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## **Dissertation Abstract**

*A Historical Anthropology of Slavery and the Gǎbbar Servitude System  
in Wǎlaytta of Southern Ethiopia, 1894–1975*

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several wars against successive Ethiopian regimes, with some governors cooperating with them and loyalists serving the state. Riverine societies such as the Dube people also employed their traditional military and multilingual skills in these conflicts on both sides.

Somalia's intervention, sheltering, training, and arming of insurgents worsened the violent state-society relations since 1960. These resistances contributed to the 1974 and 1991 revolutions, with little change brought to the periphery. After 1991, the politicization of ethnicity led to the decline of traditional alliances among pastoralists and introduced new trends in identity-based rivalries, which were unable to pacify the Bale lowlands.

**BOSHA BOMBETA**, *A Historical Anthropology of Slavery and the Gäbbar Servitude System in Wälaytta of Southern Ethiopia, 1894–1975*, PhD Dissertation in History at the University of Pavia, defended on 14 July 2022.

This dissertation provides a historical, anthropological study of slavery and the *gäbbar* system in southern Ethiopia's Wälaytta region from 1894 to 1975. Slavery was widely practiced in the area prior to its forceful incorporation into the Ethiopian empire. We have clear evidence of slavery in Wälaytta during the Malla dynasty (thirteenth–sixteenth century). This dynasty was established by the Malla clan and became consolidated by the great fame of *káwo* Motälämi (Motolomi). This great fame in medieval southern Ethiopia is said to have conquered many neighboring polities and expanded the Malla dynasty territory greatly. Slavery was introduced into the ancient kingdom of Wälaytta through war and territorial expansion. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Malla dynasty was replaced by what was to become known as the Təgre dynasty. Its founders were Təgray immigrants (from the Tämbe area) arriving as traders who, via marriage alliances, became members of the Malla ruling class. Their rule of Wälaytta lasted up to the late nineteenth century. The warfare and territorial expansion begun by the Malla dynasty became core policy of the Təgre dynasty for a century and a half, in which time slaves emerged in the dynasty as a separate social class.

The *gäbbar* system, a peasant-lord bond ship imported and copied from the tenure system in northern Ethiopia, was a practice foreign to the people of Wälaytta. This system of serfdom was introduced after the Kingdom of Wälaytta was subdued in the 1894 conquest. Following this conquest, the *gäbbar* system severely changed the social hierarchy of Wälaytta. A new class of relationships emerged between *näftäñña* and *gäbbar* (the northern military settlers and the local peasantry) under which the conquering soldiery and nobility acquired land and tenants, the latter now required to pay taxes and tributes to their new lords. Following the conquest, slave raiding became more rampant in the region.

Thousands of local inhabitants were kidnapped and trafficked to the country's central, northern, and eastern parts. These two practices persisted until the Italian occupation of Wälāyṭṭa in 1937.

The dissertation seeks to understand how these institutions were experienced in the region from a local perspective. Specifically, it examines how slavery was practiced in the pre-conquest Wälāyṭṭa and what changes and continuities could be observed in the post-occupation period and afterwards. By doing so, the dissertation sheds light on what happened to formerly enslaved people in the post-abolition period in Ethiopia. It also analyses the introduction of the *gäbbar* system, its practices and the local inhabitants' perceptions of it. Furthermore, the nexus between the *gäbbar* system and slavery is investigated. The study examines how the Italians exploited the themes of slavery and *gäbbar* serfdom for propaganda purposes serving their colonial interest in Ethiopia and, finally, the Wälāyṭṭa experience under Italian colonial rule.

The thesis conflates a large variety of sources, some previously under-explored: locally produced Amharic history books, ethnographic accounts and travel literature and numerous oral sources, as well as Ethiopian archival sources (from National Archives Library Agency and the Waldemeskel Memorial Center in Addis Ababa and Sodo Zuria *wärada* administrative office in Wälāyṭṭa). Furthermore, various proclamations and treaties, graduate thesis and dissertations and other published and unpublished sources form the thesis's textual background.

The author argues against two commonly held views: the first being the frequent assumption that slavery developed in the conquered regions of the south, including Wälāyṭṭa, as a consequence of Emperor Mənilək's expansion, a claim only partially grounded in history. Pre-conquest Wälāyṭṭa had long existed as a slave-holding society. The acquisitions of slaves in the region were largely connected to warfare and territorial expansion. Above all, state formation and slavery went hand in hand during the *zämänä mäsaḥānt* ('age of princes'). Throughout the Təgre dynasty (since the eighteenth century), slaves constituted an integral part of the agricultural labour force. Wälāyṭṭa was also one of the significant slave-supplying areas for regional and long-distance trade during the nineteenth century.

Secondly, many contemporary Ethiopian historians interpret Ethiopia's past in terms of its independence and glory. They argue that Mənilək's territorial expansion and invasion of the independent states in the south and southwest set out to create a unified modern Ethiopian empire and defend the country's sovereignty in the wake of European colonization. Although true in many ways, this dissertation offers an alternative argument allowing local perceptions into the discourse that reveal a history of subjugation, exploitation, agonies, shame, and dependence, especially in the south. Above all, the conquest brought the *gäbbar* system into the region, aside from a substantial increase in slave raiding and the slave trade. While the former typically transformed the Wälāyṭṭa people into 'rural slaves', the latter

deserted and depopulated the region. Slave raiding in the region wrought suffering, damage, insecurities, chaos, deep psychic scars, and feelings of inferiority for the local inhabitants. It also encouraged a loss of control over corporate ethnic destinies and the cohesiveness of families and personal rights and freedoms. The thesis approaches these patterns from perspectives of oral memory and history. During its brief period, Italian colonialism introduced the region's political, administrative, and social reforms. Most importantly, it abolished slavery and the *gäbbar* system. Nevertheless, the official claim the colonial government made of having uprooted slavery and the actual number of emancipated slaves in the region appear patently in contradiction. After the Liberation and the reinstatement of imperial power, Emperor Ḥaylä Śəllase, legally banned both institutions. As a result, formerly enslaved people became tenants of their former masters. However, the past hierarchies and exploitation of formerly enslaved people persisted in the post-liberation period. Eventually, the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974 transformed the social and economic structure of the country. As a result, formerly enslaved people became tenants involved in the politics of the socialist government. They transformed their life, but their slave origin survived all dramatic changes and is still stubbornly rooted in the perception of Wälaytta society. The thesis ends with an exposition of Wälaytta as a post-slavery society in which taboos, e.g. in marriage choices or social and political participation based on slave descent, are still heavily ingrained in the local hierarchies and stratifications based on the social memory of their ancestors' status.

CHRISTIAN CARNEVALE, *La guerra d'Etiopia: una crisi globale*, PhD Dissertation in History of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science at Sapienza—Università di Roma, defended on 30 May 2023.

The narration of the Italo-Ethiopian war as a global crisis has always been taken for granted in all works attempting to explain what was actually the most important international dispute, preceding the Second World War. To prove this required a distinctive approach to the problem, quite different to any mere description of the facts or political choices made by a particular country during the eighteen months from the Walwal incident to the fall of 'Addis 'Ababā. Such a cross-road in world history is only conveniently portrayed via a 'global' point of view to emphasize how and why the international scene changed so much to initiate the process that led to the apocalypse of a new world conflict.

Understanding deeply why the Italo-Ethiopian war unleashed a global crisis, a situation completely different from previous disputes as the Manchurian imbroglio, necessitates a daily account of what happened between December 1934 and July 1936, using printed documents and, most of all, unpublished material from