

## Oral Traditional and Chronicles on Guragé Immigration

by PHILLIP LEBEL

One of the more perplexing problems in Ethiopian history concerns the dynamics of geographic demography. In the region known loosely as Guragéland, the complexity of population movements over time has made historical identification a difficult task. Frequent migrations, caused by warfare, famine and other factors, have often resulted in the identification of this area with only one group of inhabitants. As the region has played an important role in Ethiopian history, this article is devoted to a clarification of some of the issues involved in identification. The approach taken relates historical chronicles, commentaries, and other written data to locally gathered information from inhabitants of the area.<sup>1</sup>

The location of Guragéland points to its historical significance. Situated between the western slopes of the Rift hills and the adjacent plain to the west, the region includes most of southwestern Šawa province. The strategic position of the area made it subject to periodic conquests, finally stabilizing somewhat as a buffer area between the southern Galla and northern Amhara.<sup>2</sup>

A useful starting point concerns the emergence of the Fuga, a minority group currently living among the dominant Guragé population. Some have speculated that the artisan Fuga have characteristics closely related to the earliest inhabitants of the East African Horn, and were thus in all likelihood the first inhabitants of Guragéland.<sup>3</sup> In several conversations with people of the area, the notion that the Fuga were the first inhabitants of the region was quickly rejected. All said that at least one group preceded the Guragé, though no group name was ever identified consistently. However many did refer to Selté, an area to the southeast of the region under discussion, as the direction from which pre-Fuga groups had come. The most frequently offered explanation of the emergence of the Fuga was that they came with immigrant

1. The author was a resident in Emdeber from 1956 to 1968 during which time most of this information was gathered on a piecemeal basis. Sources included some fifty students at the Emdeber secondary school who wrote up notes on parts of the local traditions, as well as information presented by scores of local inhabitants ranging from religious leaders to Fuga artisans. As such, the local traditions risk all the inadequacies of oral history, but show remarkable consistency.
2. Guragéland was one of several of these areas, which included at one time Enarya, Jinjaro, and Kambatta. The name "Sidamo" was often used by the Galla to characterize these areas belonging to the Christian northerners, though this was by no means always true.
3. R. P. Azais et R. Chambard, *Cinq années de recherches en Éthiopie* (Paris, 1931), p. 312.

groups such as the Boz, Säga, and Mogämänä. Given their current generally inferior status among the Guragé, it is likely that regardless of their early possession of the land, the Fuga were undoubtedly subjugated by invading groups. Their continued existence depended on the highly intricate socio-economic relationships that evolved.<sup>4</sup>

Historical reference to the Fuga is limited. Political and economic conflicts in earlier periods contributed to the isolation of many areas, especially those in southern Ethiopia. Guragéland became subject to various stereotyped images, thus ignoring the internal complexities within the local population.<sup>5</sup> By the nineteenth century, however, many of these earlier geographic divisions were undergoing dissolution, either forcibly, as in the consolidation of Menilek II's conquests, or through the extension of commercial contacts. Although military expansion subsequently facilitated the growth of commerce, regional trade was developing even before political consolidation. This was largely a result of the growth of Islam in the southern part of Ethiopia. The effect of both these factors was to increase communications in areas formerly isolated.

One of the first written references to the Fuga appeared in the mid-nineteenth century. Isenberg and Krapf commented that, "In Gurague is a heathenish people called Fuga. They are a wandering people and eat all that the Guragueans abhor."<sup>6</sup> Subsequent references have dealt with the socio-economic role that the Fuga play among the Guragé, documenting the symbiotic relationship that exists between the groups.<sup>7</sup> One clue to the historical position of the Fuga among the Guragé lies in their social structure. At least in the western area of Guragéland there is a local chief to whom the Fuga pay tribute. His residence lies east of the town of Wälliso. How far his influence extends is indeterminate but local Fuga have contended that it reaches Kafa Province, where Fuga are also known to reside.

A second clue to the historical position of the Fuga lies with their language. Several studies on Guragé dialects have already been published, and indicate the linguistic diversity in so small a geographic area.<sup>9</sup> Although Leslau has suggested that at least in the Gogot

4. This has been well documented in W. Shack, "Notes on occupational castes among the Gurage of Southwest Ethiopia," *Man* (1964), p. 54. Local skepticism on this point could reflect a reluctance to admit that a subjugated group once controlled the area.
5. J. Bruce, *Travels to discover the source of the Nile* (London, 1813), VI, p. 89. Bruce, writing in the late 18th century, continued the generalization made by the Portuguese Alvarez in the 1520's when he wrote, "They are troglodytes, and all robbers; their constant occupation is attending the Abyssinian camps and stealing horses, mules or whatever they can get, which they do in a very singular manner."
6. C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf, *Journals of the Reverend Messers Isenberg and Krapf* (London, 1843), p. 181.
7. W. Shack, *The Gurage* (Oxford, 1966). See also W. Leslau, *Ethiopic Documents: Gurage* (New York, 1950), pp. 59-62.
8. Based on personal conversation with Fuga living around the Erdeber area.
9. M. Cohen, *Etudes d'éthiopien méridional* (Paris, 1931). In addition, specific linguistic studies on Guragé dialects include: W. Leslau, *op. cit.*, "The influence of Sidamo on the Ethiopic languages of Gurage," *Language* (1952), p. 28;

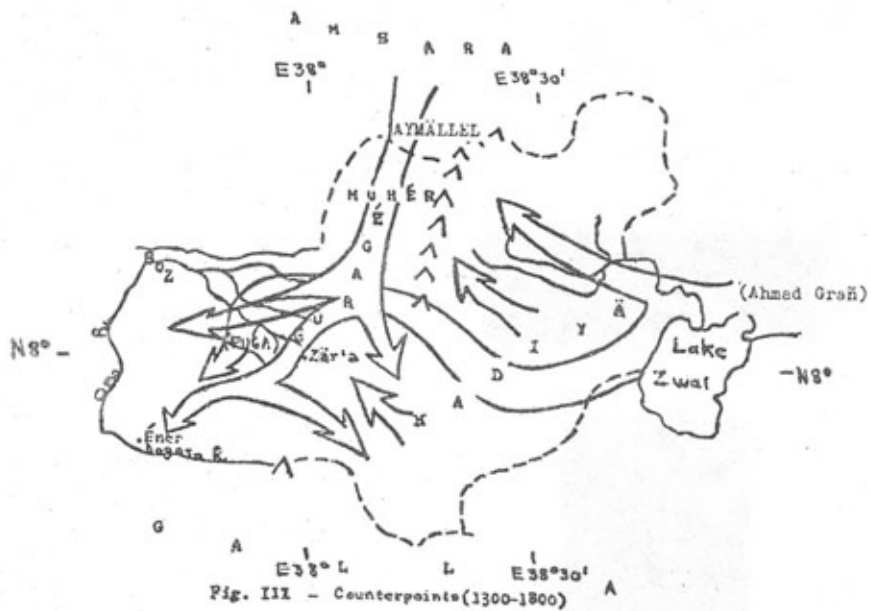
area of Guragéland the Fuga "language" is little more than an argot with Gogot roots, apparently the Fuga dialect is as diverse as the Guragé dialects themselves.<sup>10</sup> It would be instructive if scholars had a comprehensive analysis of the various Fuga dialects so that any common elements distinct from Guragé could help establish an historical basis for a once flourishing Fuga society, if indeed it did exist.

A third factor in understanding the historical importance of the Fuga lies in their geographic distribution. Some estimates have put their total population at no more than 5,000.<sup>11</sup> However, because of their complex social role among the Guragé, they do not comprise a distinct geographic region in Guragéland. Instead they are diffused among the villages of Guragéland, where they serve the special technical and ritual needs of the Guragé population. Despite the several prohibitions imposed upon them by the Guragé, such as landholding rights, there are a few villages scattered in Guragéland that are known as "Fuga villages."<sup>12</sup> Whether these villages represent isolated reservations set aside for the Fuga by their conquerors, or remnants of an earlier Fuga society is still unclear. Superficially, their village structure is little different from the rest of Guragé villages.<sup>13</sup>

Subsequent immigration into Guragéland involved two groups, one of which is well known in the chronicles, and the other which has remained relatively obscure. The first of these, the Hadiya, gained the attention of both royal and foreign chroniclers because of their economic and political power. The Hadiya were mostly Muslim, and along with the petty states of Bali, Sharkha, Ifat, and Arbabni, they took control of the areas bordering the declining Aksumite kingdom of the highlands.<sup>14</sup> Current references to the Hadiya among the Guragé frequently note that they came from "Arab"<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly this reference concerns the expansion of the Arabs along the coast of Ethiopia following the decline of the Aksumite kingdom. The town of Alaba, today located east of Guragéland, was once the name of a larger region nearby, and may have derived from "Arab", during the period of the original Muslim expansion in the seventh and eighth centuries.

"The Arabic loanwords in Gurage," *Arabica* (1956), and others; R. Hetzron, "Main Verb-Makers in Northern Gurage," *Africa* (1968), XXXVIII, 156 and H. J. Polotsky, "Etudes de grammaire gouragué," *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* (1938), XXXIX, p. 137-75.

10. W. Leslau, "An Ethiopian argot of a Guragé secret society," *Journal of African languages*, (1964), III. I checked a smaller word list that I had gathered from a local Fuga with the Gogot argot and a high proportion of the words appeared to be fundamentally different.
11. W. Shack, "Notes on occupational castes (1964), p. 54.
12. Local sources indicated that Muta in Eža, Šāmāna in Eža, and Yāmārākwā in Muhér were among the Fuga villages so designated.
13. Based on observation of the villages cited in the previous note and of other traditional villages.
14. Much of this documented in W. Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London, 1952), p. 58-65.
15. This was the most consistent response given by students at the Emdeber secondary school, some of whom were from Hadiya.



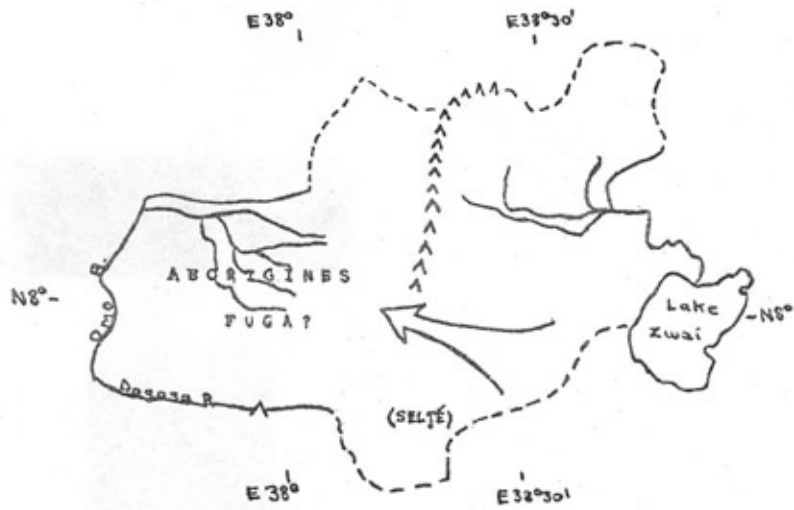


Fig. I - Primary Immigration

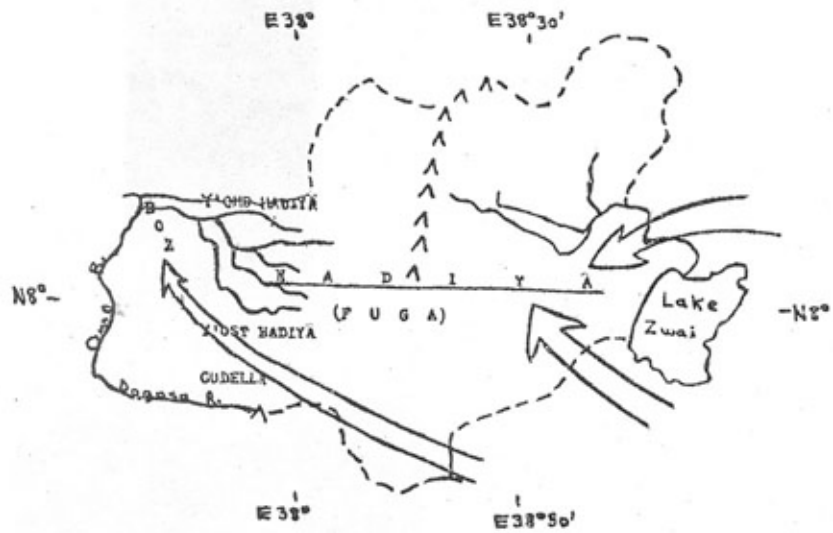


Fig. II - Post-Axumite Immigration

As long as the highland Christian Amhara remained weak, and the Galla to the south stood relatively content with their own lands, the Hadiya were able to organize their lands without interference. However, frequent attempts to upset the distribution of power forced Hadiya and other smaller states to seek occasional alliances with their erstwhile enemies. Thus it was not altogether unusual to find Hadiya paying tribute to Ethiopian highland Christian monarchs, as indicated in the chronicles of Amdā Šeon (A. D. 1313-1344).<sup>16</sup> Whether of their own choice or because of their alliances with neighboring states, the rulers of Hadiyā were often called "garad", which in Amharic has come to mean "female servant". Governors within Hadiya also used the term "garad", and at one time included offices for the regions of Diho, Hādabo, Ganazo, Gāb, Qab'én, Gogola, Halab, Gudella, and Sāga.<sup>17</sup> Current references to the Gudella in personal conversations indicated that the Gudella were the tax collectors of the Ethiopian kings.<sup>18</sup> This may have been the special role that they once performed when Hadiyā was attached to the highland monarchy.

Within Gurageland, the Hadiya maintained two administrative regions, Y'ost Hadiya and Y'omb Hadiya, or the south and north.<sup>19</sup> For each of these two regions there were further subdivisions, based on local *teb*, or extended families. While the area remained under Hadiya central, all were under the Sāga governor, who, according to local tradition, was not always well received when new taxes were about to be imposed.<sup>20</sup> By the nineteenth century, after the area had long lost its Hadiya overlords, the remaining fragment of northern Hadiyā was located at Qabēna, which was the source of an ill-fated Muslim uprising against Menilek's expanding military.<sup>21</sup> And even that affair was conducted by a rebel from the Čāha-Guragé region.

A second, smaller group of immigrants into Gurageland were the Boz. Reference to the Boz is practically nonexistent in the chronicles. Local tradition records them as having come from Soddu country, to the southeast of Gurageland, through Wālané, and eventually settling in Nadari (Abašgé), near the town of Wāliqitē.<sup>22</sup> Although they have since become identified with the Guragé, they were historically quite distinct. They were neither identified with the Guragé nor the Hadiya. Given the border area that they subsequently settled in, in all likelihood

16. G. W. B. Huntingford, *The Glorious Victories of Amda Tzion* (Oxford, 1956) p. 20.
17. J. Perruchon, *Les Chroniques de Zār'a Yá'eqōb et de Ba'eda Māryām rois d'Éthiopiā de 1434 à 1478* (Paris, 1893), p. 17.
18. Related by Ato François Marqos, teacher at the Emdeber secondary school.
19. Related by Dula Abdu, student at Emdeber secondary school.
20. Related by Emdeber secondary student, Ambazeč Šekur, and others. According to local tradition Čābār, the eleventh king of the Sāga, was defeated by one of the leaders of the Guragé, Mogāmān. The current leader of the Sāga in Guragé is *Azmač Nida*, of Guragé. Some of the prominent Hadiya *teb* (extended families) still in Guragé include: YāČāha *teb*, Imoriyā, Mand-idā Fātra, Inqeriya, Ošig, Tārāsā, Imoharā, Yāgāsiyā, and Sagēma. Hadiya money include: *nās*, *adad tet*, *fent*, *allad*, *wāqēt*.
21. A. Cecchi, *Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa* (Roma, 1886), pp. 51-52.
22. Related by Emdeber secondary students Abdullahi Sani and Tāklāmāryam Nādaw.

they were forced to migrate to that area as a result of land pressures, largely Galla, from the southern areas, as well as local resistance from the dominant Hadiya population. Even though local tradition indicates that they were in Guragéland as early as the Hadiya, their few numbers undoubtedly had much to do in determining the minor role they were able to play in the control of the area.

Hadiya control of Guragéland was frequently contested, even when alliances with the highland Christian monarchs were supposed to prevent such outbreaks. Part of this instability was due to the renaissance of political authority in the Amhara highlands after the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270 A.D. It was early in the fourteenth century that the Sāga Hadiya gave up for a while their claims to Guragéland as Christian Amhara forces pushed their way to control over the region. It was also during this period that Tāklā Haymanot, later canonized, spread Christianity into most parts of Guragéland.<sup>23</sup>

Local sources indicate that Zēna Marqos, one of Tāklā Haymanot's followers, was responsible for most of the proselytizing in Guragéland. According to priests at the monastery of Gādāmā Yāsus in Muhér, Guragéland, Zēna Marqos came from the region of Dābra Libanos in Šāwa. Accompanied by the forces of Amdā Šeyon, Zēna Marqos stayed in the area for a period of forty years, converting even the most obstinate of local traditional leaders such as Awa Gyät, and established "157 churches throughout Guragéland."<sup>24</sup> Of this total, 44 were found in Muhér, which has remained until today the region within Guragéland where the Ethiopian Church is the strongest.<sup>25</sup>

Military thrusts from the Christian Amhara highlands such as those of Amdā Šeyon occurred on a sporadic basis. Success often depended on who was the ruling monarch among the Christians and who held sway in the petty border states. Local tradition, since recorded by Alāqa Tayyā, states that *Azmač* Säbat, of the Tegrean town of Gur'a in the province of Akälä Guzay, brought one of Amdā Šeyon's armies into Guragéland and settled in the district of Aymälläl. It is from the name "Gur'a" that the people and country of "Guragé" is said to be derived. This interpretation appears more plausible than the two principal alternative versions.

One version of the "Guragé" contends that it was only during the rule of Emperor Susneyos (1607-1632) that *Azmač* Säbat's forces came

23. J. S. Trimingham, *op. cit.* pp. 65-67 Also documented in manuscripts of the monastery of Gadame Yesus, in Muhér, Guragé.

24. Related by one of the priests at Gädamé Yāsus, Muhér, Guragé.

25. As related by one of the Muhér elders: Abadāmam Giyorgis, Abadāmam Maryam, Gādāmā Yāsus, Gādāmā Zēna Marqos, Yāmbolé Yāsus, Gādām Abo, Gādām Maryam, Yägēša 'Ammanuél, Dādägābā Hawaryat, Dēsa Mādhané Alām, Dēsa Zēna Marqos, Kereker Mika'él, Yāwarā Gäbre'él, Yāwara Giyorgis, Agārā Maryam, Bal Egeziabhér, Kidané Meheret, Yāwanye Sellasé, Gārā-fā Abo, Gwēba Giyorgis, Gwēba Mika'él, Yāsera Yāsus, Yāsērā Kidané Meherat, Yāčanā Gäbre'él, Yāčanā Sellasé, Yāwāzārā Maryam, Yāwāzārā Giyorgis, Yāwāzārā Sellasé, Yābābān Mādhané Alām, Yābābān Kidané Meheret, Yāwudma Korā Maryam, Meghārām, Mika'él, Yābāret Zēna Marqos, Yābāret Rufa'él, Daba Gäbre'él, Daba Raqu'él, Yāšerar Čerqos, Abedja Tāklā-Haymanot, Abedja Mika'él, Māqorqor Mika'él, Yāgārā Senyā Abo, Čarat Maryam, Yāsanka Abo, Yāsāra Mika'él.

down from Gur'a in response to a Guragéland request for help. If the etymology on "Guragé" is at all correct, this interpretation would have to be discounted, since references to the Guragé date back to the chronicles of Amdä Şeyon.<sup>26</sup> The other version, that the Guragé came from Harär, is, as likely as not, bound up in migration patterns of the Hadiya, which have already been discussed.

Absence of strong successors to Amdä Şion provided the border states almost a century in which to re-organize their power. Hadiya once again emerged as a cohesive unit, even though it formally retained ties with the Christian Amhara. During the rule of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob (1434-1468), Mahiko, the Hadiya ruler, sought unsuccessfully to avoid paying royal tribute.<sup>27</sup> Zär'a Ya'eqob then led an army into Guragéland, beheaded Mahiko, and restored the alliance. As with Amdä Şeyon's invasion, many of the Emperor's soldiers received land in payment for services and joined the existing group of settlers. Local evidence of Zär'a Ya'eqob's passage through Guragéland comes partly from the wooded district in Géto called "Zär'a". Tradition indicates that it was so named after Zär'a Ya'eqob encamped there during his campaign against the Hadiya.

Even Zär'a Ya'eqob's efforts were not sufficient to maintain stability over Guragéland. After a succession of weaker rulers, Emperor Lebnä Dengel (1508-1540) faced an even stronger challenge to the Christian highlands, the firearmed invasion of Aḥmad Grañ (1527-1541). For some time the Muslims had held control over the coastal region of Ethiopia. This power was reinforced with the consolidation of smaller states under Aḥmad Grañ, with his capital at Harär. Soon after the departure of a Portuguese diplomatic mission in 1526, Grañ's forces moved swiftly against the highland areas.<sup>29</sup> Border regions such as Guragéland fell quickly in the jihad. Personal conversations with the Abrét Sheikh, the current spiritual leader of the Muslim Guragé, indicated that Muslim forces may well have come into the area before the departure of the Portuguese force in 1526, which would suggest a period of gradual weakening of central highland control over Guragéland.<sup>30</sup>

Within Guragéland the effect of the jihad was largely to weaken the already fragile organization that successive waves of Christian highland and Hadiya invasions had sought to stabilize. Once the initial Muslim thrust dissipated, areas within Guragéland reverted to more decentralized forms of government, often relying on a few powerful extended family rulers to maintain stability within a district. Apart from certain similarities in social organization, house construction, and

26. A. Cecchi, *Da Zeila* (Roma, 1886), p. 89.

27. J. Perruchon, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii.

28. It has since become an animist sacred forest in honor of Wak, the stargod.

29. Grañ's travels were documented by the Arabic chronicler, Arab Fakih.

30. Conversations with Abrét Sheikh indicated that Grañ's forces in Guragéland were led by Abdul-Qadir, who brought forces into the area several times during the period of the Portuguese mission.



the ubiquitous "Ahmad Grañ stone" markers, regions in Guragéland evolved with great diversity.<sup>31</sup>

This diversity was manifest in the growing number of dialects that were being spoken in Guragéland.<sup>32</sup> Studies have shown the similarities between the local dialects and Arabic, Tegrēñña, and Ge'ez, indicating the probable sources of immigrant groups. Many of these linguistic features could undoubtedly provide a clue to immigration patterns, though absence of written forms over time probably produced just enough homogeneity to make unequivocal distinctions nearly impossible. At this stage, given the number of studies on "Guragé" dialects, perhaps a stronger key may well lie with the Fuga argots, as suggested earlier.

Another indication of this diversity lay in the resulting religious organization in Guragéland. At the northern and southern extremities stood surviving elements of Orthodox Christianity, the former mostly concentrated in Muhér, and the latter in the tiny village of Éner. A trip to Éner, located on the edge of the Omo valley, revealed that when the area became isolated from Muhér, the local inhabitants dug a circular trench and built seven wooden gates as the only ports of entry. All but a few traces of the original wooden gates have disappeared, as the area has since resumed regular communications with the surrounding areas. The priests in the village at the time of my visit spoke of how their church was one of the many that had been originally established by Zéna Marqos in the fourteenth century. Unlike some areas in Ethiopia, to my knowledge, no changes in religious practices resulted from Éner's protracted isolation from Muhér.<sup>34</sup>

In other parts of Guragéland both Islam and Christianity dissolved somewhat as traditional animism absorbed their remnants. States that once held churches surrounded by thick *zegba* (*Podoparus gracillior*) forests became shrines for local deities such as Boža, Wak and Dāmawit.<sup>35</sup> This conclusion was established repeatedly by visits to the Muhér

31. On social organization see W. Shack, *The Gurage* For house construction P. LeBel, "On Guragé architecture," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (1969) For "Ahmad Grañ stones", see R. P. Azäis et R. Chambard, *Cinq années de recherches*. Personal investigations into the origins of the stones indicated that they were probably standing in Guragéland villages long before the invasion of Ahmäd Grañ's forces. Their distribution may well mark off the earlier limits of Hadiya, or other groups that once controlled the region down through Selté.
32. A. N. Tucker, and M. A. Bryan, "A linguistic no-man's land," *Africa* (1945) XV. Their survey lists 14 distinctive dialects.
33. W. Leslau "The Arabic loanwords in Gurage," *Arabica* (1956), and other studies.
34. This stands in contrast to the experience of other parts of Guragéland, as well as to that of other parts of Ethiopia. See Antoine d'Abbadie, *Géographie de l'Éthiopie* (Paris, 1860), I. D'Abbadie observed inhabitants of the Nonno, Enarya region who had been living in isolation from other Christian areas, who told him that they had been converted to Christianity by Serse Dengel (ca. 1570's).
35. Tärräfa Wäldä Şadeq has argued this position in the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (v. VI.) His discussion focuses on the Damamwit cult, but personal investigations led me to believe that this applied as well to the two other major cults. C. Ipcar gives an indication of the geographical distribution of these cults

churches and the Čäha sacred forests of the deities, and through conversations with representatives of both the Christian church and traditional religious leaders, such as Gwétakwiyä, of the Boža cult. Undoubtedly what Christianity did for animism in Guragéland was to enable cults to develop a formalism in times of political weakness that helped attract a strong body of followers. Even occasional flashes of Christian highland power, as in the dispatch of forces to the Lake Zwai region by Emperor Susenyos did little to halt the religious transformation.<sup>36</sup>

Occasionally a reverse pattern would emerge, with one of the more universal religions absorbing the animist practice. This certainly occurred during the early conversion of animist areas to Christianity, and to Islam. An example of the latter may be seen at Abrét.<sup>37</sup> There the Sheikh represents the fourth generation of the leading family of the Boža cult that earlier converted to Islam, leaving the cult with a divided following. Although it still maintains its structure, the Boža cult has been increasingly losing adherents to the Abrét Sheikh, as seen by the number of people who attend respective festivals. That this process has been occurring so recently testifies to the dynamic quality of social forces in the area.

Politically the fate of Guragéland was not unlike that of the Christian Amhara. Both were undergoing a process of decentralization. However, in contrast to the Amhara the acephalous political structure of the Guragé region exhibited remarkable endurance. Various attempts at centralization among the Guragé, such as the formation of the "Five Houses" (later "Seven Houses") borders of Guragéland, and the creation of the Yajoka, a tribal court of arbitration, were often resisted by the local population.<sup>38</sup> Folk songs among the Guragé often relate how petty alliances between groups of the "Seven houses" were as ephemeral as they were indecisive. The closest any one of them came to centralization was Čäha, with its strategic geographic location, and the fact that it was the location of the three predominant traditional religions, Waq, Boža, and Dämamwit.<sup>39</sup>

One development that could have forced more centralization among the people of Guragéland was the northward migration of the Galla. After the 1540's, when the Christian Amhara were consolidating their narrow victory over Aḥmad Grañ's jihad, the Galla accelerated an already begun northward expansion in Ethiopia. Yet, if they did take any control over Guragéland there are no solid evidence that they were long successful. Local tradition contends that the Galla never took any control of Guragé, largely because of the widespread use of *ensete*, or false banana, as the staple crop, which the Galla disliked. In any case, the principal areas of settlement of the Galla

in his unpublished M.A.thesis, "The Gurage cultural landscape: a systems interpretation," Michigan State University (1970).

36. Cecchi, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

37. Shack, *The Gurage*, p. 20.

38. On specific functions, see N. Singer, "Modernization of law in Ethiopia: a study in process and personal values," *The Harvard international law journal* (1970), II.

39. C. Ipcar, "The Gurage cultural landscape," p. 80.

lay on the sides of Gurageland. Apparently even their northward migration was never threatening enough to produce changes within the Gurageland political and social structure, perhaps in no small part due to the *ensete* plant.

During the nineteenth century, Gurageland experienced another demographic upheaval that made the area still weaker. Growing coastal trade in ivory and slaves kept the Guragé in a constant state of ferment. On the one hand, the region served as part of the trade routes in slaves that were increasingly being marketed from the southern Sudan. Frequently, slaves were brought into Gurageland via the village of Wéra, in Ennamor, along the Omo valley, or through Qabéna, near Wälqitté. From there they were transported to the principal market in Gurageland, Čäha Gäbäya. Now no longer thriving, it was once the largest market in the region, its origins dating back to the period when the area was under Hadiya control.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the frequent conflicts among the Guragé themselves often resulted in a certain percentage of their own population being sold off. Although this trade was never substantial the recurring border disputes that even the tribal court of arbitration failed to contain were enough to keep the region almost at the point of anarchy. Slaves, whether marketed through Čäha Gäbäya or not, were subsequently traded through Butajira, Harär, and points along the Red Sea coast.

The weak state of affairs among the Guragé in the nineteenth century made it possible for the Šāwan King Sahlä Sellasé (1813-1847) to claim to be "king of the Guragé", though this assertion was somewhat tenuous.<sup>41</sup>

This claim was obviously not accepted by the Guragé as evidenced by the resistance offered to his successor Menilek. Menilek's forces eventually confronted and defeated a Gurageland force in 1875, and sent down colonial governors after 1889.<sup>42</sup>

As Menilek's forces defeated successively the small kingdoms in the southern part of Ethiopia, they were followed by military settlements. Following an earlier pattern, victorious soldiers were given lands in exchange for their service to the Emperor. The pattern was rather specific in Gurageland, with at least eight villages established as Amhara military outposts. They included: Dakuna, Jämboro, Doro Gäbäya, Sar Zegba, Šam, Ešehara, Yägondär Zär'a, and Idibir Zär'a.<sup>43</sup>

40. Related by *Azmač Dämāna*, of Yetänaka. Currently Čäha market serves as an informal shrine for the principal *šeb* leaders within Čäha. Carved sticks, called *gina*, stand at the highest part of the former market. Information about Čäha market and other historical markets was obtained from area residents, as well as checking with erosion patterns that once marked the trails leading to the principal trading centers.

41. W. Shack, *The Gurage*, p. 18.

42. M. Cohen, *Études*, p. 245. Cohen quotes an 1875 letter by Menilek, indicating capture of areas of Qabéna, Wäläné Gädabono, Afro and Mohér. Remaining areas were captured in 1889.

43. See C. Ipcar (1970) on the geographic distribution of these villages and their distinctions from Guragé villages.

Together they functioned as the nucleus of Menilek's embryonic rural administration, collecting, until it was abolished, the despised gäbbar tax imposed upon the Guragé for having resisted Menilek's expansion.<sup>44</sup> These colonial outposts spread the use of Amharic, fostered the use of *teff* grain where feasible, and through the rigid tax system, accelerated the seasonal migration of workers that has continued down to the present day.

Given the historical evolution of Guragéland, it is sometimes surprising to outsiders to observe the highly complex political and social structure that has emerged. Certainly no small part of this complexity was been due to the various groups who have controlled the region. Over time, each immigrant group modified the existing social fabric in varying degrees to produce the "Guragé". Unlike the evolution of certain areas in Ethiopia, the diversity of these forces operating within Guragéland contrasts strongly with the once firmly held static images associated with its inhabitants.