

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Peasants and Resistances against Italian Occupation in North Shewa (May 4, 1936- May 5, 1941)

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Abstract

North Shewa, in the Central highland of Ethiopia, was one of the centers of guerrilla fighting resistances against the Italian occupation. The rural area of the region, residence of the peasantry was conducive for the guerrilla type of warfare. The peasants of the region had to host the resistance groups and received destructive punishments for that from the Italians and their collaborators. Therefore, this paper intends to disclose the multi-faceted challenges and causalities the peasants had been facing during the five years of occupation and resistances. Historical sources contributed both from the Ethiopian and Italian sides were consulted to organize the paper. Individuals who were the members of the resistance groups or claimed that they were the insiders produced their memoirs in historical or fiction books. The battles were fought in three consecutive phases and four major ill-coordinated zones (north western- Selalie-Merhabetie, northern-Menz-Tegulet, eastern- Ankober-Yifat and South eastern-Bulga-Shenkora) of the region because of geographical and demographic reasons. Mainly, the Amhara and neighbouring Oromo peasants were the prey for the resistance groups, the Italians and the collaborators. The peasants were also under the strong pressure of malnourishments, diseases and migrants from Addis Ababa to the region particularly after the Addis Ababa massacre of February, 1937 because of geographical and historical factors. The rugged topography and geographical proximity of the region to the capital made it the ideal place of self exile.

Key terms: Causalities/ Collaborators/ Guerrilla fighting/ Italians/ Peasants/ Resistance groups.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The region currently called as North Shewa is located in the central highland of Ethiopia. Approximately, it is the land between the Jema and Kesem rivers, which are fed by different tributaries. Jema and Kesem are tributaries of the Abay and Awash respectively. Numerous tributaries fall down from the highland of the region flowing westward to join Jema River. Similarly, a number of tributaries are flowing eastward to join the Awash. It was the valleys of all these rivers and streams hosted the resistant groups, their relatives and supporters (Ege , 2005, p.47).

That was why the resistant groups mentioned those localities as “the country of my father, the country of my mother” in their chant quoted below, to inspire oneself for resistance against the Italian occupation.

“የአባት አገር ዱሬ	The jungle of my fatherland
የእናት አገር ዱሬ፤	The jungle of my motherland
እገባብሻለሁ የትም የትም ዙሬ።” ¹	I am entering to you after wandering here and there!

Peasant casualties in wars were partly because of the fact that they were targeted being considered as the providers of every supply including manpower for the opposing groups. They were exposed to famines and other related problems because of economic disruption that would happen. A significant number of peasants in such wars were also deliberately killed by the opponents through government orders. Ethiopia was one of the countries of the world where civilians particularly peasants who were considered as the host of resistant groups were targeted and attacked in the course of the Second World War, during the attempt of Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Of the peasant population, men were considered as potentially warriors by the Italians. In fact, there are many men who were of combatant age but did not take up arms. There were also elderly men who could not actually participate in battles because of their age. On the other hand, women were categorized as relatively non-fighters, even if there were a number of women who displayed remarkable strength by acting as actual fighters, nurses of the wounded, protectors and supporters of their families throughout the course of the resistance (Epps, 2013, pp.322-323).

Therefore, every members of the society, male, female, elderly, infant, etc., were subjected to different attacks in North Shewan rural region during those five years of resistances. Usually, these wars caused disability directly by bombs and bullets, and trauma of war caused mental and emotional disturbances. Of all, children were the most disabled due to bombardments or gunshot injuries. Many children were also affected by emotional disturbances. Not only children, but also elderly peoples were affected seriously. They could not escape due to lack of mobility or physical strength and become targets of brutality and revenges. As families and communities disintegrate, elders were left isolated, destitute and helpless. During armed conflict, they might be left behind to guard home and property. They often could not adapt to a difficult new environment and faced obstacles to secure social services and employment. Deaths because of food shortages and famine occurred during those times. Acts like seizing or destroying food stocks, livestock, and other assets in food-producing regions; cutting off market supplies of food in these and other regions were common (*Ibid*, p. 323).

Farming populations were also reduced by direct attacks, terror, or forced recruitment as fighter for either of the two groups and by malnutrition, illness, and death. As farming populations declined due to frightening, production fallen, and spreading food deficits over wider areas. Chemicals used for attacking the resistant groups were additional hostile acts that turn temporary acute food shortages into longer-term insufficiencies. These acts forced people to leave and not to return, thus interrupting food production and economic activities permanently. After they lost all their assets including tools and livestock, people found themselves without resources. Moreover, children died

as a result of disease and malnutrition caused by war than from direct attack. The population movements and breakdown of social controls engendered by armed conflict encouraged prostitution mainly in urban centers and camps to serve the collaborators, Italians and the resistant groups to certain extent. Displacement of rural people, lack of energy for work and fear of the physical danger of working on farmlands hindered them from productivity. They also could not use pasture and water wells for livestock. Therefore, the displacement caused the rural population to become vulnerable to disease, malnutrition and social disruption (*Ibid*).

This period of Italian occupation in Ethiopia has been a subject of study for individuals from different fields of study in social sciences. Personalities who were participating or claimed that they were participating in the resistance in one way or another contributed bulk of literature to justify their contribution. Mainly, Amharic fictions and histories by Ethiopian authors and historical studies by both Ethiopians and foreigners in English were contributed significantly. We have also tremendous literature on the issue in Italian language. Moreover, the majority of the theses in Addis Ababa university department of history at different levels from BA to PhD degree had “patriotic resistance” as their subject of studies. The Ethiopian Orthodox church also contributed a lot of bulletins, books and manuscripts on the fate of the church and the clergy during the occupation. Unfortunately, the fate of peasants during the occupation was rarely discussed throughout these literatures. In regions which were battle ground between the Italian and resistance forces, peasants were suffering a lot. North Shewa was one of the centers where series of battles were fought between these two forces. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the experiences of Shewan peasants during the course of the war from May 4, 1936 to May 5, 1941.

The sources which were used for the purpose of this study are characterized as follows. The available national sources² are dealt with “patriotic resistance” and their love and commitment for their country, the activities and the opportunist behaviour of the collaborators. The other related categories of sources are the Church history which discusses the atrocities of the Italians and their collaborators against the clergy and how the clergy became martyr of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. On the other hand, the *bandas* (collaborators), as frequently written on the *ye Roma berehan* newspaper defaming the “patriots” as *shifita* (bandits) who went to the bush to raid the properties of peasants and their anti-peace and ant-modernization behavior.

2. The Nature of the Resistances

Why did North Shewa become one of the major centers of Guerrilla Resistances against the Italian occupation? As to this study, it was shifted from peasant farmlands to the center of guerrilla resistances because of four major reasons; the region’s geographical proximity to the capital, the geographical landscape of the region, the historical cohesion between the residents of Addis Ababa and that of the region; and scarceness of chiefs in the region that collaborated with Italy.

The geographical proximity of the region to the capital resulted in two parallel influences on the peasants of North Shewa. The first was that the Italians rushed easily from Addis Ababa to attack the resistance groups exiled themselves in the fragmented landscape of the region. The attacks, particularly the air bombardment, targeted the

resistance groups and their hosts, the peasantry. Secondly, the residents of the capital who retreated from the Italians mainly after the massacre of February 1937 rushed into the nearby rugged river gorges and mountains of the region. This was partly because it provided them safe arrival and protection before they were subjected to attack by air bombardments immediately after they escaped from the capital (Taddese, 1968).

The topographic feature of North Shewa is by far rugged and suitable for the guerrilla type of warfare. Partly, that was why the Italians did not manage to clear the resistance groups from the region, unlike their harsh measure; which targeted also the peasants. The good geographical knowledge of the resistance groups about each and every locality enabled them to choose it (Tilahun, 1983, p.109; Aberra, 2005, p.16; Campbell, 2010, p.340).

Thirdly, the region was the origin of most of the early residents of Addis Ababa or their ancestors. Moreover, there was the assumption that during such evil days, one's birth place and relatives are where to move and survive. The chief resistance leaders, subordinates and members as well as the majority of their army were from Addis Ababa and regions south of Addis Ababa, although they were categorized as North Shewan "patriots" in the available literature. Thus, they rushed to the region claiming that "none can be comparable with birth place during evil days" (Aberra, 2005, p, 84). As it is well known, the foundation of Addis Ababa as the capital of the country resulted in the population transfer from North Shewa to Central Shewa. The new site attracted peoples with different backgrounds having their own respective objectives. Many of the politically and militarily active peoples during this early phase of the foundation of Addis Ababa were from the region. Thus, it was these peoples or their descendents that rushed to north Shewa during the occupation ("evil days"), mainly after the massacre of February 1937 (Tilahun, 1983, pp. 68-69, 82, 84, 86, 88).

Fourthly, relatively speaking, there was no prominent figure under the group of collaborators from North Shewa. Rather, the Amhara peasants hosted the resistant groups who mobilized people for their objectives. In fact, most of the leaders of the resistance groups, and those who were in the rank and file of the imperial political system before the occupation, were their relatives and had no confidence to refuse their requests. These peoples had no significant grievance against the emperor and that was why they decided to resist the occupation, of course, under the slogan of "dying for the mother land" (Dawit, 2010, pp. 28, 32) and chant to mobilize the Shewans as:

እሪ በሉ ለመሬ ንገሩ	Cry and tell to Merie
እሪ በሉ ለመንዜ ንገሩ	Cry and tell to Menzie
እሪ በሉ ለአዳባይ ንገሩ	Cry and tell to Adabay
እሪ በሉ ለደብብ ንገሩ	Cry and tell to Debib
ልቦናዬ የወቃል ሰምተዉ እንዳይቀሩ	I am sure that they will not absent, hearing this
መሳቆ ለቀቀ ተከፈተ በሩ:: ³	Mesaqo is left and the pass is opened!

Contrary to the above setting, there were local Oromo *balabbats* and their relatives as well as Muslims who became loyal to the Italians and collaborators (Taddese, 1968, p. 227; Tilahun, 1983, p. 94;) because of the reasons mentioned below. Thus, the Italians were successful in penetrating among the peoples of such ethnic and religious diversity to recruit collaborators. The main agents for this purpose were mainly

the *balabbats* and *sheikhes* who mobilized the peoples within their ethnic and religious domain against the resistance groups in the region (Tilahun, 1983, p. 163). The *Rases* and *Dejazmaches* of Shewa who had discontents with Emperor Haile Silassie also became collaborators. They claimed that they were demoted from their privileges and Teferi-Haile Silassie promoted in their expense (*Ibid*, pp. 163-165). Of course, there were some individuals who were privileged by the emperor but became collaborators after his flight. Few examples from both groups were *Qegnazmch* Tekle Markos the personal servant of the emperor (defacto chronicler), *Dejazmach* Taye Gulelat (member of the royal family), *Afenegus* Aregay Bachare (father of Abebe Aregay), *Dejazmach* Meshesha Tewendbelay of Jirru, *Fitawurary* Tessema Ketema of Bulega, *Fitawuray* Sahilu Welde Gebriel of Menz, Abebe Zegenu of Debre Berhan, Nidaw Chinqilo of Merhabetie and *Dejach* Abawuqaw of Wayyu (*Ibid*, pp. 126,135,154,169,177). There were also individuals who had connection with the Italians and were agents who gave information to the Italians and were paid much for that even before the actual conquest of the country. Moreover, the town dwellers were peaceful and significant number of them collaborated with the Italians (Tedela, 2012, pp. 385-386).

In warfare of such nature, the peasants were deeply suspected and highly victimized by the activities of the Italians, collaborators and resistances groups. Thus, the following is an attempt to reveal the nature of the resistances in three phases and four different zones that resulted in the agony of the peasantry for five years.

2.1 May 4, 1936 to July 29, 1936

The first phase of the resistance in North Shewa is said to be opened by a surprise attack against the Italians who were on their way to Addis Ababa at Chacha on the evening of May 4, 1936 by Haile Mariam Mamo (Tadesse, 1968, p. 19). It was continued to the end of July 1936 when different ill-organized resistant groups of Shewa attempted to recapture the capital from the Italians (Emshaw, 2002, pp. 204-206). This phase of the resistance was an introductory and seems that the resistance groups did not understand their real capacity. Probably, that was why they attempted to recapture the capital from the Italians in late July 1936, instead of planning a prolonged guerrilla fighting. In fact, it was also said that they got a report assured that the Italians planned to fence Addis Ababa with barbed wire very soon (Tadesse, 1968, p. 317).

The other manifestation of this phase of the resistances was that many individuals or groups opened arbitrary attacks against the Italians or loyal Ethiopians simply as the act of plunder assuming that the government collapsed and anarchy prevailed. The earliest of such act was taken by Hailemariam Mamo.

Concerning the feeling of the wider population, it was not known for sure that who was going to side the Italians and side the resistance group, except rumours. In some localities, where peoples with different religious group and ethnic background were feared that they would side the Italians or at least they would not support the resistance groups. For instance, they were assumed in Yifat that they would open fighting against the Christians or resistant groups, after the experience of the Rayyas in Wello (Ahmed, 2000, pp. 147-159). The same was in Minjar where the resistance group in that front got very minor support. Even if it was not explicitly explained in local sources, it seems that the majority of the Oromo of Shewa were also with the Italians or trying to fight against

the resistance groups because of two major reasons. Primarily, the maladministration and mistreatment they faced from the previous government officials made them to perceive the Italians as liberators. Secondly, the Italian propaganda and policy of divide and rule persuaded them that they were given freedom to practice their religion and rights to speak their languages freely from the Italians. The attacks of Shewan Oromo peasants at a place called Muttie Gallan against Haile Mariam Mammo and at Abichu against Abebe Aregay were some of the examples (Tadesse, 1968, pp. 19-25, 67-70).

The third manifestation of this phase of the resistance was that, probably because of the nature of the sources, we do not have Muslim members in the group of Shewan resistances, not only during this phase but also throughout the whole duration of the resistances. But we have a number of Shewan Oromo among the resistance groups (Aberra, 2005, pp. 19-21).

To see the fate of the wider non-combatant peasant community of the region, the following are some of the actual fighting that took place during this phase of the resistances in the mentioned four zones.

Of the four fronts of the resistances, the north western (Selalie-Merhabatie) front was the first to start fighting against the Italians. Haile Mariam Mammo opened attack in Chaha and its outskirts as far as Debre Libanos in the first week of May 1936 (Tadesse, 1968, pp. 19-25). He ambushed a group of Italians on their route to Addis Ababa on May 4, 1936. His attack showed that Italy's successful conventional war to conquer Ethiopia was transforming into a guerrilla popular resistances (Tedla, 2012, p. 122). The other strong resistance in the same front during this phase was opened by Abebe Aregay in Jirru, around Denneba at a parish called Sakila as far as Salayish few kilo meters in the North West of Debre Berhan on June 1, 1936. Similar attempt was made by Seyum Gebrehiot in Ensaro district (*Ibid*).

The northern (Menz-Tegulet) front that was considered as the major front of all the resistances started fighting a bit late. The group in this front took time discussing on the issue of provisions since the districts were the most impoverished part of the region. They made only one minor attempt to confront a budge of collaborators heading toward Menz and halt them from occupying the district at Tija-sar on June 5, 1936 (*Ibid*: p. 205).

In the eastern front (Ankober-Yifat), confrontations were made during this phase probably because of their first contact with Italians who were on their way to Addis Ababa. The district of Ankober was known to the Italians because of the settlement of Italian missionary and geographical society in the 19th century. The resistance group in this front opened their fighting against the Italians at Ansokiya on May 10, 1936. In the same district, they confront the Italian force on May 18, 1936 for the second time. The Italians approached to Ankober after crushing the repeated attempts of the resistance group. Still the resistant groups fought to defend the historical town of Ankober but they were defeated and the town, the hill top of Gorebiela was occupied on May 29, 1936. Even, after the occupation, the resistance groups made several attempts throughout the month of May and June to re-capture the site from the Italians; but they could not (Emshaw, 2002, p. 195).

The Southern (Bulga-Shenkora) front of the resistance was still on discussion and attempting to mobilize the public. Relatively, they could convince the majority of the Amhara community of Bulga but the Minjar area was half hearted. Even, those who agreed to join the resistance group sometimes retreated and became loyal to the Italians.

For instance, a minor resistance group led by a certain *Fitawurari* Mekuria surrendered to the Italians convinced by the clergy of the area. Unfortunately, the Italians massacred the *Fitawurari* and 40 of his followers (Tedela, 2012, pp. 143-144).

Generally, in the lowlands of districts like Menz, Tegulet, Ankober, Ensaro, Merhabetie, and Yifat mainly among the Amhara where they got support the resistance groups organized themselves in one way or another in May and June 1936. Graziani reported the situation as:

*The situation that I inherited was the opposite of happy; on the contrary it looked more and more serious as each single aspect was examined. In the capital which, as is well known, lies a great forest of eucalyptus trees, there were only 7,500 of our men, virtually surrounded by the remains of the Negus's armies, that is more than 100,000 armed men.*⁴

2.2 July 29, 1936 to February 19, 1937

The second phase of the resistance was begun on July 29, 1936. The failure of the attempt of the resistance groups to recapture Addis Ababa from the Italians on July 28, 1936 resulted in the relative decrease in the scale of the resistances in North Shewa. It seems that the public lost confidence in the resistance groups. Campbell wrote that

After a promising start, the attempt to retake Addis Ababa had failed, several leaders had been arrested and killed, including Kassa's sons, the rank and file were dispirited and many men had deserted. Numbers were at very low levels; many people were accepting the inevitability of Italian rule. Abebe's own force was down to forty men (Campbell, 2014).

As a result, the resistance groups spent much of their time by moving from one locality to the other retreating from the attacks of the Italians. For instance, the sons of *Ras Kassa* spent the next five months moving from one locality to the other within the vicinity of Fichie to the date of their execution on December 21, 1936. During this phase, the resistance groups resided themselves in areas far away from major towns like Addis Ababa and Debre Berhan (Tedla, 2012, p. 139).

Moreover, the death and disperse of prominent figures that could assemble the groups resulted in the rampant nature of the resistances. The fear among the Italians living in Addis Ababa, particularly after the attempt to recapture the capital, forced Graziani to open strong attack on the resistance groups. His force also built fortress and military camps in the Amhara districts like Menz, Merhabetie and Tegulet (*Ibid*, p.123). Campbell put it rightly as "Graziani was furious, for the attempt to recapture the city shook the Italian community, who were always worried about their vulnerability to guerrilla onslaught, as the geography of the city made it difficult to defend." (Campbell, 2010, p. 35). The Italian force began to bombard and sometimes confront the resistance groups in those Amhara districts of North Shewa like Jihur, Midda, Dobba, Menz and Merhabetie (*Ibid*, p. 33-45). These attacks targeted not only the resistance groups, but also their hosts, the peasants.

The other characteristic of this phase was that the Italians could appease significant number of individuals to recruit them as collaborators. This was accomplished through the agency of prominent figures like *Ras Hailu* and *Dejach Abbawuqaw* who became collaborators from the very beginning. The Kassa brothers surrendered convinced by *Ras Hailu* to save their lives but executed immediately after their surrender. Other resistance leaders who surrendered during this phase were also executed except *Ras Imiru*⁵; to demoralize the resistance groups. This in turn forced people to lose confidence in the resistance groups.

This passive and weak form of resistance came to an end not because of the internal improvement of conditions among the resistance groups, but because of the massacre that followed the attempt on the life of *Graziani* on February 19, 1937. The massacre changed the minds of many people and began to think that the fascists could not be pacifist and kind to Ethiopians. Thus, many of Addis Ababa's residents decided to leave the capital and join the groups to die while fighting than simply being slaughtered as animals in a town (*Ibid*, pp. 5-6). Still, several confrontations were made against the Italians in different pocket districts of North Shewa during this phase.

In the north western (Merhabetie-Selalie) front, *Haile Mariam Mammo* confronted the Italian force at *Yayya Qachama* in *Selalie* in January 1937. *Abebe Aregay* and his followers also fought against the Italians in different parishes; at *Wayyu*, *Abdella* (the birth place of his grandfather *Ras Gobana*) on September 10, 1936, at *Sertesos* (*Jihur*) after two months, on December 4, 1936. Similarly, the resistance groups in *Jirru* had fighting with the force of a collaborator *Dejach Meshesha Tewondbelay* and his son on January 31, 1937. *Abebe Shenqut* also had battle with the Italians in *Derra* district at *Dugda* on October 21, 1936. *Geleta Koricho* and his followers had similar battles with the *Midda* local *balabbats* who were mobilizing local peasants for the Italians on October 11, 1936 (*Tedla*, 2012, pp. 122-132).

In the northern front (*Menz-Tegulet*), the resistance groups spent the rainy season of 1936 discussing about the issue and preparing for the fighting after the rainy season. They made the first fighting in collaboration with the eastern front resistance groups at *Tarmaber*, the pass from the former to the later front. So, the resistant groups from *Tegulet*, *Menz* and *Yifat* had common front against the Italians and fought a battle on September 8, 1936 (*Ibid*, p. 205). *Gizachew Hailie* of *Menz* also had significant conflict with the Italians at a place called *Mesobit* on September 29, 1936. The resistance groups confronted the Italians at *Tarmaber* for the second time on January 31, 1937. In fact, there were several fights between the two to occupy *Seladingay*, but it was in the hands of the resistance groups until the middle of February 1937 (*Ibid*, pp. 206-207).

In the eastern (*Ankober-Yifat*) front, the rainy season did not hinder both groups from the fight. There was a fight at a place called *Weira Amba* in *Yifat* on July 19, 1936. After this showdown, the Italians at a camp in *Debre Sina* moved in two directions, *Menz* and *Yifat*, killing civilians, destroying and burning their property and homes on their way. The resistance groups confronted these forces at *Nech Amba* and *Gedelgie* on September 8 and 9, 1936. There was another fight in the same district at a place called *Guz Amba* on September 25 and *Enchinie* on September 26, 1936. An Italian force from *Debre Berhan* moved to the east and fought against the resistance group at a place called *Wuti* on December 28 and 29, 1936 (*Ibid*, pp.194-198).

In the southern front (Bulga- Shenkora), the first confrontation with Italian force during this phase of the resistance was made at Rambuti, near the town of Balchi on October 22, 1936 and Asebie Ager (Wohni) on October 24, 1936. Similar fight was made in the district of Berehet on November 19, 1936 and moving to the heart of Bulga for another confrontation at Emeyit on January 4 and continued to January 7, 1937 (*Ibid*, pp. 142-152).

2.3 February 19, 1937 to May 5, 1941

The third phase of the resistance was primarily characterized by the outcomes of the massacre that was carried out on February 19, 1937 in Addis Ababa. The massacre brought about two significant outcomes on the region. The first was the influx of numerous residents of Addis Ababa to the nearby North Shewan mountainous region. This in turn swollen the number of resistance groups. For instance, the force of *Ras Abebe Aregay* increased by at least 10,000, although they became below 50 immediately after the failure of the attempt to recapture Addis Ababa (Campbell, 2014, p. 52). The second was the association of the monastery of Debre Libanos with the attempt in Addis Ababa and the belief that the monks had prior information, even collaborated with the assassins. So, Graziani who was at the climax of his temper ordered to liquidate the monastery and its community, the clergy, monks and peasants who have association with the monastery. Thus, most of the districts in the region were transformed into battle grounds. The peasants in the districts adjacent to Debre Libanos as far as Ankober in the east, Moret, Jirru, Merhabetie and Wayyu in the north were subjected to massacre and imprisonment (*Ibid*, pp.174-175). Graziani went to the extent of considering all *Habesha* (mainly, the Amhara) as ardent enemy and planned to clear them from the region. To worsen the matter, those who were assumed to be the assassins escaped crossing through the region. As a result, he ordered the final solution, the total liquidation (*Ibid*, pp. 69-71).

This phase of the resistance was also characterized by developments of strong believe, mainly among the Amhara community that although, they had their own discontents with the emperor before the occupation. In fact, the other ethnic and religious group mainly their elites tended to become collaborators as mentioned above. But the majority of the Amhara elites decided to resist the Italians saying that:

“አልበላን አልጠጣን አልጠናም ከንዳችን፣
እንዲሁ እንሞታለን ለነጻነታችን።”⁶

We did not eat and drink, our muscle is not strong
[We were not privileged]
[However], we need to die for our freedom.

The other characteristic of this phase was the transformation from rampant and disorganized to the more organized nature, and from local to country wide perception of the resistance. That was why they thought of national symbolic figure (*nigus*) for the success of the movement. Thus, the resistance groups of Shewa “enthroned” the son of *Lij Iyasu*, Melake Tsehay as “king of Ethiopia” at Itisa Tekle-Haymanot church, their

religious base, substituting Debre Libanos, which was under strong pressure from the Italian force. Then, he became a symbolic leader of the Shewan resistance group at least for a brief period of time, August, 1937 to September, 1938 (Tilahun, pp. 120-121).

Finally, the last year of this phase was characterized by a glimmer of hope for the resistance groups having the news about the coming of the emperor supported by the British since June 10, 1940. This strengthened their psychology and that of their hosts and supporters (Kebedde, 2015, pp. 199-217).

Therefore, this phase experienced series of wars in each front, relatively for long duration. To start with the north western (Merhabetie-Selalie) front, since the Italian force opened an aggressive attack to occupy Kolash, an *amba* in the center of Merhabetie from the hands of the resistance groups beginning from February 23, 1937 to occupy it after fighting for eight days and nights. In the same month, the Italians continued their attack on the resistance group and confronted them at a place called Jenekie Mariam on March 3, 1937. Similarly, a group under the leadership of Haile Mariam confronted the Italian force that was moving from Debre Berehan to the western front at a place called Dodote near Mendida on March 27, 1937. There was also an intensive fight between the force of Abebe Aregay and the Italians in the district of Moret on April 4, 1937 and more specifically near the monastery of Zena Markos on April 18-20, 1937. The resistance groups in this front were busy fighting against the Italians throughout the months of April and May in Selalie (Ali Doro and Yaya Haro) and in Merhabetie. Even if the resistance groups lost Kolash to the Italians as mentioned above, they fought against them in Midda on June 2, 1937 to rescue Kebedech Seyum, the wife of Aberra Kassa from the siege of the Italians. On the same day, the resistant groups had fought another battle at Edino (Tedla, 2012, p. 129). In Jirru-Enewari, the force of Abebe Aregay was busy fighting the Italians in the month of May for eight days. The same was true to the force of Haile Mariam Mammo who confronted them at Dirie. Mesfin Sileshi was also busy fighting during the same time at a place called Yidina on June 2 and 3, 1937.

In this front, the month of June was also characterized by persistent confrontations between the two in places like Jama-Wanchit, Wobo, Kure-Wuha in Merhabetie, Kachisa and Kusayie in Jirru etc. (*Ibid*, pp. 131-132). Only, in September, 1937, about nine confrontations were made between the two groups in the area of Selalie and Jirru (*Ibid*, pp. 132-134). Unlike, the Month of September the next months of the year were not frequented by confrontations except in few cases. On October 10, at Baso in Derra, on December 19, at Dengore in Midda, on January 27, in Merhabetie were some of the confrontations made in 1937 and beginning of 1938. It was on January 27, 1938 that the known collaborator Gizaw Chinkilo of Merhabetie was killed. In fact, the resistance groups were not idle in the rainy season of the year. They attacked the Italians at Dengore in Midda, at Fetra in Merhabetie on August 7, 1938 (*Ibid*, p. 134-135). As to the available sources, there were about seven confrontations in 1931 EC (1939/39) in different localities of this front. These were at Woromo in Merhabetie, and at Meragna in Midda, on September 13 and at Kolash on November 6, at Lamwasha in Moret on October 29, at Belbelit on December 27, 1938 and at Remeshit in April and at Kum Amba in Merhabetie on July 3, 1939. The Ethiopian year 1932 (1939/40), mainly the months from September to March, was characterized by armistice in most of the fronts of the resistances. However, in the north western fronts, there were several fights between the two groups. The resistance group opened attacks on the Italian force on its way from

Fetra in Merhabetie to Ensaro in September, 1939. Secondly, similar fight was opened on October 12, 1940 at Zegeb in Moret. In fact, in October 21, 1939 confrontations were made at Kabi in Ensaro and Muti. Then the next months of the year in this front were spent without actual fighting. The 1933 EC (1940/41) was the year of hope and bright future mainly because of the letter of the Emperor they received in the month of November. In this front, there was the effort to sandwich the Italian forces chased from Gojjam on their way to Shewa. Moreover, their hope for total victory became strong when they heard news of the emperor's arrival in Gojjam (Tedla, 2012, p. 138).

The Menz-Tegulet (northern) front was the major front of resistances throughout the course of the resistances mainly after the massacre of Addis Ababa. Beginning from the middle of February 1937, a number of intensive battles were fought for several days. The first of these was at Seladingay that enabled the Italians to occupy the site on March 10, 1937. It was after occupying this pass from Tegulet to Menz that the Italians could move and cross Mofer wuha to occupy Menz on May 4, 1937. The confrontation was a very bloody and continued for three days to May 7, 1937. In this fighting, significant number of collaborators participated from different localities including from Wello (*Ibid*, pp. 208-209). There were also confrontations between the two groups in Menz at Dengeze on July 26 and 27, 1937. After the end of the rainy season similar persistent fighting took place still in Menz at localities called Zendo Gur in the first week of October 1937, Keya Gebriel on November 25, 1937 and Qolo Margefia (Dengezie) on November 27, 1937. The next months of the year were known for the frequent conflicts between the two in different localities of Menz like Dengezie, Mezua, Sefied-Meda, Afqara and the like (*Ibid*, pp. 212-213). Similarly, the two groups spent the year 1931 EC busy fighting persistently from September to June at different localities of Menz and Tegulet. In the year 1932 EC, there was an attempt of armistice between the Italian force and Shewan resistance group mainly that of Abebe Aregay. Thus, the Menz-Tegulet front also posed their fighting for six-seven months to March 1940. After the end of the armistice, intensive battles were fought in the next three months in wider areas of the districts. It seems that the year 1933 EC was the year of offensive fighting for the resistance groups and defensive for the Italians up to the arrival of the emperor in April 1941 (Tedla, 2012, pp. 223-225).

The eastern front of the resistance fought about two battles at Bullo farad on March 26 and April 23, 1937 after the massacre of Addis Ababa. The whole year of 1930 EC to the month of May was the time of no war no peace for this front. But, in May 20, 1938 the resistance group confronted the Italian force at Ankober. Similarly, they also fought in *Senie* at two different localities on *Senie 22* (June 29) and *Senie 26* (July 3). Unlike the other fronts, they fought also in the rainy season mainly in the month of August on three different days, on 16, 21 and 24 at Kunidi and; on September 3 and 4 at Bullo farad (*Ibid*, pp. 198-199). The Italians attacked the resistance groups chasing from one locality to the other throughout the district of Ankober from October 5 to 10, 1938. In this year, the resistance groups were busy retreating from one locality to the other to the month of *Senie* when they were confident to confront at Geta Gedel on the last days of *Senie 1931* (June, 1939). Then, they were relieved from confrontations for the next eight-nine months because of negotiation, then armistice between the force of Abebe Aregay and the Italians.

However, in the next three months beginning from the first week of *Megabit*, they became in continuous fighting throughout the district and the resistance groups were pushed down to the Afar lowland (*Ibid*, p. 203). After taking pace during the rainy season in the lowland, the resistance groups confronted the Italians beginning from the month of *Meskerem*. Apparently, the resistance groups got the upper hand, particularly after the mid of 1933 EC. In most of the confrontations of this year, the resistance groups were in the offensive positions. Finally, they were successful to enter the town of Debre Berhan at the end of *Meyazia*. In fact, they had good news that the emperor was at Debre Markos beginning from April 7, 1941 (*Ibid*, pp. 204-205).

In the southern (Bulga-Shenkora) front, the time immediately after the massacre of Addis Ababa was pre-occupied by preparation to “enthroned” the son of *Lij Iyasu*. Moreover, it was a time of movement to mobilize peoples for the support of the resistance group to open large scale fighting. They did the coronation by the end of August 1937 (Tedla, 2012, p. 153). Unfortunately, this act brought the aggressive reaction of Italian force. They opened large scale attacks on the resistance groups in this front. Mainly, beginning from November 1937, a number of battles were fought. As to the local sources, the resistance groups got the upper hands in several localities. It has been mentioned by some of the witnesses as “የጣልያንን ጦር በዚያ ቦታ ሬሳ በሬሳ አደረጉት። የአዘቦም አሮሞ የሸዋን ቁላ እንደተሸከመ በየጫካው ተራገፈ።” (*Ibid*, p. 154) “they massacred the army of the Italians The Oromo of Azebo also crushed everywhere carrying their trophies [amputated from Shewans].” The year 1930 EC in this front was characterized by confrontations after confrontations mainly after their relative victory in the month of November. Places like Kunichie-Ageregebriel, Mekanisa, Kesem, Chafie Donsa, Itisa, Chacha, Galila, Dingai tira, Quntilie, Shola Gebeya, Kottu, Endodie, Burka, and the like were battle fields in the year 1930 EC. After the heavy casualties, they faced in the summer of 1930 EC because of their attempt to attack and plunder the Italian camp, the resistance groups faced another persistent air attack from the Italians in September 1937. In the same month, the “enthroned” king also died because of unknown reason. After the death of the king, there happened a sort of disagreement among the resistance group. This incident was followed by aggressive Italian attack. Paradoxically, there was also a persistent request for reconciliation from the Italian side. They sent high profile Ethiopians who became collaborators as agent of the reconciliation. The Italians put many attractive promises and preconditions for the reconciliation. So, much of the 1932 EC was spent discussing and negotiating between the two and no significant conflicts took place to March 14, 1940. But beginning from March 19, the Italians made strong air bombardment including poisoned gas and aggressive attacks of the infantry throughout Bulga.

The summer of 1940 was an extremely hard time for the resistant groups in this front because of absence of provisions, mainly food. Thus, the main target of their attack after the rainy season was the camp of the Italians to plunder provisions. Unfortunately, the Italians made consecutive attacks on the group in the month of September 1940 and weakened the already hunger-stricken resistant groups. This scarcity of provision forced the resistant groups even to fight against one another. The real example was the conflict between the group of Bulga and group of Bereket for an ox they got on their way in a field on December 19, 1940 resulted in death of about 8 members of the resistance groups. In fact, the next months of the year 1941 to April were the times of hope and

excitement because of the news and proclamations that the emperor is on his way to the capital. And finally the resistance groups became successful in clearing the region from the Italian forces and their collaborators with some successive confrontations (Tedla, 2012, pp. 184-191).

3. Peasants and Causalities

3.1 The Resistant Groups

In the four resistance zones mentioned above, there were several groups acting without strong coordination and understanding among themselves. Mostly, their rivalry for supremacy, disagreements or parallel power and their frequent mobility to different sites within the rugged topography of the region was back breaking for the peasants on their routes (Tilahun, p. 93). The Italian collaborators based on the high land (*dega*) of the region and the resistance groups (bandits for the Italians) resided themselves in the *qolla* (valleys) of the region as Tesemma Eshetie expressed in his poem.

“ባንዳዉም ዝቕ በል ሽፍታዉም ከፍ በል
ኣትወጋዉም ወይ ኣትከሰከሰዉ?
በሬና ላም ነዉ ወይ ኣልጋ ያፈረሰዉ?”⁷

Descend from the highland! You, the collaborators, ascend to the cliff! You, the bandits [resistance group].
Why don't you fight? Is it the cows and oxen that damage the throne?
[Why did you kill only the cows and oxen of the peasants?]

According to the poet, both the resistance groups in the *qolla* districts and the Italian collaborators on the highland (*dega*) districts feared each other and did not fight; rather, they simply sat and consume animals of the peasants.

To start with the discussion of series of atrocities against Shewan peasants by both the resistance group and Italian collaborators, the act of Abebe Aregay's force, their confrontation in the month of October 1936 with the Italians at a locality called Salayish, Abdella area brought a brutal effect to the peasants because of their tendency to side the Italians and their collaborators. The reason for the brutal revenge of Abebe Aregay on the peasants of Abichu is discussed by his biographer as “The people, the inhabitants of Abichu, he expected would help him, collaborated with the Italians and disappointed him. Then on November 1, 1936 he ordered that the properties and homes of these people should be plundered and burnt.” (Aberra, 2005, p. 32). The districts of Abichu and Wayyu, became battle grounds between the force of Abebe Aregay who considered the area as his birth place, and adherents of *Dajach* Abbawuqaw of Menilek's palace now became an Italian collaborator.

Abbawuqaw mobilized a number of Oromo of the area and challenged Abebe's attempt to establish strong hold in the districts. That was why Abebe took very harsh measure against the supporters of Abbawuqaw and Qumbi Kamsi of Wayyu. Sometimes the peasants both the Amhara and Oromo themselves recognized the Italians and attempted to revenge their previous local masters who became now either member or

leader of the resistant groups. Particularly, peasants that had such positions became their prey. The peasants in the district of Bulga faced these types of challenges frequently. One of them took place between a man by the name *Fitawurary* Tedla Kifetw and his previous tenants at Chimbrie in October 1937 (Tadesse, 1968, pp. 96-97; Tedla, 2012, p. 153). Similarly, the peasants of the region were suffering from the plunder of the force of Abebe Aregay. His biographer depicted these experiences of a peasant's frequently (Aberra, 2005, p. 61). Taking such peasant hardships into consideration, it has been reported that Abebe Aregay passed an order that prohibited his men from looting the peasants (*Ibid*). The issue of resisting or collaborating with the Italians seem a matter of personal interest. A single family could be divided into two, and one half became a member of resistant group and the other half became the member of collaborators. Unfortunately, both of them made the peasants their prey in the process of the conflicts. For instance, the above mentioned Abebe Aregay was the leader of the resistance group against the Italians. He was "punishing" peasants or peoples who collaborated with and supported the Italians. On the other hand, his father Aregay Bacharie and his mother Askale Gobana were collaborators and became judge and *melkegna* respectively.

The father and the mother were paid three thousand and one thousand *liras* of monthly salary respectively for their services (Emshaw, 2002, p. 163). While moving from locality to locality, the resistant groups were dangerous not only for peoples who tend to support or apparently recognize the Italians, but also for peoples who were their supporters and within their domain. They consumed whatever available of peasant properties. Let alone what they had in their home or stores, but also green bananas and other fruits in the farm across Jama River. One regiment of Abebe's, army under the leadership of *Balambaras* Teshager Gizaw raided numerous animals of peasants at Shola, Geto Silassie in Bulga in August 1938. Tadesse Zeweldie, mentioned the incident as; "the patriots spent the whole night of *Nehasie* 12, plundering the cattle of the peasants and the collaborators" (Tadesse, pp. 138-139, 210).

Moreover, the force of Abebe Aregay fed on the peasants of Qeya Gebriel in Menz in collaboration with the force of Gizachew Hailie and Tadesse Belayineh from Menz and Tegulet respectively in the month of March 1939. Particularly, the resistant groups from Menz and Tegulet fed on newly harvested crops of wheat, Teff, different leguminous crops from peasant farms of the same districts under the pretext that the farm was government *hudad* before the occupation (*Ibid*, pp. 160,204). The same pretext was used against the peasants of Golla in Ankober district in 1940/41. Bulk of sorghum grain was looted by the resistant groups as Tadesse mentioned; "on that night all the chiefs including his respective army were busy looting the grains [of the peasants] and leave to the desert." (Tadesse, 1968, p. 191).

They raided also animals that were thousands in number from Rarati probably Bulga at the beginning of the Month of January, 1938 (*Ibid*, p. 202). The force of Haile Mariam Mammo was confronted not only by the Italian force, but also resisted by Shewan peasants who gave recognition for Italian governorship. His reaction to such resistance was harsh. He "punished" them cruelly now and again. His first experience in this case was on Shewa Meda at Muti Gelan from the Oromo on May 1936. The same was true a week latter during his presence among the peasants of Debre Libanos area. Mainly, a local *balabbat* by the name Dabale Boku was punished by plundering his guns; for the guns were said to be looted from the resistant leader *Dejach* Fikire Mariam.

Another person by the name Sahile Misganaw who was said to be discovered feeding the Italians and their collaborators was attacked and his property was looted although he managed to escape (*Ibid*, p. 25).

In fact, the force of Haile Mariam was not only looting or feeding on the property of peasants who recognized the Italians, but also on that of peasants under his domain. His experience among the peasants of Becho Guranda in the home of a man by the name Dabala Dubbee in February 1936 is exemplary (*Ibid*, pp. 28-30). In the same year, the peasants of Moret provided the resistant group under the leadership of Haile Mariam with foods and drinks. In the same district the peasants were forced by another local resistant leader named Endashaw to be letting the member of the resistance groups in the home of peasants (Tedla, 2012, p. 125; Tadesse, 1968, p. 37).

The peasants of Ada'a Berga were also providing Haile Mariam with numerous animals for food in early May 1937. In fact, the force of Haile Mariam was wandering from one village to another and feeding on the property of peasants who were considered as collaborators when possible and on that of their loyal when impossible. Not only feeding on their property, even some times confrontations and killings took place. For instance, a number of peasants and an individual considered as their leader and collaborator were killed and significant numbers of the peasants were captured by the resistant groups in Selalie, Qachama in June 1937. As selectively mentioned above, the resistant groups led by Haile Mariam were fed on the peasants of the Midda area for about two years. But beginning from August 1937, they left the area partly because of the strength of the Italians and partly because of the peasants' failure to feed them, peasants were worn out of feeding them (Tedla, 2012, p. 125).

Local sources claim that the activities of the resistant group to get food supply depended on the good will of the peasants, but the sources from the collaborators identified the act as plundering the property of the poor peasants. One of the local sources by Tadesse Zeweldie narrates the experiences of the resistance groups as "On the night of *Yikatit* 13, 1929 EC the peasants of the locality provided them with animals for slaughtering. They spent days and nights there, since the locality was peaceful [by that time]" (Tadesse, 1968, p. 37). Moreover, he added that "on *Megabit* 29, 1929, they [the resistant group], follow the route of Jama river and arrived at the lowland of Moret, then they exchanged information with the patriots of Merhabetie and Moret... then the peasants inhabited both districts provided them with *enjera*, *tella*, and all of the peasants brought them as to their affordability, crops for *nefro* and *qollo* of many loads of chickpea, wheat and grounded red pepper. ... the chief of Moret, *Balambaras* Endashaw belated the army and their leaders in the home of the peasants so as they could get food and water" (*Ibid*).

3.2 The Italians and their Collaborators in "The most Hostile and Warlike Region"⁸

Of all types of attacks, air bombardments were the most serious danger that brought critical destruction and hardship to the life and properties of the peasants of the region throughout the period of resistances. In fact, it was serious mainly in the Amhara inhabited districts of the region that hosted and supported the resistance groups and the peasants expressed their discontent even to their God as follows:

የለህም እንዳልል ይመኝል ይነጋል፤
አለህም እንዳልል እንዲህ ይደረጋል፡፡⁹

To believe that You [God] do not exist, it becomes dark and morning
[natural process continues]
To believe that You [God] exist, these evils are committed [against the
helpless].

To start from the north western front resistances region, the Italians bombarded the district of Merhabetie for the first time on October 11, 1936 mainly to establish military base in the district as mentioned above. The air attack resulted in destruction of properties and homes of the peasants (Tedla, 2012, p. 122). After making such huge bombardment in Merhabetie, the Italians made another aggressive air attack in the adjacent district of Moret on April 4, 1936 to cross to Doba. Even, the national sources which exaggerated the achievement and “patriotic” acts of the resistance group, mentioned that this attack killed and wounded a number of resistance groups as well as numerous non-combatant peoples, burnt their property and homes (*Ibid*, p. 127).

In addition to the Italian air bombardments, the aggressive attacks of collaborators on the resistance groups and peasants that host them were very destructive. One case in this aspect was the act of the Rayya collaborators that came to the districts of Menz, Merhabetie and Moret serving as band of soldiers under the Italian force. Guided by a Muslim *sheikh* Sultan, the Italians bombarded the district of Menz for about 13 days by which non-combatant old persons, women, and children were massacred and a number of churches were burnt mainly to occupy a locality called Dengezie in May 1937. It is said that the Rayya collaborators were mutilating males and females indiscriminately. They did the act against the people of Menz aggressively because of the strong resistance of the groups against the Italians (Tilahun, 1983, p. 97). In fact, in the confrontation with the resistant group in the district massive deaths took place in Dengzie at Weyira Gebeya and in Menz Gera Midir.

Local authors depicted it as “ሰው እንደ ቅጠል እየረገፈ...”; “human being shade like leaves of a tree...” For instance, thousands of peoples consist of old persons, women and children as well as men and their animals were burnt by exploding a barrel contained poison gas in front of a cave where they exiled (Haile, 2000, pp.9-12). Haile Giyorgis narrated similar experiences in his autobiography. According to him, there happened a siege in cave. Armed men and other members of their families as well as their animals were confined for two weeks. Finally, they decided to leave the cave opening a surprise attack on the Italians. They decided as such because they could not survive the hunger and thirsty. But their attempt ended up in total collapse and most of the armed men were wounded and killed (*Ibid*). The rest non-combatant members of the group were confined in the middle of the dead bodies of their families or relatives for days.

They began to sick because of the bad smell of the dead bodies and terrorizing cry of wild animals. Then they were taken and imprisoned in Molalie for a month in open air in cold weather of Menz (Haile Giyorgis, 2000, pp. 10-11). Merhabetie also experienced the same catastrophe as it has been indicated in the autobiography of Asaminew Gebrewold from the district (Asaminew, 1992, pp. 33-34). The peoples of Moret and Jirru also faced the same destruction in May and June 1937 (Taddesse, 1968, pp. 372-373). This act of mutilation was extremely bad experience in the recent history

of the region. Even, the clergy of the region preached by citing versus from the psalm of the Bible that says “O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low” (Tedla, 2012, p 395; Psalm 79:8).

Similar attacks were made by the Italians and the collaborators in September 1937 in Yifat, in localities like Sinqie Amba, Karaba, Woyira Amba, Waja and the like. There were massive casualties; as to Taddesse, the “country was burnt”, both combatant and non-combatant were massacred. Some of them were burnt with their houses while they were in. He concluded that the peoples were burnt, backed, like bread for Christmas, sandwiched between fire (Taddesse, 1968, p. 276).

The sources from the Italian side also asserted similar experiences. The attacks were carried out under the general command of Graziani who said that “we cannot trust anyone, neither the clergy nor the notables. The feelings of rebellion are latent in all of them.” As quoted in Campbell (2014, p. 77). Accordingly, one of the districts in the region, Tegulet was attacked indiscriminately in March 25, 1937. In a diameter of about 25 kilometres, nothing remained even stones as the Italians reported. Within this area, about 40 villages were completely destroyed with their about 400 *tukuls* which were burnt. A village by the name Tullu was assumed that it helped the resistance groups were vanished totally (Campbell, 2014, p. 80).

Two months later other district, Denneba was hammered unceasingly for it was identified as the strong hold of the resistance groups mainly the force of Abebe Aregay. Villages were bombarded, numerous *tukuls* were burnt. It is also believed that mustard gas (yperite) was used against the local population (*Ibid*). Still, in the same month, the district of Menz, Graziani boasted that “has got the hard necessary lesson it deserved”. By this attack, the Italians destroyed almost the villages of Menz in the rugged geography of the district. It was estimated that about 15,302 *tukuls* were burnt. In those attacks, nobody knows exactly the number of non-competent groups who were killed. It was assumed that about 2500 resistant groups ‘rebels’ were killed (*Ibid*, p. 82).

The killings and mass massacre were carried out not only during the times of open fight, but also during the times when fighting was paused. This was by hanging or through other means under the pretext that the victims were criminals. Campbell summarized this curse as “... gallows for public hangings had been erected in countless villages across the highlands, and Northern Shewa was aflame with military action against civilians, with extensive shootings of ‘rebels’, burning of dwellings and use of poison gas” (*Ibid*, pp. 90-91). The attack was not only on the resistant groups and their hosts, but also on the churches and their community. The primary target was Debre Libanos which lost about 2000 members of its community in one way or the other. It has been mentioned by Campbell as “as the clergy massacre proceeded, some of the Eritrean soldiers [collaborators]..... were in a state of shock and were crying..... Some of them, distraught, exclaiming, ‘woe is Shewa!’” (*Ibid*, p. 153).

Similarly, the same author in his separate work mentioned that “Northern Shoa was aflame with fascist action against the rebels, extensive shooting of patriots, burning of *tukuls* and use of poison gas, so the executions near Debre Berhan, for example, could go virtually unnoticed, particularly as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had no presence in the area concerned” (Campbell, 2004, pp. 122-128).

Local sources indicated that almost all of the churches in the region were set on fire by the Italians. The monastery of Zena Markos and its community experienced similar misery with that of Debre Libanos. One of such experiences said to be described by *Ras Abebe Aregay* as:

[On] Ginbot 24, 1929... they began to exterminate the population of the said districts, including children and aged; although none of them participated in any activity hostile to the Italians. Moreover, they plundered their cattle and burned their houses. They also burned the church of Zena Marcos after sprinkling petrol on it. The Italians murdered a priest who was living in the church yard, named Welde Amanuel (aged 80), in cold blood when he did not want to go away from the burning fire (Campbell, 2014, p. 174).

The Italians act of burning and destroying churches of the region was resulted in not only the economic crisis among peasants, but also physiological and social crisis. It uprooted them from their natural habitat to the extent of loosing hopes in their God. Surprisingly, most of the churches in the region were burnt on the day of their commemoration where numerous clergy and laity were assembled, on the pretext that the patriots had their home in their compound or under their roof. This led to the massive massacre of the clergy and the laity refuting their belief that they will be saved under the umbrella of their religion (Daniel, 2007).

Araya Silassie Woreta who visited North Shewa mainly Menz immediately after the evacuation of the Italian force and partial pacification of the region, observed the overall effects of the war on the peasants of the region. As to his eye witness, there were a number of abandoned and empty villages across the district of Manz (Aria Silassie, 19[42]).

The emperor visited the district to put a cornerstone for a new school at Molalie and to greet, give aid for “his peoples” after their long sacrifice during the occupation (*Ibid*). As the visitor Araya Silassie, the then problems of Menz were multifaceted, but absence of clothes to wear was the chronic one in such very cold weather condition of Menz (*Ibid*). Probably, that was why the emperor visited the region and tried to distribute clothes for peasants after appreciating their contribution in the process of liberating the country (*Ibid*).

4. Conclusion

Although it is not asserted by local sources because of political reasons, it seems that the ordinary Shewans including those lived in the capital were loyal to the Italian rule before February 19, 1937. The Oromo of the region who were relieved from multiple tributaries and taxes became collaborators and loyal to the Italian administration to lead peaceful life. Moreover, the majority of town dwellers including Addis Ababa were loyal or they wanted peaceful life or running for different businesses. Even, the attempt to recapture Addis Ababa in July 28, 1936 by the resistance groups was not as such supported by the residents of the capital. So, the act of the Italians to massacre or imprison ordinary Ethiopians was minor in its scale during this early stage of the occupation.

Thus, it was the Addis Ababa massacre of February 1937 that brought the dramatic change in the type of relations between the Italian and rural peoples (peasantry) of the North Shewa and the residents of Addis Ababa. The peoples who retreated from the massacre of Addis Ababa became the prime movers of the resistance and leaders in many districts of the region. They thought that instead of being killed sitting idle in the city, it was by far better to die fighting the fascists. The Italians also took actions that strengthen this perception. They massacred the members and leaders of the resistance groups who surrendered peacefully although they promised them for their life.

After the massacre of February 1937, most of the districts of North Shewa became battle grounds between the Italians backed by their collaborators and the resistance groups. It was the peasantry that suffered from the outcomes of the fighting. They were hosting and providing the resistance group with different supplies. They were strongly “punished” by the Italians and their collaborators for that; massacred, wounded and lost their property and homes. Those who were loyal to the Italians were also “punished” by the resistance groups. Besides the two forces acting up on their lives, the peasants were sandwiched and squeezed in between different challenges. They were under informal pressure from their relatives and peoples from Addis Ababa to escape the danger in the capital. All these displaced people, who were not directly involving in the fighting needed to have all their provisions from the peasants of the region. In the midst of all these problems, the peasants were suffering from malnourishment and diseases resulted from as well as other related economic problems. Clothing was also another critical problem. So, the region was a hell, more than anywhere else, for the peasantry in the course of the resistance.

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End Notes

¹ Tadesse Zeweldie, *Qerin Geremew: Ye Arbegnoch Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 1968), p.31; Tilahun Tasew, *Addabay* (Addis Ababa, 1983), p. 109.

² Authors who claim that they participated in the resistances against the Italians and wrote their eyewitness accounts. More over there are authors who wrote books in Amharic having the resistance movements as their focus of discussion.

³ Tilahun Tasew, p.94; Tadesse Zeweldie, p.227; said to be chanted by the resistance leader Gizachew Hailie.

⁴ Richard Pankhurst, "History of the Ethiopian Patriots (1936-1940)" in *Addis Tribune*: <http://addistribune.ethiopiaonline.net/>

⁵ Ian Campbell, 2010, *Testimony. Interview conducted by Roman Herzog April 19th 2010*, <http://www.campifascisti.it/file/media/Testimony%20Ian%20Campbell.pdf>, p.3.

⁶ Tedla Zeyohannis, p.394.

⁷ Yideneqachew Tesema, *Semina Worq: Tesema Eshite* (Addis Ababa, 1985 EC), p.92, 177.

⁸ Richard Pankhurst, "History of the Ethiopian Patriots (1936-1940)" in *Addis Tribune*: <http://addistribune.ethiopiaonline.net/>, Graziani identified the region as such in his report and recommendation to Rome on 4 November 1937.

⁹ Asaminew Gebrewold, *Yebikay Nebelbal* (Losangeles, 1992), p. 37.

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