

JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

GRADUATE PROGRAMME

A History of Bishoftu Town (1917-2000)

By

Alagar Lakew

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
HERITAGE MANAGEMENT OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY**

OCTOBER, 2014
JIMMA, ETHIOPIA

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Advisor: Ketebo Abdiyo (PhD)

Co-advisor: Yonas Seifu (MA)

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Key to Afaan Oromoo Transliteration System

The following consonants are different transcriptions system from English. For instance, Oromo consonants have stressed by doubling similar consonants.

Example: *Baddaa* - High land

In addition, there are five paired phonemes that are formed by two different consonants. These are: ch, dh, ny, ph and sh. Two of them, ch and sh, have English equivalent. In order to facilitate typing and reading of phonetic transcriptions the following simplified phonetic ‘consonant’ and ‘vowel’ symbols have been used:

A. CONSONANTS

Three of them have no English equivalent. These are: dh, ny and ph which have different from English consonant sounds.

Example: *Dhadhaa*- butter

Nyaata- food

Tapha- play

Again, c, q and x have also different sounds from the English consonants while the remaining have almost the same sound as English consonants. These three could be read as follows:

Example: *Caffee*- meadow or traditional *gadaa* Oromo center

Qawwee- gun

Xuwwee- pot

In general, [C] instead of [ts]

[q]instead of [k]

[x]instead of [t] have used in this paper.

II. VOWELS

Afaan Oromoo has basically five vowels (short and long). These are; a, e, i, o, u and aa, ee, ii, oo, uu. Length in vowels brought in meaning change.

Example: *Lafa*- land

Laafaa- loose/soft

In addition, more than two vowels are possible if separated by glottal Example:*Sa 'aatii*- clock.

Key to Amharic Transliteration System

I. The seven sounds of Amharic alphabets are represented as follows

በ = Bă
ቡ = Bu
ቢ = Bi
ባ = Ba
ቤ = B'é
ብ = Be
ቦ = Bo

II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

ቫ = š
ቼ = č
ኘ = ħ
ከ = zh
ጃ = J

III. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

ቀ = q
ጠ = ṭ
ጭ = ch
ፀ = ś

Preface

This study is on the history of Bishoftu town from 1917-2000. Attempts have been made to utilize available archives, unpublished and published works as well as oral informants. Oral sources are very valuable because many of my informants were contemporary to the events they describe. For most of the post Ethio-Italian war period, I was able to use some documents from the archives of Bishoftu municipality, other government institutions in the town and the archives of Walda Meskal Tariku Research Center of the Institute of Ethiopians Studies (IES). Publications of various government ministries have also been utilized.

So far no significant scholarly attempts have been made to reconstruct the history of the town. Except two senior essays, one in geography and the other in sociology have been produced. Other study that specifically deals with the history of the town has been conducted. This study has therefore attempted to reconstruct the history of Bishoftu by exploring the origin of the town and the various factors that positively or negatively affected its growth and development.

This study has brought to brings facts to bring to light information, analyses which may be useful to understand several aspects of Bishoftu and its hinterlands with relevance also for similar urban centers however , this study itself could not comprehensiveness.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter one I have presented background, in chapter two the evolution of the town upto the Italian occupation, in chapter three growth and development of the town (1941-2000) has been treated, in chapter four town's administration, income and services and in chapter five ethnic groups and social relations have been take up.

Abstract

This study deals with the history of Bishoftu town from 1917-2000. Before Bishoftu had developed into an urban center, it was a railway station since when the line reached the area towards the end of 1917. Subsequently, the small village that flourished around the station drew in a sizeable number of people of diverse origin. In 1935, Bishoftu was a bit larger than station with its multifarious population and economic activities. Yet, at least until the Italian period, it may be difficult to label the area as a full-fledged urban center.

Through the Italian occupation period saw Bishoftu a significant change. The strategic location, agricultural productivity and recreational potential of the area were among the major factors that attracted the Italians to Bishoftu. The Italians made Bishoftu their garrison town, and it was also one of the earliest few places chosen by the Italians for their white settlement scheme. Italians in fact had a significant effect on the infrastructural development, expansion and growth of the town.

Nonetheless, in the post-Italian period that the town witnessed considerable growth and development. Together with the municipality, different administrative and branch offices of various ministries were opened, which obviously drew a sizeable number of government employees to the town. Yet, it was with the establishment of educational research center and above all with various military institutions that the town's development was closely related. Bishoftu's location in the midst of rich agricultural area and along the main highway and the railway, its proximity to the capital, and its scenery made the town a resort place. All these variously contributed to its development.

During the Derg rule with the establishment of new institutions and steady population increase, the town saw unprecedented spatial expansion. Nevertheless, this spatial expansion of the town was not compatible with infrastructure and facilities.

After 1991, the municipality was granted autonomus self-administration status and the town's development has been speeded up. During this period, Bishoftu has become one of the biggest and relatively developed towns by Ethiopian standard.

CHAPTER ONE

Background

1.1. Introduction

History recalls us that human kind for much of its long history lived in scattered situation with a number of people in groups engaging themselves in hunting and gathering activities. It was only after the agricultural revolution that human beings started to live in much aggregated settlements called towns. Towns are larger than the village and smaller than the cities. This type of settlement was made possible because of human technological advancement compared to the prior periods. This rudimentary form of urbanization was followed by the proliferation of large urban center known as cities. Lewis Mumford defined city in the following way: “The city is a form and symbol of intargeted social relationship: it is the great seat of the temple, the hall of justice, the academy of learning”¹

Urbanization could be seen as a process of rise and development of cities that substantially altered people’s way of life from agrarian to the industrial society. Although significant number of cities existed prior to industrialization, urbanization played a role of transformation from rural way of life to a city system; followed by frequent social ties and physical proximity. Cities developed through natural population increase and migration of population from rural to urban centers. One of the late 19th and early 20th century’s theoretician Max Weber argues that “cities are products of commercial activities”.²

In the middle of the 20th century, at least half of the population of industrialised countries lived in cities while most of the developing nation’s population particularly sub-saharan Africa predominantly lived in rural areas. This trend seems to correlate urbanism with industrial development. Commenting on early 20th urbanism, Louis wirth considered “cities as impressive facts of modern era”.³

Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that improvements in agriculture were of great significance both for the emergence and sustained growth of urban centers. The improvement of means of transportation was also of equally important for the growth of urban centers.⁴ All these factors together with “favorable ecological base”, relative advance of technology in both agriculture and

non-agricultural fields, and a well-established. Power structure greatly enhanced the process of urbanization in human history in the various parts of the world .⁵

In this process, there were obstacles and setbacks. The period before the industrial revolution was characterized by both successes and failures of urban life and development. The rise and fall of cities was closely related with the existing political situation. Cities emerged, grew and develop and then faced partial or complete decline or fall with the empires under which they flourished once. But socio-cultural factors were not always responsible for the decline or fall of cities. In the past, before the industrial revolution, natural catastrophe such as the eruption of plagues devastated the urban population leading to severe urban decline. More recently, such natural problems are being brought under some degree of control through technological advancement; socio-economic forces particularly wars, seriously threaten the existence of urban centers.⁶ Nevertheless, having emerged in human history, 3,500 BC years ago, the urban tradition has continued to exist in one form or another right down to our own days.⁷

After the demise of the Roman Empire, there was a great setback in the growth of urban centers. The cultural and economic stagnation which followed did not favor the development of urbanization. So, there was a general decline of urban growth from the fifth to the tenth centuries AD and this period is generally known as the “Dark age” in European history. With the revival of commerce in Europe, from the eleventh century AD onwards urban centers had begun to revive. Europe began to have an increased number of new urban centers during the late Middle Ages .⁸

Although the medieval European towns were small and harbored only a fraction of the population of the region in which they were created, they were in a position to play a great role in linking industry and commerce, emphasis being given to techniques which became the base for enhanced urbanization process. The development came about due to abundant increase in productivity, which was indeed the result of using “energy and machinery.” Nonetheless, even after the medieval period set in, for three consecutive centuries, the growth of urbanization was still at its low ebb .⁹

Medieval Europe was characterized by the increase in the number of towns rather than their expansion in size.¹⁰ After the medieval period, the growth of the urban population became

increasingly evident mainly in the political and religious centers of Europe .¹¹ By and large during the period preceding the industrial revolution, Europe was dominated by agrarian life .¹² However, the sustained technical and economic transformation which was to become later the basis of industrial revolution, had already been working towards the growth of urban centers of population and generally towards the pace of which rapid urbanization was to take place.¹³

The industrial revolution then brought about enhanced urban transformation of long lasting effect all over the world. The relation between economic progress and urbanization was in fact, of much importance as urbanization became synonymous with economic growth. This relationship has evolved to its maturity in the present developed countries of the world after the industrial revolution .¹⁴ The industrial development in Europe had a significant effect on the process since developments of far reaching outcomes were to take place in the fields of urbanization following the industrial revolution .¹⁵ Consequently, large scale urbanization began in Europe.¹⁶

This very fact indeed misled scholars who, until recently, entertained the view that urbanization always went hand in hand with industrialization and economic growth. This view, which seems to be generally true, for the developed countries of the world, is not applicable to urban process of the third world countries, where urbanization has become a fore runner rather than the outcome of industrialization and economic progress.¹⁷ High rate of urbanization in developing countries has been less the work of economic development and industrialization than the result of the rural poverty which pushed out farmers from their native habitat .¹⁸ It is also clear that towns and cities existed in different parts of the world long before the effect of industrialization relation was felt. This was the case in regions least affected by this revolution .¹⁹

The rapid rate of urbanization in the world began to manifest itself after the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the rate of world urbanization in the nineteenth century was not as rapid as that of the first half of the twentieth century. It was during the latter period that urban growth and expansion became very rapid in what are today the developed nations of the world. In Europe, the second half of the nineteenth century was noted by urban transformation due to the emerging industrialization and fast economic growth and by the first half of the twentieth century, this transformation seems to have reached its climax. The turn of developing countries for rapid urban growth was only to come in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁰

One of the major historical developments of the twentieth century, which attracted and is still attracting the attention of the world scholars, is the growth of urban centers both in number and population. This century is particularly unique for the tremendous growth of urban centers and the unprecedented concentration of huge populations in relatively few centers .²¹

In 1950, the urban population of developing countries was only 16 percent of the total population. This jumped to 30 percent in the early 1980s, and it is estimated that by the end of this century, it will reach the level of 43 percent.²² At present, the urban growth of the developing countries is proceeding at a much faster pace than ever before in history . In the period between 1960 and 1990, the urban population of developing countries grew by about 334 percent in Africa and 224 percent in Asia and Latin America. The overall urban population of developing countries grew from 280 million in 1950 to over 1.5 billion in 1990.²³ By the end of this century, more than two thirds of the urban population of the world is expected to be developing countries. This will happen in these countries where the great majority of the population will still continue to be rural.²⁴ Currently, almost half of the world's population and three-fourth of westerners live in cities. In the period between 1960 and 1992, the number of city dwellers in the world increased by 1.4 billion.²⁵

1.2. Urbanization in Africa

Urbanization has not been the same all over the world. Even in Africa, which is the least urbanized continent of the world, the rate of urbanization has not been uniform; it differed from a region to region and country to country. Yet, the rate of growth of the urban population in Africa has been the most rapid in the world. This has been caused not only by difference between birth and death rates, but also by the migration of people from rural areas to urban centers.²⁶

A major factor for the emergence and growth of pre-colonial Africa urban centers was internal development of Africa societies in response to inter-regional and international long distance trade. These traditional Africa urban centers, thus served as focal points for administration, religious rites and trade.²⁷ Apparently the process of urbanization in Africa began to accelerate since the colonial period, which witnessed the foundation of many new urban centers without, however, necessarily leading to the abandonment of the already existing ones.²⁸

The colonial period brought urban development. The European colonialists came to Africa as colonial masters of the continent in the late nineteenth century and opened the way for the foundation of new urban centers. European colonization, which took place in almost all parts of Africa, brought western economic enterprise and the market economy which began to influence African life. This economic enterprise and market economy required urban facilities to which the Europeans were accustomed in their metropolitans. European settlements gradually evolved into urban centers; and other towns grew due to specific economic activities such as coal mining, for example South Africa .²⁹

The European colonizers constructed railway lines and roads, which became additional factors for the emergence of new urban centers. In the process, already existing settlement areas were, absorbed into newly emerging towns, and new urban centers had also been founded. Just as the earlier urban centers were generally intended to serve the needs of the new towns were to serve the desire of the colonizers to settle their own people and serve as centers for their administrative, commercial, and manufacturing activities .³⁰

The first and massive effort of the Europeans to penetrate to the major resource areas of Africa was through opening up of routes of penetration of which the construction of the railway lines to link the port towns with the hinterlands.³¹ The period between from 1885 to 1931 when the colonizers where actively delimiting their spheres of influence in Africa , was characterized by a great era of railway construction in Africa.³² By the beginning of this century, the railway system in West Africa had already started to look like "...a system of coastal rivers draining the continent to the sea."³³

The rail way termin also in the coastal regions from Dakar to Luanda developed into capitals or into major cities. External trade was their main function. In other parts of Africa, particularly, in North Eastern Africa, the European focus was not coastal towns it was rather one of the major towns in the interior such as Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Kampala, Nairobi, and Salisbury. In this case, the railway was erected to link them with ports under firm colonial control. Thus, Khartoum was linked with Port Sudan; Addis Ababa with Djibouti; and Nairobi with Mombasa. In the case of this region, therefore, the main focal points of urban agglomeration, economic activities and political power were not the coastal towns but the interior ones.³⁴ There are however, a few exceptions to this rule as Daresaleam and Maputo, for example, developed as

coastal urban centers following the tradition of West Africa. On the other hand, there were mushrooming urban formations along the railway routes leading to the interior of Africa. Nairobi in Kenya, Dire Dawa, Adama and Bishoftu in Ethiopia are few examples of this development.³⁵

In the case of Ethiopia, the country was not colonized by Europeans and the influence from Europe was not direct. However, the case of Ethiopia was not much different from the rest of Africa as far as the changes which spread all over the continent were concerned in the fields of urbanization.³⁶

Even though Europeans did not come to Ethiopian territory as colonial masters, they were undoubtedly successful in exercising indirect influence. They came as experts in different fields such as military affairs, arts and crafts, health and commerce; and they enhanced the changing trends in Ethiopia within the context of developments in the rest of Africa. The military experts were responsible for giving military training while the traders were particularly active on providing armaments which were in great demand by Menilik for accomplishment of his conquests expansion. European advisors were also responsible for the introduction of modern facilities to the country, particularly, the construction of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway line.³⁷ The railway contributed easily access to get different military aid to the emperor. All these contributed to Menilik's expansion and the creation of present Ethiopia.

1.3. Urbanization in Ethiopia

In spite of the fact that Ethiopia is often regarded as a nation of small villages and home steads, the history of urbanization in this country has counted millennia. The long existing indigenous tradition of urbanization distinguishes it from most sub-Saharan African countries. Despite their disappearance or decline status ancient towns of Ethiopia such as Yeha and Adulis emerged and flourished before the Christian era. Aksum, one of the largest towns of the early medieval world emerged before the introduction of Christianity and blossomed during the Christian era. The main channel of communication with the outside world was the Red Sea, which brought people and goods to Aksum not only from Arabia, the north and the Mediterranean region, but also from the south and the Indian ocean.³⁸

Compared to many early cities in Africa, Aksumite empire urban centers achieved a reasonable degree of cultural development in which urbanization, local and international commerce played a

very important part. However, the level of civilization reached during the Aksumite period could not have been achieved in isolation from the rest of the world. Aksum must be seen within the context of the world political and economic system of the period. The rise and development of Aksum was the result of the interaction of both internal and external forces. While its emergence could be attributed to the internal development of the society in which it was founded, its further growth and development must have been enhanced greatly by its wide ranging international contacts through trade.³⁹

The Zagwe dynasty was founded in about the middle of the twelfth century, and ruled over most parts of the former Aksumite Empire from its capital at Adafa (later Lallibala) until it was overthrown by yet another dynasty around 1270.⁴⁰ During the Zagwe period it may be said that, there was a revival in architecture with the continuation of some of the technological advances already achieved by Aksum.⁴¹

Medieval Ethiopia showed no significant development of urban development when we compare the period with the Aksumite and Zagwe periods. This period seems to be characterized by economic decline and political flexibility that hindered the emergence and development of urban centers.⁴² Even though the isolation hypothesis is invalid for medieval Ethiopia,⁴³ one may safely state that the foreign contacts of Ethiopia by then was not strong enough to inspire great developments in the political and economic spheres. Thus, no strong urban centers could emerge beyond relatively small market towns and the mobile political camps of the period.⁴⁴

Until about the beginning of the seventeenth century, these centers and market towns served as political and economic bases for local and long-distance trade which was the backbone of medieval Ethiopia.⁴⁵ Pankhurst gives us the period from the fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century stating that “political and to lesser extent commercial factors... led to the emergence over the centuries of a succession of military camps, embryonic or static capitals, and trading centers.”⁴⁶ The emergence of Gondar, which later became a famous capital of Ethiopia, was the outcome of the gradual resurgence of the urbanization process in the country.

Although the anarchy during the so-called Era Princes (1769-1855) seem to have had adverse effect on the growth of trade through out the *zemene mesafint* in the region; and with this, there

was the establishment of Sunday local market towns that could also serve as administrative centers being bases for important political figures .⁴⁷

Pankhurst also notes that the decline of the power of monarchy in Gondar in the second half the eighteenth century and the consequent rise of various autonomous regional rulers actually led to the growth of several local capitals such as Dabratabor in Bagemidir, Antalloy and Addigrat in Tigray, Bichana and Dima in Gojjam, Ankobar, Angolala and Dabra Birhan in Showä .⁴⁸ In the southwest Ethiopia, such centers as Bonga, dating back to at least the 16th century.⁴⁹ Jiren Saqqa and others were also important market town in the nineteenth century, these were also major political centers of the different states in the region and they also assumed an important economic position since they were located on the lucrative long-distance trade routes and rich agricultural zone.⁵⁰

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the union of Ethiopia had been a matter of highest priority, although certainly this union was visualized differently at different times. For Tewodros, it meant the creation of a centralized unitary state. For Yohannes it signified the establishment of loosely united Ethiopia, with independent regional rulers under an emperor exercising munificent political suzerainty. By 1889, it had failed to produce the desired result. This is not to refuse the strength of the ideas and the traditions gave by the final analysis; it is different to over look the fact that both failed in the objectives they had set out to achieve.⁵¹

After long struggle of the zemene mesafint Menilik took power the political problems of the country. The Emperor formed the central government and internal war ceased. In the process of forming a united Ethiopia, the Emperor conquered areas and in the occupied areas military garrisons were formed. It was the military garrison's which formed the first nuclei of the present important urban areas. Emperor Menilik is credited with initiating the areas process of urbanization in Ethiopia. As k.Ishwarn put it, "Menilik II is often credited with initiating the policy led to the present urbanization of Ethiopia."⁵²

Meniliks conquest was followed by relative political stability and effective administration which led to the growth of the already existing urban centers and the foundation of new ones. During this period, therefore, we see the relative acceleration in the pace of urbanization in Ethiopia.⁵³

The other major development of far-reaching consequence during the reign of Menilik was the introduction of train transport. Europeans attached great economic significance to the construction of railway lines in Africa. One of the most important vehicles of indirect influence by Europeans in Ethiopia was the railway line built between Addis Ababa and Djibouti. The construction of this line clearly reflected the desire to exploit the resources of the hinterland of Ethiopia through the port of Djibouti. Construction started in 1897 and was completed in 1917. It naturally led to the emergence of many railway stations which were gradually transformed into sizeable urban and market centers. These centers include Dire Dawa, Awash, Matahara, Adama, Mojo, Bishoftu and Aqaqi. Thus, the railway increased the urban bases of Ethiopia.⁵⁴

Although the reign of Menilik may be said to have laid the foundations for urban centers in various conquered parts of the country, it was during the brief Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941) that more intensive urbanization began to take place. The Italians came with their European technological know-how and above all, with their sophisticated urban experience, which they imposed on the traditional Ethiopian urban structure.⁵⁵

In their attempt to pacify and administer the country effectively and to exploit the country economically, the Italians transformed the already existing urban centers and villages into advanced urban centers. They also founded new towns of their creation.⁵⁶ Since the Italian occupation; towns became objects of special attention with increasing numbers of people abandoning the drudgery of rural life for the squalor of the towns. This clearly reflects a basic change of values which seems to have persisted to the present.⁵⁷ Thus, it may be said that, the Italian period was one of the periods of a major urbanization process into Ethiopia.

After liberation, the restored government of Emperor Haile Sellassie continued to build upon the field of urbanization, as far as possible and, enhanced the urbanization process. Urban centers were reorganized and municipal administration had been instituted in the different parts of the country. The construction, improvement and maintenance of roads highly contributed to the growth of Ethiopian towns. In some cases it even led to the creation of small towns emerging from the temporary camps of the highway authority mostly northern Ethiopian towns. These centers had become crucial points of interaction between the surrounding rural population and the employees of the authority.⁵⁸

The establishment of hydro-electric power stations at different times and places particularly along the course of Awash River has had its own contribution to the urbanization process of the country. Supported by foreign capital, the government also introduced several import-substitution industries in the 1950s and 1960s. The locations of these industries and their neighborhood became important urban centers.⁵⁹

The appearance of mechanized farming and import-substitution industries particularly in the rift valley and the overall socio-economic environment of the country between the late 1950s and the early 1970s were all responsible for the growth of the urban establishments.⁶⁰ Even though the archaic socio-economic system did not allow much economic progress in general, particularly, in agriculture, urbanization had already reached a considerable level of growth before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia has been undertaking rapid urbanization since the 1950s. In this process, net migration to urban centers from rural areas accounted for more than 50 percent of the urban population growth. In some cases, it jumped to as high as 80 percent.⁶¹ Like in all the other developing countries; this was affected by the interaction of what is called the “urban-pull” and “rural-push factors” as one. The relative concentration of modern economic activities, social and other services and the location of government institutions in the urban centers attracted the rural people to urban centers. Real or imaginary expectations for better life and job opportunities have also been pulling people from rural areas to urban centers.⁶² The urban growth of the 1960s and 1970s was caused also by the gradual increase in the number of import-substitution industries and the emergence of medium and large scale commercial farms, particularly, in the Awash Valley which either created new urban centers or enhanced the growth of the already existing ones.⁶³

In contrast to the urban environment, the rural environment of Ethiopia had many complex problems of its own which made life extremely difficult. This situation had the effect of “pushing” people from rural one as to already existing urban centers or to the newly emerging ones in their neighbourhood.⁶⁴

In general urbanization in Ethiopia is still in its infant stage, and so it is still too early to foretell the role of towns in the process assimilation. The character of the majority of the smaller towns in

this country is neither urban nor modern. In the case of the larger towns, it might be useful to request into their composition, the nature of which is a basic factor in their functions as potential channels of assimilation.⁶⁵

1.4. The Study Area

Bishoftu is situated between 8⁰43'N latitude and 38⁰56'E longitude. It is located at a distance of 47 km south east of Addis Ababa and 52 km from Adama in the north. The foundation of Bishoftu town was directly connected with Ethio-Djibouti Railway line, the whole construction was completed in 1917. Bishoftu is at the center of Ada'a Liban District as indicated in some documents, it was established around 1917. The term Bishoftu was derived from the Afan Oromo language. *Bishaanoftuu* which is referring to "the land of excess water body", literary speaking, the word Bishoftu is given to the city based on the locally available many creater lakes such as Bishoftu, Hara Arsadi, Chäläläkä /seasonal/, Kuriftu, Kilole, Green lake and Babogaya. Therefore, the name Bishoftu was drived from many water bodies that surrounded the city at a near distance.⁶⁶

The topography of a given town can hinder on facilitate the development of a given town. Hence, the natural topography of Bishoftu town with buffer zones have been characterized in the north and east by hot land on the west by undulating land that is dominated by the hills, while the general topography of the town is undulating that is dominated by hills. The elevation of the town ranges from 1900-1995 meters above sea level. It is very important to note that the town is a part and parcel of the rift valley system in Ethiopia.⁶⁷

The altitude of the city ranges from 1900 to1995 meters above sea level. Thus, it belongs to *Weina-Dega* (warm cimete). Its average temperature and annual rainfall are 26⁰C and 733.00 mm respectively. May is the hottest month of the year while November is the coldest town, with 0 mm and 241 mm of rainfall, respectively. The highest wind speed is registered in April (5.45m/s) and the most common wind direction seen in the city is easterlies.⁶⁸

Ada'a District in which Bishoftu is located is fertile area, where before the land nationalization of 1975 mechanization of agriculture was implemented. This development of mechanization was a major factor for the eviction of large number of tenants and resulted in the rapid increase of the town's population, as unemployment spread in rural areas forced out large number of tents were

forced to leave for Bishoftu to seek employment and survival. ⁶⁹These and other features of Bishoftu influenced her historical development forty five years ago. The town was reported to have a population of 15,000. In the town has expanded in recent years and in 1984 the population of the town reached 56,000.⁷⁰

The construction of Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway line was the major factor for the emergence and development of chain of towns in the Addis Ababa-Djibouti corridor. Most of the big towns today along the railway line were small nuclei regarding this, Ronald J, Horvath wrote, “the important impetus to urbanization was the building of Addis Ababa-Djibouti rail road which reached Addis Ababa in 1917. A string of rail road stations were established which formed the nuclei of many important towns today”.⁷¹

Figure 1. Ethio-Djibouti railway line



Source: Inernet “Ethio-Djibouti railway”

Beginning as railway-station, some of them developed into sizeable towns and, more importantly, have laid adequate foundations for future growth. Along the eastern section of the railway, Dire Dawa has developed into one of Ethiopians most impotent towns; at the western

end the towns of Akaki, Bishoftu, Mojo, and Adama form and urban-industrial complex with Addis Ababa which contains most of Ethiopian's modern economic establishment.⁷²

The introduction of the railway line into Ethiopia not only increased domestics and foreign trade, but was also a main factor for the emergence of numerous urban tentacles. In 1917, by the time the line reached the capital, there were about thirty four embryos of towns capable of becoming large urban centers. Today all of them exhibit some form of urban agglomeration and some have emerged as important towns of which Bishoftu is one.⁷³

Bishoftu owed its birth to the construction of Addis Ababa-Djibouti rail road. The railway line passes through the town bisecting into two parts. The railway station is located at the present central part of the town near the central park. It was this station that provided the nucleus for the foundation of Bishoftu. The houses and offices for the railway workers were first constructed here. The principal inhabitants of the station were, at first, the people who built the railway and worked in the station.⁷⁴

Soon the present town began to take shape around the station. First the indigenous people started to settle around the station in order to provide the necessary services for the railway workers. Soon they participated in the commercial activity. It was in such process that Bishoftu started as an urban center and continued to flourish. The station of the train stop became gradually the site of governmental and non-governmental institutions. Not only Bishoftu during that time whose development was facilitated by the construction of this mode of transport. This was also true for Adama and Dire Dawa which became also important stop for train. Therefore, railway construction and development of towns, especiall entailed the origin vary its line's corridor.⁷⁵

Again I Horvath who quotes has said on the contribution of railway for the emergence of towns in Ethiopia: "...Four rail way stations were built within the study area which formed a part of the chain stations from Addis Ababa to the Red Sea. The building of rail way was companied by one of the major town founding spasms in Ethiopia".⁷⁶

The construction of the railway, therefore, was one of the initiative factors for the development of the town and this rail road town represents one of the first significant departures from traditional pattern of urbanism.

Figure 2. The railway station in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

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CHAPTER TWO

The Evolution of the Town to the End of Occupation (c.1917-1941)

2.1. Bishoftu before the Italian Period

The town is situated to the north of the Awash River basin in the locality of Wadecha River, a tributary of the Mojo River which eventually enters Lake Qoka.¹ Of the seven crater lakes found in Ada'a District two are located in the town of Bishoftu. These are Bishoftu and Hora (Arsadi) lakes within an area of 0.93 kms² and 1.03 km² wide, respectively. The former is situated in southwesterly direction while the later is located in northeasterly direction of the town. The highest depth of Lake Bishoftu is 81.4 meters and that of Lake Hora is 37.8 with a similar attitude of 1850 meters above sea level.² Besides these lakes, there are two lakes in the district. These are Kuriftu and Chäläläkä located adjacent to the town. The former is an artificial lake with an average depth of 2.79 meters.³ Lake Chäläläkä is located to northeast of the town. Though it covers a wide area during rainy season in the dry season its size greatly diminishes and, its ever extended land is used for cultivation.⁴

Figure 3. Bishoftu Lake has the highest depth (81.4 meters) from the seven lakes from Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

The landscape of Bishoftu is a result of the quaternary volcanism which rendered the area a unique volcanic geomorphology. Later it was altered to a certain extent by pluvial deposits. Within and in the outskirts of the town there are several cinder cones craters.⁵ Except Chalalaka and Kuriftu, the remaining crater lakes are supposed to be hydrologically linked below the surface of the ground. These lakes are identified by steep edges with flat bed, and with respect to each other they are lined up in a NNE direction with an apparent direction of the Rift Valley's faults. The town is surrounded by elevated terrains such as the hills of Hayle Gara in the southeast, Fiti in the east, Mandube in the northeast, and Gara Baru in the southwest.⁶

It was by the turn of the twentieth century that Ethiopia began to witness unprecedented urban development. Apart from Menelik's conquest of the south and the subsequent establishment of garrison towns, the construction of the railway ushered in a new period in the diffusion of urbanization.⁷

The first civilized world's land transport was train transport. In the past, during the railway era, the completion of new railway line was great accomplishment in terms of time factor and travel; almost as much as the space rocket was becoming during the 1960.⁸ In the history of mechanical transport system, the occupies the first and the oldest place as the pioneer of the great revolutions in train transportation of goods.⁹ Its origin being in Europe, railway transport was later introduced to the rest of the world. The turn of Africa for railway transport came at the end of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries, during the colonial period.¹⁰

Even though it had not fallen under colonial rule, Ethiopia had its own share of this new transport system during the same period. The railway was the first and the oldest modern transport facility introduced to Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Menilik II. It was the first "safe, fast and relatively inexpensive means of communication". It was a means of connecting the interior of Ethiopia with the coast and the world at large for many years.¹¹

Ancient caravan trade routes tended to give rise to many market centers, which could eventually grew into towns. The railway line did this to a much greater degree with its stations gradually developing from small villages to large sized towns. It was absolutely necessary for the railway to have stations. In the Ethiopian territory alone about 34 such stations were established at different intervals along the line.¹² Of these stations some have now assumed the position of big

towns, while others are still at their early stages of development. Of these, we may cite the following in accordance with order of their growth: Dire Dawa, Adama, Bishoftu, Mojo, Matahara, Awash, Walinchiti and Meiso.

The railway, obviously, alleviated the former geographical barriers by bringing the country's central and eastern regions together. It brought a considerable increase in passengers as well as freight traffic.¹³ Though the railway line followed the general direction of the traditional routes, this trend did not conform in the case of Bishoftu town. Because of its mountainous nature, the traditional route by way of Yerar was not suitable for the railway. On the contrary, the plains of Bishoftu, argue my informants, were one major reason behind the selection of the site for the passage of the railway line and its station.¹⁴ The other contributory factor was the presence of a market center nearby.¹⁵

Prior to the establishment of the railway station, market centers had already flourished in the area. Two railway stations were built, not far away from these market centers. The bigger station is called *les Addas* (or commonly known as Bishoftu station) it was built between the two crater lakes, ie. Bishoftu and Hora. It was situated southwest of the Haddo (Tuesday) market and in today's central part of the town. This was the major station from at passengers and freight transportation services were given. Moreover, it was here that the first settlement which formed a nucleus for the future evolution of Bishoftu town was laid.¹⁶

The other station was built at about 3 kms northwest of the former station near the Dambi market. This station was built mainly for the railway workers and the train seldom stopped there.¹⁷ The first settlers who clustered around the railway station were laborers and five French engineers employed by the railway company. These railway employees shifted their settlement when another station was built at the nearby site of Dukam. However, they were succeeded by another group of workers who made their residence around the station. There were only a few mud huts with thatched roofs and the station's office with a corrugated iron roof. These railway workers were the first permanent residents around the station to form the nucleus of the later Bishoftu town.¹⁸

The need for food supply on the part of the new settlers generated economic ties with the rural areas. The nearby residents provided the railway workers with locally made bread and alcoholic

drinks. Women were the main suppliers of food and beverages. Gradually, however, rather than travelling to and from their nearby villages they began to settle permanently near the railway station. This led to the establishment of small taverns to sell food and locally prepared alcoholic beverages.¹⁹

In addition to the railway station there were other small and scattered settlements. One of these was an early settlement found around the church of Kajema Giyorgis. This church was founded by one of the Ada'a *ballabats* Bullo Jullo in, 1843, it was during Sahlä-Sellase (r. 1843-1847), king of Shawa and the grand father of Emperor Menelik, and Ada'a was tributary to the Shäwän kingdam. Besides the priests of the church, some peasant farmers settled around the railway station, the governor administered the area from there.²⁰ Both oral sources and travel accounts agree that, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Menelik's appointed governor of Ada'a was *Azüz Bözabeh*.²¹

The other important development during the pre-Italian period was the establishment of the Bishoftu Model Farm. It was established in 1929 on the two *gäshas* (80 hectares) of land allotted by the government to experiment of modern agricultural production. The land was taken from the *Wärägänu* (name of the place) land found at Foqa, located northeast of the town.²² The man behind this scheme was *Ato* Mekonnen Habta Wald, the Director General of the Ministry of Commerce, the brother of Aklilu Habta Wald prime minister of the country. The project was conducted on the basis of the plan initially drawn by a European agronomist, H.Ossent. Two Germans and a Bulgarian were employed.²³

The center tried to practice both the cultivation of crops and animal husbandry along modern lines. However it was crop cultivation like *téff*, wheat and chickpeas that gained more attention.²⁴ To this end, tractors were bought and mechanized farming started. Some thirty-five individuals were transferred from *Wärägänu* to the model farm and became employees of the Ministry of Agriculture. There were also a large number of daily laborers drawn from the surrounding rural areas and even some workers from Walayta were brought to work on this farm.²⁵

Though at the time the model farm was located on the outskirts of the town, it had a significant contribution to the emergence of the area into an urban center. Its work force including

professionals and laborers, used to dwell near the model farm and around Lake Hora, which eventually brought new settlement.²⁶

The relocation of the Dambi market, which was formerly was located at a quarter called Lamlam Tubya in the present *Kebele* 01, also took place before the Italian occupation. The new market place was located not more than 200 meters behind the railway station, here the present Bishoftu Hospital and Worka Hotel are found. Similarly, the administrative quarter of the area was also shifted from Kajima area to the long road to Lake Hora where the present court and the Makana Yasus Evangelical Church are located.²⁷ These transfers might have taken place because of the concentration of more and more inhabitants around the railway station and the nearby areas.

The site around the station, therefore, began to develop as an important commercial as well as administrative center. Some modern buildings were also built which include the station itself and the dwellings of the railway workers and merchants.²⁸ At the newly established market small scale commercial activities were conducted. Items like *téff*, wheat, beans, and chick peas were brought from the surrounding rural areas. The market, which was held on Saturdays, also served as important point of livestock transaction sheep, goats, cattle and chickens were brought from the nearby and far away areas.²⁹

The station village eventually developed into an important traffic center from which travelers were departed to Addis Ababa, Adama and Dire Dawa and vice versa. The railway created not only job opportunities for some individuals as officers, maintenance workers and, garages, but also enhanced the commercial activities of the area. Various individuals began to engage as providers of food and drinks not only to the company's staff, but also to the passengers. During the train stop, individuals who lived even far from the station brought various types of food and drinks.³⁰

In time the small village that emerged around the station pulled a sizeable number of people of diverse ethnic origin. In fact, even before the days of Menilik people from various parts of the country had come to Ada'a to settle permanently. However, this time the new immigrants were composed of not only farmers, but also individuals who tried to make their fortune as entrepreneurs.³¹ various kinds' of commercial activities began to expand bit by bit. Around the station, the number of traders, butchers, and tailors increased. The sale of food and drinks also

increased. Among these individuals, who engaged in business activities some become more and more successful and wealthy and earned for themselves the reputation of being pioneers in the urbanization process. Before the Italian period the number of shops in the town was very much limited. In those days goods were usually sold in the market on market days. According to informants the Arabs were the pioneers in opening shops. During and after the Italian period, the number of Arabs and other foreigners alike considerably increased in the town.³²

Among active Ethiopian traders in the town were the Soddo Gurages. Unlike their Arab partners, the Soddo Gurages sold their goods in the markets. They sold almost all sorts of consumer goods like salt, clothes, pepper, utensils, etc. Some even brought coffee on pack animals by traveling as far as Jimma. Tailoring was also another important occupation dominated by the Soddo Gurages before and after the Italian occupation in 1936.³³

The first modern hotel in the town was Foqa Hotel (the later Hora Ras Hotel). It was a government hotel built in 1931 under the supervision of *Ato* Makeonnen Habta Wald. The hotel was mainly opened to serve some state officials and foreigners, who came to visit the area and the Bishoftu Model Farm. Initially its size was very small and it was usually known as Foqa Hotel, bearing the name of the area.³⁴ Apart from this hotel no modern hotel existed in the town before the Italian period. In those days, the town's dwellers rather frequented butcheries, which were commonly opened as early as the pre-Italian occupation and exist to this date in large number. It is known as Bagashaw *tāj bét*. Its owner, Bāgashaw Wāldé was among the earliest business men in the town.³⁵

As the Soddo Gurages dominated the retail trade and tailoring, so did the Walaytas in butchery. Though some natives engaged in some commercial activities, the most active elements in this respect were individuals who came from other areas, especially from the Gurageland and Walayta. The majority of the local inhabitants at the time rather engaged in agricultural activities.³⁶

In 1935 Bishoftu was a bit bigger than a station village, though its dwellers did not exceed 300, the population and its economic activities were multifarious. Yet, prior to the Italian occupation, it may be difficult to label the area as a full-fledged town. Rather it was in the process of transformation from a small village to a large village with some noticeable elements of urban

features. Yet, it was during the Italian occupation and after that the area became a flourishing urban center.³⁷

2.2. Bishoftu during the Italian Occupation (1936-1941)

When they came, what the Italians found was only a small and impoverished Bishoftu village, which they began to transform into real urban centre. It was during the occupation, between the years 1936 and 1941, that the village can be said to have started to grow into a small town.³⁸ After the Ethiopians defeat at the battle of Mayichew and the occupation of the capital, Addis Ababa, in May 1936, the Italians may be said to have, partially, completed their war of conquest. But the patriotic resistance soon followed and seriously disturbed the Italians throughout their colonial period.³⁹

The Italians first appeared in the area when they made their way to the capital by train. The Ada'a patriots led by *Däjjazmach* Fekra-Märyam Yännadu ambushed and inflicted damage on the Italians when they reached the area. The remaining Italians were intercepted and attacked by the patriots, who loosened the railway line at a place called Gogeti near Dukam. In the incident almost all the Italians were wiped out. It was after this incident that, the Italians came to control the area.⁴⁰ In the mean time the Italians faced stiff resistance from the patriots in what my informants called the Battle of Bishoftu. This battle is said to have lasted from July 7 to 8, 1936. After two days of fighting, the Italians finally broke the resistance and controlled the area. Thereafter, the patriots retreated to Bulga and Shankora areas.⁴¹

Several factors attracted the Italians to Bishoftu. Its strategic location, the agricultural productivity and recreational potential of the area and its surroundings were some of the major ones. The Italians used Bishoftu as a check-point and buffer zone against the patriots, who attempted to intrude into the capital. Furthermore, due to its proximity to the capital, the Italians found it easy to dispatch their speedy force from Bishoftu. To this end, they set up a special commissariat of Bishoftu which encompassed Aqaqi, Ada'a, Mojo and Zequala with the principal aim of protecting the capital, Addis Ababa.⁴² Bishoftu was, therefore, one of the garrison towns chosen and settled by the Italians. This had a significant effect in the expansion and growth of the town. They built several buildings for the commissariat, for the residence of senior officers and ordinary soldiers.⁴³

The development of the town was mostly speeded up during the occupation of the Italians. They introduced different services, such as hotel, bars and restaurants particularly in the centre of the town; at the present square in front of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Most of the services were concentrated for only one purpose. Their contribution was also by involving themselves in the construction of roads and houses. Not only Italians, who provided services to the town, there were also other foreigners who were the owners of shops and kiosks. During this time, the owners of shops or kiosks were the Greeks and the Arbas. But the number of Ethiopians who possessed shops and other trading post in the town was few. Bishoftu was not only the town whose development was facilitated during the Italian occupation; there were other towns in Ethiopia whose process of urbanization was accelerated. In this regard, Mesfin Wolde Mariam writes:

Although the reign of Menilik laid the ground for urbanization it was nonetheless during the Italian occupation of 1936-1941 that the process of Urbanization was accelerated. Italians were amazing the rapidly built a net work of good roads and established regional centers.⁴⁴

During their stay, the Italians established their settlements in different parts of the town. Their administrative quarter was set up around the railway station where the present Bishoftu Hospital is located, *Atse* Lebnä-Dengel School and the municipality is also located. Some of the old buildings of the hospital were built by the Italians. As it was mentioned earlier, before the Italians the site had been a market place following the relocation of the Dambi market to the area. When the Italians built their offices in the area, the market was once again moved to another place. The new market place, however, was not far away from the former. It was located some 300 meters east of the former market, and has now come to be known as Arage kedame indicating that it was the precursor of the present market called Addisu kedame.⁴⁵

There was a special quarter exclusively reserved for the Italians. Their high ranking officials and army officers resided in today's central part of the town. It includes the present Bishoftu hospital, the municipality and the Air Force and the Blue Nile Bars. This area was fenced by barbed wire and no Ethiopian was allowed to enter. As a result, the area acquired the name of Shibo Gibbi, a name in use even today.⁴⁶

The Italians also established their residences in other parts of the town. One of these was found along the way to Air Force in the present *kebele* 08 area. Nearly the whole part of this area was settled by the Italian cavalry unit, and to this day, the site is called Caballerya Säfär (district of the cavalry). On the other side of the main road in front of the Caballerya Safar, and the present *kebele* 09, the Italians also built houses for some of their senior officers. Since the houses were covered with clay made roofs this quarter is usually called Shakla Säfär. According to some informants in Addis Katama which is the present *kebele* 03 area some soldiers of the cavalry unit were also quartered in tents. The Italians also used part of the site of the present Ethiopian Air Force for small military air crafts while for the bigger ones they used the field near Mojo.⁴⁷

One of the grand attempts of the Italians was brining and settling Italian ex-service men in the Ethiopian highlands. As part of their large-scale white settlement scheme, Bishoftu and its surroundings was one of the earliest few places chosen by the Italians. As elsewhere in the country, the Italians faced incessant threats they were frequently attacked by the patriots. Hence, they had no lasting peace time to carry out what they had planned.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the brief Italian occupation has left its own legacies. In addition to the various structures and names of places the Italians had indelibly imprinted their presence in the history of the town. Though largely confined to their own quarters and interests the Italians took some measures to transform the area. For instance, considering the scarcity of woods, the Italians made some efforts to cover the area with vegetation. They planted trees in the areas around Lake Hora. The various big and old trees standing near Hora Ras Hotel today were planted during the Italian period. The Italians used hired native labor to plant these trees. They also brought some species of fish like pike and trout from Italy and introduced them to the five lakes. Henceforth, Bishoftu became one of the providers of fresh fish to the capital although in limited amount.⁴⁹

Bishoftu's warm climate and its attractive crater lakes also drew the Italians residing in the capital and the nearby towns. A good number of Italians made a visit on weekends and holidays to Bishoftu, especially to Lake Hora. They asphalted the road that led from the center of the town to Foqa Hotel. The small Foqa Hotel was renovated and expanded by the Italians to a 60 bed hotel.⁵⁰

The Italian period ushered in a new phase in the country's urban development. Their brief colonial control brought new socio-economic organizations that sped up accelerated the urbanization process. To secure their control of the country, they built roads and set up various administrative centers. It was one of the principal motto of the Italian fascists that without effective transportation and communication "no military security, no effective administration, no profitable economic development" would be realized.⁵¹

To this end, the main road that linked Bishoftu with the capital and the eastern and southern towns like Mojo, Adama, Shashamane, Awash and etc was improved. Hence, apart from constructing new ones, the Italians improved and extended the pre-occupation roads. Among other reasons, this was partly done to complement the railway facilities, to reduce charges required by the railway company, and link Harar and other places off railway line with the capital.⁵²

The Italians also improved the telephone and telegraph lines that connected the town with the capital and other areas. Besides the telegraph line which had been built by the railway company, new line was installed to facilitate smooth communication of the town with other areas. Moreover, a dry weather rural road network was established to link the town with the country side. They also installed a post office and electricity. Nevertheless, the electric light was confined to the Italian residences and the main streets like the one that presenting runs from the center to Foqa Hotel.⁵³

Besides the development of transportation and communication the creation of various establishments and structures dragged a sizeable number of workers to urban centers. This in turn furthered "new economic class" which catered for the demands of the urban workers. Hotels, restaurants, drinking houses and diverse shops became a common place. During the Italian period more people began to experience urban life as it had never been before.⁵⁴

During the Italian period the spatial expansion of the town was to follow the direction of the street that led to Lake Hora from the center. Besides their camps at Cabalarya Säfaär, the Italians also built additional buildings in their separate quarter, Shibo Gibbi. In front of the station along the major road, bars, restaurants and shops also emerged and flourished. This period also witnessed increase of foreign merchants in the town. Most of them were Yemeni Arabs. Some of

these Yemeni Arabs would become dominant figures in the town's post-Italian commercial life. The other notable foreign merchants, who came to the town during this period was a Greek merchant called Mose Mekeladis. He opened a grocery in front of the present Warka Hotel, which continued to be one of the best groceries in the town until the mid of the 1950s.⁵⁵

The site at the back of the railway station where the present Warka Hotel is situated was the Italian cemetery. A part from those who lived in the town, some Italian soldiers who lost their life in the eastern and southern fronts were brought and buried here. Long after the Italian evacuation, the relatives of the deceased Italian soldiers from Italy requested their relatives' remains. This request presented by the Italian official Senor Aezio Alabeniz the request was finally accepted by the Ethiopian government in 1970, and the remains were dug out and sent to their relatives.⁵⁶

Though scattered settlements were found here and there, the biggest native quarter during the Italian period was Aroge kedame. Being a market center various small scale commercial activities such as butcheries, tailoring, grain trade, retail shops and drinking and food selling houses were concentrated there. In the mean time, the Italians encouraged new settlements by granting land free of charge. Hence, black smiths, carpenters, weavers and people from all walks of life came and settled in and around Bishoftu.⁵⁷

Thus, the presence of the Italians brought a significant change in the infrastructural and commercial developments of the town. Bishoftu, a bit higher than a station village before the Italian period, developed into a fair-sized town by 1941 with a 60 bed hotel, air field, a post office, telephone, telegraph, hospital, modern residences, and other services. All these developments laid a foundation for Emperor Hayla-selasse's restored government to build upon Bishoftu in the post Italian period.⁵⁸

Figure 4. The current partial view of Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu administration office, photo album, 2011.

Notes

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6. *Ibid*, p.16.
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20. Informants: Légéssä, Melesé and Gorfu Wordofä.
21. McCann, p. 201, informant: Melesé.

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28. NUPI, p.37, Informants: Tafära and Umer Ali.
29. Informants: Rähämto Hussen and Hiwet Ayälä.
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37. Informants: Mäzägäbu, Melesé and Abärä.
38. Informants: Lilisä Säbökä, Terku, Zäwde.
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^{52.} *Ibid*; Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building During the Italians Fascist Occupation, 1936-1941”, *Africa Quarterly*, XV, 3, 1975, PP. 37-38, so.

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^{55.} Informants: Melesé, Mäzgäbu and Rähämto.

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^{57.} Informants: Abära and Gétu; NUPI, p. 39; Horvath, p. 45.

^{58.} Informants: Melesé and Legessa; Mc cann, pp. 221.

CHAPTER THREE

Post-Independence Developments: 1941-2000

The post-Italian period saw a remarkable phase of urban development in Ethiopia. Though the Italians played an undeniable role in founding new towns and expanding the existing ones, unprecedented urban growth was witnessed in the post Italian period, particularly in the 1950s and 1970s. Yet, the first few years immediately after the Italian expulsion were marked by urban decline. This was in part related to the war of liberation which caused destruction.¹

In the 1950s, however, urban growth gained momentum, and further accelerated from the 1960s onwards. Several factors were associated with and enhanced the growth. These can be categorized as “pull” and “push” factors. The development of transport and communications, the formation of various government institutions, the development of small scale industries, cash crop production, and rural development projects were some of the major “pull” factors. The rural-push factors population pressure, famine, land fragmentation, and environmental degradations are a few to mention. All these factors, with varying degrees, contributed not only to the emergence of new urban centers, but also to the transformation of the existing ones into major towns.² One of the towns so transformed into a principal town of Ethiopia during this period was Bishoftu.

Bishoftu was one of those towns that attracted due attention by the restored Hayle-Selasse’s government. The government was cognizant of the importance of the area amongst others as a promising provider of food for the capital, as a potential tourist attraction, and perhaps an important source of income for its high-ranking officials.³

The years after the end of the war were marked by the establishment of various administrative, military, commercial, educational and agricultural research institutions, which exerted considerable influence on the growth and development of the towns. Immediately after liberation, Bishoftu was became the capital of Ada’a District, one of the eight Districts of the Yarar and karrayyu *Awraja*.⁴

3.1. The Establishment of Military Institutions

After the Italians, the establishment of military institutions contributed toward the further expansion of Bishoftu. According to the unpublished material provided by Masfin and Getachew: “After the withdrawal of Italians, big military garrison of cavalry army, named in Amharic “*Feresegna*” was established at the present site of Air Force around *kebele* 08.⁶ This has led to the establishment of Ethiopian Air Force in Bishoftu. The military institutions included: the Ethiopia Air Force, the Para- Commando, the Anti-aircraft and the National army base. These military bases have played a great role both in the economic and social life of the town.

The Ethiopia Air Force headquarter was established in Bishoftu in June 7, 1947 serving both as training school and head office.⁷ The headquarter located in outskirts of the town on the way to Mojo. Because it is believed that the area as a whole was found suitable for recreation of the trainees, who came from different regions of Ethiopia. In addition to this, nearness of Bishoftu to the capital was taken into consideration.

After its foundation, the Air Force base has played significant role in expanding the town. Young educated students from high schools were recruited to be trained in Bishoftu. The presence of these young people in the town attracted other civilians from different areas of the country. The unoccupied place between the central town and the base was seen quickly covered with houses. Chain bars, hotels, numerous shops and other service rendering establishments mushroomed unprecedentedly. The town increased its population and became economically more heterogeneous.⁸

The national army base at Lemlem Tabiya (on the way to Addis Ababa) It was founded around 1966 also added expansion of Bishoftu to some extent. The present part of the town which is *kebele* 01 has flourished after the establishment of this base. People from the nearby areas as well as from other parts of the country came and settled around the base. These people served the trainees during weekends with local drinks and entertainments.⁹

The establishment of the Ethiopian Air Force in the town had contributed a lot for the development of the town in such a way that a number of employees being military and civil came and increased the number of population of the town. This in its turn enrolled the number facilitated increment number of hotels, restaurants and other service provision institutions.

Apartments were built by the government for posted military officers, and so did recreational centers. From this time onwards the town has to be army center and its population continued to grow.¹⁰

Bishoftu was one of those places that were frequently visited by the Emperor. The presence of the military establishments, particularly the Air force, partly explains the emperor's frequent visits and his special interest in the town. It was apparent that Emperor Haile Selassie felt strongly that Italian air superiority was one major reason for Ethiopian defeat in the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935/36. Therefore, the creation of an efficient Air Force was one of the tasks that obtained top priority in the post occupation period. To this end, the emperor closely followed various activities and developments of the Air Force.¹¹ Besides the presence of the Air Force, Bishoftu proximity to the capital, its warm climate and beautiful lakes were the other reasons that caught the emperor's attention. Thus, Bishoftu was one of the few places that served as an emperor retreat. A palace was built adjacent to Lake Hora near Hora Ras Hotel in 1948. It was commonly known as Emperor Palace. The design of this palace was the direct reproduction of a town in England where the Emperor and his family took refuge during the Italian occupation. In many occasions the emperor used to pass the weekends in his palace and this made Bishoftu a place exceptionally frequented by the emperor.¹²

Figure 5. Emperor Haile Silassie palace at Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

There is no doubt that the town's development was partly related to the emperor's frequent visit. For one thing, it enabled the emperor to follow the infrastructural development of the town carefully enough. Among others, the establishment of a high school and a hospital, the provision of electric light and tap water as well as the church of St. Rufael in the 1950s and 1960s were the direct results of the emperor's decision. The emperor's frequent presence in the town also enabled both the inhabitants and the officials to present their grievances came to Bishoftu development and other cases.¹³ Some members of the royal family and high-ranking officials followed the emperor's footsteps in building their recreational centers in the town.¹⁴ These houses were mostly built near Hora and Bishoftu lakes.

3.2. The Nature of the Town

In cities and towns, governmental and private institutions: industrial, commercial and service provision institutions exist for different interests and populations. Urbanization has resulted in the concentration of social, economic, and other different institutions providing various services in one locality.¹⁵

The urban social scene varies from one town to the other due to the existence of certain dominant functions. An industrial city, may exhibit certain outstanding socio-economic features than that of a predominantly commercial town. Most towns undertake major and numerous miscellaneous activities. In fact, towns are more or less multi-functional. Nevertheless, certain activities may appear dominant among the interrelated activities. Sometimes even, one activity should be identified among the dominant activities to characterize a given town or city.¹⁶ Bishoftu, thus, can be treated on the basis of the above theoretical framework. In the town going on several intermingled activities. But the dominant activities of the town have been industrial, commercial, recreational and urban agriculture activities.¹⁷

3.2.1. Manufacturing Industries

The number of factories in the town was small. In the 1960s and 1970s, grain mills of various sizes were numerous. Until the post Italian occupation period, no grain mill had existed in the town. Before the foundation of modern grain mills, the inhabitants of the area used to travel long distances in search of mills.¹⁸

At the time, there was only water driven mills located along the major rivers like at Danaba, Dankaka and Aqaqi. It was after the Italian period that grain mills were planted in the town. The first grain mill was that of the Air Force. *Qäganazmch* Hayle Zäläqä was also one of the earliest owners of grain mill in the town.¹⁹

The biggest and the first modern flour mill in the town was established in 1956 by an Armerian called Joseph Behesnilian. It is located in a quarter called Etebe along the major highway in the present *Kebele* 05 area. Almost a decade later, another flour mill was built by other members of the Behesnilian family Mary, Eddie Hrair Behesnilian. It is also found along the main road in the northern word direction; not very far from the first mill.²⁰ The factories regulate a substantial part of the economy by providing employment opportunities for some portion of population inside and outside the town.²¹

The factory goods produced from these establishments serve both the town and the areas outside its confines. These factories have played a great role in the development of the town. Their main contribution is providing employment which is the cause for the migration of people from the adjacent rural areas. The flour factories were necessary factoryess in the development of Bishoftu. These factories also paved the way for the emergence of other related activities such as bakeries and fodder trading.²²

After 1991, the structural adjustment of the factories and the existence of favorable condition contributed a lot to the development of factory in the town. Accessibility to the market center, sufficient man power, availability of raw materials and good infrastructure facility make the city the center for small, medium and large scale industries.²³

According to a 2000 data there were more than 41 operational factories in the town. Argo-industry is the leading factory in the town in terms of number and man power.²⁴

Table 1: Number of Major Factories in the Town, 2000

S/N	Type of industry	Number	Capital	Manpower	% stage concentration
1	Argo processing	5	140,072,000	1,130	18
2	Textile and garment	5	96,773,435	887	14
3	Leather and leather product	2	1,800,000	286	4
4	Metal and engineering	5	111,067,000	2043	33
5	Plastic and paper craft	2	19,603,966	324	5
6	Construction	3	37,234,765	283	4
7	Chemical	10	236,471,550	1,067	17
8	Storage	1	1,000,000	14	5
	Total	34	644,022,716	6,034	100

Source: Bishoftu Trade and Industry Office on socio- economic profile, 2000, P.15.

3.2.2. Commercial Activities

One of the major services giving sectors in the town has been the hotel industry. Since the 1960s there has been rapid expansion of hotels, restaurants, bars and groceries of different size. Bishoftu's position as a resort town was one major factor behind the expansion of this sector. Besides the town's attractive lakes contribution has been great. Those returning from other resort centers like Adama, Sodare and Langano tended to pay a short visit to Bishoftu.

Next to Hora Ras Hotel, the other modern hotel frequented both by local and foreign visitor's from the late 1950s to the early 1970s was the Royal Hotel. It was located along the way to Lake Hora. Bekele Mola Hotel which was built in the 1950s was also among the earliest modern hotels in the town. Apart from the town's position as a resort center, the presence of a large number of populations have been the major contributions force to its development. Not only the hotel industry, but also the various commercial establishments in the town have been flourishing. However, except government employees, particularly, the military, the majority of the town's people frequented butcheries and local alcoholic drinks.²⁵

Table 2: Commercial Establishments by Type and Number, 1973

Type	Number
Retailing shops	115
Hotels and bars	85
Taj houses	94
Grain selling	86
Barbes shops and beauty salons	18
Butcheries	18
Flour and grain mills	16
Tea houses	15
Shoe repairing shops	7
Pharmacies	7
Bakeries	5
Milk selling houses	5
Laundries	4
Metal works	4
Fuel stations	3
Garage	3
Oil pressing factory	3
Wood works	1

Source: AMDZ, File No. 3760, Meskarem 30, 1965 E.C

As indicated in the table the above retailing shops of all sizes were the most numerous commercial enterprizes in the town. Though few retailing shops had already existed as early as the pre-Italian period, it was after the liberation, especially since the 1950s, that numerous shops were opened up in the town. Both local and foreign traders had engaged in this business. However, until the early 1970s, the Yemeni Arbas were the dominant traders in the town. They owned the bigger and better shops in the town.²⁶ The main market days for the town are Tuesdays and Saturday. The major products supplied to the market are agricultural products such as different cereals, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, beans, peas, cash crops and livestock.²⁷

Commercial activity is the most dominant activity in of Bishoftu town. This function was the back bone of the economy of the town. More than twenty percent of the towns’ population engaged in commerce as their first occupation. A stranger in the town could observe various commercial firms activities everywhere and numerous retailing shops including shops connected to the residences who engage in commerce as a supplementary activity.²⁸

After 1991 the commercial activities of the town have been supported by financial institutions. These financial institutions played substantial role in the expansion of the economy of Bishoftu. Different stakeholders that ran various activities in the town required these institutions for managing their liquid assets, particularly money transactions. In Bishoftu town there were governmental 5 banks and 7 private banks. There were also one state and one private insurance campony. In the town there are also micro-finance institutions.²⁹ The above Institutions financed town Commercial activities to develop their business from year to year.

The 2000 data reveals that town had 11 wholesale traders, 2412 retail traders, 1627 service providers, 120 industries and 89 other traders were available.³⁰

Table 3: Traders with their Capital, 2000

Whole sale trade		Retail		Service		Industry		Others	
No	Capital	No	Capital	No	Capital	No	Capital	No	Capital
11	3,195,000	2412	3,375,238,334.45	1627	1,283,659,302.58	120	1,91,835,643	89	91,503,212.57

Source: Bishoftu town administration trade and market development office profile, p 14.

Figure 6. The current central part of the Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

3.3. Research and Developmental Institutions

The history of Bishoftu in the post-Italian period was also closely associated with various educational and research institutions that were linked to agriculture. As noted earlier, Ada's agricultural potential attracted both individual farmer and the government alike. Since the days of Menelik II, Ada's provision of food supplies to the capital continued without interruption even during the Italian occupation.³¹ The restored Hayla-Selasse's government once again aimed at utilizing Ada's potential with renewed vigor. To this end, the government encouraged and promoted the establishment of government and non governmental institutions, which enhanced the growth of the town and Ada's agricultural development.³²

The Bishoftu Agricultural Research Center has been one of the most important institutions founded in the town. It is the oldest and the pioneering research center set up to facilitate the introduction of modern agricultural techniques in the country.³³ The Bishoftu Agricultural Research Center was a result of Ethio-American relations. It was officially established in 1943 and further strengthened in the 1950s and 1960s by a Point-Four Program. The program

contained technical assistance in various fields such as agriculture, education, health and locust control.³⁴

Bishoftu became the early centre of veterinary training in the country. In Ethiopia veterinary activities began by the Italians in Eritrea as early as 1885 in an attempt to vaccinate Italian cavalry against African horse sickness. This was followed in 1903 by the opening of the first veterinary institute in Asmara.³⁵ The institute aimed at controlling epidemic diseases, particularly render pest, horse sickness, trypanosomiasis and anthrax. In 1939 a small veterinary laboratory was set up in Addis Ababa at Kachane Madhane Alem. Four years later, in 1943, it was transferred to Gulale close to the present Pasteur Institute. The laboratory performed operated various national veterinary tests under the name of *Direction des services veterinaries* until 1964.³⁶

In June 1964 the technical and laboratory sections moved to Bishoftu and the Imperial veterinary institute was established. Though it was administered under the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), it was aided by the United Nations Special Found and the French government through the French Veterinary Mission to Ethiopia.³⁷ The institute was established on about 30 hectares land found at Foqa.

The Ada'a Community Development Program (ACDP) was the other important institution that made its center at Bishoftu. It was under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Community Development. ACDP was required to work in cooperation with the public and governmental agencies to advance the socio-economic development of Ada'a district. The residents of Bishoftu played significant role in the establishment of this center. In this respect, members of the Air Force played a pivotal role.³⁸ Initially a voluntary association was set up merely in an attempt to promote education. It built small elementary school and invited the emperor to the inaugural ceremony. Pleased with the accomplishment of the group, Emperor Haile Selassie with the people's request permitted the establishment of a development center for the whole district.

The center's principal role was coordinating all interested and concerned governmental and non-governmental agencies towards the improvement of the Ada'a district at large. It served as a link between these concerned groups and the public in promoting development. It divided its

program into four major categories: economic, health and sanitation, educational and supporting group and community interests.³⁹

The Ada'a district Development Project (ADDP) also made its center in Bishoftu. It was established in 1972 in an attempt to transform the peasants' agriculture from subsistence to market-oriented farming. Hence, ADDP worked towards increasing the net income of the peasants by helping the farmers to produce for markets beyond their subsistence needs. To this end, the project provided low interest loans, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and improved farm implements. It also worked on the establishment of cooperatives and improvement of roads and water supplies. To implement this program, 43 percent of the budget was covered by the Ethiopian government while the remaining 57 percent was obtained from the USA government on the basis of loan and grant.⁴⁰

The ADDP carried out its program in cooperation with other development agencies, particularly, those who work was related with agriculture. For instance, in June 1973, the ADDP signed an agreement with the Bishoftu agricultural research center through which the former provided 10,000 birr to the latter for the establishment of eight demonstration fields near Bishoftu.⁴¹ The presence of these institutions applied to reaching impact on the development of both the town and the surrounding countryside. Agriculture and agri-business continued to play an important role in the town's economic development.⁴²

The above research and developmental Institutions help many households to rely based on urban agriculture as the main livelihood. The major types of urban agriculture prevailing in the town includes horticulture, production of vegetable, dairy farm, poultry, pig husbandry, cattle fattening, gardening, and other related activities. These urban agricultures were own privately and by organization of micro and small scale enterprises. The existing information reveals that 14 horticulture, 3 poultry, 2 dairy farm, 1 cattle fattening, micro and small scale enterprises.⁴³

Table 4: Urban Agriculture under Operation by Small Scale Enterprises, 2000

N/s	Type of activities	Number	Number of people involved		Total
			Male	Female	
1	Horticulture	14	77	48	125
2	Dairy farming	2	4	14	18
3	Poultry	3	0	36	36
4	Cattle fattening	1	3	0	3
	Total	20	84	98	182

Source: Bishoftu town administration agency of small scale enterprise on socio-economic profile, p. 13

There are many privately owned urban agricultural plots which employed great number of people. Genesis farm, Alema farm and Holland dairy are the best example of huge private farm and others flourished in the town.⁴⁴

Figure 7. Urban agriculture Genesis farm in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu administration office photo album, 2011

3.4. The Town's Relations with the Rural Neighbourhoods

The presence of Bishoftu in the midst of a rich agricultural zone, its agriculture oriented institutions, a large urban population of consumers and emergent agro-industries as well as its location on the main railway and highway lines, and its proximity to the capital contributed a lot to its influence on the rural neighborhood.

Through its agricultural research institutions the town became a center for the spread of new agricultural techniques not only to its immediate rural neighborhood but also for the country as a whole. A good number of the nearby peasants came to the town to get a piece of advice and improved varieties of seeds, chickens and livestock. However, the majority of rural farmers could be reached by the extension agents of the institutions. The veterinary medical center of the town was attended by a remarkable success in eradicating the area's most prevalent livestock diseases like foot and mouth, liver fluke and render pest. The veterinary operations and its results have been appreciated by those rural inhabitants who live in Kajima, Dere and Dankaka.⁴⁵

Bishoftu's steady growth also created a big market for the surrounding peasants. The Ada'a farmers have had a number of choices to sell their produce to the various neighborhood had their own respective markets. For instance, Wanbar, Robicha and Zilmu were the market centers in Zequala and held every Thursday, Saturday and Monday, respectively. In Liban particularly, in Bakajo and Adulala markets were held on Thursdays and Saturdays, respectively. Hamus Gabaya (Thursday market) Dere and Yerar were important markets in kajima with their respective market days on Monday and Thursday. However, it was Bishoftu with its large number of urban consumers and buyers which has served as a major market for Ada'a farmers.⁴⁶ The major buyers of agricultural produce in Bishoftu include the flour factories, the Air Force and hotels, restaurants, shops and oil factories.⁴⁷

The proximity factories of Bishoftu at close to the capital has had also served the neighborhood farmers as a centre of big market that would bring much in come. The farmers supplied the town with various crops. *Téff* (Eragostic) has taken the lead for it is a major crop in the area. It is cultivated both in the highland and low land regions of Ada'a district. It was only in the southern part of Ada'a that red teff is grown. This *téff* is inferior in quality and flavor. Next to *téff*, wheat was the other major food crop cultivated and brought to the town by the farmers. It is commonly grown in the high land areas of Ada'a, especially on the dark and heavier soil. Chick peas were

also widely cultivated as rotation crops both in the high land and low lands areas. Cereals like barley, maize and sorghum were also cultivated in limited amount.⁴⁸ Yerar and Zequala were the main suppliers of the town with garden products vegetables, like cabbage, hops and pepper. Other crops like *guwäyä*, *nug*, *abish* (fenugreek) and linsed were also produced and made their way to the town. The farmers at Godino, located southeast of the town, also provided the town with sugarcane, coffee, citrus, papaya and sugar beets.⁴⁹

This move from home consumption to cash crop production brought some positive contributions in the peasants' living conditions. Among others, it raised the income of the peasants and their growing desire for utilizing modern agricultural techniques.⁵⁰ The existence of Bishoftu in the very heart of the potentially rich agricultural and productivity zone not only made the area a royal kitchen (*mädbet*) and had also its own contribution to the early introduction of mechanized farming. In fact, even before the Italian period, some efforts had been made to use tractors at the Bishoftu model farm. The Italians also undertook mechanized farming in the area. However, it was limited in their envisaged settlement areas.⁵¹ Rather it was in the early 1960s that mechanized farming on small holders' agriculture was introduced in Ada'a.⁵²

Although manufacturing industries were generally lacking in Ada'a, the existing agro-industries were promising. Both Ethiopian and foreign investors participated in running various commercial and agro-industries. However, the foreigners, particularly, the Armenians, Italians and Yemenis were dominant. They owned and ran the bigger and the better enterprises in the town.⁵³

As it was the case all over the country, with the outbreak of the 1974 revolution, a disastrous blow came to these privately owned enterprises. Almost all the major enterprises were nationalized and transferred to state ownership. Henceforth, private undertakings were severely hit. Above all, the progress of the emerging agro-industries was halted. Most of the Armenians who ran this business left the country. The local business men who actively participated in the town's commercial life were similarly discouraged following the expropriation of their property. Other than small-scale retail trade and hotel industry, almost all the private undertakings came to an end. There is no doubt that, all these measures had the effect of retarding the town's growth and development.⁵⁴

It is true that, during the Darg regime, some new governmental institutions were established. The Ethiopian Management Institute was one of the major institutions established in the town during the Darg period. As it has been noted earlier, the institute was set up in the previous compound of the Bishoftu Junior Agricultural College in 1985.⁵⁵ The institute was established to promote managerial skills by providing consultancy, training and research training. The trainees were drawn from all parts of the country and the training was given to various levels of administrators. It included ministers, managers, supervisors, department heads, etc.⁵⁶

The other two new institutions were military establishments. These were *Jägnoch Ambä* (the partisans' center) and Anti-Aircraft Base (Air Defense). The establishment of these military institutions in 1978 strengthened the garrison aspect of the town and the military centers. The presence of numerous military establishments to some extent created a growing unease in the town. It also appears to have a disruptive impact on the number of visitors to the town.⁵⁷

Such institutions had also their own impact on determining the spatial expansion of the town. Besides the Air force, the patriots' center occupied 140 hectares of land within the town.⁵⁸ Formerly part of this area was held by the Savajian Beef and Dairy concern. It was evident that the excessive land holdings of these military camps halted the town's south ward expansion.⁵⁹

Besides these man made constraints natural barriers like lakes and swamy areas near Lake Chäläläkä also exerted their own influence on determining the spatial expansion of the town. Therefore, in the days of the Darg, the town witnessed an increasing north ward expansion along the left and right side of the main road to the capital. In the present quarters of Hudad and Addis Katama there was an extensive Hudad land where various crops especially *téff*, wheat and chick peas were cultivated.⁶⁰ Though the former agricultural field is covered with residential houses *Kebele* 02 is still named as Hudad säfär. With this north ward expansion, the gap between the nearby small town of Dukam and Bishoftu has increasingly narrowed.⁶¹

3.5. Problems of Urban Land Use

The introduction of the railway line marked a new departure in Ethiopia's land tenure system. The towns that emerged along the railway grew in a way that was different from the "traditional pattern" since they were established within the free zone of the railway company.⁶²

The process was further strengthened by the Italians who distributed urban lands.⁶³ Being one of the railway towns, Bishoftu was not an exception. As was noted earlier, the railway station served as a nucleus for the emergence of Bishoftu town. However, except the small plot found within the railway company, the whole area of the land which later came under the municipal boundary belonged to the landlords. In this respect the impact of the railway in introducing new land tenure in the town was insignificant. The Italian distribution of urban lands came to an end with the termination of Italian occupation in 1941.⁶⁴

After 1941 those landowners, whose restland had been confiscated by the Italians regained their lands. Moreover, a considerable portion of the Hudad land found in and around Bishoftu was given as a reward to the *bäläwulätäs*, individuals most of whom were combatants in the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1936-41. Those individuals who had been given land by the Italians became *chisägnoch* (tenants) who were required to pay land tax to the land owners.⁶⁵

In 1942/43 only 50 hectares of land was transferred to the municipality's administration of which 10 hectares belonged to *wäizäro* Negätwä Täklä Waäld and 20 hectares to *Ato* Ayle Gäshe and *Ato* Zäwäld. These individuals were given other lands as compensation and their land came under the direct control of the municipality. In 1949/50 an additional 120 hectares of land was designated as urban land. The owners of this land were similarly given compensation from the waraganu. Again in 1963/64, over 1080 hectares of land were included into the urban area and the total area of the town grew to over 2230 hectare.⁶⁶ (see appendix I and II).

Though the dispute between the municipality and the land owners over taxation and compensation dated back to as early as 1940, it became more serious in the 1960s and early 1970s. The government acted as a promoter of urban development without giving the municipalities' effective control over urban lands. On the other hand, it did not want to antagonize itself with the land lords by issuing effective urban land policies because it needed

their support. In the mean time, the local landlords were unwilling to hand over their land since their principal income was based on it ⁶⁷ (see appendix III).

The majority of the land owners, indeed, preferred to transfer their land on a contractual basis. Because they realized that, with the passage of time they would sell their land at more attractive price. Therefore, most of the land owners were reluctant to sell their lands on a permanent basis.⁶⁸ Yet the municipality had no adequate land of its own to distribute to urban land seekers. As the growth and development of the town increased, landowners continued to ask for more sum of money for their lands ⁶⁹ (See appendix IV). The quarrel between the municipality and the landlords continued without interruption until it was finally resolved by the 1974 revolution.⁷⁰

The revolution brought no end to land dispute in the area. A fresh dispute emerged between some of the town's *kebele* offices and the adjoining peasant associations over land. In 1974 an additional 53 *gäshäs* of land was added to the municipal land and the total area of the town reached over 80 *gäshäs*. However, for a long period of time to come, a vast area of this land, found adjacent to the rural neighborhood was not used, and the boundaries were not clearly demarcated between urban and rural areas.⁷¹

Until this unoccupied urban land was needed for use age the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing allowed its temporary occupation by crop cultivation and for livestock farming. Both the town dwellers and the adjoining farmers were entitled to use this land. But priority was given to those individuals, who did not have other source of income. Besides paying land tax, the farmers were required to abandon the land unconditionally when it was needed by the municipality.⁷²

However, a conflict broke out between the peasants and the urban dwellers who were engaged in farming. The urban farmers were under incessant threat from the neighboring peasants who resented the latter's involvement in farming. The problem was more serious in *kebeles* 05, 12 and 15. Despite the intervention of the municipality and the district the dispute remained unsettled for some time. It was rather after the construction of houses on these lands that the dispute was finally resolved completely ⁷³ (see appendix IV).

In spite of the town's spatial expansion and the steady population growth in number, the town's infrastructural development was inadequate. Such problems like shortage of housing, medical

and educational facilities, electricity and water supplies became the most pressing social needs to be dealt with.⁷⁴

Land in the urban center has great value and requires critical analysis for the proper management of every urban function since land has great importance in general for socio- economic activities. In 1984, the total area of the town was 3280 hectares in the year 2000; it has increased to 5,444 hectares. Land use planning is one of the most important methods of allocating land for proper and suitable functions. The proper division of urban land for varied functions is crucial for the development of the town.⁷⁵ The land use of the town was summarized as follows:

Table 5: Summary Land used Activities in Percentage up to the Year 2000.

S/N	Function	%
1.	Residential Area	15.46
2.	commercial area	1.66
3.	Administration	0.17
4.	Social service	13.9
5.	Agriculture	2.7
6.	Transport and street work	12.65
7.	Open space	24.44
8.	Recreation	17.04
9.	Manufacturing and Storage	7.45
10.	Special function	4.53
11.	Total	100

N.B. Total area= 5.444 hectare

Source: Bishoftu town administration on socio-economic profile, p.3.

Figure 8. The current partial view of Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu town administration photo album

Figure 9. The current partial view of Bishoftu town 2012



Source: Bishoftu town administration photo album, 2012

Notes

- ¹ Horvath, p. 50, Alula, p.310.
- ² Alula, pp. 312; Gerald Breese, *Urbanization in Newly Developing Countries*, New Jersey, 1966), p.80.
- ³ Sahlu Defaye, *Bashawa Teklay Gezat Yakarayun awraja Yatafatro Aqamamat yamiyasay Maglacha*, Addis Ababa, 1944 E.C., pp.5-9; Informants: kumä and Shäné.
- ⁴ Central Statistical Authourity (CSO), Report of a Sample Survey in Yere and Kerayu Awraja (Addis Ababa, 1904), p. AppendixI; informants: Mäzgäbu, Yädecha and Zäwde.
- ⁵ Reymond Borton, et al, “A Development Programe for the Ada’a District Based on A Socio-Economic Survey,” Oklahoma, Standard Research Institute, 1975, p.15.
- ⁶ Mesfin and Getachew, Socio-Economic Analysis of Debrezeit National Urban Planning, 1992, p. 3-5.
- ⁷ Tenesa Termmed, “Ethiopian Air Force Review, Especial Edition, 1985, p.23. Endeshaw, p.4.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p.5.
- ⁹ Fekadu Kebede, “Geographical Study of Urban Development; The Case of Deber zeit Town”, BA, Department of Geography, AAU, 1993, p. 13.
- ¹⁰ Informants: Dägu, Bälätä and Teriku.
- ¹¹ Informant: Melesé, Mäzgäbu and Yilma.
- ¹² *Ibid*.
- ¹³ Informants: Mäzägäbu and Yädecha; Clarence Miller, “Development of Agriculture and Agro- Industry in Ethiopia: Strategy and Programs” Melano Park: *Standard Research Institute*, pp. 67-68.
- ¹⁴ Endeshaw, p.6.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁶ Informants: Mäzägäbu, Melesé and Legessa.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ Borton, p.75; Ada Macaroni and Pasta Factory, “Management Information Reports from 1967 E.C to 1982E.C” N.D. (Hand Written), pp.1-5.
- ¹⁹ Fekadu, p. 43

- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Socio-Economic Profile of Bishoftu Town, 2000, p.15.
- ²³ Informants: Mäzägäbu, Melesé and Legessa.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Socio-Economic..., p. 14
- ²⁶ Endashaw, p. 9.
- ²⁷ Fekadu, p, 48.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Informants: Zälalem, Tafära and Yämané.
- ³⁰ Informants: Yädecha, Zemzem and Teriku.
- ³¹ Alamaya Gebrena University, Deber zeit Agriculture Center (1947 E.C-1978 E.C), Alamaya University, 1980, p. 15; Clarence Miller, p. 73.
- ³² Alamaya Geberna University..., “p.15; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*, London, 2002, p.184.
- ³³ Fikre Yoseph, “The National Veterinary Institute: Three Decades of Achievement,” Addis Ababa: Ministry of Agriculture, 1996, p.3.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ R.Borton, pp.66-67; Informants: Zälalem and Nigatu.
- ³⁶ Informants: Kumä, Mäzägäbu and Melesé.
- ³⁷ Borton, p.24; informants: Shäné and Tsägä.
- ³⁸ The Voice of Ada’a, “Ada’a Agricultural Development Project”, *A Monthly*
- ³⁹ The Voice of Ada’a,”Ada’a Agricultural Development Project”A Monthly News Letter, July 1973, pp.2-4.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4-6.
- ⁴¹ AMDZ, File No 770/2: Ada’a *Warada* Office to the Municipality of Debere Zeit, Miazia 11, 196.
- ⁴² Socio-Economic ..., p.13.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Borton, p.91.

⁴⁵ Central Statistical Office, “Report on,” Appendix VIII; Shumye Abuhay, “Demographic Trends, Urbanization and Their Effects an Agricultural Productivity and Food Security in Ethiopia,” *In the Role of Urbanization in the Socio-Economic Development Process*, Berhanu Nega and Befkadu Degfe eds. (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Economic Association, 2003) p, 91.

⁴⁶ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Melesé and Rähämto.

⁴⁷ Borton, p.80; informants: Hiwet, Rähämto and Yädecha.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Informants: Zämzäm Ahmäd and Yädecha.

⁵⁰ Informants: Zäwde Ejigu and Semé Adärä.

⁵¹ McCann, p. 228: Gene Ellis, “Man on Machine; Beaster Burden: A Case Study of the Economics of Agricultural Mechanization in Ada’a District”, ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan: The University of Tennessee, 1972, pp.13-19.

⁵² Informants: Yädecha and Semé.

⁵³ Informants: Getu, Gorfu and Kumä.

⁵⁴ Informants: Nigatu and Semé.

⁵⁵ NupI, p.84.

⁵⁶ Informants: Terku and Dägu.

⁵⁷ NupI, p.11.

⁵⁸ Informants: Terku and Dägu.

⁵⁹ Informants: Abärä, Getu and Kumä.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Horvath, P.50.

⁶² *Ibid*; p.45; Informants: Mäzgaäbu, Legessa and Yilma.

⁶³ Informants: Melesé, Bälätä and Lilisä.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ AMDZ: *Yekatama kelle* /File No. 4005: The municipality of Deber Zeit to The Ministry of Interior, Meskeram 24, and 1960 E.C.

⁶⁶ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Melesé and Abärä.

⁶⁷ Informants: Kumä, Nigatu and Yilma

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Informants: Nigatu, Zäwde and Tafära.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ AMDZ: *yekatama kellel* /File No 4005. The Town Council to Ada'a Warada Administrative office, Genbot 5, 1978 E.C.

⁷² AMDZ: *Yeketama kelel*/File 4005: Office of *kebele* 12 Cooperative. Association to The Municipality of Debrezeit, *Genbot* 6, 1968 E.C; Office of *Kebele* 05 Cooperative Association to The Municipality of Debre zeit, *Genbot* 2, 1970 E.C.

⁷³ Informants: Mäzägbu, Melesé and Tsägä.

⁷⁴ Socio-Economic Profile.... P.1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Town's Administration, Income and Services

4.1. Bishoftu's Administration

The municipality of Bishoftu was established in 1943. The first master plan of the town was drawn in 1969 and revised in 1986 and again in 2000. It began its work in a house built by the Italians in the midst of the present football field of Lebna-Dengel School. It had been the residence of the Italian governor called Captain Tranova. Until the end of the 1950s, the office of the municipality moved from place to place. Finally, in 1959, it set up its permanent office by purchasing a seven-room building owned by the Ethiopian Electric Light and power Authority (EELPA), just at the back ward of the railway station.¹

Prior to the municipalities' proclamation of 1945, there were no clearly defined rules governing the structure and authority of the towns' council and thier officers. It was following the proclamation that Ethiopian towns were classified into two major categories: category A and B. Towns under category A were declared municipalities. They included Addis Ababa, Gondar, Harar, Dasse, Jimma and Dire Dawa. All the remaining towns fell under B. Towns under this category were called townships to be further sub-divided into three classes. The criterion appears to have been based on administrative convenience rather than on some urban standard. Be that as it may on the basis of this classification. Bishoftu was recognized as the second class town to be administered by a municipal officer.²

The municipal officer had various responsibilities. Among others administering the town and directing and supervising staff members; looking after towns security by maintaining law and order in cooperation with the police; sending periodic reports about the town and its dwellers to the municipalities department of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) through the governor of the *Tekley Gizät* (Governor General) giving license for various commercial activities; and administering the budgetary allocation and keeping accounts.³

The MOI exercised control over towns through the hierarchically arranged provincial, *Awraja* and district offices. The municipal officers were under supervision the municipalities department of the MOI, which in turn worked through the governate-general's municipal departments. All

the provincial and *Awraja* governors were vested with authority of controlling the activities of the municipalities below them. When it came to the district level the district governor was in charge of the supervision of the town's municipality within the district's boundary limit.⁴

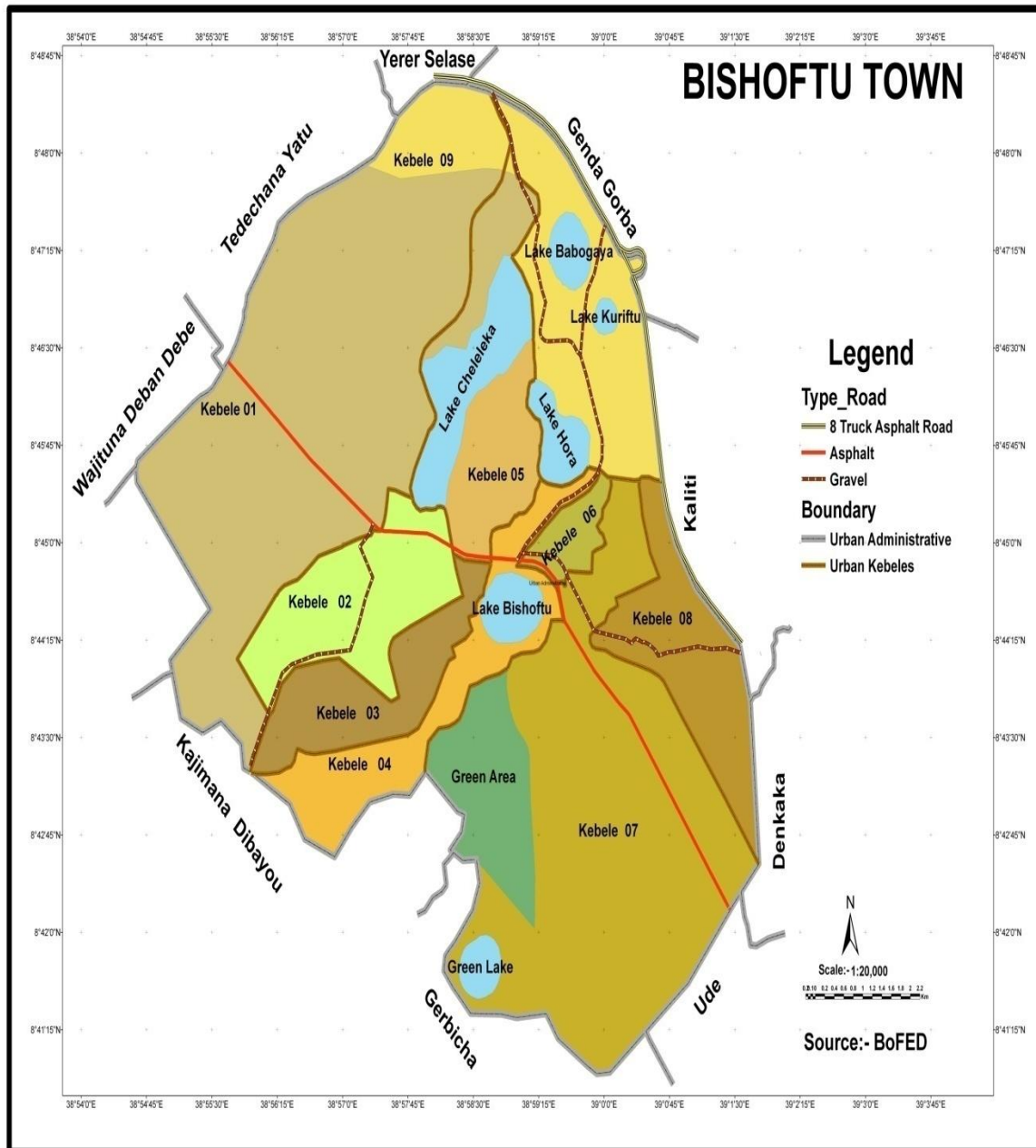
However, there were no clearly defined regulations that precisely explained the relationships between the town officers and the governors. As a result the relations were marked in most cases by "Confusion and friction".⁵ In some cases the governorship of the district and the municipality was held by the same person. For instance, just before the outbreak of 1974 revolution the last governor of Ada'a district *Qägnazmach* Gäbräkrestos Mäkonnen held both positions of administrator of the town and the district from 1958 to 1974.⁶

The municipal council was the highest organ of town administration. It was composed of seven members representing the various ministries and locally elected by the governor-general. The council was also composed of members from the town's residents. The term of office for the council members was one year. But they could be re-elected.⁷ The municipal council was in charge of fixing and levying taxes and taking part in the overall administration of the town.⁸

The municipal council was supported by those individuals called proper *Säfar Shums* (heads of neighborhoods). They worked under the guidance of the municipal council member in their own respective quarters. The duties of the *Säfar Shums* included allocation of lands on behalf of the municipality, preventing construction of houses and fences carried out without the municipality's permission, settling land and other disputes and promoting tax collection and implementing orders and regulations that were passed by the municipal council.⁹

During the Darg regime Bishoftu town had 15 *Kebeles* administration units. After 1991, the town has reduced these *kebeles* to nine and four Sub-towns for administrative convenience. The town is surrounded by five neighboring rural *kebeles* from different directions.

Figure 10. Map of Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu town administration socio-economic profile..., p. 7

In Bishoftu, the number of educated man power working in different sectoral offices has increased from time to time. Under the town’s administration, the majority of workers assigned in different offices are professionals, with different educational background and work experience. The 2000 data showed number of workers in different sectors to be 1988 (1075 male

913 female); from the total percentage female population is 46%. This implies that, the gender gap in employment opportunity is very narrow. ¹⁰

Table 6: Number of Man Power Working in Different Sectoral Offices According to their Level of Education

No	Level of education	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
1	Doctor (MD)	21	100	-	-	21	1.6
2	2 nd degree	38	90	4	10	42	3
3	1 st degree	447	67	217	33	664	33
4	Diploma (12+2)	177	46	211	54	388	17
5	Diploma (10+3)	169	43	223	57	392	20
6	Certificate (10+2)	7	44	9	56	16	0.94
7	Certificate (10+1)	52	30	120	70	172	9.02
8	Grade 12/10 complete	109	61	70	39	179	9.08
9	Below 11/9	55	44	59	56	114	6
	Total	1075	54	913	46	1988	100

Source: Bishoftu town administration civil service Governance office annual report, 2000, p.8

4.2. Municipal Income

The municipality of Bishoftu began its operation with some authority on 50 hectares of land. ¹¹ Until the 1945 municipal proclamation there is no evidence as to how the town's administration collected income. Even for this period there is no record that shows the municipality's income or expenditure. However, with the establishment of the municipal administration. It is apparent that a relatively better way of collecting tax was started. The numerous commercial establishments in the town became substantial sources of municipal income. Taxes were collected both from merchants and peasants who brought their produce to the market. ¹²

Until the relocation of Aroge Kedamé market (old saterday market) to the present market, there was only one market day in the town, i.e.Saturday. As it was noted earlier, in 1949 both Aroge Kedameé and Haddo Gäbayä were shifted to the present market called Addisu Kedamé (new saterday market). From then on the market began to be held on words two days in a week:

Saturdays and Tuesdays. This was done mainly to augment revenues obtained from taxation and market dues.¹³

Of the the two market days it was on Saturday that a huge number of people attended the market. In the early 1950s, from 1000 to 1500 people attended the market. Besides market days of Saturdays and Tuesdays. Smaller markets called *guilts* were held in the various *Säfärs* (quarters) of the town almost every day.¹⁴

Until 1954/55 the town’s municipality sent a certain proportion of its annual income to the municipality of Nazret (Adama).¹⁵ sadly, no data is available that indicates the sources of the municipality’s income until 1983/84. However, after 1991 the revenue generated from diferent sources has come too increased significantly over the years. The main sources of municipality revenue are: land tax, service charge, property revenues, market stall rent, livestock market tax, market dues, contracts, technical service, etc.¹⁶

Table 7: Annual Income of Bishoftu’s Municipality (1997-2000)

No	Year	Total yearly income
1	1997	8,604,459
2	1998	18,442,799
3	1999	16,143,660
4	2000	58,632,683

Source: Municipality financial office on socio-economic profile, p.9

4.3. Urban Service provision

4.3.1. Water Supply

The Italians during their occupation were the pioneers in introducing tap water in the town. They dug a well at Foqa and pumped the water through a pipe line to their residences.¹⁷ They also pumped water from Bishoftu and Hora lakes. The local inhabitants did not have access to this pipe water. The majority of the town’s people fetched water from Chalalaka and a few streams found at the edge of Lake Bishoftu.¹⁸

In the post-Italian period the well that had been dug by the Italians at Foqa began to serve the town's population. But it was not sufficient. Subsequently, serious water shortages occurred. Air Force planted its own generator and pumped water from this well.¹⁹ In 1954/55, following repeated complaints by residents, the municipality bought a generator with a 15,000 birr bought with loan obtained from Adama's municipality. The water was pumped from Lake Bishoftu and distributed in front of the gate of the municipality.²⁰

For a time being this measure reduced the problem of water supply. However, it did not bring a lasting solution for the ever-increasing population of the town. In 1958/59, with the aid of the point four programs, another well was dug within the compound of the municipality. It was from this time onwards that many of the town's dwellers became users of tap water.²¹

In 1965, about 60% of the population used tap water both for drinking and other household purposes. Yet, about 22.8 percent of the population continued to obtain water from streams.²² The practice of selling water fetched from Chäläläkä using cans and barrels continued right up to the early 1970s.²³ However, compared with many major Ethiopian towns, Bishoftu was relatively in a better.²⁴

From 1979 the work condition as far as water supply is concerned the town's water supply service which had been under the municipality's control was detached and became an independent body, its office was built in March 1983. Despite its repeated attempts the municipality failed to resume its control over the water supply service. Ever since this separation the relations between the municipality and the office of water supply and sewerage (WSSS) have been marked by disagreement²⁵ (see Appendix V).

The town was supplied with water pumped from the six bore holes found at Shembra Meda, located 10kms north east of the town. In fact, the bore holes had been dug as early as 1978.²⁶ But the project was not operational for more than ten years until the government allocated the required budget. In 1989, the project was resumed by the money given by the African Development Bank on loan terms. The completion of the project created a relief and significantly alleviated the town's serious shortages of water supply.²⁷ According to sources 18, 373 households have got water at their houses during this turn. The revenue collected from water provision and other services have also come to increase from year to year.²⁸

4.3.2. Hydro-Electric Power

Electricity, like water supply, was first introduced to the town during the Italian period. However, as it was noted earlier, this electric supply was confined to the Italian residences and some major streets. The town's people began to obtain power supply in the post Italian period and even then on limited scale.²⁹

Until the end of the 1940s, only a few quarters of the town were supplied with electric power. In 1949, through the good will of the emperor an electric line was installed from the Aqaqi power station, which had been built by the Italian company called *Compagnia Nazionale Imprese Electriche* (CONIEL).³⁰

In 1960, following the completion of the Qoqa hydroelectric power plant, the town obtained sufficient electric supply. This brought positive impact in facilitating the various flour and oil mills and other power consuming enterprises. There after the town never faced serious shortages of power supply. However, the inadequacies of street lighting remained a problem for the town for so long.³¹

It is evident that hand in hand with the spatial expansion of the town the demand for power grew and the number of clients was considerably increased. Unfortunately, however, no recorded information is found that indicates the number of clients for the earlier period. After 1991, the number of EELPA clients had reached 7853 and 427 new applicants were registered for electric power supply.³²

4.3.3. Transport and Communication Services

The railway was the earliest modern transportation system introduced to the town. In fact, it has been described that the town itself is a product of the railway. The railway enabled the town to be linked to other towns located along the line. In 1929, following the establishment of the model farm, some vehicles saw on the road to Foqa. It was during the Italian period that relatively better roads were constructed in the town.³³ The Italians opened new roads to facilitate communication among the various quarters which they established in the town. To ensure effective control of the surrounding areas, they constructed dry weather rural roads. Besides constructing new ones, they asphalted the road that led from the center of the town to Foqa Hotel. Moreover, the main highway which bisects the town was built during the Italian period.³⁴

In the post-Italian period new roads were also paved to connect the various quarters of the town. These roads were gravel and asphalted roads. Until 1964/65 a total of about 30 direction roads of all types existed.³⁵ In 1964 the road that led from the center to the new market, Addisu Kedame was asphalted still it is providing service.³⁶

Until the present time, apart from the main highway that leads to the capital, there have been only two asphalted roads in the town: the one that leads from the center of Lake Hora and the other that leads from the center to the market and the rest were either simple tracks or gravel roads. Compared to the spatial size of the town and the number of its population, the roads were inadequate in length and poor in quality.³⁷

One of the major reasons for this poor quality road network was the absence of a master plan. The town did not get its master plan until 1970.³⁸ It was after the implementation of the master plan that, the majority of the town's intra urban roads have been paved. Pavement of roads also led to disputes between the municipality and those who had built their houses along the newly opened roads.³⁹

The transport facility between Bishoftu and other towns was relatively better. Besides the train, there were vehicles of different types and sizes that connected Bishoftu with other town. However, the intra-urban transport system was very poor. For long, *gari* (horse-drawn cart) transport was the only public transport facility in the town. The first taxi service began with five taxis by Air Force members, who were release from their job. However, taxi transport was limited to the main asphalt roads which radiate from Lamlam Tabya to either the Air Force or Hora Ras Hotel. In the remaining areas, including the asphalted road that led to the market, *gari*s were the only means of public transport.⁴⁰

The major means of transport that have been rendering services in the town and help to communicate with other rural and urban localities include town buses, taxis, and public transport and freight trucks.⁴¹

Table 8: Type of Vehicles which are Legally Registered in the Town, 2000

No.	Types	Number
1.	Private taxi and minibuses	859
2.	Private cars (02)	90
3.	Trade cars (03)	415
4.	Government cars (04)	19
5.	Horse carts	1012
Total		1,383

Source: BCA Agency of transport on socio-economic profil, 2000, p. 39

Due to its location along the railway line, Bishoftu was one of the earliest Ethiopian towns to get telephone and telegraphic services. In the first two decades of the post-Italian period, the telephone service was confined to the emperor palace and the Air Force. It was after 1964 that the inhabitants of the town got access to telephone services. This service began with two operators who worked for 8 hours a day. In 1969 the telephone service changed its operation from manual to automatic. The existing 2000 data in the town has one automatic digital telephone and 299 wirelasses as providing services. There are also 10,012 fixed telephone lines with 7,311 apparatus.⁴²

The Italians were also the pioneers in establishing a post-office in the town. However, like other services its use was monopolized by to the Italians. After independence a post office branch was opened 1954/55. The existing 2000 data evidence shows 1990 boxes which can give domestic and international service in the town.⁴³

4.3.4. Educational Services

Modern education had already been introduced into the country long before the Italian period. The fruits of education had already been tasted. Especially by members of the ruling elite in particular. The Italians destroyed the existing educational system of the country the relative ease with which the Italians defeated Ethiopia was a clear indication of the great importance of education and developments in technology for Ethiopians. This seems to be reflected in the special urge with which the Ethiopians began to develop educational services after liberation not only through governmental intervention but also through the private initiatives of individuals.⁴⁴

Though modern education in Ethiopia dated back to the pre-Italian period, in many areas schools were opened after liberation. Bishoftu was among the first beneficiaries after liberation. The first modern school in Bishoftu was opened by the government in 1942. Its initial name was Bishoftu School. In 1953 by the order of Emperor Haile Selassie its name was changed to *Atse Lebbnä-Dengel Wanag-Sägad* School in commemoration of one of the 16th century Ethiopian emperors.⁴⁵

Until 1947 it was an elementary school which covered grades from one to six. In 1948/49 grades 7 and 8 were also launched. The second school in the town was inaugurated in 1954. This was Kättä Elementary school, after the name of the area.⁴⁶ In 1962 another elementary school was built in the town at Foqa, near Hora Ras Hotel. This was Harar Meda Elementary school. The main actors in establishing this school were members of the Air Force. In fact, some civilians and governmental institutions also contributed for foundation. Until the 1974 revolution only children from the Air Force families were admitted to the school.⁴⁷

The first high school in the town was the Ethiopian Evangelical School. It was a mission school that was launched opened in 1953 by three missionary institutions, i.e. the Makana Yasus Mission, the American Mission, and the German- Swedish-Norwegian Lutheran Missions. The school was a boarding school built on the site of the former market center called Aroge Kedame: it was opened as a gesture towards alleviating the scarcity of high schools in the country.⁴⁸ After 15 years of its establishment a two-year teachers training college was opened within the compound of the high school.⁴⁹

Despite the presence of the Ethiopian Evangelical School in the town as early as 1953, the inhabitants of the area were not the main beneficiaries. Therefore, until 1969 the town had no senior secondary school to meet the growing demand for secondary education. After completing junior secondary school the students had to go either to Hilamariyam Mamo Secondary School in Debre Berhan or to Ambo Secondary School. Later after the opening of Galawdewos Senior secondary School in 1960, the students were able to continue their education in Nazret.⁵⁰ However; it was costly and burden on money to send their children to these far away areas. After considering all the problems the inhabitants of the town appealed for the establishment of high school.⁵¹

In 1969 the school's, which consisted of 40 classrooms, was completed. The money allocated for construction was obtained by loan from the World Bank. The school, which is located along the main road to the capital, was named Princes Tanagnawarq Hiale Selasse Comprehensive secondary School.⁵²

Apart from the above mentioned schools, there were establishment of institutions of higher learnings in the town. One of these was the Institute for Animal Health Assistants. It was the first of its kind in the country. This institute was established in 1936 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) under the auspices of the MOA.⁵³ The institute awarded a diploma after two-year training in animal health. In 1968 the institute had 60 trainees, and seven lecturers, of whom 5 were foreigners and two Ethiopians.⁵⁴

In 1979 the faculty of Veterinary Medicine was also established adjacent to the Institute of Animal Health Assistants. The faculty emerged as a center of excellence in animal health and production under Addis Ababa University. It provided a six-year training program, which would lead to the attainment of the degree of Doctor of veterinary medicine. A decade later in 1989, the doctor of veterinary medicine and institute of animal health assistants joined together under the umbrella of Addis Ababa University. The main objectives of the faculty include training professionals in various fields of veterinary sciences, providing diagnostic and consultative services to various services community groups on animal health problems and undertaking basic and applied livestock research.⁵⁵

Table 9: Schools in Bishoftu (1969/70)

No	Name of the school	Male	No of studnets	
			Female	Total
1	Atse Lebana Dengel School	100	677	1677
2	Kätä Elementary School	506	205	711
3	Härär Meda School	522	204	726
4	Princess Tänägnäwärq Comprehensive High School	1056	137	1193
5	Ethiopian Evangelical School	117	-	117
6	Ethiopian Evangelical College	8	-	8
7	Institute of Animal Halth Assistants	60	-	60
	Total	2969	1258	5227

Source: AMDZ, Katama Kellel /File No.4005, 1963 E.C, p.9.

In spite of the presence of all these schools the growing demand of the people for education was not adequately met. Money students especially those who applied elementary schools could not get admission. This was mainly due to the shortage of class room and teachers. But after 1991 education sector show fast growing in the town.

The existing 2000 data of the town had 46 non-governmental KGs, 21 (3 government and 18 non government); primary level (1-8), 26 (11 government and 15 non-governmental); 9-12, 2 government schools; 1 government and NGO technical and vocational training as well as 4 private colleges, 1 government health college, 1 government University and 1Defense Engineering University College are in the town.⁵⁶

4.3.5. Health Services

The first hospital in Bishoftu was established in 1948/49 following the petition of the town's population to Emperor Haile Selassie.⁵⁷ In fact, prior to this, the Italians had built a small hospital in the town. However, its service was exclusively for the Italians themselves. Local inhabitants gained access to modern medical facilities only after the Italian period. The buildings used by the newly established hospital had been the former Italian administrative office, an

edifice that still exists.⁵⁸ In 1965, for unknown reasons, the previous hospital was reduced to a health center. In the mean time, the town's folk, especially the *Idirs* of the town repeatedly presented their complaints to the municipality.

This measure, however, did not have a strong disruptive impact on the town's health facilities as it was feared. In many respects it was a change of name. The health center kept all its equipment and the staff, and relatively speaking, it was the best center in the *Awraja*. The center had 25 beds for admitted patients and one ambulance. Being the only center, however, it did not provide adequate medical treatment, especially for patients coming from distant areas. Shortage of man power and transport facilities were the main factors that limited its ability to render services beyond the town and the surrounding areas more effectively.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the center also carried out preventive measures. Besides giving vaccines to people who came to the center, it sent its workers to schools and prison compounds to give periodic vaccination. Lessons were also given to students on hygiene, sanitation and nutrition. The other important task of the health center was inspecting the sanitary conditions of Bishoftu town itself.

Sanitarians checked the sanitation and hygiene of the various service giving sectors. Among others, they examined the cooking and service provision conditions in hotels, butchers', shops, tea and drinking houses, and the ways of pets keeping. They also investigated whether bar owners send the bar ladies for check-ups and medication for venereal diseases.⁶⁰ The other service giving undertakings inspected under the sanitary program was abattoir. In 1975 the status of the health center was raised again to a hospital, but with little practical difference. Despite the opening of another health center in the 1970s, the shortage of medical services remained to be a problem.⁶¹

Provision of quality health service is one of the basic things in creating healthy and productive citizens. The town had two hospitals, three health centers, six private pharmacies, 18 private clinics, nine drug shops, two private rural drug vendors and 1 government malaria controlling center.⁶²

Table 10: Health Institutions in the Town, 2000

N/S	Name of institution	Number and ownership		
		Government	Private	Total
1	Hospitals	2	-	2
2	Health centers	3	-	3
3	Clinics	-	18	18
4	Pharmacies	-	6	6
5	Drug shops	-	9	9
6	Rural drug vendors	-	2	2
7	Malaria control	1	-	1
	Total	6	35	41

Source: Bishoftu town Administration Health office report, 2000, p.31

The qualified medical personnel play a great role in provision of quality health service. In Bishoft city the number of medics has come to increase from year to year.⁶³

Table 11: Number of Health Professionals

No	Health professionals	Number of health professional
1	Medical doctors	22
2	Health officers	25
3	Nurses	91
4	Druggist	8
5	Sanitarian	8
6	Health Extremism workers	41
7	Lab Technicians	17
8	X-ray technicians	2
9	Pharmacy technician medical personnel	8
Total		236

Source: Bishoftu town administration health office report, 2000, P. 32.

The major diseases identified based on their severity or the number of people treated against the diseases presented using the following table.

Table 12: Number of People Treated Against the Top Ten Diseases, 2000

No	Type of diseases	Number of treated people
1	Acute upper respiratory infection	7,869
2	Trauma (injury fracture)	6,270
3	Dental with gun diseases	4,387
4	Urinary tract infection	4,122
5	Diarrhea (non blood)	3,876
6	Dyspepsia	3,,028
7	Pneumonia	2,755
8	Other diseases of the eye	2,666
9	Diabetes mellitus	2,119
10	Epilepsy	2,093
	Total	39,185

Source: Bishoftu town administration health office report, 2000, p.34

4.3.6. Housing Services

During the imperial and Darg regimes housing problem became critical to exacerbate in the town because of the imbalance between the existing housing facility and population growth. The common features of most of the housing units in Bishoftu were: most housing units were built from conventional materials like timbers for walls and truss, mud for plastering and corrugated iron sheets for roofing; most of the housing units are attached to one another; most of the housing units have floors with tiles and made from mud, most housing units lack essential services like water, sanitation facilities, communication lines and power lines. These are great disparities in the standard of the houses, which are highly associated with income distribution, lack of utilization of standard designs and lack of defined urban housing policy. After 1991 the housing policy was changed and private houses were built in different part of the town. But still the majority of the urban housing conditions have relatively remained poor.⁶⁴

Figure 11. The current house condition in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu administration office photo album, 2012

Notes

- ¹ Municipality of Debre Zeit, “*Ya Debre Zeit Katema Tintawina Zamenawi Tarik*”1976E.c (Typed Script), P.7; informant: Nigatu.
- ² Mesfin Wolde-Maryam, “Problems of Urbanization,” ..., pp.23-24; *Nagarit Gazeta* No74 of 1945, “Municipalities Proclamation”, p.43. Some names are in the compiles of AMDZ.
- ³ Informants: Abärä, Legesse and Yämané.
- ⁴ John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Policy*, Addis Ababa, 1975, P.317.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Municipality of DebreZeit, “Ya Debre Zeit ...,”P.6; informants: Nigätu, Sémé and Yilmaä.
- ⁷ *Nagarit Gazeta*, No 74 of 1945, p.8; informants: Mäzgäbu and Melesé.
- ⁸ *Nagarit Gazeta*, 5th Year No1 “Municipalility Proclamation,” p.8.
- ⁹ Informants: Lilisä, Bälätä and Getu.
- ¹⁰ Socio- Economic Profile of Bishoftu town, 2000, p.8.
- ¹¹ Archives of The Municipality of Debre Zeit (AMDZ) File No 4005: The Deputy Officer of The Municipality of Debre Zeit to The Ministry of Interior Miskaram 24, 1960E.c.
- ¹² Informants: Nigatu, Kumä and Zäwde.
- ¹³ Informants: Hiwet, Rähmäto, Dägu.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Municipality of Debre Zeit, “Ya Debre Zeit ...,” p.7.
- ¹⁶ Socio-economic profile..., p.16.
- ¹⁷ Informants: Yämäne, Zälalem and Umer.
- ¹⁸ Informants: Tsägä, Shäné and Kumä.
- ¹⁹ Informants: Yämané, Semé and Zälalem.
- ²⁰ Municipality of Debre Zeit ‘Ya Debre Zeit ...,’p.7.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Central Statistical Office “Report on A Survey of Debre Zeit” Addis Ababa, February 1967, p.10.
- ²³ Informants: Abärä, Getu and Legesse.

²⁴ Mesfin Wolde-Maryam, “Problem ...”, P.27; Mesfin Compiled The Data Prepared by The CSO regarding the source of water Supply of Eleven Major Towns of Ethiopia Including Debre Zeit.

²⁵ Informants: Yämané, Zemzem and Terku.

²⁶ AMDZ; Wuha/File No. 3148: DebreZiet Water Supply and Sewerage Service to the Municipality, Tekemt 26, 1972 E.c, Nahase 18,1973E.c.

²⁷ Informants: Yilma, Tafära and Shäné.

²⁸ Socio- Economic Profile..., p.37.

²⁹ Informants: Abärä, Gorfu and Hiwet.

³⁰ Sahlu Defaye, p.27.

³¹ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Nigatu and Tafära.

³² NUPI p.64.

³³ Informants: Getu, Kumä and Lilisä.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Municipality of DebreZiet “Ya” Debre Ziet ...,”p.8.

³⁶ Informants: Shäné, Yilmä and Zäwde.

³⁷ Informants: Abärä, Mäzgäbu, and Tafära.

³⁸ AMDZ; Yakatama kelel/File No. 4005: kanazmach Gabra” Krestos Makonnen to The Technic Service of The Municipalities Department, Tir 19,1963E.c.

³⁹ Informants: Nigatu, Kumä and Dägu.

⁴⁰ Informants: Melesé, Gorfu and Bälätä.

⁴¹ Socio- Economic Profile..., p.37.

⁴² Asefa Tewodros, “History of Telecommunications in Ethiopia up to 1974”, BA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1985, p.39; Socio-Economic Profile ..., p. 38.

⁴³ NUPI, p.65.

⁴⁴ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Getu and Zälalem.

⁴⁵ AMDZ, *Temhert Betoch*/File No.2701: From Atse Lebna Denqel School to Ada’a Warada Office Miazia 28,1945E.c.

⁴⁶ Borton, p.44.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.45; *Ya Harar Meda Model Temhert bit Achir Tarik*, p.6.

⁴⁸ Informants: Getu, Zälalem and Mäzgäbu.

⁴⁹ Borton, p.44.

⁵⁰ Informants: Yämané, Zäwde and Bälätä.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Bishoftu Technical and Vocational School (Year Book), Addis Ababa: Brana Printing Press, 2002, pp. 3-4; informants: Getu, Mäzägäbu.

⁵³ Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, “Harmonizing the curricula of veterinary faculties in East and Southern Africa,” Addis Ababa university (March, 2004), p.1; informants: Elias Dächäsä and Melesé.

⁵⁴ Borton, p.43.

⁵⁵ Faculty of veterinary Medicine..., pp.1-2; informants: Eliäs

⁵⁶ Socio- Economic Profile..., p.24.

⁵⁷ Informants: Lilissä, Tsägä and Teriku.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Borton, pp.51-52.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 53-54; informants: Tsägä, Lilisä and Yilma.

⁶¹ Informants: Lilisää, Tsägä and Legessa.

⁶² Socio-economic profile..., p.32.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.11.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Population of Bishoftu Town

5.1. Ethnic Composition

Before the arrival of the railway line, the area of present day Bishoftu and its surroundings was known collectively as “Ada’a”. Ada’a was inhabited by different branches of the Tulama Oromo such as the Abeichu, Ada’a Liban, etc. Ada’a Oromo had already established themselves in the area in the first half of the 18th century. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Ada’a’s prosperous agriculture attracted more and more immigrants, particularly from Bulga, Manz, Menjar and Shankora. Until the post Italian period the majority of the northern immigrants were peasants who were destined for the country side as tenants. However, during the foundation of the town, descendants of the early Amhara immigrants and the Oromo inhabitants began to settle in the town. Yet, the intermingling process which had already begun earlier continued. It is apparent that in those days the majority of the town’s folk spoke Amharic and Afan Oroma.¹

After 1917 Ethio-Djibouti railway reached at Bishoftu, the immigrant population of the town substantially increased. This greatly changed the ethnic composition of the town. Next to the Oromo and the Amhara population, the other important ethnic groups in the town were the Gurages and Selti. Next to the Yemenis the Gurages dominate the retail business, especially the sale of manufactured goods. Tailoring and handicrafts were also the other major occupations of the Gurages. Shoe-shining and mending were their special preserve. They were also engaged in all kinds of daily labor and there was almost no service sector activity in which they did not participate.²

The Walayita and Dorze were the other ethnics groups residing in the town. After the establishment of the model farm in 1929, a number of Walaitas were brought to work on the farm as daily laborers. The Walayitas dominated the butchery in the town; both before and after the Italian period. The Dorze together with the Salale Oromo dominated the weaving industry. Other people who came from Gojjam, Gonder, Wallo, Tegray and Eritrea also resided in the town. They were few in number and most of them have engaged in transport and hotel industries.³

There were also several foreign residents in the town. The majority were Yemeni Arabs, who dominated the retail business, especially the sale of manufactured goods. They were pioneers in opening the first modern retail shops, bakery and tea houses in the town. The first Yemeni traders arrived in the town as early as before the Italian period, but they were few in number. It was during and after the Italian period that, the Yemenis significantly increased in the town.⁴

Next to the Yemenis, the Italians and Indians were the other numerically significant groups of foreigners residing in the town. Almost all the Italians came to the town during and after the Italian occupation. Most of them ran their own small-scale enterprises. A good number of these Italians were small farmers who engaged in dairy, swine and poultry farming, and horticultural production. Unlike the Italians, almost all the Indians had engaged in teaching in various government schools and in the Air Force. Contrary to the situation in other major Ethiopian towns, the Indians did not participate in commerce. There were few Armenians, though did not permanently reside in the town, they owned and ran few large and capital-intensive commercial establishments.⁵

The other foreign nationals were Americans, French, Canadians, British, Yugoslavs and Srilankas, who worked as instructors and experts in the various educational, research and military institutions found in the town. The number of western nationals was significantly reduced following the demise of the Hayla Selasse's regime in 1974.⁶ However, in the days of the Darg; with the evacuation of the westerners the town saw a large number of Cubans and Russians, a great majority of whom were soldiers and military experts. In fact, some Russians were also assigned as instructors in the high schools of the town.⁷

With the growth and development of the town, especially since the post-Italian period, the town's population was considerably increased. Bishoftu's population was estimated at 1,500 in 1938 by the Italians.⁸ It had reached 21,220 in 1965.⁹ Such an increase was caused by various factors. A natural increase was one; apparently a result of higher fertility and lower mortality rate. The declining death rate was more likely related to the provision of relatively better medical facilities, nutrition and personal hygiene.¹⁰

The other major factor for the town's rapid population increase was immigration.¹¹ Prior to the 1975 land reform proclamation, there were tenant farmers, who were evicted by the landlords. In

the late 1960s and early 1970s, mechanized farming, though it was at its infancy, also contributed to the eviction of many peasants and their eventual migration to the town.¹²

The nature of migration to Bishoftu was not confined to rural-urban. But it also constituted urban-urban migration. Among others, the presence of the various government institutions in the town drew a sizeable number of people, particularly, from other urban areas, since some of the works required skills and expertise which could not be obtained in rural areas. However, the majority of Bishoftu's populations were migrants, who came either from rural or other urban areas.

Table 13: Number of Population Size by Year

Sex	Population size by year			
	1976	1986	1999	2000
Males	25,764	35,058	47,854	49,607
Females	27,891	38,314	52,260	53,562
Total	55,655	73,372	100,114	102,502

Source: Bishoftu town administration on socio-economic profile, 2000, p.9

Urban “pull factors” were the other causes for migration to urban areas. The presence of modern economic activities and relative job opportunities and access to modern facilities and services were some of the major elements in pulling the rural population to towns.¹³ Nevertheless, in the majority of Ethiopian towns, including Bishoftu, the rural “push-factors” were more dominant than urban “pull factors” in causing rural migration to towns.¹⁴ Social factors also played their own role for rural-urban migration. Most African urban dwellers have continued to maintain their rural ties and played a role in encouraging their rural relatives to migrate. In many respects these “Urbanities” served as bridges linking the rural migrants to urban areas as well as bringing new immigrants to urban life. The already established migrants helped new immigrants find jobs and facilitate their adaptation to urban settings.¹⁵

In the late 1970s the number of migrants to the town declined. For instance, in 1978 the migrant population constituted 56.1% against 63.2% in 1965.¹⁶ This was the case in many major Ethiopian towns. The 3.8% net migration to urban areas of the 1960s had declined to around 1%

in 1984. This decline might have been related to the low level of the country's economic development. The "pass system" introduced during the Darg regime to control movement, as well as housing shortage might also partly explain the change.¹⁷

The influx of migrants to the town from all over the country has made Bishoftu a home of diverse ethnic groups.¹⁸ The majority of the town's population were Amharic speakers; i.e. 71.95 followed by Afan Oromo 20.12% the remaining 7.93% spoke all other primary languages reported.¹⁹

In the early 1990s, the number of the Amhara population was 43% while that of the Oromo was 39.4%. Similarly, the Gurage populations constituted 10.4%, of which 4.9% belong to the Sabat-Bet Gurgages.²⁰ Over the years, these diverse ethnic groups of the town have interdependent and peaceful relations. The various social and religious organizations have served as catalysts in this and played a pivotal role in facilitating the interactions.²¹

5.2. Socio-Economic Relations

The social relations among the various ethnic groups of the town have been characterized by harmony, interdependence, intimacy and integration. These have been attained by various socio-economic organizations.²² One of the most prevalent urban voluntary associations that facilitated this ethnic-interaction and integration was *Idir* (tradition self-assisting socio-economic organization). It is a self-help association principally established to give mutual aid to its members in times of death and misfortune and on other occasions.²³

Idir has economic and social significancies. It also tries passed ethnic and religious lines. The first *Idir* in Bishoftu was the Soddo *Idir*. It was established in 1930 by the earliest migrants of the Soddo Gurage to the town before the Italian period. Initially, as it was the case in many towns. *Idir* was organized on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Gradually, however, the Soddo *Idir* began to acquire multi-ethnic set up. Similarly, all the later *Idirs* established in the town, with few exceptions, have acquired a multi-ethnic nature. Members were usually drawn from the same locality that might have diverse ethnic origin or occupation²⁴

The primary and basic functions of these *Idirs* have been provision of traditional financial and social insurance. They render social assistance such as covering funeral expenses, visiting and comforting the bereaved. Escorting the coffin together with the deceased relatives has a social

importance besides its religious values. Such actions implied the social position of both the deceased and the bereaved. To some extent *Idirs* also rendered assistance in case of accidents like fire and theft.²⁵

Though there was considerable similarity among these *Idirs*, variations also existed in their internal regulations. Some arranged a monthly meeting to discuss various matters and to contribute money while others met only for funeral ceremonies and contribute money to cover the required expenses. As a result not all *Idirs* had equal significance.²⁶

In the 1940s and 1950s a number of *Idirs* were established in the town. Towards the end of the 1960s there were 22 *Idirs* in Bishoftu.²⁷ Many of these *Idirs* were organized on the basis of their neighbourhood regardless of their ethnic origins. In this respect, *Idirs* played a part as integrating institutions. Though multi-ethnic *Idirs* themselves were the results of ethnic affiliation, these multi-ethnic *Idirs* further promoted and intensified the integration process. As Fekadu puts it correctly:

Idir...provided the social situation in which members experienced a heightened sense of mutual dependence...there was no better testing ground for mutually binding social ties than “eating and drinking” in good times and “mourning together” in bad times. Both of these social contexts have been symbolically significant as an acid test of friendship.²⁸

There were also other voluntary socio-economic groupings of financial and religious nature. *Iqqub* (rotating credit association) has been popular among both the town's folk and rural inhabitants of Ada'a. It has remained an efficient means of saving money; usually among those individuals who have almost equal income. The Contribution could be made monthly, or weekly or even fortnightly. Although, it is evident that a huge sum of money has been circulating among the merchants of the town through *Iqqub*.²⁹

Mahbär and *Sänbäte* were social gatherings that were connected with religious celebrations. Members of *Mahbär* prepared a feast to show their loyalty and dedication to one of the saints. Every member of the *mahbär* would get a turn to host the saint's day in his home by preparing *tälla* (local beer), bread, *qollo*, *injära* (pan cake) and *wät*. Members were usually drawn from people who have similar economic, social and religious standing.³⁰

Sänbäte is a religious gathering usually carried out by members of the same Christian sect in a locality. Members were required to bring food and drinks like bread, *qollo and tälla* in turn to consume in the church compounds. Both *Mähbär* and *Sänbäte* have played considerable roles in creating contacts and interdependence among their members. Members of the same group were expected to visit each other in times of both happiness and sorrow.³¹

5.3. Religion, Culture and Tourism

The great majority of the town's populations are the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Kajima Giyorgis Church was the earliest Orthodox Church in Bishoftu. Its foundation preceded that of the town. It was founded by the renowned Ada'a *balabat*, Bullo Jullo, in 1843. However, the church was named after the *balabat* (*land lord*) of the area called kajima who owned the land on which the Church was built. Kajima Giyorgis was the only Church of the town until the second one was built in 1947. This Church is St. Rufael Church, located on an elevated site overlooking the town called Fite in the south eastern part of the town, just in front of Addisu Kedame.³² The idea for the construction of this Church goes back to the pre-Italian period. It was towards the end of Zawditu's reign that the construction work was started. However, before its completion the Italians occupied the town.³³

After liberation, the construction work was resumed in 1952/53 and was completed in 1955. On July 23, 1955 the church was inaugurated in the presence of Emperor Haile Selassie, the then Ethiopian patriarch Abuna Basleyos and other high-ranking officials. It was on this particular day that the emperor changed the name of the town from Bishoftu to Debre Zeit.³⁴ The Church had close attachments both with the emperor and the Air Force. Due to the emperor's frequent visit to the town, on weekends, he usually attended the church on Sundays. It was customary for the emperor to walk on foot from the church to his nearby palace at the end of the church's service.³⁵

The third Orthodox church of the town was built in 1978. This is the Mandube Kidana-Mehrat Church. It was named after the area. It is located in the north eastern part of the town. Though hard to verify, some informants believe that this church was built on the site of the ruined medieval church that had been destroyed by the forces of Ahmad Gragn in the 16th century.

In the late 1990s, two additional churches were built in the town. These are the Mika'el Church in 1995 and Babogaya Madhane-Alam Church in 1997. They are located at the center and on the eastern edge of the town, respectively.³⁶

Besides these Orthodox Churches, the followers of other sects of Christianity built their own churches in the town. Of these the Protestant churches were relatively numerous. The earliest protestant church in the town was the Mekana Yisus Evangelical Church which was established in 1963. Prior to the foundation of this church, it was the Ethiopian Evangelical School which later promoted to college. During the days of the Darg, all the premises of the school and the church were nationalized and came under the Air Force. On the demise of the Darg a certain part of the building including the church were returned to Mekana Yesus Evangelical Church. Yet a substantial portion of the premises remains under the Air Force.³⁷

Though short-lived, the Italians built a small Catholic Church adjacent to their cemetery near the present Worka Hotel. However, it was in 1976-77 that the present Catholic Church was established in the town. It is located along the main highway in front of the former Joseph's flour mill (or the present Debre Zeit food industry).³⁸

Until 1968, there had been no mosque in the town. However, according to informants, there had been an earlier attempt to build a mosque in the town by the Muslim section of the population. To this end, in 1963/64 the Muslims bought an area at the center of the town which is called Shibo Gibbi. But later, the construction was forbidden because the site was located along the road that emperor usually passed across. Later they bought another area in *kebele* 13, and the mosque was built in 1960. This mosque, which is named Abu Baker S'adiq Mosque, was the only mosque of the town until the second one was built in 1974. It is located in *kebele* 2, just in front of Mika'el church.³⁹

In terms of religious distribution, the existing 2000 data show that, there are 8 orthodox churches, 5 mosques, 1 Catholic Church and over 30 protestant churches in the town. Regarding the followers of different religions: the existing information reveals that from the total population of the town, 87.87% are Orthodox charistians, 5% Muslim, 0.6% Catholics, 6.93% were Protestants, and 1.7% Waqefeta religions (traditional Oromo religion).⁴⁰

In Bishoftu city, there is “Hora Arsaden” remarkable “Wakefeta” ritual area, which is known as “Irrecha Ceremony”. This is the most popular cultural site in the city and even at regional level. The ceremony is conducted once in a year in September following the Meskel Holy day, on the first Sunday. There are also cultural reserving facilities such as Museum, Lemma Guya’s art gallery and Public Libraries in the town.⁴¹

Bishoftu town administration has given due attention for tourism sector. It is strongly working to ensure that the town is the first tourist destination of the country. The town administration has played a great role for development of different infrastructure services which contribute in creating conducive working environment for investors who have been investing in tourism sector. The garden city program (construction of guest houses and high standard lodges and full-fledged recreational sites) has got particular attention by the town administration. In the town there are many tourist entering hotels, resorts, recreation centers and lodges.⁴²

Table 14: Number of Hotels, Resorts, Recreation Centers and Lodges in the Town

No	Types	Number	Number of bed rooms
1	Hotels	41	770
2	Resorts	3	91
3	Lodges	3	25
4	Recreation centers	6	37
5	Pensions	23	159
6	Groceries	40	0
7	Bar and restaurants	33	0
Total		123	1082

Source: BCA Culture and Tourism office on socio-economic profile, 2000, p.41

Figure 12. Kuruftu resort in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu town cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

Figure 13. Tomy International Hotel in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu town cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

Figure 14. Irrecha ceremony at Hora Arsadi Lake in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

Figure 15. African Art Gallery, One of the famous Artist Lemma Guya in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu town cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

Figure 16. Museum in Bishoftu town



Source: Bishoftu cultural and tourism office photo album, 2012

Notes

- ¹ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Melesé and Abärä.
- ² Informants: Bälätä, Gofu and Kumä.
- ³ Informants: Nigatu, Semé, Umer.
- ⁴ AMDZ, Yawichi Agar Zegoch, File. No. 4030: The Municipality of Debre Ziet to Ada'a Warada Office, Genbot 18, 1959 E.C. PP. 3-6.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* informants: Yilma, Yädech and Zäwde.
- ⁶ Informants: Rähämto, Täriku and Zälaleme.
- ⁷ AMDZ, Yawichi Agar Zegoch, File..., pp.3-6; informants: Dégu, Täriku and Zéwdé.
- ⁸ *Gvida D' Italia Della Consociations Tvristica Italiana, "Africa Orientale Italiana,"* Milano: Graits ai Socio Del, 1938 (XVI), p.427.
- ⁹ C.S.O., Report on A Sarvey of Debre Zeit..., p.1-3.
- ¹⁰ Endashaw, p.18; Mesfin Walde-maryam, "Problems of Urbanization," ..., pp. 26-33.
- ¹¹ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Tafära and Umer; "A Study on Rural Urban Migration the Case of Debre Zeit," B.A Thesis, Department of Geography AAU, p. 17.
- ¹² Informants: Yilma, Yämané and Zäwde.
- ¹³ Assefa Damte, "Urbanization in Ethiopia: Pre and Post Revolution Experience," Ph.D. dissertation, milwankee, The University of Wisconsin, 1993, p. 58; Endashaw Getnet, p. 19.
- ¹⁴ Breese, p.80
- ¹⁵ William Shack, "Urban Ethnicity and Cultural Processes of Urbanization in Ethiopia," *In Urban Anthropology, Cross Cultural Studies in Urbanization*, Adidan South All (ed.), Oxford, 1973, pp. 252-253; Silesh Sisay, p. 681; G.Breese, p.82.
- ¹⁶ Alula, p.297.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*; Fikre Yoseph, "The National Veterinary institute: Three Decades of Achievement," Addis Ababa: Ministry of Agriculture, 1966
- ¹⁸ Informants: Mäzgäbu, Melesé and Abärä.
- ¹⁹ CSA, 1994.
- ²⁰ NUPI, p.52.
- ²¹ Informants: Teriku, Yämané and Zäwde.
- ²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid*; Eftyychia koehn and Peter koehn, “Idir as a Vehicle for Urban Development in Addis Ababa,” *Proceedings of The First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, Michigan state University, 1973, p. 399.

²⁴ Borton, p. 34; informants: Zälalem, Yilma, Tafära.

²⁵ Fakadu Gedamu, “Urbanization, Polyehnic Group Voluntary Association and National Integration in Ethiopia” A Paper Presented to the International Congress of Africanists, Addis Ababa, December 9-19, 1973, p.10

²⁶ Borton, p. 34; informants: Shäné, Nigau and Bälätä.

²⁷ Borton, p.35.

²⁸ Fekadu, p.11.

²⁹ Informants; Abärä, Dägu and Semé; Borton, p.34.

³⁰ *Ibid*; Getachew Tekle-medhin and Tilahun Mekonnen, “Socio-Economic Characteristics of Peasant Families in The Central High Land of Ethiopia Ada’a Wareda,” Ministry of Agriculture, 1974, pp.17-18.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² Informants: Legessa, Kumä and Yämané.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Informants: Yämané, Terku and Dägu; Hayla-Maryam Mangash, *Mot Ambo Darsomales*, Addis Ababa, 1994E.C, p.99.

³⁵ Informants: Dägu, Teriku and Zäwde.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Informants: Yämané, Teriku and Dägu.

³⁸ Informants: Yädecha, Yilma and Getu.

³⁹ Informants: Umer, Rähämto and Zämzäm.

⁴⁰ Socio-Economic Profile of Bishoftu town, 2000, p.41.

⁴¹ *Ibid*. p.42.

⁴² *Ibid*.

Conclusion

Bishoftu, formerly Debre Ziet, attributed its birth to the construction of Addis Ababa-Djibouti rail road. The railway line passes through the town bisecting it into two parts. The railway station is located in the present central part of the town near the central park. It was this station that provided the first nucleus of the town.

Bishoftu town has unique features, such as the existence of many natural lakes inside and around the town. Besides, its surroundings were well-known for agricultural productivity, this is still the case. The plains of the area as opposed to the mountainous nature of the historical caravan routes and the presence of a market center were the major reasons behind the selection of Bishoftu as a railway station. It was around the station that the earliest settlements emerged. Dwellings and offices of the railway workers were the first buildings in the area. Gradually, the settlement grew as the local people clustered around the station to provide the necessary services for the railway workers and to help themselves. In 1935 Bishoftu was already transformed from a small to a sizeable village with some noticeable elements of urban features. However, it was after the Italian period that Bishoftu began to acquire a truly urban character.

The occurrence of the Italians in Bishoftu had significant contribution to the growth and expansion of the town. During the Italian period, Bishoftu became a garrison town and it served as a check point and buffer zone against the patriots who tried to intrude into the capital. Moreover, due to its agricultural potential, the Italians made some attempts to settle Italian ex-service men in Bishoftu and its surroundings. Moreover, the warm climate and the crater lakes of the area also attracted a good number of Italians to pass their weekends and holidays in Bishoftu. All these events had their own contribution, particularly, to the infrastructural development of the town, which laid the foundation on which the restored government of Emperor Haile Selasse built upon in the post-Italian period.

Bishoftu's steady growth and development came, particularly, in the 1960s and early 1970s. The establishment of various administrative, military, commercial, educational and agricultural research institutions had quite considerable influence on the growth and development of the town. This in turn, simulated commerce in the town, and agriculture in the near by rural neighborhoods. The emperor's frequent visit and Bishoftu's position as a resort town had also their own contribution for the development of the town.

With the outbreak of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, as elsewhere in the country, all the major private enterprises in the town were nationalized. This action obviously curtailed private undertakings and had the effect of retarding the town's development. Compared with the imperial regime, only a few governmental institutions were founded in the town and spatial expansion with the construction of houses.

After 1991, the new government re-structured the municipalities. They had their own self administration. However, the town's infrastructural development is insufficient compared with its spatial expansion and the resultant population increase. Housing, medical and educational facilities, water supplies and inter-urban transportation remained the most pressing social needs of the town even today and need to be provided. This thesis could not claim to be comprehensive though it goes all the way up to 2000. However, its modest contribution would lay ground for further researches on Bihoftu, in particular and urban studies in Ethiopia in general.

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List of Oral Informants

No	Name of informants	Age	Date of interview	Place of interview	Remark
1	Abärä Gäbru (Ato)	73	28-03-14	Bishoftu	He is well informed about the town of Bishoftu. He has a good memory about the urbanization process of the town of Bishoftu.
2	Bälätä Telila (Ato)	77	09-03-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Ada, and long resident of the town. He is well acquainted with the oral tradition of the area.
3	Dägu Däbäbä (Ato)	65	07-04-14	Bishoftu	He is former member of the Ethiopian air force, and later he has opened his own enterprise.
4	Getu Assefa (Ato)	70	28-02-14	Bishoftu	He was long resident of the town. He served as a teacher. Now retired.
5	Gorfu Wordofa (Ato)	69	5-04-14	Bishoftu	He was the worker of Debre Zeit municipality. Now retired.
6	Hiwet Ayälä (W/ro)	67	01-04-14	Bishoftu	She was a known merchant in the town. Now retired
7	Kumä Birru (Ato)	70	27-02-14	Bishoftu	He is long resident of the town, and former member of the town.
8	Legessa Tafära (Ato)	67	17-03-14	Bishoftu	He served as a teacher in the St. Rufael church from later he became <i>alaqa</i> of the church. Now retired.
9	Lilisä Säbökä (Ato)	68	10-04-14	Bishoftu	He is long resident of the town, and served as health assistant in the hospital. Now he is retired and engaged in business.
10	Melesé Bisrät (Ato)	76	08-03-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Ada and serves in Kajima Giyorgis Church he is knowledgeable person about the history of the town.
11	Mäzgäbu G/wäld (Ato)	73	13-04-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Debre Zeit and long resident of the town. He was a teacher. Now retired. He is well acquainted with the history of the area. He also participate indifferent committees.
12	Nigatu Seyoum (Ato)	71	06-03-14	Bishoftu	Long time worker in Bishoftu town administration office. Now retired.
13	Rähämtu Hussen (Ato)	67	14-03-14	Bishoftu	A Harari Merchant who resided for more than 40 years in the town.
14	Shäné Säjäne (W/ro)	72	17-03-14	Bishoftu	She was born in Ada and resident of the town for more than 50 years.
15	Semé Adärä (Ato)	69	02-04-14	Bishoftu	Born in the Bishoftu town knows much about the town and the surrounding area.
16	Tafära Yigazu (Ato)	70	21-03-14	Bishoftu	He served in the railway company, and

					stayed in the town for a long period of the time.
17	Teriku Bädälu (<i>Ato</i>)	68	11-04-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Ada and member of the Ethiopian Air Force and long resident of the town now retired.
18	Tsägä Feleke (<i>W/ro</i>)	66	29-04-14	Bishoftu	She is long resident of the town, and served as health assistant in the hospital. Now retired.
19	Umer Ali (<i>Sheih</i>)	77	15-03-14	Bishoftu	He served as the imam of Au Bakr S'adiq Mosque. Now retired.
20	Yilma Gudeta (<i>Ato</i>)	67	05-03-14	Bishoftu	He is long resident of the town, and former member of the army.
21	Yämané Berhan (<i>Ato</i>)	69	01-03-14	Bishoftu	He served as a teacher of st. Rufeal Church later he left the church and served in the town's water supply and sewerage service now retired.
22	Yädecha Gurume (<i>Ato</i>)	70	22-04-14	Bishoftu	He was born in the town and has served in Joseph's flour mill for a long period of time.
23	Zälalem Häbte (<i>Ato</i>)	68	26-02-14	Bishoftu	He was a long resident of the town. He served a teacher. Now retired.
24	Zäwde Ejigu (<i>Ato</i>)	65	10-03-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Ada. He also served in Ada <i>woreda</i> Administration. Now retired.
25	Zämzäm Ahmäd (<i>W/ro</i>)	67	04-03-14	Bishoftu	She is one of the town business women and long resident of the town. She owned one of the bakery shop.
26	Elias Dächäsä (<i>Ato</i>)	69	02-03-14	Bishoftu	He was born in Bishoftu. He also served in Deber Ziet veterinary institute as a laboratory technician. Now he has been already retired.

Glossary

<i>Abbaa</i>	Father, owner of something
<i>Amolé</i>	Salt bar
<i>Awrajäa</i>	Sub- province
<i>Däjazmach</i>	General of any army (Title given to the feudal lords)
<i>Débtera</i>	Church teacher
<i>Därg</i>	The ex-military government of Ethiopia
<i>Enderasse</i>	Deputy
<i>Farasula</i>	Cereal measuring unit, approximately 15kg
<i>Fitäwräri</i>	General of the Vanguard
<i>Gäbbär</i>	Tribute Payer
<i>Gäshä</i>	Land of 40 hectare size
<i>Gosä</i>	Clan
<i>Geräzmäch</i>	Commander of the left
<i>Hara</i>	Low land
<i>Idir</i>	Self-help voluntary association
<i>Iqqub</i>	A form of rotating saving association
<i>Irreecha</i>	Oromo religion ceremony
<i>Känazmach</i>	Commander of the right
<i>Kebele</i>	Local administration unit
<i>Ketema</i>	Garrison center
<i>Mäd-bét</i>	Kitchen
<i>Ras</i>	The highest feudal title
<i>Tällä</i>	Home-made beer
<i>Waaqeffanaa</i>	Oromo religion
<i>Wärädä</i>	District
<i>Waaqa</i>	Sky God,

Appendices

Appendix- I

-1-

ተገር 408/60

ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር 24 ተገ 60.9.9

29

ግ ሰ ታ ወ ሽ

- ለደበረ ዘይት በተገ ስልል አገላለጽ አድስት የተከለለው በስት ጊዜ ነው
- 1ኛ / በ35.9.9 ሲሆን
- 2ኛ / በ42.9.9
- 3ኛ / በ56.9.9 ነው
- በዚህም ውስጥ በ35.9.9 የተከለለው 1ኛ / በወይዘሮ ገገቷ ተከለ ወልደ አርሰት ገገ
- ገሽ ሙረት ረቡ ሲሆን ለዚህም ጭንቅ ተስጥቶበታል ተራው በስተ ረቡ ገገ 1/8ኛው በበላ
- ርሰት አጃ ሲገኝ ለላው ለቤተ ግብርም በአዳር ጋይል ጭንቅ ጭናሪያ አኗ ለወገጊላ
- ደ ተለጅ ግሽገ ገጭሮት ቤት ውሉ በዚህም የተረረው አስተጻው ስልል ውስጥ ገብቶ ግዘ
- ገሻ ቤት ገብሮ የሚቀበልበት ሲሆን ጭንቅ አልተሰጠበትም።
- 2ኛ / በገ ከተ አገላ ገሽ ገሻ ሙረት ሲሆን ለዚህም ጭንቅ ተስጥቶበት ዳ
- ግዘገሻ ቤት ጭንቅ ሆኖአል።
- 3ኛ / በገ ከተ ዘወልዲ ገሻ ገሽ ሙረት ተወስዶ ይህም ጭንቅ ተስጥቶበት የግ
- ዘገሻ ቤት ተረከበታል።
- በዚህ ሙረት በ35.9.9 ገ ገሽ ተረብ ተከለሉ ጭንቅ ተከፍሎታል።
- 2ኛ / በ1942.9.9 የተከለለው በስት ገሽ ሙረት ሲሆን ይህም የተከለሰበትንና በለር
- ስተቸም በወረገት ከፍል በጊዜው ጭንቅ ተከፍቶ አገላታታል የታዘዘበትን ግሰረቻዎች።
- 1ኛ / የጭንቅ ሪፖርት 2ኛ / በኢት. ገገው ገገምት የጽ/ሚኒስትር በተገር
- 4850/13/42 3ኛ / በቤተ ግብርም ጭንቅ ቤት አዘዥ ለየረርና ከረፍ አውራጃ ገዘት
- ታህሣሥ 7/43.9.9 በተገር 717/3/43 4ኛ / በሸዋ ወ/ገዘት ጽ/ቤት ለየረርና
- ከረፍ አውራጃ ገዘት ነጠላ 23/47.9.9 በተገር ግ/12483/1 5ኛ / በየረርና ከ
- ረፍ አውራጃ ገዘት ጽ/ቤት ለኮይካ ወረጃ ገዘት ጽ/ቤት ነጠላ 30/47.9.9 የተጸፈ
- ጭንቅ በዚህ ጋር አቅርቦናል ይሁን አገላ በዚህ ጋር በተረቀው የጭንቅ ጭንቅ ጭንቅ ለይ
- ከተሰጠበት 1ኛ / በከተ አገላ ጭንቅ ጭንቅ 2ኛ / በገገጭረሰ ስሸገረ አርሰት የተከለለውን
- የግዘገሻ ቤት በይረቀቀው በለርስተቸ አጃ ይገኛል ለላው ገገ የግዘገሻ ቤት በጊዜው
- ተረከበ ለሕዝብ የወረው በትእዛዙ ሙረት ጭንቅ ተከፍቶ ሂደው ያልተቀበሉ ጭንቅ ለሙረ
- ት ችለናል።
- 3ኛ / በ1956.9.9 ለአስተጻው በተጠጫሪ የተከለሉት ሙረቶች 27 ገሽ 37 ሣ
- ነቱም በ5 ግሊም ስለሆነ ዘርዘሩን የሚያሰረጽ 2 ገሽ በዚህ ጋር አቅርቦአለሁ።
- እነዚህም አርሰቶች ወደ አስተጻው የተከለሉት ገገምት ወይም ገገፍ ተስጥቶ ሣይሆን
- ታህሣሥ 14/56.9.9።

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(Signature)
 ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር
 የግብርና ጥቅም ሚኒስትር

በቦር ጸሐፊ ነጻዘዝ ለሌላ ሀብተወልደ

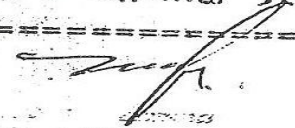
.. ረብ. ወለደገ በለጢ

.. ከተ. አበበ ረታ

.. ከተ. ወልደ ጻፈ

.. ከተ. ግደቤ ለግ

.. ደግ በክፍል ዕርገተ ሆነው በሰጡት ውሳኔ እና ስለ በሌሎች ወጪዎች ነጻዘዝ
4/56.9.ዎ በተገር 2/4/007/12357 በገጽ 177 ተገኝቶ ጸገር ገዘት ጻፈ
ሲባቸው የግዛታ ስጦታ የጻፈ በተለለፈው ነጻዘዝ መረጃው ላይ አገልግሎት በሰጡ
27 ጻገረባቸው በገንዘብ 14/56.9.ዎ የተሰጠው ውሳኔ ገለጻል ገንጽ በዘዘ ገር
ተገኝቶ በገንዘብ አገልግሎት: =====


የግዛታ ስጦታ ገንጽ
የግዛታ ስጦታ ገንጽ


በግዛታ/2/50 - ገንጽ/ግዛታ: ሂሳብ: መገንጠ.

4/56.9.ዎ: በገንጽ ደ. ገንጽ. ገንጽ. ገንጽ.

2/56.9.ዎ - ለሂሳብ. ሂሳብ: ገንጽ. ገንጽ - ገንጽ

ገንጽ: ለገንጽ ገንጽ ገንጽ

ገንጽ ገንጽ ገንጽ ገንጽ. ገንጽ. ገንጽ

ገንጽ. 

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been fully acknowledged.

Name: _____

Signature _____

Date of submission _____