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The Resistance Movement in Agaw Mider against Italian Military Occupation, 1935-1941

Ayenew Mammo Seyoum

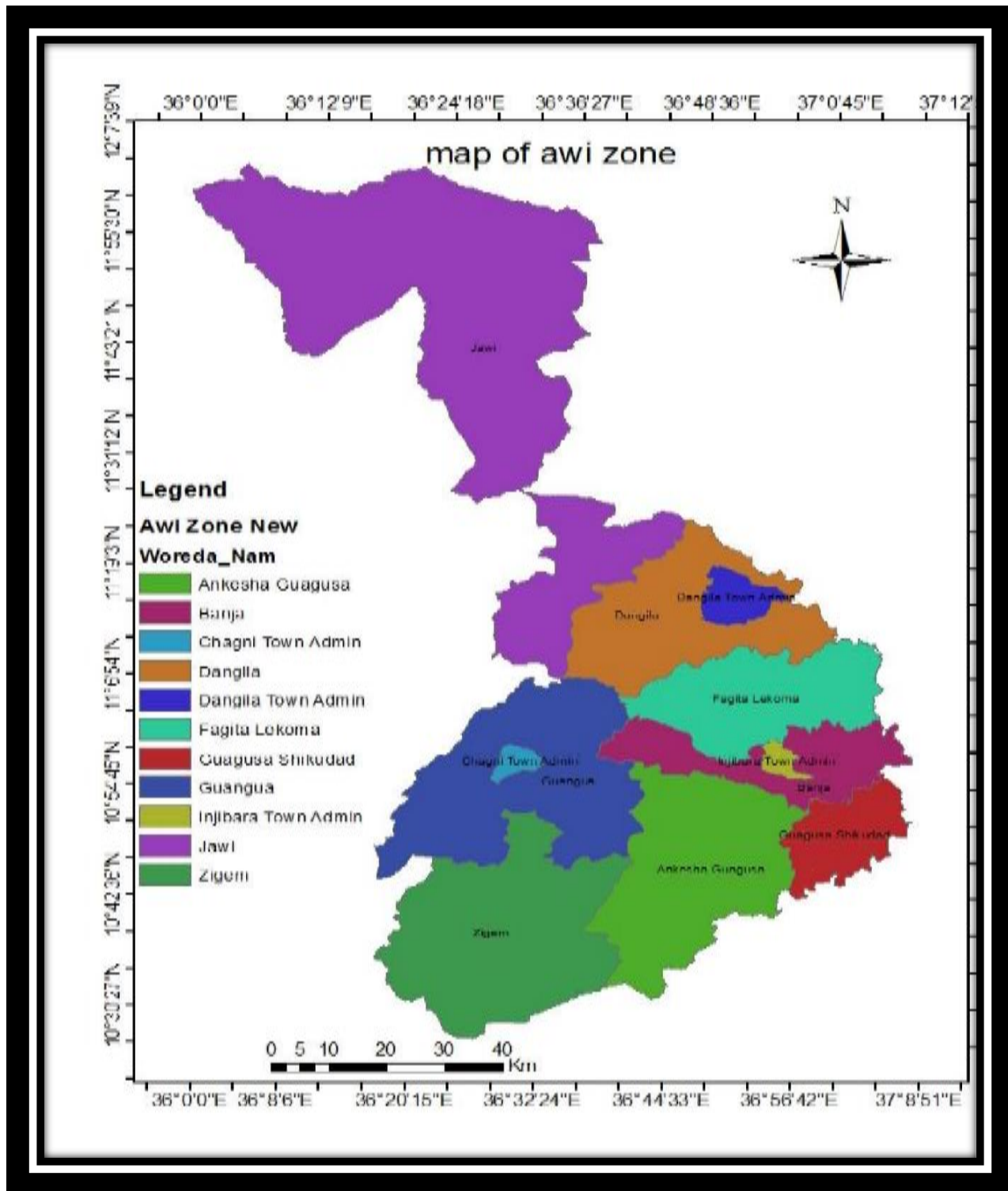
Department of History and Heritage Management, College of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Debre Markos University, Debre Markos, Ethiopia

Corresponding Author's Email: ayenew.mammo@dmu.edu.et or ayenewmammoth@gmail.com

Abstract

For the second time in forty years, a European power, Italy, invaded Ethiopia in 1935. Until this time, Ethiopia was a traditional polity with a predominantly feudal socio-political system, while Italy was an industrialized nation under the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. The invasion was conducted with the most advanced military organization and hardware-vast killing machine-against a spirited people of an old nation. In defiance of the occupation that ensued, the Ethiopians were engaged for five years in a multi-dimensional 'patriotic resistance' to drive the invaders out of their country. Indeed, after defeating all the Rases in the northern front, Italians advanced towards the central part of the country. The invaders utterly routed the Ethiopian force and the enemy continued to march southwards, i.e., to Shire and then to Gojjam. Thus, despite Ethiopia's military collapse in 1935-6, the patriotic resistance continued throughout the occupation. One of those who attacked the Italian invading force since 1936 was the Agaw Midir people. The major purpose of this paper is, therefore, to shed light on the role of the people of Agaw Midir in the resistance movement. The study is mainly based on primary sources including oral informants, and archival materials. In addition secondary sources, especially PhD Dissertations, MA theses, periodicals and magazines that deal with the patriotic movements were consulted. For archives, I have used Debre Markos University Archive Centre, Addis Ababa National Archives and Library Agency, and Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University. Indeed, gathering oral information from knowledgeable individuals through interviews was another important source data for the research. The interview was effectively addressed by qualitative approach. In the interview the age and the ability to remember the past events and the level of participation in the local affairs were given emphasis for the selection of informants. The data which I collected from oral sources were crosschecked with archival and secondary sources before interpretation. Taking into consideration the nature of the study, the researchers chose a qualitative approach.

Keywords: War, Resistance, Agaw Midir, Italians, patriots



Map of Agaw Midir, presently Awi Zone; Source; From Zonal Administration office

1. Introduction

The Italian Incursion and Occupation of Ethiopia: An Overview

The rise of Italy as colonial power in the Horn of Africa posed a serious political threat to the independence of Ethiopia by the later part of the nineteenth century. The Italian colonial ambition over Ethiopia first became evident after its occupation of Massawa in 1885. However, the Italian colonial aspirations were curtailed, though not ended, by the Ethiopian victory at Adwa in 1896.¹ Italian colonial interest in Ethiopia persisted, exemplified by the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 and continuing subversive activities. However, Italy's ambition of colonialism over Ethiopia revived with the seizure of power by Benito Mussolini in 1922. The fascist dictator sought to avenge the victory of Adwa as well as solve the domestic crisis in Italy by invading Ethiopia, which eventually occurred in 1935.² The invasion was carefully planned and carried out with the help of military hardware, and poisoned gas. The Italians deployed European standard armaments such as tanks, artillery, and fighter planes as well as poisoned gas, and launched the invasion from Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.³

The Italian ambition to colonize Ethiopia was reinforced by its desire to avenge its defeat at Dogali and later at Adwa.⁴ In spite of international outrage against this action; the Italians consolidated their hold in Ethiopia, the process that begins with the crossing of Mereb River in October 1935 and occupation of the capital Addis Ababa in early May 1936. In early June 1936, Rome promulgated a constitution that adjoined Ethiopia with its colonies of Eritrea and Italian - Somaliland.⁵

On the other hand, the Ethiopians were mostly equipped with traditional weapons. They had no well-defined military plans and/ or a clear chain of military command. The absence of modern military training and a well-designed military strategy, lack of modern communication and poor logistics services all contributed to military defeat.

However, from this period onwards the Italians faced new forms of resistance from locally-based resistance groups throughout the country. A series of guerrilla attacks flared against the Italian rule which limited their occupation to urban areas. The insurgents became increasingly motivated to fight Italian rule particularly after the Graziani Massacre of February 1937.⁶

One of the strongest guerrilla formations was in Gojjam, including Agaw Midir. Due to the roughness of the terrain and non-existence of roads, Italian forces were rarely

¹Raymond Jonas, *The battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire*. London: the Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 2011. pp.64.

²Aregawi Berhe, " Revisiting Resistance in Italian Occupied Ethiopia: The Patriots Movement (1936-1941) and the Redefinition of Post War Ethiopia." 2003, p.98.

³Gashaw Ayferam, Ametsegna Washa (The cave of Zeret), the cave of the last battle of the Italo-Ethiopian war; Guerrilla Fighting against Fascism and Colonialism during the Second Italo- Ethiopian War:(International Journal of Political Science and Development,2015),pp.119-128

⁴Aregawi Berhe, *Spirit VS.War- Machine: A patriotic resistance to Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941)*, 2015, p.3.

⁵Saheed Adejumobi, *The History of Ethiopia* (London: Greenwood press, 2007), p.77.

⁶Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), P. 145.

moved out from Gondar, to Agaw Midir. With the building of new roads into these regions, the Italians began to implement their policy of confiscation of arms and land for the benefit of the Italian colonists. Rebellion in these regions retained its local character.

Statement of the Problem

During the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, resistance was conducted all over the country. The Agaw Midir patriots as a part of Gojjam were not exceptional in this regard. As other parts of Ethiopians, the patriots of Agaw Midir were unwilling to be under the Italian invaders. Rather, they went to the forest and began organizing themselves. Regarding the Agaw Midir people, there are several written materials. However, most of them are focused and dealing with their culture as well as traditional social organizations and resource management. Regarding the resistance movement of the Agaw Midir people, the scanty published and unpublished sources are fragmentary, scrappy and incomplete. Identifying this point at the local level will be a contribution to the study of Ethiopia's resistance movement at the national level because historians have not so far succeeded in establishing firmly and in a definitive manner the time when the Agaw Midir people started and completed fighting the Italian invaders. Moreover, the paper will look at the role of women, the subsequent fundamental problems that the patriots suffered and other unleashed issues. In general, this paper will properly treat the history of the resistance movement of the Agaw Midir people against the Italian invaders.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to appraise the resistance movement of the Agaw Midir people during the 1936-1941 Italian occupation. The study has also the following specific objectives. It is intended to:

- a) bring out the role of patriots against the collaborators.
- b) investigate the role of women in fighting the invaders,
- c) identify the influence of the *bandas* on the resistance movement
- d) examine the challenges of the Resistance Movement and the problems that the patriots suffered from.

Materials and Methods

This research was undertaken by employing a historical research design based on qualitative method. In the course of the study, both primary and secondary materials were utilized. Moreover, archival documents were collected from Debre Markos University Archival Centre, National Archival and Library Agency, and Institute of Ethiopian Studies. Parallel to this, I went on field work to collect oral data and memories. I found a large number of people of both sexes in rural and urban areas whose age bracket ranges from the middle aged to the octogenarians. The elders who are in their 80s and 90s have lived through the entire period I am investigating. I will give special attention to life stories because informants generally are good at recalling the process through which they passed in their lives. The age and the ability to remember the past events and the level of participation in the local affairs were given

emphasis for the selection of informants. The data which I collected from oral sources were cross-checked with archival and secondary sources before interpretation.

2. The Course of the Italian Occupation of Agaw Midir

An Italian force led by General Achille Starace departing from Asmara moved through Tasanay and Om-Hagar occupied the historic city of Gondar on 1 April 1936.⁷ The Fascist force led by General Achille Strace captured Bahir Dar on 24 April, 1936.⁸ Soon the enemy force extended its occupation to other parts of Gojjam in genera and Agaw Midir in particular. The occupation force established garrisons in small towns found all along the way from Bahir Dar to Debre Markos. These towns were: Meshenti, Dangla, Injibara, Bure, Mankusa, Jigga, Dembecha and Amanuel.⁹ During the first year of occupation, the patriots of Agaw Midir did not receive the Italians positively. Rather, they went to the forest and began organizing themselves. The preparation for war and agitation of the people to win them over to their side took a year. On the other hand, the Fascist forces hunted the insurgents who refused to submit. The enemy force began burning their houses and looting their property with the cooperation of *bandas*

(collaborators).¹⁰ Beginning from September 1936, the Fascist forces tried hard to disarm the people of Agaw Midir. The people, however, refused to hand over their arms to the enemy and many fled to the bush. This further strengthened the preparation of the patriots for war.¹¹ In 1937 the Fascist forces intensified their atrocities against patriots and people being suspected of disloyalty to the Italians particularly after the Grazziani Massacre in February the same year.¹² During this time in Agaw Midir, known local chiefs were hunted by fascist forces through the help of collaborators. For instance, from Azena sub district, a leading local chief and the veteran of Shire and Mychew named *Fitawrawi AyeleNure* together with his two sons; *Grazmach Zewdie* and *Grazmach Berihun* were captured by the fascist forces. The third son, *Admasu Ayele* (later *Fitawrari*) escaped capture. A known local chief named *Negadiras Bewuket* from Gimjabet and another local chief named *Aleminch Tessema* from Kessa were also hunted and captured.

All they were beheaded. Such cruel measures further intensified the resentment of the local population towards the occupation forces. The Italians were repeating measures they had used to quell the insurgency in Libya in the 1920s. The Italian repression was aided by the local collaborator namely *Siyum Teku* from

⁷Melkamu, p. 29.

⁸Ayenew Mammo, "The Administrative History of the Awi to 1974." MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2007, p. 29.

⁹A.J Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: A History of Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-1936* (New York :The Dial Press Inc.,1968),p.262

¹⁰Seltene Seyoum, "A History of Patriotic Resistance in Gojjam, 1936-1941"(Ph.D. Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, 1999), p. 61.

¹¹Ayenew Fenta, "A History of AnkashaWarada, Western Gojjam, 1935—1991" (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, June 2010), p.27.

¹²Informant: MossieAmbaw.

Ankesha district.¹³In fact, the Agaw Midir collaborators had perpetrated cruel acts on the patriots', which in turn led to the failure of the patriots to attain victory. One of these collaborators who did this dreadful disaster was Siyum Teku from Ankesha. He was agitating the peasants not to support the patriots. Instead, he initiated them to support the Italians in showing roads, in feeding Italians, and in fetching water for the Italians. Agaw Midir, Dangla and Injibara were the major strong holds of the Italians. The Italians founded the garrison centers in order to extend their rule to rural areas, but this was mostly unsuccessful. They thus launched unconditional attacks towards, Azena, Agaw Gimjabet, Konzena, and Lay Zigem areas.¹⁴Soon, the Italians decided to use the palace of Hamdan Abu Shok in Guba as their seat that helped them to recruit the colonial troops from the Gumuz society of Metekel. The victims of the slavery policy of *Fitawrari Zeleqe Lique* were the Gumuz people who were living in the west part of Agaw Midir. For instance, the Gumuz welcomed the Italians to open a camp in Guba and hence, they became the leading collaborators.

The Italians incorporated these Gumuz collaborators into military sectors and constituted them under colonial troops. The Gumuz of Metekel, who were frequently taxed and enslaved by the Awi appointees considered the Italians as banners of slave

raid.¹⁵ This clearly shows that the Italians were able to occupy the whole area of Agaw Midir and even able to get their supporters from the area as their policy of persuading the local people. The Italians made Dangla their administrative center of Agaw Midir, Achefer and Mecha. They heavily fortified and protected it with a big arsenal and garrison. The Italians also began to give traditional titles to loyal local chiefs and appointed them as *Meslene* in the district. They shifted the political center of Agaw Midir from Injibara to Dangla in order to monitor closely the day-to-day activities in the region.¹⁶

Having established their base at Dangla and Injibara, the Italians used different systems to get local support. To these effects, they provided the peasants with false hopes and personal incentives such as free distribution of sugar and *abujedid* (cloth). This was the strategy that they used to get local support.¹⁷This was worked around the sub-district known as Fafa and its environs. In addition, they tried to appoint their representatives as head of the region, who were later, became collaborators. In some rural areas of Agaw Midir, the Italians established entire collaborator (collaborators) camps, who were assigned to gather information about the day-to-day patriotic resistance and attract disadvantageous local chiefs and society to join the Italian rule.¹⁸Having established their base at Dangla and Injibara, the Italians

¹³Ghiat, Ben Ruth and Mia Fuller (eds), *Italian Colonialism*(New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd,2005), p.37

¹⁴Informants: HamisaAlekaHayileKassa, Mossie, Kebede and Mulat.

¹⁵Kebede Tessema, *Ye-TakikMastawesha* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1947 E.C), pp.253.

¹⁶Alemayehu, pp.35-47.

¹⁷Melkamu,p.29.

¹⁸Ayenew Mammo, p. 29

used different systems to get local support. To these effects, they provided the peasants with false hopes and personal incentives such as free distribution of sugar and *abujedid* (cloth). This was the strategy that they used to get local support. In addition; they tried to appoint their representatives who were later became *bandas* (collaborators). In some rural areas of Agaw Midir, the Italians established the *banda* (collaborators) camps, who were assigned to gather information about the day-to-day patriotic resistance and attract disadvantageous local chiefs and society to join the Italian rule. Furthermore, Italians used these camps as fortification and made them as a big weapon store and garrison. Thus, these camps were used for Italians properly.¹⁹

3. The Resistance Movement and Organization

3.1. The Movement

During the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, resistance was conducted all over the country although it was stronger in Gojjam, Begemidir and Shewa. The Agaw Midir patriots as a part of Gojjam were not exceptional in this regard. From the time of their arrival in Gojjam in May 1936 until the summer of 1937, the Italians were preoccupied with the task of pacification. During this period, they even seem to succeed in achieving at least some of their goals. After the departure of *Ras* Imiru to south western Ethiopia (Gore), many of the Gojjame including Agaw Midir *Awrrajja* officials fled to the Italian camps.²⁰

However, *Dejazmach* Mengesha Jambere, who initially sided with the Italians, *Ftawrari Zeleke Liku* and other prominent members of Gojjam lords and local chiefs of Agaw Midir came out of forest to fight against Italian forces.²¹ The Italians took considerable measures to strengthen their authority and power in the region, but the people of Gojjam in general and Agaw Midir prepared themselves in different ways to resist the Italians. From September 1936, the Fascist forces tried hard to disarm the people of Agaw Midir. The people, however, were not ready to hand over their arms to the enemy and many chose to continue guerrilla warfare.²²

Italian policy was based on divide and rule with the manipulation of ethnic and religious differences.²³ Like other parts of the country, Agaw Midir was subjected to this Italian policy. After they occupied Bahir Dar and the surrounding regions, the Italians closely worked with different ethnic and religious groups to continue their divide and rule policy.²⁴

Following their invasion, the method that the Italians used to pacify Gojjam, in particular Agaw Midir, was to apply divide and rule system than political persuasion. To this end, by exploiting the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of the marginalized groups such as Christians, Muslims, artisans as well as the poor, the Italians propagated the groups at large to

¹⁹*Ibid*, p.30.

²⁰Bahru, p.149

²¹Seltene, pp. 51-52

²²Alemayehu, pp.35-47.

²³Ayenew Fenta, p.31.

²⁴Aregawi, p.90.; Alemayehu, pp.35-47.

bring them on their side.²⁵Exploiting differences among rival regional leaders was another dubious tactic Italians employed to control the expanding resistance.

Italian policy in Agaw Midir interestingly proved to be pro-Islamic. The fascists recognized their religion and promised to construct mosques in their respective areas, as well as repairing some mosques in Dangla.²⁶Because of this, the Italians were able to gain support from some Muslims in the district. Overall, though in Agaw Midir there were a small number of Muslims, the Italians were not really successful.²⁷The Italian authorities also attempted to get mass base from the peasants, poor and oppressed sections of the people of Agaw Midir by giving them different clothes and economic freedom.

These efforts were not apparently successful. Despite Italian efforts at a divide and rule strategy, most people favored the insurgents.²⁸*Bitwoded* Mengesha Jembere emerged as the insurgents' commander, though the Italians did not initially face resistance when they first entered Bahir Dar and nearby areas including Agaw Midir. Furthermore, they declared a policy of disarmament. They believed that, unless the people who inhabited the countryside were disarmed, peace could not be maintained in the region. In addition to this, they ordered the people not to give any kind of tax or tribute to the then ruling classes-lay and

ecclesiastical. They instituted that tax should be paid only to the Italian officials or the representatives. However, the populations were still largely defenseless and were unable to respond to superior Italian military power, especially aerial bombardment and the mustard gas.²⁹The Grazian's massacre of February 1937 in Addis Ababa and brutal measures against the monks of the Debre Libanos monastery had wider repercussions. The insurgency began to spread in the Agaw Midir over the course of the following year and the insurgents attacked the Italian camps of Dangla and Injibara on 14 September 1937.³⁰

The Italian forces responded by hunting the insurgents, disarming the population and burning houses and looting property, aided in many cases by local collaborators.³¹The disarmament policy had contradictory outcome. Even though most of the Ethiopian people opposed the policy, many became collaborators in order to obtain weapons.³²The Italians also conducted a population and livestock census in Agaw Midir which also heightened popular resistance. This is remembered in a famous poem: "They ordered us to count our cattle's, we counted They also ordered us to count our children, we did. They also ordered us to surrender our rifles, we surrendered. It was only when they ordered us to take of our trouser. The daring (heroic) people of Sekela urged us to tighten belts and to get armed."³³

²⁵Informants: Mengistu Awoke and WodajieBiru.

²⁶Aregawi, p.90; Informants: Mengistu Awoke and WodajieBiru.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Informants: Gashu, Ayalew, Birhanu

²⁹*Ibid*

³⁰Informant: Mossie.

³¹Informants: Kebede, Mulat.

³²Informants: Mossie and Ambaw.

³³Informants: Gashu, Ayalew, Birhanu.

When the Italians invaded Ethiopia from the north, the force of Gojjam in general, and Agaw Midir in particular, campaigned under the leadership of *Ras* Imiru. However, this military leadership and organization dispersed following the Ethiopians defeat in the northern front. As a result, the leading figures in the campaign retreated though they carried out a discussion on how to develop guerrilla warfare in their respective regions.³⁴

The insurgents were still mainly fighting with backward firearms. The plan to destroy the Italian camp of Dangla ended in failure a few months later. However, insurgents in Agaw Midir led by *Fitawrari* Desta Workie and *Fitawrari* Yismaw Meshesha of Banja, working with other insurgents from Damot attacked the Italian camp at Sekela in 1937. This dislodged Italian forces and led to the capture of some modern weapons.³⁵ However, another attack led by Desta Workie failed due to a lack of coordination among the insurgents and shortage of modern weapons.³⁶ Then, the resistance leaders decided to try and encircle the Italians at Injibara.³⁷ On 13 May 1937, they fought what was called as the first battle of Injibara in which a number of Italian troops were killed or injured along with considerable losses of insurgents.³⁸ The attempts of the patriots to dislodge the Italians led to Italian bombing of suspected resistance centers, churches, houses, cattle

and cereal crops though this tended to intensify the resistance movement.³⁹

The Agaw Midir insurgents proceeded to launch guerrilla attacks against Italian forces from two directions. The first was from the eastern direction of Kuakura, including Mecha, half of Achefer and the whole Dangla. The patriots of Kuakura led by *Fitawrari* Yenew Moges established a base at Abba Qorat Washa (cave) and carried out several attacks against Italian camps in Dangla and Injibara.⁴⁰ The second guerrilla attack came from Tumha, (now the area includes half of Ankesha, half of Azena and part of Guagusa Shikudad districts) and Belya in the west, where insurgents attacked Dangla. *Fitawrari* Zeleke, an Agaw governor of Belaya and Tumha, was the leader of this front. Zelek's guerrilla attack on Dangla started after the unsuccessful assault of the battle of Injibara. He established first an understanding with other local resistance leaders such as *Fitawrari* Yenew Engida (nicknamed Yenew *Abba Dina*) of Askuna, *Fitawrari* Embiale and *Fitawrari* Gessese Mesfin of Chara. The planned operation to besiege and annihilate the Dangla garrison was launched on September 14, 1937. Being the advance force, Agaw Midir patriots under the command of *Fitawrari* Desta opened the operation. Then, the forces of *Dejazmach* Negash and other patriots attacked and fighting went on for three days, from 14-16 September 1937. Although in the fighting of the first two days the patriots got the upper hand, on the third day conditions changed,

³⁴Ayenew Fenta , p.26

³⁵Informants: GashuReda (Abba), AyalewMekonen(Qes) and BirhanuShibeshi; Kebede, p.287.

³⁶Alemayehu, pp.35-47.

³⁷Informants: Gashu , Ayalew, Birhanu.; Kebede, p.287

³⁸Alemayehu, pp.47-49.

³⁹Informants: Gashu, Ayalew, Birhanu

⁴⁰Informants: Wodajie Lema and Mengistu Eshete.

because two Italian aircrafts arrived from Gondar. They dropped bombs which caused casualties and weakened the patriots' resistance. In fact, according to my informants, the patriots were able to shoot down one aircraft and six men in it were dead. By this time the peasants in Agaw Midir had started to participate in wider resistance activities such as raising the alert when there was any movement in Italian camps.⁴¹

3.2. Leadership and Organization

The people of Agaw Midir had their own reason in choosing their patriotic leaders. The patriots and peoples of Agaw Midir choose *Dejjazmach* Mengesha as their principal patriotic chiefs, and prominent patriots were also emerged in different *woredas* like in Ankesha, Banja, Guagusa and other nearby areas in 1937. The Agaw Midir people nominated Mengesha for two reasons. For one thing, by having a leader of their own, they wanted to check any attack or raid by other patriots to their territory. For another, the Agaw Midir people believed that if Mengesha was chosen as their principal chief, he would bring unity to the anti-fascist resistance movement by rallying the whole of Agaw Midir and the nearby regions.⁴² To make this effective, a general meeting of patriots and peoples of Agaw Midir was organized. At this meeting different patriots 'leaders from the respective district were nominated as the patriot leader. Similarly, meetings were also held where patriots swore to remain loyal to

each other and oaths were made in the presence of priests and elderly people.⁴³

Mengesha possessed at least two points that made him qualify for an overall patriotic leadership position in Agaw Midir. One was his associations to the ruling class of Gojjam and the other achievement in different engagements. Mengesha married the daughter of *Ras* Hailu Tekle Haymanot, Seble Wongel, who was a well-known influential local leader who was respected by the whole people of Gojjam in general and Agaw Midir in particular. More importantly, Mengesha's fame had recently risen because of the talent he had displayed in the campaign of Shire. The patriots and the people believed that Mengesha would be capable of uniting them against the Italians as he had both political and military skills.⁴⁴ Mengesha travelled throughout the territories of Agaw Midir instigating the people to rebel and secured a large following. If there was any opposition to the leadership of Mengesha, it came from Syoum Teku of Fafa, an Italian collaborator, though even he urged the people to protect Ethiopia from the fascist occupation.⁴⁵ But the people of Agaw Midir and nearby regions accepted Mengesha as the principal patriotic leader. In several villages, market places and church enclosure meetings were held and decisions were made proclaiming Mengesha's leadership.⁴⁶ Elders relate that the people and patriots of Agaw Midir and

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Seltene, p. 123; Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Book Ltd, 1985), p.7.

⁴³Informants: Mulu Abjew, Alayilu Berihun and Ferede Agignew.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Mockler, p.189; Informants: MuluAbjew, AlayiluBerihun and FeredeAgignew.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

other neighboring districts swore oaths in the presence of chiefs, elders and priests holding crosses and the holy waters of the Abay River or the Ghion, in order to follow their leaders, loved each other brotherly and fight against the enemy strongly. To stay unified and to fight the enemy jointly the people swore an oath, and a word used in swearing was: “የከዳሚስቱ ጥቁር ውሻ ትውለድ”, which means, “If any one breaks his promise and betray the patriots, let his wife give birth a black Dog.”⁴⁷

This practice of swearing and oath continued until the Italians were eventually expelled. Oathing ceremonies were held in several areas of Agaw Midir. For example, in Kuakura, Injibara, Ankesha and other places where patriots were existed.⁴⁸ He introduced various military tactics for the patriots when they attacked the enemy. During the resistance period there were front runners who introduced various military techniques and preferred by patriots. The prominent personalities were Abebe Aragay of Shewa, Belay Zeleke of Gojjam and Wubeneh Tessema of Armachiho. *Dajjazmzc* Mengesha Jemberie, Negash Bezabih of Bure and *Lij* Hailu Belew were also popular leaders ‘chosen by the patriots and peoples during the struggle period.’⁴⁹ Significantly it was not from modern military training centers that these patriotic leaders gained their military experiences but rather from the

practice of banditry against their enemy in their locality.

Some of the collaborators (*bandas*) who did this dreadful disaster were *Qegnazmach* Seyoum Tessema, *Blata* Aged Mengesha, *Blata* Melesse Taye, Yeshe Endalew, Berhan Tessema, Taye Berhan, Ayetew Sema, Mamo Haile Mikael, *Agafari* Moges, Abere Yemam (until 1940), *Fitawrari* Tefera Gessesse (until he changed his mind and became underground patriot) and his son Asfaw Tefera. This disgraceful role aroused the contempt of the people which they expressed in the following verse:

ስማኝ አንተ ካዲ:ስማኝ አንተ ባንዳ
ስትዞር የምትውለው አዝላህ ተሸጋሚ
የጠላትን ኮዳ
አንድ ቀን ቤት የለህ ሁል ጊዜ በኬንዳ
ለጣሊያን ወግነህ የወገኖችህ ደም
እንዲፈስ አድራጊ በኢትዮጵያ ሜዳ
እናትህ ኮቲባ (አሽቃባጭ) አባትህ
ጋሁ (ከሀዲ)
አወይ አንተ ባንዳቃል አባይ ወስላታ
ምን ይውጥህ ይሆን ጠላት
ሸንፎ፡፡⁵⁰

Its translation in English Language;
Listen you traitor! Listen you
collaborator!

You who wander up and down by
carrying the enemy’s canteen
Even for one day you are not in your
home, you are always in tent
You side with the Italians and cause
bloodshed

Your mother is *kotiba* (submissive)
and your father is (*juda*) traitor
You collaborator, breaker of a promise
(and) liar

⁴⁷Informants: MuluAbjew, AlayiluBerihunand FeredeAgignew.

⁴⁸Informants: WodajeBiru, FeredeYenew, AyalewKebede and MossieFentahun; Sekela Tourism Office, *Dejjazmach* Zeleke Desta /Abba Merzoo/ Ye-Hiwot TarikKe 1900-1950 (Gish Abay, 1995) p. 5.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid*

When the enemy force surrender what
will be your fate

Because of his strong anti-Italian propaganda, *Dajjazmach* Mengesha became the target of the enemy. The enemy sent out frequent military campaigns through their hired informants like a collaborator named Syoum Teku and others from the beginning of the invasion to the last period to hunt him. As Mengesha had anticipated, the Italians lost no time in chasing him. But, their efforts came no avail because Mengesha had retreated to the bush in Injibara, Ankesha and Guta.⁵¹

Simultaneously, the Italians were equally engaged in propaganda to stop the agitation of the Mengesha and his close relatives. They used hired informants and light planes to disseminate leaflets and propaganda over Agaw Midir and the Amhara neighboring regions. However, they were not successful. The patriots committed for Mengesha and fought the Italians bravely in their respective domains.⁵² As a result, the Italians took coercive efforts to his agitation. Similarly, *Azaj* Kebede Tessema also mentions the Italians false story about the death of Emperor Menelik II and the agitation of prominent patriotic leaders. Despite the atrocity, the patriots showed their allegiance to Mengesha and determined to avenge the blood of their families in particular and the people in general. Mengesha applied different mechanisms to lead the resistance movement in a good manner. In the first place, he promoted several individuals, who had strong mass support and were hostile to the enemy, to various positions with

prestigious titles and rewarding them modern guns. He also gave them considerable territories as *Ye Gobaz Alleqa* (chief of plucky). The reward was not limited to the patriots, he also promised the collaborators to give the same positions if they would join the patriots' side. Whenever the collaborators met the patriots, unlike other patriotic leaders, *Dajjazmach* Mengesha made a warm reception and treated them in a good manner. He allowed them to hold the weapons that they brought from the enemy. This action was able to win the support of the majority people and same collaborators. Secondly, *Dajjazmach* Mengesha strongly opposed the loot of the peasants' property. To avoid antagonism with the mass, he warned his followers not to loot the property. Taking the hardship of peasants into consideration, Mengesha passed an order to prohibit his men from looting the peasants.⁵³

3.3.The Role of Women

As the Fascist regime became intolerable to the Ethiopians, there also arose women who led their own army in the guerrilla wars. To mention some of them, *Woyizero* Lekyelesh Beyan, whose career as a guerrilla fighter ended in January 1941, when she was captured after an Italian air bombardment. *Woyizero* Kebedech Seyoum (a daughter of *Ras Seyoum* Mengesha and the wife of *Dejjazmach* Abera Kasa), started her patriotic activity before the fall of Addis Ababa to the Italians. Thus, when her husband was fighting in the northern front, she maintained peace and order in the province of Salale representing her

⁵¹Seltene, p.85.

⁵²Ayenew Mamo, p.41;Kebede p.288.

⁵³Frank Hardie, *The Abyssinia Crisis* (London: B.T Bets Ford Ltd, 1974), p.219.

husband.⁵⁴

In Agaw Midir, unlike the negative role of the *bandas*, there were a number of women who played a significant role in supplying valuable information to the patriots. These were called *Ye-wust arbegnoch* (clandestine patriots). Although they lived, worked, ate and drank with the invading force, they furnished, at great personal risk, crucial information to patriots about the enemy's strength, movement and operation plan. Thus, relying on the information that they got patriots were able to take precautionary measures.⁵⁵ In addition, women patriots prepared provisions such as *qollo*, (roasted cereal), *Besso* (cereal powder), *qanṭa* (pemmican), *Enijera*, bread, *amole* (salt bar), butter, honey, flour and coffee. Moreover, they were busy in cleaning the guns of their fathers, husbands and brothers using butter and other cleaning materials. They also sharpen the traditional weapons like spears, knives and others. Among these women *Woyizero* Kebedech Lakew, *Woyizero* Zewudie Abune, *Woyizero* Alemitu Agajie, *Woyizero* Azalech Kassa, *Woyizero* Desta Kassa, and *Woyizero* Seble Wongel were prominent from Shewa province. By and large the number of women in the actual combat showed a significant increase in patriotic guerrilla wars fought mainly after 1937.⁵⁶ There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the triumphant entry of the enemy into the capital at the expense of an immense loss in human and material wealth aroused great nationalist feeling and the need for revenge. Secondly, women were also highly offended

by the inhuman treatment at the hands of the Italians engaged in the search for rifles and other war materials. The latter used to flog and jail women that refused to submit rifles or locate the whereabouts of their warrior husbands or brothers.⁵⁷

Disarming one's self is intolerable in Ethiopian custom and indeed women prefer dying to surrendering the war materials of their husbands. Informants say that many women used to hide the weapons in latrines, underground stores, water wells, dense forests, etc., if they were unable to flee and join the guerrilla bands nearby. Thirdly, many women left their homes to avoid dishonor at the hands of the fascist rapists. Fourthly, quite a significant number of women joined guerrilla fighters as a result of Italian air bombardment that burnt their homes to ashes and devastated their crops and cattle. Last but not least, most of the patriotic wars were fought in local districts where the chiefs and soldiers had to operate with the whole family.⁵⁸

4. The Challenges of the Resistance Movement

In the five years of the Ethiopian resistance from 1937-41, insurgents such as those of Agaw Midir passed through several difficulties and challenges. Some of the problems for the patriots during the resistance movement were as follow:

4.1. Lack of Co-ordination

In the patriotic movement, the coordination in Agaw Midir was difficult which in turn delayed the success of triumph of the war. In

⁵⁴Seltene, pp.135-137.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Harold Marcus, *Haile- Selassie I: The Formative years, 1982-1936* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), p.179.; Bahru, p.181.

the first hand, different individual patriotic groups in several places like Injabara, Fageta, Dangla, Tumuha, Achefer, Kuwakura, Cheuwsa, Sekela, Ankesha, Mecha, and other fortification sites, for a time being, could not work together and coordinate their resistance movement among themselves. They had no single leader. The location of the patriots in disseminated areas and uneven landscape of the *Awrajja* had also postponed an effective coordination.⁵⁹ Difference in ethnical psychological makeup, socio-economic condition and others were the additional but essential factors that made coordination hard. Patriots in Ankesha, Banja, Azena, Guwangua, Chara, and Fageta were purely Agaws, whereas most of Dangla and Kuwakura were bilinguals, speaking Agewgna and Amharic with an Agaw accent. This to some extent had intensified the gap among the patriots and affected their coordination. In spite of all these, however, the patriots were able to fight together and achieved victory over the Italians.⁶⁰

4.2. Desertion problem

Due to the centralization policy of the emperor, the Italian propaganda and the technological superiority of the Italians relatively large number of Agaw Midir people deserted their compatriot and joined the Italians. This betrayal and unfaithfulness greatly shocked the one who loved his country.⁶¹ This leaving and collaboration was a very disastrous for the patriots. On the

one hand, when they deserted their fellow men, they were with the other prominent and influential people and large followers. This was evident in the hesitation of some like Gesesse Belew, who deserted from the *Ras Emiru* Haile Selassie, the then governor of Gojjam province, with his followers.⁶² As a result, under the assistance of *Dajjazmach* Gesesse Belew the fascist forces occupied Debre Markos on 20 May, 1936. As a result, few patriots from Agaw Midir with their weapons joined the enemy's camp. This episode highly lowered and decreased the moral of the fighters. On the other hand, the desertion affected the resistance because the new Italian men knew very much the patriot's condition. Thus, they helped largely the Italians to capture or destroyed the patriots.⁶³

4.3. Lack of modern firearms

The other serious problem during the resistance period was lack of firearms and ammunitions. When the Italians made aggressive invasion on Ethiopia, only few Ethiopians had possessed modern guns. As my informants told me, during the campaign to Tigray province many of the Agaw Midir people in particular and the country in general had possessed traditional weapons such as lancet, bayonets, swords and spears. Even after the beginning of the guerrilla warfare, most of the people were without firearms though there were captured arms at the different battle fields. As far as the distribution of fire arms in the country before and during the time of occupation were concerned, Salome Gebra- Egziabher described that Shewa province had more fire

⁵⁹Anthony Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War, The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign*. New York: Random House, 1984, p.110.

⁶⁰Informants: Ayalew, Mossie, Moges, Ferede and AbajiDesta.

⁶¹Harold Marcus, *Haile- Selassie I: The Formative Years*, p.179. ; Bahru, p.181.

⁶²Mockler, p.110

⁶³Informants: Ayalew, Mossie, Moges, Ferede and AbajiDesta.

arms than the other provinces. As she discussed in detail, the prince of guns in Gojjam and Gondar was too much expensive.⁶⁴

In Gojjam, for instance, the price of one rifle was estimated 500 Maria Theresa taller. Therefore, the patriots found it difficult to purchase even one rifle. To minimize the scarcity of arms every patriot was ordered to use ammunitions as effectively as possible.⁶⁵ The problem was not only quantity but also the quality of the arms. On the onset of the resistance movement, the patriots were forced to use their daggers, knives, sword, spears and sticks. The patriots also used *wonchiff* (a rope used to throw stones) and pepper powder as a means to fight the enemy. Besides, out-of-date weapons, the patriots armed with the old aged weapons probably the treasures of the battle of Adwa and even before it. The weapons used by the Agaw Midir patriots were old rifles, pistol, met ford and some machine guns.⁶⁶ Due to their long service, most of the weapons were not active and rusted. Contrary to this, the Italians came with weapons that were automatic, devastating and latest. The arms included tank, poison gas, flamethrowers, flame bombs, canon, grenades, aircraft, binoculars and military cars as well as various means of communication. Thus, due to the technological superiority of the Italians, the Ethiopians fell easily even if they fought bitterly.⁶⁷

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵NALA, Folder No.፩.18.36, File No.62.1.18.36.

⁶⁶Sbacchi, *Ethiopia...*, p.198.

⁶⁷Salome GebreEgzabhre, "The Ethiopian Patriots 1936-1941," *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol.12, No.2, 1960, p. 65.

The issue of weapon became a serious problem, which lasted up to the defeat of the enemy in 1941. In his letters to Emperor Haile Selassie, *Azaj* Kebede Tessema, who was assigned as the leader of the combined force of the British and the Ethiopian patriots in Gojjam, announced the shortage of weapons. He urged the emperor to send him enough weapons and money to the final operation. Most of the patriots went to the boarder of Sudan mainly to the Belaya area following the coming of foreign aid to bring the weapons, but many of them returned with bare hand and promise.⁶⁸

4.4.The incidence of famine and shortage of nourishment

Another serious problem that challenged the patriotic resistance movement in the Agaw Midir and nearby area was famine. In 1938/39 the peasants of the area could not plough their farms because the war between the Italian forces and the patriots had been intensified throughout countryside.

As a result, famine broke out in the area. This in turn had resulted in food shortage, which badly affected the life of the patriots. Another factor for starvation was the locust invasion that destroyed all kinds of cereals and green plants in Agaw Midir and its surrounding area. Furthermore, the strong nature of the resistance, which made the peasants not to plough, sow and cultivate their farm land, aggravated the problem of food insecurity. Thus, food became a great issue of the time. According to Kebede, the people acquired some kinds of food from plant roots and leaves like fruits of cotton, and wild animals. The price of the cereal

⁶⁸IES.Ms-1799. A note organized by Tadasse; Anthony Mocker, p. 181; Del Boca. p. 242

was too expensive and the supply was almost empty. In the meantime, Italians were said to have eaten nettle, which is very hard for the tongue and other parts of human body after they seen the eating of Agaw Midir people cabbage.⁶⁹Besides, Azaj Kebede Tessema noted to the Emperor in his letter that when the imperial mission under him entered to Agaw Midir via Belaya got nothing to see grain types with the exception of sorghum. According to him, the region had suffered a serious shortage of food.⁷⁰Due to the invasion of locust, famine started to punish the patriots, and faced many people to go to the Italian camp for assistance. To attract the people who had supplied the patriots, the Italians started to provide food, give free medical treatment and as well as other services.

Moreover, taking the famine into consideration, the Italians had tried to approach different patriots and patriot leaders by offering gifts. To do so, they asked different patriots of the region to take food, clothing and firearm. They also sent a message to the patriot leaders. However, all their efforts remained fruitless when prominent patriots rejected their gifts. But some individuals were inclined to take it. Sbacchi noted that one of the reasons for the weakening of the patriotic resistance movement was the wide spread of famine in 1939.⁷¹

4.5.The problem of insecurity of the area

Another challenge that hindered the resistance movement was insecurity of the region. This meant that though most of the

patriots fought the enemy heart fully, some of them lacked sympathies for their own men. There were some patriots who disarmed many people and even killed them to snatch their arms.

Dajjach Ambaw Jembere also shared this idea in his letter that the patriots not all plundered the arms of the exiles and the deserters. He indicated in his letter that he sent his 13 soldiers to receive arms from Khartoum, Sudan. But, according to him, only six patriots received and returned back while other seven soldiers died in the march.⁷²The shortages of communication and transportation were also other challenges in the time of patriotic resistance. Like other parts of the country, the patriots of Agaw Midir faced serious problems in exchanging of ideas, materials and letters.

4.6. Lack of Communication

Communication was one of the most crucial and great problem for the Agaw Midir patriots. This in turn had created a problem for the patriots not to exchange ideas, letters, and other resources necessary for the war. All the necessary information from the patriot leaders, patriots and exiles were exchanged through envoys and messengers after travelling long distance areas of highland and lowland on foot without any means of transportation. The only alternate was getting information through emissaries and this could be real after travelling very far distant on foot. In addition, horses, mules and donkeys were (are) commonly used as means of transportation which mitigated the movement of the patriots. This also aggravated by the lie of collaborators. The messages of the patriots could be heard by

⁶⁹Salome, p.64.

⁷⁰Kebede, p.258.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²Informants: Ayalew, Mossie, Moges and Ferede.

the collaborators and addressed to the Italians then the patriots and messengers became victims of the Italians attack.⁷³

Getting messenger who could be responsible and cautious for his work was very difficult. Many people feared to take this responsibility because it would be very risky for him and his families if he was known or found by the enemy. Hence, due to lack of communication and transportation necessary materials like food, war materials, and crucial information did not reach for the patriots at the right time and place.⁷⁴ The different groups of patriots in Agaw Midir had possibility and often exchange messages with messengers. To do this, the patriots must find persons trustworthy and careful who can directly bring the messages carefully. Ammunitions, rifles and clothes were brought to them passing through difficulties in order not to be discovered by the enemy because it would be dangerous to the senders if it was discovered by enemy forces.

Food and water supplies could be late because of communication problem. In all cases patriots were very far from information to know about the condition of the country, the enemy and the situation of their fellow patriot groups. Therefore, it had discouraged the patriots in the resistance movement.⁷⁵ To minimize the problem, the patriots took various methods and systems. The first was establishing some clandestine groups (the inner patriots) whose main duties were collecting and gathering valuable information from the enemy for the

patriots of the region. Another way that the patriots used to solve the transportation problem was travelling on donkey, mule and horse back from one district to another mainly from and to Sudan. And through letters which were posted very carefully being hidden systematically.⁷⁶ The problem of collaborators was also the major obstacles that the patriots faced in the resistance period.

The majority people of Agaw Midir and its local chiefs condemned the Italian occupation, violently opposed and strongly fought the Italians. To the opposite, some peoples were pro-Italians. The collaborators directed to the enemy, where the patriots were found, and what kind of fire arms were owned, the war strategy of the patriots and the time table arranged by patriots for attack. Totally, they informed to Italy every activity of the patriots. When the enemy forces controlled nearby areas to their fortress at Injibara, the people of Fafa, sub-district of Ankesha, just south of Injibara, sided with the Fascist forces. When the enemy force increased pressure on the local population of Ankesha, known local chiefs of Fafa like *Azaj Desta*, *Fitawrari Seyoum Teku*, *Fitawrari Deresso* and *Azaja Tessema* became known collaborators' leaders. Thus, Fafa sub-district as whole was designated as collaborator territory by the patriots. The local division between collaborator and patriots at the sub-district level and the fight between them was very devastating to the local population.

6.7. Lack of Medicine

Another problem that patriots confronted was lack of medicine. Medication, which

⁷³Informants: Emehy Shashe, *Qes* Endaew, Gashu and *Qes* Tilahun.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵Kebede, p.272.

⁷⁶NALA, Folder No.h†.23.11, File No.62.1.23.11.

was the most crucial factor to carry out the resistance movement persistently, was another trouble of the patriots. In relation to this, Agaw Midir patriots are said to have lacked tablets, drugs and the like. In addition to this, they did not have skilled physicians to treat the sick and wounded patriots.⁷⁷

The resistance fighters depended on local medicine, and local doctors, *wogeshas*. So, whenever a patriot was sick or wounded, he would be kept under the guardianship of relatives or supporters until he recovered to rejoin the group.⁷⁸

The collaborators had great impact on the resistance movement of the patriots in many ways. They worked for the benefit of the enemy burnt the patriot's houses, villages, and looted their properties, taken their families as war prisoners and killed them. When the atrocities and problems emerged frequently on the patriots, to develop and initiate their moral they expressed their feeling as follows: "The heroes of Agaw Midir, stay where you are, be strong and courageous before the down, it is customary to become dark."⁷⁹

7. Conclusion

In the five years of patriotic resistance movement, the Ethiopian patriots passed through several difficulties. Indeed, the guerrilla fighters had faced for different problems. On top of this, in Agaw Midir when natural phenomena like drought and locust devastated the area upon which the

patriots were dependent, the food problem became acute. In the guerilla fighting lack of coordination in the study area was another problem, which in turn delayed the resistance movement. In the first place, different individual patriotic groups in several places like Injabara, Fageta, Dangla, Tumuha, Achefer, Kuwakura, Sheuwsa, Sekela, Ankesha, Mecha, and others, for a time being, could not work together and coordinate their resistance movement among themselves. They had no single leader. Shortage of medicine, arms, ammunitions as well as modern armaments was also another problem which in turn hindered the resistance movement. Communication, which was one of the most crucial and great problem for the guerilla fighters, created a great problem in order to exchange ideas, letters, and other resources necessary for the resistance. Anyway, during the resistance period, people of Agaw Midir had played pivotal role to liberate their locality from ruthless Italian rule. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its leaders in Agaw Midir had also played a significant contribution for the resistance movement in the area by broadening the national feeling of the people. However, as a solution, the patriots used various strategies to survive. One was attacking the enemy convoy and military camps to collect logistics. They ate wild animals, fruits, leaves, and roots as a solution for the problem of famine. They also organized a secrete group who could gather intelligence reports about the condition of the enemy. Agaw Midir served as a center of cross-border operation in Gojjam.

Anyway, thanks to the "British support", the Agaw Midir patriots fought the Italians in

⁷⁷Informants: EmohayShashe, QesEndaew, Gashu and QesTilahun

⁷⁸DMUARC, Folder No.0083, File No.፬/፳፭. A letter written from DejjazmachAmbawJembere.

⁷⁹Informants: AlebachewBiru, MulunehAbejew and Fentaye.

determination and dislodged the Italians from the region. Meanwhile, the five-year Italian occupation and rule had left many legacies in Agaw Midir. The loss of many people's through diseases and bombardment, social bitterness, and the destruction of properties of the native peoples were some of the negative impacts of the Italian occupation. On the other hand, the development of infrastructures and the emergence of towns and the beginning of horseman association could be the positive impacts of the occupation period.

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List of Informants

No	Name	Interview			Remarks
		Age	Place	Date (E.C)	
1	AbajiDesta	95	Injibara	17/09/2013	His family was victims of the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1936-41. He took part in much traditional conflict resolution process between Awi and Gumuz people.
2	AbbaGashuReda,	90	Injibara	28/04/2013	He has several relative patriots and he got the chance to live with them and has good knowledge about the Agaws patriots and their way how they struggle against the Italians.
3	AlayiluBerihun	94	Gimja Bet	21/12/2013	He has several relative patriots and he got the chance to live with them and has good knowledge about the Agaws patriots and their way how they struggle the Italians.
4	AlebachewBiru,	97	Gimja Bet	21/12/2013	In 1932 he came to Gojjam with <i>RasImru</i> and served assistant secretary of the revenue department. Therefore, he has a good knowledge of the tax paid. After the restoration, he was appointed as an assistant <i>Bejrond</i> of Gojjam province.
5	AyalewKebede	89	Injibara	17/09/2013	He has a good knowledge of the Awi under the Imperial regime.
6	Ayalew, Birhanu	87	Chgni	16/01/2013	He was an <i>Atbiadagna</i> of <i>ZagsaAbboMeketelwereda</i> and has a good knowledge about tribute collection during the imperial regime.
7	AyalewMekonen	88	Injibara	17/09/2013	He has an outstanding memory about the whole thing that happened in Agaw Midir since the period of Haile Selassie. He was a campaigner during the Derg period and later he was the head of Ayehu state farm. And still now his power of keeping fact in the conscious mind and of being able to call them back at will is very strong.
8	BirhanuShibeshi	91	Gimjabet	21/12/2013	He was one of the patriots in Agaw Midir. He participated in the May 1950 uprising by siding with the Kuwakura peasants.
9	Fentaye Bekele	91	Dangla	12/10/2011	He was a close friend of <i>FitawrariZeleqeLiqu</i> of Belaya. After Italians established strong hold at Dangla and Injabara, he made life and death

					struggle against them.
10	FeredeAgignew;	96	Dangla	12/10/2011	He has a good memory about the Imperial as well as the Derg period history of Agaw Midir. He served as a clerk in the <i>awrajja</i> for several years. By now he is a patient and living in his house.
11	FeredeYenew	91	Injibara	17/09/2013	He is the son of patriots though young; he is well informed by his father about the patriotic resistance against Italy
12	HayileKassa (HamisaAleka)	89	Gimjabet	12/10/2011	He has an outstanding memory about the whole thing that happened in Agaw Midir since the period of Haile Selassie. Still now his power of keeping fact in the conscious mind and of being able to call them back at will is very strong. Further, he is history teacher in GimiaBét High school.
13	KebedeMulat	89	Gimjabet	23/12/2013	He was one of the patriots in Agaw Midir. He informed me the ignominious behavior of the Italians and their gruesome activities in Dangla town.
14	Mengistu Awoke	87	Injibara	18/09/2013	He is a farmer and a horseman. He is a member of the horsemen association of Agaw Midir. He has a good knowledge about the Imperial land tenure system.
15	MengistuEshete.	88	Gimjabet	22/12/2013	He served as head of the Awi Horse Men Association, and informed me how and when it established. Further, he told me the contemporary condition of the association
16	MossieAmbaw	88	Chagni	07/01/2011	He has authentic memories regarding the conditions that occurred in Dangla during the Italian occupation period. Furthermore, he provided me a good information about the Kuwkura, Mécha and Achefer peasants revolt of the peasants under the leadership of AbereYimam
17	MuluAbjew	89	Injibara	18/09/2013	He is too kind and intellectual informant who has deep knowledge about the cause of conflict between Ethiopia and Italy.
18	TekesteSiltanu (Meregeta)	92	Chagni		He served the church of Mariam in GimjaBét for more than fifty three years. He provided me authentic information on the introduction and expansion of Orthodox Christianity in the region.
19	WodajieBiru	97	Gimjabet	22/12/2013	He was one of the collaborators of the fascist force and has a good knowledge on the resistance of the Awi patriots and on the role of the fascist force against the formers.