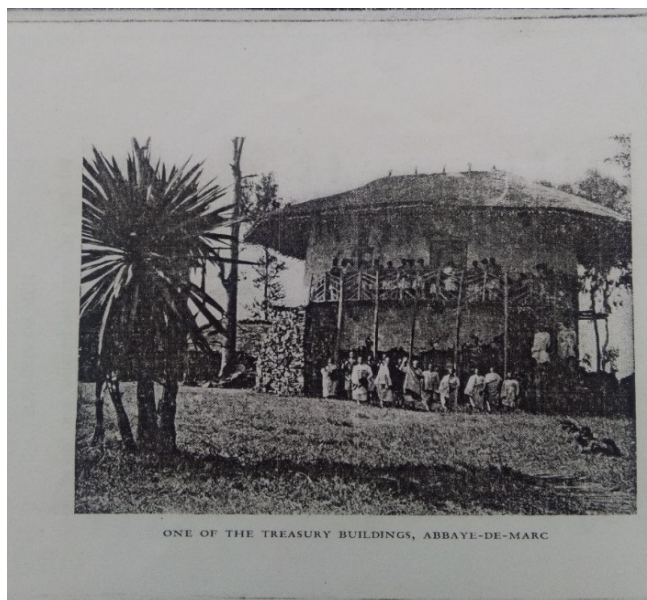
¹³Seltene Seyoum, “A History of Resistance in Gojjam, 1936-1941” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1999), p. 25; for the removal of Ras Mängäša's officials see, Asrat Araya, “A History of Buré-Damot Wāräda, 1936-1974” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 2010), p.26.

¹⁴Dawit, pp. 8- 9; Nebeyu, p. 10.; Donald N. Levine, *Wax & Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1972), pp. 57 – 58.

Besides, the peasants under their jurisdiction were expected to provide them offerings on special occasions like Christmas and Easter.¹⁵

Likewise, historically, the great monasteries of Gojjam like Dima Giyorgis, Zägé Giyorgis, Märto Lā Mariyam, Wašāra Mariyam, Däbrä Wärq, Däbrä Marqos owned vast *gult* lands known as *qefäf* (monastic *gult* lands) or *rim* over which they had the autonomy to administer justice and collect tribute. The management of their widely scattered *qefäfs* or *rims* was held either by succeeding lay *mamihirs*, *gäbäzs* or others of each monastery.¹⁶

However, *Ras* Haylu notoriously violated the traditional land tenure and internal administrative structures of the above monasteries. To begin with, Haylu either appropriated or actively purchased fertile mostly riverside lands from *restä gult* owners and *gult* land owning the great monasteries of Gojjam such as Däbrä Wärq, Zägé Giyorgis, Däbrä Markos, Dima Giyorgis and the like using various means including his office. Then, he converted these lands into his own *hudad* farms (estates) and sold the produce.¹⁷ *Ras* Haylu also constructed temporary store houses at the site of each *hudad* farm in Gojjam.¹⁸ He also established permanent treasury houses at places like Däjän, Däbrä Marqos, Injibara, Yismala, Zägé, Motta and Addét for storing honey and other agricultural products which were collected from the people by way of taxes.¹⁹



One of the Treasury Buildings of *Ras* Haylu of Gojjam in 1929.

Source: Griaule, Marcel. *Burner of Men: Modern Ethiopia*, Gilrich Edwin, Trans (London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1935), p. 103.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Negatu Säyfu, “Tezämedo Säbe’e Zä Ityopeya” (MS, Personal Collection, Bahr Dar Un Dated).; Bälay Mekonnen (Liqä Heruyan), *Etégé Taytu Bä Däbrä Mäwi* (Addis Ababa: Tana Publishing Enterprise, 2003 E.C.), p. 66.

¹⁷ Donald Crummey, Donald. *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), pp. 194, 232; Habtamu, p. 190; Abdussamad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy”, pp. 198-200.

¹⁸ Marcel Griaule, *Burner of Men: Modern Ethiopia*, Gilrich Edwin, Trans (London: J.B Lippincott Company, 1935), p. 127; Dawit, p. 11.

¹⁹ Abdussamad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy”, pp.25, 70; Griaule, pp. 103, 127; Ayele Tariku, “A History of Hulät Iju Ensé Wäradä, 1941-1991” (MA Thesis, History, Addis Ababa University, June 2011), pp 15-16; Geremew Eskezia, “A History of Yelmana Dēnsa District: 1901- 74” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 2015), p. 47; Informants: Addam Käbbädä ; Biyazné Ejegu.

Besides, peasants were obliged by accountable local officials of each district of Gojjam such as the *mesläné*, *hudad endärasé* and *cheqa šum* to work on Ras Haylu's estates. As a part of his tax obligation, every peasant had to work on Haylu's estates in monthly rounds as scheduled by these officials. Peasants carried out plowing, planting, weeding and harvesting on Haylu's estates.²⁰



Ras Haylu Watching Work by the Public on one of his Estates, 1929

Source: Source: Marcel Griaule, *Burner of Men: Modern Ethiopia*, Gilrich Edwin, Trans (London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1935), p. 182.

Furthermore, Ras Haylu made many localities of Gojjam *ganägäb* territories (personal *gults*). The *ganägäb* territories of Ras Haylu were run by the *gult endärasés* (superintendents) and their secretaries, who were accountable to district *endärasés*.²¹ The *gult endärasé* (also called *asaraš*) of Ras Haylu had the right to take one third of the local taxes and court fees collected in the areas under his jurisdiction. Similarly, the secretary of a *gult endärasé* had the right to collect a *qunna* of grain from each harvest of each peasant in his *gult* territory. In addition, the latter received a salary of *madeggas* of grain and *qunnas* of pepper and an annual payment of 10 Maria Theresa thaler (henceforth, MTT) for clothing.²²

Further, large number of labourers, particularly slaves and other low status people, worked on Haylu's *hudads* (estates). They were paid some amount of grain, *amolé*, pepper and MTT for their maintenance.²³ Criminals, except murderers, were also required to pay for their crimes

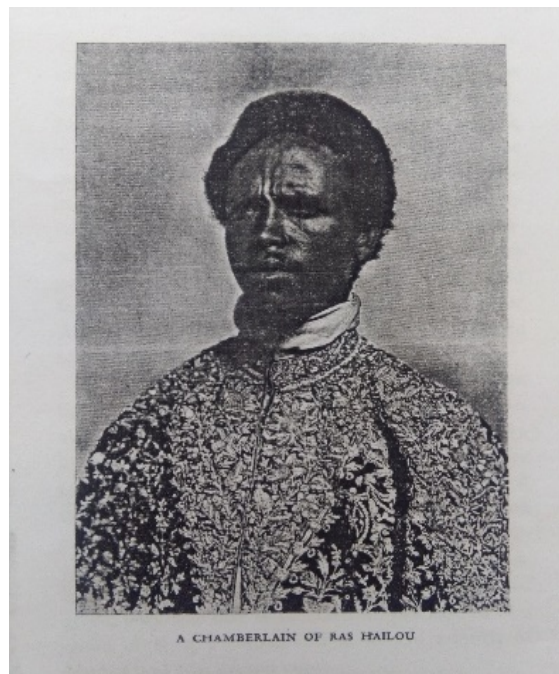
²⁰Negatu (MS, no page); Dawit, pp. 11-12.

²¹Negatu (MS, no page); Dawit, p. 11.

²²Negatu (MS, no page).

²³Abdussamad Hajj Ahmed, "Trade and Politics in Gojjam, 1882-1935" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1980), p. 63.

through working on *Ras Haylu's* estates.²⁴ Even the Gumuz people in the western periphery of Gojjam as far as the Gubba area along the Ethio-Sudanese border were expected to pay taxes of various forms to Haylu through his Agaw financial and administrative agents like *Fitawrari Zälläqä Liku*.²⁵



A Ligaba (Court Chamberlain) of *Ras Haylu* of Gojjam in 1929

Source: Marcel Griaule, *Burner of Men: Modern Ethiopia*, Gilrich Edwin, Trans (London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1935), p.111.

The courts of *Ras Haylu* at various places of Gojjam followed the pattern of the court of the central government. He had his own treasurer with the title of *Azaž*, military commander, *wāmbārs* (judges) and a chamberlain (master of ceremonies) entitled *Ligaba*, who were responsible for financial issues, administration, maintenance of peace, hearing of appeals from the *meslāné* and passing down Haylu's orders, respectively. Regarding this, the diagram below drawn by Mission Griaule in 1929 elaborately explains the structure of *Ras Haylu's* court at Adét which provided treasury, residence, banquet and others functions.²⁶

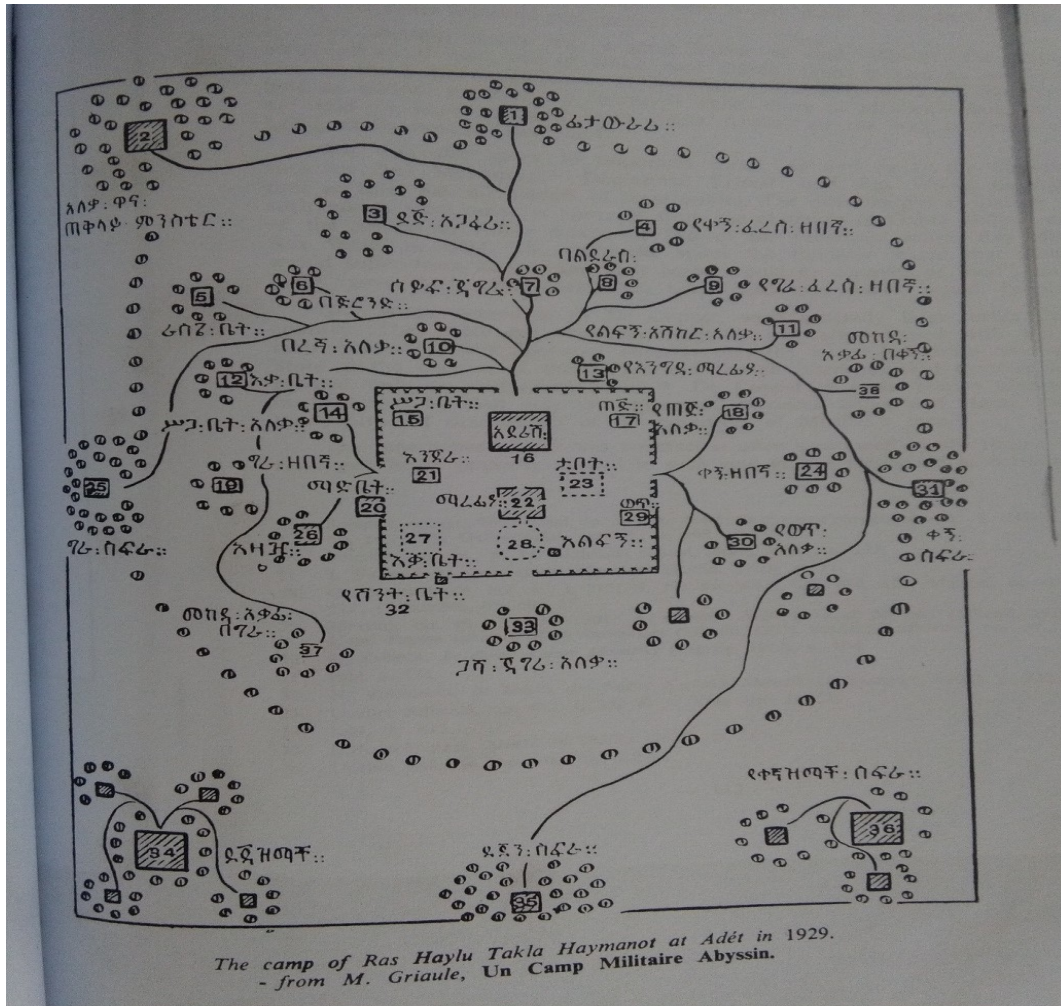
Usually, *Ras Haylu* made administrative and judiciary activities including *šum šeer* of local officials during his temporary stay at these courts. For instance, he promoted local *cheqa šums* in to the rank of *Grazmač* and assigned them to carry out taxation and administrative responsibilities. Similarly, as described above, *Ras Haylu* reorganized the administrative structure of the churches of Gojjam. Here, ten or so neighbouring churches of each sub

²⁴C.F. Rey, *In the Country of the Blue Nile* (New York: Negro University Press, 1927), p. 138.

²⁵Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 137; Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Center-Periphery Relations, Local Governance and Conflicts in Ethiopia: The Experience of Metekel Province", *Social Identities*, DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2017.1310040, (2017), p.7.

²⁶Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1965, p. 136; Nebeyu, p. 10; Griaule, many pages. For the diagram of *Ras Haylu's* court at Adét, see R. Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1966), p. 112. Mission Griaule was the French anthropological mission whose leader was Marcel Griaule, who stayed for some times with *Ras Haylu* at Adét in 1929.

district of Gojjam were put under the supervision of a *Liqā Kahenat* (superior of the clergy).²⁷ He also promoted other church officials by receiving appointment fees.²⁸ In this case, Abdussamad



The Camp of *Ras* Haylu at Adét in 1929

Source: R. Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1966), p. 112

states that Haylu appointed mostly lay secular Christians to the administrative positions of the leading churches of Gojjam like Motta, Biččäna, Däbrä Marqos and Däbrä Éliyas; for example, a *Fitawrari* for Dämbäčha Mika'él.²⁹ Further, Haylu designated a *Grazmač* over craft workers and a *Liqä mäkwä*s over the *Azmari* (minstrels) and *Amina* or *Hamana* (dawn time singers) of each sub district of the province (if any). Obviously, the most important task of all these local officials was the collection of taxes and other tributes of *Ras* Haylu.

²⁷Negatu (MS, no page).

²⁸Nebeyu, p. 11.

²⁹ Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", pp. 74-75.

The Taxation System

As already stated, *Ras Haylu*'s rule was marked by excessive taxation and exploitation of the peasants, artisans and merchants of Gojjam. His greediness is widely spoken about still today as Haylu collected taxes even from the blind, lepers, beggars and other physically disabled persons which was taboo in the eyes of the public at the time.³⁰ In short, the *Ras* made his utmost effort to boost his revenue. This can be understood from one of the several inquiring questions the *Ras* asked the above mentioned American zoological team that visited Gojjam in 1926 about American agricultural technology and farming methods. One of Haylu's questions was about American income from taxes which reads:

“What is America's income from taxes each year?” was the next question of this information hungry ruler.

He followed that by a long list of others. What did the taxes amount to on land, livestock and other things? We were able to give some tentative figures, and *Ras Hailu* whistled.”³¹

In any case, apart from land tax, Haylu received revenues in the form of tributes, taxes other than land tax, fees and bribes. To begin with, *asrat* (tithe) also called *asé qolo* was collected by *Ras Haylu*'s officials such as the *mesläné*, *gultä gäz* and *cheqa šum* in collaboration. Initially, *asrat* was collected in kind by groups of Haylu's tax collectors (including the *cheqa šums*) in each sub district. They were called *asāfari* (measurers) who were shortly afterwards renamed as *gotära asekäfač* (assessors of the granary). The *asāfari* retained a third of the amount of the *asrat* (tithe) and was allowed to collect two *qunna* of grain from each peasant for his service. For that reason, *Ras Haylu*'s tax collectors were sometimes called *yä golqunna šums*.³²

Later on, however, *Ras Haylu* found this system of tax collection to be inefficient and the collectors corrupted. As a result, in 1910, Haylu changed the payment of *asrat* into cash. He imposed fixed amount of taxes on each district. For the purpose of levying Haylu's taxes, elders were elected at the district, *mesläné* (sub district) and village levels, respectively, to assess the wealth of their inhabitants. Then, the amount of *asrat* (a tenth of one's produce) imposed by Haylu was divided among *meslänés* and villages according to their wealth.³³ A peasant who owned a pair of oxen was usually expected to pay at least two MTT, two pairs of oxen three MTT and so on. *Asrat* was still collected by the *yä golqunna šums* who were also given some localities as *gult* for their service.³⁴

It seems that the local peoples of Gojjam were generally happy with the conversion of taxes into cash because they could now harvest their crops without waiting for the coming of tax assessors.³⁵ Any extra amount of money collected in an area was also shared by the *mesläné* and his secretary. Here, among others, the *endärasé* of Yelmana Dénsa (including Zägé and Lejj Ambära) since 1925, Negatu Säyfu, remarked that the new system could not prevent corruption by tax collectors, and hence, the amount of tax collected from his district usually dwindled to 6,000 MTT from the fixed tax of 8,800 MTT of which Zägé 's share was 800

³⁰*Ibid*, p. 84; Habtamu, p. 190; Informants: Alämay Bogalä, Addam Käbbädä, Haylu Meteku.

³¹Baum, p.199.

³²“Bahr Dar Center of Edegät Bäheberät Amätawi Report, *Ter* 1967 E. C. – *Säné* 1968 E. C.” (Bahr Dar, Säné 1968E. C.), pp. 61-62. ; (MS, no page). For *Ras Haylu*'s officials see also Dawit, p. 9. ; Nebeyu, p. 11.

³³Dawit, p. 10; (MS, no page).

³⁴“Bahr Dar Center of Edegät Bäheberät”, p. 61.

³⁵Negatu (MS, no page). ; Abdussamad, “Trade and Politics in Gojjam”, p. 33.

MTT.³⁶ Dawit also stated that the tax share of the district of Méçha was 27000 MTT.³⁷ Similarly, Asrat pointed out that *Ras Haylu* received 500 MTT per annum from the people of Buré- Damot for the use of two mineral waters.³⁸

Ras Haylu also received taxes of different other forms from all adults corresponding to their occupations. The most unpopular tax which was introduced about 1920 was *yāçhes geber* (hut tax). There were times when people were forced to live in group in a single house, and newly married couples were forced to stay longer in the houses of their parents so as to escape the hut tax.³⁹ Regarding this, Dawit quotes a popular parlance made in the district of Méçha which reads:

ጎመኔን ቀንጥሽ ጥሬውን በላሁት፤
እንዳለበስለውም የጢሱን ፈራሁት፡፡

*I ate my cabbage raw, as I cannot cook it for fear of the smoke tax [hut tax].*⁴⁰

Being aware of the preceding condition, *Ras Haylu* changed the tax in to *yä qula geber* (head tax) paid by all adults, whether they lived together or alone. Besides, Haylu took *yä qānd geber* (tax per head of cattle) also called *yä çhera geber* (tail tax) and *ambo geber* (tax on mineral waters sources). *Yä qānd* and *yä ambo gebers* were collected by local *Grazmaçes* promoted by Haylu for the same purpose. *Mäšäta* ladies and widows were also required to pay a tax called *yä gofäre geber* (hair tax).⁴¹

Gojjam was always praised as a land of honey and butter. Hence, Haylu, like his predecessors, collected honey tax from the people; a tax then known as *faga mar* (a gourd shell full of honey).⁴² Since 1922 Haylu also introduced a new tax known as *yä géšo geber* (tax on *géšo* plant) taxable on both plant fields and at market places.⁴³ People were also expected to pay two MTT as court fee for *Ras Haylu* and his officials, and a tax of two MTT per parish as *afärsata* fee (traditional criminal detection).⁴⁴

For the purpose of collecting his taxes, *Ras Haylu* promoted local *çheqa šums* of Gojjam to the rank of *Grazmaç* and assigned them to collect market dues. Further, *Ras Haylu* brought the craft workers of each *mesläne* of the districts of Gojjam such as tanners, weavers, black smiths and jewelers under a *Grazmaç* and required them to pay taxes entitled *yäkasma* (peg tax), *yägwdegwad* (hole tax), *yädäbälanssa* (smiths tax) and *yämanafiya* (bellow tax), respectively.⁴⁵

The amount of all the above taxes varied from person to person according to their status and amount of wealth. For instance, ordinary people like *mäšäta* ladies, minstrels and *Amina* or *Hamana* (dawn time singers) were required to pay one MTT, and craft workers two MTT per

³⁶Negatu (MS, no page); Geremew, p. 56.

³⁷Dawit, p. 11.

³⁸Asrat, p. 26.

³⁹Gebre, p. 165; Informants: Addam Käbbädä, Alämay Bogalä Haylu Meteku.

⁴⁰Dawit, p. 11; for the English version of the verse see also Gebre, *Ibid*.

⁴¹Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", pp. 71-73. ; Nebeyu, p. 11. ; Asrat, p. 26. ; Dawit, pp. 10-11. ; Habtamu, p. 190.

⁴²Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", pp. 70, 223.

⁴³*Ibid*, p. 71.

⁴⁴*Ibid*, p. 82.

⁴⁵Negatu (MS, no page). ; Tecle Haimanot Gebre Silassie. "The Waito of Lake Tana: An Ethno- History" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1984), pp. 44-45.

year.⁴⁶ By contrast, the taxes of *Ras Haylu* were relatively higher for higher status people and ecclesiastical leaders receiving from them from 50 to 100 MTT. Moreover, soldiers recruited from one district, then known as *māḥi*, were quartered in peasant houses of another district to enforce Haylu's different form of taxes.⁴⁷

The business minded lord of Gojjam also always used every other opportunity to tax his subjects. Among others, in the early May 1921 when *Ras Täfäri* summoned him at Dessie, he raised 5,000 militia attendants, taxed his subjects one MTT per person for provisions; and able bodied men who refused to accompany him had to pay ten MTT each, which was known as *Yä zämäḥa färi* (fearful of campaign). Täfäri was pleased by the demonstrated loyalty of *Ras Haylu* and rewarded him 30,000 MTT to distribute among his troops. However, Haylu kept the money for himself, which created ill feeling among his troops and earned him a nick name *Haylu Birru* (Haylu the money minded).⁴⁸ When *Ras Teferi* nominated Haylu to accompany him in his European tour in April 1924, Haylu got another opportunity to impose a tax of five MTT per head on his subjects to cover his expenses.⁴⁹

The other section of the people of Gojjam who were expected to pay Haylu's taxes were merchants and other market attendants. Market day taxes known as *yädelal* (brokerage tax) were usually two MTT per mule or donkey load. It was taxed both at the gate of and inside the market. *Ras Haylu* also collected *Yä Bär tax* (toll- gate tax) at bridges and other toll-posts in Gojjam from merchants.⁵⁰ Monasteries, mineral waters and the hot springs in the province of Gojjam (including Wanzayä in Bägémder) were also expected to pay a share of the amount they had collected per year.⁵¹

One of the sources of Haylu's revenue was called *yä mäššomiya* (appointment fee) demanded from all his secular and ecclesiastical officials. To begin with, *Ras Haylu* appointed *yägolqunna šums*, new *gultä gäžs*, and gave recognition for hereditary *gultägäžs* by receiving appointment fees from all of them.⁵² Besides, Haylu received appointment fees from all *Wämbärs* (local judges), ecclesiastical officials, *Liqämäkwases*, and the *Grazmačes* of craft workers, cattle herders and market day tax collectors. In doing all this, Haylu did not consider merit or birth as a criteria, but the *Mäššomiya*.⁵³ Likewise, individual persons were expected to pay fees to *Ras Haylu* so as to get military ranks like *Fitawrari*, *Balambāras*, *Šambäl*, *Qāññazmač* and so on.⁵⁴ A *Nägadräs* was also expected to pay an appointment fee usually amounting to 2000 MTT.⁵⁵

Finally, as mentioned earlier, part of *Ras Haylu*'s revenue also came from the confiscation of property. Haylu confiscated land, wealth and slaves of murderers and those persons without offspring using various means including his office. For instance, he often ordered aged persons without offspring to adopt him as the inheritor of their property.⁵⁶ Besides, he confiscated the entire property of a murderer and his relatives up to the seventh line with the

⁴⁶Nigatu (MS, no page); Dawit, p. 11.

⁴⁷Gebre, p. 165; Dawit, p. 11.

⁴⁸Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 71.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁰Negatu (MS, no page); Dawit, p. 11.

⁵¹Negatu (MS, no page). The traditional title of the official of the *Ambo* before the period of *Ras Haylu* was *Blatta*.

⁵²Nebeyu, pp. 10-11. ; Negatu (MS, no page).

⁵³Negatu (MS, no page) ; Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 87.

⁵⁴Negatu (MS, no page); Dawit, p. 11. ; Asrat, p. 26.

⁵⁵Asrat, p. 26; Geremew, p. 58.

⁵⁶Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", pp. 62, 72. ; Crummey, p. 232; Informants: Addam Käbbädä, Biyazné Ejegu, Alämay Bogalä, Haylu Meteku.

“intention” of “discouraging such a crime.”⁵⁷ According to Abdussamad, Haylu also confiscated slaves in Zägé and used them to work on confiscated coffee plots of land there.⁵⁸ The same author further states that one of the many *Nägadrases* of Haylu in Gojjam, Abdulqader Aman of Adét, died in April 1927, and Haylu took:

“...86 head of cattle, 46 slaves, 32 *wächäfo* (wetterly) and *wejegra* (Fusil Gras) rifles, 32 London made swords, 66 mules loaded with ivory and civet, 13,000 thalers, 1,800 jars of butter and honey from his house” [at Mändärä Eyäsus].⁵⁹

Regarding the preceding point, in an interview with him at Adét (Gojjam) in 2015, *Nägadras* Abdulqader’s grandson, *Ato* Nuré Muhammad, stated that the alleged reason for the confiscation of his grandfather’s entire property by *Ras* Haylu was that the latter claimed that it was “the property of the state” because Abdulqader was one of his most important trade agents. The family of the *Nägadras* unsuccessfully accused Haylu to the central state. Here, *Ato* Nuré lamentingly blames *Ras* Haylu for involving in the killing of one of the sons of the *Nägadras* in Addis Ababa while he was there to follow up the verdict.⁶⁰

Consequently, Haylu’s rule was universally disliked in Gojjam. He was even disliked by the clergy, his own soldiers and officials. Because of this, conspiracies were frequently made by his guards to kill *Ras* Hailu usually at places of banquet.⁶¹ Regarding this point, a verse collected by Ayele Tariku in Inäbsé (Mottä) states that at one time the *Azmari* (traditional musician) heard about a conspiracy and told *Ras* Hailu to care for himself in the following poem:

ከራስዎ በላይ የለዎም ወዳጅ
ራስ ራስዎን ይጠብቁት እንጂ

*You do not have better companion than yourself,
You had better look after yourself.*⁶²

In conclusion, according to Bahru, *Ras* Haylu alienated a large section of the people of Gojjam including the clergy by over taxing them and amassing land which was later on used by Emperor Haile Selassie as a propaganda to accuse him, as will be discussed below.⁶³

Deteriorated Relations with the Central State and End of *Ras* Haylu’s Rule (late 1920s- 1932)

The political power struggle at the imperial center from 1907 to 1930 permitted *Ras* Haylu and other northern Ethiopian chiefs to freely impose heavy taxes on farmers, artisans and merchants and accumulate wealth.⁶⁴ As discussed earlier, through taxation, *hudad* farming, appointment and court fees, monopoly of export trade and commerce, owning cattle as well

⁵⁷Geremew, p.58; Negatu (MS, no page).

⁵⁸Abdussamad, “Trade and Politics in Gojjam”, P. 30; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, “Priest Planters and Slavers of Zage (Ethiopia), 1900-1935” In *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No.3 (1996), Pp. 549-550.

⁵⁹Abdussamad, “Trade and Politics in Gojjam”, P. 30.

⁶⁰Informant: Nuré Mohammed.

⁶¹Ayele, p. 16; Griaule, p. 182.

⁶²Ayele, *Ibid*.

⁶³Bahru, p. 144.

⁶⁴Abdussamad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy”, p.25.

as confiscation of property *Ras* Haylu became one of the wealthiest persons in Ethiopia.⁶⁵ In 1932 Haile Selassie's government estimated Haylu's wealth to have been three million MTT, which was at the time a very big capital.⁶⁶ He used every opportunity and abused all the traditional prerogatives of his office to accumulate wealth. As already mentioned, Haylu heavily taxed his subjects, monopolized export trade and manipulated *rest* and *gult* through vigorous land purchase and appropriation.⁶⁷

Wealth accumulation enabled Haylu to consolidate his provincial power base without interference from the imperial center for nearly 28 years.⁶⁸ According to Abdussamad, Haylu's power was his army, and the base of his power was the wealth obtained from Gojjam.⁶⁹ As a result, he did not follow the directives from the central government concerning the administration of his province.⁷⁰ It seems that Haylu proved clever enough to maintain his autonomy through carefully watching the development of events and avoiding conflict with regional powers and the central government.⁷¹

Furthermore, sources agree that no significant amount of revenue was sent to the treasuries of both the central state and church.⁷² Instead, Haylu invested much of his money in Addis Ababa in cinema, night clubs, taxi service and the like which amounted to personal business more than anything else.⁷³ Nor his exactions did bring any transformation of social relations of production in Gojjam.⁷⁴

However, *Ras* Täfäri at the center of power was always finding ways to try to force *Ras* Haylu of Gojjam and *Ras* Gugsa of Bägemedet to send taxes and custom revenues to the treasuries of the central state in Addis Ababa. Particularly after his coronation as an Emperor in 1930, Haile Selassie was preparing the ground to dispossess Haylu.⁷⁵ Hence, the two potentates were in a series of disputes particularly between 1928 and 1931.

Eventually, in June 1932 a case which was used as a pretext to confiscate the entire property of *Ras* Haylu and bring the province of Gojjam under the direct central government control was brought to the Emperor. Here, *Ras* Haylu was allegedly accused of involving in the escape of *Lej* Eyasu from prison at Feččé. For instance, in his autobiography, Täklä Hawaryat Täklä Mariyam states that, as the then Minister of Finance, he was one of the fifty individuals/witnesses who gave their own judgments on *Ras* Haylu and his property. Under the final verdict of Emperor Haile Selassie, *Ras* Haylu was sentenced to life imprisonment and his entire property was confiscated.⁷⁶

⁶⁵Bahru Zewde, "Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia (1916-1935)" *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XVII (November 1984), p.18; Abdussamad, "Trade and Politics in Gojjam", pp. 27, 58; Greenfield, p. 137.

⁶⁶Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 81.

⁶⁷Nebeyu, p. 10.

⁶⁸Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 27.

⁶⁹*Ibid.* p.27.

⁷⁰Nebyou, p. 10.

⁷¹Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. 29.

⁷²*Ibid*; Negatu (MS, no page).

⁷³Bahru, "Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia", p. 18. ; Crummey, p. 232. ; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 98; Bairu, p. 46.

⁷⁴Abdussamad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", p. III.

⁷⁵*Ibid.* pp. 73, 77.

⁷⁶Märsē'ē Hazān Wäldä Qirqos, "Selä *Ras* Haylu Nebrät Mäwāräs Ena Däbrä Marqos Bätänäsaw Amba Gwaro Bezu Säw Mägodatu" (Manuscript, Amharic, n.d.), Ethiopian National Archive and Library Agency (here after N. A. L. A.), Folder Number መ. ታ. ወ. ቁ. 63.1, File Number, 33.13.; Täklä Hawaryat Täklä Maryam (*Fitawrari*), *Auto Biography (Yä Heywoté Tarik)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2004 E. C.), pp. 413-414. ; Seltene, "A History of Resistance in Gojjam", p. 12; Abdussamad Hajj Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and World Economy", pp. 73-74.

Conclusion

Ras Haylu of Gojjam used his utmost effort to accumulate as much wealth as possible. He was involved in regional trade, estate farming, land sale, urban commerce as well as animal rearing and cash crop production. He also over-taxed the people of Gojjam. The bases of Haylu's power were his huge regional army and the wealth drawn from the people of Gojjam. Probably, Haylu's financial power was one of the main factors for the continuation of Gojjam as an autonomous region at least until 1932.

However, the people of Gojjam almost universally disapproved of Haylu's rule because of over taxation, land grabbing and manipulation of traditional institutions; all of them emanated from his avarice for money. He has also been criticized by many for his failure to invest his huge amount of capital in Gojjam. On the other hand, Emperor Hayla Sellase was waiting for an opportune time to bring an end to the autonomous status of Gojjam especially after he had become an emperor on November 30, 1930. The Emperor took the hatred of the people of Gojjam towards *Ras* Haylu to his own advantage. Haylu's trade contact with the neighbouring colonial powers including the Italians in Eritrea was another factor for the disagreement between Haylu and the Emperor. In the end, neither his financial power nor the people of Gojjam could save him from the life imprisonment sentenced up on him by the Emperor in 1932.

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III. Informants

No	Name of Informant	Age by the time of interview	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remarks
1	Addam Käbbädä (<i>Ato</i>)	85	21.9.1999 & 26.3.2000	Erbereb (Adét)	A native of Adét. He knew a great deal about Yelmana Dénsa since the time of <i>Ras</i> Haylu. He narrated events fairly well, but not dates.
2	Alämay Bogalä (<i>Däbtära</i>)	65	27. 8. 1999	Adét	He was highly educated in church schools. He comprehensively narrates the socio economic conditions of the district across the periods.
3	Biyazné Ejegu (<i>Ato</i>)	70	31.8.1999 & 19. 6. 2015	Adét 01	He was a <i>Näçh Läbas</i> . He has deep knowledge about the history of the district.
4	Haylu Meteku (<i>Ato</i>)	88	18.6.2015	Adét 02	A patriot who served the previous two regimes in various capacities. He has a detailed knowledge on the history of Yelmana Dénsa
5	Nuré Muhamad (<i>Ato</i>)	70	19. 6. 2015	Adét 02	Grandson of <i>Nagadras</i> Abdulqader Aman. He has much hearsay knowledge about the early history of the district. Highly knowledgeable.