

# 1 Politics of Resistance among Shako during Imperial Ethiopia: 2 Historical Perspective

3 Bisrat Lema Bergene<sup>1</sup>

4 <sup>1</sup> Wolaita Sodo University

5 *Received: 14 December 2016 Accepted: 1 January 2017 Published: 15 January 2017*

## 6 **Abstract**

7 Modern Ethiopia, with its borders and its dozens of nations, nationalities and peoples, came  
8 into being as a result of relentless campaigns of conquest which was accomplished by the  
9 Abyssinian state and its military might under Menelik by the late 19th century. The  
10 subjugation of Shako peoples was part and parcel of this process. By the conquest dozens of  
11 nations, nationalities and peoples (including Shako) were subdued to the Amhara hegemony.  
12 The historical experience of cultural and political domination, economic exploitation and  
13 social discrimination under the Amhara dominated Ethiopian empire obviously caused the  
14 Shako people to start resistance. Adopting the historical method of narrative and analysis,  
15 and interrogating available primary and secondary sources on the subject, this study argue  
16 that the patterns and natures of both domination/power and resistance changes in historical  
17 time and space as they are not mutually exclusive. The past offer us understanding in terms  
18 of contemporary new phenomenon which is still in its initial stage, and thus contributing in  
19 increasing the historical awareness, comprehend contemporary problems and impacts thereof.  
20

21 *Index terms*— imperial ethiopia, domination, politics of resistance, historical perspective, shako people.

## 22 **1 INTRODUCTION**

23 Ethiopia had unique position among African nations, both by successfully defending European colonialism and  
24 participating in scramble for Africa. Although the so called Abyssinia, with its Christian state on the northern  
25 plateau, claimed to have a long and continual history of many centuries, modern Ethiopia which is three or four  
26 times bigger than traditional Abyssinia with its borders and its tens of nations, nationalities and peoples, came  
27 into being as a result of brutal military conquest in the late 19th century ??Hamesso and et.al, 1997;Hamesso,  
28 2001). The philosophy behind the actual welding together of different peoples and eventual unequal yoking  
29 of same into an administrative framework from which modern Ethiopia emerged has markedly been political  
30 and economic; with motives of primarily empire-building (imperial ambition for expanded territory and power  
31 consolidation) and wealth acquisition (resource exploitation).

32 It is important to note that the Abyssinian conquest was coincided and encouraged by the Europeans'  
33 scramble for Africa in 1880s; the Abyssinian empire building project was started and completed by king Minilik  
34 of Shawa, the later emperor Minilik II of Ethiopia. Tibebu even considers Minilik II as "the only black  
35 African leader who effectively participated in the scramble for Africa" (Tibebu, 1995). Several other writers  
36 also (Jalata, 2005;Habteselassie, 1980;Markakis, 1974) view the process as colonial conquest. Triulzi (1983)  
37 stated that "Ethiopia is cited as a de facto colonial power and that colonial violence was used in incorporating  
38 adjacent territories and colonizing its peoples in spite of some obvious but not crucial differences with European  
39 Colonialism". Moreover, Habteselassie (1980) invoked connotation used by the imperial regime itself in using terms  
40 that relate to colonization and wrote: "The Southern region was referred up to the last days of Emperor Haile  
41 Selassie as yekignhager (conquered or colonized territory). Moreover, Addis Hiwet (1975) describes the whole  
42 socio-economic structures of post-conquest Ethiopia by using the term military-feudal colonialism. Hence, the  
43

## 1 INTRODUCTION

---

44 march of the traditional highland Christian kingdom of Ethiopia towards the South, Southeast and Southwest  
45 (which includes my study area, Shako) is termed as colonialism. For the purpose of this study, the terms  
46 colonialism and conquest are simultaneously employed. By the conquest, the dozens of nations, nationalities and  
47 peoples were subdued to the Amhara hegemony and were left marginal to the political, social, economic and  
48 cultural privileges.

49 The subjugated peoples were not however simply passive objects of Abssynian conquest and Amhara  
50 domination. There was resistance but depending on the definition of power, different types of activities will  
51 count as resistance. Moreover, the patterns and natures of both domination and resistance changes in historical  
52 time and space. However, within resistance studies across the globe (Vinthagen & Lilja, 2007) there exists a  
53 plurality of concepts and definitions of resistance. On the other hand, the documentation and scholarly analysis  
54 of imperial policies watershed years of conquest and consolidation of Abssynian rule has not been properly done;  
55 they do not indicate the response of subject people like Shako as they only focus on the analysis of power structure.  
56 A few of the resistance studies conducted in Ethiopia focus on a few case studies and some forms contain much  
57 by way of explanations behind motives. Consequently, misconceptions of resistance prevail; often connecting  
58 resistance to reactionary ideologies, unusual and imperial (Abssynian) conquest and Amhara domination after  
59 1898. This imperial conquest under Amhara hegemony and the local Shako resistance were of vital historical  
60 importance for the following reasons. First, it represented one of the most bitter struggles against domination  
61 in the Horn of Africa. The human and material losses it provoked was very huge. It even led to atrocities  
62 and mutilations which none of the contemporary European colonial powers practiced in the Horn of Africa.  
63 Second, from historical point of view, this study makes a very comprehensive insider and outsider observation  
64 from conflicts perspective, which helps to well understand contemporary historicalpolitical dynamics and conflict  
65 generating experiences and tendencies in Shako region and in the greater Horn of Africa today. Thus it derives  
66 from a concern with the contemporary situation in Horn of Africa. It delves into the past only because otherwise  
67 it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the near  
68 future. Third, Shako resistance has turned out to be instructive in the sense that when any group of people  
69 face domination, they did not remain silent rather engage in various types of resistance, which may be open  
70 confrontation or the hidden one.

71 Fourth, the sacrifice of thousands of fighters and martyrs in defence of their dignity and freedom seems to  
72 have become a rallying point, a symbol of ancestral struggle against domination and a source of inspiration in  
73 the quest for the political identity of the Shako nation. Last, but not least, attempting to write at least some  
74 aspect of the historical experience of one of politically submerged and colonized peoples seems to have a challenge  
75 (and one way of correction) to the mainstream position of Ethiopia historiography, which is established on the  
76 premise of ignoring the history and culture of the oppressed and peripheral peoples such as the Shako. It will  
77 also provide a case-study from which resistance studies may fruitfully build to develop valuable concepts, insights  
78 and theories for understanding contemporary conflicts. This is because it provides or suggests the distinguishing  
79 elements of resistance while maintaining its plurality of forms in different contexts (by initiating a list of resistance  
80 types) through time and space. "Date here here" By outlining further the historical process and context itself  
81 in this section, this research paper considers the dimensions of economic, social and political domination from  
82 an external as well as internal point of view, emphasizing the resistance of the Shako with the larger Abyssinian  
83 social and political system.

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

98 The imperial soldiers that were sent for the conquest of Shakoland and people were commanded by Tessema  
99 Nadew. Tessema's expeditionary force started its campaign from a place called Gore that is near Sheka (Abbink,  
100 2000;1996). Before launching the campaign Tessema sent a message to the Shako demanding their peaceful  
101 submission without giving any room for negotiation; it was rather presented as an order directed by the Emperor.  
102 At the time of conquest there was no centrally organized political authority in Shako but rather divided into  
103 several chieftaincies. As a result, the Shako failed to cooperate against the incorporation, they failed even to  
104 agree on how to respond to the request of Tessema demanding their submission. Owing to this, some clan leaders  
105 proposed to submit peacefully while others rejected the request and waged a resistance. When Tessema's soldiers  
106 intruded into Shako, the clan that was on the head way of Tessema's army accepted his rule realizing that it was

---

107 their clan who would become the first victim of the invasion whereas others like Arshyab and Tuzyab refused and  
108 individually tried to defend themselves. However, because of the military superiority of the expeditionary force,  
109 Tessema was able to defeat the resistance and established his first garrison at Silale, which is said to have been  
110 the first garrison town in Shako. But the Shako did not fully accept alien rule and they were preparing to oust  
111 it.

112 **2 II.**

113 THE CONQUEST OF SHAKO: ASPECTS OF DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE, 1898-1941 After the  
114 conquest in 1898, the Shako area was given to Ras Tessema Nadew's follower Dejazmach Mulugeta. Shortly  
115 following the establishment of garrison towns in the Shako territories, every clan of the indigenous communities  
116 was required to provide annual tributes of two large oxen and a pot of honey and grain. This form of tribute was  
117 shortly discontinued, and the neftegna/melkegna-gabbar system was simultaneously imposed on the conquered  
118 people with far reaching consequences lasting over a longer duration (Abbink, 2000). In short, the new rulers  
119 introduced an alien social and economic relationship expressed in neftegna/melkegna-gabbar system, which turned  
120 the indigenous people into tenants. The system was explained not only in terms of confiscation of land belonging  
121 to the indigenous society (Markakis, 1974) but also the settlers partitioned the local people and made them render  
122 corvée services by working on the farms and in the households of the settlers. Moreover, the system aimed at  
123 imposing the supremacy of the settlers over the Shako by virtually destroying their culture and traditional  
124 institutions altogether. The local elders state that the economic and political oppression was more harsh and  
125 unbearable than the military measures taken during the conquest. The predatory nature of the newly established  
126 socio-political order is evident not only from the forced restructuring of the dayto-day socio-economic relations of  
127 the indigenous groups in the area, which destroyed the fibber of their society, but also from the common practice  
128 of wholesale pillaging of the natural and human resources of the area whenever a governor departed.

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

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

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

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

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

### 169 3 ( D )

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

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

### 185 4 III. Patterns In Imperial Rule And Shako

186 Resistance, 1941-1974

### 187 5 a) Dimension of Domination

188 As explained in forgoing sections, the adverse impact of the Neftegna-gabbar system was considerable and highly  
189 pronounced on the economic, socio-cultural and political life of Shako society. The conquest and the attendant  
190 entrenchment of alien rule resulted in a radical transformation of the socioeconomic structure and political life  
191 of the people. Moreover, until the 1975 revolution that abolished the neftegna-gabbar system, the cash economy  
192 that became so important after the conquest was entirely controlled and monopolized by settler groups in the  
193 main rather than the local population ??Markakis, 1975). However, some of the Shako groups who wished to  
194 hold power later opted to assimilate and integrate to urban settlers by changing their names (accepting change  
195 of Shako name to Amharic) and professing Orthodox Christianity as their religious creed (Gudina, 2003). In  
196 this regard, Amharic became the lingua franca, state-backed Orthodox Christianity became the only legitimate  
197 religion in the empire, and all forms of Amhara culture were imposed on the subjected peoples of the south as the  
198 only legitimate and 'civilized culture' (Tibebu, 1995). During this time, one has to be "Amharized" to get some  
199 privileges. John Markakis (1994) argues that "in imperial Ethiopia for instance, it was easier for a non-Christian,  
200 who also did not speak Amharigna, to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the charmed circle of power  
201 and privilege" Such trends resulting from subjugation of the Shako continued up until the revolution. Indeed,  
202 with the policy of reinvigorated centralization drive and consolidation of state-machineries, the oppression and  
203 domination of subject people increased in magnitude and dimension in post -1941 imperial.

204 Volume XVII Issue I Version I Politics of Resistance Among Shako During Imperial Ethiopia: Historical  
205 Perspective

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

---

## 227 6 b) Resistance Against the Neftegnas and Restoration of 228 Imperial Rule

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

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

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

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

## 275 7 ( D )

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

285 Sheko people led by Shiferaw Mengesha, Mura Urgu and others opened fire on the garrisoned government  
286 soldiers. Although there were casualties on both sides, the number of people died on the side of local people of  
287 Sheko was great; the archival material mention that about 10 men died and injured from the side of government

## 8 C) INDIVIDUALS WITH COURAGE: DIKKO OF GURAFARDA AND HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE RESISTANCE

288 force, whereas 80 people died and 130 were surrendered from the local people (IES/WMTMC: Folder No., 2177,  
289 File No., 5548; Folder No., 2181, File No., 2881). But it is difficult to accept this figure as face value. In spite  
290 of the defeat, the resistance continued in this front, mainly under the leadership of Mura Urgu, who reorganized  
291 the local people to continue the struggle.

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).

<sup>312</sup> 8 c) Individuals with courage: Dikko of Gurafarda and His  
<sup>313</sup> Contribution in the Resistance

314 Volume XVII Issue I Version I One Battalion force that was sent to Gurtafarda has been garrisoned in the camp  
315 at Birhan which was built by the Italians. After four days stay of the government forces at the camp, the local  
316 people led by Diko, one of the Shako chiefs at Gurafarda, suddenly attacked the soldiers. After fighting for four  
317 days the government soldiers were defeated and began to retreat back. The Shako fighters take the offensive and  
318 followed the government soldiers until they were totally driven out of Shakoland; after expulsion from Shakoland,  
319 the government soldiers stationed at Yeki. And the fighters of Shako of Gurafarda marched to the area around  
320 Boqo River and stationed there. Unable to crush the resistance, Fitawrari Alemayehu requested Mesfin Sileshi  
321 for additional force. Accordingly, additional government forces arrived on May 1942. After consolidating his  
322 former army with the newly arrived one, Alemayehu started to invade the Shakoland from all directions. After  
323 fighting the combined forces of Alemayehu for about nine days, Shako people were heavily defeated; the final  
324 and decisive battle took place at Boqo on June 26, 1942. Alemayehu expressed his victory to Ras Mesfin Sileshi  
325 through the letter written on July 14, 1942 which reads as, "??? ?á???" 19 ?? ??? ???????? ??? ??? . . . ??  
326 ??? ?? ??? ?????? ??????á???" ???????? ???????? ??????", "After fighting until June 19 [June 26], all balabats of  
327 Shako announced their submission and confirmed their loyalty" (Folder No., 2181, File No., 2881). Other sources  
328 however show that all balabats were not submitted and stopped the resistance.

329 As mentioned above, some of the Shako groups continued to make a fierce and open resistance even after  
330 the resistance of larger Shako groups have been crushed by government force. A man behind that resistance  
331 was one of the Shako chiefs at Gurafarda whose name is Qegnatzmach Dikko. As was discussed in the preceding  
332 section, he resisted the restoration of the imperial government and fought the imperial force together with other  
333 Shako groups. Even he was much more active in resistance and politics than his contemporaries, providing  
334 ideological and organizational base for resistance. For example, Fitawrari Alemayehu repeatedly sent him a  
335 letter requesting a peaceful submission but Qegnatzmach Dikko refused to do so. Dikko even sent a message  
336 expressing his conviction. One of the letters written on February 25, 1942 explains the response of Qegnatzmach  
337 Dikko as, "???? ???? . . . ??? ?????? ??? ?????????? ??? ?????? ??????????", "If the country [the Shakoland and its  
338 people] will be allowed to till its own land and consume what it produced, we will accept it [the restoration of the  
339 imperial regime]; otherwise we prefer war" (IES/WMTMC: Folder No., 2177, File No., 5548; Folder No., 2181,  
340 File No., 2881). This indicates that Dikko's intention was to resist the restoration of the imperial regime if this  
341 means the restoration of the pre-Following the refusal of Dikko to submit peacefully, despite the repeated request,  
342 Fitawrari Alemayehu (as mentioned earlier) sent one battalion force under the leadership of shamble Temesgen  
343 to Guraferda. The force was stationed at the camp of Birhane which was built by the Italians. Soon, the war  
344 broke out between Dikko's force and that of the government. The war was initiated by Dikko himself. After  
345 four days confrontation at the battle of Birhane, the government force was defeated by Dikko's force. Following  
346 the defeat, the government force retreated back and Dikko's force followed them until they fled to Yeki. After  
347 the battle of Birhane, Dikko's force marched to Boqqa River that border Shakoland and that of the Bench, and  
348 garrisoned there preparing to attack the government force when it crosses the river. Alarmed by this, Dejazmach

349 Mesfin Sileshi sent additional Battalion force from Gore as per the request of Fitawrari Alemayehu. Dikko's  
350 force faced a huge army at the battle of Boqo in which his force (together with other groups) defeated by the  
351 government force. After the decisive battle of Boqo, Dikko fled to Bero, located in Maji area which is near to  
352 Sudanese border.

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

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

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

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

388 For instance, opposition reached to the climax in the early 1970s. During this period, the students took a  
389 forefront in the opposition movement. The main leader 1935 period oppressive system that denied the local  
390 people the right to hold their ancestral land, in addition to denying their political and cultural identity.

391 When Fitawrari Alemayehu requested for submission of weapons, Qegnatzmach Dikko responded as follow:  
392 "?á???? ???? ???? ????? ?? ??? ????? ?????? ????? ??????", "Since it was England [Britain] who provided  
393 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  
394 letter of order to me." This vividly indicates ideological and organizational degree of Dikko and his soldiers. He  
395 has got several rifles and ammunitions from Britain just like Alemayehu's soldiers so that he consider himself and  
396 his fellowmen as equals than inferior to the former. Thus, he has no intention of submitting peacefully except by  
397 war.

398 d) The Continuities and Discontinuities in the Resistance of the movement among Shako was Dejene Wotango.  
399 They used several mechanisms but the major one was through making petition to central authorities, expressing  
400 the grievance of the local people. Of which, the petition letter that they wrote to Lij Endalikachew Mekonen,  
401 the prime minister of Imperial Ethiopia, was the major one (MoCT/ NALA: Folder No., 299, File No., ?-7). In  
402 this letter, they expressed their dismay with the condition as, "Although we expected a significant change to  
403 their people after the reorganization of the government [with the appointment of Lij Endalkachew and his new  
404 cabinet], nothing is so far changed". And they longed for radical reform in the region. Students blamed the  
405 whole system and officials of the administration in particular. Although they blamed all government officials of  
406 the administration, including the governor, they boldly blamed the then governor of Sheko district, Girazmach  
407 Ayalew Yirsaw for he was bogged down in corruption, bribery, and was disrepect of the local people including  
408 elders. Nevertheless, such petitions bore no result and things continued without change until the downfall of the  
409 regime in 1974. Of course, the imperial regime introduced several reforms, pretending to solve the problem, by  
410 enacting administrative, legal and economic regulations through various Decrees in post-1941 periods. One of  
411 the Decrees dealt with the reorganization of administrative territories and establishment of a tightly structured

## 8 C) INDIVIDUALS WITH COURAGE: DIKKO OF GURAFARDA AND HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE RESISTANCE

---

412 and formal administrative system that is intended to unify the country and centralize power under the emperor.  
413 Nevertheless, the mechanism that sought to implement the Decree was strengthening the centralization drive  
414 mediated by the doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Church. It was experienced by Shako people as domination  
415 from the centre and subjugation under its local representatives and neftegnas (drawn from Amhara ethnic group)  
416 who wielded almost absolute power over the local people. The practice of neftegnagabbar rule was also persisted  
417 unabated until 1974. Thus the imperial monarchy developed into an absolutist state with a power structure based  
418 on feudalism and ethnicity. By the same token, the resistance of the local people of Shako continued, changing  
419 in nature and patterns, up until the revolution, in which the Shako people actively participated hoping to regain  
420 their land and associated rights as well as to revitalize their cultural and political identity.

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

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

436 The above forms of resistance "corresponds to different forms of domination (material, status and ideological),  
437 which in return resulting in various features of resistance". Shako's resistance take the first form as public declared  
438 resistance (through open revolts in both pre and post 1941 period, and also through petitions, predominant after  
439 the late 1940s) against material domination by neftegna; assertion of worth or desecration of status symbols  
440 against status domination by neftegna; or, counter-ideologies against ideological domination as the case of 1941-  
441 1943 indicate. And, the second form of resistance occur simultaneously as "everyday resistance" (e.g. stealing the  
442 property of dominant, desertion of landlords by tenants, evasion like withdrawal from destructive power relations  
443 (e.g. by escape to other countries or areas) and thus refusing to take part in the system).

444 Shako's resistance also vary depending on social space; sometimes occurring in an established and recognized  
445 public arena, in an informal and emergent political space (e.g. in a neighbourhood) as the Diko's action after  
446 1943 from Bero indicated, making that space a space of political contest. And Shako's resistance was also varied  
447 according to what social category is resisting/resisted and the relative size and power of contending groups (for  
448 example in time of conquest a clan under Arshyab and Tuzyab resisted while others were submitted). Shako's  
449 resistance also vary in terms of what historical context resistance is played out and what values or ideologies  
450 that guides the resistance (e.g. in feudal state until 1930; autocratic state ; authoritarian colonial state ??1937)  
451 ??1938) ??1939) ??1940) ??1941) and absolutist state .

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

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

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

470 The various strategies of resistance by Shako was a response to their articulation with the expanding frontier of  
471 the Abyssinian empire. As a result of this process, the traditional economic and cultural patterns of Shako society  
472 were reshaped. The new pattern of social reproduction tied them increasingly to wider political and economic  
473 processes in the region. Their remarkable population growth despite their heavy losses in slave raids and repeated  
474 military retaliation is evidence of the fact that they succeeded in adapting themselves to changing circumstances

---

475 and in absorbing various non-Shako speaking groups into their society. They also continuously re-adjusted their  
476 strategy as survival strategy which is conditioned in various historical formations and processes. These processes  
477 received their 'meaning' from such culturally mediated groupings. Moreover, the case of Shako shows that the  
478 traditional cultural ideology stemming from the earlier days is maintained in the process of adaptation to new  
479 situations. Their cultural ideology is in the form of conditioning new social alignments in the regional 'ethno-  
480 system'. This was possible because of the socio-cultural definition and workings of their kinordered mode of  
481 production, which proved to have political-economic advantage in times of crisis.<sup>1 2 3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Year 2017 © 2017 Global Journals Inc. (US)Politics of Resistance Among Shako During Imperial Ethiopia: Historical Perspective

<sup>2</sup>Year 2017 © 2017 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>3</sup>Politics of Resistance Among Shako During Imperial Ethiopia: Historical Perspective

**8 C) INDIVIDUALS WITH COURAGE: DIKKO OF GURAFARDA AND HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE RESISTANCE**

---

---

482 [Triulzi ()] 'Competing Views of National Identity in Ethiopia'. Alessandro Triulzi . *Nationalism & Self-  
483 Determination in the Horn of Africa*, I M Lewis (ed.) (London) 1983. Ithaca Press.

484 [Markakis ()] *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, John Markakis . 1974. Oxford: Calerendon Press.

485 [Gudina ()] *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy*, Merera Gudina . 2003.  
486 1960-2000. Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing House.

487 [Hamesso ()] *Ethiopia: Conquest and the Quest for Freedom and Democracy*, Seyoum Hamesso . 1997. London:  
488 TSC Publication.

489 [Hiwot ()] 'Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution'. Addis Hiwot . *Review of African Economy Occasional  
490 Publication* 1975. (1) .

491 [Markakis ()] 'Ethnic Conflict and the State in the Horn of Africa'. John Markakis . *Ethnicity and Conflict in  
492 the Horn of Africa*, Markakis Fukui (ed.) (London) 1994. James Currey.

493 [Hamesso ()] Seyoum Hamesso . *Ethnicity in Africa: Towards a Positive Approach*, (NewYork) 2001. New York  
494 University Press.

495 [Jalata ()] *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethno-national Conflict*, Asafa Jalata . 2005. Lawrenceville,  
496 NJ: The Red Sea Press. p. .

497 [Vinthagen et al. ()] *Resistance Studies*, Vinthagen , & Stellan , Mona Lilja . 2007. Glasgow. (paper presented  
498 at ESA Conference)

499 [Habteselassie ()] 'The Dergue's Dilemma: The Legacies of a Feudal Empire'. Bereket Habteselassie . *Monthly  
500 Review* 1980. (3) p. 32.

501 [Abbink ()] 'The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987: Transformation from An Aristocratic to a Totalitarian  
502 Autocracy'. Jon Abbink . *Northeast African Studies* 1996. 3 (1) p. .

503 [Tibebu ()] *The Making of Modern Ethiopia (1896-1974)*, Teshale Tibebu . 1995. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea  
504 Press.

505 [Garretson ()] 'Vicious Cycles: Ivory, Slaves and Arms on the New Maji Frontier'. Peter P Garretson . *The  
506 Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology*, Donald Donham, Wendy  
507 James (ed.) (Cambridge) 1986. Cambridge University Press.

508 [Abbink ()] 'Violence and the Crisis of Conciliation: Suri, Dizi, and the State in South-West Ethiopia'. Jon  
509 Abbink . *Africa* 2000. 70 (4) p. .