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## **Struggle for Survival: St. Mika’él Church and the Orthodox Laity of Jijiga in the Course of the Ethio-Somalia Wars in the 1960s and 1970s**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the history of St. Mika’él Church and the Orthodox Laity of Jijiga in the course of the Ethio-Somalia Wars in the 1960s and 1970s. It establishes that Christianity first began to spread in Jijiga and the surrounding area, which is predominantly inhabited by followers of the Islamic faith, following the expansionist campaigns of *Nigus* Menelik II since the late 19th century. Christian dignitaries provided significant support, which helped it expand and solidify its position. The faith has been tested in many ways since its inception, but during the invasion of Somalia in the 1960s and 1970s, Jijiga Christians and the church fell into great trouble. The invaders considered the EOC as a powerful bulwark of the state and worked hard to destroy the institution and harass its followers. This article emphasizes the internal political situations and external factors that played a role in the alternation of growth and debacle of Christianity in Jijiga. It argues that at the end of the 19th century, the expansion of the highland Christian kingdom to the east made a positive contribution to the creation of new Christian settlements, the introduction of Orthodox Christianity, and the expansion of churches in Jijiga and its neighboring regions. However, the presence of strong followers of Islam and repeated attacks by internal and external armed forces on the Christians made Orthodox Christianity the religion of the minority, and Christians were also forced to live under high security threats.

**Keywords:** Christian, St. Mikael Church, Jijiga, Somalia, Invasion

### **Introduction**

Today Jijiga/Jigjiga is the capital city of the Somali Regional State. Jijiga is located 628 kilometers to the east of Addis Ababa and at a distance of 105 kilometers from Härär. Christianity was introduced to Jijiga at the end of the 19th century, during the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV. The eastward expansion of King Menelik in 1887 brought a great opportunity for the growth and spread of Christianity and Christian settlements at Jijiga. Along with the

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arrival of highland Christian settlers to this newly founded town, the Orthodox Christian faith was introduced and spread. Although various hazards and 'non-believer' resistances had unsympathetic impacts, Christianity had spread in the area. For more than two decades, the Christians of Jijiga were using Qočär *Qidist* Maryam Church (28 kilometers from Jijiga) to perform various religious activities like liturgy, mass praying, praising of God, holiday feasts, baptizing the children, burying the deceased, and others. The first church, *Qidus* Mika'él/St. Michael, was built at Jijiga in 1916 due mainly to the strong support of local rulers, the passion of the Christian settlers, and the zeal of clerics in different parts of the town.

In the subsequent decades, however, Christians and St. Mika'él Church of Jijiga had faced and gone through numerous challenges, including sudden assaults of local Muslims and onslaughts of foreign invaders. The unexpected attack of Muslim extremists during riots against the government of Ethiopia and the merciless Fascist assaults during the 1936-41 Italian invasion severely affected the lives of local Christians and the St. Mika'él Church. Despite persistent attacks and challenges, Orthodox Christianity continued to spread slowly and systematically until the late 1950s in and around the town. In the meantime, the infiltration into the Ogaden of political groups inspired by the idea of "Greater Somalia" after the 1940s, the growth of local insurgents demanding self-rule, and the change of government in Ethiopia in the 1970s paved the way for the decrease in the number of Christian settlers and the decline in the spread of Orthodox Christianity in the town of Jijiga. The abolition of the former close Church-State relationship and the 1975 radical land reform smashed both the "political" and economic power of the Orthodox Church with vivid implications on the local churches and many Christians.

The climax was the 1977 invasion of Somalia, which had a multi-faceted impact on Christian settlers and Orthodox Christianity at Jijiga. In addition to the Christians who were killed and exiled during the war, St. Mika'él Church, which had been serving Christians for many years, was damaged and forced to quit service. Alongside the war, the Somali army's anti-Christian propaganda had fueled religious discord among the local population and paved the way for extremist attacks. Due to all these factors, therefore, Christianity was unable to spread well in the Jijiga area so as to become the second dominant faith in the area next to Islam.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study relied on both primary and secondary sources. It is primarily descriptive research under the broad category of qualitative research. It is descriptive in the sense that the data gathered will be described clearly, with no statistical analysis required.

Following the establishment of research methods, fieldwork was conducted to gather data, which included a series of interviews. Participants were selected based on their relevant experience and former positions. During the interviews, oral information was collected carefully and ethically through note-taking and audio recording. This oral testimony is essential, as it provides a vital balance to the perspectives found in written sources.

In addition, the East Härärghe Diocese Archive and Häräri People Regional State Archive in Härär, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahido* Church Archive, and the National Archive and Library of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa were consulted thoroughly. Articles, books, B.A. theses, M.A. theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and newspapers preserved at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University and the National Archive and Library of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa were also extensively exploited. To support arguments, the study relied on careful research and documentary evidence. Then, the data collected from different sources were cross-checked for reliability, and in order to reconstruct a plausible historical narration, they were analyzed and interpreted.

### **The Somali Infiltration, Proliferation of Insurgency and Implications on Christians**

Before the outright invasion of Ethiopia by the Republic of Somalia in 1977, there were frequent attempts to weaken the Ethiopian government and encroach into the country from the east. The main objective of these repeated attempts was to take some Ethiopian territories by force. For instance, in the post-Italian era, the Somali Youth Club (SYC), later the Somali Youth League (SYL), was established in Somalia to develop pan-Somali ideals. From the very beginning, members of the League defined their group as defenders of Muslims and announced their plan of protecting the interests of the Muslims in the Horn of Africa. Then, they tried to create a link with the Ethiopian Muslims in the eastern part of the country. Later on, in the 1940s, the Somali Youth Club (SYC)<sup>3</sup> opened its branch office in Ethiopia and began to work

together with the local Muslim *extremists*<sup>4</sup>. According to the sources, the League viewed the Ethiopian Christian government as an oppressor of the Muslims in the lowlands.<sup>5</sup> “In the Ogaden, the SYC slogan was ‘Somalia *hanolato*, Ethiopia *hadimto*’ (*Long live Somalia, death to Ethiopia*).”<sup>6</sup> As a result, the establishment of this group based on religion had a clear danger to both the local Christians and the Ethiopian government. Therefore, members and supporters of the League were doing anti-government and anti-Christian activities from the outset.<sup>7</sup>

In the mid-1940s, members of this Muslim organization started guerrilla warfare in the eastern parts of the country. In fact, the central government sent soldiers to help the efforts of the then governor of the region, *Blatta* Ayele Gebre, and crushed the movement. During this main operation, many suspected members of the movement were killed, and others were arrested. The leading figures of the movement were imprisoned at Jimma under the strict control of *Ras* Mesfin Sileshi.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the quick response of the imperial government to the provocation of SYC, the desire of the Somali Muslim extremists in Ethiopia failed. Here, the Muslim extremists of Somalia and their local allies might have lost a battle in the 1940s. However, many other subsequent attacks were made against the Ethiopian government and the Christians in and around Jijiga town. Especially in Somalia, the strong desire to bring all Somalis under one administration structure caused a great challenge in the eastern part of Ethiopia in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, this idea was widely accepted by the Somali youth and was

<sup>3</sup> The Somali Youth Club, later the Somali Youth League, was founded in 1943 as the first political party of Somalia. See also: Cedric Barnes, 2007. “The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somali Idea,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol.1, No.2. pp. 280-281.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, I use the term ‘Muslim extremists’ or ‘radical Muslims’ to describe a small number of local Muslims who, unlike the majority of peaceful Muslims, often attack Christians and the church.

<sup>5</sup> National Archives and Libraries of Ethiopia (Hereafter NALE), Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Report from the Office of Härärghe Province Administration to the Ministry of Interior, Hämle 6, 1970 E.C.; Tim Carmichael, 2001. “Approaching Ethiopian History: Addis Ababa and Local Governance in Harar, C.1900 to 1950,” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Department of History, Michigan State University), p. 218.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Carmichael, “Approaching Ethiopian ...,” p. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp.192-194, 218.

<sup>8</sup> Wehib M. Ahmed, 2015. *History of Harar and Hararis*, Härär: Häräri People Regional State, Culture, Heritage and Tourism Bureau. p. 162; Ejetta Feyessa, 1975. “New Comers and the Peoples of Harar in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *History Society of Ethiopia, the History and Culture of the People of Harar Province*. MS, p. 5-6.

the main agenda of the time, but the foundation was laid by the British in the 1940s. “Pan-Somalism …was a legacy of the British concept of “Greater Somalia” in the 1940s. The British had dropped this idea by the 1950s, but Lennox’s speech in 1959 signed its revival.”<sup>9</sup>

On the same token, in the 1950s, apart from efforts to resolve the conflict through diplomacy and agreement, Egypt’s anti-Ethiopia propaganda and Somali newspaper agitation made the region a hotbed of tension. Moreover, instigated by such propagations, feeling alienated in the imperial administration, and due to a lack of any meaningful development in the Ogaden region, Ethiopian Somalis initiated an insurgency demanding self-rule. Particularly, beginning in the early 1960s, the insurgents conducted armed uprisings with support from Somalia and posed a serious challenge to the Ogaden administration. Subsequently, in addition to various minor border skirmishes between the Ethiopian government and Somalia, conflicts and armed insurrections, including the Danot and Dägähäbur incidents spearheaded by Nasser Allah and others, erupted and intensified in the Ogaden in the early 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, in June 1963, armed insurgents supported by the Somali government began a rebellion in Warder. Shortly after the guerrilla attacks, the Imperial government sent troops to suppress the existing restlessness and control the area. Then, due to the weakness of the Somali insurgents and the strength of the Ethiopian soldiers, the conflict had been managed. However, in the following year, in February 1964, to show solidarity with the insurgents, the Somali army opened fire on the Ethiopian police force in different directions, including the southeast and northeast of Jijiga town. The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1964 started with firing shots on Ethiopian aircraft at Togoč’ale and gradually spread to border towns farther south, including Inegoha, Däbägoriale, and Warder. The Somali army was repulsed successively. Even though there was damage to some of the police stations in

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Negash, 2004. “A History of the Ogaden ‘Province,’ 1954-1978,” (MA Thesis: Department of History, Addis Ababa University), p.50.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-57; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A letter from *Colonel Legese Wolde-Mariyam*, Ministry of Interior Minister to *Lieutenant Colonel Zeleke Beyene*, Chairman of the Revolutionary Campaign Coordinating Committee, Hämle 10, 1970 E.C.; East Härärghe Diocese Archive (Here after EHDA), Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat Abayneh Abebe*, Administrator of Jijiga *Awrajja Betä-Kihnat* to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Yä-Jijiga Awrajja Betä-Kihnat* to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Teqemt 22, 1971 E.C.

these border towns by artillery shelling, the Somali army never stayed more than a day or two in any of the towns. Due to the war, “Ethiopia lost about 300-400 dead, and nearly 500 were wounded.”<sup>11</sup>

As a result, the Ethiopian imperial government ordered a relatively well-organized armed force to crush the invasion. The Ethiopian Army, which included infantry, artillery, and mechanized forces assisted by the Air Force, defeated and forced Somalia’s soldiers to retreat. However, on both sides, several people were killed and many others injured in both insurgent and invader attacks. Especially in 1964, the Somali army suddenly attacked, and many members of the Ethiopian police force who belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were killed. According to Samuel, ‘as a result of the Ogaden War of 1964, an estimated number of 800-1200 Somali soldiers were killed and 1200-1500 wounded. Ethiopia lost 300-400 dead, and nearly 500 were wounded.’<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in April 1964, the victory of the Ethiopian army on the battlefield was repeated in the field of diplomacy, and the two countries agreed to stop the war via the OAU. Based on this agreement, the Somali soldiers left the Ethiopian territory and returned to Somalia’s territory.<sup>13</sup> However, the killing of members of the Ethiopian armed forces shocked the high officials of the Imperial government and forced them to change their previous plan of moving the bodies of Ethiopian heroes who were killed during the Italian invasion.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, many Christian patriots and soldiers were killed in the eastern parts of Ethiopia to defend the country and the church during the Italian invasion. As a result, in the years after Italy, the high officials of the Ethiopian

<sup>11</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no. 83, A letter from Šäläqa Solomon Aynalem, Officer of the Third Infantry Division to the Office of the Diocese of Härär Province, Miyaziya, 8, 1956 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Report from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province to Colonel Legese Wolde-Mariyam, Ministry of Interior Minister, Hämle 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 148, No File no., A letter from *Abba* Haile-Mariyam Yhidegu to the Offices of Härär Diocese, Hedar 30, 1961 E.C.; Samuel, “A History of the Ogaden...,” p.72.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel, “A History of the Ogaden...,” p.72.

<sup>13</sup> Hussein Mohamed, 2008. *From Tyranny to Anarchy: the Somali Experience*, Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, pp. 44–45.

<sup>14</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no. 83, A letter from Haile Moltot ..., Teqemt 27, 1961 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no.83, A letter from the Office of the Diocese of Härär Province to *Lä-Amstu Adibarat Abiyatä-Kirstiyanaat Astädadariwoč*/For the administrator of the five churches/, Teqemt 28, 1961 E.C.; see also Moges Wolde-Giorgis, 1997. “A Brief History of *Leul Ras Mekonan* Memorial *Abuna* Takla-Haymanot Church of Härär from its foundation to the present,” (B.A Thesis: Department of History, Addis Ababa University), pp.34-35.

government and Orthodox Täwahedo Church discussed to establish a memorial as a tribute to the Christian martyrs. Finally, they agreed to build a cemetery for Christian heroes in the lower part of the newly built Härär *Abune* Tekle-Haimanot Church. Accordingly, the original architectural design of the *Abune* Tekle-Haimanot Church was modified to erect a statue of commemoration for the Ethiopian soldiers who were followers of the Orthodox faith and killed fighting against Fascist Italy. The plan was to exhume the remains of the martyrs and rebury them in the basement of this church.<sup>15</sup>

However, due to various controversies about the newly built burial chamber, the remains of the heroes were not transferred to the church for more than fifteen years after the vault was completed.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the previous plan to move the remains of the Christian heroes killed during the Italian invasion was canceled, and it was replaced by a new idea of bringing the bodies of those who were killed during the insurgency in 1963 and the invasion of Somalia in 1964. Therefore, due to this conflict, government officials changed their previous plan about the vault and decided to transport to Härär the exhumed bodies of the Ethiopian ‘Christian soldiers’ who died defending their country from the insurgents in 1963 and the Somali invasion in 1964. They intended to rebury them in the newly built vault within the new *Ras Mekonnen* Memorial *Abune* Tekle-Haimanot Church located in the city of Härär.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Härär People Regional State Archive (Hereafter HPRSA), Folder 594, File no. **መ.၇/፩፻** 2/3842/594/2, A letter from *Fitäwräri* Aymiro-Silassie Abebe to Härär Municipality, Teqemt 11, 1954 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no. 83, A letter from *Šaläqa* Solomon Aynalem, ..., Miyaziya, 8, 1956 E.C.

<sup>16</sup> Among others, the religious background of the heroes and the size of the coffin case were the two main challenges. On the one hand, distinguishing only the Christian soldiers' remains from the rest of the dead bodies was major problem that forced to delay in the transferring process of the remains of the heroes. On the other hand, after the end of the construction, some members of the delegation conveyed unexpected complaints about the size of the coffin cases. (The size of each coffin case is only 40cm×60cm× 40cm). They objected that it would be better to leave the dead bodies in the field than to put the honored human race in the small box. A few of them also had advised dismantling the vault and reconstructing it again. Subsequently, contrary to the original plan the remains of the heroes who died during the Italian invasion were not transferred to the new *Abune* Tekle-Haimanot Church; see also Moges, “A Brief History of *Leul Ras Mekonan* ...,” pp. 36-37.

<sup>17</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no. 83, A letter from Haile Moltot ..., Teqemt 27, 1961 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no.83, A letter from the Office of the Diocese ..., Teqemt 28, 1961 E.C.

Subsequently, various letters were sent to the Diocese of Härär to prepare for the appropriate religious ceremony during the relocation process of the bodies of the victims to this church. One of the letters sent by Haile Moltot, Officer of the Third Infantry Division to the Office of the Diocese of Härär Province on Teqemt 27, 1961 E.C./ 6 November 1968/ informing the Diocese about the order of the Emperor and asking for the cooperation of the Diocese, clearly explains the situation at that time. It says:

የጊመዋዊ ገንዘብ ነገሱት መልካም ቁጥርና ሆኖ ለለደንድ ክፍለ ማት ወሰነት በጥቃ  
በማሳዣበር አይወቻቸውን መስቀት ያደረገ የጊዜ እና የፖ.ስ.ስ አሳለቸ አሳሰናቸው  
ከረፈበት በታ አዴማቸው ተስተካክሏ ለረሱ ከተማ በሚገኘው በልዕል ሰነ መካንን  
መታሰቢያ በከተማ እንዲያርጓል በስተት መሬ ተከተለ መሰረት የሳይም ማጥፊያ  
ሥነሥራራት የሚፈጸመው አካርር 1 ቀን 1961 ቀን ለለምኑ ለለሆነ ተግባር የተዘረዘሩት  
ጥርጋዎች እንዲያውቀት ከዚህ ወር እያወለን ለከንፈልግ ሰነዱ በተወስኑ እለት ተስተካክ  
ወለሁ የሚያርጓል ከሆናቸውን እንዲታዘዣ በትሃሱ እናናሳሳሳን፡፡<sup>18</sup>

According to His Majesty the king of kings' order, the remains of the military and police members who sacrificed their lives in the work of maintaining peace in the Ogaden region will be collected from the place where their remains were laid to rest at the Prince *Ras* Mekonnen Memorial in Härär City. Since the cremation ceremony will be held on November 1, 1961 E.C., we have attached the program for this purpose, and we humbly requested that the priests who perform the funeral prayer on the specified day obey us.

At last, on 10 November 1968, for the purpose of commemorating the national heroes, which was attended by many officials of the imperial governments and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the bodies of about 200 armed forces that were killed during the insurgency and the invasion of Somalia were brought to the new *Abune* Tekle-Haimanot Church and laid to rest in the underground vault. In the thirteen consecutive years from 1964 to 1977, there was no major war between Ethiopia and Somalia except minor border skirmishes at intervals. After the escalation of tension up to 1970, the insurgency significantly diminished until the eruption of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. As a result, for at least a decade or so, the Christians of Jijiga town and their church experienced a relatively stable period.<sup>19</sup> Contrary to this, however, the dynamics of Ethiopia's internal political upheaval in the mid-1970s and the subsequent aggression of Somalia's army on the eastern part of the country

<sup>18</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 246, File no. 83, A letter from Haile Moltot ..., Tegempt 27, 1961 E.C.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; Informants: *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe.

caused great destruction and financial hardship to St. Mika'él's Church and enormous loss to Christians in Jijiga town.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Jijiga Christians and St. Mika'él Church during the 1977 Somali Invasion**

The political chaos in revolutionary Ethiopia gave fertile ground to those who advocated secessionism to raise a standard of rebellion in the Ogaden. With active clandestine support from the army of the Republic of Somalia, the insurgents under the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF) intensified the armed struggle since 1975. They controlled most of the rural areas of the Ogaden and made the region ungovernable. The Republic of Somalia considered the tumultuous situation in Ethiopia as an unprecedented golden opportunity. Three years after the overthrow of the imperial government and the assumption of power by the *Därg* military regime, therefore, the Somali army in July 1977 launched a well-organized offensive in the eastern part of the country to snatch the Ogaden region and neighboring areas. With the provision of weapons from socialist countries, mainly the Soviet Union, within a short time, Somali troops invaded, apart from the Ogaden, many places in Ethiopia. On the Ethiopian side, the war posed a serious existential threat. In addition to the political instability and challenges from various rival groups for power, the *Därg* government was unable to defend the country from foreign invasion due mainly to a lack of modern weapons and trained military manpower. As a result, the Somali troops easily advanced into various places and towns of Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Jigiga St. Mika'él Church Administrator to the Office of the Diocese of Härärge Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härär, Nähäsé 18 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of Härär Diocese, Teqemt 23, 1971 E.C.

<sup>21</sup> NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A letter from *Colonel* Legese Wolde-Mariyam ..., Hämle 10, 1970 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A letter from *Lieutenant Colonel* Zeleke Beyene, Chairman of the Revolutionary Campaign Coordinating Committee, to *Yä-Msraq* Ethiopia *Mälso Yä-maquaquam Abiyotawi Zämäča Komitā*/ Revolutionary Campaign Committee for the Reconstruction of Eastern Ethiopia /, Ter 29, 1970.; *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 14, 1969 E.C., No. 1369; *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 19, 1969 E.C., No. 1373. *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 21, 1969 E.C., No. 1375; Belete Belachew, 2014. "Ethiopian foreign policy and the Ogaden War: the shift from "containment" to "destabilization," 1977–1991," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 679-680.

Then, in August and the first few days of September 1977, the Jijiga dwellers recognized the swift expansion of the invading force in the direction of Jijiga, and several people retreated to neighboring areas, including Härär. Particularly, in the first seven days of September, the number of immigrants to Härär, including men, women, and children, highly increased. Many residents moved from the town of Jijiga to relatively safer towns as well as the countryside on the eve of the invasion. Local administrators exerted efforts to minimize the suffering of the Jijiga inhabitants by providing several cars to transport women and children to Härär. In Härär, the government made makeshift/temporary shelters for the immigrants, and they stayed there until the invasion was reversed and the region liberated.<sup>22</sup>

As one can see, due to the invading forces' venomous anti-Christian propaganda, a number of people decided to leave the surrounding areas and migrate farther to safer areas and the central parts of the country. Due to the prevailing mass migration, however, the *Därg* officers prohibited the withdrawal of males from Jijiga. Of course, many Christians left the town in various illegal ways. In addition to this, soon after controlling various towns, including Jijiga, the army of Somalia repeatedly attacked the city of Härär by long-range artillery. These frightening assaults also disturbed the Christian immigrants in Härär and pushed several of them to continue their journey to the central parts of the country.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, some immigrants convinced the respective government officials that they had families in the central parts to continue their voyage to Addis Ababa. However, sources indicate that many immigrants who claimed to have family in Addis Ababa to migrate to the central parts of the country had actually no place to go and settle in Addis. As a result, the mass migration brought an unexpected burden on the government. Therefore, in October 1977, top military officers sent a letter to the commanders of the eastern and

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<sup>22</sup> Informants: *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; *Addis Zämän*, Nähäsé 27, 1969 E.C., No. 1408.

<sup>23</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Mäwi* Eyob Wondimu, *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Hailu Wolde-Giyorgies, *Yä-Kätäma Mahibärat Madäraja Mämreya Hälafi* / Head of the Urban Association Organization Department , to the Office of *Yä-Härärghe Kifilä-Hägär Kätäma Lmat*/ Development of the Urban of Härärghe Provence, Hedar 13, 1970 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Beshir Sheik Abidi, the Deputy governor of Härärghe Province, to the Office of State Administration Minister, Tahesas 27, 1970 E.C.

southern Ethiopian armies to halt the movements of the immigrants and force them to stay in the city of Härär.<sup>24</sup> The letter says,

....የኢ.ዲ.ሸ.ው. ስጋሳ መንግስት ወረዳ በጀመረበት ገዢ ከጠረፍ አብበዎ. ማግኘት በተሰበቻ ወደመሆል ህንጻ እንዳመጠ ተደርሱ ሁሉር ከደረሰ በንግድ መጠለም ተሰርቶለቻው ተሰማርተው ስለ ተቀጥቻዊ ወመድ እና ገብረት አዲስ አበባ አለን በማሳት እንዳራቅ ቅድሚችው ባመለከቱት መሰረት ተፈቅደለቻው መመጣት ለደምና ለለምና ምንም መጠለም እና ማረጋገጫ ስጋሳ ስጋሳ የሰንጻ የምታደርገንን አደርገን በማሳት ባልታሰበ ገዢ እና በልተዘረዘሩ ሁኔታ እየመጠ ከና ያለ የብለኩ ሆነዋል:: .... ይህ ትኩለ ከደረሰቻ ገዢ ይምር ማንኛው ለው ያለ ቅዱድ ካለበት መር ለሉር እና መጠለም እንዳይወጣ ተደርገን ዘንድ በጥበቃ አስታውቁለሁ::<sup>25</sup>

...When the reactionary government of Somalia began its invasion, people residing in the border areas were brought to the interior parts and upon reaching Härär, shelters were built for them. A few of them applied and got permission to proceed to Addis Ababa after claiming to have families and property there. Nevertheless, others took the opportunity to falsely claim to have family and advance to Addis Ababa with actually no shelter or residence. Then they would admit to having no family or residence and boldly say, "Do whatever possible to assist us." They had become a thunder strike in an unexpected time and with no preparation ... After receipt of this letter, we strictly instruct you not to allow anyone to leave his camp or shelter without permission.

As the local people feared, the invading force, on the eve of 9 September 1977, surrounded the town of Jijiga. However, before the militants controlled the town, Somali troops conducted long-range artillery attacks at various parts of the town to scare and further intimidate the people. This was also intended to force and make sure the retreat of the Ethiopian Defense Force from Jijiga. At the beginning of the invasion, the town of Jijiga was repeatedly attacked by long-range gunfire, and its various places were destroyed. Due to this unwarranted assault, some people were killed and others were wounded. Similarly, on 9 September 1977, around 5:30 in the afternoon, one of the Somali artillery shells fell on the roof of St. Mika’él Church, causing heavy damage. Bullets were sprayed at different places, causing panic among the parishioners and priests of the church. In addition to the deafening noise of the cannon and the explosions, the sound of injured people caused a nuisance

<sup>24</sup> NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Kefelegn Ybiza, *Yä-Mdir Tor Mkitil Azaž*/ Deputy Commander of the Army, to *Yä-Msiraq Eiz Azaž*/ the Commander of the East Command and *Yä-Däbub Eiz Azaž*/the Commander of the South Command, Mäskaräm 26, 1970 E.C.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

to the surrounding area. As a result, many people spent the night trying to escape the attack and save their families.<sup>26</sup>

At this critical time, the veteran servants of St. Mika'él Church, namely *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale, *Mämire* Getachew Tegegn, and *Mämire* Tinfe Gizaw, decided to remove the Arks from the partially damaged church amid the deadly explosions all around. It was not an easy task for them to enter the church and take the ark to a better place while bullets were raining from all directions that might even cost their lives. If we try to examine the general characteristics of the fathers of the Orthodox Church, history tells us about their multifaceted roles. They are farmers in the harvest season, patriots in times of foreign invasion, and full-time church workers in peace times.<sup>27</sup>

It was the same with *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi of Jijiga. In addition to many years of religious services in different Orthodox churches, *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale was one of the Ethiopian patriots in Menz (Northern Šäwa) when the Italians invaded Ethiopia. From the Italian invasion in 1935 until they were expelled from Ethiopia in 1941, Wolde-Aregawi and his comrades were organized under the leadership of the famous Mäniz patriot, *Däjjazmac* Kefelew Wolde-Tsadiq. They resisted the activities of the Fascist Italian Army in north Šäwa, south Wällö, and the surrounding areas. In the post-Italian era, the imperial government recognized Wolde-Aregawi's deeds and awarded him for his great contribution during the occupation. Soon after the Italians were evicted and the freedom of Ethiopia restored, Wolde-Aregawi turned his face back to his old spiritual work and continued his service in a local church at Mäniz. Later, in 1954, Wolde-Aregawi applied for a transfer to the East Härärghe Diocese and was assigned as a priest at St. Mika'él Church in Jijiga. So, in 1977, he tried to use his previous war experience to guide his friends amid the unrelenting offensive of the Somali army and collect the three Arks that were kept in the St. Mika'él Church.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Jijiga St. Mika'él ..., Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.

<sup>27</sup> Informants: *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe and *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu; *Mälakä Mäwi* Eyob Wondimu, and *Mälakä Mäwi* *Qomos Abba* Tsige Desta.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Office of Härärghe Diocese to the Office of Archdioceses, Teqemt 1, 1970 E.C.; *Qidus Mika'él Betä-Krstiyan*, 2016. *Yä Jijiga Mäleltä Adibarat Däbrä Mäwi Qidus Mika'él Betä Krstiyan*, (Addis Ababa: Jajao Printing Press), pp. 22-22.

<sup>28</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 533, A letter from the Office of Ogaden *Awrajja Betä-Kihnat* to Wolde-Aregawi Dubale, Säne 2, 1950 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter

Therefore, *Mämire* Getachew Tegegn and *Mämire* Tinfe Gizaw, led by *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale, quickly entered the interior of the church and took away the Arks of St. Mika'él, St. Giyorgies/George, and St. Maryam/Mary. Soon, these priests carried the Arks with many local Christians, including the administrator of Jijiga District *Betä-Kihinät*, *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe, and started the long journey to Härär. But, before crossing the Karamara Mountain, the invaders who partially controlled Jijiga opened fire on the rescuers and killed some of them. A few of them who carried firearms tried to respond and resist the attack.<sup>29</sup>

The sources pointed out that *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi was one of the leading members who participated during this skirmish of resistance. Of course, due to the presence of very small Somali troops around the Karamara area, the fighting was not intense. Within an hour the exchange of fire was over and the crowd moved on. In an effort to hide the emigrants from the Somalia troops, during the dark hours on the way to Härär, all lights were turned off. As a result, in addition to the fear of an unexpected attack by the Somali Army, they agreed to spend the night at Hädaw due to the darkness of the night. Finally, on 10 and 11 September 1977, Christian refugees entered Härär with the three Arks. The priests immediately handed over the Arks to Härär *Timiqätä-Bahir* St, Mika'él Church and started a discussion about the fate of the displaced Christians. Meanwhile, many Christians joined the makeshift camp established by the government for women and children who came to Härär from Jijiga on the eve of the invasion. Some other people took shelter at the homes of their families and relatives in and around Härär.<sup>30</sup>

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from Wolde-Argawi Dubale to the Office of the Diocese of Härär Province, Pagumén 4, 1956 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter from Wolde-Argawi Dubale to *Abune* Abrham, Hämle 16, 1964 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter from Wolde-Argawi Dubale to Patriarch *Abune* Tewoflos, Nähäsé 10, 1964 E.C.

<sup>29</sup> Informants: *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe and *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Office ..., Teqemt 1, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A Certificate from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe to Wolde-Argawi Dubale, Yäkkatit 21, 1970 E.C.; *Qidus* Mika'él *Betä-Krстиyan*, *Yä Jijiga Mälelte Adibarat* ...,p. 21.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Jijiga St. Mika'él Church Administrator to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe to the Office of Archdiocese, Teqemt 1, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Jijiga St. Mika'él Church Administrator to the Office of the Diocese

Regarding the invasion of Somalia, therefore, three Arks, the priests, and some of the local Christians (including children and women) escaped from the invaders and traveled to Härär. Then, until the Ethiopian Army, with the support of the Cuban army, defeated the Somali invaders and took control of the area, most of the Jijiga Christians and the three Arks of St. Mika'él's Church stayed in Härär and other major cities in the eastern parts of the country. On the other hand, young and armed Christian settlers tried to resist the rapid expansion of the invaders. But they were unable to stop the advance, and some of them were killed during the fighting. The rest fled to areas beyond Mount Karamara and joined the Ethiopian defense force.<sup>31</sup>

According to my informants, who had observed the situation in Jijiga during the time, the invading troops that were assigned around St. Mika'él Church and the surrounding Christian villages were belligerent and aggressive. From the very beginning, they tried to terrorize the locals by opening fire without any provocation, resulting in dead bodies in various places. Residents of Jijiga were forced to stay in their homes, as they were not allowed to engage in any activities. Many people lived without enough food for some days. Of course, no one thought much about food. Earlier during the invasion, houses were burned and tombs were dismantled. As many people pulled together or abandoned the town, some felonious individuals used the prevailing onslaught as an opportunity to commit various crimes. The invading troops and robbers spent a lot of time looting the houses of the Christians and the properties of St. Mika'él Church. For some time, St. Mika'él Church was also used as a barrack by the invaders. Therefore, in a short period of time, the invading army destroyed the entire town, especially the houses of Christians.<sup>32</sup>

On top of this, the propaganda and assault of the invading troops based on religion and ethnicity seriously affected Orthodox Christianity and the Christians in the town of Jijiga. Even if the Somalia armed forces launched several destructive assaults in the eastern parts of the country, the local

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of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A Certificate ..., Yäkkatit 21, 1970 E.C.

<sup>31</sup> *Qidus Mika'él Betä-Krstiyan, Yä Jijiga Mälelte Adibarat* ..., pp. 20-25.

<sup>32</sup> Informants: *Ato* Tamirat Mola and *Ato* Sefiw Beyene; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A Minutes of the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 13, 1970; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh ..., Nähäsé 18, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from ..., Teqemt 23, 1971 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Report from ..., Hämle 6, 1970 E.C.; Gebru Tareke, 2000. "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, p.641.

Christians and their religious institutions were the main targets of the invaders. In order to make their invasion easy and break down the unity of the people so as to weaken the Ethiopian resistance, the Somali invaders tried to divide the local people along religious lines.<sup>33</sup> የጥቃቅና መንግስት ... ለፈወን የሰማለ ሆነዎች እናት የሚማጣው መርከተን የህይማኖት ቅርጫ በመስከተት እንደሆነ ያለማቋረጥ የሚነበው ተርጋግኝ ያረጋግጣል:: /The incessant propaganda proves that the government of Mogadishu ... is putting the vast Somali people on the line of fire by giving the war a religious form.<sup>34</sup> For that reason, the Somali soldiers and officials tried to show their enthusiasm to the Muslims and the Ethiopian-Somalis by attacking the Christians and non-Somali residents.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, before taking control of Jijiga, the Somali government sent its infiltrators, who claimed to be Ethiopian citizens, to carry out clandestine propaganda work and instigate Muslim youths to hate non-Muslims and non-Somalis. As a matter of fact, this was initiated during the Italian occupation, though it was carried out by the Somali invaders in an organized manner. Many Ethiopian Somalis were then sent to military camps of Somalia in Härgeisa to receive training and participate in the attacks on non-Muslims.<sup>36</sup> ከዚህ ...የሰማለ ወታደሮች በህይማኖት እና በነፃ ለያነት እያታለለ ወደ አራጋዕስ ከመሰረታዊ በቃላ በወታደሮች ተታወርሱት አስልጥነው መልሰው ህንጻችውን እንዲወጥ የጥክና መሆኑን ገልጋው እናራትናን በፊት አውጭዎች:: /From Jijiga ... [Ethiopian Somalis] stated that the Somali soldiers, with the enticement of differences in religion and ethnicity, took them to Härgeisa, and they condemned the practice of sending them back to attack their country after giving military training.<sup>37</sup>

Realizing that the matter was a conspiracy by the enemy, many young trained returnees surrendered to the Ethiopian army on several occasions. Various sources of information stated, however, that during the war a considerable number of Muslim youths had sided with the invading army and attacked the

<sup>33</sup> Informants *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Miyaziya 20, 1970 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Hailu Wolde -Giyorgies ..., Hedar 13, 1970 E.C.

<sup>34</sup> *Addis Zämän*, Mäskaräm 6, 1970 E.C., No. 1417.

<sup>35</sup> Informants *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Abayneh ..., Miyaziya 20, 1970 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Hailu Wolde -Giyorgies ..., Hedar 13, 1970 E.C.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*; *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 20, 1969 E.C., No. 1374.

<sup>37</sup> *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 20, 1969 E.C., No. 1374.

local Christians. This work of inculcating hatred and spreading false narratives caused many radical Muslims to harbor great detestation for Christians living in and around Jijiga town during and after the war. As a result, they repeatedly attacked the Christians, thinking that the latter were their bitter economic and religious rivals.<sup>38</sup>

So, in addition to their horrible measures against the Christians and the church, the agitation of the Somalia soldiers in Jijiga that aroused the Muslims to develop anti-Christians sentiment and banish the Christian was a time bomb just waiting to go off at various favorable intervals. Most of my informants state that the dangerous religious and ethnic propaganda by the Somali invaders during the war was the origin of the various attacks that occurred in the area after the end of the war. In addition, 40 years after the end of the war in 2018, they considered it as the basic reason for the brutal attack on Christians and churches in Jijiga. The large-scale attack of Jijiga Christians on *Hämle* 28, 2010 E.C., and the destruction of churches by radical Islamists living in the region with the help of high political leaders, including the contemporary president of the region, is a recent reality.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the religion- and ethnic-based mischief of the invaders, a letter sent from the Office of Härärghe Province Urban Association to the Office of Härärghe Province Urban Development in *Hedar* 1970 E.C./November 1977 described it in the following way:

...በተለይ አድራሻው የሰጠበት ስበብ አድርን የሚመቀምበት ህጋዊነትን  
እና በፌርማ ስለሆነ ይህንን በማመለከት በይጋብዕስ አቀራረብ መፍትሬ ለሆነ  
የሚችለውን ሁሉ በመስት እና ለማንበር ቅዱም ሰራዊቱ የሚለውን ይችላል  
በሚደረገው ተናት እና አፈጻጸም ሁሉ ስተኞች አስተዳደር ከማንደር ለማ  
ገተማና ለለለው መሰረም በቶት እና ህቀም አጠቃላይ በመሳሪያ ተብሎ  
እንዲፈረግለታው እናለታውቋል፡፡<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Informants: *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Colonel Gebire-Kirstos Buli, *Yä-Biherawi Abiyotawi Zämäča Mämrya yä-Zämeča Mäkonän* / Campaign Officer of the National Revolutionary Campaign Officer to the Office of Härärghe Province Administration, Miyaziya 12, 1970 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 36, File no. 17.01.7.03.04, A letter from the Office of Härärghe Province Administration to Ministry of Interior, Tir 26, 1973 E.C.; *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 8, 1969 E.C., No. 1374.

<sup>39</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Mäwi* Eyob Wondimu, *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe.

<sup>40</sup> NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Letter from Hailu ..., *Hedar* 13, 1970 E.C.

... Especially since the reactionary Somali government uses religion and ethnicity as an excuse [for aggression], in this regard, in all the research and implementation to find a solution and to prepare a rear support for the frontline army in a scientific approach, we inform you to cooperate with the administrator of the province, Commander Lemma Gutema, as well as other offices and honest revolutionaries.

It means that within the first three months after the invasion, the Ethiopian local government officials had recognized the vicious mission of the Somali army related to religion and tried to take appropriate remedial measures to alleviate the problem. But, it was too late and too difficult to take corrective action. Before the government recognized the problem and tried to avert the situation, a large number of local Muslims influenced by the propaganda of the invading force joined the Somali camp. Many others also misunderstood the issue and developed an attitude of religious and ethnic intolerance.<sup>41</sup>

So, regarding the 1977 Somali invasion, Jijiga Orthodox Christians and Christianity were undoubtedly the main victims. Several Christians were killed, wounded, or forced to migrate; the building of St. Mika'él's Church was damaged; the properties of local Christians and the church were looted or burned; and religious services were terminated. In the period between the attack of St. Mika'él Church by Somali troops on 9 September 1977 and the return of the three Arks from Härär after the invaders were evicted from Ethiopia on 23 April 1978, there were no Orthodox Christian religious services in the town of Jijiga.<sup>42</sup>

According to the sources, in addition to their primary political/military mission, Muslim Somali soldiers in Jijiga had a somewhat destructive religious purpose. Side by side with their looting and destroying of the properties of the church and the Christians, Somali soldiers were slaughtering camels within the compound of Jijiga St. Mika'él Church, intending to demoralize the local Christians. Frequently, many soldiers committed several crimes to deliberately harass the local Christians. Of all the bad deeds they did, the one that saddened and gravely annoyed the Christians of Jijiga was the slaughter of camels in the compound of St. Mika'él Church. In order to irritate Christians and demonstrate their deep hatred for Christian religious

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; Informants *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu and *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe; *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 20, 1969 E.C., No. 1374.

<sup>42</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Abune* Samuel, Bishop of the Diocese of Härärghe to *Abune* Tekile-Haiymanot, Patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Tahesas 17, 1979 E.C.

institutions, they had repeatedly carried out this action in the Holy Church, which goes completely against the teachings of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>43</sup>

ወራሮ የጠላት መር ድንበኛን ጥና የሚይገባበት ክብር ካሬታችንና ደራሮ ወደ  
መሆል ሆኖ በግባብ ገዢ በቅድማች በሆነዎች ላይ የመናገድ አደጋ : በሆነ  
ንብረቶች ላይ የጥገናው መንፈል ከተፈጻሚዎች አበያት በተከርከለችን አንቀ  
የቻቻች ደጋረ መቆ ቅጽ ማኅኬል በተከርከለችን ስ.ወን ይህ በተ መቆዳለ  
ከጠላት ወራሮ መር በፈት ከፍተኛ ገንዘብ ወጪ ተደርሱት በተገባ የመቆዳ  
መንበር ለገንዘብ የነበረውን በተከርከለችንና የደረሰ የአማካናም ተራሮ  
የነኩ መሰለም ለጥቃት ገዢ በበተከርከለች ወሰኑ የገመል ማረጃ ቅሬ  
ከማድረጋገጫ በለይ የመቆዳ መንበሩም በመር መሰረም በሳሰት አና በስለት  
ቆራረሙ ከጥቃም ወጪ አድራሻታል::<sup>44</sup>

When the invading enemy army breached our border and dared our inviolable honorific freedom and advanced into the interior of the country, one of the churches whose buildings were destroyed and wealth was stolen was the *Däbrä-Mäwi* St. Mika'él Church of Jijiga. This temple was used by the holy podium, which was bought at great cost before the enemy army's invasion. The enemy had assumed they had humiliated our church and affected the morale of the believers; besides turning the church into a slaughterhouse for camels for a short time, they turned the holy podium useless by puncturing it with bullets and knives.

So, from the beginning of the invasion by Somalia until liberation, the Christians of Jijiga town had been forced to pass through very gruesome situations. In addition to destroying the church, plundering properties, and making the lives of Christian people miserable in Jijiga, the Somali soldiers tried to humiliate the local Christians and incite the Muslims against the Christians, which contributed greatly to the weakening of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>45</sup>

It was quite obvious that the *Derg* government was weakened by internal challenges and lacked the military capability to repulse the invading Somali army. As a matter of fact, various attempts had been made before the war to solve the dispute with the help of certain parties through negotiation.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Informants: *Mälakä Mäwi* Eyob Wondimu, *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe, *Mälakä Mäwi* *Qomos Aba* Tsige Desta, and *Wäizäro* Sisay Alemu.

<sup>44</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Abune* Samuel ...., Tahesas 17, 1979 E.C.

<sup>45</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Qesis* Ytbarek Tatek to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Mäskaräm 13, 1970 E.C; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härär, Miyaziya 21, 1970 E.C, EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe to Härärghe Province Police Department, Miyaziya 13, 1970 E.C.

However, it failed, and both sides worked strongly to build up their military capability to prepare their military force for the imminent war.<sup>46</sup>

Even after Ethiopia received the huge military and skilled manpower assistance from the communist nations, the invading force of Somalia was not stopped. Then, in October 1977, when the Somali soldiers attempted to control the historical city of Härär, the allied power of the Ethiopian and Cuban forces successfully halted the invader's assault. They even launched a counter-offensive and quickly controlled strategically important places. Hereafter, the defeated Somali troops retreated back. Conversely, the Ethiopians and their allies followed in the footsteps of the retreating invaders and launched several successful attacks. Finally, in March 1978, the Ethiopians won the war and secured the sovereignty of their motherland by evicting the Somali troops from the eastern parts of the country.<sup>47</sup>

The victory of the Ethiopians in the war against the Somali invaders paved the way for the revival of Orthodox Christianity in the border areas. It helped various religious activities to resume regular services, especially in Jijiga town. Soon after the war, several Christians from Härär and the surrounding areas returned to Jijiga. In order to encourage the Jijiga Christians, the East Härärghe Diocese enhanced its support and supervision during and after the reconstruction of the church. Particularly, upon the return of the priests and the start of the reconstruction project of St. Mika'él Church building, a large number of Christian settlers flocked to the town. Due to the delay in the renovation of the St. Mika'él Church building, the priests of Jijiga observed the problems of the Christians in the area related to the lack of church services. As a result, they discussed with the representatives of the Diocese

<sup>46</sup> *Addis Zämän*, Hämle 21, 1969 E.C., No. 1375; *Addis Zämän*, Nähäsé 3, 1969 E.C., No. 1385.; Wondim Tiruneh, "Leading Factors for the Somalian Invasion of Ogaden: Foreign Intervention, and the Ethiopian Response (1977-1978)", *International Journal of Social Science Studies* Vol. 6, No. 6; June 2018, p.62; Gebru, The Ethiopia-Somalia War ..., p.657; Walter S. Clarke, 1991. "The 'Esayi Dream: A Footnote to the Ogaden War" *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.32-33. Kenneth G. Weiss, 1980. "The Soviet Involvement in the Ogaden War," *Institute of Naval Studies*, No. 269, pp.12-13.

<sup>47</sup> NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A letter from Colonel Legese Wolde-Mariyam,... Hämle 10, 1970 E.C. Wondim Tiruneh, 2018. "The Dynamics of Conflict and Intervention in North -East Africa: The Case Study on the Second Ethio-Somalian (Ogaden) War of 1977-1978" *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.8, No.11, pp. 78-79.

of Härärghe about the necessity of bringing back the Arks as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

Then eight months later, in April 1978, the three Arks were returned from Härär. Until the restoration of the main church was completed, the Arks were kept in a temporary shelter or a small house found in the compound of St. Mika'él Church serving as a *Mäqaño*/small house. Accordingly, on 23 April 1978, the *Mäqaño* church was officially inaugurated, and religious services began in the presence of senior Ethiopian Orthodox Church officials, including *Abune* Basilos.<sup>49</sup>

The war ended with the victory of the Ethiopians, and the exiled Arks returned to Jijiga. Nevertheless, it was the resumption of the spiritual service of St. Mika'él Church that was interrupted due to the invasion, which not only comforted the Christians in the city, but also caused many Christians to return to Jijiga. In addition to the long time that it took to reinstate Orthodox Christianity in Jijiga in the post-war period, the decline of the Christian population, the economic weakness at the time, and the existence of children who lost their families in the war were big challenges for St. Mika'él Church.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Instantaneous Impact of the War**

Archival sources show that Somalia's 1977 invasion and the subsequent war to liberate the country had tremendous effects on the lives of Jijiga Christians. As I have mentioned earlier, the local Christians were the main victims of the invasion. They lost many things, including their lives. In addition to the many

<sup>48</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe to *Yä-färäsut Abyatä-Krstiyanat Mälsö Makuakuam Komitä/* Committee for the restoration of destroyed churches, *Mägabit* 27, 1971 E.C.; NALE, Folder no. 52, File no. 17.01.7.06.02, A Report from the Office of Härärghe Province... Hämle 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Mitsilal Abay, Chief Secretary of the Diocese of Härärghe to the Office of *Amistu Adibarat*/the Five Churches, Miyaziya 17, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Abayneh Abebe..., Miyaziya 20, 1970 E.C.

<sup>49</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Mitsilal Abay to the Office of Härärghe Province Police Department, Miyaziya 13, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from the *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Miyaziya 20,1970. EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from *Abune* Abirham to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe, Miyaziya 12, 1970.

<sup>50</sup> Informants: *Liqä-Kahnat* Abayneh Abebe, *Mälakä Mäwi* Eyob Wondimu, and *Ato* Tamirat Mola; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 30, A letter from Jijiga *Awraja* Administration to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe Province, Hämle 26, 1970 E.C.

Christians that migrated to different areas, many other Christians had formed small fighting groups or joined the Ethiopian Defense Force to fight against the Somali invaders. Unfortunately, however, most of their firearms and ammunition were obsolete. Many young and mature Christians were killed in various battles because of their nationalist sentiment and their desire to protect the church from the invading forces.<sup>51</sup>

As a result, one of the challenges that occurred in the town of Jijiga after the war was the presence of many orphaned Christians. Some children lost both parents in the war. Many other children lost their fathers and were forced to wait for help from the Orthodox Church and the government. For the time being, the local Christians, St. Mika'él Church, and Jijiga town government officials tried to help these children and their mothers. However, the growing number of Christian orphans in need of permanent support and the weakness in the economy of the local government and the church after the war created a challenge in the town. In particular, the lack of food and shelter for these Christians forced St. Mika'él Church and other Christian institutions to think of a permanent solution for the hungry children.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, the Härär Province Diocese had been repeatedly requested to share the burden with St. Mika'él Church and the Ogaden *Awrajja*/District Church Office. Subsequently, the Diocese tried to provide some financial assistance to support the victims. However, neither the local church nor the support of the Diocese could satisfy the needs of Jijiga orphans. Consequently, the children's lives deteriorated over time, forcing the Orthodox Christians to seek a permanent solution for these Christian orphans. For that reason, the Archbishop of Härärghe Diocese, *Abune* Samuel, consulted with the Office of Ogaden *Awrajja Betä-Kihinät*, Jijiga *Awrajja* government officials, and local church representatives and decided to establish a childcare center in Jijiga town.<sup>53</sup>

By the same token, *Abune* Samuel wrote a letter to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Council of Child Care on 5<sup>th</sup> Pagumén 1976 E.C., demanding financial support to bring together the Christian orphans of Jijiga in one organized center. In this letter the bishop tried to clearly describe the challenges faced by the Jijiga Christians and his plan to solve the problem as well as the financial

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 48, A letter from *Abune* Samuel, to the Office of Ethiopian Orthodox Church Council of Child Care, Pagumén 5, 1976 E.C.

problems he encountered to implement the plan. From the general discussion of the letter, let me make a quotation to show the impact of the invasion of Somalia on the local Christian population and the suffering of the Jijiga Christians after the war.<sup>54</sup> It says,

... በሀራሪጊ ከፍልሆነ ካለት 13 አውራጃዎች በጠላት መረጃ እምበካም ስትርቁ የምትገኘው የቃቃር አውራጃ ከኢጋዥን አውራጃዎች በመሆኑ፣ ወልደን ለተገኘ ሲደተቻቸው መኖኩልያ በመሆኑ በተ ሁለት የሚጥረበት ከመሆኑም በለይ የህንጻን ደንብር ለማስከበር እና የአዲሱወጭ መርነት በመከላከል ማረጋገጫ አበቃቻቸው የምተባቸው በርካታ ሁኔታ የሚገኘበት አውራጃ በመሆኑ የሀገርከሰቱ፣ የኋገኑ እርዳታ ለይርከለቸው እንዲማግኑ እያጠየቃቸው:: በዚህ መሰረት.... በቃድማግ በቃቃር አውራጃ በቃቃር ከተማ የሀገሩ ማስረጋዥ በሀገርከሰቱ፣ የኋገኑ እማካኋንት እንዲቋቋማቸው.... በዚህ ጉዳይ በሰራት እና በተልቀት ተጠኑት እንደሆቂዎች እና በዚህ አመት ተማሪዎች ተለባበዎች ተዋህበዎች እንዲቋቋኑ እንዲሆረግ በቃቃቸው ስም አስቀበሉሁ::<sup>55</sup>

... Among the 13 *Awrajjas*/districts in Härärghe Province, Jijiga District, which is not far from the enemy's border, is a safe haven for refugees from the Ogaden districts, and it has a large population. In addition to this, there are many children whose fathers had died while defending the border of the country and the reactionary war. There is no question that the help of our church should reach them, as it is a district where. Accordingly ... to establish first of all, an orphanage in Jijiga district through our church ... On behalf of the victims, I request that this issue be studied extensively and thoroughly and that students be allowed to come together and start school this year.

As much as possible, the bishop informed the Church Council of the negative impacts of the Somali invasion on Jijiga Christians in the manner mentioned above and asked for the institution's urgent support on behalf of the affected children. For more than two months, however, the Office of Ethiopian Orthodox Church Council of Child Care did not respond to *Abune* Samuel's letter. Due to the delay of the response, the Bishop's plan to start education at the beginning of the New Year for children who lost their parents had failed. In addition to this, it had become the main cause for the intensification of the suffering of the victims in Jijiga town. Over time, the involvement of the local government, the church, and Christians in helping the orphans declined significantly. As a result, the number of starving children increased, causing the local Christians to worry more. Finally, two months later, on 9 November 1984, the Office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Council of Child Care

<sup>54</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 48, A letter from *Abune* Samuel ..., Pagumén 5, 1976 E.C.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

responded to *Abune* Samuel's request in a letter. Curiously enough, the Office cited the contemporary financial shortage it was having as a reason for the delay in their response and announced that the Council could not entertain and process for the time being the request for help of the Diocese. Therefore, the concerned church bodies could not provide support to the victims, so things turned from bad to worse. Many children in Jijiga were living on the streets in a dire situation until the *Därg* military government realized the seriousness of the problem and took many of the children to the government orphanage called *His'anat Amba*, (Children's Center)<sup>56</sup> near Zäway Town.<sup>57</sup>

### The Post War Recognition

Immediately after the war, some Christians living in Jijiga were awarded for their great contributions during the invasion. Among them, Wolde-Aregawi Dubale was one of the Christian patriots selected for multiple awards and letters of recognition from various government agencies and the office of the Diocese of Härär. In order to grasp the general spirit of the appreciation, it is good to go in particular through some of the testimonies listed in the letter of acknowledgement presented to Wolde-Aregawi on 15 November 1977, which was approved by *Lieutenant Colonel* Belete Ergete's seal and signature. The letter evidently describes some of the challenges and the role played by local Christians in general and Wolde-Aregawi in particular during the war.<sup>58</sup> It says,

ሰላ መጥና ወልደኩረጋዊ የብድር...1ኛ. ነህስ 26 ቀን 1969 ብቻ በቃዋሚ አውራጃ  
ግብት ካራማጭ ለይ ለተን እና ለበላን በማግኘት ወደ መር ባንባር ተመልከ  
እንዳታዊ በማስቀባበ እና 'ቈለ ህዋርያት' ካው በማከናል ገዢዎች ተመለስ በህግ  
አምስክ' በለው አውጭዎው በኋኩራ በቃዋሚ ከተማ በመገለጫ ካለማለ ወንበድ  
እታከኩ ወላዋል:: 2ኛ. ነህስ 29 ቀን 1969 በግራ ዓ.ዲ በየበኩ በተደረገው መሆኑት

<sup>56</sup> His'anat Amba/Children's Amba was established in 1979 by the Ethiopian military government with the support of Cuba and Sweden. It was located between Lake Abyata and Shala. The camp was built on purpose to raise the children of soldiers who suffered from the wars. It was designed to hold about 5000 children and about 1000 workers. The institution received and taught orphans of different age groups. When the children reached the age of 18 and completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, they were allowed to leave the center to pursue a career of their choice or attend college. However, following the change of government in Ethiopia in 1991, it was decided to close the institution within a few years, and the children who lived in the institution at that time scattered to different places.

<sup>57</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 48, A letter from the Office of Ethiopian Orthodox Church Council of Child Care to *Abune* Samuel, Teqemt 30, 1977 E.C.

<sup>58</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 533, A letter from the *Lieutenant Colonel* Belete Ergete to Wolde-Aregawi Dubale, Hedar 6, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 533, A letter from the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe to Wolde-Aregawi Dubale, Yäkkatit 2, 1970 E.C.

ከዚህ ዓመት ከነገት ተሰልፈው ስምምነት ከጠላት መር የዚህበር ማርከው ለመስራም በተከተል ከበርሃውል:: 3ኛ እንደሆነ 4 ቀን 1969 ዓ.ም በደንብናው ማካከል በተከተል ከነገት ለየ በጠላት መደብ ጥያቄ ተመቶ ጥያቄ በመደረሰ ቁስ መቅረብ ገዢው ድሳታዊ ይዘው እንደሆነበት በቁልጥናት እየተዋጥ ከጠላት እምልጠው ለለተኛ ተንሬው እንደሆነ 5 ቀን 1969 ዓ.ም ከደንብናው እውቅ ገዢው ተዋጥል:: ከአዲው ድሳታዊ ወሰድው ስራር ከፍል ሆኖ በተ ከሆነት ወሰድው ጥምቀት ማህበ ማካከል በተከተል ስራ አስከያደርግ አስተካክልዋል::...<sup>59</sup>

About *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale ... 1<sup>st</sup>. On August 26, 1969 E.C., at Karamara in Jijiga District, he comforted the troops and civilians and agitated them to come together and return to the fighting. He denounced those retreating by saying: 'It is an apostolic word; I denounce you in the name of Mika'él, in God's Law, return.' He marched to Jijiga Town shouting a war cry and exchanged fire with the Somali bandits all day long. 2<sup>nd</sup>. On August 29, 1969 E.C., while fighting alongside the army at the battles of Giri Dida and Yäbäre, he captured a *Mnšir* gun from the enemy soldier and handed it over to the office. 3<sup>rd</sup>. On Pagumén 4, 1969 E.C., when the upper part of Mika'él's Church in Jijiga was hit and damaged by enemy cannon, the priest entered the temple, took out the altar, and fought resolutely to avoid its capture. On the same day, he escaped from the enemy, traveled from Jijiga through the night, and on Pagumén 5, 1969 E.C., entered Adäw. From Adäw he took the Ark to Härär Provincial Diocese, in the presence of the chief executive of the diocese, and handed it over to Bahr Mika'él Church.

From this certificate of recognition, many important points could be extracted. Despite the terrible agony they suffered during the invasion, it clearly explains the role of the Christians of Jijiga and the ministers of St. Mika'él Church during the war. Particularly, *Mämire* Wolde-Aregawi, in addition to his active participation in the war, he inspired the Jijiga Christians to fight against the invaders to protect the honor of their country and church. Even though they were unable to get enough food and weapons, the Christians abided by the calls of their religious leaders and fought bravely against the enemy force, and many of them sacrificed their lives. This helps to understand how much Jijiga Christians and religious leaders sacrificed themselves for their country and religion during the Somali invasion.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, the fact that the citation of religious teachings by the *Mämire* had made the Christians of Jijiga face the enemy without any

<sup>59</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 5, File no. 533, A Certificate from the Lieutenant Colonel ..., Hedar 6, 1970 E.C.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

hesitation during the battle is a sweet reminder of the martyrdom of *Abune* Petros during the Italian invasion. Although there is a wide difference in historical chronology and location between the two invasions, it is a vivid manifestation to understand that Ethiopian Orthodox Christians confronted foreign aggressors at different times with incredible determination and faith.<sup>61</sup>

After the end of the war and the resumption of spiritual services at St. Mika'él Church of Jijiga, *Mämiře* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale enjoyed great respect and praise for the heroic deeds he performed for the honor of the Holy Church, in addition to his amazing adventure during armed encounters. Moreover, he comforted the exiled Christians so that they did not disperse to distant places and, after the war ended, encouraged them to return to their homes. As a result, *Mämiře* Wolde-Aregawi won an election in June 1978 to become the chief administrator of Jijiga St. Mika'él Church due to the worldly and spiritual works he did for the country, the church, and the Christian residents of Jijiga. The Diocese of Härärghe also readily accepted the result of the election and sent a letter approving his appointment on 21 June 1978 to the Office of Jijiga *Awrajja* Church. In his letter of appointment, *Abune* Abraham, the Archbishop of Härärghe Diocese, enumerated the great works done by *Mämiře* Wolde-Aregawi when the church and Christians were in serious trouble. He praised him in the name of God, urging him to do even a better work in the future.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Abune* Petros was the archbishop and martyr of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahedo Church. The Pope was killed by the Italian army for inciting Christian's patriots to fight against the Fascist Italians and not to surrender, and for his public condemnation of colonialism. On top of this, it is widely remembered in the history of Ethiopian patriotism that the Italian soldiers, before killing Petros, condemned the Ethiopian Christians and the land to not be captured by the invaders. Similarly, *Mämra* Wolde-Aregawi condemned the Somali invaders and urging the Jijiga Christians to fight for their country and religion by excommunicating them in the name of God and reminding them not to back down.

<sup>62</sup> EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter from *Abune* Abraham, the Archbishop of Härärghe Diocese to the Office of Jijiga *Awrajja Betä-Kihñät*, Säne 14, 1970 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter from *Mämra* Wolde-Aregawi Dubale to the Office of the Diocese of Härärghe, Hedar 17, 1973 E.C.; EHDA, Folder no. 30, File no. 533, A letter from *Mämhîr* Tsige Gebire-Giyorgies, Chief executive of the Diocese of Härärghe to the Office of Jijiga *Awrajja Betä-Kihñet*, Tahesas 11, 1973 E.C.

### Conclusion

In general, the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahedo Church has suffered various persecutions since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, especially in connection with the increasing and multifaceted attacks, the Orthodox Church and Orthodox Christians are facing an existential threat. Although the followers of the faith and their church were repeatedly challenged by a series of problems and lost a lot, they did not give up completely. Instead, even in the most difficult situations, they had been using different methods to cope and survive. The experience during the war with Somalia is no exception, and it is a continuation of this trend, and the Church's recovery is a manifestation of its superb capacity for resilience.

The repeated invasions of Somalia in the 1960s and 1970s and the change of government in Ethiopia following the revolution were major historical events that had a great impact on the Jijiga St. Mika'él Church and the Orthodox believers in the surrounding areas. In addition to the new policies of the *Därg* military government that affected the economic power of St. Mika'él's Church, the attempts of Somalia to invade the eastern parts of Ethiopia greatly weakened the church and the Christians. In particular, during the 1977 invasion, the Somali army persecuted many Christians, damaged the church, and took the property of the local Christians and St. Mika'él Church. When the Somali Muslim invaders attacked the town of Jijiga due to their religious prejudices, they targeted the local Christians. As a result, the three arks and considerable Christians were evacuated from Jijiga.

Even if they were not able to implement it properly, the Somali invaders had a plan to work together with the Muslims who lived in different areas of the Eastern Härärghe Region, including Jijiga town. From the very beginning, they tried to divide/categorize the local people on the basis of their religions. Then they tried to gain the support of the local Muslims at the expense of the Christians. Therefore, we can understand from this and the previous discussion that Somalia had a religious purpose in Ethiopia/Jijiga in addition to their territorial claims during the invasion.

At the same time, in Jijiga, the attempts of the Muslim Somali invaders to divide/categorize the local population based on their faiths gave new momentum to the sense of rivalry between the followers of the two dominant religions. This situation had been weakening the overall growth of Christianity. It had paved the way for the spread of hatred and suspicion

between Muslims and Christians in Jijiga town and its surroundings, leading to various untold damages and destructions.

Among others, the efforts of Somalia, like the Italians, to portray the highland Christian settlers as a religious group and economic rivals as well as colonizers have had disastrous consequences. Accordingly, after the defeat of Somalia and the restoration of the country's sovereignty, many sudden attacks were carried out by local Muslim extremists in different areas of the town.

Attacks in this region are often orchestrated by a few radical Muslims and political elites. However, it has been repeatedly shown that the majority of the society wants to live in harmony and peace. In addition to living together in peacetime, when Christians were attacked by extremists, local Muslims took a dangerous responsibility and saved the lives of the victims by hiding them in their homes. Indeed, the situation in the area seems peaceful at the moment. However, based on past experience, it can be assumed that the current situation cannot guarantee that a similar attack will not occur again.

In short, the expansion of the Ethiopian empire to the east at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed positively to the introduction of Orthodox Christianity in the town of Jijiga. Although the support of the authorities of the Imperial government accelerated the Christian settlement and church building in the town, the existence of strong Islamic religion, the poor method of preaching by Christians, and the repeated attacks on Christians by local and foreign armed forces have made Orthodox Christianity a minority religion.

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**List of Informants**

1. Abayneh Abebe (*Liqä kahnat*), age 81, Addis Abäba, January 24, 2020 and April 6, 2021.

He was the former administrator of *jiččiga Awraja Betä-Kihinät*. He provided important data about the general religious movement of the region, the impact of the Somalia invasion, the economic activities of the local churches and other related issues. He remembers each and every historical phenomenon with its appropriate year, month and date.

2. Eyob Wondimu (*Mälakä Mäwi*), age 53, *jiččiga*, June 15, 2020 and April 3, 2022.

He is the former *jiččiga Qidist Kidanemihiret* Church and *jiččiga Qidus Mikael* Church administrator. Currently he is the head of *jiččiga Awraja Betä-kihinät*. He knows quite a lot about the churches and the Christian residents of the region.

3. Sefiw Beyene (*Ato*), age 63, Härär, August 23 2020.

He was an eye witness and provided me an account about the post-1974 main developments in the region, the economic challenges of the local churches and the impact of the Somalia invasion.

4. Sisay Alemu (*Wäyzäro*), age c.71, *jiččiga*, April 27, 2022.

She is the daughter of Alemu Worku, the local patriot during the second Italian invasion. Her ancestors were among the first Christian settlers of Härärghe Province following the late 19th century state expansion. She is one of the most important sources of information on various aspects of the religious history of the East Härärghe Region.

5. Tamirat Mola (*Ato*), age 78, *jiččiga*, July 30, 2019.

He is a long time resident of *jiččiga* town. He is well informed and an eye witness for Orthodox Christian religion and its challenges during the *Därg* period.

6. Tsige Desta (*Mälakä Mäwi*), age 64, *jiččiga*, June 3, 2020 and April 24, 2022.

He is chief executive of the Diocese of Ethiopia-Somali Region. He provided information mostly on the late imperial and the *Därg* period religious history of the Region.