

# Innovations

## Slavery, Slave Trade and Manumission in Gojjam, 1940s-1950s, North West Ethiopia

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### Abstract

*In Ethiopia slavery and slave trade was practiced for centuries and had been an endemic for the society. Slavery and slave trade were abolished by the active intervention of the British in the middle of 18th century. However the institution of slavery and slave trade continued in the eastern part of Africa until the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The continuation of slave trading and slavery itself in Ethiopia into the 1930s, the involvement of the state in the trade and the continued use of slaves in the royal court were directly contrary to the public statements of Emperor Haile Sellassie I and the legal commitments of the Ethiopian state. The objective of this paper is, therefore, to show the institutional feature of slavery in Ethiopia in general and the historical province of Gojjam in particular. Moreover, in this article I have made an attempt to bring out the efforts of different emperors, particularly Emperor Haile Sellassie's period in order to regulate and prohibit slavery and slave trade in Ethiopia and to discuss the existence of the institutions and the practice until the 1950s. In the course of the study, I have depended mainly on primary and secondary sources, as well as oral informants, and archival materials. For archives, I have used DebreMarkos University Archive Center, Addis Ababa National Archives and Library Agency, Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University. The sources are critically collected, scrutinize and analyzed and their validities are cross-checked one against the other. Finally, as a historical research, the paper is based on a systematic selection, collection and analysis of archival documents, manuscripts and secondary sources of both published and unpublished.*

**Key words:** 1.Emperors; 2.Fetha Negest; 3.Slavery and Slave Trade; 4.Decrees; 5.Manumission

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### Introduction

Slavery and slave trade were an age-old institutions and practices in all African countries. Like in other African countries in Ethiopia slave trade was practiced for centuries and it had been endemic in the Ethiopian society, and it was well established until the first half of twentieth century. Above all, the very surprise issue was that it was official and legally accredited by the FitehaNegest which was the traditional legal code of Ethiopia translated from the 13th century 'Coptic' document based on the Biblical and Roman law. The words of the FitehaNegest were largely accepted by many Ethiopian rulers including Emperor Menilek (1889-1913).<sup>1</sup>

Like other parts of Africa, the demand for slaves led to the extensive slave raiding and warfare in the northwest and southern parts of the country. It resulted in the breakdown of law and order by providing a considerable exodus of population in many areas as well as extensive hunting of humans for slavery.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly the case in Northwestern and Southern parts of Ethiopia.

According to the FitehaNegest as well as the traditional customary laws, slaves were deprived of any forms of property ownership and legal affairs. Slaves were considered as the property of their owners; sometimes the owners of the slaves might give them a piece of land and some cattle but they remained under the property of their owners. On the other hand, slaves, as a kind of property, were subjected to sell or be given as a kind of presentation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a slave could be owned by more than one master. Likewise, slaves could hold no public office as judge or guardian. They were deprived of providing evidence in courts. However, the slave master became legally responsible for any action or crime including murder committed by his slaves. The owner could become free either by emancipating or by handing over the slave to the aggrieved party.

<sup>1</sup>Pankhurst, Richard. "The Ethiopian slave trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: a statistical inquiry." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9.1 (1964): 220-228.

<sup>2</sup>Abir, Mordechai, *Ethiopia: the era of the princes: the challenge of Islam and re-unification of the Christian Empire, 1769-1855. Praeger. (1968), p. 57.*

<sup>3</sup>W. G. Clarence-Smith *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century. Psychology Press (1989) pp. 108-109.*

Similarly, punishment of a slave became an official phenomenon in the country. It includes whipping, flogging and even death.<sup>4</sup>

The law strictly forbade stealing of a slave or initiating him to run away. According to the law, he was liable to restore him to his masters together with equal price. On the other hand, a person may be entitled to get reward as he brings back a runaway slave to its masters. The recaptured slave would face harsh punishment including whipping, smoking of beriberi, red tape, executing as well as being resold to other persons.<sup>5</sup>

As the law indicated a slave master could utilize his slave on his will. A slave could not have the right to refuse or obey an order from his master. Even a pregnant slave was also obliged to participate in work until she resumed a few days after her delivery. As a calf belonged to the owner of a cow not the bull, the newborn infant of a slave also belonged to her master.<sup>6</sup>

The law prohibited any kind of marriage between freemen and the slave. Even it ordered severe punishment in this case. If a master's wife fornicates with a slave, she may be beaten, her hair shaved, her nose broken and her infamy publicly proclaimed according to the FitehaNegest. Nevertheless, the fate of the slave was obviously death. In actual fact in 1930s, there was no penalty in this case rather the concubines enjoyed special privilege as head of her master's slaves.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the FitehaNegest also provided a provision for the manu-mission of slaves. The law provided that a slave might be free as if he served his masters father, became a priest, or the slave saved his master from death as well as after the death of the master having no heir over the slave.

<sup>4</sup>Pankhurst, Richard. "Ethiopian Slave Reminiscences of the Nineteenth Century." *Trans African Journal of History* 5.1 (1976): 98.

<sup>5</sup>Katsuyoshi Fukui; Eisei Kurimoto; Masayoshi Shigeta, *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12-17 December 1997, Volume 2. Shokado Book Sellers, (1997), p. 804.*

<sup>6</sup>Pankhurst, Richard. "The Ethiopian slave trade...., p.228-230.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

However, there was no slave freed by the time due to the unwillingness of the owners as well as the unimplementation of the law to liberate the slaves. In connection with this, the law also prohibited the sailing of a pregnant slave except with her unborn child. The separations of a young slave from its mother also banned and urged for the desirability of keeping the families united although it was not practically implemented.<sup>8</sup> (Pankhurst, 1968a). Anyway, the second half of the nineteenth century in particular was characterized by attempts of the rulers of Ethiopia to abolish slavery and slave trade. However, despite European pressures and treaties signed with the British government, these attempts failed.

Thus, this paper considers slavery, slave trade and manumission in Gojjam since 1940s on the basis of a systematic selection, collection and analysis of archival documents, manuscripts and secondary sources of both published and unpublished. Primarily, it deals with the attempt of the Ethiopian rulers that existed before Emperor Haile Sellassie I to regulate or prohibit the trade. Following this it attempts to investigate how an international pressure as well as domestic forces succeeded in bringing some changes in the institution of slavery and the slave trade. Finally the paper deals with the existence of slave trade in the border areas of the country and on the basis of an edict issued in 1942 how Emperor Haile Sellassie I and his government imposed heavy punishment on the people who involved either in capturing or kidnapping or selling slaves.

### **Different Monarchs effort to abolish slavery and the slave trade**

During Emperor Tewodros's reign (1855-1868) the slave trade was already widespread and dominant in Ethiopian society. In fact, Tewodros himself opposed the trade and declared it illegal mainly to prevent conversions to Arabs and to win the friendship and goodwill of European governments. He made the first attempt to put an end to the slave trade which had become endemic in Ethiopian society. During one of his campaigns in Gojjam, Tewodros freed all the slaves at the Basso market and, in an unrehearsed wedding ceremony; he had all the male slaves married to the females. He followed this by an official ban the slave-trade throughout his realm. In Qallu he forbade the soldiers to resell slaves they had captured.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia* (Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968), pp.123-125.

Such measures against the slave trade did not extend to an abolition of the institution of slavery itself, since slavery had come to be embedded in the Ethiopian social fabric

Despite the claim of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) that he found slavery repulsive, any attempt to abolish it, or even the trade in slaves would have provoked opposition from many of his local chiefs. Indeed, the trade continued although Emperor Yohannes took little action to prevent his followers from seizing slaves on raiding campaigns. Furthermore, in the mid-1870s Ethiopians made frequent raids for slaves in Bogos, on the northern border with Egypt, and the trade flourished with the implied consent of both governments.<sup>10</sup>

In fact in 1884 Emperor Yohannes IV carry out his major step to abolish the slave trade in a treaty signed with the British government. He agreed to prohibit and prevent to the best of his ability the trade in slaves and their import and export from within in his territories and to protect all liberated slaves, as well as to punish severely any attempt to molest or assault them or return them to slavery. Anyway, the slave trade in Ethiopia continued nonetheless, albeit underground.

Notwithstanding the efforts made by the earlier monarchs, it was during the reign of Menelik II that the issue of abolishing the slave trade acquired wider currency, corresponding, partly at least, to the gradual but steady involvement of international anti-slavery bodies. Menelik had issued at least two proclamations prohibiting the slave trade in his realm. The first, issued in February 1875 while he was still king of Shoa, declared that Christians should

no more buy or sale slaves: that slaves smuggled by Muslim slave dealers could reclaim their freedom; and that dealers would be arrested and tried.<sup>11</sup> However, there was very little attempt to enforce this in practice, and the edict remained a dead letter for a long time. The second proclamation was issued shortly after Menelik's accession. In this, the emperor referred to his earlier proclamation and reiterated the people who persist in the practice of trading in slaves would be severely punished and declared, also, that prisoners of war should be liberated after seven years of service to their captors.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, Joseph Calder Miller, *Women and Slavery: Africa, the Indian Ocean world, and the Medieval North Atlantic, Volume 1*. Ohio University Press (2007) pp. 225-227.

<sup>11</sup>Gebre Sellassie, *Chronicler*, II, 601-602).

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

Basically two main factors were accountable for Menilek's failure to abolish slavery in Ethiopia. The first and the most important one was his southward expansion of the Christian Highland Kingdom. Due to his successive wars and campaigns in the newly conquered areas, Menilek himself attended a massive enslavement of the captives of war. With the establishment of a new social economic system in these areas, local people also enjoyed the pain of enslavement soon after their subjugation.<sup>13</sup> One was because the unprecedented expansion of the Ethiopian empire into what are today the southern provinces, a process over which Menelik himself presided, was attended by a massive enslavement of captives of war.

The other factor which seems to have prevented Menelik from taking stronger measures against the slave trade was his heavy depending on individual foreign traders for his importation of arms and ammunition. These traders in turn operated with the good will of the coastal chiefs who derived handsome revenues by levying taxes on slaves bound for export. Menelik apparently knew that interference with the slave trade would offend these chiefs and thus directly affect the import of firearms to Shoa.

During Menelik's reign, therefore, despite his involving European powers in efforts to abolish the slave trade, it continued as before and no meaningful steps were actually taken to suppress it. Thus, no actual struggle to quash the slave trade developed in Ethiopia during the nineteenth century. In the absence of effective and responsible administration, Menelik's extension of Ethiopia's frontiers and the incorporation of new areas only tended to accentuate the predatory tendencies of the ruling class and the soldiery.

As Pankurst indicated there had been little external pressure over Ethiopian rulers to stop slavery. Britain the champion of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade had little or no effort to suppress slavery and slave trade in the eastern part of Africa. In fact, Britain and France had their own protectorate on the Gulf of Aden. However the trade continued until 1930s by using different means of shipment of slaves along the coast.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands: Essays in Regional History from Ancient Times to the End of the 18th Century*. The Red Sea Press (1997) pp. 35-300.

<sup>14</sup>Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia*, (Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968), pp. 141-145.

Before 1900s slaves were sold openly in the markets in Ethiopia. After this time the open slave markets were closed and slave traders abandoned their conventional routes and traveled at night on different routes. This was also the case in Jimma where slaves were sold at night through the brokers.<sup>15</sup>

On his death, Menilek was succeeded by his grandson LijIyasu. This new crown did nothing for the abolition of slavery in Ethiopia. He even participated in a slave raiding. In 1912, the well-organized slave raiding of LijIyasu, captured and raided many southwestern provinces and captured many thousands of captives in the raiding. He distributed the captives for his favorite officials and clergymen. In other words during the reign of LijIyasu, there was no attempt for the abolition of slavery in Ethiopia.<sup>16</sup>

Written sources assert that the most serious laws marking the beginning of the end for the institution of the slavery in Ethiopia came in the 1920s. International pressure as well as domestic forces succeeded in bringing about some changes in the institution of slavery and the slave trade. Although earlier emperors like Tewodros II and Menelik had made some 'half-hearted gestures' to check the trade in humans, it was not until the 1920s that serious measures began to be taken. In the early 1920s in particular, a vigorous campaign against Ethiopian slavery was conducted in the British press. Domestically, too, growing costs of maintaining large numbers of slaves as well as the changing life style of the ruling class had begun to render slavery both uneconomical and obsolete. As a result, a series of proclamations were issued providing for the gradual emancipation of slaves. Institutions to implement the decrees and a school for the freed slave children were established. Administration of the school was given to ardent campaigns against slavery.

By 1922, Ethiopia had come under unremitting pressure to end slavery from Western news-media particularly the British press as well as anti-slavery groups such as the 'Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society'.

<sup>15</sup>Bonacci, Giulia, and Alexander Meckelburg. "Revisiting Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia." *Northeast African Studies* 17.2 (2017): 5-30.

<sup>16</sup>Pankhurst, Richard. "Ethiopian Slave Reminiscences of the Nineteenth Century." *Trans African Journal of History* 5.1 (1976): pp.57-59.

On September 23, 1923, RasTafari issued the first proclamation outlawing slave raiding and imposing a duty on administrations to enforce the proclamation under the penalty of the laws. This proclamation made slave raiding capital offensive. It also imposed strict liability on local authorities in which governors, chiefs and headmen (chiefs of small villages) would be liable to a steep fine for every slave stolen from their area. In addition, this proclamation stated that every slave taken from his country would be eligible for a license of freedom and would maintain the right to return home.

On the same year, September 28, Ethiopia had become a member of the League Nations and as such was forbidden from engaging in the slave trade under the terms of the Brussels Act of 1890. Later Ethiopia became a signatory to the 'Slave Convention of 1926'. This was followed by another amendment of law in which the Emperor sought to gradually emancipate slaves in the country and abolish slavery.<sup>17</sup>

The slave trade in fact includes all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him, all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a slave acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and, in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves.

The official policy of the Ethiopian government against the slave trade, however, did little to stop the regional war lords from continuing to raid the borderlands for slaves. Border enclaves on the periphery of Ethiopia served as hunting grounds to capture slaves. Lack of effective control of the central government in many parts of the country, and the fact that people in place of authority including judges and village chiefs, were also slave owners, had made the enforcement of existing laws impossible. The Emancipation Law sought to remedy that by putting in place strict enforcement mechanisms. To that end it introduced a mandate for the registration of all slaves and the establishment

of special slavery courts that would be subject to supervision of central government inspectors. Fifty-six special judges were appointed in different parts of the country and a department main function was to supervise the proper implementation of laws was

<sup>17</sup>Allain, Jean. "Slavery and the League of Nations: Ethiopia as a Civilised Nation," *Journal of the History of International Law* 8 (2006): 213–44.

established in the capital, a sign of the Emperor's determination to ensure the effective enforcement of his laws.<sup>18</sup> (Goadby, pp.180-202).

The Emancipation law also included provisions that made it easy for slaves to emancipation immediately. It did this in part by stacking procedural hurdles against slave owners. For example, it provided that if a slave escaped he/she could only be legally captured by their master or by authorized customs officials at the border. In addition, it gave slaves legal standing to litigate their masters for maltreatment. If it was found that a master had indeed mistreated his/her slave, the master would get one warning; a finding of a second offense would result in the emancipation of the slave.<sup>19</sup>(Pankhurst, 1968: p.114).

Significantly, the Emperor's court at Addis Ababa continued to support Muslim slave raiding polities and to employ slave labor itself. Even after Ras Tafari issued different decrees making the slave trade illegal, the royal court commissioned the procurement of freed slaves. Ras Tafari's wife Wayzero Menen, advanced 30,000 thalers to Sheikh Khajjeleof Sudan to buy 600 young slaves between seven and thirteen years old. Not only this. Tafari and Menen kept the slaves as servants in their own palace. So, generally speaking, the continuation of slave trading and slavery itself in Ethiopia into the 1930s, the involvement of the state in the trade and the continued captivation of slaves in the royal court were directly contrary to the public statements and decrees issued in the period.

After they invaded the country, in fact, Italians had made great efforts to stop slavery and the slave trade. Even after they advanced through Tigray, they are said to have proclaimed a proclamation on October 14, 1935 that all slaves were to be free. However, the total abolition of slavery in Ethiopia goes to the Italian. During their occupation, the Italians issued a decree in April 1936 which liberated more than 40000 slaves in the 'Galla- Sidama' Province. The Italians created a job opportunity for some of the ex-slaves in the expanding infrastructural facilities of the country.

<sup>18</sup>F.M. Goadby, *The Law of Slavery in Abyssinia*, in *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, (Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., 1933), 180-202..

<sup>19</sup>Pankhurst, Richard. "Ethiopian Slave Reminiscences of the Nineteenth Century." *Trans African Journal of History* 5.1 (1976): pp.57-59.

In some place they also set up a village of liberty for those freed slaves by providing plough and oxen to begin a new settled life.<sup>20</sup>

Following Italy's defeat, Emperor Haile Sellassie in fact returned from exile from Britain. Then, he said to have changed mechanisms and abandoned his plan to phase out slavery over an extended period of time in favor of one that resembled Italy's, immediate and complete abrogation. It seems that the lack of any significant reaction from the passage of the laws against slavery by Italy during its brief occupation of Ethiopia had convinced Haile Sellassie that his fear of possible negative impact that may result from an immediate abolition was unfounded. The Emperor, therefore, issued the Abolition of Slavery Proclamation No. 22 of 1942 in August of that year.<sup>21</sup>

The 1942 Proclamation declared that "the legal status of slavery is abolished" and imposed harsh penalty on persons who participated in transporting of persons out of a persons out of Ethiopia so that they could be sold as slaves: participated in slave dealing prevented slaves from asserting their freedom; or participated in the trade of



people. The 1942 Proclamation was later replaced by the Penal Code No. 158 of 1957, which was then repealed by the law currently in force.<sup>22</sup>

In general, although several rulers and emperors of Ethiopia made attempts to regulate or prohibit slavery and the trade in slaves, until the second half of the twentieth century it is said to have continued. This is clearly proved in the archives and manuscripts that I have discovered.

### **The Veracity of Slavery and Slave Trade in Ethiopia in the 1940s and 1950s.**

Immediately after the evacuation of the Italians although Emperor Haile Sellassie made efforts to prohibit slavery and the trade in slaves, it continued to flourish. In fact it is assumed that the abolition was complicated in the years that followed the evacuation of the Italians from the country. Unlike this assumption, however, catching, kidnapping and selling slaves were not eradicated. Rather, it is said to have continued for several years though in a clandestine manner.

20 Tekalign Wolde Mariam,

<sup>21</sup> Sterling Joseph Coleman Jr, "Gradual Abolition or Immediate Abolition of Slavery? The Political, Social and Economic Quandary of Emperor Haile Selassie I." *Slavery and Abolition* 29.1 (2008): 65-82.

<sup>22</sup> Mohammed, Seid A. "A social institution of slavery and slave trade in Ethiopia: Revisited." *African Journal of History and Culture* 7.3 (2015): 85-90.

Following the rumors about the existence of slavery and slave trade in different parts of the country, Emperor Haile Sellassie issued several edicts in different years imposing heavy punishments on the people who involved either in capturing or kidnapping or selling slaves. However, this does not mean that it came to an end. For this I have discovered archival evidences in DebreMarkos Administrative Office, which formerly served as the capital city of Gojjam *Teqlay Gizat*, presently the capital of East Gojjam Zone, and in the Higher Court House of Eastern Gojjam Zone, and in Dangla and Metekel administrative offices, as well as manuscripts and secondary sources of both published and unpublished.

Here, I would like to present these events by separating into three parts. The first one treats people who were accused of catching, kidnapping and selling individuals (slaves) and on the witnesses that have testified in the prosecution, who were punished from seven to seventeen years of imprisonment. In relation to this issue there are four belongings.

The second category or phase deals with people who were accused of kidnapping and selling individuals as slaves for money but for lack of witnesses, who exonerated and set free.

The third category is connected with the people who, after captured and kidnapped individuals with intent to sell them to slavery but because of the absence of consumer, treated them severely and brutally.

In relation to the first category, there are four cases.

#### **Case One:**

The first case was happened in the former Gojjam province, Metekel *Awraja*, Chagni town. Its File Number was 130/42 E.C. The prosecution of a claim was started on July 11, 1950 and the name of the court that followed the case was Metekel *Awraja Gizat*. The subject of litigation was that kidnapping *Lij Alem* with intent to reduce her to slavery and selling for money. The place where she was captured was *Azena Woreda*, *Azena* town. The plaintiff was *Qegnazmatch Alene Kefale* and the defendants were *Ato Melese Abiyir* with his mother, *Woyzero Desta Yenenew* and *Ato Tegegne Yigzaw*. The judges were one, *Qegnazmatch Tedla Ayele*, second *Ato Workineh Meshesha*. But later,

when the court was transferred to Gojjam province, DebreMarkos town, the panel or group of judges included *AzazhBezabehDesta*, *AtoMebratuEngida* and *AtoEmiruBelay*. In the litigation that proceeded, initially the defendants denied the action they were accused of, and the court in Metekel had decided in favor of the defendants. Nevertheless, the complainant raised the case to the Supreme Court of Gojjam province to reconsider it again. After a two years debate and litigation, on the basis of the witnesses given by three individuals, the Supreme Court reconsiders the file and decided in favor of the accuser and the defendants were sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Here, although the *Awraja* court decided for the defendants, the Supreme Court decision was the highest and would be ratified and authorized. Therefore, the defendants were imprisoned in DebreMarkos for ten years. Moreover, the Supreme Court passed a decision on the mother of *AtoMeleseAbiye*, *WoyzeroDestaYeneneh* to be in prisoners each for three years for being involved in cajoling and selling *LijAlem* for thirty Birr for her brother, *AtoKassahunYeneneh*.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Case Two:**

The second case was occurred in *Azenaworeda*. This prosecution was very sophisticated. Because the accuser of the event is on the one hand the Agaw-Bahir Dar *AwrajaGizat* police station commander *ShambelGebreSellassie* and on the other hand the one who was reduced to slavery named, *ErrameteWollie*. The defendant was *AtoTirunehYimer*. The commander accused *AtoTiruneh* because of by violating the 1942 decree that reported and warned in *NegaritGazet* for his buying *ErrameteWollie* from *AtoBayabilAtnafand* putting her in enragement and anger in his house. *Erramete* herself and procurator werethe others who accused *Ato TirunehYimer*. In Agaw-Bahir Dar *Awraja* the group of judges consisted of *FitawrariTedlaAyele*, *AtoKelemeworkMazengiya* and *QegnazmatchMegeshaDerseh*. The prosecution was started on January 01, 1952 and the file number was Criminal Law No 40/44. The litigation sustained for three years and on the basis of eye witnesses the Court decided on *AtoTiruneh* for eight years imprisonment while *AtoBayabil*, who involved in the act of selling *Erramete*, had disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>DMUAC, Fol. No. 869, File No. 67/44.

<sup>24</sup>DMUAC, Fol.No.865, File No. 302/51.

#### **Case Three:**

The third case was connected with kidnaping and selling. The file number is 152/42 and it was occurred in 1950. The defendants were *AtoTessemaAbichu* and *YalewNegera*, whereas the plaintiff was procurator. In fact the defendants denied the act at the Court in Matakal. But later with reconsideration, the Supreme Court at DebreMarkos investigated the issue and passed a decision to be imprisoned for thirteen years.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Case Four:**

The fourth case seems unique. Its file number is 63/54. The plaintiff was *DestaYemane* herself and the procurator, and the defendants were *WorkinehAgazhe* and *KebedeAymiro*. The main subject was an attempt to sell *DestaYemane*. In the litigation that followed although the defendants attempted to sell *WoyzeroDesta*, no one was affable to buy her. After a four days travelling, the defendants who couldn't get a purchaser jolted and pierced her body and finally threw her to a river by considering as if she has passed away. Unfortunately, however, *WoyzeroDesta*, who suffered much from the criminality went to *MatakalAwrajaGizat* after an eight days suffering and applied the issue for the court. The judges who surprised by the act immediately ordered the police force in order to search, and capture the defendants then to bring them to the Court. Finally the issue transferred to the



Supreme Court at DebreMarkos and on the basis of the witness given, the judges passed a decision on both defendants to be imprisoned for seventeen years each. Moreover, the Court passed a three years imprisonment on *AtoZelalemMeseret* for cajoling *WoyzeroDesta* to agree with the defendants (criminals).<sup>26</sup>

### Category Two:

The third case was connected with kidnaping and selling. The file number is SE/98/52 and it was occurred in 1952. The defendant was *AtoBemrewBeyene* whereas the plaintiff was procurator. The subject was for selling *WoyzeroAlemituWodajo* as a slave for *GrazmachBelewEmiru*. And for lack of witness, the Court set free the defendant.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>DMUAC, Fol.No.865, File No. 308/51.

<sup>26</sup>DMUAC, Fol.No.869, File No. 67/44.

<sup>27</sup>DMUAC, Fol.No.869, File No. SE/98/52

### Category Three

File number reads Ze/Qu/158/544.

Kidnapped; *WoyzeroJameroNegawo*

Kidnapper: *AtoAgidewGetahun* and the place Qilazh, presently named as Zigem. And the year that occurred was 1952. The case reads as follow. By violating the law of the government, in 1952 *AtoAgidew* kidnapped *Jamera* and sold as a slave for *QegnazmacchShibabawFenta*. Although the defendants accused of kidnapping and selling *Jamera*, the Court at DebreMarkos couldn't get a witness and finally after two years litigation the court made the kidnapper free.<sup>28</sup>

From these entire one can understand that how far in Ethiopia, particularly from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, slavery existed.

Anyhow, Ethiopia was one of the great centers of slavery and slave trade in Eastern Africa. There are evidences which show that slavery and slave trade existed in what is today Ethiopia even during the Aksumite period, if not before. So slavery has a long history in Ethiopia. It was only in the early part of the twentieth century that slavery as an institution was officially abolished. Emperor Haile Selassie introduced a legislation outlawing slavery in 1924 (as part of his effort to join the League of Nations), but with no concrete results.

The Italians also proclaimed the abolishment of slavery in Ethiopia immediately following their occupation of the country in 1935. When independence was restored in 1941, the Emperor "reinstated previous anti-slavery legislation, and also confirmed that the existing Italian decrees against slavery and forced labor were to remain in force". The measures of the Emperor might have been successful in "preventing a resurgence of slaving and in undermining slavery as a social institution", as one scholar has put it, but had negligible results in terms of the integration and empowerment of the "freed". The "real" freedom has to wait for another three to four decades.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>DMUAC, Fol. No. 931:File number reads H /ቁ/(ze/qu)158/544.

<sup>29</sup>F.M. Goadby, The Law of Slavery in Abyssinia, in *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, (Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., 1933),pp. 180-202.

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