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Politics of Resistance among Shako during Imperial Ethiopia: Historical Perspective

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Abstract- Modern Ethiopia, with its borders and its dozens of nations, nationalities and peoples, came into being as a result of relentless campaigns of conquest which was accomplished by the Abyssinian state and its military might under Menelik by the late 19th century. The subjugation of Shako peoples was part and parcel of this process. By the conquest dozens of nations, nationalities and peoples (including Shako) were subdued to the Amhara hegemony. The historical experience of cultural and political domination, economic exploitation and social discrimination under the Amhara dominated Ethiopian empire obviously caused the Shako people to start resistance. Adopting the historical method of narrative and analysis, and interrogating available primary and secondary sources on the subject, this study argue that the patterns and natures of both domination/power and resistance changes in historical time and space as they are not mutually exclusive. The past offer us understanding in terms of contemporary new phenomenon which is still in its initial stage, and thus contributing in increasing the historical awareness, comprehend contemporary problems and impacts thereof.

Keywords: imperial ethiopia, domination, politics of resistance, historical perspective, shako people.

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Politics of Resistance among Shako during Imperial Ethiopia: Historical Perspective

Bisrat Lema Bergene

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I. Introduction

Ethiopia had unique position among African nations, both by successfully defending European colonialism and participating in scramble for Africa. Although the so called Abyssinia, with its Christian state on the northern plateau, claimed to have a long and continual history of many centuries, modern Ethiopia which is three or four times bigger than traditional Abyssinia with its borders and its tens of nations, nationalities and peoples, came into being as a result of brutal military conquest in the late 19th century (Hamesso and et.al, 1997; Hamesso, 2001). The philosophy behind the actual welding together of different peoples and eventual unequal yoking of same into an administrative framework from which modern Ethiopia emerged has markedly been political and economic; with motives of primarily empire-building (imperial ambition for expanded territory and power consolidation) and wealth acquisition (resource exploitation).

It is important to note that the Abyssinian conquest was coincided and encouraged by the Europeans' scramble for Africa in 1880s; the Abyssinian empire building project was started and completed by king Minilik of Shawa, the later emperor Minilik II of Ethiopia. Tibebu even considers Minilik II as "the only black African leader who effectively participated in the scramble for Africa" (Tibebu, 1995). Several other writers also (Jalata, 2005; Habteselassie, 1980; Markakis, 1974) view the process as colonial conquest. Triulzi (1983) stated that "Ethiopia is cited as a de facto colonial power and that colonial violence was used in incorporating adjacent territories and colonizing its peoples in spite of some obvious but not crucial differences with European Colonialism". Moreover, Habteselassie (1980) invoked connotation used by the imperial regime itself in using terms that relate to colonization and wrote: "The Southern region was referred up to the last days of Emperor Haile Selassie as yekignhager (conquered or colonized territory). Moreover, Addis Hiwet (1975) describes the whole socio-economic structures of post-conquest Ethiopia by using the term military-feudal colonialism. Hence, the march of the traditional highland Christian kingdom of Ethiopia towards the South, Southeast and Southwest (which includes my study area, Shako) is termed as colonialism. For the purpose of this study, the terms colonialism and conquest are simultaneously employed. By the conquest, the dozens of nations, nationalities and peoples were subdued to the Amhara hegemony and were left marginal to the political, social, economic and cultural privileges.

The subjugated peoples were not however simply passive objects of Abssynian conquest and Amhara domination. There was resistance but depending on the definition of power, different types of activities will count as resistance. Moreover, the patterns and natures of both domination and resistance changes in historical time and space. However, within resistance studies across the globe (Vinthagen & Lilja, 2007) there exists a plurality of concepts and definitions of resistance. On the other hand, the documentation and scholarly analysis of imperial policies watershed years of conquest and consolidation of Abssynian rule has not been properly done; they do not indicate the response of subject people like Shako as they only focus on the analysis of power structure. A few of the resistance studies conducted in Ethiopia focus on a few case studies and some forms contain much by way of explanations behind motives. Consequently, misconceptions of resistance prevail; often connecting resistance to reactionary ideologies, unusual and sudden explosions of violence and emotional outbursts.

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This particular study is dedicated to the resistance of the Shako, one of the ethnic groups of Ethiopia, against imperial (Abssynian) conquest and Amhara domination after 1898. This imperial conquest under Amhara hegemony and the local Shako resistance were of vital historical importance for the following reasons. First, it represented one of the most bitter struggles against domination in the Horn of Africa. The human and material losses it provoked was very huge. It even led to atrocities and mutilations which none of the contemporary European colonial powers practiced in the Horn of Africa. Second, from historical point of view, this study makes a very comprehensive insider and outsider observation from conflicts perspective, which helps to well understand contemporary historical-political dynamics and conflict generating experiences and tendencies in Shako region and in the greater Horn of Africa today. Thus it derives from a concern with the contemporary situation in Horn of Africa. It delves into the past only because otherwise it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the near future. Third, Shako resistance has turned out to be instructive in the sense that when any group of people face domination, they did not remain silent rather engage in various types of resistance, which may be open confrontation or the hidden one.

Fourth, the sacrifice of thousands of fighters and martyrs in defence of their dignity and freedom seems to have become a rallying point, a symbol of ancestral struggle against domination and a source of inspiration in the quest for the political identity of the Shako nation. Last, but not least, attempting to write at least some aspect of the historical experience of one of politically submerged and colonized peoples seems to have a challenge (and one way of correction) to the mainstream position of Ethiopia historiography, which is established on the premise of ignoring the history and culture of the oppressed and peripheral peoples such as the Shako. It will also provide a case-study from which resistance studies may fruitfully build to develop valuable concepts, insights and theories for understanding contemporary conflicts. This is because it provides or suggests the distinguishing elements of resistance while maintaining its plurality of forms in different contexts (by initiating a list of resistance types) through time and space. “Date here here"

II. The Conquest of shako: Aspects of Domination and Resistance, 1898-1941

By outlining further the historical process and context itself in this section, this research paper considers the dimensions of economic, social and political domination from an external as well as internal point of view, emphasizing the resistance of the Shako with the larger Abyssinian social and political system. Thus the resistance of local Shako ethnographic and, ultimately the global level can be analytically integrated.

The imperial soldiers that were sent for the conquest of Shakoland and people were commanded by Tessema Nadew. Tessema’s expeditionary force started its campaign from a place called Gore that is near Sheka (Abbink, 2000; 1996). Before launching the campaign Tessema sent a message to the Shako demanding their peaceful submission without giving any room for negotiation; it was rather presented as an order directed by the Emperor. At the time of conquest there was no centrally organized political authority in Shako but rather divided into several chieftaincies. As a result, the Shako failed to cooperate against the incorporation, they failed even to agree on how to respond to the request of Tessema demanding their submission. Owing to this, some clan leaders proposed to submit peacefully while others rejected the request and waged a resistance. When Tessema's soldiers intruded into Shako, the clan that was on the head way of Tessema's army accepted his rule realizing that it was their clan who would become the first victim of the invasion whereas others like Arshyab and Tuzyab refused and individually tried to defend themselves. However, because of the military superiority of the expeditionary force, Tessema was able to defeat the resistance and established his first garrison at Silale, which is said to have been the first garrison town in Shako. But the Shako did not fully accept alien rule and they were preparing to oust it.

Tessema's stay at Silale was precarious as a result of which he could neither subdue the population nor exact tribute. The Shako refused to come nearby his encampment and continued to wage sporadic attacks against the expeditionary force, which was forced to withdraw without much success as a result of which the Shako stayed for about a year without being subdued. It was in the late 1898 that, Ras Tessema completed the mission of conquering the Shako to the extent of using Shakoland as a base for launching campaigns against the neighbouring territories. Ras Tessema came to Shako with a far more superior and organized army than before and the people also tried hard to resist the invasion of the Ras than before. Nevertheless, because of various reasons the attempt of the Shako to defend their territory was easily suppressed. The first reason for the poor resistance on the part of the Shako against subjugation is attributed to a host of weaknesses. Militarily, Menelik's army, the first Ethiopian army that was fully equipped with modern weapons, was superior to the traditional instruments of war that the Shako had. This enabled the army of Menelik’s regime to easily overcome the resistance of the Shako. Moreover, internal disagreement and disunity among the Shako became an obstacle to design a unified resistance strategy to repel the incorporation.

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After the conquest in 1898, the Shako area was given to Ras Tessema Nadew's follower Dejazmach Mulugeta. Shortly following the establishment of garrison towns in the Shako territories, every clan of the indigenous communities was required to provide annual tributes of two large oxen and a pot of honey and grain. This form of tribute was shortly discontinued, and the neftegna/melkegna-gabbar system was simultaneously imposed on the conquered people with far reaching consequences lasting over a longer duration (Abbink, 2000). In short, the new rulers introduced an alien social and economic relationship expressed in neftegna/melkegna-gabbar system, which turned the indigenous people into tenants. The system was explained not only in terms of confiscation of land belonging to the indigenous society (Markakis, 1974) but also the settlers partitioned the local people and made them render corve´e services by working on the farms and in the households of the settlers. Moreover, the system aimed at imposing the supremacy of the settlers over the Shako by virtually destroying their culture and traditional institutions altogether. The local elders state that the economic and political oppression was more harsh and unbearable than the military measures taken during the conquest. The predatory nature of the newly established socio-political order is evident not only from the forced restructuring of the day-to-day socio-economic relations of the indigenous groups in the area, which destroyed the fibber of their society, but also from the common practice of wholesale pillaging of the natural and human resources of the area whenever a governor departed.

Slave raiding was also intensified in the region after conquest. Tessema Nadew's troops captured as much cattle, gold, ivory and slaves as possible and this was either taken as spoils to the north or distributed to his followers. This customary practice continued up to the last governor, Ras Getatchew Abbate, in the 1930s. This was true not only in a vital economic sense, but also in a demographic sense because the Shako could not escape the effects of the slave raids (Abbink, 1996). These raids threatened the integrity of their kin-ordered work units, and caused a perpetual social disequilibrium within their corporate groups and those of their indigenous allies.

Notwithstanding this, the Shako did not completely accept defeat and voluntarily embrace the newly imposed socio-economic and political system. They resisted domination in different ways during the subsequent periods. One way of resistance was in a camouflaged form in which some gabbars left their land and fled to the bush in the remote highlands where the reach of the neftegna/ melkegna was minimal. The other ways of resistance was direct and open opposition to new arrangements on the part of some gabbars. In this regard, Shako people engaged in direct confrontation by forming alliance with their neighbours (with various rebellious Bench and Kafa groups). Through trade they had already secured a substantial amount of firearms at a relatively early stage, which is before 1910 (Garretson, 1986). Raiding and counter-raiding between the Amhara and the Shako, despite the apparent defeat of the Shako in 1913 continued in the area throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

In the first years after the conquest, the indigenous population had no fire-arms and were powerless to engage in open confrontation. Every time northerners appeared to collect taxes (in the form of grain and honey) or to capture stock and people, the Shako retreated into the dense forests then covering the highland area. Occasional ambushes of small parties of northerners provided their first fire-arms; they forced their captives to show them how to use them (Abbink, 1996). Further, the Shako people were joined by armed rebels from the Bench, Me'enit, Mejenger, Dizi and Kafa people, and guns were introduced as payment for ivory and slaves. In the earliest days, three to five slaves were exchanged for one gun; but in the 1920s when slaves had become more difficult to obtain, the ex-change was one for one.

The first open Shako resistance after their arms build-up came from a group under a chief called Aybera. He set the pattern of Shako resistance to the encroaching northerners by instigating hit-and-run ambushes: travelling parties of traders or soldiers were attacked and killed, the Shako making off with their trade goods and livestock. Isolated military outposts were also attacked and wiped out. All of this made the Shako area with its important trade route to the north dangerous to cross despite the fact that, as sources states, the first open Shako resistance put down around 1913. It was with the involvement of the government force from the centre under the personal leadership of the emperor himself that the resistance was crushed. Nevertheless, the Shako territory was not completely pacified; new Shako leaders emerged and on several occasions the garrison town of Shako itself was attacked.

Whenever a governor departed Shako, leaving behind the familiar devastation of the countryside, the Shako retaliated with attacks on northern out-posts, and increased their raids on weaker neighbouring groups to make up for their own losses. These attacks and raids provoked a massive response from the northerners under the new governor Fitawrari Taye, a resistance which have been crushed in 1925. This same pattern is also evident in later periods, particularly in the late 1920s, so that Shako resistance could not be stamped out as new and strongly armed groups in Shako were in open rebellion and refuse to pay tribute to them, and the local governments are afraid to tackle them. Then in the early 1930s, the Shako revolted anew against their exploitation and dominance by the Abyssinians. Throughout the following years, the Shako maintained

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this stand against the Abyssinians and resisted forced subjection to political domination and serfdom. Thus, armed conflicts and slave-trading continued up to the arrival of Italian troops to the Shako area in 1936 to 1937.

It was in this context that Italy occupied Ethiopia, which stayed until 1941. During the early period of the Italian Occupation, there was cooperation between the Italian forces and the Shako. Moreover, there seemed to be a form of appreciation among the Shako concerning the Italian Occupation. This was because they abolished the slave trade and the inhuman neftegna-gabbar system. Informants of one of the Shako clans, the Tureta, stated that the Italians were, initially at least, hailed as liberators by them because they abolished the slave trade and the neftegna-gabbar system. However, the collaboration with the Italian forces did not last long. After a lapse of two years when the Italians began to implement their policy of colonial exploitation and oppression, the people began to oppose the Italian colonial forces and begun to rebel against them. In other words, the people became disenchanted with the rigid measures and the continued requisition of cattle to feed the troops and resented the Italian proposal to appropriate land. On the other hand, the balabbats who benefited from the Ethiopian imperial system firmly opposed and resisted Italian rule from the very beginning and most of them spent the occupation period in the bush with other members of the resistance during which they fought against the colonial forces.

III. Patterns In Imperial Rule And Shako Resistance, 1941-1974

a) Dimension of Domination

As explained in forgoing sections, the adverse impact of the Neftegna-gabbar system was considerable and highly pronounced on the economic, socio-cultural and political life of Shako society. The conquest and the attendant entrenchment of alien rule resulted in a radical transformation of the socio-economic structure and political life of the people. Moreover, until the 1975 revolution that abolished the neftegna-gabbar system, the cash economy that became so important after the conquest was entirely controlled and monopolized by settler groups in the main rather than the local population (Markakis, 1975).

The conquest and attendant subjugation of Shakoland and the population at large also affected the viability of the Shako language and culture. This has, therefore, been seen as the main obstacle to promote and develop the Shako language and culture. In this connection, Markakis (1994:225) argues: "In Ethiopia no other indigenous language was allowed to be printed, broadcast or spoken in public functions… and the attempts to study the culture and history of other groups were decidedly discouraged." Thus the system of the regime had played a significant role in discouraging practices of the different aspects associated with cultural values and traditions. However, absence of integration into urban life on the part of the Shako and lack of social interaction between the urban settlers and the Shako inhabiting the rural areas minimized the degree and extent of acculturation as a result of which the Shako were able to retain their culture and traditional values by default. Disengagement in urban life and urban economic activities on the part of the Shako was caused by different factors. First, economic problems that did not allow the local population to build houses and settle in urban centres necessitated the confinement of the large majority of the Shako in the rural areas and eke their livelihood from agriculture. Moreover, the settlers did not want the Shako to settle in the urban centres and engage in urban-based economic activities. This could be for fear on the part of the settler ruling classes that settlement in urban centres would create opportunities for the local population to access modern education that could lead to acquiring political consciousness regarding the nature and workings of the oppressive neftegna-gabbar system. Indeed, it is one aspect of resistance. This form of Shako's resistance adopted as the survival practices in "third spaces" against effects or aspects of power. It also shows that resistance is not only a response to power, power might as well be a response to resistance, a response both to its construction of new social structures which negates power logics and a counter-response to the resistance against power. In a fundamental sense power and resistance need each other to develop and expand.

However, some of the Shako groups who wished to hold power later opted to assimilate and integrate to urban settlers by changing their names (accepting change of Shako name to Amharic) and professing Orthodox Christianity as their religious creed (Gudina, 2003). In this regard, Amharic became the lingua franca, state-backed Orthodox Christianity became the only legitimate religion in the empire, and all forms of Amhara culture were imposed on the subjected peoples of the south as the only legitimate and 'civilized culture' (Tibebu, 1995). During this time, one has to be "Amharized" to get some privileges. John Markakis (1994) argues that "in imperial Ethiopia for instance, it was easier for a non-Christian, who also did not speak Amharigna, to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the charmed circle of power and privilege" Such trends resulting from subjugation of the Shako continued up until the revolution. Indeed, with the policy of reinvigorated centralization drive and consolidation of state-machineries, the oppression and domination of subject people increased in magnitude and dimension in post_1941 imperial.

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b) Resistance Against the Neftegnas and Restoration of Imperial Rule

At the time of Emperor Haileselassie's return from exile following the defeat of the Italians in 1941, there was conflict between the returning settlers (Neftegnas) and the Shako especially those who were known as arbegnas led by Diko and others. Arbegna is the term used to identify members of the resistance against Italian occupation but this was used in Shako in a different manner. The Shako arbegna firmly opposed and struggled against the reoccupation of Shakoland by the neftegnas/ melkegna, representing the settler landowners. Indeed, the attempt to reassert their former supremacy over the local people started first by the former neftegnas in the last days of resistance against Italians. A spark that lit a fire was the action of Fitawrari Gezahegne. In other words, his action increased the grievance of the local people and precipitated the condition. He ordered the Shako patriots to stop their struggle against the Italians, at the last days of the liberation movement, while they want to continue the resistance until the final days. Moreover, Gezahagn attempted to disarm the Shako people. The Shako people, on their side, also reacted against this action because they knew that Gezahagne's action was intended to open the way for reasserting the neftegnas' former supremacy over the Shako people. The result was then conflict between the Shako people and the restored elites and neftegnas of the imperial regime who reclaimed their status, land and tenants as well as power following which the local people and their rulers become victories.

The regime tried to solve the nationwide crises and problem through introducing some measures by enacting administrative regulation known as Decree No. 1/ 1942. The Decree dealt with the reorganization of administrative territories and establishment of a tightly structured and formal administrative system that is intended to unify the country and centralize power under the emperor. Nevertheless, the mechanism that sought to implement the Decree was strengthening the centralization drive mediated by the doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Church. The aim was to build a centralized bureaucracy and thereby to increase its presence in the peripheries. However, the Haillesilasie's government did not establish its central rule immediately after the evacuation of the Italians; it did not establish until 1943 in Shako area which created administrative vacuum. The administrative vacuum enabled the local traditional chiefs to assert their power in their respective areas. In other words, all of the Shako chiefs tried to take advantage of the situation and reasserted their hereditary privileges and their region's former political autonomy. They held political authority and ruled their own people on their own ancestral land based on their indigenous administrative system. The holding of power by the native chiefs in this area also gave the people a relief from payment of onerous tribute and other exaction and land grabbing.

When the imperial government began to restore power in Shako area in 1943, the Shako, together with other indigenous groups, fiercely resisted. This was because the people knew that the restoration of imperial rule means the restoration of oppressive and exploitative system of pre-1935 period; They feared that the restoration of imperial rule might reinstitutes the previous oppressive neftegna-gebbar system, and the slavery and slave trade of pre-Italian period which were still fresh in the minds of the Shako people. On one hand, the period of administrative vacuum enabled the local chiefs to reassert their political autonomy and to consolidate their authority in their respective region and to organize their people. Large amount of arms held by the local people is another factor in their struggle against the establishment of imperial government. The Shako people like other people of the region, possessed huge amount of weapons. They acquired it both from Italians and British. The Italians had initially distributed large number of arms to let they fight the patriots of the region who were fighting the Italians. Later on, the British also trained and distributed weapons to the local people at Boma, part of the British colony of Sudan which borders the study area. Thus, this had built the confidence of the local people and also helped them to put a stiff resistance against the restoration of the imperial government.

The responsibility of crushing the resistance and restore the imperial authority in the region was given to Ras Mesfin Sileshi, governor of Illibabur province which included the Sheko people. Mesfin Sileshi in return sent Captain Alemayehu Filate (later Fitawrari), one of his war commanders, to the region to carry out the task. Of course, there was a military preparation and intense propaganda before the actual fighting broke out; Alemayehu tried to persuade the Shako people by sending repeated messages in which he promised to avoid confrontation if they would submit peacefully. For instance, the letter written on July 14, 1942, says, "**ዘጠኝ ወር ሙሉ የስብከት ደብዳቤ በመላክና በሌላውም የሰላም መንገድ ስንደክም ፍሬ ሳናገኝ ቀረን**", "Aimed at persuading them to submit peacefully, we sent letter of pursuant and other peaceful mechanisms for about nine months. But we laboured for such long period in futile as it bore no result" (IES/WMTMC: Folder No., 2177, File No., 5548).

When such strategy failed, Alemayehu marched to the Shakoland from his base area at Gore with contingent force consisting of four battalions, under the leadership of Shalaqa Hayle Ayano, Fitawrari Mulugeta Ashine, Shalaqa Gezimu Siyum and Fitawrari Kebede Demissie in January, 1942. From the four Battalion force, three were sent to Temengayaz (to garrison there) and the remaining one Battalion sent to Gurafarda. Five days stay at Temengayaz, on 25 January, 1942, the

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Sheko people led by Shiferaw Mengesha, Mura Urgu and others opened fire on the garrisoned government soldiers. Although there were casualties on both sides, the number of people died on the side of local people of Sheko was great; the archival material mention that about 10 men died and injured from the side of government force, whereas 80 people died and 130 were surrendered from the local people (IES/WMTMC: Folder No., 2177, File No., 5548; Folder No., 2181, File No., 2881). But it is difficult to accept this figure as face value. In spite of the defeat, the resistance continued in this front, mainly under the leadership of Mura Urgu, who reorganized the local people to continue the struggle.

One Battalion force that was sent to Gurtafarda has been garrisoned in the camp at Birhan which was built by the Italians. After four days stay of the government forces at the camp, the local people led by Diko, one of the Shako chiefs at Gurafarda, suddenly attacked the soldiers. After fighting for four days the government soldiers were defeated and began to retreat back. The Shako fighters take the offensive and followed the government soldiers until they were totally driven out of Shakoland; after expulsion from Shakoland, the government soldiers stationed at Yeki. And the fighters of Shako of Gurafarda marched to the area around Boqo River and stationed there. Unable to crush the resistance, Fitawrari Alemayehu requested Mesfin Sileshi for additional force. Accordingly, additional government forces arrived on May 1942. After consolidating his former army with the newly arrived one, Alemayehu started to invade the Shakoland from all directions. After fighting the combined forces of Alemayehu for about nine days, Shako people were heavily defeated; the final and decisive battle took place at Boqo on June 26, 1942. Alemayehu expressed his victory to Ras Mesfin Sileshi through the letter written on July 14, 1942 which reads as, "**እስከ ሰኔ 19 ቀን ድረስ ከተታኮሱዋቸው በኋላ በሸኮ . . . ያሉ ባላባቶች ሁሉ እጃቸውን መስጠታቸውንና ታማኝነታቸውን ማረጋገጣቸውን አስታወቁ::**", "After fighting until June 19 [June 26], all balabats of Shako announced their submission and confirmed their loyalty" (Folder No., 2181, File No., 2881). Other sources however show that all balabats were not submitted and stopped the resistance.

The success of Alemayehu's army was due mainly to the superiority of his force both in number and armaments. The tactic which he employed in the course of fighting had also helped him. That is, he captured Shako women and children and detained them at "Mocha" [Sheka]. Then, he announced that anyone whose wife and children have been detained could get them back by surrendering or submitting weapons. Since the Shako people normally love their wife and children, the majority had submitted their weapons. This system helped the government by reducing the number of armament (there by reducing the means of fighting for the Shakos) and facilitating the future control also. In addition, Alemayehu's army captured the influential balabats of Shako and detained them, first at Gore and then at Addis Ababa. After that they informed the Shako people that the government would kill the balabats if they did not stop fighting and refuse to accept the restoration of the imperial regime. Since the Shakos had a great love and respect for their balabats (as the traditional bondage was still exist and also consider their traditional chiefs as sacred), most people hesitated and failed to continue the war. All this factors contributed for the defeat and submission of the Shakos. This does not mean that the government soon assured its hegemony over the people at least until 1947. There was also variation in this regard; while most of the Shakos people were engage in protracted and open struggle until the late 1940s, some of the Shako people continued to make the most vigorous and open resistance at least until the late 1950s by changing the place and organizational level of resistance. Individual acts of resistance by some Shako fighters, or individuals with courage like Dikko was dominant in the latter case as points that will be discussed below indicate. All in all however the resistance of Shako people in all regions of the Shakoland continued until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, changing its nature and pattern (MoCT/ NALA: Folder No., 242, File No., 12-□1; Folder No., 242, File No., 103; Folder No., 299, File No., □-7).

c) Individuals with courage: Dikko of Gurafarda and His Contribution in the Resistance

As mentioned above, some of the Shako groups continued to make a fierce and open resistance even after the resistance of larger Shako groups have been crushed by government force. A man behind that resistance was one of the Shako chiefs at Gurafarda whose name is Qegnazmach Dikko. As was discussed in the preceding section, he resisted the restoration of the imperial government and fought the imperial force together with other Shako groups. Even he was much more active in resistance and politics than his contemporaries, providing ideological and organizational base for resistance. For example, Fitawrari Alemayehu repeatedly sent him a letter requesting a peaceful submission but Qegnazmach Dikko refused to do so. Dikko even sent a message expressing his conviction. One of the letters written on February 25, 1942 explains the response of Qegnazmach Dikko as, "**አሁን አገሩ. . . አርሶ የራሱን የሚበላ ከሆነ እንቀበለዋለን ያለዝያ በጦርነት እንቀበላዋለን**", "If the country [the Shakoland and its people] will be allowed to till its own land and consume what it produced, we will accept it [the restoration of the imperial regime]; otherwise we prefer war" (IES/WMTMC: Folder No., 2177, File No., 5548; Folder No., 2181, File No., 2881). This indicates that Dikko's intention was to resist the restoration of the imperial regime if this means the restoration of the pre-

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1935 period oppressive system that denied the local people the right to hold their ancestral land, in addition to denying their political and cultural identity.

When Fitawrari Alemayehu requested for submission of weapons, Qegnazmach Dikko responded as follow: "**ለኔም ላንተም ጠመንጃ የሰጠን እንግሊዝ ነው ስለዚህ ከእንግሊዝ ወረቀት ካልመጣ አልቀበልም**", "Since it was England [Britain} who provided both of us with the rifle, I will never submit the rifle as per your request; I will submit the rifle if England sent a letter of order to me." This vividly indicates ideological and organizational degree of Dikko and his soldiers. He has got several rifles and ammunitions from Britain just like Alemayehu's soldiers so that he consider himself and his fellowmen as equals than inferior to the former. Thus, he has no intention of submitting peacefully except by war.

Following the refusal of Dikko to submit peacefully, despite the repeated request, Fitawrari Alemayehu (as mentioned earlier) sent one battalion force under the leadership of shamble Temesgen to Guraferda. The force was stationed at the camp of Birhane which was built by the Italians. Soon, the war broke out between Dikko's force and that of the government. The war was initiated by Dikko himself. After four days confrontation at the battle of Birhane, the government force was defeated by Dikko's force. Following the defeat, the government force retreated back and Dikko's force followed them until they fled to Yeki. After the battle of Birhane, Dikko's force marched to Boqqo River that border Shakoland and that of the Bench, and garrisoned there preparing to attack the government force when it crosses the river. Alarmed by this, Dejazmach Mesfin Sileshi sent additional Battalion force from Gore as per the request of Fitawrari Alemayehu. Dikko's force faced a huge army at the battle of Boqo in which his force (together with other groups) defeated by the government force. After the decisive battle of Boqo, Dikko fled to Bero, located in Maji area which is near to Sudanese border.

Although Dikko was defeated, he did not stop resistance. As documents as well as informants indicate, he continued resistance from his base area of Bero until 1950s. There, he organized other groups and continued to challenge the government, making sporadic attack on government forces stationed at Guraferda. This indicates that he changed his war tactic from conventional war to guerrilla war. He also terrorized the officials by sending a message that threatens them with murder if they do not stop taxing the people; he also instigated the local people to expel the settlers.

The major reason for the strength of Dikko and his force was moral and material support provided by the Shako people and their neighbours. The support provided by the British officials, for their own advantage, from the Sudan also helped Diko and his force; also supported later by Sudanese government. They provided armaments to the rebels to destabilize the Ethiopian government so that they could exploit the goldmines of the area. The rebels had also strategic and tactical advantage over the government forces. Since most of the rebels' base was in the area that border Sudan, they cross to Sudan when the government force wage a planned attack. Then they came back and attack the government forces and officials suddenly. In other words they employed hit-run tactic. Moreover, the jungle of Maji area makes it difficult for the government forces to control the rebels, who were fighting on the soil which they knew very well.

To overcome the problem and maintain stability in the region, the government sent additional army to the area; for instance, one Battalion force was sent in 1949 in addition to the already existing force there. Their main target was to capture Dikko as he was the moving spirit of the resistance and also served as a uniting figure, providing a lenient leadership as well as organizational and ideological tool for all the rebels. However, government failed either to capture Dikko or crush the rebels and maintain stability in the region. Although documents as well as the informants do not mention the final fate of Dikko after mid-1950s, the insurgents or rebels continued to exist in the region. Due to this, the government sent additional forces (about three Battalion force) to the area in the 1960s. However, such a huge force did not assure security in the region. Therefore, the security problem continued unabated in the region throughout the imperial period.

d) The Continuities and Discontinuities in the Resistance

After the second half of 1940s, petition was the main means of open resistance to most of the Shako people. For instance, opposing land eviction from their ancestral land, tenancy and land alienation (which increased in the area after the mid-1940s), the Shako people together with Bench made several petitions to provincial and central government offices. The prominent personalities from Shako who spoke the grievance of their people (representing the Shako people) at Jimma (provincial capital) and Addis Ababa (the capital of the imperial government) in 1950s were Jabi worgu and Tessema Aybara. Although the resistance resulted in deposition of Fitwrari Alemayehu Filate from his governorship, it did not halt the spread of tenancy, sufferance of the peasants from land alienation and eviction. It was continued unabated throughout the regime. For example, on the eve of the revolution, almost all of the local people of Shako like that of Bench and others in the region were tenants. The resistance was also continued until the downfall of the regime with variation in some form like change in leadership.

For instance, opposition reached to the climax in the early 1970s. During this period, the students took a forefront in the opposition movement. The main leader

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of the movement among Shako was Dejene Wotango. They used several mechanisms but the major one was through making petition to central authorities, expressing the grievance of the local people. Of which, the petition letter that they wrote to Lij Endalikachew Mekonen, the prime minister of Imperial Ethiopia, was the major one (MoCT/ NALA: Folder No., 299, File No., □-7). In this letter, they expressed their dismay with the condition as, "Although we expected a significant change to their people after the reorganization of the government [with the appointment of Lij Endalkachew and his new cabinet], nothing is so far changed". And they longed for radical reform in the region. Students blamed the whole system and officials of the administration in particular. Although they blamed all government officials of the administration, including the governor, they boldly blamed the then governor of Sheko district, Girazmach Ayalew Yirsaw for he was bogged down in corruption, bribery, and was disrespect of the local people including elders. Nevertheless, such petitions bore no result and things continued without change until the downfall of the regime in 1974. Of course, the imperial regime introduced several reforms, pretending to solve the problem, by enacting administrative, legal and economic regulations through various Decrees in post-1941 periods. One of the Decrees dealt with the reorganization of administrative territories and establishment of a tightly structured and formal administrative system that is intended to unify the country and centralize power under the emperor. Nevertheless, the mechanism that sought to implement the Decree was strengthening the centralization drive mediated by the doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Church. It was experienced by Shako people as domination from the centre and subjugation under its local representatives and neftegnas (drawn from Amhara ethnic group) who wielded almost absolute power over the local people. The practice of neftegna-gabbar rule was also persisted unabated until 1974. Thus the imperial monarchy developed into an absolutist state with a power structure based on feudalism and ethnicity. By the same token, the resistance of the local people of Shako continued, changing in nature and patterns, up until the revolution, in which the Shako people actively participated hoping to regain their land and associated rights as well as to revitalize their cultural and political identity.

IV. Conclusion

The Shako people, like other subordinate groups in Ethiopia and even across the world, engaged in the resistance in response to power, challenged that power, and consequently undermined power by the act. In this regard, resistance is not only a response to power, power might as well be a response to resistance, a response both to its construction of new social structures which negates power logics and a counter-response to the resistance against power. It indicated that the types of resistance would vary according to who acts, where, with what means and organizational forms and against what through analyzing historical changes of resistance. It varies also according to what motivating ideas and ideologies that guides the resistance. By doing so, it briefly indicated what implication resistance studies might have to our understanding of contemporary political conflicts.

Accordingly, the types of resistance by Shako people witnessed historical change in different times but two major types of resistance were dominant as the discussion made indicate. Firstly it was characterized by the open and public challenge against power including conventional war, revolts, petitions, refusal to pay taxes and the like. The second one takes the form of hidden, circumventing forms of camouflaged resistance like work-slow. This form of Shako's resistance adopted as the survival practices in "third spaces" against effects or aspects of power; for example running away to forests and other safe places where the neftegna's influence was minimal and also becoming indifferent towards the conditions.

The above forms of resistance "corresponds to different forms of domination (material, status and ideological), which in return resulting in various features of resistance". Shako's resistance take the first form as public declared resistance (through open revolts in both pre and post 1941 period, and also through petitions, predominant after the late 1940s) against material domination by neftegna; assertion of worth or desecration of status symbols against status domination by neftegna; or, counter-ideologies against ideological domination as the case of 1941-1943 indicate. And, the second form of resistance occur simultaneously as "everyday resistance" (e.g. stealing the property of dominant, desertion of landlords by tenants, evasion like withdrawal from destructive power relations (e.g. by escape to other countries or areas) and thus refusing to take part in the system).

Shako's resistance also vary depending on social space; sometimes occurring in an established and recognized public arena, in an informal and emergent political space (e.g. in a neighbourhood) as the Diko's action after 1943 from Bero indicated, making that space a space of political contest. And Shako's resistance was also varied according to what social category is resisting/resisted and the relative size and power of contending groups (for example in time of conquest a clan under Arshyab and Tuzyab resisted while others were submitted). Shako's resistance also vary in terms of what historical context resistance is played out and what values or ideologies that guides the resistance (e.g. in feudal state until 1930; autocratic state (1930-35); authoritarian colonial state (1937-1941) and absolutist state (1941-1974).

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Their resistance would also have a variation of consequences depending on all these factors sometimes leading to chaos or increased repression as events of 1920s, 1930s and post-1941 cases indicated or equity in terms of land reform after 1974 revolution, etc.). The dimension could also differ between individual-collective, and type of social category or ideological groupings doing resistance. Individual acts of resistance, e.g. "robbing" and "raiding" of rifles and slaves from northern traders, governors and neftegnas by some Shako fighters, or individuals with "courage" like Dikko. It also witnessed the majority mobilizations, e.g. the Shako's struggle in the post-1941 period based on ethnicity.

Having explored various features of resistance and dominance and some of its broad variation of types in the case of Shako through history, it is possible to accept Vinthagen & Lilja's (2007) assertion that "resistance studies is a necessary companion to all critical theory and other research interested in agency or social change, yes, probably also if we are to understand power, since power is not, it is exercised in historical and contemporary relationships". The dynamic traits, patterns and creativity of power, resistance and social change are connected. If we focus only on one of them, say on power, we may miss significant issues and even we overstress the role of one of it.

Moreover, resistance is not usually destructive and anti-social. As the case of Shako indicated mostly resistance can be productive, at least, both ripping down some elements in society while generating new. Through resistance, the Shako's broadened the room for making choices, paved possibilities by discouragement or restructuring such power relations which limits and produces their (possible) identities, action space or bodies.

The various strategies of resistance by Shako was a response to their articulation with the expanding frontier of the Abyssinian empire. As a result of this process, the traditional economic and cultural patterns of Shako society were reshaped. The new pattern of social reproduction tied them increasingly to wider political and economic processes in the region. Their remarkable population growth despite their heavy losses in slave raids and repeated military retaliation is evidence of the fact that they succeeded in adapting themselves to changing circumstances and in absorbing various non-Shako speaking groups into their society. They also continuously re-adjusted their strategy as survival strategy which is conditioned in various historical formations and processes. These processes received their `meaning' from such culturally mediated groupings. Moreover, the case of Shako shows that the traditional cultural ideology stemming from the earlier days is maintained in the process of adaptation to new situations. Their cultural ideology is in the form of conditioning new social alignments in the regional `ethno-system'. This was possible because of the socio-cultural definition and workings of their kin-ordered mode of production, which proved to have political-economic advantage in times of crisis.

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