

AMHARIC ORAL POEMS AND SONGS AS SOURCES FOR RECONSTRUCTING A HISTORY OF SHEWA, ETHIOPIA (1703–1889)

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ABSTRACT

The church and state institutions in the history of Ethiopia were considered literate. However, the majority of Ethiopians in general and Shewans in particular were non-literate. Moreover, peoples who were in the service of both the church and the state had no interest to record the day-to-day incidents in written form. These incidents were mainly maintained and transmitted from generation to generation orally by individuals who performed poems and songs. Thus, the main objective of this article is to explain how the daily political and socio-economic experiences of Shewa were preserved orally. It also attempts to analyse to what extent these experiences are reliable sources to reconstruct a history of the region (1703–1889). The oral poems and songs were collected from Amharic oral informants, books and manuscripts that were contributed by amateur historians.

Keywords: oral history; songs; poems; non-literate; reconstructing history

INTRODUCTION

Oral traditions and oral history became reliable sources for reconstructing a history of non-literate societies since the 1960s. The efforts of Vansina and his students are very essential in this aspect. They published a number of articles and several books that explain the importance of oral traditions to write the history of African societies and states (Henige 1974, 1982; Vansina 1961a; Vansina 1961b; Zewde 2002). Various techniques have been developed as a solution for the weaknesses of these oral traditions as sources for historical reconstruction (Vansina 1961a; Vansina 1961b). Commonly,

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oral historical evidences are available in different forms such as simple narrated stories, poems, songs, and prose (Vansina 1961a; Vansina 1961b).

Thus, the main purpose of this article is to explain how the day-to-day political and socio-economic history of Shewa was preserved in Amharic oral poems and songs. In addition, it attempts to analyse to what extent they are reliable sources to reconstruct a history of the region (1703–1889) (Mekuria 1973; Mekuria 1989a; Mekuria 1989b; Mekuria 1991; Mesqel 1972; Silassie 2000; Silassie 2007; Tafla 1987).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Shewa became a political heartland of the country where a series of historical incidents that shaped the destiny of the present-day Ethiopia took place since the nineteenth century (Tafla 1987). Unfortunately, these incidents were not recorded in written form by chroniclers. The reign of Shewan chiefs from Negasi c. 1700 to the death of Haile Melekot in 1855 mainly lacked official chroniclers. Menilek, the son of Haile Melekot, was the first Shewan chief to appoint a chronicler (Aregay 1967). As a result, there are no locally produced written chronicles for the period before Menilek in Shewa. For instance, there was a significant number of court attendants or councillors for Sahile Silassie in the 1830s and 1840s, and most of them were the clergy, the literate members of the society (Silassie 2000, 110–2). In the midst of all these, as far as the available sources are concerned, were Sahile Silassie, his predecessors and also his successor who had no chroniclers. In fact, there are sources that indicate Sahile Silassie had a treasury clerk in his court and a low land caravan trade terminal. Surprisingly, it is said that the individual who kept the store of religious books of that Sahile Silassie was non-literate (Silassie 2000, 110–2). Furthermore, it seems that there were no literate individuals who were interested in recording the day-to-day routines of the Shewan chiefs and their courts on a private basis. Therefore, this article is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How were the day-to-day political and socio-economic experiences of the Shewans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries maintained through oral poems and songs?
2. Which members of the Shewan societies were active and knowledgeable enough to compose and perform the oral poems and songs?
3. To what extent are the oral poems and songs reliable sources to reconstruct the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of Shewa?

METHODOLOGY

Before interviewing the oral informants to collect songs and poems, the present author conducted field observations. Moreover, his personal experience of being born in Shewa

and brought up among the rural Shewan peasantry was also an important springboard. The practice of composing and performing oral songs and poems during different occasions is still prevailing in rural Shewa. So he observed those actual practices during the fieldwork and inquired to what extent they were rooted in the history of the Shewan dynasty. Books written in Amharic by amateur historians since the second half of the twentieth century were also inspiring because of their quotation of a number of such poems and songs.

Finally, the poems and songs were collected by interviewing Amharic oral informants. Some of them were also collected from the books and manuscripts dealing with the history of Shewa. For the purpose of this study, about 85 of these poems and songs were selected, out of several hundred, and arranged into the following four major themes for description:

1. territorial expansion;
2. power struggle;
3. patronage for craftsmen; and
4. prevalence of famine.

To use the poems and songs as historical sources, one has to be familiar with their style and characteristics:

- Some of the poems and songs were composed in the form of “wax and gold”; the “wax” as their surface but deceiving meaning and the “gold” as their hidden but actual meaning.
- A number of the poems and songs are very difficult to translate into another language; if translated they lose their aesthetic value and context.
- In some of the poems and songs, the first verse was composed simply to fit in with the second without having direct contextual connection. The second verse contains the actual message.
- The songs and poems are very unlike in their quality; some were composed perfectly and others were composed crudely.

As a result, the approximate translations following and historical descriptions preceding each song and poem or a group of them as given below needed to be understood within this local context.

COMPOSING AND PERFORMING ORAL POEMS AND SONGS

The daily activities of Shewan chiefs and military commanders, as well as political and socio-economic relations and some natural calamities were not totally forgotten. They

were preserved orally by the literate and non-literate members of the Shewan societies, and transmitted from generation to generation. Peoples of Shewa, who were identified as *azmari* (“traditional singer”), *alqash* (“singer of funeral hymns” and commonly women), *eregnas* (“shepherds”), home servants of chiefs and military commanders, and also a number of soldiers and peasants were active enough to compose and perform songs and poems regarding those political, economic and social issues (Mesqel 1969).

These peoples who were interested in songs and poems, and had the ability of composing and performing such songs and poems were rarely identified by their personal names in the sources. They were identified as the servant of *nigus* (“king”) “X” or “Y” or *ras* (“commander”) “X” or “Y”. The same were true for war songs or chants which were composed by *azmaris* or soldiers. They were identified as *azmaris* or soldiers of *nigus* “X” or *ras* “X” (Mesqel 1969).

The identified *azmaris* and *alqashs* were active enough to recite also the achievements of their ancestors to attendants of occasions (Silassie 1972). Such occasions or feasts were held as part of the preparation for battle by a king or chief of the army (Silassie 1972), and on the date of funerals to remember or acknowledge the achievements and hero character of the respective person (Jemberie 1991; Jemberie 2005; Silassie 1918; Zewoldie 1988; Zewoldie 2005). Particularly, the death of a king or military commander was followed by a celebratory funeral during which the good deeds or achievements, and the golden and comfortable times for “the people” were mentioned (Jemberie 1991; Jemberie 2005; Silassie 1918; Zewoldie 1988; Zewoldie 2005).

As mentioned above, the *eregnas* also composed or performed songs and poems while they were looking after their cattle or guarding farms from pests. The peasants could also compose songs and poems that expressed their discontent with the governance system in secret. But the *eregnas* performed their songs and poems in public while they herded their animals (Kibret 2017, 22–29; oral informants, interviews; Wakjira 2010). In relative terms, the *eregnas* had the right to compose or perform their songs and poems without censorship. They were reportedly performed as “said my sheep”, “my goat”, and even “the monkey” or “the ape”. It is also said that the chiefs tried to inquire about popular comments about their administration from the songs and poems of the *eregnas* by saying “እረኛ ምን አለ?” “What did the *eregnas* say?” So, it is possible to say that the songs and poems from the *eregnas* can be taken as more accurate and reliable sources (Mesqel 1969, 40–41).

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION OF SHEWA

The territorial expansions of the Shewan chiefs from Menz during the early phase displaced the Oromo from Yifat, Shewa Meda and subdued the other Amhara districts (chiefdoms) within Shewa. The process was started by Negasi (1682–1703), the founder of the Shewan dynasty from Ayinie in Menz, and continued by his son Sebiste (1703–1718) and grandson Abiyie (1718–1744) (Silassie 2007, 45–52). The territorial

expansion of both Negasi and Sebiste has been mentioned in the lengthy poem quoted below under the topic power struggle. The following songs and poems are about the territorial expansion of the third Shewan chief, Abiyie:

አደላድ ሎ ሎ ደ ል አገሩንበቅጡ
ሞ ተ አብዬ ብ ለዉ ዳግም እንዳይመ ጡ ::

Abiyie died after pacifying the country well, so that they [rivals] should not come assuming that he died.

ደመ ናዉ በሰማይ ም ነዉ መ ሸበሩ
ዕፅዋት በገዳም ዝማ ሜ ጀመሩ
ዓይኔም እንደሁ እንጃ ተራሮች አጠሩ
አናይም ብለዉ ነዉ አብ ዬን ስትቀብሩ::
አድባር ታለቅሳለች ቆሌ ታለቅሳለች ብዬ ስነግራችሁ
አብዬን በይፋ ም ነዉ መ ቅበራችሁ
እርሱ አልነበረም ወ ይ የሸዋ ጦራችሁ ::

The cloud is terrorised in the sky, the plants started humming in monasteries. I can't believe my eyes! The mountains become short, saying that they should not see while you bury Abiyie. I am telling you that the shrine is crying, the spirit is crying. How do you bury Abiyie in public? Was he not the army [commander] of Shewa?

ጎንደር ደስ ይበለዉ ጎጃም ደስ ይበለዉ
ትግሬ ደስ ይበለዉ ሸዋ ግንእዘን
አቅኚዉ ን ወታደር ስታጣ ብ ርቁን::

Gonder will be happy! Gojjam will be happy! Tigrie will be happy! But Shewa should be sad, since you lost the conqueror soldier, Birku [commander of Abiyie's army].

Amehayes (1744–1775), the son and successor of Abiyie, was also remembered well for his capture of land from the Oromo and his plan to subdue the Amhara districts of Moret and Merhabete (Silassie 2000, 75):

ዛሬስ አም ኃየስ አረጀ ደቀቀ
መ ሬት ይይዝ ጀመር አየተንፏቀቀ::

Amehayes is becoming too old, he could move only by holding land [capturing others' land through territorial expansion].

ዓብይ ብ እሲ ሰይፍከ ስሁል
ለሰብ ዕ ሞረት ወ መ ርሐ ቤቴ አም ኃእየሱስ መ ስተጋድል::

A great man with whetted sword, Amehayes the warrior, is to subdue men of Moret and Merhabete.

Asfawesen (1775–1808), who ruled Shewa after the death of his father, Amehayes, was reluctant to expand territorially and gave emphasis to church education, *Digua*, *Qnie*, *Geez* and *Zema*. Consequently he was criticised for that in poems and songs (Silassie 2000, 76). His ultimatum to his contemporary chief of Moret, Tidu, was also maintained in those poems (Silassie 2000, 76–77; Silassie 2007, 57–58).

ነጋሢ ሰብ ስቴ አም ኃየስ የሰፋትን ቤት
አስፋወሰን ያያል ጋሎ ች ሲያፈርሱት
በድጓ በቅኔበግዕዝ በዜማ ይሰራ ሙ ስሎ ት።

Asfawesen is sitting idle while the Oromo are destroying the house [system] which was constructed [established] by Negasi, Sebestie, Amehayes; as if a country can be built by *Digua*, *Qnie*, *Geez* and *Zema*.

አስፋ ወሰን ይፋትን ጠንክረው ይረሱ
ሞረት ጥዶ አል ብ ለው ከሙ ሙ ላለሱ ።

Oh! Asfawesen, plow in Yifat strongly, rather than see what Tidu is baking in Moret.

ለሞ ፈር ለቀንበር የሚ ሆ ነኝን
ሳልቆርጠ ው አልቀርም ዘንድሮ ጥዱ ን።

For my plow and my yoke, to cut, but no choice except the ‘*tid*’, juniper tree [Except to attack Tidu].

ያባቴ አገር ሞ ረት
ሴቱን ያሳምራል
ወንዱን ያደረጃል
ም ንጭ ን ያሙ ነጭ ል
ጠ በሉን ያፈ ልቃ ል
ቢለሙ ልም እንጂ ጥዱ ሙ ች ይደርቃል።

Moret, the country of my father, is beautifying women, strengthening men, it is also sourcing streams, springs holy water! It would ever be green, the *tid* (chief) never dries.

በጉም ገበያወጥኛ
ፈረሴንአጃ አብልኛ
ሳልቆርጠ ው አልቀርም ዘንድሮ ጥዱን
እጅግ ደብ ር ሣይሆን።

I ascend [go] to the Begum market, feeding barley to my horse. I would cut the juniper by this year before it becomes too thick [I would defeat the chief before he strengthens his force].

እኛስ ሙ ስሎ ን ነበር ድጓ ቅኔ አዋቂ
ዕዝል ግዕዝ ዜማ ሙ ርማ ረ ጠ ያቂ።

አዬ ጉድ አናንተ አንዲህ ያለ ነዉ ር
የአምኃየስን ልጅ በጦር አንዲህ መ ጠ ርጠ ር።

We assume that he is only an expert of *qnie*, an inquirer, and investigator in *eze*, *geez*, *zema*.

Oh, it was, a great fault, suspecting [thinking that he could not defeat] the son of Amehayes [Asfawesen] in fighting.

The second phase of territorial expansion of Shewa was characterised by expanding to the districts located to the south of Shewa Meda by *nigus* (king) Sahile Silassie (1813–1847) and his horse, Dina (Silassie 2000, 65–67).

ዲና ተነስቶ ካንጎላላ ላይ
ሸኖ ማ ራኪ ገርማ ማ ገዳይ።

Dina set out from Angolala, was captured at Sheno and killed at Germama.

ዲና ቢ ነሳ ከመ ሃል ጭ ጭ
ገብ ሮ አደረ እስከ ወጭ ጭ ።

When Dina set out from the centre, Chacha, all [enemies] surrendered as far as Wochecha in a single night.

ብ ርድ አይችልም ጋላ ከቤቱ ከወጣ
እዩት ገላንስቶ እሳት ሊጭ ር መ ጣ ።

Galla [Oromo] cannot survive cold weather outside their home. Look, they are coming to lit [take in clay] fire [on our home].

አብ ቼ ና ገላን ም ን ያጉመ ተም ታ ል
አሁን የኔጌታ በማ ሴት ይደርሳል።

What caused Abichu and Galan to murmur? Obviously, my master did not touch anybody's woman [he will conquer as far as Masiet].

ም ንስ አረመ ኔ ም ንስ ጋላ ቢሆን
በጦ ር አይሞ ትም ወ ይ የወጉት እንደሆን።

Even if he is an unbeliever, and Galla [Oromo], would he not die if he should be shot [with spear]?

ከቤት ሲወጡ ወደ ደጅ
ገላን ታጥቦ ነዉ እንጂ።

When one sets out from home, he should wash his body [should displace the Galan Oromo].

After the death of *nigus* Sahile Silassie, the power of the Shewans began to decline. As a result some districts refused the supremacy of the successor *nigus* Haile Melokot (1847–1855). One of them was Darra, a buffer district bordering Wollo. Its chief attempted to declare its autonomy or loyalty to the regional chiefs north of Shewa

(Silassie 2000, 136–138). As a result, *nigus* Haile Melokot, the son and successor of Sahile Silassie declared war and subdued Derra as mentioned in the following song:

የኛ ቤተንጉስ ኮራ ተናጠጠ
ኃይሉ ቢወርድበት ደራ ተለመ ጠ ::

Our palace is erected upright, but it bent down [Darra] when force [Hailu's] was exerted on [Darra was defeated by the force of Haile Meleket].

የኃይልዬን ሱሪ ሰፊ አሳጥሮበት
ሜ ጊራን ሲወርድ ጉልበቱ ታየበት ::

The tailor shorten the trousers of Hailie, his knee [power] is seen when he descends to Migira.

The third phase of the territorial expansion of Shewa was made by Menilek, son and successor of Haile Meleket, who reigned as king of Shewa from 1865–1889. He brought large size territories and peoples under his domain (Silassie 2000, 83–88). The poems and songs remembered the incident as follows:

አሳመ ነዉ ፤አሳመ ነዉ በልክ
አዳ ምኒልክ
አሳመ ነዉ ፤አሳመ ነዉ ወርዶ
በጠ ሓይ ነዶ
አሳመ ነዉ ፤አሳመ ነዉ አሉ
ምኒልክ ኃይሉ ::

Ase Menilek! Subjugate them exactly! Subjugate them by descending to the low land! After being burnt in the tropics [heat]! Subjugate them! They said, Menilek Hailu.

ፈረንጅ፣ ገበረ አሉ ጥይትና እርሳስ
ዋድላም ገበረ አሉ ሙ ክት ለንጉስ
ሰሜን ገበረ አሉ ሓርናዱማ ስ
ዓረብ ቀርቶሃል የጎራዳዉ ልብስ::

They said that the whites paid tributes in bullets and gunpowder. Wadila paid fattened sheep for the king. Semien also paid silk and spices. You left only with the Arabs [Western border of Ethiopia] who dressed differently.

ተሰዉ ጋር ንግግር የማ ልወደዉን
አሳማ ኝ ምኒልክ ያራቱን ማ እዘን::

I never like talking [gossiping] with others. But Menilek made me gossip [backbiter] about the four corners [he subdued the four corners].

In this third phase of the territorial expansion, the subject of the songs and the poems was not only Menilek but also his prominent army commanders. The first of them was Ras Gobana, who played a significant role in subduing the southern and south-western region of the country in the 1870s and the 1880s (Iyesus 1973, 23, 32–33). He was appreciated by Menilek as follows:

ጎበና፤ጎበና ጎበናዬ ዩኔ
የጦር ንጉስ አንተ ያገር ንጉስ እኔ።

[It is reported that Menilek said] Gobana! Gobana! You're mine. You're the king of the army while I am that of the country.

ጎበና ፈረሱን አማ ን ቢስነሳው
አባይ ላይ ገታው
ጎበና ፈረሱን ፋሌ ላይ ቢያስነሳው
ዓረብ አገር ገታው
ጎበና ፈረሱን ቼቼ ቢለው
ሱዳን ላይ ገታው ።

Gobana rode his horse from Aman [his village of birth], stopped in the country of Abay. Gobana rode his horse from Fallie [his home after he became famous], stopped in the country of Arab. Gobana provoked his horse saying Chie! Chie! and stopped in Sudan.

የጎበና አሽከሮች ጠ ፍር የት ያው ቃ ሉ
በነጋ በጠ ባ ባረብ ይጭ ናሉ ።

Gobana's servants never knew leather strips, they loaded in Arab ropes [they rode to the country of Arab, Benishangul] day and night.

ም ን ታቦት አለና ትለም ናላችሁ
ም ን ንጉስ አለና ትታጠ ቃላችሁ
ም ን ራስ አለና ትከተላላችሁ
ዲያቢሎ ስ በበቅሎ ሲሌ ድ እያያችሁ ።

Where is the *tabot* you are praying for? Where is the king you are fighting for? Where is the commander you are following? Don't you see that the devil is riding on a mule back? [It means that Gobana was too fast in all his campaigns].

Contrary to the appreciation, Gobana was also criticised for not being wise enough to harvest the fruits of his toil.

አገር ሲለም ኑ ባቦ በስላሴ
ድረስልኝ ሲሉ በሐም ሌ በነሐ ሴ ።
አነራስ ጎበና ባቀኑት አገር
ቀኛዝማ ቸ ግራዝማ ቸ ይባባል ጀመር።

They beg for a country in the name of *Abbo* and Trinity. They called you in July and August. But after the countries have been pacified, they appointed one another as *qegnazmach*, *girazmach*! [it means ignoring your merits].

ጎበና ባጥጉ ሆድህን አይባሰው
ወትሮም ልማ ድህ ነው እያቀናህ ለሰው ።

Gobana, father of Tigu, do not feel sad, it is your usual fate to pacify and give to others.

The other known army commander of Menilek in the territorial expansion was *Ras Darge*, Menilek's uncle who was promoted to the title *ras* on the same day as Gobana in Shewa in 1878 (Iyesus 1973, 23, 32–33). His role in subduing Arsi is well remembered in the history of the country. He was also popular among ordinary citizens and was assumed to be the second to the king in socio-political status (Iyesus 1973, 23, 44).

እንደ ኔማ ቢሆን እንደ ልቦናዬ
ንጉሱ ባሌ ሆነው ዳርጌ ዉ ሸማ ዬ።

It would not happen, if it happens I wish the king will be my husband and Darge will be my [friend] adultery.

የፈረሱን ኮቴ ከሩቅ ሰማ ሁት
ጋልቦ ከሜ ዳ ከፍቼ አየሁት።
ባሩሲ ገብቶ ማ ሩን የቀመ ሰ
አዉ ሎ አግብቶ ዳርጌተመ ለሰ።

When I heard the hooves of his horse from a distance, I opened the gate and saw that Dargie was galloping in the field. He arrived in Arsi and tested its honey and came back for the night in a single day. [Dargie arrived in Arsi and came back to Fichie in a single day on horseback].

POWER STRUGGLE

The political history of Shewa was characterised by a series of struggles for local political power beginning from its genesis in about 1682 to the end of the 1880s (Silassie 2000, 42–89). The death of each Shewan chief was followed by conflicts for succession. The stronger one, who had more followers or an army, from a number of sons of the chiefs would be successful in assuming the position. Most of the Shewan chiefs had several wives and concubines that gave birth to a number of sons who would become rivals (Mesqel 1973). Besides the conflicts among themselves, the Shewan chiefs had a series of conflicts with the central power located north of Shewa. The later conflicts were for two purposes: to maintain Shewan autonomy, and to claim the royal crown to a certain extent (Silassie 2000, 50–100, 122–70).

The internal conflicts for political power started with the death of Negasi in 1703 and ended in 1889 when Menilek became emperor of Ethiopia (Silassie 2000, 50–100, 122–70). As mentioned above, Negasi was the first Shewan chief who founded the Shewan dynasty by defeating more than a dozen local chiefs that were based in their respective districts. Then he went to Gonder to request an official appointment in Shewa as a viceroy of the then Ethiopian emperor at Gonder. Unfortunately, Negasi died there (Silassie 2007 45). The power rivalry that took place among Negasi's sons after his death has been recorded in the following lengthy poem that was transferred to the next generation through oral narration (Silassie 2007 49–50):

የነጋሢ ልጆች አልተስማሙ ም ከቶ
አባታቸው ቢሞት ሰባት ልጆች ትቶ፤

አንዱ አንዱን ጠ ላዉ ሁከት አስነስቶ፤
ሰብ ስቴም ለቀቀ ሌ ደ ካገር ትቶ፤
ከወንድሞ ች ጋር መ ጋደልን ጠ ልቶ።
ወደ ቆላ ወረደ አደረ ለጌታ፤
ጌታ ዉ ም ወደደዉ ሰጠ ዉ ከበሬታ፤
አደን ሌ ዶ የጌታዉ ሰራዊት ሲፈታ፤
ባንድ ዉ ርወራ አስቀረዉ ጎሹን በቱማ ታ፤
የጎሽ ሰንበር በላ ቀኝ እጁ በረታ።
ለጌታዉ አንድ ሰዉ ትንቢት ቢነግረዉ ፣
የሱን ዘር ሰብ ስቴ በኋላ እንዲገዛዉ ፣
በወ ደደዉ ፈንታ ፈ ጽ ሞ ጠ ላዉ ፣
ሊያስረዉ ም ፈለገደግሞ ም ሊገለዉ ፣
ጋላ አስቸገራቸዉ እጅግ ተጨ ንቀዉ ፣
ዘመ ዶቹ ላኩ ም ክንያት አርገዉ ፣
እናትህ ታመ ዋል ናድረስ ብ ለዉ ፣
የቅንነት አም ላክ ከሞ ት አዳነዉ ።
ሊታሰር ተመ ክሮ ነገወይም ሠለስት፣
እናትህ ታመ ዋል ብ ለዉ ቢ ነግሩት፣
ደንግጦ ተነሳ በዚህ ም ክንያት፣
ፈጥኖ አገሩ ሌ ደ ሳይሰናበት፣
ፈልጎቢያጣ ዉ ላክ ወደቤት፣
የቆለኛ ጌታዉ ሆነበት ጸጸት፣
እያለ ተክዞም ነዉ በሞ ትሁት፣
ም ነዉ በጨ ለማ በፊት በያዝኩት፣
አመ ለጠኝ ብ ሎ ነደደ እንደ እሳት፣
የእግዚአብ ሌ ርን ፍቃድ ያስቀረ መ ስሎ ት፣
አም ላክ የፈቀደዉ ያሰበዉ ከጥንት፣
ም ን ቢሆን አይቀርም በሌ ላ ብ ልሃት፣
ከንቱ ነዉ አንጂ አንደዉ መ ታከት፣
በትዕዛዝ አይሆንም አልጋና መ ንግስት፣
ከላይ ካልፈቀደ አም ላክ ጸባኦት።
ነጋሢ ም አዘዘ አልጋዉን ለካዋ፣
ዝናብ አልዘንብ አለ በግዛቱ ሸዋ፣
አም ላክ ባይፈቀድለት ሰዉ ሁ ሉ ጠ ላዋ።
ዳኛም ግንባር አጣ አላገኘም ግርማ ፣
በሰብ ስቴ ጉልበት አልጋዉን ተቀማ ።
ሰብ ስቴም ተመ ርጦ አም ላክ ፈቀደለት፣
ለልጅ ልጁ ሆነየሸዋ መ ንግስት።

It means that the seven sons of Negasi were never in agreement after their father died. They hated each other and rebelled against the successor. Sebestie, one of the brothers, migrated leaving his locality, hating to be in conflict with his brothers. He left for *qolla* [Merhabete] and was employed as a servant for a master. He was loved and respected by his master. When the servants

of his master went hunting, Sebistie killed a buffalo with a single shot. He became a courageous and strong man. Unfortunately, a “prophet” told his lord that Sebistie will be his successor. Then his lord hated him. He planned to arrest and to kill him. At the same time, Sebistie’s relatives were in trouble with the Galla [Oromo]. They called him saying, “Please! Come in a hurry! Your mother is sick.” He rushed out without any hesitation. As a result, he was saved from death, because his master planned to arrest him the next day. His master was searching for him in the home. However, his master regretted his plan seriously saying, “Alas! I better die before he left! Last night was the right time to arrest him!” He was severely angry, not thinking that he could not stop the will of God. But, what God planned from the beginning could not be stopped by man’s wisdom. It is petty and valueless toil. One could not be enthroned without the will of God. Negasi ordered his throne for Kawa but Shewa experienced drought during his reign. For that he was hated by the people. Dagna, the successor, did not have courage and he lost the throne by the force of Sebistie who was chosen by the will of God. Sebistie’s sons and grandsons took over the throne.

The conflicts among Shewan chiefs for the position of local leadership continued even after Sebistie, the successor of Negasi, resolved the first one in 1703. Sebistie himself had similar conflicts with his own son Abiyie. As a result, Birku, the loyal servant of Abiyie, murdered Sebistie. Abiyie could not tolerate that and killed Birku, although he celebrated the funerals of both equally. He moved their corpses from their first tombs to a newly founded church yard (new tomb) in a newly conquered territory (Silassie 2000, 61–62). This was recorded in an oral poem as:

አባት ሎ ሌ ገዳይ እያሉ ሲያሙ ት
 አጥንት ናፍቆ መ ጣ በሰባት ዓመት
 ዉ ለታ መ ለሰ አብ ዩ ለአባቱ
 አልረሳዉ ም ብርቁን ቢረግፍ እንኳ አጥንቱ
 ለቅሞ ይዞሌ ደ ሳይለየዉ ከጌታዉ ::

Although they gossiped that Abiyie is the master who murdered his servant, he came to see the corpses after seven years. He paid in kind for his father, he also did not forget Birku [the murdered servant] though the latter’s corpse was decayed. Abiyie collected and took them with those of his fathers.

The next internal conflict for power took place during the reign of Wesenseged (1808–1813), after the reign of two Shewan chiefs, Amehayes (1741–1775) and Asfaweson (1775–1808). Wesenseged’s army conspired against him, opposing his plan to confront the emperor at Gonder. He was murdered by one of his own slave servants, but the cause of his death was identified as epilepsy (a disease nicknamed slave) by oral poets. The servant himself was murdered outright (Silassie 2000, 61–62):

ከምድርዳር እምድርዳር ሲገዛበድምጡ
 ካራዉ ና ባርያዉ ም ነዉ አልተቀጡ ::

He governed from one corner to the other corner of the land by his voice, but why were the slave and his sword not punished?

አያችሁ ወይ ይህ ወላጅ ትቢቱ
ከቀድሞ አሁን ድረስ አብሮ መ ተኛቱ ::

Do you see the arrogance of this slave? He slept [died] with the master since then to the present.

ለሌላው መ ድኃኒት ሰጥቶ የሚ ያድን
ባርያ ጣ ለው አሉ ወሰንሰገድን::

Though he gave medicine to and healed others, Wesenseged himself died from epilepsy.

The intense internal struggle for power in Shewa has worsened again after the death of Haile Meleket in 1855. Menilek mainly faced a strong challenge from individuals who ruled Shewa during his imprisonment at Meqdela (1855–1865). One of these individuals was Bezabih, who was the appointee of Emperor Tewodros II (1855–1868) in Shewa (Mekuria 1990, 23–27; Mekuria 1991, 71–75). Thus, the poems and songs below are dealing with the conflicts between Menilek and Bezabih:

የመ ድኃኒት ጥቂት ይበቃል እያለች
የም ኒልክ እናት አንድ ወልዳ መ ከነች::

Thinking that one is enough for medicine (quality is important), Menilek’s mother became sterile after giving birth to only one baby.

ማ ነው ብላችሁ ነው ጋሻው መ ወልወሉ
ማ ነው ብላችሁ ነው ጦራችሁ መ ሳሉ
የጌታችሁ ልጅ ነው ጸ ረ በስማ ም በሉ ::

Who is he against whom you clean your shield?
Who is he against whom you sharpen your spear?
He is the son of your master, alas! [Cross in the name of Father, Son and ...].

ንጉስም ቢሰጡህ ዳርዳሩን ተዋጋ
ዉ ረድ ማ ለት ይቅር ልጅን ከአባት አልጋ::

If the *nigus* appoints you to fight in the frontier, stop attempting to step down the son from the throne of his father.

አባደክር በዙ የበረከት ለታ እሽንጡ ተወግቶ
ከሻንቅላ ጋራ አብ ሮ ተቆራኝቶ
አልጋ ለም ኒልክ አያለ ቆይቶ
ሊወጋቸው ሌ ደ የሰው ነገር ሰም ቶ::
አንተም አደረከኝ የመ ነኩሴ ፈራጅ
የሙ ት ልጅ ሲቀበል እንዲህ ነውይ ወዳጅ ::

Bezu, the father of Dekir, was injured on his hip on the day of Bereket, and was chained with Shanqla saying that the throne is for Menilek, [But now] he goes to fight him after the advice of foreigners. You made me a nun judge. Is this the way to receive the son of dead friend?

ጋላም አርፈህ ተኛ አው ልቀህ ጀልይህን
ያማ ራም ጎበዝ ፍታ ኮርቻህን

በእሳት አቃጠ ሉ ት የሚ ያበንንህን።

The Galla [Oromo] sleep in peace taking off your Jeldo. The Amhara offload your saddle. They burnt the one who caused you sleepless nights.

አንተም ጩ ካኝ ነበርክ ጩ ካኝ አዘዘብ ህ
አንደ ገና ዳቦ እሳት ነደደብ ህ።

You were cruel, you also faced cruelty and you were [burnt] baked like bread for Christmas.

መ ንዝንም አየሁ ቡልጋንም ተጉለትንም አየሁ
ማ ፍድንም ቀወትንም ይፋትንም አየሁ
ብ ፈልግም አጣሁ አንዳንተ ያለ ሰዉ
አመ ድክም ጠ ፋብ ኝ በእንቅብ አንዳላፍ ሰዉ ።

I was looking in Menz, in Bulga, and in Tegulet. I was looking in Mafud, in Qewet, and in Yifat. But I could not get a man like you. I could not get even your ash to take a fistful of it with a platter.

የስንደዶ ወስከም ባይ ያክርማ ሰፊዱ
ም ነዉ ተታለለ አባደክር ወንዱ
ጥንትም በቀረበት ከአፍቃራ መ ዉ ረዱ ።

One grass [*sindedo*] for the cover of a wickerwork basket, the other grass [*akirma*] for a flat basket [*sefed*], why was Bezu the father of Dakir deceived, it was better for him not to descend from Afqara [his fort].

የበተፈ ረሶች ቦራናጠ ለፋ እንዴ ት ይግረማ ችዉ
ገርማ ሜ በአንድ እግሩ ሲከረኩራቸዉ ።
እሳቸዉ ሲሰጡ ት እሱመ ቀበሉ
ከነልቡ ነዉ ይ ከነአደፋፈሩ።

Bezu’s horses, Telefa and Bora, were surprised when Germame provoked them with one leg [the other leg was disabled]. Even if the *nigus* gave him, how he accepted [the position to replace Bezabih]? Was it with courage [charisma]?

መ ቼ ከረብታዉ መ ቼ አፍቃራ ነዉ
መ ቼ ፈረሱ መ ቼ ቦራ ነዉ
መ ቼ መ ሣሪያዉ መ ቼ ጠ መ ንጃዉ ነዉ
በዙ አባደክር እሱን ያኮራዉ
ሓሞ ቱ አንጂ ነዉ አብ ሮት የተሰራዉ ።

It is not the fort, it is not Afqara. It is not his horse, and it is not Bora. It is not his arms, it is not his gun that made Bezuthe father of Dakir proud; but it is his bladder [courage] that he was born with.

The second conflict that Menilek faced in Shewa during his struggle for Shewan leadership was with Bafana, his own concubine from Merhabete. She attempted to mobilise a protest against him by having a common front with his own relatives and rivals (Silassie 2007, 107–13). This was indicated in this oral poem as follows:

ኧረ ጥም ቀት፤ጥም ቀት ኧረ ፲፭፻፲፭
ጠ ርተዉ ሃል ወይ ከእሜ ቱ ባፈና?

On the date of epiphany, on the date of Christmas, were you called for a feast by the madam (Bafana) in secret [for the conspiracy]?

The conflict between Shewa and the central political power north of it was started when the latter invaded the former in 1730 EC (1737/38) during the reign of Emperor Iyasu II (1730–1755). It was because of Abiyie’s, chief of Shewa, refusal to pay annual tributes to the emperor. The conflict was ended by the victory of Shewa (Mekuria 1973, 264–5; Silassie 2007, 107–13). The following song was to inspire the Shewan army for the showdown:

ነጋሪት ቢሙ ታ እም ቢልታ ቢነፋ ጠ ሙ ንጃ ቢተኮስ
እዉ ነት አይም ሰልህ፣
ሸዋን ባባት አገር ማ ነዉ የሚ ደፍርህ፣
እዚያም ተፈርተህ ነዉ ራስ የላኩብ ህ።
ተዉ ሰይፍህን ም ዘዝ ተማ ታ ተ ጉለት፣
የማ ትደ ፈ ረዉ የወንዶቹ ቤት ።
ሙ ቹ ይደፈራል የጠራ ወታደር ጎንደር ቢንጠራራ፣
ሠይፉን ላወረሰዉ ብርቁ ብ ሎ አደራ ።

Even if, the royal drum is beaten, the trumpet is blown, and the gun is fired, it is not true. Who can be impudent in Shewa on the land of his father? There [in Gonder] you were frightened that is why they sent *ras* [army under the command of *ras*]. Draw your sword from the sheath and fight, you! Men of Tegulet, from the unconquered house [land] of heroes. A soldier of Tera could not be subjugated, though Gonder is boasting [to conquer Shewa]. Birku [a famous fighter in the region] gave his sword to the hero of [Tera], by trust upon his death.

Emperor Tekle Giyorgis (1779–1800) still from Gonder attempted to subdue Shewa during the reign of Asfawesen. However, he could not confront the Shewan force because of his internal political problems that forced his army to turn back to Gonder from Wollo (Mekuria 1973, 288–9; Silassie 2000, 78–79). This forfeit was considered a glorious victory from the Shewan side and was boasted as indicated as follows:

ጎንደር ተክላጊዮረጊ ስቅኔያዉ ቃ ል ይላሉ ፣
ትግሬም ወልደገበርኤል ቅኔያዉ ቃ ል ይላሉ፣
በላስታም በቀቴ ቅኔያዉ ቃ ል ይላሉ፣
በጎጃም ም ኃይሉ ቅኔያዉ ቃ ል ይላሉ፣
ከአስፋወሰን ጋራ ሙ ሙራት ሳይችሉ ።

People said that Tekle Giyorgis from Gonder knows *qinie* [religious poetry], Welde Gebri’el from Tigrie knows *qinie*, Bqtie from Lasta knows *qinie*, and Hailu from Gojam knows *qinie*; but they do not know how to lead the forum [share power] with Asfawesen.

ንጉስ ሙ ጣ ሁ ብ ሎ ዐዉጃ ከቀረ
ዘወዱን ለአስፋወሰን ቢልክ ም ን ነበረ።

If the king is absent after claiming [declare] that he will come [for the showdown]; why not, he should send the royal crown for Asfawesen.

ጎንደርንም ከሩት ጎጃም ን ም ከሩት ላስታም ይመ ከር
የሚ ያንገበግብ ነዉ የሚ ተረትር ነዉ የሸዋበትር
ም ነዉ ቀም ሶት ሌ ዶ ጥሩዉ የራስጦር።

Tell Gonder, tell Gojam, and tell Lasta that the arms of Shewa are terrible! They knew that the army of the *ras* experienced it [was defeated some time ago].

እስይ የም ስራች ዕልል አለች ሸዋ
ዘዉ ዲ ን ልትመ ልስ ነዉ በረታ ጋሻዋ።

Congratulations! Shewa is ululating. She is getting back her crown, since her shield is stronger.

የወዲያዉን ቅጠ ል አናዉ ቀዉ ም ና
ራስ ወ ልደጊዮረጊስ አሳየን ብ ሳና።

We do not know what is going on up there [in Gonder], you! *Ras Welde Giyorgis* cross [penetrate] and show us [what they are doing].

The other incident that threatened the Shewan internal autonomy was Tewodros’ (1855–1868) move to centralise political power (Mekuria 1989a, 163–82; Mekuria 1989b). The following songs and poems deal with how Tewodros subdued Shewa by force and treated his Shewan opponents cruelly:

ቁርጡ ን አወቁና ያለ መ ኖርህን
በረከት አገቡ ት ጌታዬ ልጅህን።

Knowing that you are not around [alive], they gave your son as charity [to the new king Tewodros]. It means they took your son to the Bereket district.

ዓፄቴዎድሮስ እጅግ ተዋረዱ
የሸዋን ሰዉ ሁሉ እጅ ነስተዉ ሌ ዱ ።

Emperor Tewodros was too much dishonoured since he bowed to all the men of Shewa [amputated their hands].

የሸዋ መ ኪንጎት ከእንግዲህ አትልፉ
ተመ ዞ የነበር ተከተተ ሰይፉ ።

The nobles of Shewa do not toil here after [because] the pulled sword is returned to its sheath [Saifu, the leader of the rebels, is killed].

ሺህ ሐመ ር ሺህ ዳለች ሺህ በራ ሲሉት የነበረ የሸዋ ፈረስ
አንድ ጥርኝ ቀረ ቢዘልቅ ቴዎድሮስ።

The cavalry of Shewa which was known as thousands of purple, thousands of grey, thousands of yellowish were finished except one *tirign* [a small regiment] by the force of Tewodros.

The final phase of the power struggle between Shewa and the region north of it was the struggle between Yohannis IV (1872–1889) and Menilek for the position of emperorship

of the country by which the former became victorious (Mekuria 1990, 457–68). The following poems and songs are about the intermittent ultimatum between Yohannis and Menilek for the position:

ትግሬንም አየነው ላጩ ላጩ ነው
ጎጃም ንም አየነው ላጩ ላጩ ነው
ቤጌምድርንም አየነው ላጩ ላጩ ነው
አባዳኘው ብቻ ገና ቆንዳላ ነው ።

We have seen Tigrie, they are bald, we have seen Gojjam, they are bald, we have seen Begemider, and they are bald; only *Abba* Dagneu has long hair [hero].

ትግሬም አለን አቤት፤አቤት
ቤጌምድርም አለን አቤት፤አቤት
ጎጃም ወሎም ወልቃይት ጠገዴም ደም ቢያም አለን አቤት፤አቤት
ሸዋ ብቻ ቀረን የጋላ ጎረቤት።

Tigrie declared that they are loyal to us, Begiemidr also declared that they are loyal to us, Gojjam, Wello, Welqait, Tegdie and Dembiya declared that they are loyal to us [now] We are left only with Shewa who is the neighbour of Galla [Oromo].

በስተ ጎጃም በኩል ገበያ ቢያስማማ
በስተ ቤጌምድርም በስተ ቋራም በኩል በስተ ትግሬም በኩል ገበያ ቢያስማማ
እኛም አዉ ቀነዋል አንዳንገዛማ ።

Gojjam agreed to be governed; Begiemider, Quara and Tgrie also agreed to be governed, but we knew that we would not be governed [surrendered].

ለአም ሳ ሰናድር ዋስ የጠራች ሁ
ባሻ አቦዬ ከፈለላችሁ ።

For who pledged to bring fifty shooters [gun], Basha Aboyie has paid for you.

ሲሆን ተከናኑብ ባይሆንአጣ ፋዉ
መታጠቅ አይሆንም እንዳተ ላለሰዉ ።

If possible, cover your head, if not, wear it under your armpits. It is not possible to bow down to a man like you.

እንዴት ያለ ሩቅ ጭንቅ ያለዉ መንገድ
አሸቅቦ ወጥቶ አቆልቁሎ መዉረድ ።

How it is tiresome to go up the top, and coming back to the bottom. [It is shameful to abandon the title of king of kings of Ethiopia to the king of Shewa].

አይሆንም አንጂ ቢሆንማ
ከመጋዘ መሬት ይሻለል ጉልማ ።

It never happens, but if it were to happen, it is better to own private land than to share crop tenures. [If possible it is preferable to be free from the sovereignty of the emperor Yohannis IV]

እንታገል ይላል ጉልበቱን ያመ ነ
መ ጣ ል እንዳተ ነዉ እያመ ነመ ነ።

Let us duel! Says the one who is confident in his strength, but it is good to throw down as you did. [You were able to defeat your rival wisely step by step.]

PATRONAGE FOR CRAFTSMEN BY SHEWAN CHIEFS

The territorial expansions of the Shewan chiefs were successful partly because of the contributions of craftsmen. Their contribution by producing iron agricultural tools and weapons was significant. So the Shewan chiefs were their patrons in one form or another. One example was Amehayes (1744–1775), who had good knowledge of working with gold (Silassie 2000, 70–72). He was appreciated by his subjects and supporters through several oral poems and songs:

አም ኃየስ ም ነዉ አንደዚህ ከበረ
ባባት ያልተሰራ በናት ያልተሰራ ወርቅ ያፈስ ጀመ ረ።

How Amehayes is extremely wealthy, he spends extravagantly, which was never done by his father, never done by his mother. [Amehayes became a gold jeweller which was not the profession of his ancestors].

አም ኃየስወርቁን አፍሶ ቢሰራ
ጓድ ያገኘህ መ ስሎ ህ ቀጥቃጭ እንዳትኮራ።

Although Amehayes became a jeweller, you are craftsmen! Don't be proud of that assuming you got a colleague.

The same support was given to craftsmen by *nigus* Sahile Silassie. The compound of his court was divided into several compartments. Of these, the craftsmen had their own shares (Silassie 2000, 103–5). They were also invited to his palace for different feasts and discussions. However, the craftsmen were disrespected by the *rega* (non-craftsmen) members of Shewan society. The following are the ultimatums between the craftsmen and non-craftsmen on the matter:

ኧረ አይገባም ከነጋሲ ፊት
ኧረ አይገባም ከወይዘሮ ፊት
ሰዉ የሚ በላ ቁራና ጭ ል ፊት።

It should not be in front of kings, it should not be in front of madams, these crows and hawks that eat human beings are invited. [Craftsmen should not be invited in to the palace of the royal family because they possess evil eyes].

እኔ ጠ ይብ ብ ሆን እንዴት ያለ አህያ አንዴት ያለ ጅል
እደጅ አስቀምጭ
አቴና ረግጭ
ብርሌ ጭ ብ ጭ

ታጤ ተጫ ዉ ቛ ::

Even if I am a craftsman, I leave the donkey, the foolish man outdoors, walk on a carpet, drink with a flask and chat with the king.

እንደኔ ያለዉ ን ጅ ል እደጅ ብታ ስቀም ጥ

አቴና ትረግጥ

ብ ርሌ ብ ትጫ ብ ጥ

ብ ትጫ ወት ካጤ

አህያ ፍጅ ብ ለዉ ሰጡ ህ ወይ ቀለጤ ::

If you leave the foolish man like me outside! You walk on a carpet, you drink with a flask
You chat with the king; did he give you a license so that you can finish [eat] donkeys?

PREVALENCE OF FAMINE

The history of Shewa was dominated not only by the type of political, economic and social issues mentioned above but also by the prevalence of persistent famine. One such period of serious famine took place during the reign of Wesenseged (1808–1813) who was associated with bad fortune. He was unpopular because of this (Tafla 1987, 529). Such experiences of the chiefs were recorded in the following oral poems and songs:

ወሰን ሰገድ የሰዉ ልጅ

ችጋር ይ ዟ ል በቀኝ እጅ ::

Wesenseged the son of a man holds famine in his right hand.

ወ ሰንሰገድ ከረገጠ ዉ

በጓም አለች ም ንልግጠ ዉ ::

Even the sheep stops grazing when Wesenseged walks on it [pasture].

The other period of destructive famine took place during the reign of Menilek. It was nicknamed *kifu qen* (evil days) (Demisie 2015, 166–71). The famine (1888–1892) was characterised by the massive death of draught animals and the absence of food. Then people began to consume unusual types of food. They ate different plants, animals, including dead animals. At its climax, it was reported that cannibalism was practiced by which infants were the victims (Demisie 2015, 166–71). These calamities were recorded in poems and songs as follows:

የበሬ ዎ ች ስም ጠ ፍቶ ብ ኝ ነበረ

አሁንስ በስታዉ ስ ከብት ዓለም ነበረ::

I forgot the name of the oxen, now I remember that cattle are wealth.

በሬ በመ ቶ

ያዉ ስ የት ተ ገኝቶ ::

An ox is bought for hundred [too expensive], where is it available even paying that?

ምድር በዶሮ
ዳሩ ማን ገብሮ።

One could buy land for a hen, but who was able to pay the tributes?

አህል በፊት ሲሄድ በሬ ሲያባርር
ሁሉ ም ተከታ ትለው ጠፋ አሉ ከአገር።

Both the crops and ox were out of the country one after the other while the crops were moving ahead and the ox was chasing the crops.

አህል ታሟል አሉ ሌ ደን አንየው
የማይተርፍ አንደሆን እኛ አንቀደሙ ዉ።

Let us visit the crops, reported that the crops are sick! It is better for us to die before, if the crops could not survive.

እረኛ እንኳን የለው የሚጠብቀው
እዩት ያሳያችሁ ሣሩን ሰው በላው።

There is no guard to protect it. Look! A man is eating that grass.

በሬ አንዳል ጠይቅህ አገርህ እርቆ
ያንተን ቀለብ በላሁ የኔቀለብ አልቆ።

Oxen! I ate your food since mine was finished. I could not ask you for permission because your country became far.

ወንድም ሆይ ወንድም ሆይ
ትናንት የበላነው ሢሳይ
አመድ ላይ ተንከባላይ
አምሳዳዊ ላ አዛይ።

My brother! The plenty we had yesterday was the one that rolls on ashes, carries fifty *quintals*. [The meat we ate yesterday was that of donkey].

ዝባድ ለመነገድ ከመውረድ መተማ
ዕጣኑ ይሻላል ለዕለት ራትማ።

Trading in incense is preferable to trading in civets for daily dinner by travelling to Matama. [Eating infants for daily dinner is preferable].

Sometimes the composers of those songs and poems associated two historical incidents that took place at the same time or one after the other, namely the death of *Ras* Gobana and the prevalence of famine as indicated below:

አውነት ም ጎበና የጋላ ልጅ ነው
ከብቱን ይዘት ሌ ደ ወተት እንዳያምረው።

It is true! Gobana, who took all the cattle with him not to lack milk, was the son of Galla [Oromo]. [The cattle died following Gobana's death, he was an Oromo; they are people who love cattle milk very much].

The incidents in the immediate aftermaths of the famine periods were also preserved in oral songs and poems composed by the traditional poets and singers. The following are examples of the memory of the calamities during the period of recovery:

እህል ዘም ቶ ገባ አኛም አየነው
አያሌ ሰው ቀረ ሳይገናኘው ።

We also see that crops come back from the campaign [absence] but, a number of peoples miss to meet [died before getting them back].

እኔም መ ጥቻለሁ በረቴን አጥሬ
ሚ ስቴም ብላኛለች ይሰጠ ሃል ዛሬ
እባክህ ምኒልክ ስጠኝ አንድ በሬ
አደራ ብያለሁ አንዳይቀር በውሬ ።

I come to you after constructing the shelter. My wife told me that I would be given. Would you [Menilek] give me an ox? I remind you! So that it would not be ended in rumour.

ም ኒልክ ለትግሬ መ ቼ ይሰውራል
ምኒልክ ለጎንደር ለጎጃም መ ቼ ይሰውራል
ቀርባችሁ ንገሩት ከመ ላክ ይሻላል ።

Menilek never hides himself from Tgrie, Menilek never hides himself from Gonder and Gojjam. Come and tell him instead of sending a messenger. [Menilek is more generous than an angel]

አህል ዱ ር አደረ ብ ቻው ንም ዋለ
ጠ ላት አንደሌለው ሰው አንዳልገደለ።

Cereals spent the day and night in the field lonely, as if they have no enemy and never killed people. [As if people did not die hungry].

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