



BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

A HISTORY OF HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN GOJJAM TO 1991

BY

KEREBIH GEBEYEHU

September, 2022

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This is a declaration that the thesis, “A History of Highway Construction in Gojjam to 1991,” which I submitted to Bahir Dar University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in history and heritage management, is a record of my original work and has never been submitted to another organization in order to obtain any other degree or certificate.

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Glossary of Terms

<i>Addis Zemen</i>	The names of Ethiopian newspaper, usually published daily or weekly in low-quality paper, containing national and international news and other articles
<i>Aläqa</i>	An Amharic term meaning chief or leader which means administrative head of the church
<i>Araqi</i>	Local liquors which means a distilled alcoholic beverage
<i>Aṭbia Dagña</i>	Local judge
<i>Ato</i>	The title, equivalent to mister
<i>Atsé</i>	The title, equivalent to King
<i>Awrajja</i>	Sub-province
<i>Axciwon</i>	Literally share, the association formed by different individuals for commercial purpose
<i>Bäjerond</i>	Royal Treasurer or Guardian of Royal property
<i>Balabat</i>	Hereditary land-owner or landed gentry
<i>Banda</i>	A traitor or a person disloyal to his country
<i>Bitwädäd</i>	A title given to a trusted individual in feudal Ethiopia (literally beloved)
<i>Bilatténgéta</i>	Honorific title usually given for achievement in learning
<i>Čikal</i>	A short and strong wood used for road surveying
<i>Däga</i>	High land area with Cold temperature
<i>Däjjazmač</i>	A politico-military title, ranked just below <i>Ras</i>
<i>Firida</i>	The meat from a cow or bull
<i>Fitawrari</i>	Commander of the vanguard forces and high-ranking state official. It rank just below <i>Däjjazmač</i>
<i>Grazmač</i>	Commander of the left wing of the army. In the civilian context, this title was given to high ranking government personalities. Rank normally below <i>Fitawrari</i>
<i>Igirbär</i>	Footpath
<i>Imahoy</i>	Honorary title given to female monk in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
<i>Indärasé</i>	Governor of the governorate-generals, representing the Emperor

<i>Injera</i>	The staple diet in much of highland Ethiopia
<i>Jändi</i>	Wide width leather made from the hide of cattle
<i>Märgéta</i>	A religious title given to the clergy who educate the liturgy
<i>Mäslänéwäč</i>	Equivalent to sub-district
<i>Misläné</i>	Deputy, substitute of a magistrate; royal official in charge of royal farms and tax collection; also district governor
<i>Nigus</i>	The title equivalent to king
<i>Pagumé</i>	The 13 th month of the Ethiopian calendar which has 5 days (6 days every 4 th years)
<i>Qägn Azmač</i>	Commander of the right wing of the army, rank normally below <i>Fitawrari</i>
<i>Qäbäles</i>	A small administrative unit next to <i>Wäräda</i>
<i>Qolla</i>	low land area with very hot temperature
<i>Ras</i>	literally “head”; a title given to provincial governors and high officials
<i>Rist</i>	Hereditary ownership of land
<i>Şähafä Ti'izaz</i>	Head Scribe or Minister of the Pen
<i>Şihifät Bét</i>	<i>Office</i>
<i>Şäwan</i>	A person of Amhara back ground residing in Şäwa
<i>Şalläqa</i>	Military title, equivalent to major
<i>Şambäl</i>	Military title, below <i>Şalläqa</i>
<i>Sheikh</i>	A religious title given to Muslims
<i>Ṭäqlay Gizat</i>	Governorate-General
<i>Ṭéff</i>	Scientifically called <i>Eragrostis abyssinica</i> , one of the important cereals in Ethiopia for making the traditional food, <i>injära</i>
<i>Wäräda</i>	An administrative unit equivalent to a district
<i>Wäyna-däga</i>	Moderate climatic zone
<i>Wurç</i>	The cold weather that causes ice crystals to form
<i>Yezaret Ethiopia</i>	The names of Ethiopian newspaper, usually published daily or weekly in low-quality paper, containing national and international news and other articles

Acronyms

BNCE	Blue Nile Construction Enterprise
CA	Calendar
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
DMUAC	Däbrä Marqos University Archive Center
E.C	Ethiopian Calendar
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party
ERA	Ethiopian Road Authority
ETCA	Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority
ETH	Ethiopian
GIS	Geographic Information System
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies
IHA	Imperial Highway Authority
KG	Kilogram
KM/H	Kilometer per Hour
KMS	Kilometers
NALA	National Archive and Library Agency
OAU	Organization of African Unity
REF	Reference Number
RRS	Rural Roads Study
SQ	Square
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Front
VOL	Volume

Key to Transliteration System

I. The following is the representation of the seven sounds in the Ethiopian alphabet systems:

1 st order	በ = Ba
2 nd order	ቡ = Bu
3 rd order	ቢ = Bi
4 th order	ባ = Ba
5 th order	ቤ = Be
6 th order	ብ = Bi
7 th order	ቦ = Bo

II. Concerning the sixth form in the above representation, it should be noted that the letter “i” will be added to the letter if the letter is vocalized or stressed. If not, it will not be needed at all.

Example: ብር = Birr

ርብ = Ribb

III. The following is the representation of palatalized sound systems:

ሸ = Š	ኸ = Ě	ኸ = Ž
ቸ = Č	ጸ = J	

Examples: ሸዋ = Šäwa ቢቡኸ = Bibuñ ኢኸኸ = Azaž

ጎጎቻ = Gonča ጸጋጎጸ = Jaragädu

IV. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

ቀ = Q	ጮ = Ç	ጰ = P
ጠ = Ṭ	ፀ/ጸ = Ş	

Examples: ማርቆስ = Marqos ጮሞጋ = Çämoga ጰዉሎስ = Paulos

ጣና = Ṭana ፀህፈት ቤት = Şhifät Bét

IV. Germination sounds are always indicated by doubling:

Example: ደጃዝማች = Däjjazmač

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct a history of highway construction in Gojjam to 1991. The study employed a qualitative research approach in the sense that a large amount of primary and secondary data was collected from NALA, Weldemesqel Tariku Memorial Research Center, and DMUAC. Archival documents collected from NALA convey, among others, information from the periods of the Imperial and Derg regimes about the people's demand for rural and feeder roads; public initiatives in the construction of rural and feeder roads; and the process of Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar secondary highway construction. Likewise, the primary sources consulted from DMUAC deal with the role of the Italians in the construction of Bahir Dar-Däjän gravel highway; the onslaught that nature exerted on the highway; and the involvement of the local people in the process of its repair. Furthermore, the archives mentioned above provide information on the history of Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar, Injibara-Guba, and Buré-Näqämit feeder road construction. A good deal of newspapers consulted from IES, NALA, and Weldemesqel Tariku Memorial Research Center bear interesting information and pictures on the history of highway construction in the study area. Significant amount of published and unpublished secondary literature was also consulted from IES, NALA, DMUAC, ERA, Bahir Dar University libraries, and Bahir Dar Plan Commission center. These sources briefly describe the reconstruction of Bahir Dar-Däjän gravel highway and the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar, Injibara-Guba, and Buré-Näqämit feeder roads. Basically, unpublished sources in the form of reports fairly state the progress of the construction and reconstruction work. Crucial oral sources were also collected among key informants from Bahir Dar, Piccolo, Durbété, Däbrä Marqos, and Moṭṭa. The major finding of this study is that before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, there was only one gravel highway and one feeder road in Gojjam: Bahir Dar-Däjän gravel highway and Bahir Dar-Ṭis Abbay feeder road. Inaccessibility of highways, therefore, significantly slowed down Gojjam's socio-economic development. However, during the Derg Regime, 547 kms of all-weather roads and 991 kms of dry-weather roads were constructed. Of the 1,538 kms of roads, the longest feeder roads that fulfilled the criteria of secondary highway systems accounted for 675 kms. As a result, the road accessibility of Gojjam reached 75% and ranked the 5th in Ethiopia next to Šäwa, Harar, Sidamo, and Wällo provinces, respectively. Although the Derg Regime is criticized for its dictatorial rule in Ethiopia, it played a vital role in highway construction in Gojjam. Therefore, the expansion of highway networks facilitated the socio-economic development of Gojjam. The development of road accessibility, therefore, enabled peasants to get better market for their produces. The mobility of the people of Gojjam also sharply increased following highway accessibility. The data which was collected from the above sources was carefully selected, crosschecked, analyzed, and organized for its authenticity and credibility before it was established into a straightforward narrative in its current form.

Preface

Historical enquiry and research in Ethiopia has for long focused on political issues. Likewise, although some historical studies have been conducted and published in the form of books, articles, theses, and dissertations in Gojjam, they give much emphasis on the political histories. Until recently, no historical writers or graduate students have tried to assess the history of highways as a major theme in Gojjam. The history of highway construction is, therefore, one of the most neglected areas of study in Gojjam till now. Hence, this study fills some of the gaps of knowledge about the history of highway construction in the study area to 1991.

This study is organized and divided into five main chapters. Chapter one deals with the geographical and historical description of the study area. Even if the description of the geographical, political, as well as weather and climatic conditions of Gojjam is not the main concern of this thesis, an attempt is made to show how these themes influenced the process of highway construction in the study area. Chapter two examines the genesis and the historical development of highway construction from international and Ethiopian perspectives. It focuses mainly on the genesis and historical development of planned highway construction in Ethiopia, beginning with Emperor Tewodros II and ending with the downfall of the Derg Regime. The third chapter analyzes an attempt of highway construction in Gojjam before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. It mainly addresses the history of Bahir Dar-Dājān gravel highway and the unsuccessful attempts to construct Dājān-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road. Chapter four, deals with the history of highway construction in Gojjam from 1974 to 1991. The last chapter examines the socio-economic significance of highways in Gojjam. It mainly focuses on the socio-economic significance of Dājān-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar, Bahir Dar-Dājān, Buré-Näqāmit, and Injibara-Guba secondary highways.

During the reconstruction of this thesis, I faced immense problems. One of the challenges was the process of collecting oral sources. For instance, some of my informants were reluctant to narrate what they knew about the history of highways. For instance, a man whose name is *Ato Addis* from Bahir Dar knows a lot about the past. I heard that he knew significant information. However, he was not willing to give information about the history of highways in Gojjam. Some of my informants were inclined to talk about the political history of Gojjam rather than the history of highways.

Political instability in Ethiopia was also a major problem. For instance, there were serious problems accessing Addis Ababa for data collection because the highway from Bahir Dar to Addis Ababa was blocked repeatedly by the Oromo Liberation Front. When I was in Addis Ababa, I was forced to return to Bahir Dar by plane because the highway from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar was blocked by the Oromo liberation front. Furthermore, when I was in Moṭṭa, the conflict between Motta's Fanno and Amhara Special Forces occurred. This conflict significantly slowed down my data collection process. Due to the conflict, informants suspected that I was a spy sent by the central government, so they refused to give me information. I was challenged to return to Bahir Dar because the highway from Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar was blocked for two days.

Lack of transport access was the other critical problem. For instance, I cannot pick a photo of the Italian gravel highway, which was constructed from Bahir Dar to Moṭṭa at Wob Qäniçarit Mariam, 25 km away from Moṭṭa town. Due to the ruggedness of the area, I could not go on foot to Wob Qäniçarit Mariam, where some parts of the Italian road still existed.

In Weldemesqel Memorial Archival Center, sources are not organized based on their folder and file numbers. As a result, searching for sources that related to my topic was challenging.

CHAPTER ONE

Geographical and Historical Description of the Study Area

1.1. Geographical Description of the Study Area

Despite the description of the land features, the political and climatic condition of Gojjam is not the main concern of this thesis, it is necessary to mention these three themes since they had a direct influence on the history of highway construction in Gojjam to 1991. Gojjam is located in the northwestern part of the country at 10° N 12° N latitude and 35° E 39° E longitude.¹ Geographically, Gojjam is bordered in the north with Gondar, in the south with Wälläga, in the west with Sudan, and in the east with Wällo and Šäwa.² According to James Bruce, “Gojjam, from northeast to southeast, is about eighty miles in length and forty miles in breadth.”³ But, in view of Tellez, “Gojjam, from northeast to southeast, is about fifty leagues (the distance that a person can walk in one hour) in length and thirty leagues in breadth.”⁴ However, the two travelers’ view is very far from the total area of Gojjam (6,400,000 square kilometers).⁵

Besides, one of the largest province, Gojjam, is also located south of Lake Ṭana and is bordered by the Blue Nile in all but one direction, the west, where the Dura River separated it from Çara, Mätäkäl, and Wänäbra.⁶ Bordered by the Blue Nile River in the northeast, south, and southwest as well as the Dinder River and Lake Ṭana in the north, Gojjam resembles a river island.⁷ Indeed,

¹ Yä Gojjam Kiflä Hagär Plan Şifät Bét, *Yä Gojjam Kiflä Hagär Açir Mägläça*, Däbrä Marqos, Sene 1980 E.C (Plan Office of Gojjam Province, *Short Description of Gojjam Province*, Däbräa Marqos, June 1988), P.1.

² Ethiopian Herald, June- September, 1980.

³ Samuel Shaw, Abridge from Original Work. *An Interesting Narrative of the Travels of James Bruce in to Abyssinia to Discover the Sources of the Nile*, Fourth edition (London: Clerkenwell, 1800), P. 205.

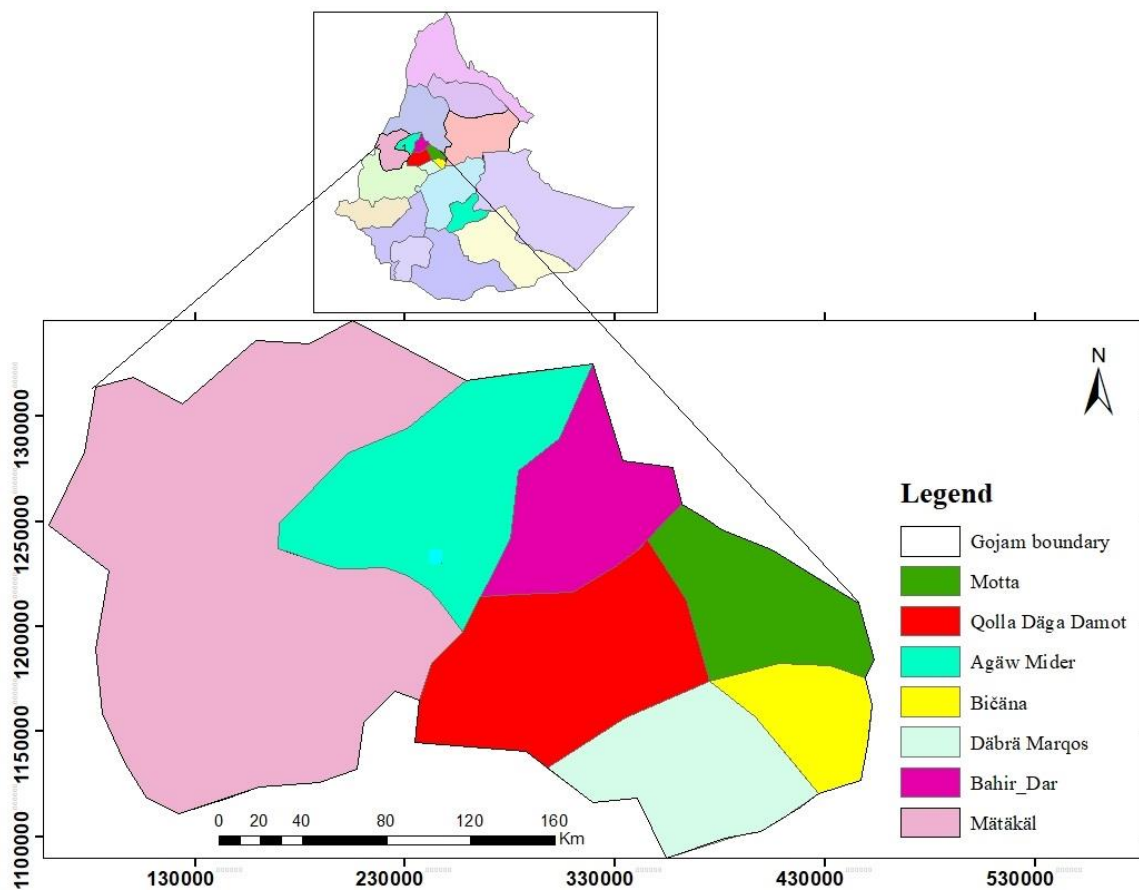
⁴ Balsazar Tellez, *the Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia* (London: Knapton, 1710), P. 11.

⁵ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1981 E.C.

⁶ Merid Welde Aregay, “Political Geography of Ethiopia at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IV, No. I (1970), P. 621.

⁷ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia; Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* (Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1961), P. 166.

three-quarters of the land of Gojjam is surrounded by the Blue Nile River.⁸ The Blue Nile, known in Ethiopia as Abbay, has the historical and geographical significance to demarcate Gojjam with its adjacent areas. Originating at mount Giš (Säkälla) at an elevation of 10,000 feet above sea level, the river first flows northwards and enters Lake Ṭana.⁹ After leaving Lake Ṭana, it runs to the east and southeast, creating a deep gorge and a boundary between eastern Gojjam and south Gondar, Wällo, Šäwa, and Wälläga.¹⁰



Map 1: Location map of the study area (Gojjam). Source: GIS

⁸ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1973 E.C.

⁹ DR. Blanc, *the Story of the Captives: A Narrative of the Events of Mr. Rassamis Mission to Abyssinia* (London: Dyer, 1868), P. 86.

¹⁰ Genzeb Atalay, "Red Terror in Gojjam" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2012), P. 2.

Gojjam's landscape is incredibly intricate and diverse. It has plains, canyons, mountains, and plateaus with flat tops.¹¹ As the province is located in the northwestern high lands of Ethiopia, its topography is more rugged, often interrupted by hills, mountains, and deep valleys, which makes road construction very difficult.¹² However, in the words of James Bruce, Gojjam is a very flat region with full of pasture, except for a few very high mountains along the banks of the Blue Nile River.¹³ The plains of Gojjam, with a slightly undulating surface structure and low thorny bushes, were remarkable and beautiful to the sight of travelers.¹⁴

The height (altitude) of Gojjam ranges from 4,070 meters in the Çoqé Mountains to less than 1,000 meters in the Blue Nile gorge and in its western part.¹⁵ The Çoqé Mountains are located in East Gojjam Zone (Sinan Wārāda), 110 kms south of Lake Ṭana. These Mountain chains have a total area of 17,443 square kilometers and making the second highest peak in Ethiopia next to Ras Dājān.¹⁶ The Çoqé Mountains are amazing land features of the region, extending from central Gojjam to Damot and Mātākāl. These mountain ranges consist of different mountains ranging from 800 meters to 4070 meters above sea level.¹⁷ In addition, it is covered with various small green plants and evergreen bushes. According to the traveler by the name Allen, bushes were growing higher than the height of a man and a variety of lichens. Like that of Ireland and

¹¹ Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling, Christianization, and Identity," *African Identities*, Vol. 14, No. 3(2016), P. 255.

¹² *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

¹³ Samuale Shaw, Abridge From Original Work. *An Interesting Narratives of the Travels of James Bruce....*, P. 205; Henry Blanc, "From Metemma to Damot, Along the Western Shores of the Tana Sea," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 39 (1869), P. 43.

¹⁴ Walter Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia and the Galla Country with an Account of a Mission to Ras Ali in 1948* (London: Spottiswoodb, 1968), P. 28.

¹⁵ Temesgen, "Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling....," P. 255.

¹⁶ Gizachew Andargie, "Enviornmental History of Gozamān Wārāda: The Case Study of Çāmoga Watershed and its Environs in the 20th Century" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2012), P. 10.

¹⁷ Denser Nigatu, "The Court System of Ras Hailu Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam, 1901-1932" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2018), P. 2.

the northern Cornish, in the early morning, the weather of Çoqé was covered with water droplets.

Related to the Çoqé Mountains, he also states the following:

*The least-known part of the Gojjam province is probably the region of the Choke Mountains which rise to the north of Däbrä Marqos. In an effort to hold down this very wild bit of country the Italians had built forts at Motta and other points and a passable dirt highway had been constructed linking Däbrä Marqos via Moṭṭa with Bahir Dar, the Italian strong point at the southern tip of Lake Ṭana.*¹⁸

The construction of this highway (the above mentioned highway) has slightly reduced the obstacles to travel to Mount Çoqé.¹⁹

In addition to the Çoqé Mountains, Mount Amädamit (3619 meters), Mount Aratmäkärakir (3577 meters), Mount Liga (3296 meters), and Mount Kaniči (3500 meters) are the physical structures of the area, which had a significant influence on the provision of adequate road transport facilities in Gojjam. Moreover, these lofty mountains, deep river gorges, and irregular broken surfaces had generally been hindrances to the development of surface transport, communication, and other infrastructure.²⁰

The Çoqé Mountains are known as the Blue Nile basin's water tower. They are also the source of over 23 big rivers and 273 small streams flowing to the Blue Nile as a major tributary.²¹ Besides, the Çoqé Mountains serve as the regions watershed. These mountains are the sources of all rivers that flow through the region and into the Blue Nile River.²² There are also numerous tributaries of the Blue Nile River between Däbrä Marqos and Lake Ṭana with great potential for the economic development of Gojjam. But, due to lack of adequate road transport infrastructure,

¹⁸ W.E.D. Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands," *the Geographical Journal*, Vol.101, No. 1 (1943), P. 4.

¹⁹ Ethiopian Mapping Authority, National Atlas of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1988), P. 802.

²⁰ Regional Planning Office, *a Regional Atlas of North-Western Ethiopia* (Bahir Dar: Physical Planning Department, 1985), P. 6; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Proposed Development Credit to the Empire of Ethiopia for Highway Project*, December 11, 1967, Report No. P-576, P. 5.

²¹ Habitamu Mengistie, "Lord, Zega and Peasants in Eastern Gojjam....," PP. 1-2.

²² Abebaw Ayalew, "A History of Painting in East Gojjam in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Study of the Second Gondarine Style of Painting" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2002), P. 1.

these rivers are not providing adequate economic benefit to Gojjam in particular and Ethiopia in general.²³

Having an altitude that ranges from 4,070 to 1000 meters above sea level, Gojjam has four climatic zones. These are *qolla* (lowland), *wäyna-däga* (medium-altitude), *däga* (highland), and *Wurç* (alpine).²⁴

The *qolla* climatic zone is found at an elevation of 1,500 meters above sea level. This zone is found mainly in the peripheral areas of Gojjam. It also includes areas along the deep valleys of the Blue Nile and the western part of the kingdom along the border of Sudan. It is the hottest area in Gojjam. The average annual temperature ranges from 20-25°C, and the average rainfall is between 700 and 1000 millimeters.²⁵ As a result of the prevalence of various human and livestock diseases, this zone has sparse population density. It has great potential for agricultural production and irrigation. However, due to lack of finance and road transport, it is impossible to develop this area. A variety of tropical crops such as sorghum, bananas, and maize are cultivated in this zone. From the total area of Gojjam, the *qolla* climatic zone covers an area of 33,605 square kilometers. Therefore, this climatic zone is the biggest in its territorial extent compared to the three zones.²⁶

The second climatic zone of the province is *Wäyna-däga*. The *wäyna-dägga* climatic zone is found within elevation that ranges from 1,600-2,400 meters above sea level. The average annual temperature is between 15 and 20°C, and the annual rainfall is between 1,200 and 1,400

²³ Treje Tvedt, *the Nile River in the Age of British: Political Ecology and the Quest for Economic Power* (Egypt: Cairo University Press, 2006), P. 253.

²⁴ Gojjam Province Plan Office, *Short Description of Gojjam Province* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1988), P. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *a Regional Atlas of North-Western Ethiopia* (Bahir Dar: Physical Planning Department, 1985), P. 6.

millimeters.²⁷ As Walter Plowden describes, in most *wäyna-däga* areas of Ethiopia, the tropical rain falls for three continuous months: July, August, and September. But, in some *wäyna-däga* areas, particularly in Gojjam, rain begins to fall one month before the rainy season and continued for a month after the end of the rainy season. But, the rain does not affect traditional bridges and does not interrupt communication.²⁸ The *wäyna-däga* area, which is free from most of the tropical diseases of both humans and animals, is much favorable for human settlement. Relatively, this climatic zone is a flat highland. As a result, this zone is the most productive area to cultivate crops like *ṭéff*, barely, wheat, and oilseeds.²⁹ Of the total area of Gojjam, the *Wäyna-däga* climatic zone covers an area of 25,715 square kilometers.³⁰ Therefore, this zone is the second widest in its territorial extent next to the *qolla* areas of the zone and the most densely populated areas of the province.³¹ In this zone, the gently undulating topography makes the plateau suitable for constructing infrastructures like roads and highways.³²

The third climatic zone is called *däga*. This zone lies within the elevation range of 2,500-3,500 meters above sea level. In June, July, August, and September, areas of this zone get above 1,500 millimeters of average annual rainfall.³³ According to Allen, during the rainy season (from July to October), Gojjam was entirely cut off from Šäwa and the neighboring provinces by the flood of the Blue Nile.³⁴ Furthermore, traveler Rey observed that during the rainy season, Gojjam was cut off from some parts of the Ethiopian state, south of the Blue Nile River due to lack of

²⁷ Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *A regional Atlas of North-West Ethiopia* (Bahir Dar: Physical Planning Department, 1985), P.6.

²⁸ Walter Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia*....., P. 28.

²⁹ Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *A Regional Atlas of North Western Ethiopia*..., P.6.

³⁰ Gojjam Province Plan Office, *A Short Description of Gojjam Province* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1988), P. 2.

³¹ Regional Planning Office, *A Regional Atlas of North-Western Ethiopia*....., P.6.

³² *Ibid*, P.4.

³³ Gojjam Province Plan Office, *Short Description of Gojjam Province* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1988), P. 2.

³⁴ W.E.D. Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands.....," P. 4.

adequate bridges and all-weather roads.³⁵ However, ongoing communication became possible following the construction of the bridge at Šafartak over the Blue Nile River.³⁶ According to Blashford Snell, the *däga* climatic zone was densely populated, and this region was swept by frequent tropical storms in August. Therefore, the ground was very muddy and transportation on the main highway (Bahir Dar-Däjän highway) was impossible for all vehicles. This zone is hotter than the climatic zone of *Wurç* and colder than the *wäyna-däga* climate. In this zone, the top of the mountains (4000 meters) are very cool.³⁷ Its average annual temperature ranges from 10-15°C.³⁸ However, according to Blashford, at midday on the plateau, its temperature was reached 16°C.³⁹ This climatic zone is favorable to cultivate crops like wheat, barley, peas, beans, and potatoes. Besides, this zone is ideal for herding sheep, horses, and mules. From the total area of Gojjam, this agro-climatic zone covers 4,798 square kilometers.⁴⁰

The last and the fourth climatic zone is *wurç*. This zone is found at an elevation of 3,400 meters above sea level. The *wurç* climatic zone is located at the top of the Čoqé mountain range. Because of its cool temperature (below 11.5°C), snow falls frequently and the land is covered with snow.⁴¹

Generally, the *qolla*, *wäyna-däga*, *däga*, and *wurç* climatic zones accounted for 50 %, 40 %, and 8 %, and 2% of the total area of Gojjam, respectively.⁴² This division is based on the distribution

³⁵ C.F. Rey, "A Recent Visit Gudru and Gojjam," *the Geographical Journal*, Vo. LXVII, No. 6 (1926), P. 492.

³⁶ Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands....," P. 4.

³⁷ J.N. Blashford et al., "Conquest of the Blue Nile," *the Geographical Journal*, Vol. 136, No. 1(1970), PP. 43-44.

³⁸ Plan Office of Gojjam Province, *A Short Description of Gojjam Province* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1988), P.2.

³⁹ J.N. Blashford et al., "Conquest of the Blue Nile....," P. 43.

⁴⁰ North-Western Ethiopia Regional Planning Office, *Gojjam Province Short Description* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1988), P.2.

⁴¹ Denser Nigatu, "the Court System of Ras Hailu Tekle Hayimanot....," P. 4.

⁴² *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1981 E.C.

of altitude and temperature, which have significant impact on the settlement and socio-economic activity of the people of Gojjam.⁴³

The total area of Gojjam is estimated to be 6,400,000 square kilometers. 482,000 hectares of this area are utilized for grazing; 1,861,106 are used for various crops; and 96,200 are covered in various plants.⁴⁴ Gold, iron, marble, gun powder, coal, sulfur, copper, and other elements are all abundant in this area.⁴⁵ As a result, Alvarez describes Gojjam as the land of plenty of gold. However, the people lacked mining skills and knew nothing about the extraction of these priceless minerals.⁴⁶ Fertile black, red, clay, and sandy types of soil are also abundant in the area.⁴⁷ Besides, the soil of eastern and central Gojjam is predominantly nitisol. These red soils have deep profiles that allow easy root penetration and have good moisture retention with free drainage. These soil types have low organic and potassium content (46%), but are high in phosphorus content (54%). Along the Blue Nile gorge, there are also very shallow, extremely stony, and basaltic clay types of soil.⁴⁸ Clay and high organic soils are less desirable for highway construction, but sandy soils are the most desirable types of soil for constructing highways.⁴⁹

As a result, Castanhoso describes Gojjam as a large, well-supplied, fertile, and rich kingdom.⁵⁰

Besides, Jerome Lobo, who did extensive travel in Gojjam, says that Gojjam is one of the “most

⁴³ Daniel Dejen, “Land Tenure Reform and Socio-Economic Structure in Däbrä Marqos (Gojjam), Ethiopia: C. 1901-1974” (Dissertation, University of South Africa, Department of History, 2020), P.10.

⁴⁴ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November- December) 1981 E.C.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, *Hamile-Nehase* (July- August) 1973 E.C.

⁴⁶ Walter Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia and the.....*, P.30; Balsazar Tellez, *the Travels of the Jesuits...*, P.25.

⁴⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July- August) 1973 E.C.

⁴⁸ E. Westphal, *Agriculture System in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1975), P. 32.

⁴⁹ Alemineh Sorsa, “Engineering Characterization of Sub-Grade Soils of Jimma Town,” *Geosciences*, Vol. 10, No. 94 (2020), P. 2.

⁵⁰ R.S. Whiteway, translated, *The Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia in 1541-1543 as Narrated by Castanhoso* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1892), P. 241; Sir Francis, *the Life and the Adventurers of Bruce, the African Traveler* (New York: Harper, 1840), P. 240.

fruitful and agreeable” of the Ethiopian regions.⁵¹ Thus, Gojjam is the most resourceful, prosperous, and surplus-producing area due to the region’s soil fertility, sufficient rainfall, and moderate temperature.⁵² Gojjam, which is about 64,000 square kilometers in size, is a surplus producing area.⁵³ Therefore, the province is a source of various crops like barley, wheat, sorghum, *téff*, oilseeds, chickpeas, flax, oats, nigger seed, millet, lentils, and peas.⁵⁴ As a result, Gojjam is known as one of the granaries of Ethiopia.⁵⁵ *Téff* is given the highest priority out of all the aforementioned crops and is consumed as the main diet by those with higher and more distinguished social, economic, and political status as well as respected guests in the form of *injära*.⁵⁶ According to Walter Plowden, *téff* is the universal food of Gojjam, which is grown everywhere, except in the coldest climatic zones.⁵⁷ As a result, *téff* is a predominant crop that constitutes some 40% of the area and accounts for nearly 46% of the cereal production. Despite the region is being one of the most important grains producing area, agricultural production is still carried out using traditional methods and traditional tools.⁵⁸ Pair of oxen is the main source of traction power for cultivation.⁵⁹

Gojjam is also a land of large numbers of livestock.⁶⁰ Referring the works of Almeida, Getenet states that farmers reared cattle in large numbers in Gojjam, where they constituted the principal

⁵¹ Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (London: Edinburgh, 1788), P. 110.

⁵² Ethiopian Herald, September- June 1980.

⁵³ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia; Power and Protest: Peasant.....*, P. 161.

⁵⁴ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1973 E.C.

⁵⁵ Ethiopian Herald, September to June 1979 E.C.

⁵⁶ James C. Mccann, *People of the Plow: An Agriculture History of Ethiopia, 1800-1990* (New York: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), P. 55.

⁵⁷ Walter Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia and the.....*, P. 29.

⁵⁸ Central Statistical Office, *Agriculture Sample Survey of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Office, 1983), P. 36.

⁵⁹ James C. Mccann, *People of the Plow.....*, P. 45.

⁶⁰ Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of Multiethnic Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1974), P.37.

wealth of the people.⁶¹ With regard to this idea, Walter Plowden states that the vast and luxuriant grass plain of Gojjam and the border of Lake Tana are favorable for herding large numbers of cattle. He also observed a large number of livestock such as mules, horses, and donkeys while grazing the pasture in Gojjam.⁶² In Whiteway's observation, the cattle had large size, and some of them were as large as elephants.⁶³ Besides, Jermoe Lobo describes Gojjam as the land of honey and butter. According to him, a great quantity of honey was gathered and a huge number of cows were also kept in Gojjam.⁶⁴

James Bruce also noted that due to the presence of many cattle and bees, Gojjam produces abundant honey and butter.⁶⁵ The other traveler, Plowden, remarked that Gojjam is the land of plentiful and fresh sources of milk.⁶⁶ The province had 2,664,500 cattle, 390,200 goats, 954,800 sheep, 154,500 horses, 18,630 mules, and 280,400 donkeys, according to an agricultural ministry report that was published in 1984.⁶⁷ These large numbers of goats and sheep were a source of hide and skins for Gojjam. For instance, according to the 1979 agricultural minister's report, 553 hides and skin were transported from Gojjam to Addis Ababa via Bahir Dar-Däjäň highway.⁶⁸ In addition, mules, horses, and donkeys played a significant role in transporting people and goods from place to place.⁶⁹ Although livestock number was large, their productivity was generally

⁶¹Getenet Bekele, "Contingent Variable and Discerning Farmers: Marginalized Cattle in Ethiopian's Historically Crop-Livestock Integrated Agriculture (1840-1941)," *North East African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2002), P. 84.

⁶² Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia*....., P. 43; Henry Blanc, "From Mätämma to Damot....," P. 43.

⁶³ R.S Whiteway, *the Portuguese to Abyssinia*..., P. 235.

⁶⁴ Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*...., P. 71.

⁶⁵Sir Francis, *the Life and Adventures of Bruce*...., P. 255.

⁶⁶ Walter Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia*...., P. 236.

⁶⁷ Gojjam Development and Rehabilitation Association, *Indicator study of Socio-Economic Developments in Gojjam, November 1985* (unpublished material), P.7.

⁶⁸ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1972 E.C.

⁶⁹ R.S.Whiteway, *the Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia*...., P. 235.

very low. The inadequate supply of pasture and the prevalence of diseases combined with poor management were the major factors contributing to its low productivity.⁷⁰

Throughout history, the term “Gojjam” has been used to refer to different geographic regions.⁷¹ Due to this geographical variety in different periods, there is no consensus among scholars regarding the earliest territorial extent of Gojjam.⁷² Prior to the early 17th century, the kingdom of Gojjam included the sub-regions populated by Christians who spoke Amharic as well as other people, notably Agews, who were not Christians. All the areas lying west of the Jämma and *Gelgäl* Abbay (little Abbay) Rivers were occupied by Christian Amharic people, while all the regions that lay to the west of these rivers and as far west as Mount Bäläya were occupied by other people, notably Agews.⁷³ The territory of Gojjam was regarded during the medieval period as the area almost encircled by the Blue Nile River, which is the vast geographical area extending from Lake Ṭana in the north to southeastern bends of the same river. However, the term Gojjam came to refer to a smaller geographical area within the Blue Nile bend from the 17th to the 20th centuries.⁷⁴ With regard to this point, Merid Wolde Aregay states the following:

*After the seventeenth century, the name Gojjam refers more to the eastern districts inhabited by the Amhara than to the province as a whole. The region inhabited by the Agäw began in the narrow plains to the west of the Jama River, a tributary of Abbay River, and reached up to the Blue Nile. In the east, it began somewhere near Amadamit and Mangästu mountains and ends at the Dura River on the west. Hence, we cannot speak clearly about the territorial limits of Gojjam during this period.*⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Planning and Programming Department, *General Agricultural Survey of Gojjam* (Addis Ababa: Ministry of Agriculture, 1984), P.75.

⁷¹ Habitu Mengistie, “Lord, Zega and,” P. 1.

⁷² Genzeb Atalay, “Red Terror in Gojjam....,” P. 1.

⁷³ Geremew Eskezia, “Ethiopian State Campaign, and Settlement and Integration of Oromo Military Regiments in Gojjam (Ethiopia): CA. 1586-1855” (Dissertation, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2021), P. 12.

⁷⁴ Genzeb Atalay, “Red Terror in Gojjam....,” P.1.

⁷⁵ Merid Welde Aregay, “Political Geography of Ethiopia....,” P. 621.

On the other hand, various sources show that throughout the history of Ethiopia, the term “Gojjam” refers to different geographical areas at different times. For instance, in the middle of the 19th century, most historians refer to Gojjam as “Gojjam proper” and “Damot.” Gojjam proper refers to the eastern parts of Gojjam which included the current Bičäna, Moṭṭa, and Däbrä Marqos that stretches geographically to the Blue Nile. “Damot” also refers to the western part of Gojjam, which was divided into the sub-districts of Däga Damot and Qolla Damot.⁷⁶ However, according to other sources, the geographical area of Gojjam was divided into: “Central Gojjam,” and “Gojjam Proper,” Firstly, the East Gojjam Administrative Zone, formerly known as Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, is where the old sub-province of “Central Gojjam began somewhere at the top of Mount Čoqé and extended eastward. Secondly, and most significantly, “Gojjam Proper” was the region encircled by the Blue Nile River.⁷⁷

However, the administrative rearrangement of the region in the first half of the 20th century, which persisted long into the end of the Imperial era, was largely responsible for central Gojjam’s fading and beginning to lose its former significance. Central Gojjam was no longer able to significantly influence local political developments on its own. The administrative reorganizations caused by the government’s centralization process prevented the sub-province from fully recovering, and as a result, it lost its significance. Because of these and other events, the former Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* only came to take the place of Central Gojjam. Gradually, Central Gojjam vanished from the political map of the area, and the name Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* took its place. Therefore, Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* appears to have been the former sub-province

⁷⁶ Alula Yohannes, “A History of Dämbäčä *Wäräda*.....,” PP. 1-2.

⁷⁷ Daniel, “Land Tenure Reform and Socio-Economic...,” PP. 75.

of Central Gojjam and serves as its figurative physical entity. One of the earliest Christian provinces in northwestern Ethiopia was Gojjam, which included Däbrä Marqos.⁷⁸

Gojjam was not a core province of the Christian kingdom until the late 16th century.⁷⁹ It existed as a semi-autonomous political unit for centuries, isolated from the rest of the empire by the deep and forbidding gorge of the Blue Nile.⁸⁰ Both the rulers of Gojjam and the common people had considered the Nile as a natural defense to the autonomy of Gojjam.⁸¹ In line with this, Charles T. Beke attests the natural significance of the Blue Nile gorge to the autonomy of Gojjam and its rulers as follows:

*Gojjam from its laying within the curve of the River Abai (the “Nile” of the Portuguese and of Bruce), has always maintained a quasi-independence; and its rulers, like those of Tigre, have a times gained possession of the capital and the person of the nominal sovereign, and been by him appointed Ras or vizier, with the real power.*⁸²

King Tekle Haymanot attempted to violate the isolation of Gojjam from the rest of the Ethiopian states by using the Blue Nile gorge as a natural defense. For instance, he planned to connect Gojjam with Šäwa through transport infrastructure. He tried his best to connect the two areas by building a modern bridge over the Blue Nile River.⁸³

However, Gojjam found itself extremely close to the heart of the Ethiopian state once the political center shifted from Šäwa to the Lake Ṭana region. Controlling Gojjam from the direction of Lake Ṭana became much easier than from Šäwa, where the Blue Nile gorge serves as a formidable geographic barrier. Because of this, it appears that Gondärin kings were able to

⁷⁸ Daniel, “Land Tenure Reform and....,” PP. 7-8.

⁷⁹ Genzeb Atalay, “Red Terror in Gojjam....,” P. 3.

⁸⁰ Nicolas Gildas, “Protest in Ethiopia,” *A Journal of African Studies*, Vol.2, No. 3 (1972), P. 51.

⁸¹ Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia and Eritrea*, 2nd edition (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1981), P. 44; Richard Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia: The North and Central Highlands from Early Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor Tewodros II* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1990), P. 173.

⁸² Charles T. Beke, *the British Captives in Abyssinia*, 2nd edition (London: Dyer, 1867), P.6.

⁸³ Ethiopian Herald, October- February 1978.

dominate Gojjam more successfully than Gondär. One indicator of this was that Gondärin kings made more frequent political campaign to Gojjam than their predecessors.⁸⁴

As a result, from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, the monarchs of the Christian kingdom personally appointed the rulers of Gojjam. For instance, Welde Abib of Gojjam, who held the title of *Yäšaläqa* during the reign of Iyasu I, was appointed as the governor of Gojjam. In 1753, Empress Mintwab and her son Iyasu II chose Yosedeq, his son and heir, to serve as the governor of Gojjam. Yosedeq was also given the title of *Däjjazmač*. However, Yosedeq was the first to challenge the tradition of Gojjam rulers being directly appointed by the Gondräian court. Gojjam's independence from the Gondärian court continued during the reign of *Ras* Hailu the Great, Yosedeq's son and successor (r. 1777-1795).⁸⁵

Following the death of *Ras* Hailu Yosedeq in 1795, there was an acute power struggle among the lords of Gojjam. Finally, with the intense power struggle, *Däjjazmač* Zewdu ruled Agäw Mädar and Damot, while *Ras* Mared ruled Gojjam proper. However, this acute power struggle ended in the early 1870s with the rise of *Ras* Adal Tesemma, later known as King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam and Kaffa in 1881. The reign of King Tekle Hamanot marked the end of the power struggle among the members of the ruling houses of Gojjam and the beginning of a stable order, except for a few military campaigns outside Gojjam.⁸⁶ Therefore, *Nigus* Tekle Haymanot devoted much of his time to domestic matters like the development of trade and communication throughout his domain.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Abebaw Ayalew, "A History of Painting in East Gojjam ...," PP. 6-7.

⁸⁵ Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosen, *Historical Dictionary* ..., P. 144.

⁸⁶ Genzeb Atalay, "Red Terror in Gojjam, 1976-1978.....," P. 6.

⁸⁷ Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial Kings of Ethiopia," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1973), P. 39.

Nigus Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam, among others, found the battle of Embabo to be shocking. Early in 1882, there was a conflict at Embabo in Wälläga. The armies of Tekle Haymanot and King Menelik did not have to wait long to engage in combat. Since the Blue Nile was impossible to cross once it flooded, a protracted delay would have been terrible for Tekle Haymanot and Gojjam army since it was the beginning of the rainy season. Additionally, before the war started, numerous animals and soldiers perished by epidemics that had broken out in king Menilek's camp. As a result, both sides were eager for combat. Gojjam's army was defeated in this fight, and *Nigus* Tekle Haymanot was wounded and taken prisoner.⁸⁸

Following the battle of Embabo, Tekle Haymanot's commercial plans to the south and southwest were limited. But, he was able to control the Gudru, Kutay, and Horror districts of Wälläga.⁸⁹ Due to this, he tried to develop his commercial relationship with these districts in the south of the Blue Nile, which had strong ties with the market of Gojjam.⁹⁰ Hence, to facilitate his commercial relationship with these districts, Tekle Haymanot planned to connect Gojjam with Šäwa through modern transport; the hitherto isolated regions due to lack of adequate transport infrastructure. One of his plans was to build a modern bridge in Gojjam across the Nile for the sake of flourishing trade. To achieve this plan, he wrote a letter to a commercial agent of Italy in Africa in 1883. But, his scheme was not successful due to the Šäwan domination in the south and southwest regions after the battle of Embabo.⁹¹

After the death of King Tekle Haymanot in 1901, Gojjam was once again disturbed by political chaos and again divided among local nobilities. Thus, Gojjam proper became under the rule

⁸⁸ Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial...", P.38.

⁸⁹ Walelign Aschale, "Trade and Market in Baso Libän Wārāda (District) of Gojjam" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2016), P. 40.

⁹⁰ Walter Plowden, *Travel in Abyssinia*..., P. 305.

⁹¹ Walelign, "Trade and Market in Baso...", P. 40.

of *Däjjazmač* Seyum while Damot and Agäw Mädär under *Ras Bitwadäd* Mengesha Atikem. During the reign of *Ras* Hailu, Gojjam was divided into fourteen administrative units called *Wäräda*, each of which divided into *Mäslänéwäč* (equivalent to sub-districts).⁹² *Ras* Hailu's rule over Gojjam was known by excessive taxation and exploitation of the people of Gojjam.⁹³ *Ras* Hailu became one of the wealthiest person in Ethiopia through taxation, trade, and confiscation of property.⁹⁴ "Birru Hailu" (Dollars Hailu) was a nickname for *Ras* Hailu because of his business savvy and love of money.⁹⁵ *Ras* Hailu, though interested in new things, did not introduce many innovations in Gojjam. He had a few bridges built and improved the road from Däbrä-Marqos to the Blue Nile. But, he did not spend a fraction of his wealth on other infrastructural developments in Gojjam and was not known for his social reform.⁹⁶ Instead, *Ras* Hailu was determined to have a motor car in Gojjam. In line with this, R.E. Chessman states the following:

*Ras Haylu, the governor of Gojjam province, had had a car brought in section by mule from Addis Ababa, and across the Blue Nile. It was assembled in the town of Däbrä Marqos, his capital, and he was being driven round the out skirts in it when I visited him in 1926. It could not be said that it had made the journey there as a car, and it was only used as a toy, as the roads that were leveled for it did not extend in to the outer districts.*⁹⁷

The rise of Emperor Haile Selassie I to power facilitated the end of hereditary rule in Gojjam. Soon after Hailu's imprisonment (1932), Haile Selassie I centralized the Governorate-General

⁹²Geremew Eskezia, "A History of Yelmana Dénsa District (1901-1974)" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2015), P. 44.

⁹³ *Ibid*, P. 55.

⁹⁴ Bahiru Zewde, "Economic Origins of the Absolute State in Ethiopia (1916-1935)," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 17 (1984), P.18.

⁹⁵ Gebru, *Ethiopia; Power and Protest*..., P. 165; Geremew Eskezia, "A History of Yelmana Dénsa...", P. 59.

⁹⁶ Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial...", P. 46.

⁹⁷ R.E Chessman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London: Frank Class, 1968), P. 2.

and appointed *Ras* Imiru as governor of Gojjam.⁹⁸ Besides, by constructing Bahir Dar-Däjäñ highway, the Italians increased the vulnerability of the local elite to the central government. Despite the fact that the economic significance of this highway was not immediately realized, it had a profound political implication in facilitating the centralization process.⁹⁹ Realizing its political significance, *Ras* Hailu opposed *Ras* Tafari's plan to construct Bahir Dar-Däjäñ-Addis Ababa highway through the support of J.G White Engineering American Corporation.¹⁰⁰ The long-existed political tradition, therefore, significantly delayed the construction of modern transportation systems in Gojjam.¹⁰¹

During the post-Italian period, Gojjam had seven distinct administrative sub-provinces (*Awrajjas*): Agäw Määdär, Bahir Dar, Bičäna, Damot, Däbrä Marqos, Mätäkäl, and Moṭṭa.¹⁰² But, during the Derg regime, Gojjam was divided into 35 *Wärädas* and seven distinct administrative sub-provinces.¹⁰³ Of all Gojjam distinct administrative sub-provinces, Mätäkäl was the largest sub-province, with an area of 28,681.1 square kilometers.¹⁰⁴ But, Bičäna was the smallest sub-province, with an area of 3,124.6 square kilometers.¹⁰⁵

1.2. The People of Gojjam

Traditions associate the origin of the people of Ethiopia with the Biblical statement, which says, "After the flood, all the nations of the earth ascended from Noah." (Gen. 10:32). During the great flood as mentioned in the Holy Bible, all the people of the world were destroyed. But, Noah, his

⁹⁸Adane Gashu, "Dergo System in Gojjam to 1974" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2017), P. 12.

⁹⁹James Mccann, "Ethiopia, Britain, and Negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam, 1922-1935," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1981), P. 694.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, P. 647.

¹⁰¹ W.E.D. Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands...", P.4.

¹⁰² Temesgen, "Gojjam (Ethiopia): ...," P. 255.

¹⁰³ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Tahisas-Tir* (December- January) 1966 E.C.

¹⁰⁴ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, A Letter Written from Ministry of Interior, to Ministry of Finance, Ref No. 1040/29, dated, February 15/1964 E.C.

¹⁰⁵Office of the National Committee for Central Planning North-Western Ethiopia Regional Planning Office, Statistical Abstract 1984/85 (Bahir Dar, March 1987), P. 1.

wife, and his three sons (Sem, Cam, and Yafet), including their wife were saved from that flood disaster, and it is from these three sons of Noah that all people of the world are believed to have descended.¹⁰⁶ Besides, after the great flood, Noah divided the world to his three sons. Accordingly, the original settlers in Ethiopia were descended from among the children of Noah (Cam) who dispersed to different parts of the world.¹⁰⁷ The descendants of Cush, the son of Cam (Ham), came from Asia through the Bible Mändäb, and they settled in Ethiopia in around 2,713 BC.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the Cushitic peoples have been established in Ethiopia for several millennia and they form the basic ethnic element of the Ethiopian population.¹⁰⁹ Specifically, *Ityopis*, the son of Saba, while his grandfather was known as Cush, was the forerunner of the people of Ethiopia.¹¹⁰ Gradually, the term *Ityopis* evolved into Ethiopia.¹¹¹

According to traditions, the name Gojjam is directly associated with Goze, one of the direct descendants of *Ityopis*. Sources like the *kibrä nägäst* demonstrate that Goze was the founding father and the earliest settler of Gojjam. The tradition maintains that the term Goze gradually evolved into Gojjam.¹¹² The tradition further speculates that the descendants of Goze, namely, Melello, Selello, Derbe, and Serbe, were said to have occupied the area around the Çoqué Mountain and divided the resourceful areas of the region. Accordingly, Melelo and Selelo were

¹⁰⁶ Habite Mariam Assefa, *Yä Ethiopia Tarik Tiyaqewoç ena Bahiloç* (Ethiopian History Questions and Traditions) (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Press, 1986), P. 33; Yohannes Welde Mariam, *Ye Alem Tarik* (World History) (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Press, 1940), P. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, *Yä Eteyopia Tark: Nubia-Aksum, Zagwe Iske Atse Yekunno Amlak Zemene Mengist* (History of Ethiopia: Nubia-Aksum, Zagwe to the Reign of King Yekunno Amlak) (Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Press, 1951), P.11; Tekle Eyesus Waqijira (ed by Girma Getahun), *Yä Gojjam Teweled Bämulu Kä Abbay Eskä Abbay* (the Generation of Gojjam From Abbay to Abbay) (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2003 E.C), P.8.

¹⁰⁸ Fikre Tollossa, *Yä Oromo ena Yä Amhara Ewnätäña Yäzär Minç* (the True Genealogy of Oromo and Amhara) (California: Nebadan, 2016), P. 51; Girma Zewdu, *Ityopis* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Press, 1985), P. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Ullendorff, *the Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), P. 45; Drusilla Guned, *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushitic Empire* (New York: Universal Publishing company, 1926), P. 20.

¹¹⁰ Tekle Eyesus, *the Generation of Gojjam from...*, P. 7.

¹¹¹ Ayele Bekerie, "Ethiopia: Some Historical Reflections on the Origin of the Word Ethiopia," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2004), P. 113.

¹¹² *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Tahisas-Tir* (December-January) 1966 E.C.

assigned to settle between the Çay River (in what is now Bičäna) and along the Blue Nile River. The rest took up the vast area to the east and south-west of the Çoqé, as well as the areas between the Çay River in the east and Zingini in the south-west. It seems that Derbe and Serbe occupied the larger part of the area as a result of their strength as compared to Melello and Selello.¹¹³

According to *Aläqa* Tekleyesus, Melello begot, Bibugn, Gedeb, Siltanayale, Bekeka, Sarmidir, Goncha, and Enebse.¹¹⁴ They settled in some parts of eastern Gojjam, like Bibuñ, Gonča, Enäbsé, Gädäb, Sältanayalé, Sarmidir, and Bäkäka.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, Arefa, Qolela, Ashmen, Yilmana Densa, Zege, and Achefer were the children of Selello.¹¹⁶ They predominantly occupied areas like Aräfa, Qoläla, Ašmān, Yilmana Dēnsa, Zägé, and Ačäfär. These areas are found in the current administrative units of north-western and north-eastern Gojjam.¹¹⁷

According to Taddesse Tamirat, Derbe and Serbe were the most important personalities who were supposed to have first settled in the highlands of Gojjam.¹¹⁸ As noted in the manuscript of Tekleyesus, the children of Derebe were said to have settled in the Gozamän, Anädäd, Awabäl, and Wudmit areas, which are found in the East Gojjam administrative zone.¹¹⁹ The tradition further shows that these place names were the names of the children of the founding father, Derbe. The other name that the tradition often refers to the origin of the people of the area under study is Serbe. Serbe is believed as to have begot three children: Sehnan, Machakel, and Sebraden. These children occupied and settled in the land found between the rivers Gédéb and

¹¹³ Taddesse, Tamirat, "Ethiopia in Miniature: the People of Gojjam," in Harold G. Marcus and Grover Hudson (eds), *Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 1 (Michigan State University, 5-10 September, 1994), P. 956.

¹¹⁴ Tekle Eyesus, *the Generation of Gojjam from...*, P. 45.

¹¹⁵ Alula Yohannes, "A History of Dämbäça.....," P. 14.

¹¹⁶ Tekle Eyesus, *the Generation of Gojjam from...*, P. 45.

¹¹⁷ Alula, "A History of Dämbäça Wäradä.....," P. 14.

¹¹⁸ Taddesse Tamirat, "Ethiopia in Miniature....," P. 956.

¹¹⁹ Tekle Eyesus, *the Generation of Gojjam...*, P. 43.

Zängini. Machakel occupied the territory between Gédéb and Tämča Rivers while the area found along Fänam River became the domain of Sehnan. Sebraden took the area found between Fätam and Zängini Rivers.¹²⁰

According to Taddesse Tamrat and Tekleyesus, Gafat was the name of the son of Goze.¹²¹ Thus, Gafat gave birth to Melelo, who in turn gave birth to Selello, Selello begot Tirif, Tirif begot Zenifinif, Zenifinif begot Gunifinif, Gunifinif begot Qegn Derbe (literally right) and Gira Serbe (literally left). These two, Qegn Derebe and Gira Serebe, settled in the east and west parts of Gojjam, respectively.¹²² One of the regions is Gozamän Wäräda, which is known as *ye-Gafat ager* (land of Gafat). It is also important to note that Gzamän Wäräda, like many other Wärädas and place names in the area, inherited its name from Gozamen, the first son of Qegn Derb.¹²³

Concerning the Gafat people Taddesse Tamirat also states the following:

*Giving the strong impression that Gafat was the earliest ancestral name next only to Gojjam itself, which is deeply imprinted in the local tradition as belonging to an ancient founding father. There is also an interesting idea that Gafat is invariably and relentlessly identified as the ancestor of the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th generations, which is still a figure in the living tradition of the people.*¹²⁴

Therefore, the Gafat people had a strong presence in Gojjam.¹²⁵ The Gafat language was spoken in Gojjam along the Blue Nile gorge.¹²⁶ Over 100 years ago, Charles T. Beke found that Gafat

¹²⁰ Alula, "A History of Dämbäça Wäräda....," P. 15.

¹²¹ Taddesse Tamirat, "Ethiopia in Miniature.....," P. 956; Tekle Eyesus, *Generation of Gojjam....*, P. 42.

¹²² Getachew Sinshaw, "Household Access to Farm Land and Socio-Economic Status: The Case of Wonqa Kebele, Gozamen Werda (East Gojjam), Amhara Region" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Social Anthropology, 2003), P.19.

¹²³ Gizachew, "Environmental History of", P. 14.

¹²⁴ Taddesse Tamirat, "Ethiopia in Miniature....," P. 954.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, "Ethnic Interaction in Ethiopia: the Case of Gafat," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1988), P. 40.

¹²⁶ E. Westphal, *Agriculture in Ethiopia....*, P. 59

was on the eve of extinction. However, it lingered until 1947 and was spoken only by four people in the region.¹²⁷

The vast areas to the east and south-west of the Çoqé, as well as the region between the Cay River in the east and Zingini in the south-west, were all occupied by Derebe and Serbe, as I mentioned before. It seems clear that the Zagwe and Solomonic dynasties made the earliest coordinated attacks against Gojjam from ancient Aksum and its successor kingdom, specifically in this direction. Most likely, from the center of their former residence in the upper Tākāzé valley and Sāmén Mountains, the Agew were the first to spread out toward this area. Agew's influence was firmly established even outside the Melello-Selello areas later, when the state's power shifted to lasta. Thus, the Zagwe had gained control over a sizable portion of Gojjam.¹²⁸

In the conflict between king Lalibela and his elder brother Harbe, the "Seven Houses" of Agew came and settled in much of Gojjam. They were loyal to the Harbe and rebelled against prince Lalibela.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the subject people of Gojjam, the eight descendants of Derbe and Serbe were strongly supported Lalibela and demanded a change in administration. Finally, when Lalibela defeated his brother and took the throne, he took his revenge on the Agew of Gojjam. He banished them all from Derbe and Serbe areas and forced them to move to the west of Zingini River.¹³⁰ Then, they resettled along the Abbay River including Ačäfär and Säkälla.¹³¹ Besides, Jermo Lobo mentions as Säkälla, where the Abbay River originates, was a home of Agew people, who call themselves Christians.¹³² Place names like *Agew Badima* (Agew Ruin), *Agew*

¹²⁷ Edward Ullendroff, *the Ethiopians...*, P. 131.

¹²⁸ Taddesse Tamirat, "Ethiopia in Miniature...", P. 956.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, "Ethnic Interaction in Ethiopia the", P. 11.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, "Ethiopia in Miniature: the People", P. 956.

¹³¹ Shumet Sishagn and Taddesse Tamirat, "Dialog," *Journal of Addis Ababa Teachers Association*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1992), P. 89.

¹³² Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia...*, P. 110.

Märét (Agäw land), *Agew Bärät* (Agew barn), *Agew Kab* (Agew wall), *Agew Minç* (Agew spring), *Agew Amba* (Agäw hill) found in various parts of the region as far east as Enäbsé and Enäsé and as far west as Mačakäl show that there was significant Agäw presence in East Gojjam.¹³³

In addition to the Agew people, a very influential group, Shime, especially identified as the descendants of the Zagwe, settled in eastern Gojjam. Shime was believed to have descended from May, half-brother of Menelik I. Important communities of eastern Gojjam “the Five Houses of Enne-May” descend their origin from him. Thus, the descendants of May were important inhabitants of the eastern region between the River Suha and Çay which is called Ennä-May after them. In Amharic, May is equivalent to Enne-May, which was the name of the *Wäräda* where they are said to have settled. Together with Enne-May, many Amhara groups are said to have settled in eastern Gojjam on ancient Derbe land, between Suha and Çay River just across the Blue Nile River from the medieval provinces of Amhara (Wällo and Šäwa). Some of their family-group names, like Däjän, Gubaya, Šäbäl, Bäränta, Lämčän, Enarj, and Ennawga, are still names of important districts or sub-districts in the region.¹³⁴

The Amhara, the dominant peoples of Gojjam and some other areas of Ethiopia, originated from Amhara (Wällo) and Šäwa regions. The migration and settlement of Amhara people in Gojjam took place in stages and was from east to west direction. At first, there disputes with the Agäw. Enäbsé, Sarmädär, Gonča, Enarj Enawga, Šäbäl, Bäränta, and Ennä may were among the regions occupied during the initial phase. They increased in number over time, moved to the west, and eventually settled in the areas of Awabäl, Däbay Tälatgin, Anädäd, Gozamän, Mačakäl, Sinan,

¹³³ Abebaw Ayalew, “A History of Painting...,” P. 3.

¹³⁴ Taddesse, “Ethiopia in Miniature...,” PP. 975-958.

and Moṭṭa. The settlement of Amhara, which started in the 14th century, grew steadily and transformed Gojjam. By interacting with and occasionally displacing the earliest settlers, the Agews, Eastern Gojjam, in particular, underwent transformation into a predominately Amhara Christian region.¹³⁵

In 1954, the total population of Gojjam was estimated to be 1,600,000.¹³⁶ In 1966, this population rose to 1,800,000.¹³⁷ However, based on the 1984 national census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the total population of Gojjam was 3,244, 822. Of these, 1,622,878 (50.01%) were females, while 1,622,004 (49.99%) were males.¹³⁸ Besides, the census indicates that 7.9 % of people lived in urban areas, while 92.1% lived in rural areas.¹³⁹

Other people who lived in Gojjam include the Oromo, Damot, Weyito, and Gumuz.¹⁴⁰ Besides, a few Shinasha and Kunfel people have also lived in Gojjam. Of the total population of Gojjam, the Amhara ethnic group accounts for 87.4%. Other people I mentioned above made up the remaining percentage (12.6%).¹⁴¹

The demographics of Gojjam underwent a significant transformation throughout the 16th century due to a new wave of migration and settlement. Damot, Gafat, and the Oromo had established significant settlements during this period in Gojjam.¹⁴² Therefore, the remarkable ethnolinguistic composition of the people of Gojjam is a product of several years of large-scale migration and

¹³⁵ Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling...", P. 260.

¹³⁶ Edward, *the Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country...*, P. 31.

¹³⁷ John Sommer, *a Study Guide for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa* (Boston: African Study Center, 1969), P. 65.

¹³⁸ The Province of Gojjam Plan Office, *Yä Gojjam Kiflä Hager Açir Mägläça (Short Description of Gojjam Province)*, Däbrä Marqos, June 1988, P. 5.

¹³⁹ North-Western Region Plan Office, *Yä Gojjam Yä Economy Ena Mahibäräw Limat Täquwami Īinat (Indicator Study of Gojjam's Socio-Economic Development)*, November 1985 (unpublished material), P. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1973 E.C; Balsazar Tellez, *the Travels of the Jesuits...*, P. 38.

¹⁴¹ Plan Office of Gojjam Province, *a Short Description of Gojjam Province* (Däbrä Marqos, June 1980), P. 7.

¹⁴² Temesgen, Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling..., P. 255.

many centuries of inter-mixing. The cumulative effect of this process has made Gojjam an epitome of Ethiopia.¹⁴³

1.3. Historical Overview about Infrastructural Developments in Gojjam

Compared to the total population and the size of Gojjam, there was a low level of infrastructural development in Gojjam. For instance, during the Imperial Regime, only the people who lived in two towns (Däbrä Marqos and Bahir Dar) had access to electricity. But, after the Revolution, through the joint efforts of the Revolutionary Government and the masses of the province, 14 towns in the province had been electrified. These towns are Däbrä Marqos, Bahir Dar, Däjän, Bičäna, Däbrä Wärq, Moṭṭa, Lummamé, Finotä Sälam, Buré, Dangila, Čagni, Dänbäça, Jiga, and Adét. Likewise, only Däbrä Marqos, Dagila, and Bahir Dar had gotten access to piped water prior to the popular upsurge. During the Derg regime, this number rose to 13.¹⁴⁴ These towns are Däbrä Marqos, Bahir Dar, Däjän, Bičäna, Däbrä Wärq, Moṭṭa, Finotä Sälam, Buré, Dangila, Čagni, Dänbäça, Durbété, and Adét.¹⁴⁵

If we consider the development of education prior to the popular upsurge, there were only 116 primary, 12 junior secondary, and 3 senior secondary schools. But, during the Derg Regime, through the joint efforts of the Revolutionary Government and the masses, there were 302 primary, 31 senior secondary, and 9 senior secondary schools. The number of students has similarly increased by 78%, 82.2%, and 150% in the primary, junior, and senior secondary schools, respectively. With regard to health services, during the Imperial Regime, there were

¹⁴³ Temesgen, "Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling...", P. 255.

¹⁴⁴ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.04, File No. 17.1.11.04, 01, Reports of Infrastructural Developments in Gojjam.

¹⁴⁵ Derb Tefera, "Nexus between Water Supply Infrastructure and Socio-Economic Developments in Amhara Region, Ethiopia, 1941-2005" (Dissertation, University of South Africa, Department of History, 2017), P. 148.

only 3 hospitals with 269 beds, 7 health centers, and 26 clinics throughout the province. But the number of clinics has risen to 68 after the Revolution.¹⁴⁶

In line with communication networks, Däbrä Marqos and Buré were connected with Addis Ababa through the telephone. Ras Imiru wanted to extend it to Injibara and Dangila from Buré by 1935. He also intended to extend it as far as the Sudanese border via Mätämma. This telephone connection, however, was less than perfect. Because the direct link only extended from station to station, the operators had to relay the message to the recipient, which often resulted in a modified version of the original message.¹⁴⁷ During the rainy season, from June to September, the rain often interrupted the single-line telephone.¹⁴⁸ Despite the fact that communication networks have not entirely benefited the society, most people began to utilize telephones, telegrams, and radio during the Derg Regime.¹⁴⁹ For instance, 27 towns in Gojjam were accessible to telephone services during the Derg Regime. That means the provinces of Gojjam accounted for only 5.3 percent of Ethiopia's total 512 telephone stations. In Gojjam, 3101 telephone lines were installed until 1991. In comparison to the national telephone lines, the province of Gojjam accounted for only 2.3 percent of the total. There was one telephone for 1,300 people in Gojjam, compared to one telephone for 370 people in Ethiopia.¹⁵⁰

In terms of postal services, Gojjam had 50 post offices in 1989, compared to 921 post offices in Ethiopia. Its accessibility was one post office for 82,000 people in Gojjam, compared to one post office for 57,000 people in Ethiopia.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Ethiopian Herald, September-June 1980.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, February-April 1982.

¹⁴⁸ James Mc Ccan, "Ethiopia, Britain and Negotiation....," P. 75.

¹⁴⁹ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.04, File No. 17.1.11.04, 01, Reports of Infrastructural Developments in Gojjam.

¹⁵⁰ Gojjam Development and Rehabilitation Association, *Socio-Economic Development Index Study of Gojjam*, November 1985 (unpublished material), P. 40.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*.

With regard to transport systems, the province was accessed to air, maritime, and road transport. There were air ports in Bahir Dar, Moṭṭa, Däbrä Marqos, Dangila, and Pawi. Of these, Däbrä Marqos was among the first five towns in Ethiopia to have air transportation services when the Ethiopian Air Line began its domestic flights in 1946. Bahir Dar air port had international standards while the rest were rural air ports.¹⁵²

Concerning maritime transport, modern boat transportation was started in 1948 under the name of Naviga Ṭana by refloating 3 sunken Italian boats and purchasing a second-hand one from Massawa. In 1960, Lake Ṭana Transport Service was established and continued to operate alongside Naviga Ṭana until the latter was nationalized in 1974 and merged with Lake Ṭana Transport Services. Despite Gojjam has numerous rivers, they do not give transportation services. Feasibility studies are required to use the Blue Nile and its tributaries for transportation services.¹⁵³

In terms of trains, there has been no railway in Gojjam since the early period. But, since there is a railway on the western side of the Sudanese city of Roysär, there is a possibility to extend the railway to Gojjam at a high cost.¹⁵⁴

As I noted above, the long-existing political tradition and other factors significantly delayed the construction of modern transportation systems in Gojjam. Like in other parts of Ethiopia, the transport system of Gojjam consisted of both traditional and modern modes of transport. Traditional means of transport, which consist of over-head portage and loading on the backs of

¹⁵²Gojjam Development Association, *Socio-Economic Development Index Study of Gojjam*, November 1985 (unpublished material), P. 40.

¹⁵³ Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *Developments of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia* (Bahir Dar: Physical Planning Department, 1988), P. 32.

¹⁵⁴ Gojjam Development and Rehabilitation Association, *Indicator Study of Gojjam Socio- Economic Development*, November 1985 (unpublished material), P. 40.

humans and pack animals, are still extensively used in rural areas of Gojjam. The most common means of pack animal transportation in Gojjam were donkeys (55%), mules (45%), and horses (5%).¹⁵⁵ Pack animal transport, primarily by donkeys, mules, and horses, was common in Gojjam and was essential for farm and household transportation, as well as local trade. In Gojjam, donkeys are exclusively used to transport goods from place to place. On average, 60 to 70% of loads were transported from place to place through the use of pack donkeys. A donkey can carry an average of 45 to 55 kilograms and travel a distance per day. On the other hand, mules are substantially used to transport humans from place to place.¹⁵⁶

Since traveling on a mule pack was a manifestation of greatness, it was usually the nobles and bourgeoisie who used mules as pack animals in the tradition of Gojjam. In fact, the British man, John Boyes, who made an extensive visit to Africa and Asia, states that “the Abyssinians are the most adept people at mule packing that I have seen in any part of the world.” Sometimes, mules are used to transport heavy loads from place to place. For instance, a mule can carry 67 kilograms and travel at an average of 4 kilometers per hour. Horses are also used as a major pack animal for transporting people and materials like agricultural products, construction materials, firewood, and manure. Horses, which are used almost exclusively in the *däga* and *woyina däga* climatic zones, have a greater carrying capacity (about 350 kilos) than other pack animals.¹⁵⁷ For instance, eight horses can carry as many as twelve mules, and twelve mules can carry as many as thirty-six donkeys.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *Developments of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia* (Bahir Dar: Physical Planning Department, 1988), P. 4.

¹⁵⁶ North-West Region Plan Office, *Studies of Transport and Communication* (Bahir Dar: Social Service Plan Office, 1978), P. 19.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Tegegn Worku, “Ethiopia and Its Press” (MA Thesis, Boston University, Department of Public Relation and Communication, 1961), P. 34.

However, it was only the bourgeoisie who transported loads from place to place using pack animals. The poorest people who had not equine, however, transported their goods from place to place by carrying them on their shoulders and heads. In Gojjam, a person can carry an average of 25 kilograms and travel from 27 to 32 kilometers per day.¹⁵⁹ Besides, human porters were widely used by poorer merchants in the 19th century. According to Pankhurst, on average, a porter could carry 25 kilos, or about half the load of a mule, and could travel or cover some 11 to 32 kilometers per day.¹⁶⁰ Transporting goods by the use of slave labor was also a common practice in Gojjam. For instance, slaves in Gojjam were transported trade items like coffee from Zägé to Mätämma.¹⁶¹ Indeed, transporting loads on the shoulders and heads is still common practice in Gojjam.¹⁶²

Due to the absence of modern road transport, the trade activity of Gojjam was conducted by pack mules. Just as the Saharan trade depended on pack camels, so the trade of Gojjam depended on pack mules, which swam in flowing rivers and crossed steep mountains.¹⁶³ Caravan merchants were seen by Charles T. Beke while they were travelling to northern Ethiopia as far as the Red Sea coast, departing from Gojjam with their load of mules.¹⁶⁴ Mules also carried items of trade for inter-regional trade within Gojjam, although local markets were conducted by pack donkeys. Thus, it was the donkey that was the basic means of transportation for Gojjam's daily transport and commerce, as well as for both local farmers and retail merchants.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Northwest Region Plan Office, *Studies of Transport and Communication* (Bahir Dar: Social Service Plan Office, 1978), P. 20.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Pankhurst, "Transport and Communication in Ethiopia, 1835-1935," *the Journal of Transport History*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (1961), P. 71.

¹⁶¹ Abdussamad Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy 1901-1935" (Dissertation, University of Illinois, Department of History, 1986), P. 167.

¹⁶² *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1973 E.C.

¹⁶³ Abdussamad Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital....," P. 192.

¹⁶⁴ Walelign Aschale, "Trade and Market in Baso Liben District....," P. 23.

¹⁶⁵ Abdussamad Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital....," P. 192.

The absence of motor roads made transporting the products of Gojjam to Addis Ababa difficult. Thus, Ras Hailu of Gojjam ordered merchants to travel across the difficult Blue Nile gorge to Addis Ababa. Beginning in 1931, they preferred the route that led to Addis Ababa via Däbrä Marqos, Däjän, and Fičä.¹⁶⁶ In line with this, Harold G. Marcus describes their travels in the following ways:

There were virtually no roads then, and trade followed traditional routes such as the trails south from Gondar and Däbrä Marqos to Addis Ababa. Through Bägémdir and Gojjam, on the high plateau, the travel was easy, but at Däjän, at the rim of the Blue Nile gorge, crowds of men and animals waited their turn to funnel in to the canyon, cross through its sweltering heat, and climb up to the cool Šāwan highlands on the other side. The track down was “a bad descent at the best of times.....stony and uneven, with long steeps and bad gradients”, and it was narrow, with room for only three men to walk abreast. Yet on this track moved traffic in both directions, “a constant stream of thousands of men, mules, and donkeys, untethered, and each with an awkward load”, all proceeding at about one mile an hour. This was the passage to and from Addis Ababa.¹⁶⁷

The preceding discussion implies that due to lack of adequate road infrastructure in Gojjam, merchants conducted their trade activities by using pack animals. In addition to fatigue on foot travel, crossing the rugged topography of Däjän to travel from Gojjam to Addis Ababa and vice versa was the other major challenge for merchants.¹⁶⁸

The above noted routes continued to be more important than the Basso, Zamé, and Kačisi routes, which also led to Addis Ababa via Castino Bridge and Addis Aläm. Besides this route, there was also another extensive network of trails (foot paths) in Gojjam used by caravan merchants and pedestrians, primarily used for access to markets. For instance, an extensive mule track connected Gojjam with Mätämma and Asmära.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Abdussamad Ahmad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital....,” P. 252.

¹⁶⁷ Harold G. Marcus, *Haile Selassie I: The Formative Years, 1892-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), P. 55.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Abdussamad Ahmad, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital....,” P. 252.

Lack of road transportation made the vaccination campaign for epidemics such as malaria, smallpox and leprosy more challenging. Vaccination supplies were dropped by helicopters as well as transported by more than 100 pack animals over the rough Gojjam terrain.¹⁷⁰ The following archival document substantiates this point:

በንጉሥ ነገስት ግዛት በአንዳንድ አወራጃዎች እና ወረዳዎች የተላለፈ በሽታ በሚነሳበት ጊዜ አስፈላጊውን የህክምና እርዳታ ለማቅረብ የአየር ሆነ የየብስ መገናኛ ስለሌሉ ከፍተኛ ችግር እንደሚያጋጥም የታወቀ ነው። በጎጃም ጠቅላይ ግዛት የሚገኘው የስጋ ደዌ መከላከያ ተዘዋዋሪ ቡድን በወሎ ጠቅላይ ግዛት በቦረና አወራጃ ለሚገኙት የስጋ ደዌ ህመምተኞች አስፈላጊውን ህክምና ሰጥቶ ለመመለስ በአባይ ወንዝ መሸጋገር ስለማይችል፤ በደሴ በኩል ዙሮ ቦረና አወራጃ ለመድረስ ሶስት ቀን ሙሉ በኩብት በመጓዝ የህክምና ተግባር ሲከናወን ቆይቷል። ወንዙን ለመሻገር የሚያስችል ድልድይ ቢኖር ጉዞው ከአንድቀን ባነሰ ጊዜ ሊከናወን ይችል ነበር።¹⁷¹

In the Imperial Empire, it is well known that in some Awrajjas and districts, there is a severe shortage of air and land transport to provide the necessary medical treatment while epidemics are occurred. The leprosy prevention team of Gojjam Täqalay Gizat has been traveled on pack animals for three days to reach Boräna Awrajja via Dässé as it is unable to cross the Blue Nile River after providing the necessary treatment for leprosy patients in Boräna Awrajja of Wällo Täqalay Gizat. If there was a bridge across the river, the journey would have taken less than a day.

In the local markets of Gojjam, traveling to market centers on foot was also a common practice. For instance, from Ačäfär to Däbrä Marqos, the journey took three to four days on average. Similarly, from Ačäfär to Bahir Dar, the journey takes nine to ten hours. In addition to the hardships of foot travel, the people were looted by bandits at Qotqotima.¹⁷²

Besides, from 1960 to the 1974 Revolution, the town of Moṭṭa was only accessible during the rainy season by plane transport, which provided regular services once a week.¹⁷³ The price for plane from Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar was Eth. 9 birr and 5 cents. Besides, the price from Moṭṭa to

¹⁷⁰ Ethiopian Herald, December-July 1982.

¹⁷¹ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.18, File No. 17.1.11.18.01, A Letter Written from Yohannes Wolde Girma, Deputy Minister, to Ministry of Interior, Ref No. 3/5155/71/2, Dated 8/7/61 E.C.

¹⁷² Informants: Alehegn Belay, Yeshanbel Abera, and Mergeta Agumas.

¹⁷³ Ayele Tariku, “A History of Hulät Iju Inäsé Wārāda, East Gojjam (1941-1991)” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2011), P. 125.

Däbrä Maqos was Eth. 12 birr.¹⁷⁴ People also traveled to Däbrä Maqos on foot because there were no motor roads connecting Moṭṭa and the provincial capital. The journey took them three to four days. The difficulties of walking, as well as being robbed by robbers at Çoqé Mountain, exacerbated the difficulties the people faced.¹⁷⁵ The following archival document confirms this point: በደብረ ማርቆስ እና ሞጣ አዉራጃ ግዛት አዋሳኝ መካከል ያለዉ ጮቄ የተባለዉ መገናኛ መንገድ ዘወትር የሌባ መደብር እና መቀሚያ ሁኖ ህዝቡ በንግድ አገልግሎት የሚያገኘዉን ጥቅም ለሁልጊዜ ያገደበት መሆኑ ግለፅ ነዉ----.¹⁷⁶ The text, literally translated, could read: “It is clear that the Çoqé road, located on the borders between Däbrä Maqos and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas*, has always been a center of thieves and has always restricted the public’s access to commercial services.....”

Despite Gojjam is being a surplus producing area, peasants have been unable to transport their products through motor roads to faraway market centers, such as Däbrä Maqos, Bahir Dar, and Däjän, to sell at a high price. Hence, they were forced to sell their products in nearby markets at low prices for so long. In particular, perishable fruits were not delivered even to the nearby markets and they were left to decay on the farm land. The absence of motor roads, therefore, results in the isolation of Gojjam from other regions. This in turn slows the economic and social progress of Gojjam.¹⁷⁷ With regard to this, Bairu Tafla states that Gojjam was cut off from other Ethiopian provinces, particularly those south of Abbay, by strong rivers like Abbay. When this River swelled during the rainy season, communication and trade were terminated.¹⁷⁸

Despite pack animal transportation played a significant role in Gojjam, it had certain detrimental consequences for the region’s expansion of modern transportation systems. For instance, people

¹⁷⁴ Informants: Mesfin Admasu, Geremew Yigzaw and Yismaw Limenih.

¹⁷⁵ Ayelew Tariku, “A History of Hulät Iju Inäsé *Wäräda*...,” P. 125.

¹⁷⁶ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.18, File No. 17.1.11.18.01, A Letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to Public Works and Communication, Ref No. 411/ 11, Dated May 20/1952 E.C.

¹⁷⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.

¹⁷⁸ Bairu Tafla, “Two of the Last Provincial Kings of...,” P. 36.

did not give emphasis to roads built with public participation. They were also hesitant to accept the introduction and growth of modern transportation systems because they had relied on pack animal transportation for so long. Furthermore, illegal transactions spread in the peripheral areas of Gojjam as a result of pack animal transportation. Because government regulation of pack animal transportation was impossible, caravan merchants illegally imported and exported trade items such as coffee. The government was unable to collect tribute from illegal caravan merchants. This in turn decreased the national economy and raised inflation rates.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ North-West Region Plan Office, *Studies of Transport and Communication* (Bahir Dar: Social Service Plan Office, 1978), P. 21.

CHAPTER TWO

The Genesis and Historical Development of Highway Construction

2.1. Historical Development of Highway Construction from International Perspective

It is crucial to define the terms road and highway, as well as their categories, from both an international and national perspective before moving on to the origins and development of highway construction. The word road derived from the Latin term *viarupta*, which means open road. However, in its modern sense, a road is an unrestricted path that is used by automobiles, animals, and humans.¹⁸⁰ The word highway is also derived from the early Roman roads, which had a mound or hill in the middle, created by the earth pushed into the center from the side ditches. They were referred to as highways because of their higher elevation.¹⁸¹

Roads can be classified in many ways. For instance, in terms of seasonality, they can be classified as all-weather and dry-weather; based on materials used during construction, they can be categorized as earth and gravel; and on the basis of topography, we can classify them as hill and plain roads.¹⁸² All-weather roads provide transport services throughout the year, but dry-weather roads are not accessible during the rainy season.¹⁸³ Earth roads are built with the available soil at the site. Unlike other types of roads, earth roads are not capital-intensive. They are designed for a few vehicles.¹⁸⁴ As the name indicates, gravel roads are constructed from a mixture of gravel and soil. They are useful for connecting different villages.¹⁸⁵ Hill roads are constructed in hilly areas. Constructing hill roads requires more time and capital compared to

¹⁸⁰ T. Ninouh, "Review of the Roman Roads in Algeria," *International Journal of Social Science and Engineering*, Vol. 7, No. 12 (2013), P. 246.

¹⁸¹ Maxwell Gordon, "Road and Highways," *Journal of Road Technology*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2016), P. 4.

¹⁸² Krishna, "Types of Roads or Classification of Roads," <https://civilread.com/roadtypes/> (accessed December 22, 2021).

¹⁸³ Ethiopian Herald, September-February 1978.

¹⁸⁴ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Yekatit-Ginbot* (February-May) 1972 E.C.

¹⁸⁵ Ethiopian Herald, January-June 1978.

plain roads.¹⁸⁶ Plain roads are constructed on the plain areas. Of these, all-weather, dry-weather, and gravel roads are the common types of roads in Ethiopia.¹⁸⁷

Roads can also be categorized according to their speed and accessibility. Highways, expressways, and freeways fall within this group. Access-controlled highways are another name for freeways. They are wide highways designed for swiftly moving vehicles to cover large distances at high speeds. Freeways are constructed in the standard of four-lane (two lanes in each direction). Expressways are the most advanced form of highways and are built to high speed (120 km/h) vehicles. Such roadways are designed to drive at high speeds and to provide high levels of comfort and safety, free from steep curves, congested traffic intersections, and railway junctions. On expressways, only fast cars are permitted to travel. Highways are the superior type of road in terms of width and speed next to expressways and freeways.¹⁸⁸

The Imperial Highway Authority of Ethiopia classified the Ethiopian road system into three categories. These are the Primary National Highway System, Secondary National Highway System, and Feeder (Tertiary) Roads. Primary national highway systems are the main roads that connect Addis Ababa with provincial capitals, seaports, and peripheral areas. It also connects Addis Ababa with the neighboring African countries. Besides, the national highway connects the principal market, productive, and agricultural centers with Addis Ababa. The Addis Ababa-Assäb highway, which measures 860 kilometers, is a good example. Secondary national highway systems (secondary roads) are the second main roads that interconnect important towns,

¹⁸⁶ Sadanandam Anuppoju, "Classification of Roads and Their Details," <https://theconstructor.org/transportation/> (accessed December 22, 2021).

¹⁸⁷ Fikereyesus Demeke, "Analysis of Road Problems in Ethiopia," *Journal of Transport and Communication*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2016), P. 154.

¹⁸⁸ Belew Dagnaw, "Socio-Economic Impact of Road Development in Ethiopia: Case Study of Gendawuha-Gelego, Mile-Woldiya and Ginchi-Kanchis Roads" (MA Thesis, University of South Africa, Department of Geography, 2016), P. 14.

agricultural, industrial, and marketing regions of Ethiopia. This thesis will focus largely on these types of roads. Feeder (Tertiary) roads provide access to primary and secondary national highways from districts, as well as agricultural, mining, and other production centers.¹⁸⁹

People in the prehistoric era subsisted by engaging in hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild fruits. They followed an old path (the roads of the first generation) to move from place to place on foot in search of food and water. It is debatable whether men first drew and paved these prehistoric pathways or whether they were first used by wild animals.¹⁹⁰ Ancient people started carrying their food and firewood to their shelter on their backs and heads after they built shelters in caves and discovered fire. They gradually came to understand that sleds could be used to drag loads on the ground. As a result, they began to widen and level the old pathway in order to pull loads on the ground.¹⁹¹

The roads of the second generation, the early stone roads, were built in Rome in 312 B.C. The Romans were one of the people of the ancient world who built longest highways.¹⁹² They were also the first people who drew highway designs on paper before doing their practical work. It is worth noting that these road drawings are still found in the national archives of Rome.¹⁹³ The Roman art of highway making and several innovative principles are valuable until modern times.¹⁹⁴ The Ancient Romans built the longest highways (more than 80,000 kms), mainly to transport soldiers, officials, and civilians from one part of the empire to another.¹⁹⁵ Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in 455 AD, their wonderful systems of highways deteriorated due

¹⁸⁹ NALA, Folder No. 1.2.1, File No. 1.2.1.13, Annual Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority.

¹⁹⁰ Anastasios Mouratidis, "on the Track of Road Evolution," *Journal of Infrastructure Development*, Vol.6, No. 1 (2001), P. 2.

¹⁹¹ Andy Schaefer, "History of Roads and Evolution of Transportation," P. 11.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Bert Baldwin, "Some Ancient Modern Roads," *Society American Military Engineers*, Vol. 22, No.121 (1930), P. 11.

¹⁹⁴ Anastasios, "on the Track of Road Evolution....," P.4.

¹⁹⁵ Schaefer, "History of Roads and Evolution of....," P. 11.

to a lack of proper attention.¹⁹⁶ In addition to the Romans, the ancient Chinese, Greeks, Inca, and Maya people were skilled in engineering and highway construction. They built major highway networks known by various names, such as the Silk Road (China), Military Road (Greeks), Royal Highway (Inca), and *Sacbe* (Maya).¹⁹⁷

There was not much development with respect to highway construction between the early stone highway and the modern asphalt highway of the 19th century. This was due to the fact that in the middle ages, new technological developments in highway construction were slowed by the occurrence of epidemic diseases like the Black Death, harsh droughts, feudalism, and fighting between states. In addition, people in medieval Europe thought that building good roads made it easier for invaders to overrun their land.¹⁹⁸ However, the beginning of the industrial revolution accelerated the development of the third generation of roadways (asphalt highways).¹⁹⁹ In many regions of the world, asphalt highway construction and development have accelerated since the turn of the 20th century. For instance, significant highway networks with varied names were built by European nations, such as *autoroutes* (France), *autostrada* (Italy), *autobahns* (Germany), and motorways (Britain).²⁰⁰

In Africa, the evolution and historical development of highway construction are divided into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The pre-colonial period was marked by the low development of highway construction in Africa.²⁰¹ During this period, the ancient Egyptians and the Carthaginians were the pioneers and most remarkable people in the art of highway building.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Steiger, "Roads of the Roman Empire," P. 12.

¹⁹⁷ Asseffa Gessesse, *Transport and Communication in North-West Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1985), P. 4.

¹⁹⁸ Anastasios, "on the Track of the Road..." P. 4.

¹⁹⁹ Ethiopian Herald, September-January 1978.

²⁰⁰ Goh Cheng, *Human and Economic Geography* (Britain: Oxford University Press, 1982), P. 576.

²⁰¹ B.F Tchanche, "A View of Road Transport in Africa," *African Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (2019), P. 296.

The evolution of highway building in Egypt began as early as its known history. The Egyptian pharaohs (kings) and *Fellahin* (Egyptian peasants) realized the significance of highways for civilization. Adam Smith states that “the rulers of ancient Egypt were extremely attentive to the making and maintaining of good roads.”²⁰² During the old kingdom, the ancient Egyptians built one of the world’s oldest known paved highways, called the Giza highway.²⁰³ In addition to the Egyptians, the Carthaginians were also credited with their art of road design and building. The early Carthaginian roads were called *viae vicinalis*.²⁰⁴

Europeans constructed transportation infrastructure during the colonial era, primarily to exploit the continent’s resources. Additionally, they intended to build highways to connect mines and coastal areas so that they could export natural resources to Europe. However, it was generally thought that rail transportation had a comparative advantage over other modes of transportation, particularly highway transportation, for delivering large and bulky items over long distances. As a result, they spent more money on building railways than on highways.²⁰⁵

In the post-colonial period, most African countries planned to integrate all parts of Africa through highway networks. One of the top priorities given by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was to establish socio-economic ties among member states through transport networks. At the meeting held in Kinšasa in 1977, the OAU proclaimed the period from 1978 to 1988 as the “transport and communication periods” for Africa.²⁰⁶ Thus, the Cairo-Gaborone (8,861 kms), Cairo-Dakar (8,636 kms), Lagos-Mombasa (6,349kms), and Algiers-Lagos (4,373kms) highways

²⁰²Herbert Reinhold, “A History of Roads from Ancient Times to the Motor Age” (MA Thesis, University of Georgia, Department of Science and Technology, 1940), P. 32.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, P. 12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, P. 83.

²⁰⁵ Ken Gwillian, *Africa’s Transport Infrastructure* (Washington: Debra Naylor, 2011), PP. 2-4.

²⁰⁶ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Tir-Yekatit* (January-February) 1980 E.C.

were constructed.²⁰⁷ The Cairo-Gaborone Trans-East African highway passes through Mātāma, Azāzo, Dājān, Addis Ababa, Mojjo, Awassa, Dilla, and Yabéllo.²⁰⁸

2.2. The Genesis and Historical Development of Highway Construction in Ethiopia

During the state of Aksum, Ethiopia was a mighty and prosperous state in northeast Africa. A network of caravan trade routes connected its interior with the ports of Adulis, Massawa, and Zäila.²⁰⁹ Therefore, the main paths of ancient Ethiopia were caravan routes and tracks. According to an official report, there were 8,936 kilometers of tracks (not passable for vehicles) and 60,000 caravan paths. Barefooted people, camels, horses, and mules traveled on dust and dirt tracks.²¹⁰ Related to Ethiopian tracks, M. Parkyns describes that “the best road was only a track worn by use and a little larger than sheep paths from the fact of more feet passing over it.”²¹¹ These tracks were not built on purpose, but were cleared and flattened by the constant movement of travelers and their animals, or by the rainy season’s streams.²¹²

However, due to persistent foreign invasions and internal crises, the country became very weak economically and politically. Its active ports and trades were destroyed by the expanding Muslim Arabs. The sea routes that were used to transport items of trade and troops across the Red Sea collapsed. Caravan routes frequently used by caravan merchants to travel from the interior of the kingdom to the ports were reverted to the bush and shrub lands.²¹³

²⁰⁷ Ethiopian Herald, September-June 1975.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, September-June 1976.

²⁰⁹ Ethiopian Mapping Authority, *National Atlas of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1988), P. 33.

²¹⁰ Tegegne Worku, “Ethiopia and its Press” (MA Thesis, Boston University, Department of Public Relation and Communication, 1959), P. 34.

²¹¹ Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia*, 2nd edition (London: Albemarle, 1868), P. 92.

²¹² Richard Pankhurst, “Transport and Communication in Ethiopia, 1835-1935,” *the Journal of Transport History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1961), P. 72.

²¹³ Ethiopian Mapping Authority, *National Atlas of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1988), P. 33.

Even though the medieval era saw a recovery in economic prosperity, internal strife and outside invasions hindered the growth of interregional connections between the interior and the coast. This circumstance might have discouraged efforts to construct and expand transportation networks.²¹⁴ According to Perkyns, “the utmost labor bestowed on any road in this country is when a traveler, vexed with a thorn that may happen to scratch his face, draws his sword and cuts off the spray. Even this is rarely done.”²¹⁵ Although both monarchs and local lords attempted to construct certain roads, the task of road construction at the time was done with concern for their strategic relevance rather than their economic value. While they traveled from place to place, kings and their subjects cleared the area of stones, brush, and vegetation. They constructed dirt roads in this manner, earning the name “king’s roads.”²¹⁶ The classic examples of the king’s roads were those that ran from Adwa to Abi Adi, from Abi Adi to Däbrä Tabor, and from Abi Adi to Ašängé.²¹⁷

In Ethiopia, the genesis of modern highway construction dates back to the second half of the 19th century, which followed the formation and consolidation of the modern Ethiopian empire. Emperor Tewodros II (r.1855-68) was the first to build an embryonic highway network in the northern part of the country.²¹⁸ As Theophi Waldamier describes, to civilize his country, Emperor Tewodros II was eager to make good roads with the help of European workmen.²¹⁹ Even if Ethiopia had not a motor car during the period, King Tewodros II had a strong desire to connect all parts of Ethiopia through highway networks. The Emperor, having made Däbrä Tabor his

²¹⁴ Ethiopian Mapping Authority, *National Atlas of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1988), P. 34.

²¹⁵ Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia*...., P. 92.

²¹⁶ Ethiopian Mapping Authority, *National Atlas of Ethiopia*...., P. 34.

²¹⁷ Richard Pankhurst, “Transport and Communication in Ethiopia...,” P. 72.

²¹⁸ Mattia Bertazzini, “the Long Term Impact of Italian Colonial Roads in the Horn of Africa, 1935-2000,” *Journal of Economic History*, No. 272 (2018), P. 52.

²¹⁹ Theophil Waldamier, *the Autobiography of Theophilus Waldamier: Being an Account of Ten Years Life in Abyssinia and Syria* (London: S.W Partridge and Co.nd, 1890), P. 73.

base, attempted to connect Däbrä Tabor with Gondär, Gojjam, and Mäqdäla through highways. He also dreamt of interconnecting each town within his sphere of influence with feeder roads.²²⁰

Richard Pankhurst, however, asserts that his motive was limited in extent and was based more on strategy than economic terms.²²¹ Referring the works of Consul Plowden, Tadesse Beyene also states that Emperor Tewodros II was regarded as pioneer in the field of building roads, which had been rare in Ethiopian history up until his time. Like other great road builders in other states, his primary motive was military considerations, specifically the necessity to move his troops and cannon swiftly from one part of the country to another.²²² Despite Tewodros's greatest contribution was the creation of a competent and disciplined state army, he was also a forerunner in the history of Ethiopian road construction. He understood the strategic and political significances of roads in extending the northern highland empire.²²³

Emile Jonvawks, who made an extensive visit to Ethiopia, met the Emperor for the first time while he was preparing himself to pave the road. He also recalls that the Emperor was clothed very simply and handled a pickaxe and a hammer like his workmen to be an example and encourage them.²²⁴ With the help of Protestant workmen's mission, the Emperor began the construction of the country's first embryonic road network, to connect Däbrä Tabor with Gondar, Gojjam, and Mäqdäla.²²⁵ As Sven Ruben Son describes, with his European artisans, the Emperor selected the best slope for the road. With his own hands, he was removing the stone and leveling

²²⁰ Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Tewodros (Emperor Tewodros)* (Addis Ababa: Yorika Printing Press, 1985), PP. 168-169.

²²¹ Ethiopian Herald, September-December 1979.

²²² Richard Pankhurst, *Kasa and Kasa: Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV (1855-1889)*, edited by Tadesse Byene et al (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1990), PP. 134-136.

²²³ Emmenegger Romy, *the Roads of Decentralization: The History of Rural Roads in Ethiopia* (Switzerland: Swiss Peace Press, 2012), P. 12.

²²⁴ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem* (September) 1973 E.C.

²²⁵ Paulos Gno Gno, *Ate Tewodros....*, PP. 168-169.

the ground.²²⁶ Day and night, his subjects dig and level the ground. With regard to this, referring to Henry Blanc, Richard Pankhurst states the following:

*Twodros's courage and determination as a road builder in the last months of his reign, when he was engaged in transporting his cannon from Däbrä Tabor to the mountain citadel of Mäqdäla, was later described by Henry Blanc, who though one of the Emperor's British captives, wrote with admiration that "from early dawn to late at night Tewodros was himself at work; with his own hand he removed stones, leveled the ground, or helped to fill up small ravines. No one could leave so long as he was there himself; no one could think of eating, drinking, or of rest, while the Emperor showed the example and shared hardships." Describing the country traversed by the road in the vicinity of Mäqdäla, Blanc adds: "the work now before him would have driven any other man to despair.... He went, however, steadily to work. Little by little he made a road, creditable even European engineer."*²²⁷

The preceding discussion implies that Emperor Tewodros II motivated to construct highways in northern Ethiopia primarily for strategic and political objectives. To facilitate the highway building, the Emperor himself engaged in the construction work with his subjects.²²⁸

As *Aläqa* Zeneb states, the missionaries such as Sandal, Waldamier, Bender, and Kintsle played a key role in the construction of the king's road. For instance, the Bétähara road was constructed under the responsibility of Salmuler Sandal. However, he complained to the Emperor that no one had assisted him in building the road. As a result, angered by the little contribution of the local people, the Emperor imprisons the then *misläné* of Dälanta, Yimer Godana. On the other hand, satisfied with Salmuler's effort, the Emperor rewarded him with the mule that he had served (the king's mule) and 1000 Maria Theresa Taller. Furthermore, the Emperor rewarded 600 Maria Theresa Tallers to Waldmier, Bender, and

²²⁶ Seven Ruben Son, *the Survival of Ethiopian Independence* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1976), P. 256.

²²⁷ Richard Pankhurst, *a Social History of Ethiopia: Northern and Central Highlands from Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor Tewodros II* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1990), PP. 326-327.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

Kintsle, those who were constructing the road of Čäçäho.²²⁹ Concerning this point, referring to the works of Consul Plowden, Richard Pankhurst states the following:

*An early glimpse of his activity as a road builder is afforded by consul plowden, who, in his report of March 1859, noted that the Ethiopian ruler was employing some Europeans in road making, and paid them handsomely for their work as he said that he could only succeed in conquering all his foes by making wide roads, that he may pass with his army rapidly from one point to another.*²³⁰

After hearing the British army was approaching Mäqdäla, Emperor Tewodros facilitated the construction of the Gafat-Mäqdäla highway.²³¹ The total length of this highway was 320 kilometers. Moving the cannon (800 kg) to Mäqdäla began on September 28, 1867.²³² Some parts of his army had to construct the road for the wagons while others were engaged in dragging the cannon.²³³ The Emperor himself worked hard and encouraged the whole army to drag the heavy pieces of artillery (Sebastopol).²³⁴ After seven months of challenging and exhaustive travel, Sebastopol was eventually reached at Mäqdäla. According to the views of Paulos, the surveying of the Gafat-Mäqdäla highway was remarkable. He visited the highway, covered with shrubs and deteriorated by the flood.²³⁵ Besides, Captain Hozier describes Tewodros's road to Mäqdäla as "a grand feat of rude engineering; rocks had been hurled aside or blasted through at an immense expense of

²²⁹Debtera Zeneb, *Ye Tewodros Tarik* (the Chronicle of King Theodore of Abyssinia edited from the Berlin Manuscripts with Translation and Notes by Enno Littman) (New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1902), PP. 326-327.

²³⁰ Richard Pankhurst, *a Social History of Ethiopia...*, P. 326.

²³¹ Theophil Waldamier, *the Autobiography of...*, P. 102.

²³² Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Tewodros...*, P. 165.

²³³Fantahun Ayele, "Revisiting History of Gafat: Was Emperor Tewodros's Military Reform an Attempt at "Translative Adaption" of Western Technology," *African Journal History and Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 4(2016), P. 28.

²³⁴ Theophil Waldamier, *the Autobiography of...*, P.102.

²³⁵ Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Tewodros...*, P. 165.

labor and time.”²³⁶ Markham also states that Tewodros’s road was “a most remarkable work, a monument of dogged and unconquerable resolution.”²³⁷



Figure 1: Emperor Tewodros II during the construction of the road. Source: Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Tewodros*, p. 170.

The British military expedition to Mäqdäla was engaged in the construction of the highway that extends from Zäila to Mäqdäla. This highway radiates from Zäila and passes through Sänafé, Adigrat, Antalo, and ends at Mäqdäla. The first hundred miles of this highway (from Zäila to Adigrat) were described by Markham as “an excellent first-class fair-weather road, suited for cart traffic.” According to Stanley, no fewer than 600 carts were moving on this fair-weather road. Despite the road from Adigrat to Anṭalo being of lesser quality, it was used to transport heavy artillery by wheel vehicle.²³⁸

²³⁶ Henry Hozier, *the British Expedition to Abyssinia* (London: Macmillan, 1869), P. 178.

²³⁷ Richard Pankhurst, *a Social History of Ethiopia...*, p. 326.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, *Economic History of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1968), P. 287.

Emperor Yohannis IV, who succeeded Emperor Tewodros II, made little attempt in the task of road building. Relatively little road building seems to have taken place during the reign of king Yohannes IV. As I noted above, like the medieval Europeans, the Emperor also believed that the construction of the roads opened ways for enemies to invade Ethiopia. Rather, the Emperor was more interested in church building than road construction.²³⁹

However, the development of the Ethiopian highway system, both in terms of quality and coverage, showed meaningful improvements under Emperor Menelik II (r.1889-1913) and Emperor Haile Selassie I (r.1930-1974). They considered modern transport networks as a fundamental means to consolidate their power over the Ethiopian empire.²⁴⁰

2.3. Attempts of Highway Construction in Ethiopia under Emperor Menelik II

Emperor Menelik placed a strong emphasis on the modernization of Ethiopia following the Battle of Adwa. One of his efforts was directed toward the expansion of highway communication across Ethiopia. Emperor Menelik II, who established the modern Ethiopian empire, planned the construction of highways and roads in Ethiopia.²⁴¹ The Emperor had a clear goal and vision to connect Ethiopia through a network of highways.²⁴² With regard to this, Richard Pankhurst states the following:

Emperor Menelik as true child of the 19th century was almost inevitably a road building monarchy, and in his determination to get things done would himself often put "stone shoulder." It was by no means unusual for the

²³⁹Seid Husen, "A History of Road Construction in Wollo/1936-2015" (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2017), P. 16.

²⁴⁰ Mattia Bertazzini, "the Long-Term Impact of Italian ...," P. 52.

²⁴¹ Merse Hazen Welde Qirqos, *Ye Hayagnaw Kifle Zemen Mebacha (the Beginning of the Twentieth Century)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1960), PP. 21-22.

²⁴² Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Menelik (Emperor Menelik)* (Addis Ababa: Bole Printing Press, 1984), P. 345.

*Emperor to get off his mule and set an example by himself participating in road construction.*²⁴³

Emperor Menelik II gave the captured Italian army members the task of constructing the highway that would connect Addis Ababa with the country's northern regions after the Ethiopians defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa. As a result, the highway connecting the Eritrean border with Addis Ababa was built in 1903. Wylde saw "Many hard at work blasting rock and improving the road from the Eritrean frontier to Addis Ababa." He adds that the track was "fairly wide and level and that the boulders and rocks had been blasted away, the debris being built up as a low wall on the precipice side."²⁴⁴ The Emperor started building the road from Addis Ababa to Addis Alām in 1902.²⁴⁵ As Merse Hazen Wolde Qirqos describes, the two Italian engineers, Muse Kastegna and Tiente Bandi, were the surveyors of this road. After the end of the surveying, large numbers of the local people (Šāwan peasants) were ordered by the Emperor to engage in the construction of the road.²⁴⁶ They ordered them to come from a far distance, which took a distance of six days' journey. Thus, thousands of peasants traveled to the project with their food. With great courage and determination, the people paved the road, chipping the stone with traditional tools. As a result, they called that period "a period of stone chipping."²⁴⁷ It is worth noting that, to break large rocks into pieces, the Emperor burnt the rock and poured water over it.²⁴⁸

However, the local people suffered and wasted much of their time on road construction. Realizing this problem, the Emperor decided to construct this road by employing large numbers of daily laborers. In return for the payment of daily laborers, the Emperor ordered the local

²⁴³ Richard Pankhurst, "Transport and Communication in Ethiopia.....," P. 76.

²⁴⁴ Richard Pankhurst, "Transport and Communication in Ethiopia.....," P. 77.

²⁴⁵ Belew Dagnaw, "Socio Economic Impact of Road Development in.....," P. 3.

²⁴⁶ Merse Hazen Welde Qirqos, *the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*....., PP. 21-22

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, P. 21.

²⁴⁸ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Meskerem* (September) 1978 E.C.

people to contribute one birr per ox.²⁴⁹ In this way, within three months, the Emperor completed the construction of the Addis Ababa-Addis Alām road, which measured 56 kilometers.²⁵⁰

As Harold describes, people used this road as a resort during the rainy season.²⁵¹ Furthermore, the construction of this road was soon followed by the introduction of the first automobile to Ethiopia in 1908. The vehicle was brought from Britain by a driver named Mr. Bentley. During his travels, Bentley convinced Menelik that he needed a very strong kind of vehicle that could withstand the long trip and unfavorable road conditions since there was no modern paved road in the country at that time. Thus, in 1912, Emperor Menelik II imported the first roller (stone crushers) for paving modern roads, which operated with steam energy.²⁵² “No fewer than 800 were at one time seen pulling a giant road-flattening machine, and singing as they worked under the direction of their chiefs.”²⁵³ In line with this, Clifford also states that “though it was nearly sunset, there were still huge bodies of men at work on the road, and in the center of the nearest mass they could make out what was either a traction engine or steam roller.”²⁵⁴ Then, a modern road was built from the palace to Enṭoṭo Gänät and the British embassy. In 1915, other motor vehicles were imported to Ethiopia from Germany and Britain.²⁵⁵

Menelik’s provincial governors were active in road building too. For instance, Menelik’s cousin, Ras Mekonnen, the governor of Harar province, was notable as a pioneer of road building.²⁵⁶ He

²⁴⁹ Paulos Gno Gno, *Atse Menelik...*, P. 345.

²⁵⁰ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Meskerem* (September) 1978 E.C; Harold G. Marcus, *the Life and the Times of Menelik II Ethiopia, 1844-1913* (Britain: Oxford University Press, 1975), P. 200.

²⁵¹ Harold G. Marcus, *the Life and Times of Menelik...*, P. 200.

²⁵² Temesgen Aklilu, “the Role of Transport Sector in Ethiopia’s Economic Development,” *Ethiopian Economic Association*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2006), P.19.

²⁵³ Richard Pankhurst, “Transport and Communication in Ethiopia...,” P. 77.

²⁵⁴ Clifford Halle, *To Menelik A Motor Car* (London: Paternoster, 1913), P. 246.

²⁵⁵ Temesgen Aklilu, “the Role of Transport...,” P. 19.

²⁵⁶ Kiros Habte Selassie and Mazengia Dina, *Ethiopia: A Short Illustrated History* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Press, 1969), P. 127

was responsible for the construction of Dire Dawa-Harar road, which measures 56 kilometers.²⁵⁷ The French engineer, Skinner, was the surveyor of this road. During the surveying, the local people complained that their farm would be destroyed and the project would not take place. However, realizing the significance of this road, *Ras Mekonnen* rejected the appeal and dismissed the petitioners. To prevent any attack from the local people, *Ras Mekonnen* employed large numbers of guards for road workers.²⁵⁸ Dire Dawa-Harar road was admired by all travelers who saw it. For instance, Skinner describes it as an “excellent piece of work,” while Boyes calls it a “beautiful road, cut out of the rock and broad enough for a wagon.” Jennings and Addison specifically contrasted this road with the modern French road built by Macadam. Several other provincial governors attempted to construct roads in their respective regions during the reign of Emperor Menelik II.²⁵⁹ The Emperor, however, was unable to accelerate road and highway building outside of Addis Ababa because of the shortage of funding. His attempt was only limited in the capital. As a result, up until the end of his reign, highway development and extension did not succeed as planned. Throughout the country, camels, mules, and horses continued to be used as the main transportation systems. Highway construction was carried out with greater magnitude under the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasie I.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷Kiros Habite Selassie and Mazengia Dina, *Ethiopia: A Short...*, P.126.

²⁵⁸ Pankhurst, “Transport and Communication...,”P. 78.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid, Economic History of Ethiopia...*, P. 289.

²⁶⁰ Ethiopian Herald, February-June 1978.



Figure 2: The surveying of Addis Ababa-Addis Alām road. Source: Merse Hazen Welde Qirqos, *the beginning of the twentieth century: From what I saw and heard from my memory of history*, p. 22)



Figure 3: Addis Ababa-Addis Alām road under construction. Source: Geoffry Last and Pankhurst, *a History of Ethiopia in Pictures*, p. 44.

2.4. Highway Construction and Expansion in Ethiopia under Emperor Haile Selassie I

Emperor Haile Selassie I realized the importance of highway construction to a secure and centralized state before his coronation as Emperor of Ethiopia.²⁶¹ Besides, under his reign, highway construction was given special emphasis as he realized the significance of highways to

²⁶¹ Hari Atikns, *Ye Ethiopia Tarik (History of Ethiopia)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1960), P. 38.

connect provinces with Addis Ababa.²⁶² Beyond the political implications, his motive for highway construction was to facilitate commerce in Ethiopia.²⁶³ Hence, under the concession of *Ras Teferi* and Empress Zewditu, a Greek, Angelo Danalis, founded the Ethiopian Motor Car Transport Company in 1917.²⁶⁴ Besides, Emperor Haile Selassie I instituted the Ministry of Public Transport in 1930 and promoted more structured road-building plans. This institution is aimed at connecting Addis Ababa with provinces through highway transport networks. The establishment of the Ministry of Public Transport was a significant step for the expansion of highway construction in the country.²⁶⁵

Despite the prevailing financial difficulties aggravated by the worldwide economic crisis caused by the great depression in the 1930s, the regent intensified his highway construction under the responsibility of different foreign engineers. For instance, in 1927, the Mätu-Goré-Gambéla (956 km) dry weather highway was constructed under the responsibilities of the two Greeks, Zervos and Danalis. In eastern Ethiopia, the old *Ras Mekonnen* Dire Dawa-Harar road was repaired between 1928 and 1932 with the assistance of foreign engineers and an American grading machine. This road was later extended to the Somalian port of Bärbara by way of Jigjiga and Hargésa.²⁶⁶ The Addis Ababa-Fičä-Blue Nile (170 kms) highway was also paved and opened for motor traffic.²⁶⁷ In addition, the Addis Ababa-Dässé (400 kms) dry weather highway was built and opened for motor traffic. This highway was constructed under the responsibility of engineer

²⁶²Hawi Tilahun, “the Ethiopian State Perennial Challenges in the Struggle for Development” (MA Thesis, Macalester College, Department of International Studies, 2016), P. 83.

²⁶³ Harold G. Marcus, *Haile Selassie I: the Formative Years, 1892-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), P.133.

²⁶⁴ Chrisprouty and Eugene Rosenefeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia and Eritrea*, 2nd edition (London: the Scare Crow Press, 1981), P.303.

²⁶⁵ Mattia C, Bertazzini, “the Long-Term Impact of Italian Colonial Roads....,” P. 52.

²⁶⁶Ayele Tarekegn, “the History of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1951-1981” (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1987), P. 3.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, P. 4.

Ayana Birru of Wäläga.²⁶⁸ Addis Ababa is also connected with the provinces of Balé by a dry-weather highway (300 kms), which passes through Arsi.²⁶⁹ The Addis Ababa-Jimma (310 kms) dry-weather highway was also constructed under the responsibility of the German engineer, David Hol. The first 176 kilometers of this highway were well constructed and opened for motor traffic. But, up to the Italian invasion, the construction of this highway was not completed.²⁷⁰

In addition, Ambo-Gédéwo-Näqämit (213 kms), Addis Ababa-Diré Dawa (470 kms), Mojjo-Ššašämäné-Yirga Aläm (226 kms), Adola-Wadra-Nägälé (119 kms), Nägälé-Filtu-Dolo (351 kms), Assäla-Balé (256 kms), Jigjiga-Dägahbur (160 kms), and Dägahbur-Qarahi (217 kms), all gravel highways were paved during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I.²⁷¹

At the time of the Italian occupation, there were approximately 6,326 kilometers of roads. Of these, the Ethiopian highways accounted for 4,148 kilometers.²⁷² This figure did not include roads in Eritrea since it was under Italian rule during that period.²⁷³ Before the Italian invasion, the only Ethiopian all-weather road was the Addis Ababa-Addis Aläm (56 kms) stone road. The rest were dry-weather roads, and they were difficult for vehicle transport during the rainy season.²⁷⁴ The following map shows the principal Ethiopian dry-weather (not usable in the rainy season) gravel highways, which were built prior to the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia, 1935-1941.

²⁶⁸ *Ye Zaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Ginbot* (September-May) 1973 E.C.

²⁶⁹ Ethiopian Herald, January-May 1988.

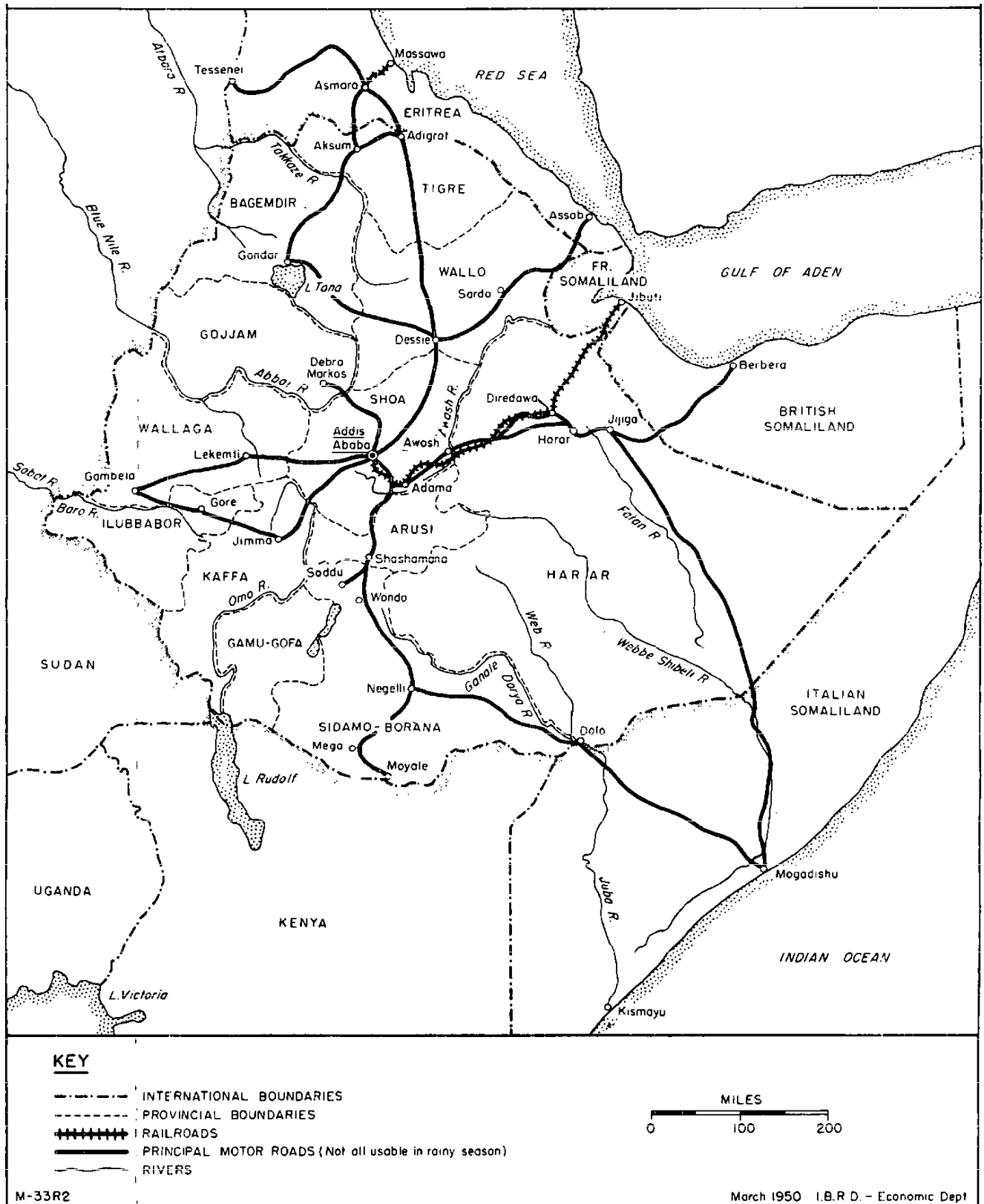
²⁷⁰ *Ye Zaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Ginbot* (September-May) 1973 E.C.

²⁷¹ Mahiteme Selassie Wolde Mesqel, *Zikre Neger* (literally. *Oral and Written Legacies* [of Historic Ethiopia's]) (Addis Ababa: Artistic Press, 1939), PP. 434-436.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Appraisal of a Fourth Highway Project in Ethiopia*, Report No. To-597a, November 24, 1967, P. 6.

²⁷⁴ J.Baker, "Developments in Ethiopia's Road System," *Geographical Association*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (1974), P. 150.



Map 2: Ethiopian highways built prior to 1935. Source: Technical Report on Road Rehabilitation Project in Ethiopia, July 19, 1950, p. 12.

2.5. Highway Construction and Expansion in Ethiopia during the Italian Invasion

Fascist Italy gave priority to the rapid expansion of the country's transport system in different parts of the country. The construction of highways was necessary to suppress the resistance of Ethiopian patriots and speed up their invasion.²⁷⁵ Even if it was not well developed until 1934, highway construction in the Italian colony of Eritrea began in the late 19th century.²⁷⁶ Related to this problem, Marshal Badoglio said that "we had to give two thousand blows with a pick for each blow with gun."²⁷⁷ Furthermore, Emilio De Bono, who visited Eritrea in 1932 to investigate the military preparations, states the following:

*All the roads, including the main artery from Massawa to Asmara, could not be classed, according to our ideas, as practicable for mechanical traffic. True, they were used by a few score of motor-cars which represented the normal traffic; but not one of the roads was asphalted, all had dangerous turns and steep gradients, while only certain stretches were wide enough for vehicles to pass.*²⁷⁸

Since 1934, however, highway construction in Eritrea has begun on a large scale for the purpose of colonial conquest. The process of highway building both in Eritrea and Ethiopia had three main phases. The first phase was in Eritrea between November 1934 and October 1935; the second, from October 1935 to May 1936, in the course of the invasion to proceed southwards from Eritrea; and the third, from May 1936 to June 1940.²⁷⁹

In the first phase, three strategic roads were built that led to the Ethiopian frontier, radiating from south of Asmara. The first road leads to Sänafé via Däcamäré, Saganäiti, and Adi Qaieh; the second road runs to May Aini via Gura; and the third road leads to Adi Quala via Asmara and Adiugri. Badoglio describes these roads as "not so much real roads as rough tracks, unsuitable,

²⁷⁵ Ayele Tarekgn, "the History of the Imperial Highway Authority...", P. 5.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, P. 6.

²⁷⁷ Walter E. Lorence, "the Italian Campaign in Northern Ethiopia," *Society of American Military Engineers*, Vol. 29, No. 166 (1937), P. 277.

²⁷⁸ Richard Pankhurst, "Road Building during the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941)," *African Quarterly*, Vol. 3 (1976), P. 22.

²⁷⁹ Ayele Tarekgn, "the History of the Imperial Highway Authority...", P. 6.

both in surface and foundation, for motor traffic.” He was not also satisfied with the native road workers. Thus, 50,000 Italian, 2000 Yämanite, Libyan, and Sudanese laborers arrived at Asmara to engage in the construction of the Massawa-Näfasit-Däkämäharé (135 km) highway.²⁸⁰ This asphalted highway, with 8 large and 535 small bridges, cost the Italians 105,000,000 lire. The construction of this highway was completed and opened for traffic on September 16, 1934.²⁸¹ A road linking Näfasit with Asmara, named later by fascists as “the road of Dogali,” was also built. All the aforementioned highways and roads were built by the two Italian road-building firms called *Societa Italiana Construzion Dlayori Publici* (S.I.C.E.L.P) and *Puricelli*.²⁸² Furthermore, the Italian army was involved in road building operations, and their efforts ultimately constructed the Sänafé-Baraqit-Gongon road and the May Aini-Bälläs-Enda Giyorgis-Märäb highway. The former was strategic road to convey the invading force to Adigrat, whereas the latter was designed to launch an assault on Adwa.²⁸³

All the above highways were built at the time of hasty preparation for the colonial conquest. An extreme shortage of labor was the major problem encountered the Italians in this phase of highway construction.²⁸⁴

After the colonial conquest began on October 3, 1935, highway construction operation followed the footsteps of the invading force. Hence, paved roads would allow easier and swifter passage of reinforcements and supplies. Immediately, the Italians built the Sänafé-Adigrat and Adiquala-Adwa roads. Later, Badoglio, who replaced De Bono on November 30, 1935, intensified the construction of these two roads. These roads constituted the main lines of entry into Ethiopia.

²⁸⁰ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

²⁸¹ Ayele Tarekegn, “the History of the Imperial Highway Authority....,” P. 7.

²⁸² Imperial Highway Authority, *A Proposal for National Highway Planning Study* (unpublished material), PP. 5-6.

²⁸³ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

²⁸⁴ ERA, *Road Development and Expansion in Ethiopia* (unpublished material), P. 9.

Therefore, Sänafe-Adigrat-Ambalage and Adiquala-Adwa-Sälaklaka-Halda roads were built. Furthermore, the three less important ones, May Aini-Enticho-Adwa-Abbi Addi-Gaela highway in the center front; Adwa-Adi Rassi road in the west; and Enda Takäla Haymanot-Hawzien-Addis Zubbana-Waru highway in the east front, were built. Dässé-Addis Ababa gravel highway, which paved prior to the Italian invasion also asphalt surfaced.²⁸⁵

At this stage of road construction, the Italians gave primary attention to the quantity rather than the quality of roads. Another characteristic feature of the road program in this phase was that the soldiers on the campaign constituted the principal labor force.²⁸⁶ 200,000 daily laborers were estimated to be engaged in the task of road building in this phase of road construction.²⁸⁷ The above mentioned roads and highways played a major role in the campaign that enabled the fascist aggressors to occupy Addis Ababa on May 5, 1936.²⁸⁸



Figure 4: sphalting of Addis Ababa-Dässé highway. (Andrew, "Infrastructural Propogand..," P. 362)

²⁸⁵ Richard Pankhurst, "Road Building during the Italian Fascist...," P. 32.

²⁸⁶ Ethiopian Herald, December- March 1977.

²⁸⁷ Abadi Mesele, "Road Construction Development in Ethiopia up to 1984" (BA Degree, Addis Ababa University, Department of Geography, 1985), P. 13.

²⁸⁸ Ayele Tarekegn, "the History of the Imperial Highway Authority....," P. 8.

With the occupation of Addis Ababa, Mussolini immediately stated that the priority in the newly occupied empire was building extensive highway networks as quickly as possible. The following main problems motivated him. Firstly, peripheral towns like Goré were out of control due to the impossibility of moving troops efficiently. Secondly, the major cities of the empire, such as Gondar, Harar, Diré Dawa, and even Addis Ababa, were isolated during the rainy season. Thirdly, the Italians needed to transport supplies and reinforcements from place to place efficiently. Subsequently, fascist Italy built the following remarkable and longest highways.²⁸⁹

The Addis Ababa-Asmara (1093 kms) highway, with 76 large and 1,953 small bridges and 4 tunnels, was asphalted at an aggregate cost of 51,560,000 Italian lire.²⁹⁰ Fascist Italy employed 938,813 native and 360,177 Italian daily laborers to build this highway.²⁹¹ This north-south axis was named by the fascists as “the road of victory.” It was considered the most significant highway in the empire, over all other Italian highways.²⁹² Indeed, the British traveler, Fannin, describes this highway as “a super feat of engineering which can rank with any in Europe.”²⁹³ Likewise, the Addis Ababa-Kombolča highway, with 52 large and 1,347 small bridges, as well as 3 tunnels, was constructed at an aggregate cost of 30,000,000 lire. Of the three tunnels, the longest was 703 meters long. At the time, Italians named this tunnel “the Tunnel of Mussolini.”²⁹⁴ To build this highway, the Italians employed 265,000 native and 480,000 white laborers.²⁹⁵ The first bus was introduced to Addis Ababa on May 21, 1937, and began its

²⁸⁹ Mattia Bertazzini, “the Long-Term Impact of Italian Colonial Roads ...,” P. 53.

²⁹⁰ Ayele Tarekegn, “the History of Imperial Highway Authority (IHA),” P.10.

²⁹¹ Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building during the Italian Fascist Occupation...,” P. 46.

²⁹² *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

²⁹³ Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building during the Italian Fascist Occupation...,” P. 46.

²⁹⁴ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

²⁹⁵ Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building during the Italian Fascist Occupation...,” P. 46.

transport service for the first time through this highway. It was mainly foreigners who traveled on this bus. But, Ethiopians traveled by Lorries loaded with commodities.²⁹⁶



Figure 5: Asmāra-Addis Ababa highway under construction. Source: Andrew, “Infrastructural propaganda...,” P. 353.



Figure 6: Mussolini Tunnel (now Tarma Bär). Source: Marco Antonsich, “Signs of Power: Fascist Urban Iconographies in Ethiopia (1930s-1940s),” p. 333.

²⁹⁶ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

In northwest Ethiopia, another strategic highway was built to connect Asmara with Gondar via Limalimo and Däbarq. Since this highway traverses difficult terrain like the Tākāzzé valley and Limalimo gorge, the construction needs extensive blasting (explosion of rocks). Guiglia sates that the builders “practically had to blast their way through solid rocks and in some places, had to work suspended by ropes over steep cliffs.” The correspondent of *The Times* also describes this highway as “the greatest engineering feat in the empire”, for the track had “to climb the sheer face of a mountain of over 7,000 feet.” The Italians spent 10,503,000 lire for maintenance and 29,043,000 lire for the construction of this highway. Besides, 216,536 native and 210,319 Italian laborers were engaged in the construction of this highway. This highway had 21 large and 1,193 small bridges in Eritrea and 52 large and 686 small bridges in Gondar.²⁹⁷

In the south-east of Gondar, the Italians linked Gondar with Assäb via Dässé and Däbrä Tabor. Construction takes place in both Gondar and Dässé ends. The construction on the side of Gondar costs 22,000,000 lire, and 235,437 Italian and 102,250 native laborers are involved in the project. On the side of Dässé, however, the construction cost was 15,000,000 lire, and 740,000 native and 250,000 Italian workers were engaged in the construction.²⁹⁸ However, due to repeated patriotic resistance, the construction of this highway was not completed.²⁹⁹

Several pre-war highways already integrating Addis Ababa with south-western and south-eastern provinces were also improved and extended to consolidate the capital’s communication with these provinces and to bring most parts of the new empire under effective military rule. For instance, the Addis Ababa-Addis Aläm road was extended to Näqämt via the town of Bako. After Näqmit, this highway leads to Yubdo town via Haru districts. This highway was paved

²⁹⁷ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ethiopian Herald*, February-April 1982.

with five wooden bridges. Likewise, the former Addis Ababa-Jimma highway was completed and improved between December 1936 and October 1938. The old Addis Ababa-Nazrét (now Adama) road, which passes through Akaki, Dukam, Däbrä Zäyit (now Bišofitu), and Mojo was also repaired.³⁰⁰

To the southeast of Addis Ababa, efforts were also undertaken to improve the former paved highways and roads. For instance, the old Menelik's road between Harar and Dire Dawa was improved with four large and five small bridges between February and March 1937 at a cost of 30,000,000 lire. 2000 natives, 750 Italian laborers, and 250 soldiers were involved in the reconstruction of this road. The pre-war track from Jigjiga to Harar was also upgraded between February and October 1937 at the expense of 18,000,000 lire. This old track was upgraded by 2000 Italian workers.³⁰¹ The last highway construction undertaken by fascist Italy was the Assäb-Dässé (535 km) highway. This highway, with 80 large and 1,504 small bridges and 36 long tunnels, was constructed between December and July 1939 at a cost of 915,000,000 lire.³⁰² 15,685 native and 1,354 foreign daily laborers were involved in the construction of this highway. Since this highway passed through the Danakil desert, Italians named it the "Dankalia highway."³⁰³ The construction of this highway enables Addis Ababa and the southern and southeastern regions to have easy access to the Red Sea coast.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

³⁰¹ Richard Pankhurst, "Road Building the Italian fascist Occupation....," P. 51.

³⁰² Abadi Mesele, "Road Construction Development in Ethiopia up to...," P.17.

³⁰³ Richard Pankhurst, "Road Building the Italian fascist Occupation....," P. 53.

³⁰⁴ Abadi Mesele, "Road Construction Development in Ethiopia up to...," P.17.



Figure 7: Assäb-Dässé highway under construction. Source: Andrew Denning, “Infrastructural Propaganda: the Visual Culture of Colonial Roads and the Domestication of Nature in Italian East Africa....,” P. 365.



Figure 8: Labor based highway construction by Italians. Source: Antonsich, “Sign of power: fascist urban iconographies in Ethiopia (1930s-1940s)...,” p. 333.



Figure 9 : Machine intensive highway construction by fascist Italy. Source: Seid Husen, “the History of road construction in Wällo...,” p. 33.

In June 1940, Italy entered the Second World War on the side of Axis forces. The Italian highway construction project in Ethiopia was terminated as a result of this occurrence.³⁰⁵ In just five years, fascist Italy constructed more than 4,400 kilometers of highways and 8,334 bridges. To construct these highways and bridges, the Italians expended 2, 967, 300, 000 lire, or 32, 970, 000 pounds.³⁰⁶ They sought to use highway networks to connect major Ethiopian towns with peripheral areas. The most notable legacy that fascist Italy left behind in Ethiopia was the construction of highways and bridges. Therefore, the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia might be seen as a turning point in the history of highway development and expansion in the country.³⁰⁷

In the spring of 1941, however, realizing that their defeat was inevitable, Fascist Italy embarked on an extensive program of sabotage and destruction on their strategic roads. A British officer, Lawrence, describes the bridge over Awaš “one of the most imposing sights imaginable, as

³⁰⁵ Paulos Gno Gno, *Ye Ethiopia Ena Ye Italian Torinet (Italo-Ethiopian War)* (Addis Ababa: Bole Printing Press, 1980), P. 122.

³⁰⁶ Lapiso Gedebebo, *Ye Ethiopia Gebar Sirat Ena Gimir Capitalism (Ethiopian Gebar System and Startup Capitalism)* (Addis Ababa: Nigid Printing Press, 1983 E.C), P. 68.

³⁰⁷ Ethiopian Herald, March- August 1978.

blown by the Italians.” Besides, the post-war Ethiopian publication, the *Ethiopian Review*, reported that “the enemy had systematically destroyed all-important bridges in the course of its incessant retreats.” Likewise, Christian Sandford, a British observer, describes that “broken bridges and abandoned transport met the eye wherever one went.”³⁰⁸



Figure 10 : Awaš Bridge destroyed by Fascist Italy. Source: Paulos Gno Gno, *Italo- Ethiopian War*, p. 216.

Immediately after independence, rehabilitating the relatively extensive roads that fascist Italy had constructed at great expense was a heavy burden for the restored Imperial regime. There was an urgent need to reconstruct roads and bridges destroyed during the war, particularly during the Italian retreat, when much of the damage took place. Nevertheless, due to the shortage of capital, skilled manpower, and well-organized governmental institutions, the operation of highway construction could not be continued in the immediate post-liberation period. This issue necessitated the establishment of an efficient and well-organized institution that was responsible for constructing and improving the existing highway networks.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building during Italian fascist Invasion...,” P. 54.

³⁰⁹ Burdick C.W, “Highways in Ethiopia,” *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1958), P. 404.

2.6. The Birth of the Imperial Highway Authority (IHA)

The Imperial Highway Authority was set up under proclamation No. 115/1951 as a semi-autonomous agency with specific duties to plan, design, construct, and improve highways and roads.³¹⁰ It was established based on an agreement signed among the Imperial Ethiopian government, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the United States Bureau of Public Roads. Since its establishment in 1951, the IHA has begun to undertake the following highway and road construction and maintenance.³¹¹

Under the First Highway Program (1951-1957), 1,931 kilometers of principal highways were repaired. Accordingly, the Addis Ababa-Assäb (860 kms), Addis Ababa-Jimma (335kms), Addis Ababa-Näqämit (331kms), Addis Ababa-Blue Nile (170kms), and Addis Ababa-Šašämäné (235kms) highways were completely reconstructed.³¹² Besides, another 2,700 kilometers of roads were improved through maintenance, especially south of Addis Ababa, and in the region of Eritrea. In the first highway program, a total of 4, 631 kilometers of highway were estimated to be improved at a cost of \$55.5 million in Ethiopian (hereinafter, Eth.). Of which, Eth. \$12.5 million was a loan secured by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (hereafter, IBRD).³¹³

In the Second Highway Program (1957-1965), most construction and improvements took place in the southwest of Addis Ababa and along the Awaš valley.³¹⁴ Accordingly, the Addis Ababa-Mojjo (64 kms), Jimma-Bonga (294 kms), Šašämäné-Soddo (136 kms), Däjän-Däbrä Marqos-

³¹⁰ Planning and Programming Division, *Imperial Highway Authority* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1967), P. 4.

³¹¹ Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *An Introductory Geography of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Press, 1972), P. 151.

³¹² Ethiopian Herald, December-January 1984.

³¹³ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *the Economy of Ethiopia, Vol. II*, Report No AF-12a, September 30, 1962, P.2.

³¹⁴ Imperial Highway Authority Planning Office, *Highway Construction in Ethiopia: The Second Highway Program* (unpublished Material), P. 2.

Bahir Dar (366 kms), Mäisso-Asäbä Täfäri (26 kms), Dire Dawa-Harar (55 kms), and Nazrth-Awaš (115 kms) roads were repaired. In the second highway program, therefore, a total of 1,010 kilometers of roads were estimated to be improved at a cost of Eth. \$107.5 million. Of which, the U.S. \$15 million was a loan secured by IBRD.³¹⁵

In the Third Highway Program (1965-1968), a total of 1,700 kilometers of all-weather highways were constructed.³¹⁶ The major highways that were reconstructed during this program include: Läqämti to Ghimbi (115kms), Agaro to Bädälé (105kms), Šašämäné to Goba (181kms), Kibrä Mānghist to Nāgäelé, Soddo to Arba-Minç, and Mojjo to Nazrét.³¹⁷ The Third Highway Program was initiated with a loan of Eth. \$10,000,000 secured by the United States Agency for International Development and a loan of Eth. \$33,750,000 from the IBRD. The Ethiopian Imperial government allocated Eth. \$ 60,250,000.³¹⁸

During the Fourth Highway Program (1968-1973), the IHA spent Eth. \$ 350 million on the construction of 1,025 kilometers of primary, secondary, and feeder roads. Furthermore, the improvement of 1,000 kilometers of major dry-weather roads, the asphaltting of 600 kilometers of primary roads, and the final survey and design of 700 kilometers of primary roads were undertaken.³¹⁹ Accordingly, the roads from Jimma to Agaro (44 kms), Bädälé-Mättu, Awash River-Tändaho, Dilla-Yabéllo-Moyallé were improved.³²⁰ Furthermore, the construction of the roads from Däbrä Birhan to Robi (asphalt surfacing), Däjän-Moṭṭa, Gondar-Humära, Ghimbi-Kurmuk, and Azäzo-Mätämma was started. Most projects, however, failed due to the rise in the

³¹⁵ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *the Economy of Ethiopia, Vol. II*, Report No AF-12a, September 30, 1962, P.2.

³¹⁶ Planning and Programming Division, *Imperial Highway Authority* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1967), P. 4.

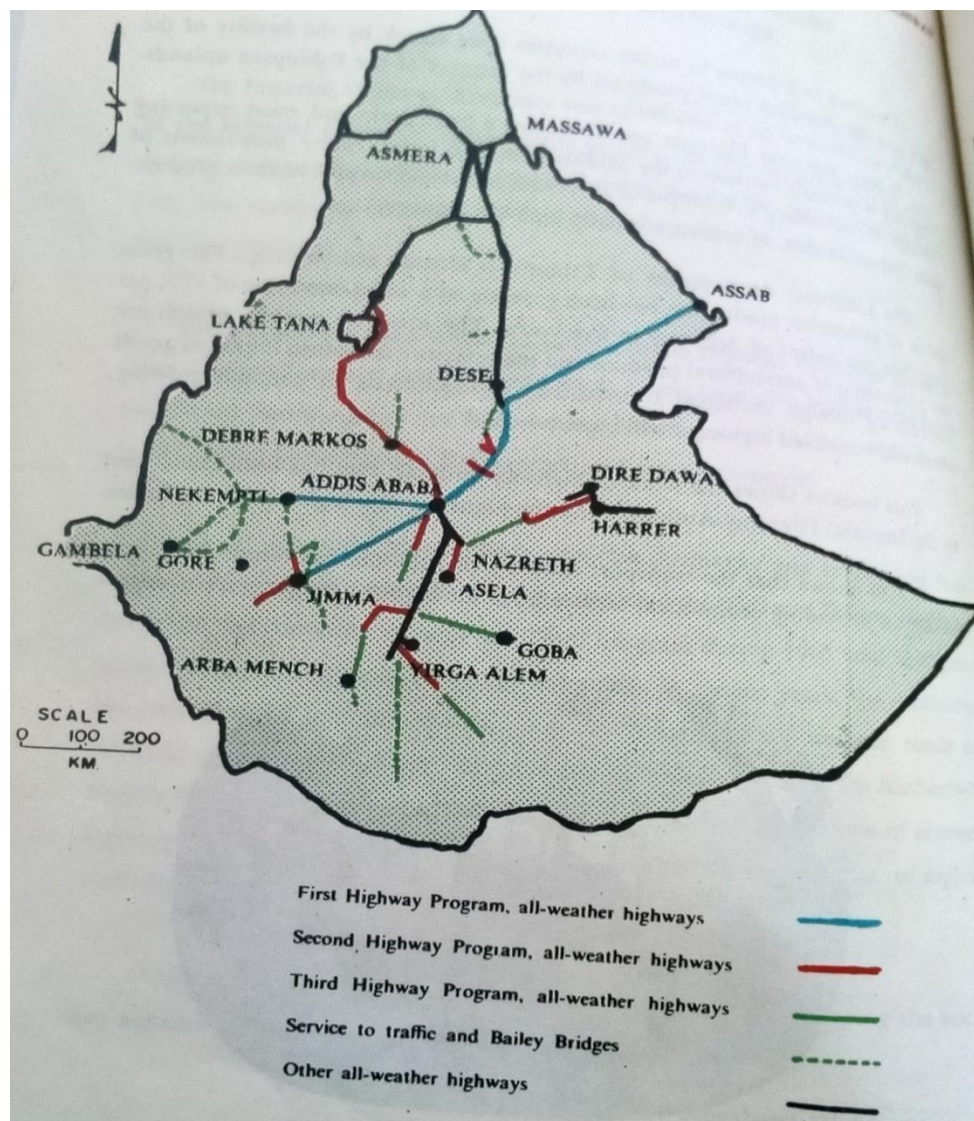
³¹⁷ Ethiopian Herald, October-December 1978.

³¹⁸ Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *an Introductory...*, P. 153.

³¹⁹ Ethiopian Herald, September-December 1975.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, October-December 1978.

cost of imported oil and equipment. With the completion of the Four Highway Programs, road development had reached the stage where most cities and major towns were linked to Addis Ababa through a system of dry and all-weather roads. Almost all the 14 Ethiopian Governorate-Generals were linked with Addis Ababa through highway networks.³²¹



Map 3: Major Ethiopian highways reconstructed from the 1st to the 3rd highway Programs. Source: Planning and Programming Division of Imperial Highway Authority, *Progress in Highway Transport*, P. 6.

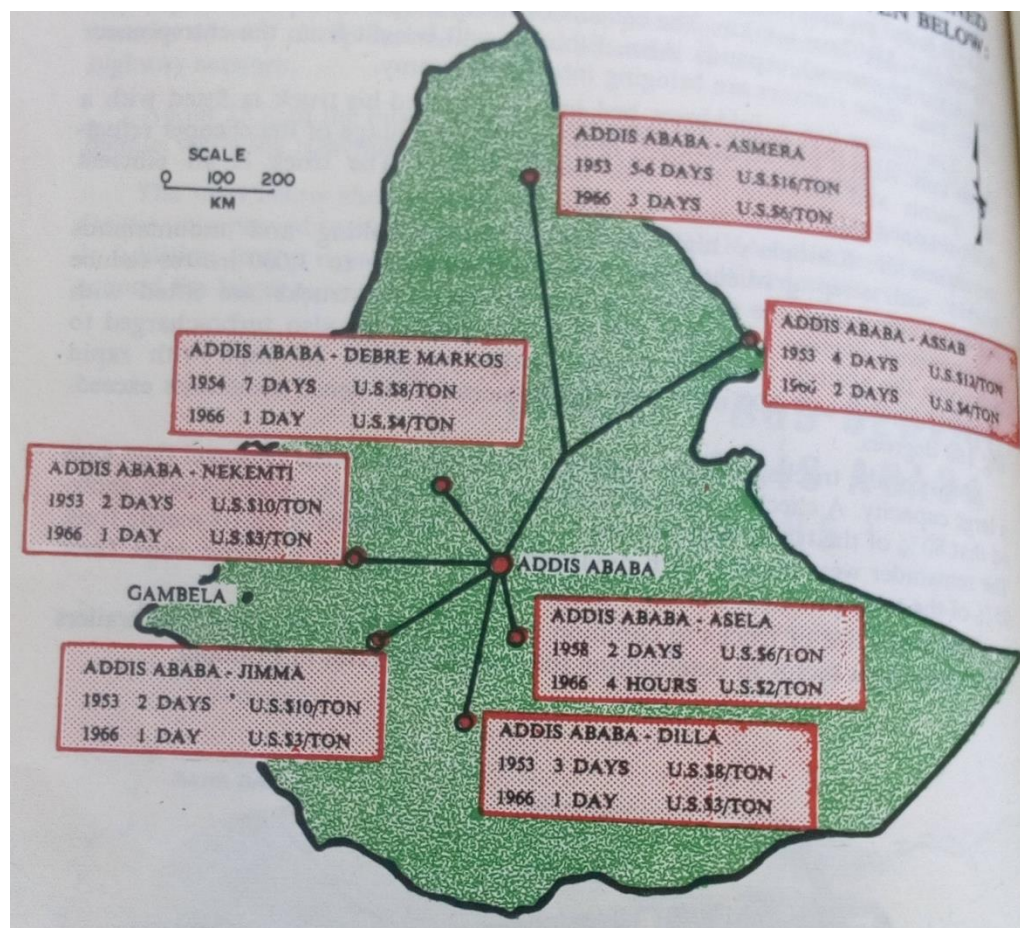
³²¹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Tahisas-Tir* (December- January) 1966 E.C.

The improved highway system has increased the mobility of Ethiopia's population and agricultural products to the major markets and distribution centers of Addis Ababa and Asmara.³²² Besides, the maintenance of highways substantially reduced highway travel times. For instance, before the highway was repaired, the journey from Wondo Gänät to Dilla took more than nine days in the rainy season. However, after this highway was reconstructed, the journey was drastically reduced to four hours.³²³ Highway improvements reduced highway merchandise costs dramatically. For instance, the merchandise cost from Addis Ababa to Assäb highway has decreased from Eth. \$ 87.50 per metric ton in 1953 to Eth. \$ 49.00 in 1957. Likewise, the transport cost for coffee was significantly reduced due to the improvements of highways along the coffee-producing areas.³²⁴ For further information, see the following map.

³²² J.Baker, "Developments in Ethiopia's Road System...", P. 152.

³²³ John Velissarios, "the Economy of Ethiopia" (MA Thesis, Boston University, Department of Business Administration, 1954), P. 95.

³²⁴ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *the Economy of Ethiopia...*, P. 2.



Map 4: Highway improvements significantly reduced traveling times and merchandise costs. Source: Planning and Programming Division of Imperial Highway Authority, *Progress in Highway Transport*, P. 18.

Furthermore, the maintenance and improvements of highways led to an increase in the number of vehicles. For instance, between 1961 and 1965, the total number of vehicles increased by 13.5% per annum. The number of buses, Lorries, and cars was also increased by 20%, 18.5%, and 18%, respectively, per year. At the end of 1965, 32,000 vehicles were estimated to be registered in Ethiopia. Of which, 75% (cars), 13% (Lorries), and 12% were buses.³²⁵

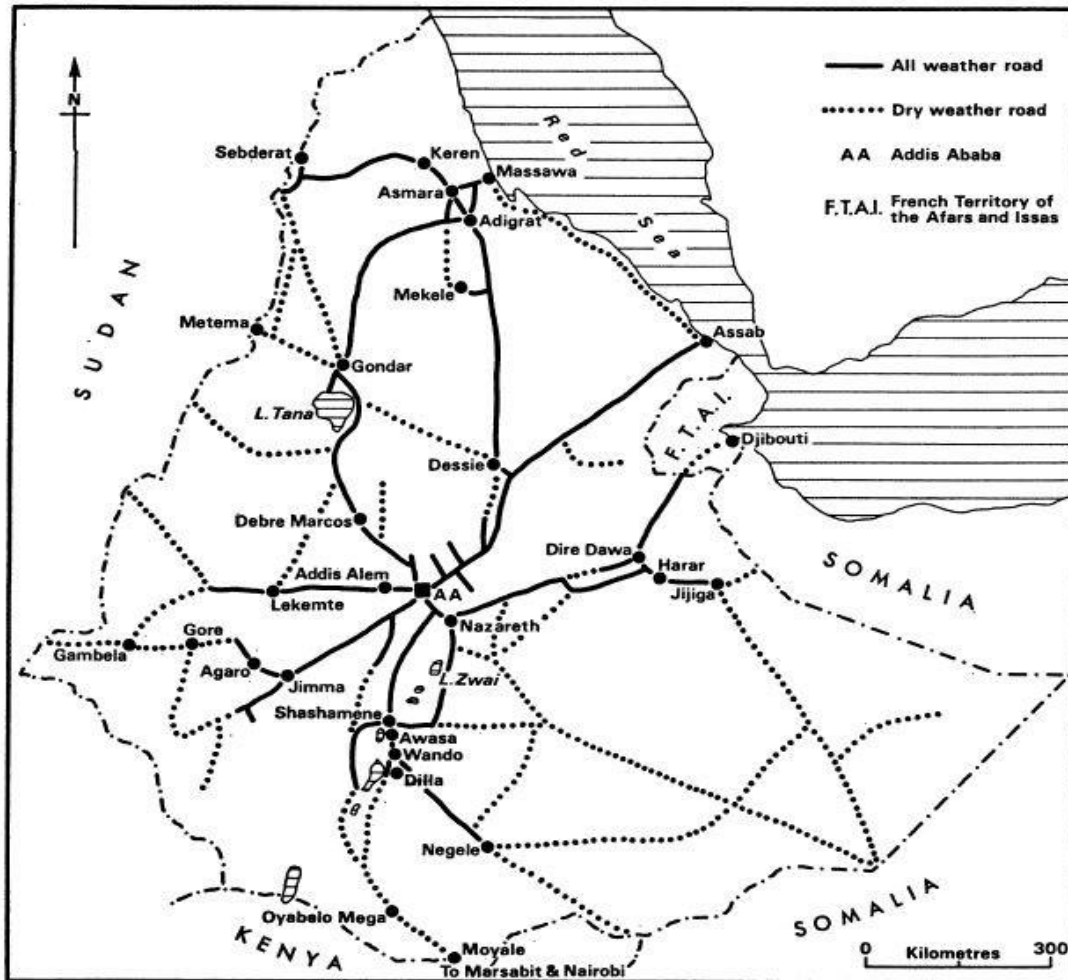
According to archival documents, up to the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, Ethiopia had 15,798 kilometers of roads. Of those, 6,940 kilometers were all-weather roads; 2,893 kilometers were

³²⁵ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Appraisal of a Fourth Highway Project*, Report No. To-597a, November 24, 1967, P. 6.

asphalt surfacing roads; 632 kilometers were dry-weather roads; and the rest, 5,333 kilometers, were gravel roads that were under maintenance. Besides, of the total of 15,798 kilometers, the Ethiopian highways accounted for 11,771 kilometers.³²⁶ However, Ethiopia is still one of the world's least developed countries in terms of its road network. The development of highways was rudimentary except in the province of Eritrea, in which extensive highway networks were built during the Italian rule. In 1974, the rest of Ethiopia, however, 85% of the people lived 30 kilometers away from the nearest all-weather roads. Travel from place to place was largely depending on pack animal transportation and foot. In particular, during the rainy season, large areas of Ethiopia become inaccessible. According to an article published in the IHA magazine, Ethiopia's needs were for 13,000 kms of primary roads (primary national highways), 14,000 kms of secondary roads (secondary national highways), 6,000 kms of tertiary roads, and 21,000 km of rural roads. The total need of the country's roads was 54,000 kms. But, in 1974, the country's road network was very far from the expected (54,000 kms) road.³²⁷

³²⁶ NALA, Folder No. 1.2.47, File No. 1.2.47.09, Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority, June 1961.

³²⁷ Ethiopian Herald, September-December 1975.



Map 5: Ethiopia's major highways in 1974. Source: J.Baker, "Developments in Ethiopia's Road System," p.151.

2.7. A History Highway Construction in Ethiopia during the Derg Regime (r. 1974-1991)

In 1974, the *Derg* Regime took power and continued the construction of new roads on a larger scale than ever before. The new regime initially followed the highway programs of its predecessor by shifting its attention to the construction of previously forgotten rural roads.³²⁸

Unlike the Imperial Regime, which gave top priority to the construction of extensive highway networks, the Derg regime gave more emphasis on the construction of rural roads and feeder

³²⁸ Ethiopian Herald, January-May 1975.

roads.³²⁹ Rural roads were regarded as a critical tool for spreading socialist ideology in rural areas.³³⁰ The Regime also considered rural roads as a fundamental means to improve market access for farmers and provide relief programs to famine and drought-prone provinces.³³¹ Accordingly, under the Fifth Highway Program (1974-1976), the construction of 539 kilometers of feeder roads and the asphalt surfacing of 320 kilometers of roads were undertaken. In the Sixth Highway Program (1976-1978), the improvement of 284 kilometers of primary roads; 280 kilometers of secondary roads; and the construction of 809 kilometers of new gravel feeder roads; and 1,660 kilometers of rural roads were undertaken.³³²

In 1978, under proclamation number 1331/1978, the IHA was renamed as the Ethiopian Road Authority (ERA) and the Rural Road Task Force, with specific duties to plan, design, construct, and improve rural roads.³³³ Compared to the Imperial Highway Authority, which built and repaired an average of 300 kilometers of roads per year, the Ethiopian Road Authority could construct and improve 1,300 kilometers of roads per year.³³⁴ Under the Ethiopian Road Authority, the lengths of paved roads were increased by 8.6% per annum. As a result, in 1991, the country's total road length reached approximately 43,200 kilometers. However, this road network was one of the least developed in East Africa (50 kms of roads per 1,000 km²), with a density of only 10 kms of roads per 1,000 km² and 0.4 kms of roads per 1,000 people.³³⁵

³²⁹ Ethiopian Herald, January-May 1975.

³³⁰ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene* (June) 1979 E.C.

³³¹ *Ibid*, *Tir-Yekatit* (January-February) 1979 E.C; DMUAC, Folder No. 554, File No. 00/17, A Letter Written from Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, to the Governor of Gojjam Province, Ref No. 0003/9/20-11, Dated May 30, 1980 E.C.

³³² Abadi Melese, "Road Construction Development in...", P. 29.

³³³ Seid Husen, "A History of Road Construction in Wollo...", P. 48.

³³⁴ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1973 E.C.

³³⁵ World Bank, *Ethiopia: Second Road Sector Project*, Report No. 423 ET, June 3, 1983 (unpublished material), P. 11.



A)



B)

Figure 11: The picture in “A” shows Highway Transport during the Imperial period and the one in “B” illustrate highway transport during the Derg regime. Source: Ethiopian herald, June1985.

CHAPTER THREE

Attempts of Highway Construction in Gojjam before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution

Before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, a few attempts to construct modern highways in Gojjam were made. For instance, a rough highway was intended to connect Fičä with Däbrä Marqos through the Blue Nile gorge in the late 1890s. This endeavor did not, however, succeed as planned because of lack of competent labor and funding.³³⁶

The Italians suggested to Menelik that they need to construct a motor road from Eritrea to the northwestern regions of Bägémidir and Gojjam. They desired to build the highway that would connect Eritrea with Gojjam via Tigray and Bägémidir. As a result, Ferdinando Martini, the governor of Italian Eritrea (1900-1907), received a concession from Emperor Menelik II on July 16, 1903. Besides, the Emperor gave instruction to his officials in northwest Ethiopia to permit access to Italian highway builders. Emperor Menelik emphasized that even though the Italians would finance this highway construction, it would be under the control of the Ethiopian government. However, this prerequisite did not attract Italians to begin construction work.³³⁷

In 1932, in order to extend the Italian commercial influence in northern Ethiopia, the Italians established four consulates at Adwa, Dässé, Gondar, and Däbrä Marqos. The Italian consulate office at Gondar studied the possibility of constructing two main highways: from Gondar to the Eritrean frontier and from Gondär to Gojjam.³³⁸ Thus, the Italian government, in the guise of a private firm, put pressure on the Ethiopian government to gain a highway building concession. But, the government of Haile Selassie restrained from giving the concession. It was suspicious

³³⁶ Physical Department Development, *Development of Transport Networks in North-West Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, p. 6.

³³⁷ Abdussamed Ahmed, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy 1901-1935" (Dissertation, University of Illinois, Department of History, 1986), p.5.

³³⁸ Abdussamed Ahmed, "Trade Relations of Northern Ethiopia with Italian Eritrea 1903-1935," *Africa Rivista Trimestrale*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (September, 1997), p.429.

that the Italians from Eritrea might use the highway for political and military penetrations.³³⁹ Instead, the central government favored the construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway via Däbrä Marqos, which would be of great value to consolidate and centralize its power, a process that gained more attention in the post Italian period. In the same year, the government planned to build a bridge on the Blue Nile so that it could easily control developments in Gojjam.³⁴⁰

A chief of Gubba, Hamdin Abu Shok, constructed a motor highway from Gubba to Mänzé, near Abu Ramla. Hamdin's Gubba-Mänzé highway did attract the coffee of Wänbära to the Sudan. Therefore, Hamdin desired to extend this highway to Dangila in Agäw Midir to tap the beeswax, leather, and hides of Agäw Midir. Furthermore, Halder, the governor of Funj Sultanate, demanded to build 62 kilometers road connecting Mänzé to Sudan's main Roseires highway. But, building highways presupposes the willingness of the Ethiopian government. However, the central government rejected their attempts at highway construction. Emperor Haile Selassie I refused permission suspecting that its construction might have allowed the British from the Sudan to encroach into the Ethiopian region through the two back doors. In addition to this, *Ras* Haylu and *Ras* Gugsa were greatly annoyed at Hamdin's success in commerce. Therefore, they opposed the extension of the motor highway to Agäw Midir. They considered Hamid's proposal as a major threat to their treasuries. Haylu feared that Hamdin's move would challenge his monopoly of trade in Agäw Midir while Gugsa feared losing the revenue that he gained from taxation, which he used to collect from Agäw Midir merchants in transit to Mätämma and Asmara. As a result, Hamdin's idea of building Dangila-Gubba gravel highway was nipped in the bud owing to the above reasons.³⁴¹

³³⁹ George Baerdeb, *the Coming of Italian- Ethiopian War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 20.

³⁴⁰ Abdussamed Ahmed, "Trade Relations of Northern Ethiopia...", p. 429.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital....," p. 130.

In 1927, a rough track had been cleared from Addis Ababa to Jarso on the edge of the Blue Nile valley. The total length of this track highway was estimated to be 193 kilometers on the left bank of the Blue Nile River. This track was constructed under the supervision of *Ras Kasa*, the governor of Sālaé in northwestern Šäwa.³⁴² One or two cars had been driven to the end of the track (up to the Blue Nile gorge). But, up to the end of 1933, no car had crossed the Blue Nile gorge to Dājān and Däbrä Marqos. R.E Cheesman confirmed the above statement when he says; “Up to the time I left Abyssinia, nearly a year after afterwards, I had not heard that any motor-car had crossed the River and reached Däbrä Marqos from Addis Ababa travelling under its power.”³⁴³

In 1933, Emperor Haile Selassie planned to extend the Jarso tracks across the Blue Nile gorge to Dājān and Däbrä Marqos. But, crossing the Blue Nile curve and passing the river became very challenging. In the spring of 1933, the Greek engineer, Zervos, was sent from Addis Ababa for surveying and to mark the road on both sides of the river. *Ras Kasa* was responsible for the construction of the road on the left bank of the river, while *Ras Imiru*, the new governor of Gojjam *Täqlay Gizat* (governorate-general), was responsible for the construction of the road on the right bank of the river (on the side of Gojjam).³⁴⁴ With regard to this, R.E Chessman states the following:

The work on the road was being held up, as the supply of dynamite had run out and there were big rocks that required blasting on some of the cliffs. The labor was founded by putting sections in charge of local chieftains, who were responsible for their completion. I passed several of these quaint old squires and spoke with them. They confessed that neither they nor their men had any previous knowledge of road-making, and many of their men had never seen road. The only touch of modern engineering equipment that I saw was that most of the chieftains sported a pair of field-glasses slung over the shoulders.

³⁴²Imperial Highway Authority press Release, March 16, 1953 (unpublished material), p.7.

³⁴³ R.E Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile*...., p. 290.

³⁴⁴ Press Release of Imperial Highway Authority, March 20, 1953 (unpublished material), p. 12.

*I asked one of them how many of his men were working on his section and he replied: “who can say, there are thousands, but some return to their farms to plough and others take their place and the work goes on”. As spades and pickaxes could not be procured, the excavating had been done with ploughshares. I pointed out that the gullies crossing the line of the road had not been bridged, and that during the rainy season parts of it would be washed away, and they replied that after the rains the road could be repaired with little trouble and expense.*³⁴⁵

The above observation is very interesting at least for two reasons. One is that it reflects the source of labor and the extent to which local *balabats* (landed gentry) and community participated in the construction of the road. Secondly, it clearly indicates the absence of skilled manpower, which itself was seasonal and lack of appropriate equipments necessary for the construction of the road.³⁴⁶

Within three months, the construction of a road was in progress through a labor-intensive scheme (labor-based construction). To escape steep slopes, the road had many meanderings, making it at least three times longer than the long existing caravan road.³⁴⁷ A floating pontoon bridge was also completed in 1934 under the governorship of Ras Imiru. Until then, “traffic across the Blue Nile either swam or was floated across in straw-filled cowhide called *jändi*.”³⁴⁸ Referring the works of Christian Sandford, Ethiopian herald states the following regarding the bridge that was being constructed across the Blue Nile River:

A pulley was attached to the bow of a raft floating on an empty oil-drum and carrying a wooden platform large enough to take a motor lorry. A wire cable was stretched from bank to bank high above the water, and on this ran a pulley attached to another long cable that was fixed to the bow of a raft floating on an empty oil-drum and carrying a wooden platform large enough

³⁴⁵ Chessman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile...*, p. 289.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ James McCann, “Ethiopia, Britain, and Negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam, 1922-1935”, *the International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1981), p. 675.

*to take a motor lorry. Two ropes connected the raft to windlasses on both sides, allowing personnel on both sides to wind it across the water.*³⁴⁹

Under the effort of Ras Imiru, therefore, Gojjam was connected with Addis Ababa through Jarso-the Blue Nile-Dājān-Däbrä Marqos gravel highway.³⁵⁰ Thus, the people of Gojjam were expecting that the first car would cross the Blue Nile gorge and arrive in Däbrä Marqos in the spring of 1934.³⁵¹ Imiru was also interested in extending Dājān-Marqos road to Bahir Dar via Buré, where he planned to build a barrage on Lake Ṭana. But, Däbrä Marqos-Blue Nile gravel highway was very difficult for motor traffic. On the other hand, on the Jarso-Addis Ababa gravel highway, a few cars and Lorries were driven in the dry season. Therefore, Emperor Haile Selassie I had a strong desire to connect Bahir Dar with Addis Ababa via Dājān through an all-weather metalled highway.³⁵²

3.1. The First Unsuccessful Plan for the Construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa Metalled Highway

European powers' interests in Ethiopia developed significantly in the 20th century. The British and the Italians intended to control the trade routes from northwestern Ethiopia to Sudan and Eritrea, respectively. Britain, more than any other European power, was interested in the Lake Ṭana area, and planned to build a barrage on Lake Ṭana near the Blue Nile's outlet in order to enhance the economy of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan territory. They sent several study teams to Bahir Dar to do so. In 1926, for instance, Robert Cheesman arrived in Bahir Dar from Dangila, the British consul's seat in northwestern Ethiopia. Cheesman went to the church of Qidus Giyorgis, and he said it was a well-built structure. Moreover, Chessman understood well the strategic position of Bahir Dar. He described how it was linked by canoe transportation with

³⁴⁹ Ethiopian Herald, June 1976.

³⁵⁰ Abdussamed Ahmed, "Gojjam: Trade,...," p. 11.

³⁵¹ Chessman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile...*, p. 2.

³⁵² Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority, May 1953 (unpublished material), p. 9.

Zägé and how caravans used two different means to cross the Blue Nile. One was by canoe along a ferry called Kanfaro Abbay, or the outlet of the Blue Nile from Lake Ṭana during the rainy season, and the other was by fording the river at *Igir Bär* (footpath) during the dry season when the volume of water was reduced enough that mules could cross without difficulty. These paths were used by the local people, long-distance caravan merchants, and travelers. Besides, these traditional routes connected northern and south-western Ethiopia in the position of Bahir Dar from early on.³⁵³

Besides, Cheesman describes the Alata Bridge, or the Blue Nile Bridge, some 30 kms south of Bahir Dar as the main transit for mule caravans. He also states that the barrage, which the British intended to erect at the outlet of the Blue Nile in Bahr Dar, would become a busy transit for motor traffic coming and going to and from Dabra Tabor on one hand, and Addis Ababa and Sudan on the other hand.³⁵⁴

Britain was given permission by the Ethiopian government in 1924 to build a dam across the outlet of the Blue Nile from Lake Ṭana. The construction of the highway to Bahir Dar, however, was a point on which the two governments could not agree. The construction of the highway between Lake Ṭana and Sudan was a top priority for the British government. It suggested and insisted that construction materials must be transported from Khartoum to Bahir Dar through an access highway. However, the Imperial Ethiopian government recommended the construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway via Däbrä Marqos. The Ethiopian government did not agree with the British because it was suspicious that the British might use this highway for colonial

³⁵³Seltene Seyoum, "Early History of Bahir Dar Town: C.1900-1941," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.15 (2012), pp. 76-77.

³⁵⁴*Ibid*, p.78.

penetration into Ethiopia from their colony, Sudan.³⁵⁵ Ras Teferi (Haile Selassie after 1930) may also have been aware of other schemes designed by the British to tie northwest Ethiopia economically and financially with Sudan. Such prospects may have added further suspicion to Ras Teferi and the central government's threats of foreign influence.³⁵⁶

On March 24, 1928, the Ministers at the British Legation in Addis Ababa addressed a note to Ras Teferi, stating that the British government would demand to negotiate with the Ethiopian government on the basis of the latter's demand that the Lake Tana dam project be given to a non-British company. In other words, the British government agreed to the construction of the Lake Tana dam and the construction of the Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway by the American firm, the J.G. White Engineering Corporation. Hence, Ras Teferi requested the American Minister in Addis Ababa, Southard, to contact with the company and send representatives for discussion with Ethiopian government. Subsequently, Southard transmitted a telegram to the company on January 1, 1929. As a result, the vice president of the company, Henry A. Lardner, arrived in Addis Ababa on April 22, 1929.³⁵⁷ Lardner soon started the discussion on the dam project with Ras Teferi and Bilaten Geta Heruy, Director of Foreign Affairs.³⁵⁸

However, Italy objected to the American corporation's involvement and plotted to abort the negotiations between White Engineering Corporation and the Ethiopian government. As noted earlier, Italy planned to connect Eritrea with Lake Tana through a highway network. As a result, the construction of the highway leading to Lake Tana became the focal point of diplomatic

³⁵⁵ Tefera Haile Selassie, *Ethiopia and Great Britain Diplomatic History From 1798-1966* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1999), p. 195; England Baz, *Qadamawi Haile Selassie Niguse Negesit Ze Ethiopia: Hiwet Ena Ye Ethiopia Ermija* [Emperor Haile Selassie I Ethiopian King of King: My life and the Progress of Ethiopia] (Addis Ababa: Birhanena Selam Press, 1929 E.C), p. 106.

³⁵⁶ James McCann, "Ethiopia, Britain, and Negotiations for" p. 676.

³⁵⁷ Teferi Mekonnen, "the Blue Nile Issue: A History of Hydropolitics, 1884-1974" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2004), p. 90.

³⁵⁸ Tefera Haile Selassie, *Ethiopia and Great Britain Diplomatic....*, pp. 196-197.

negotiations in which the British from Sudan, the Italians from Eritrea, the Ethiopian government from Addis Ababa, and the U.S., as a new comer from Addis Ababa, tried to get the resources of Gojjam.³⁵⁹

However, Ethiopia continued her relation with America and the discussion between the representatives of the J.G. White Engineering Company and the Ethiopian officials, mainly *Ras Teferi* and *Bilatténgéta Heruy*, continued until June 24, 1929. As a result, on June 30, 1929, *Ras Tafari* announced Ethiopia's intention of granting the Lake Tana dam concessions to the J.G White Engineering Company.³⁶⁰ The intention was accepted and the J.G White Engineering Corporation was designated by the U.S. Government to begin the project.³⁶¹

According to the Ethiopian government, the construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway was necessary for the construction of the dam. The government proposed to the Americans that the highway would be required to transport supplies from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar for the construction of the dam. *Ras Teferi* used the dam issue as a diplomatic and political bargaining chip for the construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway. Besides, the construction of this highway would be very crucial to the central government because it would enable it to consolidate its power and limit *Ras Haylu's* autonomy. The completion of the highway would also redirect Gojjam's coffee, beeswax, skins, and leather to Addis Ababa.³⁶²

According to the report of the J.G White Engineering Corporation, the construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway was estimated to cost US \$3,370,000.³⁶³ Since the highway would cross

³⁵⁹ Abdussamed Ahmed, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital ...," p. 300.

³⁶⁰ Teferi Mekonnen, "the Blue Nile Issue: A History of Hydropolitics...," P. 92.

³⁶¹ Elias Ashebir, "the Politics of the Blue Nile Basin" (MA Thesis, Johannesburg, Department of Hydropolitics, 2009), p. 23; Tadesse Kassa, "Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty on the Nile and the Tana Dam Concession: A Script in Legal History of Ethiopia's Diplomatic Confront, 1900-1956," *Mizan Law Review*, Vol.8, No. 2 (December, 2014), p.29.

³⁶² Abdu ssamed Ahmed, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital ...," p. 299.

³⁶³ Elias Ashebir, "the Politics of the Nile Basin...," p.23.

several rivers and the difficult terrain of Gojjam, the total cost of the construction was very high.³⁶⁴

The J.G. White Engineering Corporation study group from the United States came in Bahir Dar in 1930, led by L.B. Roberts. The Ethiopian government deployed the first group of engineering specialists to examine the viability of building a motorway from Bahir Dar to Addis Ababa. The task of finding an alignment for an all-weather metalled highway from Lake Ṭana to Addis Ababa was given to the J.G. White Engineering Corporation.³⁶⁵ Therefore, preparatory clearance and surveying of the highway leading to Bahir Dar was initiated in Addis Ababa. Besides, the surveying and clearing of the highway was started on both sides of the Blue Nile gorge between Goha Ṣiwān and Dājān. Likewise, the construction of a bridge across the Blue Nile at Kanfaro was also part of a scheme that would link Gojjam with Bägémdir.³⁶⁶ R.E Cheesman describes the process of surveying in the following ways:

The surveyors of the J.G White American Engineering Corporation were in Mazarkanye, a small village near Dangila, in 1933, and the leader, major L.B. Roberts, who had seen my [Chessman] notes and sketches, decided to have one last attempt to discover an alignment for an escarpment with no gradient exceeding 10 percent, by sending one of his surveyors to examine the slopes below Mazarkanyä. He sent Mr. Long, who arrived in Dangila on Christmas Eve, and we went over my rough sketches carefully together before he started, as it was all unmapped country. I [Chessman] waited his return anxiously, knowing that if he was not successful this time it was unlikely that a pass would ever be found; so his report, when he came back weeks later, was particularly gratifying, for he had been able to find a line with required gradients, on which a motor-road could be constructed without any blasting of rocks.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Imperial Highway Authority, *the Developments of Highways in North-West Ethiopia* (unpublished material), p. 7.

³⁶⁵ United States Department of Interior, *Land and Water Resources of the Blue Nile Basin, Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Berhannena Selam Pree, 1964), p. 10.

³⁶⁶ Seltene Seyoum, "Early History of Bahir Dar Town...", p. 79.

³⁶⁷ Chessman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian ...*, p. 79.

The above discussion implies the efforts of J.G. engineers and R.E. Cheesman to plot the design of Bahir Dar-Dājān gravel highway on paper before the practical work. It also describes their attempt to find the line on land where the intended metalled highway passes.³⁶⁸

In 1934, the J.G White Engineers were also at Dibkan, a place 20 kms away from Dangila. Chessman also describes the process of the highway surveying around this area in such away:

*In the future Dibkan is likely to become a place of wider importance, for the alignment for the new road from Addis Ababa to Lake Ṭana, which engineers of the J.G White Engineering Corporation were surveying in 1934, crossing the small Abbai at Dibkan, and as the River, augmented as I have said by its tributaries, has now become wide width a considerable current, a substantial bridge will have to be built.*³⁶⁹

However, all the above activities were interrupted by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.³⁷⁰

Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935. The fascist force led by General Achille Starace, departing from Asmara, moved to Täsanay and occupied the historic city of Gondär on April 1, 1936.³⁷¹ After they occupied Gondär, the fascists advanced to Gojjam. General Starace's force advanced fast to the Lake Ṭana areas, particularly to control the towns of Bahir Dar and Ačäfär, encouraged by a few Ethiopian resistances. Thus, one branch of the army reached Bahir Dar on land by way of Yifag, crossing the Blue Nile at *Igir Bär* (footway). The second wing came from the western direction and arrived at Bahir Dar via Ačäfär. The other and the third wing came on

³⁶⁸ Chessman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile...*, P.79.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 83.

³⁷⁰ United States Department of Interior, *Land and Water Resources of the Blue Nile Basin, Ethiopia*(Addis Ababa:Berhannena Selam Press, 1964), p.10; Wendim Tiruneh,“ the Historical outline of the Blue Nile-Lake Tana Water Resources and Their Impact on the Socio-Economic, Geo-Political and Historical Development of Modern Ethiopian Empire,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 45 (2018), p. 19.

³⁷¹ A.J Barker, *the Civilizing Mission: A History of Italo- Ethiopian War of 1935-1941* (New York: the Dial Press Inc., 1968), p. 262.

boats across the lake from Gorgora. But, they all arrived at Bahir Dar in the same month (May 1936).³⁷²

The fascist force hosted the Italian flag, which signaled the beginning of Italian rule in Gojjam. Bahir Dar served as a depot as well as a place of departure for the further conquest of Gojjam.³⁷³ The Italians founded Bahir Dar town with a *gādam* (monastery) administration. Soon, the Italians took a number of measures that enhanced the position of Bahir Dar as a modern urban center. One of these measures was the introduction and expansion of modern transport.³⁷⁴

Cavallero advocated a full-scale military campaign in Gojjam as part of his military plan to extend Italian rule in Ethiopia. The construction of highways, the most apparent success of the Italian presence in Gojjam, was required to cross the vast province of Gojjam.³⁷⁵ The extent of patriotic resistance, particularly in Gojjam, prompted the building of two principal highways connecting Bahir Dar and Dājān, one via Dangila and the other via Moṭṭa. By way of Wāldya, another highway connected Bahir Dar and Wāldya. Other feeder roads connecting Buré with Giš Abbay and Dābrā Marqos with Moṭṭa via Mount Çoqé and Fārās Bét to Robu Gābāya were also built. As a result, these feeder roads and highways connected Gojjam to Gondār, Dässé, and Addis Ababa.³⁷⁶

³⁷²Binayew Tamirat, “A History of Zāgé Peninsula, 1902-1991” (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2009), 33.

³⁷³ Melkamu Bimirew, “A History of Patriotic Resistance against the Italian Occupation in Ačāfār District, West Gojjam, 1936-1941” (MA Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2018), p. 21.

³⁷⁴ Seltene Seyoum, “Early History of Bahir Dar Town....”, p. 87.

³⁷⁵ Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1985), p.199.

³⁷⁶ Seltene Seyoum, “A History of Resistance in Gojjam (Ethiopia): 1936-1941” (Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1999), p.138.

3.2. The Construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway under the Italians

For colonial objective, after Addis Ababa was occupied by fascist Italy, highway building was given top priority. Decree was issued on May 19, 1936, declaring that “the Duce had delineated the plan of the Ethiopian road net work and had given instructions so that construction work might rapidly be put in to operation.” The decree announced for immediate construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān-Addis Ababa highway.³⁷⁷

The process of the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway was divided into five main sections. These are Bahir Dar-Piccolo Abby (50 kms), Piccolo-Dangila (51 kms), Dangila-Buré (79 kms), Buré-Dābrā Marqos (109 kms), and Dābrā Marqos-Dājān (77 kms). In 1937, Italian engineers began the surveying of the highway in each section. According to oral sources, the surveying of the highway took place using a wood called *čikal*. While the Italian road engineers surveyed and marked the land, the Salato (Italian laborers) and Eritrean Askaries cleared and paved the highway using pickaxes and shovels, following the footsteps of the surveyors from the back. Local informants called Eritrean Askaries as Hamasén.³⁷⁸ In order to facilitate the construction of this highway, in addition to the daily laborers, both the Italian soldiers and higher military officials were ordered to engage in the construction of the highway. Therefore, the fascist soldiers engaged in highway building operations carried their weapons on their shoulders. Italian soliders were assigned to this highway and even served as the principal labor force. Withstanding the patriotic resistance, the warmest and coolest weather conditions in Gojjam, daily laborers and military members build this highway throughout the day. In particular, the involvement of fascist troops in this highway building operation ultimately speeds up the process of construction.³⁷⁹ In

³⁷⁷ Richard Pankhurst, “Road Building during the Italian...,” p. 34.

³⁷⁸ Interviews with Ato Beqele Semahegni, Werqu Tayachew, Melese Gizachew, and Yitbarek Getahun.

³⁷⁹ Interviews with Ato Jemere Gwadie, *Emahoy* Atakilt Amare, Aragaw Bezie, and Amsalu Molla.

addition to the Salato, Eritrean Askaries, and military workers, the Italians ruthlessly exploited the local people's labor dwelling along the highway.³⁸⁰ In fact, in November 1937, the Italian government successfully endeavored to drastically reduce expenses on road programs by halting the use of imported daily laborers and relying substantially on local compulsory labor.³⁸¹

There were moveable tents used as a camping site for resting at night for fascist road workers along the road. At night, higher officials and road workers rest in those tents. They start their work each day at dawn, constructing the highway tirelessly throughout the day and stopping their work in the evening for rest. But, according to local informants, their moveable tents were repeatedly attacked by local patriots day and night. This challenge had become a major obstacle for fascist Italy in completing the construction of the highway in a short period of time.³⁸² To complete the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān (366 kms) highway, the Italians almost took two years (1937-1939).³⁸³

The pre-war Addis Ababa-Blue Nile highway in the south was upgraded, extended to Dājān across the Blue Nile canyon, and connected to the network of Dājān-Dābrā Marqos roads. They reconstructed this highway with the employment of 30,000 local and 3,600 Italian workers and a cost of 2,000,000 lire.³⁸⁴ As I mentioned above, in the late 1890s, an effort was made to build a shaky road across the Blue Nile gorge to connect Dābrā Marqos with Fičä. Besides, despite the fact that road construction to connect Dābrā Marqos with Addis Ababa was continued in the

³⁸⁰ Melkamu Bimirew, "A History of Patriotic Resistance.....," p. 25; Informants: Ato Beqele Semahegn, Tareqegn Mulu, and Yihalem Muluneh.

³⁸¹ Ayele Tareqegn, "the History of the Imperial Highway Authority.....," p. 10.

³⁸² Interview with Ato Beqele Semahegn, Temeliket Adigo, and Jemere Gwadie.

³⁸³ Imperial Highway Authority, *Ethiopian Progress in Highway Transport*, 1967 (unpublished material), p.9.

³⁸⁴ Richard Pankhurst, "Road Building during the Italian....," p. 49.

1920s and 1930s, it was not put into use until the Italian invasion.³⁸⁵ The highway, which was constructed under the responsibility of General Ugo Cavallero to connect Addis Ababa with Däbrä Marqos and Gondar, was perhaps the most significant legacy that Italian rule left behind in Gojjam.³⁸⁶

It is important to note that, the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway by the Italians was conditioned by the pre-existing caravan routes.³⁸⁷ That means they construct this highway following ancient and traditional caravan trade routes. In deeded, as I noted above, beginning in 1931, caravan merchants preferred the route that leads to Addis Ababa via Däbrä Marqos, Dājān, and Fičä. This route continued to be more important than Basso, Zamé, and Kačisi route which also lead to Addis Ababa via Castino Bridge and Addis Alām. During the occupation of 1935 to 1941, the Italians built this highway following this pre-existing route.³⁸⁸

3.3. Major Challenges that the Italians faced during the Construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway

3.3.1. Human Challenges

According to local informants, during the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway, Italians encountered strong oppositions and challenges from the patriots of Gojjam.³⁸⁹ According to Melkamu, the patriots strongly opposed the construction of the road for the following two main reasons: Firstly, they realized that the construction of a road could be used for the fast and easy movement of the enemy. Secondly, during the construction, the Italians ruthlessly exploited the

³⁸⁵ Physical Department Development, *Development of Transport Networks in North-West Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, p. 6.

³⁸⁶ Daniel Dejen, "Land Tenure Reform and Socio-Economic Structures in Debre Marqos (Gojjam), Ethiopia: C. 1901-1974" (Dissertation, University of South Africa, Department of History, 2020), p.265; Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*...., p. 199.

³⁸⁷ Seltene, "Early History of Bahir Dar....," p. 89.

³⁸⁸ Abdussamed, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant....," p. 252.

³⁸⁹ Interview with Priest Semaw Belay, Admassu Alemayehu, and Dagne Wassie.

local people's labour, which at times caused human life casualties.³⁹⁰ The use of forced labor in the construction of this highway and bridges brought untold hardship to the local people. People were forced to abandon their farmlands, especially during the farming seasons, to work on the highway. For instance, between 1937 and 1939, farmers were denied access to their farm lands because of road construction, and this led to the destruction of crops and the concomitant bad harvest.³⁹¹

Later, the Italians changed the approach to highway building through the use of intensive corvee labor. Accordingly, during the construction of this highway and bridges, the Italians began to use peasant labor and pay them in cash. This in itself did not last long because people considered it as an act of *banda* (collaborator).³⁹²

In the course of the resistance, the patriots who saw the importance of the roads for the speedy mobilization of the enemy decided to sabotage all kinds of road networks in Gojjam. Therefore, destroying the line of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway was a common practice of the local people and patriots. They did it mostly at night time. Italian road workers also encountered strong resistance from patriots along the line of the highway. For instance, while the road workers put their arms aside and start the construction of the highway, the local people took the arms and left for a safe area. In such a way, the local people looted a large number of rifles and weapons from the Italian road workers. Therefore, in order to defend themselves from the patriots' surprise attack, road builders were organized into battalions, uniformed and armed. The guerrilla attacks on the road workers were a major source of constant disturbance for the road workers.³⁹³ As oral sources and

³⁹⁰Melkamu, "a History of Patriotic Resistance....," p. 25; Informant: Beqele Semahegn, Yeshanbel Abera, and Simeneh Muhammed.

³⁹¹Interview with Yirdaw Demelash and Semaw Tareqegn.

³⁹² Daniel Dejen, "Land Tenure Reform and Socio..," p. 266.

³⁹³ Informant: Beqele Semahegn and Tilahun Molla.

written documents describe, road workers were also killed by local patriots while they were constructing this highway. For instance, as Alfredo Gonzalez states, Silvio Durante, a worker (*operaio*), was killed during the construction of the highway near the Blue Nile gorge.³⁹⁴



Figure 12: The tomb of Silvio Durante (*operaio*), killed during the construction of the highway, near the Blue Nile gorge. Source: Alfredo Gonzalez, “Fascist Colonialism: the Archaeology of Italian outposts...,” P.4.

Besides, guerrilla fighters repeatedly attacked tents of road workers and looted their logistics under different circumstances. Hence, along this highway, mobile camps were protected by barbed wires installed along the road. As a result of unceasing guerrilla attacks, the progress of the construction was very slow.³⁹⁵ Besides, some secondary sources claim that the Italians were unable to complete the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān gravel highway due to fierce patriotic opposition. For instance, according to a source compiled by the Bahir Dar Physical Planning

³⁹⁴Alfredo Gonzalez, “Fascist Colonialism: The Archaeology of Italian Outposts in Western Ethiopia (1936-1941),” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (December, 2010), p. 4; Informant, Jemere Gwadie.

³⁹⁵ Informants: Yinager Ademe and Emahoy Atakilt Amare.

Department in July 1988, the Italians were only able to construct less than 300 kilometers of road between Bahir Dar and Däbrä Marqos due to the relative and stronger resistance that they faced in Gojjam than in Gondar.³⁹⁶ However, archival and oral sources claim that the Italians completely connected Bahir Dar with Däjän by a gravel highway.³⁹⁷

The construction of this highway was not even uniform due to the challenges that the Italians sustained from the patriots of Gojjam. For instance, some sections of this highway were paved with flat stone pavement, which came to be known as Telford. While some other sections were unpaved with stone pavement. But, according to archival sources, it is difficult to know the total kilometers of paved and unpaved road sections with stone pavements.³⁹⁸ Therefore, the governor-general of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay Gizat* repeatedly wrote letters to the Ministry of Public Works and Communications demanding the completion of unpaved road sections in the post Italian periods. However, the Ministry did not give timely replies to those requests.³⁹⁹

3.3.2. Geographical Challenges

Landforms, such as mountains, hills, and rocky terrain in many areas of Gojjam, were another major challenge encountered by fascist Italy during the construction of this highway. Paving and leveling of the difficult terrains of Gojjam made construction work very difficult and quite challenging.⁴⁰⁰ Congruent with this information, Gonzalez states that “large numbers of workers died or fell seriously during construction work. The number of casualties among local workers,

³⁹⁶ Physical Department Development, *Development of Transport Networks in North-West Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, p. 7.

³⁹⁷DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Pen, Ref. No. 631/47, dated 17/5/47 E.C.

³⁹⁸National Archive and Library Agency (hereinafter NALA), Folder No.17.1.11.18, File No. 17.1.11.18.01, a Letter Written from Agew Midir Awrajja to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No.37/47, March 30/7/43 E.C.

³⁹⁹DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, Ref. No. 544/47, January 8/6/47 E.C.

⁴⁰⁰*Yezarietu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehasie* (September-August) 1974 E.C.

although presumably higher, is unknown.”⁴⁰¹ With regard to this information, Pankhurst also states the following:

*Road building had moreover to contend with immense difficulties of the terrain which as The Times Correspondent remarked, presented “every natural obstacle from mountains thousands of feet high to plains flooded in the rain season”. The result, as Diel noted, was that many thoroughfares had to wander along the edges of precipices” and “tons of rock” had to be blasted away to clear the path”, and she adds: “In many causes the workmen had to be roped together, as with out that precaution it would have been impossible for them to work in any degree of safety. Many bridges were built in circumstances of real peril. As stones cannot tell of the frightful human suffering which occurred near them, the Italians have honored the dead, who sacrificed their lives that the work might go on by inscribing on an arch of one of the bridges whatever the cost, we had to do it.”*⁴⁰²

The above discussion implies that the rugged topography, the great hydrographic systems, the deep gorges, and canyons of the area significantly challenged Italians during the construction of highways.⁴⁰³



Figure 13: The abandoned Italian Bahir Dar-Dājān highway section, at Ambo Mäsk, near the newly constructed church of Mädhānialām, 40 kms away from Bahir Dar (photo by the researcher)

⁴⁰¹ Alfredo Gonzalez, “Fascist Colonialism: The Archaeology...,” p. 4.

⁴⁰² Pankhurst, “Road Building during Fascist...,” pp. 41-42.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*



Figure 14: Italian gravel highway section at the Blue Nile valley on the Addis Ababa-Däbrä Marqos highway. Source: Seventh Annual Report on the Activities of the IHA, P. 16.

3.4. Factors for the Deterioration of Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway in the Post-Italian Period

The deterioration of highways is considerable in Ethiopia due to the effects caused by the dry season, in particular during the rainy season. For instance, flooding poses a significant threat to highways and causes massive obstruction of traffic and damage to highway structures, with possible long-term effects. Flooding, especially as a result of heavy rain, is the predominant cause of weather-related destruction of highways. Mountain slides, washouts, and other sudden happenings caused by acts of nature can also change the condition of highways within an hour.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ Ethiopia Observer, "Highways in Ethiopia," in Sylvia and Richard Pankhurst (ed.) *Journal of Independent Opinion, Economics, History and the Arts*, Vol. II, No. 2 (June 1958), p. 232.

Likewise, the highway that connects Addis Ababa with Gojjam was deteriorated by these natural hazards. For instance, this highway was blocked by debris near Tilili, 485 kilometers away from Addis Ababa, caused by a mountain slide. The mountain slide occurred due to heavy rain on August 9, 1954. This incident damaged the highway and disrupted the transportation services for three continuous days. Vehicles and passengers were forced to return to their destination.⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore, this highway was blown up by the flood, making vehicle transportation difficult not only in the rainy season but also in the dry season.⁴⁰⁶ The stone pavements were washed away, and the highway was filled with sediments. Since this highway had no ditches along the sides, it was eroded on both sides during the rainy season when natural drainages such as rivers and streams flooded. Lack of ditches along the sides significantly aggravated the deterioration of this highway during the rainy season. If the construction of ditches had taken place earlier, the highway would not have been severely endangered by flood hazards in such a way.⁴⁰⁷ The Governorate General of Gojjam disclosed the situation in this letter to the Ministry of Pen. The excerpt taken from the letter reads as follows: “በጎጃም ጠቅላይ ግዛት በጠላት ጊዜ የተሰራው መንገድ ማለት ትልቁ አባይ እና የሸዋን ግዛት ከባህርዳር ጋር የሚያገናኘው መንገድ ከጠላት መልቀቅ ወዲህ ያልታደሰ በመሆኑ፤ በከረምት ወራት ዝናቡ እና ጎርፉ መንገዱን እየሸረሸረ ፈፅሞ አበላሽቶታል፡፡”⁴⁰⁸

The road which was constructed during the period of Italian occupation in the Governorate General of Gojjam meaning the one that linked Šäwa with Bahir Dar over Abbay proper [the Blue Nile River] is completely devastated by the rain and the flooding of the rainy seasons as it underwent no reparation works after the evacuation of the enemy [Italians].

⁴⁰⁵Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Nehasie* (August) 1974 E.C.

⁴⁰⁶DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Public Works, Ref. No. 139/47, July 12/11/47 E.C.

⁴⁰⁷*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Qolla Däga Damot Awrajja to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 412/47, July 20/11/47 E.C.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Pen, Ref. No. 231/47, 1947 E.C.

Furthermore, during the rainy season, the ground along this highway line became so muddy that all vehicles were unable to move on it.⁴⁰⁹ As a result, it was common for vehicles to be stuck in the mud for days until being dragged by human power.⁴¹⁰ Passengers and the local people were instrumental in pulling the vehicles out of the mud. As a result, the vehicle is always driven with tools like shovels, hoes, and pickaxes for this purpose.⁴¹¹

Unpaved road sections were extremely vulnerable to floods, landslides, and gully erosions. Unless rain water drains properly on unpaved road sections, the road surface is washed away, resulting in sedimentation on the road. Besides, in different sections of the highway, many potholes were created due to heavy rain. As a result, this highway becomes very difficult for vehicle transport. The Governorate General of Gojjam disclosed the situation in this letter to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication. The excerpt taken from it reads as follows:

በጎጃም ጠቅላይ ግዛት በጠላት ዘመን ከአባይ ወንዝ እስከ ባህርዳር የተዘረጋው መንገድ በየቦታው እየተቋረጠ ግማሹ በዲንጋይ ንጣፍ የተሰራ አንዱ ላይ ደግሞ ድንጋይ ያልተነጠፈበት በመሆኑ እንዲሁም ድልድዮች ተሰርተው ሳይፈፀሙ የቀሩ በመሆናቸው ተሽከርካሪ መኪኖችን ማስተላለፍ ቀርቶ ለህዝብ እንኳን ቢሆን የሚያስቸግር በመሆኑ ተቋርጦ ድንጋይ ያልተነጠፈበት እና ድልድዮችም ጅምሮች ተሰርተው እንዲያልቁ በማለት በየጊዜው ለምናመለከተው ሁሉ ባለመፈጸሙ ጅምር ሁነው የቀሩትን ድልድዮች ጎርፍ ሸርሸሯቸው ተሰባብረዋል፡፡አንዳንድ ቦታ ላይም የተነጠፈው ድንጋይ በጎርፍ በመሸርሸሩ ከላይ እንደተጠቀሰው ለተመላላሾች አስቸግሯል፡፡⁴¹²

The road in the Governorate General of Gojjam, which was constructed from Abbay River to Bahir Dar during the period of Italian occupation, is even difficult for people to travel on let alone for vehicles since it displays unfinished works at several points; half of it covered with gravel and the other half without gravel cover together with bridges, the works of which was not completed about which we repeatedly requested but not accomplished as per our requests, which gave rise to the destruction of the unfinished bridges by flooding. Even the gravel covered one is challenging for passengers as noted above as it is eroded by flooding.

⁴⁰⁹J.N. Blash Ford-Snell et al, “the Conquest of the Blue Nile,” *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 136, No. 1 (March, 1970), PP. 43-44.

⁴¹⁰DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No.መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Qolla Däga Damot Awrajja, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 412/47, July 20/11/47 E.C.

⁴¹¹ Informants: Simeneh Muhammed, Aderajew Girma, and Abeje Wendie.

⁴¹²*Ibid*, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, Ref. No. 544/471, January 8/6/47 E.C.

The local people expressed the deterioration of this gravel highway in their daily social activities in the following couplet:

እንኳን ያንተዉ ጎጆ የኩሽሽላዉ፤
መንገዱም ፈርሷል ጣልያን የሰራዉ።⁴¹³
Let alone your hut made of acanthus sennii:
The road constructed by Italians is also destructed.

In addition to natural factors, the local people were also accountable for the deterioration of Dājān-Bahir Dar highway. Perhaps unwittingly, peasants discharged the rainwater collected from their farm lands to this highway. To discharge the water away from their farm land, mostly peasants built small canals that stretch from farm lands towards the highway. Therefore, the upper structure of the highway was severely eroded and washed away by the flood. As a result, it was obstructed by sediments, making it difficult for motor traffic. Furthermore, Italian concrete bridges were destroyed by local robbers who demanded girders to forge them for agricultural tools and sell them to blacksmiths.⁴¹⁴



Figure 15: The deteriorated Bahir Dar-Dājān highway section, near Dājān. Source: Imperial Highway Authority Planning Team, *Highway Construction in Ethiopia*, P. 7.

⁴¹³ Informant: Ato Qomiche Ambaw.

⁴¹⁴ Interviews with Misganaw Balew, Yikeber Bitew, Teshager Degu, and Mekuriaw Jenber.

Therefore, an immediate maintenance system could be the only answer to repair such severe damage without delays, which in turn would be disastrous for general traffic. Hence, the governor-general of Gojjam *Ṭäqalay Gizat* disclosed the situation in this letter to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication. The excerpt taken from it reads as follows:

ይህ አንድ መንገድ ይቅር እና ሌሎችም መገናኛዎች ባዋሳኛችን ከሚገኙት ከበጌምድርና ከወሎ ከወለጋ ጠቅላይ ግዛቶችና እንዲሁም ከአዉራጃዉ ግዛታችን የሚያደርሱ መንገዶች ይሰሩልናል ብለን ተስፋ ስናደርግ እንዴዉም ይህ አንድ መንገድ ፈርሶ ፈጽሞ ሊበላሽ ስለሆነ ከአሁኑም በክቡርነትዎ መልካም ፈቃድ ይህ ከአባይ እስከ ባህርዳር የተዘረጋዉ መንገድ እንዲጠገን ይደረግልን ዘንድ በማክበር እገልጣለሁ፡፡⁴¹⁵

Let alone this road, we also hoped that other communications that would connect Gojjam with our neighbors, Bägémidir, Wällo, Wälläga as well as roads leading from our Awrajjas would be built. Even worse, this road that stretches from Abbay to Bahir Dar was severely damaged and I respectfully inform your Excellency that this road be repaired by your good will.

But, in the post-Italian period, the Imperial Ethiopian government was not in the position to repair this and other highways.⁴¹⁶ The economic stagnation that hit Ethiopia in the 1940s, along with a lack of international capital, prevented the government from undertaking any maintenance of existing highways.⁴¹⁷ The following archival document substantiates this point:

ለክቡርነትዎ ደጋግመን በጽሁፍና በቃልም እንዳስረዳንዎ ከደብረ ማርቆስ አውራጃ ከደጀን ወረዳ እስከ ባህርዳር የሚወስደዉ የመኪና መንገድ በፍጹም የተበላሸ መሆኑን አዲስ አበባ ባሁኑ አመት፤ 47 በነበርሁበት ጊዜ ተነጋግሪ በ47 ዓ.ም የመንገዱ ጥገና የሚጀመር መሆኑን ገልጸዉልኝ ስለነበር በመስከረም ወር ስራዉ ይቀጥላል በማለት ተስፋ ሳደርግ የአዉራጃ ዳና ባለስልጣን እላይ የተጠቀሰዉን መንገድ በፕሮግራሙ ውስጥ የተመለከተ ሲሆን ለስራዉ የሚያስፈልገዉ ወጭ በባጀት ላይ ተጨምሮ አልተሰጠም በማለት በቁጥር፡ 329/ ነሐሴ 27/47 ዓ.ም ለክቡርነትዎ በተጻፈዉ ደብዳቤ ላይ ተገልጾ የተጻፈ መሆኑን በደረሰኝ ኮፒ ተመልክቻለሁ፡፡ የተበላሸዉ መንገድ ሳይጠገን ከአመት ወደ አመት እየተላለፈ ከመቆየቱ የተነሳ ፈጽሞ መኪና የማያስተላልፍ መሆኑን እየገለጽሁ በጉዳዩ ክቡርነትዎ የበለጠ አስበባት በተሎ ተወስኖየ መጨረሻዉ ትእዛዝ ተላልፎላቸዉ ስራዉ በቅርብ ጊዜ ይፈጸምልን ዘንድ በመደጋገም አሳስባለሁ፡፡⁴¹⁸

For your Excellency [Ras Abebe Aregay], we [officials of Gojjam Ṭäqalay Gizat] have repeatedly stated in writing and orally that the road that radiates from Däbrä Marqos Awrajjä in Däjän district and leads to Bahir Daris

⁴¹⁵DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, Ref. No. 544/471, January 8/6/47 E.C.

⁴¹⁶Bahiru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*, 2nd Edition (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), p. 164.

⁴¹⁷ Mattia, “the Long Term Impact Italian Colonial ...,” p. 54.

⁴¹⁸DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Aweke Amha to Ras Abebe Aregay, Ref. No. 329/47, dated 27/47 E.C.

completely damaged. When I [Aweqe Amha] was in Addis Ababa this year (1947), you told me that the road repair would begin in 1947 E.C. While I was hoping that the work would continue in September, the IHA saw the road mentioned above in the program and said that the cost for the project was not included in the budget in a letter written to your Excellency dated 329/August 27/47 E.C. I saw in the receipt a copy of the letter stating that the cost of the project was not included in the budget. I state that the damaged road concerns no one year after year without any repair and it is becoming very difficult for motor traffic. I would like to reiterate that your Excellency would give due attention to this matter and that the final order would be given for them [IHA workers] and that the work will be completed soon.

As a result, on December 13, 1956, the Imperial Ethiopian Government sent a letter to Ras Hailu Belew, the governor-general of Gojjam Governorate-General, stating that Dājān-Bahir Dar highway would be repaired with public participation under the supervision of Šambāl Aemiro Selassie, the governor-general of Bahir Dar Awrajjja.⁴¹⁹ In addition to this, Šāhafā Ti'izaz (the minister of Pen) disclosed additional orders in the letter written to Gojjam Governorate-General. The excerpt taken from it reads as follows: “ከደጃን እስከ ባህርዳር ያለውን መንገድ ሻምበል አእምሮ በባላገሩ እርዳታ እንዲያሰሩ ስለታዘዙ ሹማመንቶቹ ትዛዙን እየተቀበሉ እስከ 15 ቀንድረስ ተሰርቶ እንዲያልቅ እንዲያደርጉ መታዘዙን አስታወቃለሁ፡፡”⁴²⁰ the text, literally translated, could read; “I [ministry of pen] would like to inform you [Gojjam Governorate-General] that order was given to the effect that the road from Dājān to Bahir Dar has to be constructed with the help of peasants under the responsibility of Šambāl Aemiro Selasse, so that the officers will accept the order and have it completed within 15 days.” In addition to Šambāl Aemiro Selassie, Ato Aweqe Amha, the secretary of Gojjam Governorate-General, was assigned by the governor-general of Gojjam to reconstruct Dājān-Bahir Dar highway.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, to Ras Hailu Belew, Ref. No. 12773/19, December14/1949 E.C.

⁴²⁰*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Pen, to Gojjam Governorate-General, Ref. No. 47/44, December16/4/1949 E.C.

⁴²¹DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ras Hailu Belew, to Aweqe Amha, Ref. No., dated 24/5/1949 E.C.

3.5. The Role of the local people in the Process of Däjän-Bahir Dar Highway Repairing Work

Using labor-intensive schemes (labor-based schemes) to repair roads in third world countries like Ethiopia is considered advantageous in many ways. One of its major benefits is that it saves extra expenses for repairing deteriorated roads. Repairing of roads through labor-intensive would enhance socio-economic activities by opening up remote areas to both human and vehicular traffic. This would in turn facilitate the movement of people and goods across different areas.⁴²²

The Ministry of Public Works and Communication of the Imperial Ethiopian Government sent shovels (300), hoes (50), pickaxes (600), and mattocks (50) to Gojjam *Ṭäqlay Gizat* to repair this highway. Except for Mätäkäl *Awrajja*, Šambäl Amiro Selassie received these tools from the governor-general of Gojjam and allocated them to each *Awrajjas*.⁴²³

According to the order of the Imperial Ethiopian Government, in mid January 1956, the *Awrajja* and *Wäräda* governors announced to the local people to begin Däjän-Bahir Dar highway repair work through labor-intensive schemes. They also ordered peasants to come from a far distance, which took a distance of 3 to 4 days' journey. Thus, a large number of peasants poured onto this highway with their food and tools. In addition to the materials sent from the central government, the local people brought their own tools such as baskets, shovels, hoes, and pickaxes to be used in the restoration works. In some localities (in Ačäfär district), depending on the peasants' interests, they brought agricultural tools together with their oxen.⁴²⁴

With respect to repairing process, the road was divided into *Qäbälés* and distributed to each individual. According to oral sources, the *Aṭbia Dagña* measured the road with a rope made from

⁴²²Ethiopian Herald, September-June 1982 E.C.

⁴²³DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. *፬/፬*-61, a letter Written from Ministry of Public Works and Communication, to Gojjam Governorate-General, Ref. No. no, dated 15/4/1949 E.C.

⁴²⁴ Interviews with Aragaw Bezie, Jemere Gwadie, Sew Mehon Melashu, and Andinet Sintie.

a plant called *Nača* (*hibiscus macranthus*) and distributed it to each individual. Accordingly, 15 cubits were given to one person. Peasants carried sandstone from a distance with baskets and leveled irregular road sections beginning from day break to dusk. The main physical work included leveling and filling potholes. As I noted above, in some areas, to get sufficient gravel, they plowed the two sides of the road and filled the potholes with gravel. They worked until they finished their parts, which took them two to three days. The order was gender specific in that it was only men who took part in the repair works.⁴²⁵

Most often, the governor of Gojjam controlled the activities of the *Awrajja* governors; the latter in turn managed the *Wäräda* and the *Aṭbia Dagña* activities. In particular, the *Aṭbia Dagña* and *Fitawraris* had the responsibility of monitoring the day-to-day operations through strict supervision. For example, they reported to *Wäräda* governors regarding absences and the progress of the reconstruction work. The *Fitawraris* and *Aṭbia Dagñas*, who did not properly perform their responsibilities and failed to mobilize peasants, were accountable to *Wäräda* governors; the latter, in turn, were accountable to *Awrajja* governors. Depending on the degree of their negligence for the work, they may be deposed from their power and replaced by other active *Aṭbia Dagñas* and *Fitawraris*.⁴²⁶ For instance, the two *Aṭbia Dañoč*, Yigzaw and Hailu were deposed from their power and replaced by *Ato Alemu Ayele* because they did not accomplish the rehabilitation work properly. Alemu Ayele actively mobilized the people and completed the road repair work from January 14 to February 14, 1956.⁴²⁷

In addition to the *Aṭbia Dañas*, *Fitawraris*, and *Wäräda* governors, *Ato Aweqe Amha* traveled from place to place and oversaw the operation and accomplishments of public works. For

⁴²⁵Interviews with Aragaw Bezie and Jemere Gwadie.

⁴²⁶ Informant: Qomiche Ambaw and Dagninet Ayelew.

⁴²⁷DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from *Ato Asmamaw*, *Aṭbia Dagña*, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 471/14, Dated, February 29/6/49 E.C.

instance, he supervised the activities of the public works in Qolla Däga Damot Awrajja. Accordingly, in this *Awraja*, the reconstruction work runs very well. But, in *Dämbächa Wārāda*, the repair work was much delayed. Besides, the quality of the repair work was very poor. In particular, the rugged sections of the road were not well repaired. Therefore, to intensify the public work and mobilize the local people, Aweqe ordered the *Awrajja* governor to personally appear for a few days at the repair work.⁴²⁸ Besides, Ato Aweqe Amha disclosed the accomplishments of the repair work in *Dājān Wārāda* in this letter to *Ras Hailu Belew*. The excerpt taken from it reads as follows:

ባነደድ ቀበሌ ነፋሳም ተሰርቷል ለማለት አያስደፍርም፤ እንዲሁም የፊታውራሪ ምንዉየለት ካሳ አልተሰራም፤ ከዚያም ቀጥሎ የፊታውራሪ ደስታ ወንዴ አሰራራቸው ደህና ነው፤ ወደ ፍጻሜ አልደረሰም፤ ቀጥሎ ያቶ የሮም ተሰማ በሚገባ ተሰርቷል ማለስለስስ ብቻ አልፏል ፎቀርቶታል፤ ቀጥሎ አዋበል ቀኝ አዝማች በቀለ ብቻቸውን ይደክማሉ፤ የወረዳው ገዥ ፊታውራሪ ዘውዱ መኮነን በጭራሽ አላሰቡትም፤ እንዲያውም በአይን የሚታየውን ስርቻለሁ ብለው ከርከር አቅርበዋል፤የደጅን ወረዳ ገዥ በግዛታቸው የሉም፤ ጸሀፊው አቶ ገሰሰ የተባው በእውነቱ ካቅሙ በላይ ይደክማል፤ መንገዱም እስከ አባይ ድረስ በሚገባ ተሰርቶ እንሁ ላይ አልፎ አልፎ ያልተሰሩ ይገኛሉ እነዚህም በቅርብ ጊዜ የምክትሉ ገዥ ቀኝዝማች ዘውዱ እንደሚያስጨርሱት እተማመናለሁ፤ ከደጅን ከተማ አዋሳኝ መሬቱ ኩትቻ ስለሆነ ሲቆፍሩት በመፈንቀሉ ምክንያት ሀይለኛ በመሆኑ ህዝቡ በብዛት ወጥቶ በድካም ላይ ይገኛል፤ አነሱም እንዳያያዝቸው በቅርብ ጊዜ እንደሚያከናውኑት እተማመናለሁ፡፡⁴²⁹

In Aneded, kābälé Nifasam, it cannot be said that it is constructed, and also Fitawrari Minwuyälät Kassa's is not constructed. Next to this, Fitawrari Desta Wondi's construction is fine; it has not come to an end. Next, Ato Tessema's is well done; only softening is left. Next, Awabäl, Qāñ Azmač Bekele is toiling alone. Fitawrari Zewdu, the district governor, never thought of it, he even argued that he had worked what is visible to the naked eye. The governor of Dājān district not in his state; the secretary, Ato Gessesse actually is working beyond his capacity. The road up to the Nile is well constructed and there are occasional unfinished ones, which I [Aweke Amha] believe will soon be completed by the deputy governor, Qāgn Azmač Zewdu. The area around Dājān is rocky and large numbers of people are exhausted due to heavy excavation. I am sure they will do it as soon as possible.

Ato Aweqe also supervised the accomplishments of the reconstruction work in *Bahir Dar Awrajja*, *Méça* and *Ačäfär Wārādas*. In these *Wārādas*, the reconstruction work was completed

⁴²⁸DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ato Aweqe Amha, to *Ras Hailu Belew*, Ref. No. no, dated 24/5/49 E.C.

⁴²⁹*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ato Aweqe Amha, to *Ras Hailu Belew* Ref. No. 3883/49, dated 6/5/49 E.C.

before the advent of the fasting season. Within a month, the deteriorated road parts were fully repaired.⁴³⁰

On February 14, 1956, with the goodwill and efforts of the local people, the road-repairing work was nearly completed. Hence, the Ministry of Interior extended gratitude to the local people and officials for their selfless road-repairing efforts. The Ministry of Interior also stated its hope that, with the help of the people's goodwill, the rest of the repair work would be completed soon.⁴³¹ Thus, referring to the roads and bridges conservation proclamation issued in 1950, *Ato Aweqe Amha* wrote to *Ras Hailu Belew*. The letter states that the highway and bridges repaired by public participation should be protected by villagers who live along this highway, the district governors, and *Aṭbia Dagña*. He forwarded this message until the final report, which describes the end of the repair work, was submitted.⁴³² Accordingly, *Ras Hailu* received the issue and notified to each of the seven Gojjam sub-province (*Awrajjja*) governors in the following letter. I quote the letter, which reads as follows:

ስለ መንገዶች እና ድልድዮች አጠባበቅ 65 ቁጥር፡ 1943 የወጣውን ነጋሪት ጋዜጣ በመጥቀስ የጠቅላይ ግዛቱ ጠቅላይ የፅህፈት ቤት ሹም አቶ አወቀ አምኃ በቁጥር 10፡የካቲት 14 ቀን 1949 ስለገፋልን፤በአዋጁ መሰረት የወረዳ ገዥዎች እና አጥቢ ዳኞች በየመንገዱ ዳር የሚገኙት መንደርተኞች መንገዱን እንዲጠብቁት እንዲያደርጉ አሳስባለሁ፡፡⁴³³

Referring to the roads and bridges conservation proclamation issued in Nāgarit Gazéta under number 65/1950, Ato Aweqe Amha, the chief of Gojjam governorate-general Şehéfäte Bèt (office), wrote to us [Hailu Belew] under number 10, February 10, 1949. Based on the proclamation, I [Hailu Belew] urge district governors and local judges to ensure that villagers along the road protect it [highway].

⁴³⁰ Informants: *mārgéta* Agumas Getahun and *Ato Alem Tegegne*.

⁴³¹DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, A letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, to *Fitawrari Sebisbie Shibiru*, Ref. No. 155/49, March 6/7/49 E.C.

⁴³²*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Aweqe Amha*, to *Ras Hailu Belew* Ref. No. 471/44, dated 14/6/49 E.C.

⁴³³*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Ras Hailu Belew*, to the Seven Gojjam *Awrajjjas*, Ref. No. 5042/471/44, dated 19/6/49 E.C.

The Ministry of Finance, pleased with the active participation of peasants, funded Eth.8000 birr to Gojjam governorate-general, *Bäjerond*, the people who were repairing the highway to invite to *araqi* (local liquor) and *Firida* (beef). *Šambäl* Amiro Selasse was instructed to receive this money and hand it over to each of the *Awrajja* governors-general. He was also ordered to submit a copy of the cash receipt voucher for the expenditure.⁴³⁴ Accordingly, *Šambäl* Amiro Selassie received this birr (Eth.8000 birr) from *Bäjerond* and distributed it to each of the *Awrajja* governors according to their share; the latter in turn redistributed it to each district governor. For instance, he handed over Eth. 900 birr to the governor-general of *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja*, who in turn redistributed Eth. 128 birr each to the seven district governors-general. He also hands over Eth.815 birr and 80 cents to Tefera Kidane Mariam, the treasurer of *Qolla Däga Damot Awrajja*.⁴³⁵

In most Gojjam *Awrajjas*, the people interestedly invited *araqi* (local liquor) and *firida* (beef). However, in *Däbrä Marqos* and *Qolla Däga Damot Awrajjas*, half of the peasants were reluctant to accept the invitation ordered by the Imperial Ethiopian Government. Thus, *Šambäl* Amiro urged the bull and beverages purchased for the invitation to be returned to *Bäjerond*.⁴³⁶ For instance, in *Däbrä Marqos Awrajja*, in *Awabäl* district, peasants complained as they repaired the highway, His Imperial Majesty would come, but not for an invitation. They also added that in the future, they would maintain this highway by leveling uneven road sections. Besides, they suggested that the money should be returned to His Imperial Majesty's treasury.⁴³⁷ Indeed, there

⁴³⁴DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Finance, to Gojjam Governorate-General, *Bejrond*, Ref. No. 3366/49, dated 19/4/49 E.C.

⁴³⁵*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from *Šambäl* Aemiro Selassie, to *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie Shibru, Ref. No. 47/44, March 8/1950 E.C.

⁴³⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from *Šambäl* Aemiro Selassie, to *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie Shibru, Ref. No. 47/44, March 8/1950 E.C.

⁴³⁷*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from *Awabäl* District, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 471/49, February 10/1949 E.C.

was a rumor that his Imperial Majesty would come to Gojjam to visit this highway after its reconstruction was completed.⁴³⁸

The advent of the fasting season was also another factor for peasants who did not accept the invitation ordered by His Imperial Majesty. Concerning this, the governor of Anädäd district [Ayalew] disclosed the peasants' suggestion in this letter to *Ato Yohannes Afewerq*, the chief of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja Şehfäte Bèt* (office). The excerpts taken from it read as follows:

የመኪናውን መንገድ የደለደለው ህዝብ ፍራዳ እና አረቂ ተገዝቶ እንዲጋበዝ ከክቡርነትዎ የደረሰንን ትእዛዝ መሰረት በማድረግ እንደትእዛዙ ለመፈፀም ለከፍላችን ምክትል ገዢዎች ትእዛዙን ደጋግመን አስተላልፈን ነበር፤ ነገር ግን የፆሙ ጊዜ የተቃረነ በመሆኑ ለግብዣው አንድም ሰው ሳይቀርብ ፆሙ ስለገባ ህዝቡ ያልተጋበዘ መሆኑን ለክቡርነትዎ እየገለፅሁ፤ ለወደፊት ግን አስፈላጊውን ትእዛዝ ተጠባባቂ መሆናችንን በማክበር አመለካከታለሁ፡፡⁴³⁹

According to the order we received from your Excellency [Ato Yohannes Afewerq] and to perform it [the order], we repeatedly announced the order for our vice governor-generals, the people who leveled the highway to be invited to firida (beef) and araqi (local liquor). But, I [Ayalew Desta] state to your Excellency that, due to the advent of the fasting season, no one was presented at the invitation. We [Ayalew Desta] respectfully state that, in the future, we are ready to accept any order.

Furthermore, in Däjän district, the people invited *areqi* (local liquor) but not *firida* (beef). The district governor was waiting for an order from Gojjam governorate-general's office to sell the three bulls purchased for the invitation and return the money to the treasury.⁴⁴⁰

Likewise, in Qolla Däga Damot *Awrajja*, except in Gwagussa and Wonbärmma *Wäräda*, peasants in other *Wäräda* were not invited.⁴⁴¹ Even in Wonbärmma district, peasants only invited

⁴³⁸DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ministry of Finance to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 497/50, June 26/10/1950 E.C.

⁴³⁹*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Anädäd *Wäräda*, to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* Office, Ref. No. 946/14/49, April 10/1949 E.C.

⁴⁴⁰*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Däjän District, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 1297/123, January 7/1949 E.C.

⁴⁴¹*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsbie, to *Däjjazmač* Ayalew Mekonnen, Ref. No. 3444/471/44, dated 21/4/50 E.C.

araqi (local liquor) but not *firida*.⁴⁴² Peasants were not invited to *firida* (beef) because the bull was bought after the advent of the fasting season. Therefore, the bull, which was bought for Eth. 49 birr, was sold for Eth. 50 birr, and the money was in the hands of Tefera Kidane Mariam, the treasurer of Qolla Däga Damot *Awrajja*.⁴⁴³ Similarly, in other Qolla Däga Damot *Wärädas*, the bulls were looked after by district governors because, like in Wänbärmma *Wärdäda*, they were bought after the advent of the fasting season.⁴⁴⁴

On January 24, 1957, the Ministry of Finance addressed a note to *Ato Awoqe Amha*, concerning Eth. 8000 birr that the Ministry of Finance had funded to Gojjam governorate-general, *Bäjerond*, to invite the people who repaired Däjän-Bahir Dar highway. A note stating that the necessary legal receipt which shows the expenses of this money for its intended program should be delivered to the Ministry of Finance. It also states that if there is leftover money, it must be returned to the Ministry of Finance.⁴⁴⁵ However, Gojjam governorate-general office did not reply timely to what was asked from the Ministry of Finance; the latter, in turn, was challenged to respond to the question repeatedly raised by higher government authorities. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance wrote the second letter to Gojjam governorate general office.⁴⁴⁶

Accordingly, *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie, the then *Endärasé* (acting governor) of Gojjam governorate-general, addressed a note to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja's* office. The addressed note stated that the peasants of this *Awrajja*, who repaired Däjän-Bahir Dar highway voluntarily, had not been

⁴⁴²DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ras Hailu Belew, to Šambäl Aeimro Selassie, Ref. No. 10693/471/44, dated 3/1/50 E.C.

⁴⁴³*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Tefera Kidane Mariam, to Qolla Dgäa Damot *Awrajja* Office, Ref. No. 5/49, July30/49 E.C.

⁴⁴⁴*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ras Hailu Belew, to Šambäl Aeimro Selassie, Ref. No. 10693/471/44, dated 3/1/50 E.C.

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Finance, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 614/504/48, January16/1950 E.C.

⁴⁴⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Finance, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 265, *Pagmé* 3/13/1950 E.C.

invited and that the money (Eth.900 birr) should be returned to the Gojjam governorate-general treasury up to December 4, 1957 as soon as possible.⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, he wrote to *Däjjazmač* Ayalew Mekonnen, the governor-general of Qolla Däga Damot *Awrajja*. The letter states that with the exception of Gwagussa and Wonbärmma *Wäräda*, the peasants in other *Wärädas* were not invited and the remaining money should be returned to Gojjam governorate-general treasury up to January 7, 1957. Besides, the letter states that the oxen bought for the invitation must be resold and the money returned to the treasury.⁴⁴⁸ However, the two *Awrajja* governor-generals did not immediately respond. *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie, for his part, was receiving repeated orders from the Ministry of Finance to return the remaining money from the two *Awrajjas*. As a result, on March 4, 1957, *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie readdressed a note to *Däjjazmač* Ayalew Mekonnen and *Däjjazmač* Gobena Amedie. The addressed note stated that the peasants of the two *Awrajjas* who repaired Däjän-Bahir Dar highway, were not invited and that the money should be returned immediately to Gojjam governorate-general treasury up to March 12, 1957.⁴⁴⁹

In October 1958, in Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja*, except for Anädäd, the money donated for the invitation was recollected and Eth. 761 birr and 50 cents given to *Ato* Awoke Amha. The official of Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* office, *Ato* Yohannes Afeworq, states to Gojjam governorate-general office that there was no money left in this *Awrajja* except in Anädäd district. He also notified *Fitawrari* Ayaliew Desta, the governor of Anädäd district, to handover the money (Eth. 128 birr and 50 cents) to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* office he had taken from *Awrajja* governor.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie, to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* Office Ref. No. 2886/471, dated 21/10/1950 E.C.

⁴⁴⁸*Ibid*, Folder No.74, File No.መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie, to *Däjjazmač* Ayalew Mekonnen, Ref. No. 3444/471/44, dated 21/4/50 E.C.

⁴⁴⁹*Ibid*, Folder No.74, File No.መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsibie, to *Däjjazmač* Ayalew Mekonnen, Ref. No. 6204/47/44, dated 25/6/50 E.C.

⁴⁵⁰*Ibid*, Folder No.74, File No.መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* Office, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. no, October 6/1951 E.C.

Concerning this, Gojjam governorate-general *Shehefäte Bèt* (office) wrote to *Fitawrari Ayaliew Desta*. I quote the letter, which read as follows:

መንገድ ለጠገነው ህዝብ መጋበዣ እንዲሆን ተከፍሎ የነበረው 128.50 ሳንቲም ህዝቡ ግብዣውን አንፈቅድም በማለቱ ገንዘቡ ወደ ግ/ቤት ተመላሽ እንዲሆን በመታዘዙ በደብረ ማርቆስ አውራጃ ግዛት የሚገኙት ወረዳ ገዥዎች ቢደርሻቸው የወሰዱትን ተመላሽ ሲያደርጉ በእርስዎ በኩል ያለው ከፍ ብሎ የተጠቀሰው ገንዘብ እስከ ዛሬ ገቢ ሳይሆን ቆይቷል፡ አሁንም ይህ ደብዳቤ እንደደረሰዎ ለደብረ ማርቆስ አውራጃ ግዛት ፅ/ቤት እንዲያስረክቡ አስታውቃለሁ፡፡⁴⁵¹

You [Ayalew Desta] were given 128 birr and 50 cents to invite the people who repaired the road [Dājān-Bahir Dar highway]. Since the people refused to accept the invitation, the money was ordered to be returned to the treasury. Accordingly, all other district governors have returned the money they had taken, but you still have not returned the abovementioned money. As soon as you receive this letter, I [Ato Yohannes Afewerq] will notify you to handover the money to Däbrä Marqos Awrajja Shehefäte Bèt (office).

But, *Fitawrari Ayaliew Desta* was given another responsibility (public *Endärasé*) and was not in the district. Therefore, he transferred the money (Eth. 128 birr and 50 cents) to his colleague, *Ato Ayenew Tedla*; the latter, in turn, handover this money to Gojjam governorate-general office.⁴⁵² Of Eth. 8000 birr, the remaining Eth. 1,700 birr was returned to the Gojjam governorate-general treasury, funded by the Ministry of Finance, to invite the people who repaired Dājān-Bahir Dar highway. Since *Ato Awoqe Amha* repaired damaged bridges at his own expense, the Ministry of Finance ordered this money (Eth. 1, 700 birr) given to him.⁴⁵³ *Fitawrari Amiro Selassie*, on his part, sent 52 legal cash receipt vouchers which describe the expenses of Eth. 8000 birr for its intended program to the Ministry of Finance.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsbie, to *Fitawrari Ayalew Desta*, Ref. No. 1091/1171/44, dated 11/2/51 E.C.

⁴⁵²*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Ato Awoqe Amha*, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 2873/143/48, March 9/7/1951 E.C.

⁴⁵³*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Pen, to *Dejjazmach* Sebsbie, Ref. No. 2675/19, December15/1950 E.C.

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, *Bejrond*, to *Šambäl* Aemiro Selassie, Ref. No. 4112/414, September1/1951 E.C.

In addition to this money, as I noted above, the Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Public Works and Communication, gave different tools to *Fitawrari Šambäl* Aimiro Selassie to repair Däjän-Bahir Dar highway. After the completion of the repair work, the Ministry of Public Works and Communication ordered the return of tools sent to Gojjam governorate-general for the purpose of repairing the highway to the Imperial Ethiopian Government's treasury.⁴⁵⁵ As a result, Gojjam governorate-general office issued a directive to all seven Gojjam *Awrajjas* to return the tools they had taken from *Šambäl* Amiro Selassie to Gojjam governorate-general treasury.⁴⁵⁶

Of the seven Gojjam *Awrajjas*, Desta Mitke, the governor of Mätäkäl *Awrajjja*, complained that he did not take the tools from *Fitawrari Šambäl*.⁴⁵⁷ Gojjam governorate-general office received tools from all the *Awrajjas* except Agäw Midir *Awrajjja*. In this *Awrajjja*, the office refused to receive four badly damaged pickaxes and shovels.⁴⁵⁸ But, Ayenew Jenber, the governor-general of Agäw Midir *Awrajjja* office, on his part, complained that these four pickaxes and shovels were damaged during the construction of the *Awrajjja* office.⁴⁵⁹ Shovels (296), hoes (50), pickaxes (596), and mattocks (50) returned to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, on June 18, 1958.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Public Works and Communication, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 21/039/29/500, January 24/5/50 E.C.

⁴⁵⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General Office, to All Seven Gojjam *Awrajjas*, Ref. No. 4839/471/44, dated 14/11/50 E.C.

⁴⁵⁷*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Mätäkäl *Awrajjja*, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 1765/68/48, August 20/12/50 E.C.

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Hailu Shibeshi, to Agäw Midir *Awrajjja* Office, Ref. No. 969/670, April 21/1953 E.C.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Ayenew Jenber, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref. No. 2649/792/45, February 16/6/1953 E.C.

⁴⁶⁰*Ibid*, Folder No.74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General Office, to Ministry of Public Works and Communication, Ref. No. no, June 18/1958 E.C.

As I noted above, the reconstruction of Dājān-Bahir Dar highway was completed on March 27, 1956. Ato Aweqe Amha presented a report which describes the completion of Dājān-Bahir Dar highway reconstruction work to Gojjam governorate-general *Şehefäte Bèt* (office). The report states that the highway was well repaired with the goodwill and initiative of the local people. Ras Hailu Belew, the governor-general of Gojjam governorate-general, visited the reconstructed Dājān-Bahir Dar highway. He was interested in the reconstruction work. Thus, he sincerely thanked *Fitawrari* Amiro Selassie and Ato Aweqe Amha, who were responsible for the rehabilitation work of the highway. Ras Hailu also praised the people's selfless sacrifices in repairing this highway.⁴⁶¹

The reconstruction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway significantly reduced both travel times and challenges. For instance, before the highway was repaired, even during the winter season, the journey from Dājān to Däbrä Marqos took eight hours.⁴⁶² Surprisingly, after the highway was rehabilitated, the journey was reduced to four hours. Likewise, from Däbrä Marqos to Bahir Dar, travel times and challenges were significantly reduced after the highway improved. For instance, before the highway was repaired, the journey from Däbrä Marqos to Bahir Dar took four days. But, after the highway was improved, the journey was drastically reduced to two days. However, this highway, which was reconstructed by peasant labor, was severely deteriorated due to unseasonal heavy rain without providing transport services for some months. This unseasonal heavy rain was occurred in April 1957. Therefore, it needs urgent and better repair work by the Imperial Highway Authority.⁴⁶³ With regard to this, there is saying that “የመንገድ ህይወቱ ጥገና ነዉ.”

⁴⁶¹DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ras Hailu Belew, to Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Pen, Ref. No. 8119/471, dated 5/10/49 E.C.

⁴⁶²*Ibid.*

⁴⁶³*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from Ras Hailu Belew, to Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Pen, Ref. No. 8119/471, dated 5/10/49 E.C.

Literally, “the life of the road is repair.”⁴⁶⁴ The reconstruction work would make the highway safer for pedestrians and vehicles. Besides, the improvement of this highway would enable the people to be more effective in providing products to the whole of Ethiopia. Because of their easy access to markets, the villages along this highway would be the most beneficiary. Commercial centers would also establish along the highway.⁴⁶⁵

3.6. A History of Dājān-Bahir Dar Highway Reconstruction by IHA

A series of discussions took place between the Ministry of Communication and Gojjam governorate-general concerning the reconstruction of the Blue Nile-Bahir Dar highway.⁴⁶⁶ After the discussion, the IHA board of commissioners approved the reconstruction of Dājān-Bahir Dar highway October 8, 1958. To reconstruct this highway, the IHA divided the highway into two sections: the Blue Nile (Waša Mikael)-Dājān (38 km) and Dājān-Dābrā Marqos-Bahir Dar (366 km).⁴⁶⁷ For further information, see the following table:

Table 1: Estimated costs for the Blue Nile-Bahir Dar highway reconstruction project

No	project	Length in km	How to be performed	Estimate of Total cost Of the project If performed by Contract construction	Estimate of total number of months required to perform the work. This total elapsed time, including rainy weather	Estimate of the cost of the Project speculative of depreciation and equipment purchase. This estimate of cost includes: labor, supervision, and construction material	Estimate of the cost of Purchase price of new equipment required to perform the project	Total outlay to perform the project. This is the sum of column 7 and 8

⁴⁶⁴ IHA, *Highway Rehabilitation and Construction in Ethiopia, 1951-1957* (Unpublished Material), P. 7.

⁴⁶⁵ The United States Department of Interior, *Land and Water Resources of the Blue Nile* (Addis Ababa: Berhannena Selam Press, 1964), p. 118.

⁴⁶⁶ DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. 00/00-61, a letter Written from *Dājjazmač* Sebsbie, to Ministry of Communication, Ref. No. 2336, *Hidar* 14/60 E.C.

⁴⁶⁷ NALA, Folder No. 1.2.42.18, File No. 1.2.42, Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority.

						rials		
1	Waša Mikael (Blue Nile gorge)- Dājān	38	Contract	3, 500, 000	26	-	-	-
2	Dājān-Marqos- Bahir Dar	366	IHA	-	30	4, 006, 000	2, 642, 000	6, 648, 000

Source: NALA, Folder No. 1.2.42, File No. 1.2.42.18, Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority.

However, the IHA board of commissioners later amended the proposal for the Blue Nile gorge road project in the following ways:

Table 2: Estimated cost and completion date for the amended Blue Nile gorge road reconstruction project.

No	Items	Blue Nile Road Project
1	Estimate of total cost of the project	\$ 5, 886, 240
2	Contract time (calander day)	730
3	Starting date	May 28, 1959
4	Estimated completion date	Julay 31, 1963

Source: Ninth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1961, P. 27.

The IHA publicly opened bids for the reconstruction of Waša Mikael-Dājān road at the Ghion Hotel on April 8, 1959.⁴⁶⁸ Domestic and international firms such as Veidekke (Ethiopia), Vianini (Liberia), Sole Bonhi (Israel), Hoffman and Sons (Ethiopia), Marples, Rideway and Partners (London), Societe Dumez (France), Raymond Construction of Africa (America), and *Imprese Italiane All Estero* (Italian) competed to win the bids.⁴⁶⁹ *Imprese Italiane All Estero* won the bids and the contract for the reconstruction of the Blue Nile road project in the amount of Ethiopian (hereinafter referred to as Eth.) \$5, 886, 240 was awarded to this company. The sum was

⁴⁶⁸ Imperial Highway Authority Publication, Vol. II, No. 9, 1959 (unpublished material), P. 8.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. II, No. 5, 1959, P. 20.

increased in May 1961 by a further Eth. \$ 622, 288 due to additional agreements to include the construction of the Blue Nile viaduct. The contractor planned to construct the viaduct along with the road project.⁴⁷⁰ Sig Raynieri, the project superintendent, employed daily laborers and planned to begin the actual reconstruction work as soon as the rainy season ended.⁴⁷¹ The reconstruction work started on November 6, 1960, with an estimated completion date of January 1962. At the end of 1960, 34% of the reconstruction work was completed, and 43% of the contract time was completed.⁴⁷² The following archival document confirms this point: “ከአባይ እስከ ደጃን ስለሚሰራው መንገድ ጉዳይ ከቡርካትዎ እንደሚያወቀው ሁሉ ከዋሻ ሚካኤል እስከ ደጃን ድረስ መንገዱ በመሻሻል እንዲሰራ የኢትዮጵያ ንጉሥ ነገስት መንግስት የአወራጃና ባለስልጣን ለኮንትራት ሰጥቶ ስራው በመከናዎን ላይ ይገኛል፡፡”⁴⁷³ the text, literally translated, could read: “As your Excellency [acting governor of Gojjam] knows about the construction of the Blue Nile-Dājān road, to improve the Waša Mikael-Dājān road, the IHA gave it [the road] to the contractor and the work is in progress.”

The process of the reconstruction work consists of clearing and grubbing, drainage structure, grading and laying of base and surface courses over a road length of 38 kilometers. In 1961, 46% of the reconstruction work was completed and 68% of the contract time was used. The repair work also costs Eth. \$ 3,328,510 at an average monthly progress payment of Eth. \$ 278,375. At the end of 1961, 93% of the contract time completed, and the total cost of the project reached Eth. \$ 5,475, 480. It was estimated that the rehabilitation work would be completed in July 1963 at a total probable cost of Eth. \$7, 850,137.⁴⁷⁴ At the end of the 1962 reporting period, 98% of the project was completed, including the whole of the viaduct construction. The total cost up to

⁴⁷⁰ Imperial Highway Institute, *Seventh Annual Report on the Activities of Imperial Highway Authority* (unpublished material), p. 18.

⁴⁷¹ Imperial Highway Publication, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1959 (unpublished material), P. 4.

⁴⁷² Eighth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1960 (unpublished material), P.18.

⁴⁷³ DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from IHA, to Gojjam governorate-general Acting Governor, Ref. No. 170, September 26/1954 E.C.

⁴⁷⁴ Ninth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1961 (unpublished material), P. 20.

the end of 1962 was Eth. \$7, 688,718.⁴⁷⁵ The contractor disclosed the progress of the project to the IHA head office in the following ways: “የመንገዱ ስራ ፍፃሜ ወደ ማግኘቱ ተቃርቧል፡፡ የዚህ መንገድ ፍፃሜ ማግኘት በአዲስ አበባ እና በጎጃም መካከል ያለውን ግንኙነት የበለጠ ያቀራርባል፡፡ በተለይ የመንገዱ ስራ ለተመልካች እጅግ በሚያስደስት እና በሚያስደንቅ ሁኔታ የተሰራ በመሆኑ የተመለከተው ሁሉ ያደንቀዋል፡፡”⁴⁷⁶ the text, literally translated, could read: “the road construction is nearing completion. The completion of this road will bring the relationship between Addis Ababa and Gojjam closer. In particular, the work of the road is admired by all who see it, as it is constructed in a way that is very pleasing and impressive to the viewer.”

In the first half of 1963, the contractor completed the Blue Nile gorge road reconstruction work. After a contractor completed the whole road maintenance, considerable remedial work was also undertaken to improve the road structure deteriorated by mountain slides during the rainy season.⁴⁷⁷ During the reconstruction work, the contractor faced two major challenges. The first one was the repeated mountain slides caused by heavy rain during the rainy season. The second problem was the local people who refused the contractor to take gravel from their *rist*.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Tenth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1962 (unpublished material), P. 14.

⁴⁷⁶ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar* (November) 3, 1955 to *Tir* (January) 29, 1955 E.C.

⁴⁷⁷ Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1963(unpublished material), P. 9.

⁴⁷⁸ DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from the Imperial Highway Authority, to Gojjam Governorate-General Acting Governor, Ref No. 170, dated September 26/1/1954 E.C.

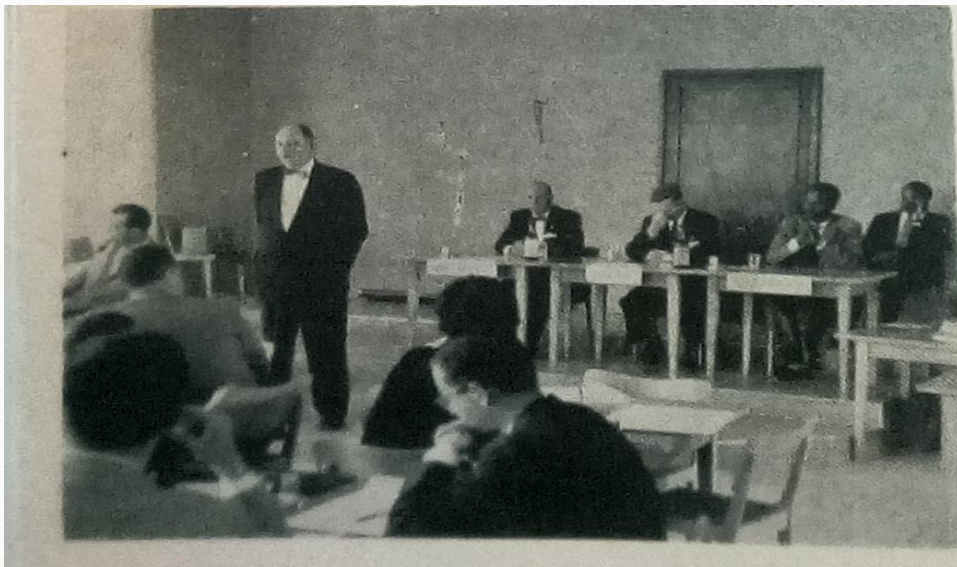


Figure 16: the director of highways, Mr. J. Clarke Williams, addressing bidders and other interested guests at Gihon Hotel to reconstruct the Blue Nile gorge-Dājān road section. Source: IHA Publication April 18, 1959, Vol. II, No. 9, p. 12.

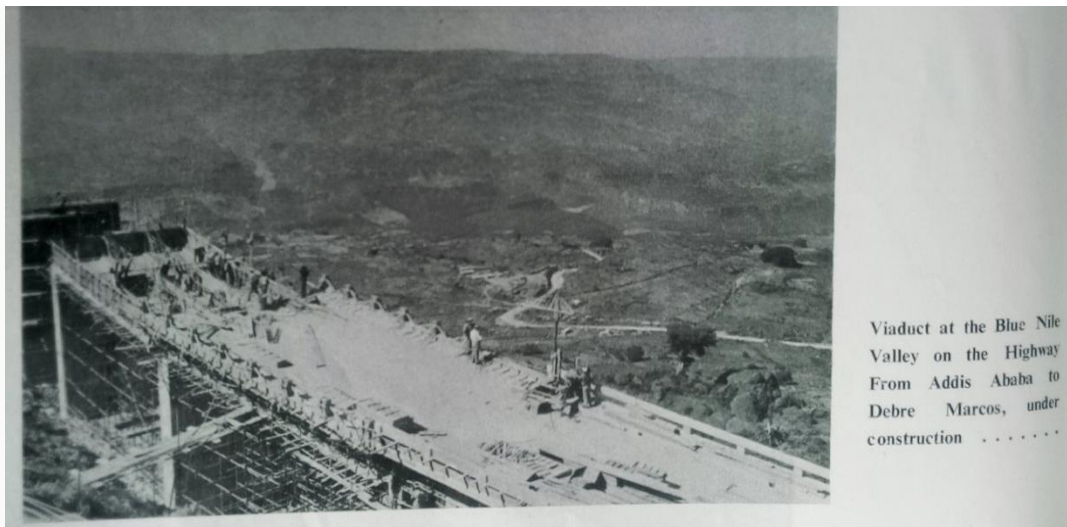


Figure 17: viaduct at the Blue Nile valley on the highway from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos, under construction. Source: Seventh annual report on the activitie of the IHA, p. 32.



Figure 18: the newly constructed the Blue Nile gorge viaduct. Source: Reports of the IHA, October 1964, p. 24.

Unlike the Blue Nile-Dājān road project, Dājān-Dābrā Marqos (77kms) road reconstruction work was conducted by the IHA. Concerning the reconstruction of Dājān-Dābrā Marqos road, the IHA wrote the following letter to *Däjjazmač* Sebsbie:

ክቡርነትዎ በቁጥር 2336/441/44ህዳር 14 ቀን1950 ዓ.ም የፃፉልን ደብዳቤ ደርሶናል። ከደጃን እስከ ደብረ ማርቆስ ያለውን መንገድ ለመስራት ነገሩን በማጥናት ላይ መሆናችንን እየገለፅንልዎ ይኃዉ የተባለው መንገድ በቅርብ ጊዜ እንደሚሰራ እንገልፅልዎታለን። መሆንዲሶች ስራቸውን ከጨረሱ በኋላ የመንገዱ አቀማመጥ እና ሁኔታ ተጠንቶ መንገዱ እንዲታደስ አስፈላጊው ነገር ይፈፀማል።⁴⁷⁹ the rough English translation of the letter reads as follows:

your excellency [Däjjazmač Sebsbie], in receipt of your letter No. 2336/441/44 of Hidar 14th, 1950 (Eth.Cal) we [IHA] inform you that we are giving consideration to the reconstruction of the road from Dājān to Dābrā Marqos so that it will be carried out and completed as soon as is practicable. When the surveyors finish their work in that section, the road's center line will be studied and the necessary action will be taken for the reconstruction.

Shekih Hamiza Husen was the manager for this project. He signed an agreement with IHA on October 6, 1958, to be the superintendent for the overall activities of the repair work. In 1959,

⁴⁷⁹DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from the Imperial Highway Authority, to *Däjjazmač* Sebsbie Shibru, Ref. No..., December 24/1950 E.C.

Däjjazmač Sebsbie allowed the manager to use the Italian stone crushers located along this highway.⁴⁸⁰

Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road project had a total length of 77 kilometers. The reconstruction items consisted of clearing and grubbing, drainage structures, grading, and laying of base and surface courses. The survey crew, supervising clerks, dressers, garage workers, surfacing crew, grading team, structure crew, mason crew, carpenter crew, and crusher crew were among the field personnel engaged in this project. The reconstruction of Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road section began on February 1, 1960, and is estimated to be completed in 1962. In 1961, 34 kms of clearing and grubbing, 26 kms of grading, and 18 kms of base course works were completed. There were 30 culverts of various sizes and one bridge extended to fit the road. As a whole, 31% of the work was completed and 33% of the time used. 31% of the work was completed with a total expense of Eth. \$ 565, 220 at an average monthly expenditure of Eth. \$ 47, 101. By the end of 1961, 64% of the project's time had passed, and 41% of the reconstruction work was completed. The project was anticipated to be finished in March 1963. The project has been operating since February 1960 under the supervision of an Ethiopian construction superintendent who is supported by the appropriate field staff. Thus, at a cost of Eth \$1, 336, 032, 60% of the reconstruction work had been finished by mid 1962. Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road project was finished at the end of 1963 with a total cost of Eth. \$ 2,143,169. The project could not be finished in the allotted time due to lack of adequate equipment.⁴⁸¹

Table 3: Equipment used to reconstruct Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road project:

No	Types of equipment	Amount
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⁴⁸⁰DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. መ/መ-61, a letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Sebsbie, to *Däjjazmač* Gobena Amedie, Ref. No. 471/44, dated 28/1/51E.C.

⁴⁸¹ Imperial Highway Institute, *Seventh Annual Report on the Activities of Imperial Highway Authority* (unpublished material), p. 22.

1	Transportation equipment	6
2	Dump truck	12
3	Dumpster	1
4	Motor grader	10
5	Tractor	3
6	Scraper	1
7	Mobile grease unit	1
8	Welding machine, electric	1
9	Electric plant	2
10	Tagalong trailer	1

Source: Annual report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1963, P. 22.

Like Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road project, Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar road section was reconstructed by IHA. This project had a total length of 275 kilometers. This extensive project was divided into three main sections: Däbrä Marqos-Buré (109 kms), and Buré-Dangila (79 kms), and Dangila-Bahir Dar (76 kms). The construction items consist of grading, site clearing, and laying of base and surface courses over the road length. The field personnel, under the Ethiopian construction superintendent, consisted of the survey crew, supervisory clerks, dressers, garage personnel, surfacing crew, grading crew, structure crew, mason crew, carpenter crew, and crusher crew, each having their own equipment and personnel.⁴⁸²

Däbrä Marqos-Buré's reconstruction work was started on January 1, 1960, with an estimated completion date of 1963. The dry season was favorable for rehabilitation work. Under the supervision of the project superintendent, *Ato Taffesse Bekele*, the rehabilitation work was in progress. The road deteriorated by flood, well repaired with new crushed stone and selected

⁴⁸²Ninth Annual Report on the Activities of Imperial Highway Authority, 1961(unpublished material), p. 23.

materials. At the end of 1960, 30% of the reconstruction work was completed.⁴⁸³ During the 1961 reporting period, the Däbrä Marqos-Buré project was completed in September 1961 with a total expense of Eth. \$ 4,355, 931. Eight existing culverts were repaired, four new reinforced concrete culverts constructed; 21 bridges were repaired; and 36 new concrete pipes of various sizes were installed. 725, 907m³ selected materials were used for the base course, and 2,333m³ crushed rock used for surfacing work. The reconstruction work continued beyond Buré in the direction of Dangila and Bahir Dar.⁴⁸⁴ The author of the Imperial Highway Authority newspaper describes the progress of the reconstruction work as follows:

የአውራ ጎዳና ስራተኞች ከድንጋይ መፍጫቸው፤ መዳመጫቸው፤ ከአፈር ገፈ መኪናቸው እና ከልዩ ልዩ መሳሪያዎቻቸው ጋር ተሰራጭተው ሁሉም በየተሰጣቸው ስራ ተሰማርተው ስራቸውን ሲያካሂዱ እና ሲያሻሽሉ ይታያሉ። ብርቱዎቹ የአቶ ታፈሰ በቀለ ስራተኞች በሀላፊያቸው ትጋት፤ በታላቅ ቆራጥነት ስራቸውን እያከናወኑ ወደ ፊት ሲራመዱ ይታያሉ።⁴⁸⁵

Highway workers with their stone crushers, graders, dozers, rollers, as well as different equipment, are seen doing their assigned work and bettering up [the road]. Ato Tafesse's tough workers, with the diligence of their superintendent [Ato Tafesse], are seen pushing ahead with great determination.

The IHA transferred one Italian crusher from Šäwa and one loader from Gondar to Buré-Dangila road project. Two Italian crushers were also well repaired to provide crushed stone for reconstruction work. Besides, selected materials were transported from Däbrä Marqos field district to Buré-Dangila road project. A total of 336 existing culverts were cleaned, 75 damaged culverts, 11 fords, and 19 bridges were repaired. Besides, seven new culverts and two bridges were constructed. 12,463.10m³ (crushed stone), 224.48m³ (sandstone), 4,602.50m³ (selected material), and 199, 437.50kg (cement) were used for the base course and for surfacing work.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Eighth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1960 (unpublished material), P. 18.

⁴⁸⁴ Ninth Annual Report on the Activities of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1961 (unpublished material), P. 24.

⁴⁸⁵ Imperial Highway Authority Publication, Vol. II, No. 2, February 1961 (unpublished material), P. 15.

⁴⁸⁶ Planning and programming Division, *Imperial Highway Authority's Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of July 8, 1966 to October 7, 1966* (unpublished material), p. 22.

After the end of the Buré-Dangila road project, the reconstruction work continued beyond Dangila towards Bahir Dar. Danila-Bahir Dar road section needs significant reconstruction work because the road was badly damaged by the flood during the rainy season. Thus, intensive reconstruction took place on badly deteriorated and heavily washed-out road sections from 36 kms to 50 kms, from 58 kms to 62 kms, from 62 kms to 64 kms, and others. Minor reconstruction was also undertaken on less severe road sections. A total of 263 existing culverts were cleaned. Besides, 57 damaged culverts, 8 fords, and 18 bridges were repaired. A total of 23,446.43m³ (crushed stone), 4,279.15m³ (sandstone), 1,846.00m³ (selected material), and 693, 921.14kg (cement) were used for the base course and for surfacing work.⁴⁸⁷

In the 1963 reporting period, 73% of the reconstruction was completed at a cost of Eth. 2, 784, 288.97.⁴⁸⁸ More than 40 kms of road reconstruction was completed, including the base-level course, during the 1964 reporting period. In addition, all roads in the Bahir Dar city municipality have been improved. Early in 1965, all rehabilitation work was expected to be completed. Thus, equipment and personnel from this project were already being transferred to other projects.⁴⁸⁹ In the 1965 reporting period, Dangila-Bahir Dar road reconstruction project was completed in mid-1965. All work, including masonry and surfacing, has been completed. Heavy rain during the rainy season significantly slowed down the progress of the project.⁴⁹⁰ The author of the Imperial Highway Authority newspaper describes the completion of the Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar road project as follows:

ከደብረ ማረቆስ እስከ ባህርዳር ያለው መንገድ የተጠገነ መሆኑን የጥገና ክፍል መሀንዲስ ደጃዝማች ኢሳ ሸሪፍ አመልክተዋል። ስለዚህ በዚህ መንገድ ላይ በፍጥነት መጓዝ ትችላላችሁ።

⁴⁸⁷ Planning and programming Division, *Imperial Highway Authority's Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of July 8, 1966 to October 7, 1966* (unpublished material), p. 22.

⁴⁸⁸ Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1963 (unpublished material), P. 13.

⁴⁸⁹ Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1963 (unpublished material), P. 14.

⁴⁹⁰ Thirteenth Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1965 (unpublished material), P.28.

የተጀመረ ነገር መጨረሱ አይቀርም። እኔም የጋዜጣችሁ ደራሲ ባህርዳርን ለመጎብኘት ስሄድ፤ የሄድሁትን ያክል ስመለስ ጊዜ አልወሰድብኝም፤ ምክንያቱም መንገዱ አስፈላጊው ጥገና ስለተደረገለት። ለዚህም ምስጋና ለአቶ ታፈሰ በቀለ ይድረሰው።⁴⁹¹

Däjjazmač Isa Sherif, engineer of the maintenance department, noted that the road from Däbrä Marqos to Bahir Dar has been repaired. So, you can travel faster on this road. What started will end. When I went to visit Bahir Dar, the author of your news paper, it did not take long for me to return as much as I had gone because the road had been repaired. For this, thanks to Ato Tafesse Beqele.

To reconstruct Buré- Bahir Dar road project, the IHA used the following equipments:

Table 4: Equipment used to reconstruct Buré- Bahir Dar road project.

No	Types of equipment	Amount
1	Light transportation	6
2	Heavy transportation	2
3	Dump trucks	26
4	Dumpsters	2
5	Digger	3
6	Tractors	6
7	Scrapers	3
8	Motor graders	9
9	Air compressor	1
10	Rock drills	2
11	Jaw crusher	1
12	Dozers	6
13	Rock breaker	1
14	Motor mixers	2
15	vibrator	1
16	Tow crusher	2

Source: Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1965, P. 14.

⁴⁹¹ Imperial Highway Authority Publication, Vol. II, No. 5, May 1965 (unpublished material), P. 17.

Generally, Dājān-Bahir Dar highway reconstruction work has taken place following the existing one (Italian highway) with some realignments and improvements to the horizontal curves and the vertical profile to accommodate high-speed vehicles. Besides, to minimize erosion and sedimentation caused by high flood velocities, the side ditches, concrete pipes, and box culverts were well prepared.⁴⁹²

Following the completion of Dājān-Bahir Dar highway reconstruction, traffic movements increased sharply. For instance, according to oral evidence, on Dājān to Bahir Dar highway, on an average, 3 to 5 vehicles were counted per day in 1953. The same route shows an increase of 10 to 12 vehicles per day in 1960. Besides, the maintenance of this highway substantially reduced travel times and challenges. For instance, before the highway was repaired, the journey from Dājān to Bahir Dar took more than two days in the rainy season. However, after this highway was reconstructed, the journey was drastically reduced to one and a half days.⁴⁹³ Likewise, with the improvements of this highway, the average tariff for freight costs has also sharply decreased. For instance, the freight cost from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos has decreased from Eth. cent 32.8 per metric ton in 1953 to Eth. cent 7.3 in 1961. In the Ethiopian dollar, the freight cost from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos has decreased from Eth. \$ 100.00 in 1953 to Eth. \$22.50 in 1961.⁴⁹⁴ The average travel time between Addis Ababa and Däbrä Marqos has also been reduced from 7 days in 1954 to 1 day in 1966.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹²DMUAC, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, a letter Written from Ethiopian Road Authority (hereinafter ERA), to General Road Construction Manager, Ref No. no, July 6/1973 E.C.

⁴⁹³Interviews with Simeneh Muhammed, Qomiche Ambaw, and Yismaw Limenih.

⁴⁹⁴ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *the Economy of Ethiopia*, Vol. II, Report No. AF-12a, September 30 (unpublished material), 1963, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Planning and Programming Division of Imperial Highway Authority, *Ethiopia: Progress in Highway Transport* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1967), p. 18.

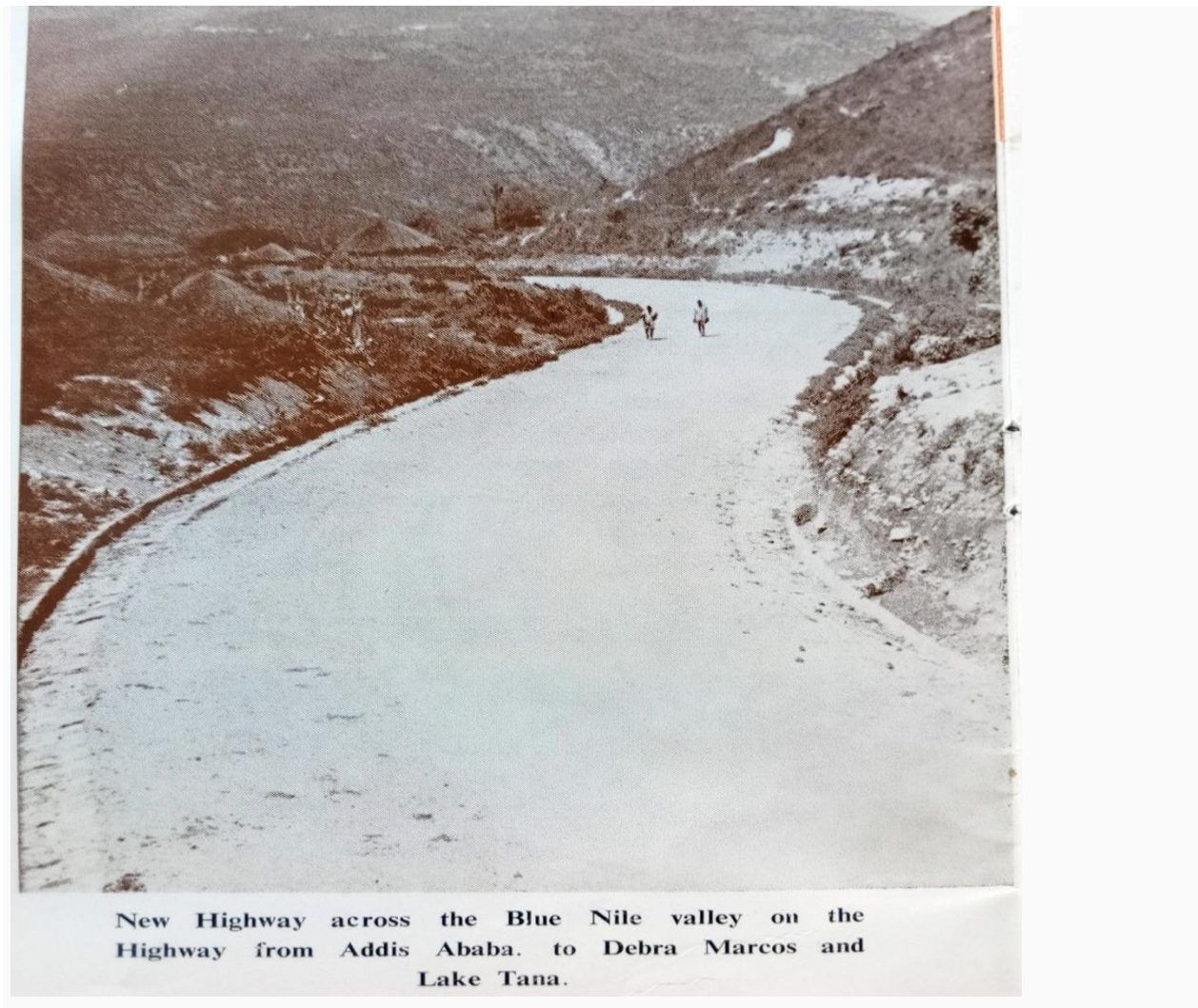


Figure 18: the newly reconstructed highway across the Blue Nile valley on the highway from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos and Lake Ṭana. Source: tenth annual report on the activities of the IHA, P. 27.



Figure 19: Imperial Highway Authority stone crusher in Däbrä Marqos field district. Source: Ethiopia observer, Vol. V, No. 2, P.5.

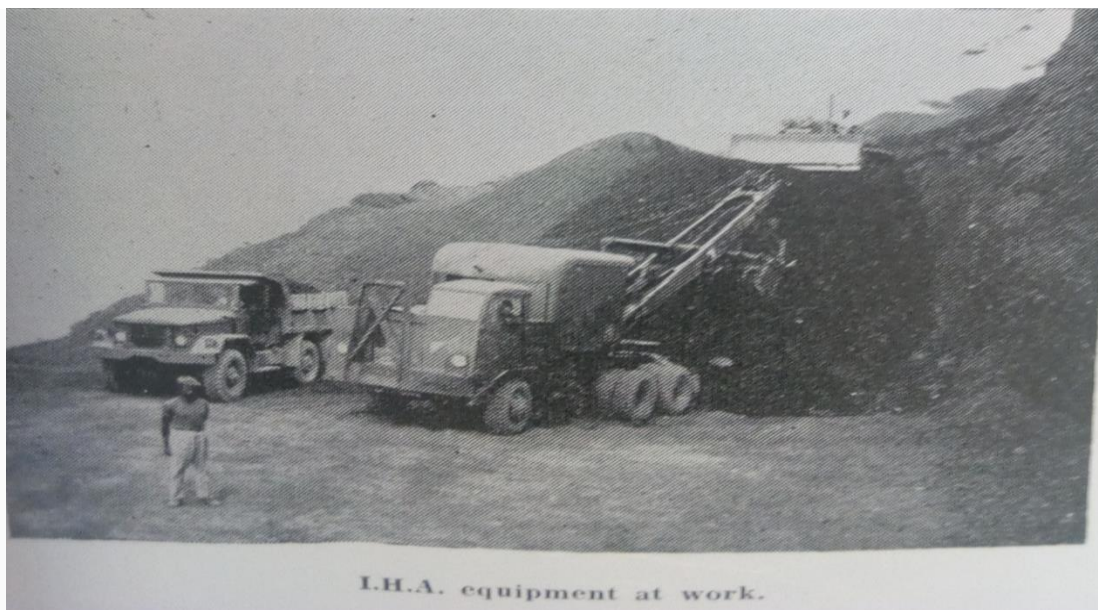


Figure 20: Imperial Highway Authority equipments at work at Däbrä Marqos field district. Source: Ethiopia observer, Vol. V, No. 2, P. 5.

3.7. Effects of Land Slide Hazards on the Blue Nile Gorge Road Section

Land slide problems in the Blue Nile Gorge are a significant threat to the local people and the highway that runs from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. Goha Şiwän-Däjän transect is a critical transport corridor connecting Addis Ababa with the northern part of the country. However, it

experienced repeated landslide problems. Due to cracking of rocks by heavy rain and ground water percolation, a road severely deteriorated during the rainy season (i.e., June 1 to September 30). The basalt in Goha Şiwän-Däjän road has cracks and is causing critical landslide problem.⁴⁹⁶ As I noted above, the viaduct in figure 22 was constructed in early 1962 and failed shortly afterwards due to landslide problems. The road was realigned but continues to experience problems due to landslide hazards on an annual basis.⁴⁹⁷

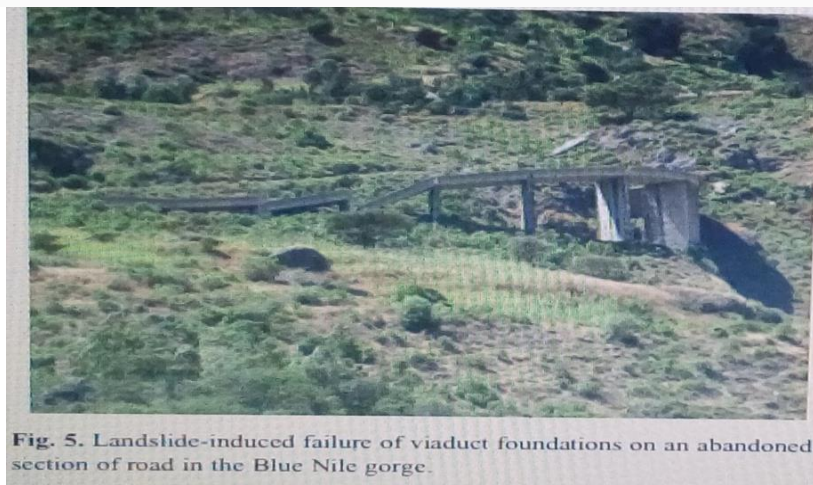


Figure 21: Landslide caused the failure of the viaduct on the highway in the Blue Nile gorge. Source (G.J Hearn, 5)

Between 1960 and 2010, 388 people were killed, 24 people were injured, and vast amounts of agricultural land, houses, and roads were destroyed. In 1960, a severe landslide at Gämbäçi village within the Băcät valley was responsible for the deaths of 45 people.⁴⁹⁸ Serious rock slides also occurred near the Blue Nile Bridge in 1969. But, it was able to be cleared by blasting without causing significant road damage. Furthermore, due to high earth pressure and sliding, 8 meter segments of the retaining wall and the viaduct failed. As a result, the necessary viaduct and

⁴⁹⁶Matebe Meten and Netra Prakash, “Effects of Landslide Factor Combinations on the Predication Accuracy of Landslide Susceptibility Maps in the Blue Nile Gorge of Central Ethiopia,” *a Springer Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (2015), p. 2.

⁴⁹⁷G.J. Hearn, “Slope Hazards on the Ethiopian Road Network,” *Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology and Hydrology*, (2018), p. 5.

⁴⁹⁸Matebe Meten and Netra Prakash, “Effects of Landslide Factor Combinations on the ...,” p. 2.

retaining wall repairs were undertaken.⁴⁹⁹ However, the 1979 landslide was the worst and damaged the Waša Mikael Bridge. Due to this landslide, the section of the Addis Ababa-Gojjam road in the Blue Nile gorge between 190 and 196 km was blocked with debris. Thus, the construction of a detour, which measures 6 kilometers long and 10 meters wide, began in April 1979. Most of the construction of the new detour took place during the rainy season. To withstand the lateral pressure of the soil and prevent further landslides, four retaining walls that range in height from 20 to 50 meters were built with intensive labor. Since this highway passes through mountain chains, it was quite exhausting to blast 20 to 30 meters high solid rocks. Despite this difficulty, daily laborers worked for 11 hours a day and completed the construction of the detour in 1979. The construction of the detour was completed at a cost of Eth. 1.5 million birr.⁵⁰⁰ To complete the construction of this detour, the ERA used 4,000m³ of gravel and crushed stone. The reconstruction of this road section was completed under the responsibility of Ato Tegegne Worku.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Press and Public Relations Branch, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of July 8, 1969 to October 7, 1969* (unpublished material), p. 18.

⁵⁰⁰ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1972 E.C.

⁵⁰¹ Twenty-First Annual Reports of Ethiopian Road Authorities (unpublished material), P.12.

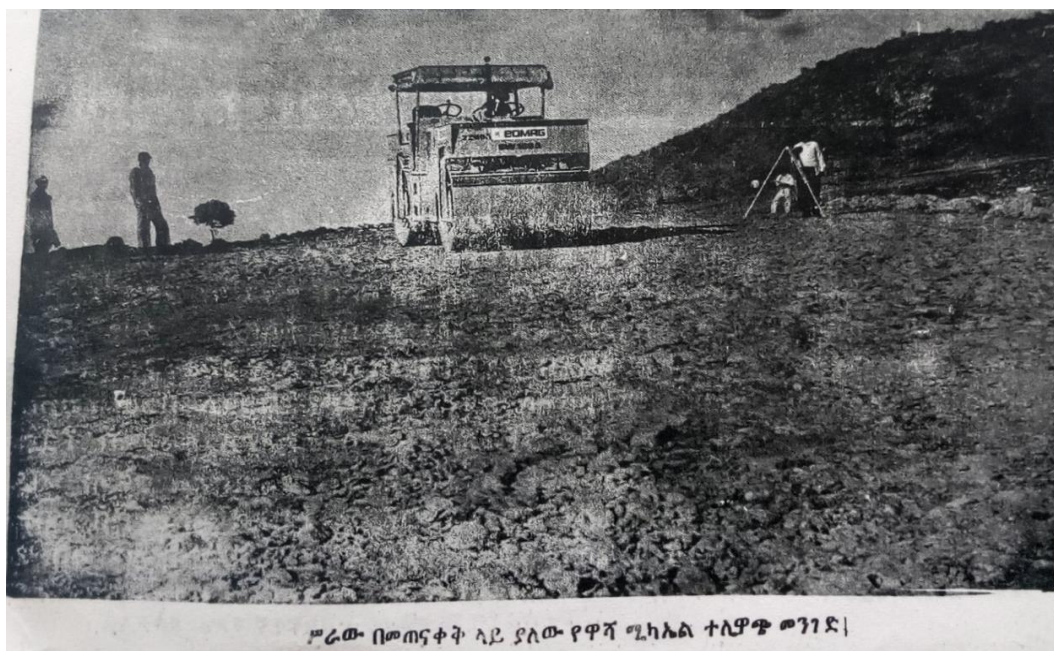


Figure 22: new detour under construction in the Blue Nile gorge (Waša Mikael). Source, Ethiopian Road Authority Golden Jubilee, p. 12.



Figure 23: The newly constructed detour in the Blue Nile gorge on the Addis Ababa-Gojjam highway. Source: *Addis Zemen* newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1972 E.C.

Besides landslide hazards, the Blue Nile gorge road section has also been facing repeated deterioration by escarpment erosion during the rainy season. Flooding is the other weather-related cause for the repeated disruption of transport services in the Blue Nile gorge road section.⁵⁰² For instance, in 1967, the road at Lämé in the Blue Nile gorge within Däjän district was damaged and making transportation difficult. Hence, highway workers undertook the necessary repairs as the foundation of the road had already eroded due to heavy rain. The repair work was conducted under the supervision of engineer Shiferaw Bizuneh.⁵⁰³ Likewise, in 1968, the road at Dämbäza *Qäbälé* in the Blue Nile gorges was deteriorated and resurfaced by highway workers as a road was very difficult for vehicles to pass during the rainy season.⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, the segment of the road at 216 kilometers in the Blue Nile gorge on the Addis Ababa-Gojjam route was washed away by rain flood and affected the transport services. In 1972, the then vice *endärasé* (acting governor) of Gojjam governorate-general, *Fitawrari* Hailu Bira, wrote a letter to Gojjam governorate-general highway *Şehefäte Bèt* (office) demanding the urgent repair of the deteriorated road section.⁵⁰⁵ However, Mekonnen Romicha, Manager of Gojjam governorate-general highway *Şehefäte Bèt* (office), complained that since this road segment was found in Šäwa governorate-general, it must be repaired by Šiwan highway workers. Mekonnen Romicha had received repeated letters from Gojjam governorate-general about the deteriorated road. In

⁵⁰²The Development of Highways in Ethiopia (to be presented by the Management of IHA at the Second Pacific Regional Conference of International Road Federation, Tokyo, Japan, April, 20 to 24, 1964), p.2.

⁵⁰³DMUAC, Folder No.74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Shiferaw Bizuneh, to *Däjjazmač* Dereje Mekonnen, Ref No. 1577/32, September 14/1951 E.C.

⁵⁰⁴*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from General Zewde, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 3726/38/11, *Ginbot* 10/1961 E.C.

⁵⁰⁵*Ibid*, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Fitawrari Hailie Bira, to Gojjam Governorate-General Highway Office, Ref No. 17/43/670/27, dated 15/13/1966 E.C.

turn, he wrote a letter to Šäwa governorate-general, asking for the road to be repaired by Šiwan engineers.⁵⁰⁶

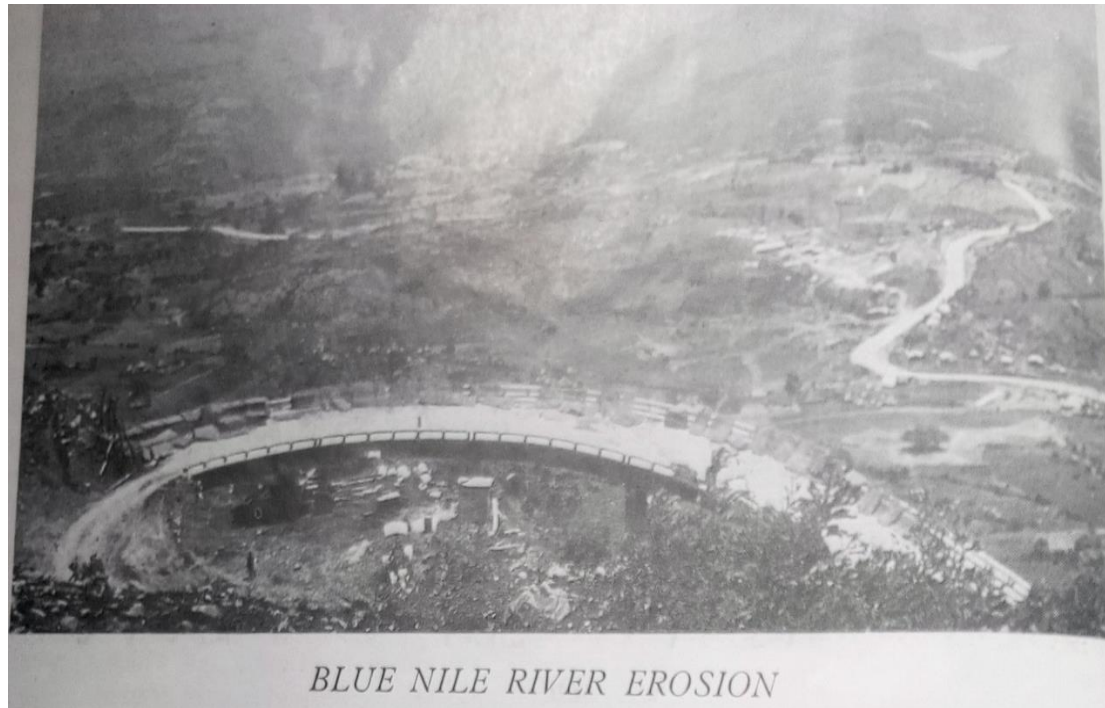


Figure 24: Blue Nile River erosion in the Blue Nile gorge on the Addis Ababa-Gojjam highway.
Source: Management of Imperial Highway Authority, P. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ DMUA, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, a letter Written from Mekonnen Rumicha, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 3225, 1967 E.C.

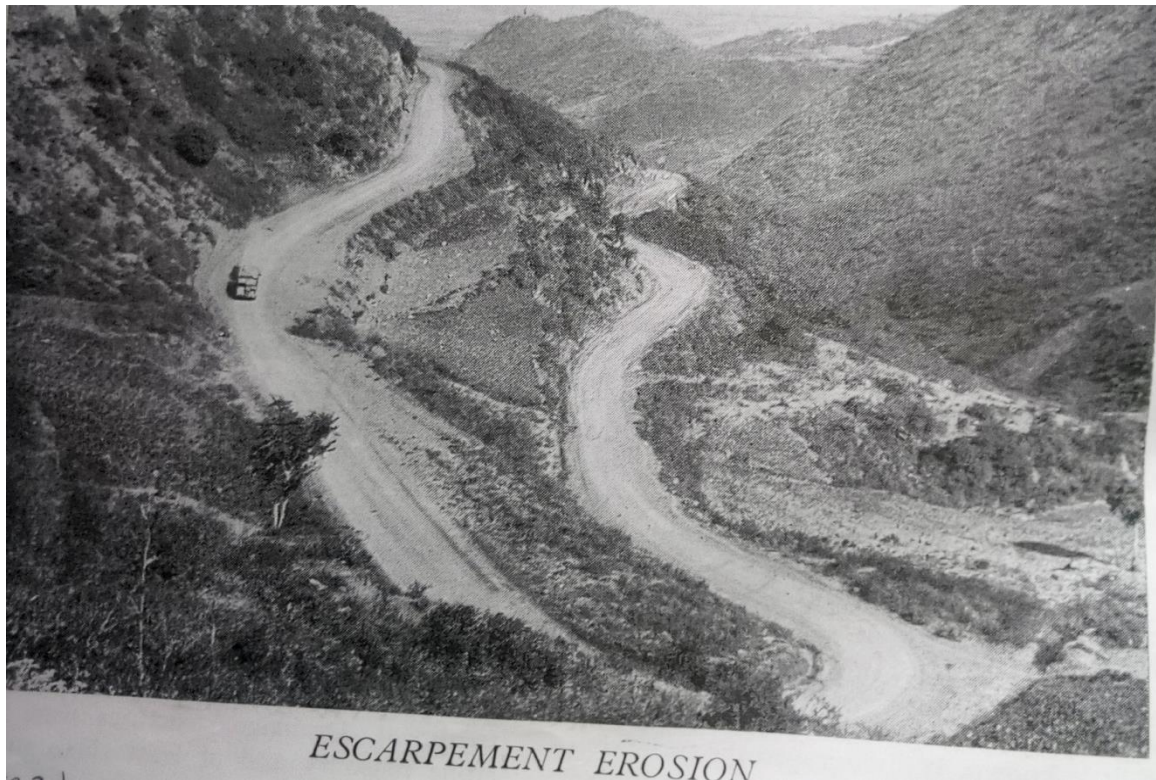


Figure 25: Escarpment erosion in the Blue Nile gorge on the Addis Ababa-Gojjam highway.
Source: Management of Imperial Highway Authority, P. 2.

3.8. A History of Bridge Construction in Gojjam before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution: with Especial Emphasis on Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway Route

Like a soul and a body, bridges and highways are intertwined. There can be no road transport the bridge without the highway and vice versa.⁵⁰⁷

For many years, the people of Gojjam crossed mighty rivers during the rainy season by placing two or three large logs over the rivers. In Gojjam, it was a common practice for some individuals to build a wooden bridge across a river during the rainy season and then enable the locals to utilize it. The local people paid fifteen cents to the owners of the wooden bridge in exchange for using it to cross rivers.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Miazia* (May) 1947-*Miazia* (May) 1949 E.C.

⁵⁰⁸ Interviews with Ato Qomche Ambaw, priest Amdewerq Alem, and Ato Yismaw Limenh.

The Portuguese constructed a stone and lime bridge at Tis Abbay, near Bahir Dar, downstream from the famed Tisisat Falls. It was built between two close rocks on both banks. This bridge also has a curved shape with eight arches and a length of 64 meters. It is still widely used by the local people.⁵⁰⁹

The genesis of planned modern bridge construction in Gojjam dates back to the reign of *Nigus Tekle Haymanot* (r.1824-1884). He had a strong desire to develop a modern transportation system in Gojjam.⁵¹⁰ For instance, he pushed Gustavo Bianchi, an Italian traveler, to build a concrete bridge across the Blue Nile River from 1880 to 1881. According to Bianchi, the first plan was conceived by Giyorgis Fotis, a Greek resident in Gojjam who recommended that a bridge be built across the Blue Nile and suggested that Bianchi complete the project himself. The king preferred the bridge because it would allow him to collect supplies across the Blue Nile during the rainy season, and make it simpler to avoid any rebellions in the area. As a result, in 1883, the king issued a letter to the *Societa Italiana di Commercio con Africa*, an Italian commercial organization in Africa. In his letter, he emphasized the significance of the bridge and states that it would make easier to transport goods from the interior to the port of Assab. The Italian business man, Salimbeni, accepted the king's request to build the bridge. Menelik's supremacy in the south and southwest after 1882, however, forced the king to alter his initial strategy. He chose to build the bridge over Tamči River in Dämbäça, one of the tributaries of the Blue Nile, rather than the Nile itself. Richard Pankhurst describes the process of the construction of the bridge in the following ways:

⁵⁰⁹ Victor M. Fernandez, "What the Great Alexander and the Famous Julius Caesar Wanted so Much to See: A Commemoration of the Fourth Centenary of the Blue Nile Sources Discovery," *Culture and History Digital Journal*, Vol. 8, No.1 (June 2019), P. 15.

⁵¹⁰ Ethiopian Road Authority Golden Jubilee, April 5, 2001 (unpublished material), P. 48.

*The foundation stone was laid by Tekle Haymanot on December 15, 1884. Explain that the sovereign was motivated in the selection of the site by fear of attack from Šäwa, Salimbeni relates that preliminary investigation revealed good supplies of limestone, rocks, pebbles, clay, and sand in the area, but that timber was unobtainable as the only nearby trees were in the vicinity of churches and could not therefore be touched. Large quantities of supplies were used: 34,000 porter loads of sand stone, 12,000 loads of sand, 8,000 loads of limestone, which had to be carried a distance of three days, and 60,000 locally-made bricks. The work was based on improvisation: trowels were made out of the engineers' frying pans, hammers out of local ploughs and rope out of twisted cow gut, while bamboos were set in straw strengthened mud to serve as scaffolding.*⁵¹¹

To encourage the people, the king himself took part in the construction process. Bricks were carried on the backs and heads of women carrying their children. Bianchi and Andreoni taught eight Ethiopian workers how to use lime stone and another twelve people how to lay bricks to erect bridges.⁵¹²

Ras Hailu of Gojjam imported masons from Greece and erected a bridge over the Čämoga River in 1919. Likewise, he built a modern bridge across the Bir River on the road to Buré.⁵¹³

During the reign of Emperor Menelik, the construction of the bridge over the Blue Nile River to connect Šäwa with Gojjam was started by an Italian engineer named Sinor Castanio. Preliminary payment was made to import girders from Milan. But, the project was terminated because of the girders' loss before it reached Addis Ababa.⁵¹⁴ Emperor Haile Selassie I also planned to erect this bridge across the Blue Nile in 1932. As a result, he brought cement and girders from Europe and placed them near the river. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia, however, caused the project to

⁵¹¹ Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia*..., p. 298.

⁵¹² Ethiopian Road Authority Golden Jubilee, April 5, 2001, P. 48.

⁵¹³ *Ibid*, P.50.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, P.49.

be abandoned. The local people looted the cement and used it to decorate their homes, while the girders rusted and were demolished.⁵¹⁵

During the Italian invasion, fascist Italy built three large and principal bridges across the Blue Nile River from Bahir Dar to Däjäñ. One of the most important works in this respect was the building of the wooden bridge along the exit of the Blue Nile from Lake Ṭana, where a bridge and a dam were intended to be erected by the Imperial Regime. This bridge linked Bägémidir with Gojjam. The new bridge made the transportation of people, cattle, and cars between the two provinces possible and replaced the old use of ferries or fords on horseback or foot across the Blue Nile.⁵¹⁶

In 1958, Emperor Haile Selassie I laid the corner stone to erect the current concrete bridge at the same site (Kanfarö Abbay), just a few kilometers away from the Blue Nile outlets from Lake Ṭana.⁵¹⁷ *Addis Zemen* newspaper describes the progress of the project in the following ways:

.....ግርማዊ ንጉሥ ነገስት ቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ስላሴ ጎረቤት የሆኑት የጎጃም እና የባህር ዳር ጠቅላይ ግዛት ህዝቦች ያለአንዳች ችግር በቅርቡ ለመገናኘት እንዲችሉ አስበው በመካከላቸው በሚገኘው ካንፋሮ አባይ ላይ ዘመናዊ የሆነ ድልድይ እንዲሰራ ራሳቸው ግርማዊ ንጉሥ ነገስት መሰረቱን ከማስቀመጣቸውም በላይ፤ ስራው በተቻለ ፍጥነት ተፈፅሞ ህዝቡ እንዲጠቀሙት እየደጋገሙት እዛዝ ሰጥተው ስራው በመፋጠን ላይ ይገኛል፡፡⁵¹⁸

...His Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I laid a corner stone for the construction of a modern bridge at Kanfarö Abbay, to connect the neighboring governorate-generals, Gojjam and Bägemider. He repeatedly ordered the construction to be completed as soon as possible and the people to use it.

The two governorate-general people were eager to see the completion of this bridge. They also realized how much the Emperor thought and cared about the people and wished long live to

⁵¹⁵Techane Jenberie, *Yehabesha Jebdu (Habesha's Adventure)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2010), p. 26.

⁵¹⁶ Seltene, "Early History of Bahir Dar....," p. 89.

⁵¹⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot* (May) 1950 E.C.

⁵¹⁸ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 17, 1952-*Nehase* (August) 13, 1952 E.C.

Emperor Haile Selassie I.⁵¹⁹ After two years (in 1960), the construction of the bridge was completed and inaugurated by Emperor Haile Selassie I.⁵²⁰ This bridge was designed and constructed by two Italian engineers named Arseni and Samojja.⁵²¹ The overall activity of the project was supervised by Calm Sig Oliva, the most experienced engineer in both bridge and highway construction. The construction of this bridge alleviated the transportation challenges from Gojjam to the Northern provinces and vice versa.⁵²² In 1991, during the war between TPLF and Derg, of the total length of the bridge (150 meters), dynamite destroyed some of its 15 meters. In 1994, the ERA repaired this bridge and regained its former shape and reopening it to traffic on August 7, 1994.⁵²³

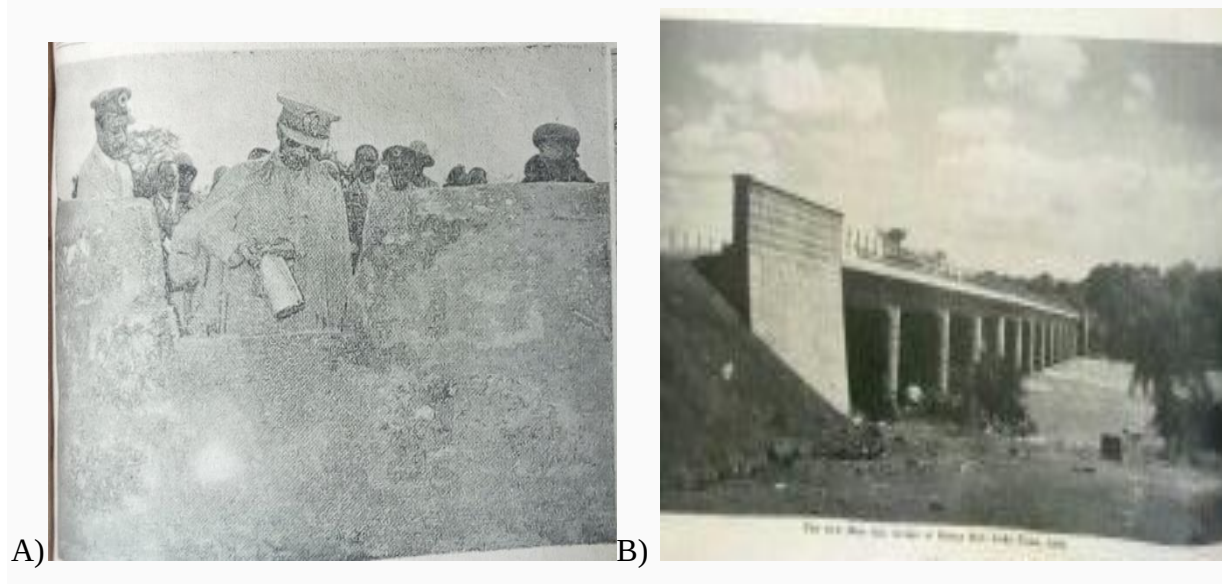


Figure 26: The picture in “A” depict the Emperor laid the corner stone for the construction of the Bridge at Kanfaro, in Bahir Dar, 1958 and the one in “B” illustrate the new Blue Nile Bridge at Bahir Dar, Lake

⁵¹⁹ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 17, 1952-Nehase (August) 13, 1952 E.C.

⁵²⁰ Physical Department Development, *Development of Transport Networks in North-West Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, p. 6; James McCann and Guillaume Blanc, “Bahir Dar and the Lake Tana Basin: History of Urbanshed”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, No. 197 (2016), p. 120.

⁵²¹ Informant: Yismaw Limenh.

⁵²² Imperial Highway Authority Publication, Vol. II, No. 2, February 1969 (unpublished material), P. 17.

⁵²³ Ethiopia Statistical Abstract, September 1994 (unpublished material), p. 60.

ፓና, 1960. Source, for picture “A” *Addis Zemen* news paper, *Ginbot* (May), 1950 E.C and for picture “B” *Ethiopia observer*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p.106)

Secondly, in 1938, the Italians built a wooden bridge across a Little Abbay, near the town of Piccolo, 50 km away from Bahir Dar. This bridge facilitated the transportation of cars, people, and cattle between Ačäfär Wārāda and Bahir Dar. But, the river took away this bridge in 1940.⁵²⁴ The local people experienced a tough challenge crossing the river after the bridge took over, especially during the rainy season. The locals expressed the challenge of the river in the following couplet.

አባይ ጉደል ጉደል ቀጭን መንገድ አዉጣ፤
የከፋዉ ወንድ ልጅ ተሻግሮ እንዲመጣ፡፡⁵²⁵
Abbay, please get subside and make a narrow path:
The morose youngster can cross over and come.

In 1951, a modern concrete bridge was built at the same site (at Little Abbay) under the supervision of an Italian engineer, Buski.⁵²⁶ The construction of this bridge was completed and inaugurated by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1951. It was built with the intention of providing transportation for only 50 years. But, it still provides transportation service. This bridge has a total length of 12 meters and a width of 3 meters. In 1983, it was enlarged to 9 meters by adding 6 meters to the previous one in order to prevent traffic accidents.⁵²⁷ As I noted above, this bridge was built at a place where a modern bridge was intended to be erected by the J.G. White American Engineering Corporation in 1934.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ Interview with Kassa Simegn and Awlew Simeneh.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Ato Mulat Teshal and Emahoy Adanech Abere.

⁵²⁶ Interview with Ato Alehegn Belay, Beqele Semahegn, and *Mergeta* Agumas Getahun.

⁵²⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Senie* (May- June) 1975 E.C.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*



Figure 27: Buski's Bridge across the little Abbay, near Piccolo town (Photo by the researcher)

Thirdly, on both sides of the bank, the Blue Nile acted as a natural border between Šäwa and Gojjam. The local people have always regarded the Blue Nile as a natural barrier to the autonomy of Gojjam. But, it separated the historical governorate-generals of Šäwa and Gojjam for many years. The local people suffered for many years trying to cross this mighty river. Many swimmers were taken away while they crossed the river and swallowed by aquatic animals like crocodiles.⁵²⁹ The locals expressed the challenge of the river in the following couplet.

አባይ ወዲያ ማዶ ዘመድ አለኝ ማለት፤
 ዋ ብሎ መቅረት ነዉ ዉሀዉ የሞላ ለት፡፡⁵³⁰
*To say having a relative beyond Abay River:
 One wails and fails, when the water swells.*

On April 28, 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie I, accompanied by British military officers and Ethiopian patriots, crossed the Blue River via the pontoon bridge. At that time, the Emperor

⁵²⁹ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 17, 1952-*Nehase* (August) 13, 1952 E.C.

⁵³⁰ Adane Kassie, "A History of Däjäñ Wāräda East Gojjam (1941-1991)" (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, February 2010), p. 30.

personally witnessed the difficulty of crossing the river and decided to build a modern concrete bridge across it. When the Emperor laid the foundation stone for the bridge on June 4, 1949, he describes how he came up with the idea of building a bridge across the Blue Nile River between Gojjam and Šäwa as follows:

...እኛም በዚህ በር አልፈን ጦራችንን እየመራን የዋና ከተማችንን አቅጣጫ በያዝነ ጊዜ፤ የጦር ሰራዊታችንን በሳንቃ መረባርብ ባሻገርንበት በዚህ ቦታ ባለውለታ የሆነውን ጎጃምን ፅኑ በሆነ መገናኛ ከሽዋ ጋር ለማያያዝ፤ ስለመገናኛ ያለበትንም ችግር ለማቃለል ይህን ዛሬ የምንመስርተውን ድልድይ ለማሰራት በሀሳባችን ተወጠነ።⁵³¹

....When we led our army in the direction of our capital through this door, where our army crossed over a pontoon bridge; we planned to construct a masonry bridge, where we today put the corner stone to join Gojjam with Šäwa in a firm communication system and to lessen the communication problem of its people.

Emperor Haile Selassie I noted during the foundation ceremony that the bridge would connect Gojjam and Šäwa governorate-generals both physically and spiritually. He also claims that the bridge would serve as a memorial for many generations. The Emperor designated it (the bridge) Emperor Haile Selassie I bridge.⁵³²

In March 1950, the construction of the bridge was completed with a total cost of Eth. 2,800,000 birr. This bridge has a total length of 204 meters and 35 centimeters and a height of 43 meters from the river base. It has also an arch length of 120 meters and a width of 9 meters and 80 centimeters.⁵³³

The Emperor announced the bridge would be open to traffic on April 30, 1950. Individuals from Gojjam presented various poems during the inauguration ceremony, which emphasized the former difficulty and new relief in crossing the river, as well as the relationship between nearby

⁵³¹ Adane, “A History of Däjäan Wārāda East Gojjam (1941-1991) ...,” P. 32.

⁵³² Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 23, 1941-*Miazia* (April) 7, 1942 E.C.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

governorate-generals. They also honored the Emperor in their poems. For instance, *Aläqa* Melake Selam from Dämbäça Mikael presented the following couplet:

ልጄ ከሰዉ ጋራ ሲሄድ ለመቀሰስ፤
 ባዞ ቀርቶ ነበር አባይ ላይ ሲደርስ፤
 ከእንግዲህ ወዲህ ባዞ እንዳይቀር ልጄ፤
 ድልድይ ሰራሁለት ወጥቶ ወርጄ፤
 እንዲህ አለ ጠቅል ጌታዩ ወዳጄ፡፡⁵³⁴

*When my son travels with other people to get ordained as a priest
 When he reached Abbay, he was devoured by crocodile
 Hereafter to rescue my son from crocodile
 After ups and down, I built a bridge (for my son)
 My dear, my lord Teqle (Haile Selassie I) said*

Likewise, students who came from Däbrä Marqos, under the leadership of Ato Betre Tsadiq Kassa, presented the following song in front of His Imperial Majesty:

ተሰራልን ዛሬ የጊዎን ሀዉልት፤
 በኃይለ ስላሴ ፅኑ መሰረት፤
 ጎጃም እና ሸዋ ሁነዉ አንድነት፤
 እንዳይለያዩ በጋ እና ከረምት፤
 ህዝቡን የጨረሰኸዉ ያለፍርድ ያለ ህግ፤
 የአዞ እና ጉማሬ ያመፀኞች ምሽግ፤
 ጥበብ ተሰራብህ እንግዲህ ምን ታደርግ፤
 ባለፉት አባቶች ሁሉን አዋርደህ፤
 እስከ ዛሬ ድረስ ማንም ሳይደፍርህ፤
 በኃይለ ስላሴ ወደ ታች ታየህ፡፡⁵³⁵

*The Gihon monument is built today to us
 By Emperor Haile Selassie solid foundation
 Gojjam and Šäwa have joined together*

⁵³⁴ Adane, “A History of Däjäñ Wārāda …,” P. 35.

⁵³⁵ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 23, 1941-Miazia (April) 7, 1942 E.C.

*Do not separated in rainy and dry season
You have [the Blue Nile River] annihilated the people with no law and justice
The trench of conspirators, hippopotamus, and crocodiles
Wisdom is functioned upon you, hereafter what shall you do?
So far you [the Blue Nile River] humiliated all the previous fathers
To this day, no one dares you [the Blue Nile River]
You [the Blue Nile River] looked down by Emperor Haile Selassie*

The construction of Haile Selassie I bridge marked a turning point in the relationship between Gojjam and Šäwa. Inter-ethnic and commercial ties between the residents of these districts have significantly improved. Following 1950, a considerable number of Oromo merchants from Jarso *Wäräda* began to appear in various *Däjän Wäräda* markets. The bridge made the trade easier to transport goods to and from *Däjän*. Yet, the bridge is now out of use after its long years of service, and so it was replaced by a new bridge that opened in 2007/8 in front of the former one.⁵³⁶

All the above mentioned bridges were built with the money obtained from Italy as a form of post-Mussolini Italian government war compensation for the massive damage imposed on Ethiopians during the occupation period.⁵³⁷ Since these bridges have tremendous strategic and military significance to Ethiopia, they have been protected by security forces. Especially during the Derg Regime, there was a threat that TPLF insurgents might destroy these bridges. As a result, they were protected by ten security forces.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Daniel Dejen, “Land Tenure Reform and Socio-Economic Structures ...,” p. 265.

⁵³⁷ Informants: Qomiche Ambaw, *Mergeta* Agumas Getahun and Yismaw Limenih.

⁵³⁸ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.07, File No. 17.1.11.07.01, a letter Written from Gashaw Sew Agegne, to the Ministry of Interior, Ref No. 534/348, dated 23/1/1974 E.C.

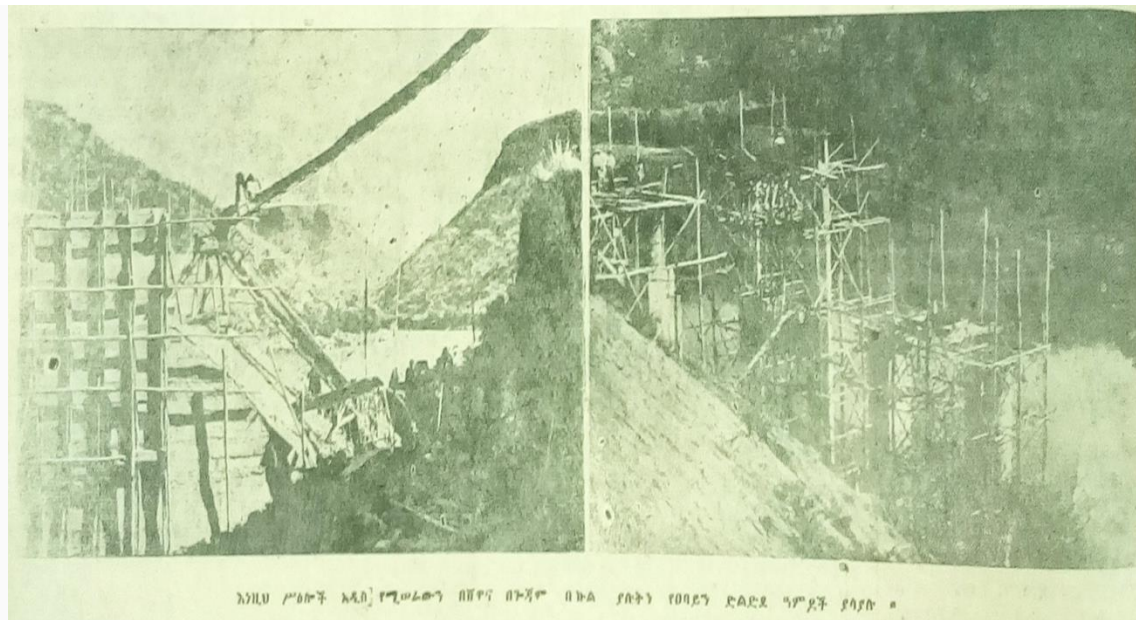


Figure 28: Emperor Haile Selassie's bridge under construction. Source: *Addis Zemen* news paper, *Miazia* (April) 20, 1941- *Miazia* (April) 7, 1942 E.C.



Figure 29: Emperor Haile Selassie Accompanied by Abune Basilios visiting the construction of the Blue Nile Bridge. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper 9th year, 1941-1942.



Figure 30: Emperor Haile Selassie I inaugurating the Blue Nile gorge bridge. Source: *Addis Zemen* newspaper, *Miazia* (April) 20, 1943-*Miazia* (April) 11, 1944 E.C.

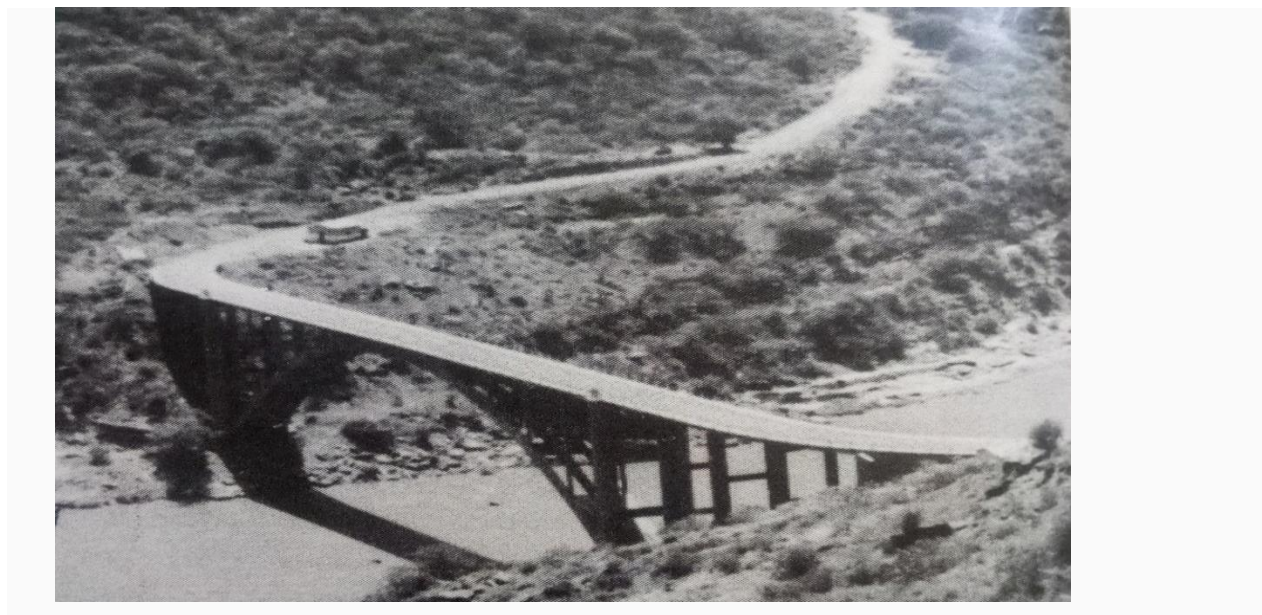


Figure 31: Emperor Haile Selassie's Bridge across the Blue Nile on the highway from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos. Source: Sixth Annual Report on the Activities of the IHA, September 1956-September 1958, p. 4.

The Italians also built rough culverts and small wooden bridges over Fäsasit, Lah, Gudäla, Tämäča, and other small rivers. These bridges were made from thick tree trunks placed alongside each other and covered with big stones. The interstices are filled with smaller stones. Such bridges were hard and were not destroyed by termites. Besides, even if they began the construction of various concrete bridges, they did not complete the construction until their evacuation from Ethiopia. In the immediate post-liberation period, these unfinished bridges were blown up by floods, and it made transportation difficult. Therefore, to complete these bridges, Gojjam governorate-general repeatedly wrote letters to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication.⁵³⁹



Figure 32: Original Italian culvert on the abandoned Bahir Dar-Däjän highway section, at Ambo Mäsk, near the newly constructed church Medhanialem, 40 kms away from Bahir Dar (photo graph by the researcher)

⁵³⁹ DMUAC, Folder No. 74, File No. *σσ/σσ*-61, A Letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General, to the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, Ref. No. 544/471, January 8/6/47 E.C.

3.9. The Genesis of Däjän-Moṭṭa Feeder Road Construction

The genesis of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road dates back to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Fascist Italians tried their best to construct Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder road through labor-intensive schemes. They began to construct the road from Däjän to Bičäna and to extend it from Bičäna to Moṭṭa. However, due to the repeated guerilla attacks on the road workers, they were forced to terminate the construction work.⁵⁴⁰

As I noted in chapter two, during the fourth highway program, several kilometers of roads were repaired and constructed by foreign contractors. Apart from contract construction, the IHA also undertook the construction of roads through mass support. For instance, the IHA had planned to construct Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road through public support.⁵⁴¹ Concerning this, I quote a letter written to Doctor Haile Giyorgis Workneh, Minister of Work, from Mamo Tekle Giyorgis, special secretary of Gojjam governorate-general: “ከደጀን እስከ ሞጣ ስለሚሰራው መንገድ እርዳታ በስልክ እንደ ገለፅሁት ሁሉ የብቸኛ ህዝብ በበጎ ፍቃዱ 12,000 ብር የሰበሰበ መሆኑን እገልጻለሁ፡፡”⁵⁴² the text, literally translated could read: “As I mentioned in phone about the assistance of Däjän to Moṭṭa road construction, I would like to announce that the people of Bičäna have voluntarily collected Eth. 12, 000 birr.”

Besides, concerning to Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder road construction, Shiferaw Bizuneh, vice chief engineer, wrote the following letter to the Ministry of Interior:

ከደጀን እስከ ሞጣ ድረስ ስለሚሰራው መንገድ ጉዳይ ግንቦት 7/60 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 1/2529 የፃፋችሁልን ደብዳቤ ደርሶን ተመልክቻለሁ፡፡ ከፍ ብሎ ስለተጠቀሰው መንገድ ስራ

⁵⁴⁰ Ethiopian Herald, December- April 1978.

⁵⁴¹ Ayele Tarekegn, “A History of the Imperial Highway Authority...”, P. 38.

⁵⁴² DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Mamo Tekle Giyorgis, Especial Secretary of Gojjam Governorate-General, to Doctor Haile Giyorgis Werkneh, Ministry of Work, Ref No. 6511/670/27, Dated 10/7/1960 E.C.

ከህዝብ ተሰብስቧል የተባለው ገንዘብ እስካሁን ገቢ ስላልተደረገልን ስራውን ለማስጀመር የተቸገርን መሆኑን አገልግለሁ።⁵⁴³

I [Shiferaw Bizuneh] have seen the letter you [Ministry of Interior] wrote to us on May 7/60 E.C under reference number 1/12529 regarding the construction of Däjän to Moṭṭa road. I [Shiferwa Bizuneh] would like to point out that it is difficult for us to start the project because the money collected from the people for the above mentioned road has not yet been received.

Therefore, in 1967, Eth.17, 796 birr and 75 cents were collected from the local people as well as governmental employers of Bičäna and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas*. Besides, the treasury of Bičäna *Awrajjja* funded Eth. 8, 607 birr, and 75 cents. Thus, a total of Eth.17, 796 birr, and 75 cents were handed over to the IHA. The people also pledged to continue their support until the road is completed.⁵⁴⁴ Concerning this, I quote a statement extracted from a letter written to IHA from *Dejjazmač* Tsehayu Inqu Selassie, acting governor of Gojjam governorate-general. “ለመንገድ ስራ ህዝቡ እርዳታውን በተጨማሪ የሚቀጥል መሆኑን በቁጥር 6732/670/ ባስተላለፍነው ቴሌግራም ገልፀናል።”⁵⁴⁵ the text, literally translated, could read: “we have stated in our telegram number 6732/670/that the people will continue to provide their contribution for road construction.” For instance, in 1971, Dima monastery contributed Eth.508 birr. In the same year, the governorate of Mengisto monastery contributed Eth. 645 birr and 75 cents. This money (Eth.1153 birr and 75 cents) was deposited in the commercial bank of Ethiopia, Däbrä Marqos Branch, in the name of *Däjjazmač* Workneh, development fund treasurer. Besides, the money, which was collected from the local people and then deposited in the commercial bank, had been announced on the radio.⁵⁴⁶ Likewise, in 1971, from Enarg Enawga and Yinaç sub-districts, Eth.1, 800 and 2,426 birr had been collected,

⁵⁴³DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Bizuneh, Vice Chief Engineer, to Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, Ref No. 2056/2911/27, Dated 21/9/1960 E.C.

⁵⁴⁴*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Bičäna *Awrajjja* Office, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 1748/198/281, Dated 19/6/1961 E.C.

⁵⁴⁵*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Tsehay Inqu Selassie, Acting Governor of Gojjam Governorate-General, to Imperial Highway Authority, Ref No. 7990/670/27, Dated 25/8/1960 E.C.

⁵⁴⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Ayele Tadele, Acting Governor of Bičäna *Awrajjja*, to Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Däbrä Marqos Branch, Ref No. 2056/198, Dated 23/8/1964 E.C.

respectively. This money (Eth. 4, 226 birr) was deposited in the commercial bank of Ethiopia, Däbrä Marqos branch, in the name of *Däjjazmač* Werkneh Nigus, development fund treasurer of Bičäna *Awrajja*. This public development contribution has been announced on the radio.⁵⁴⁷

According to Ayele Tariku, in the 1971s, the two *Awrajjas*, Moṭṭa and Bičäna, coordinated together and established a committee known as *Ye Moṭṭa ena Bičäna Awrajja Gizat Yemenged Dereget* (Bičäna and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas* road organization).⁵⁴⁸ Besides, following the beginning of Däjän-Motta feeder road construction, the people of Motta and Bichena *Awrajjas* coordinated together and formed an *Axcwion* (share) and decided to collect money to buy a public transport bus. *Ato* Beyene Gezahegn was elected as a manager of the *Axcwion* (corporation). Likewise, *Ato* Fiker Yohannis was elected as a secretary of the *Axcwion*.⁵⁴⁹

Däjän-Moṭṭa project was officially begun in 1967. Accordingly, the surveying of 35 kms road has been finished. Likewise, the design of 30 kilometers road was finished. 25 kms road was also surveyed at the beginning of 1968. In addition, the design of 5 kms road has been finished.⁵⁵⁰ His Imperial Majesty, on his part, ordered the road construction to be intensified during the dry season and reached Däbrä Wärq and Bičäna *Awrajjas* in 1968. Likewise, the local people were eager for the road construction to reach Däbrä Wärq and Bičäna *Awrajjas* as soon as possible.⁵⁵¹ The governors of Gojjam *Awrajjas* and its acting governor, on their part, were eager for the intensification of Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder road construction. For instance, *Däjjazmač*

⁵⁴⁷DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Ayele Tadele, the Governor of Bičäna *Awrajja* to Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Däbrä Marqos Branch, Ref No. 1115/198, Dated 4/5/1964 E.C.

⁵⁴⁸ Ayele Tariku, "A History of Hulet Iju Inesie...", P. 129.

⁵⁴⁹*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from *Fitawrari* Ayele Tadele, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 1550/3144, Dated 4/5/1964 E.C.

⁵⁵⁰ Sixteenth Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1968 (unpublished material), P. 9.

⁵⁵¹*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, a Letter from *Däjjazmač* Tsehay Enqu Selassie, to Doctor Haile Giyorgis Werkneh, Ref No. 6732/670, Dated 16/7/1960 E.C.

Tsehayu Enqu Selassie complained to IHA that if the construction work had begun earlier, the people would have been interested and then more continued its popular support.⁵⁵²

Between January 8, 1968 and April 7, 1968, the plan with earth work was completed completely, and the drainage design was completed 60%. In December 1968, plans were printed and given to the construction division. From 1km to 8 kms, clearing and grubbing have been finished. However, operations were suspended until funds were available. Aside from that, the project was halted due to a security issue beyond Däbrä Wärq town.⁵⁵³

At the beginning of the 1968 reporting period, the progress of the work was very slow due to a lack of funds and operating equipment. As a result, it was completely closed from July to September 1968. Again, work operations resumed in October 1969, and the following work has been done: clearing and grubbing work has progressed from km 1 km to 17 kms; grading work from 1 km to 12 kms. A base course with select materials has been laid from 1 km to 6 kms.⁵⁵⁴ From October 8, 1968 to January 7, 1969, clearing and grubbing works were completed from 1 km to 17 kms and grading work was completed from 1 km to 12 kms. A base course with select materials has been laid up to 9 kms. The progress of the project was supervised by Ato Tafesse Bekele, general superintendent of Ethiopian highway projects.⁵⁵⁵

During the seventh annual reporting period of the IHA, clearing and grubbing works were progressed from 18 kms to 29 kms, and grading work from 12 kms to 27 kms. A base course with select materials has been laid between 10 kms and 25 kms. Clearing and grubbing work was

⁵⁵² DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter from *Däjjazmač* Tsehay Enqu Selassie, to the Imperial Highway Authority, Ref No. 1035/670/27, Dated 6/11/1960 E.C.

⁵⁵³ Press and Public Relation Branch, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of January 8, 1968-April 7, 1968* (unpublished material), P. 19.

⁵⁵⁴ Sixteenth Annual Report of the Imperial Highway Authority, 1968 (unpublished material), P. 34.

⁵⁵⁵ Press and Public Relation Office, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of October 8, 1968 to January 7, 1969* (unpublished material), P. 14.

completed up to 27 kms and grading work was completed up to 21 kms during the reporting period of January 8, 1969 to April 7, 1969. 180m³ selected materials accumulated at different quarry sites for second layer. Culvert was also under construction at 3 kms. German economic experts with Ato Deneke Tegegne, construction engineer, visited the site to check the progress of the project.⁵⁵⁶

However, due to a lack of heavy-duty equipment, no earth work (clearing and grubbing) and grading work was performed between January 8, 1970 and April 7, 1970 reporting periods. But, culvert walls were completed at kms 9 and 17. The size of the wall was 1.5 meters wide by 10 meters long. Besides, 229m³ of soil and rock were excavated on various culvert sites.⁵⁵⁷ At different road sections, the following culverts were also constructed.

Table 5: Culverts constructed at different locations on Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road.

No	Culvert size completed	Location
1	2m wide and 10m long	At 1km
3	3m wide and 10m long	At 6kms
4	2m wide and 10m long	At 15kms
5	2m wide and 10m long	At 17 kms
6	5m wide and 10m long	At 20 kms

Source: Press and public relations division, *quarterly progress report for the period of January 8, 1970-April 7, 1970* (unpublished material), p. 2.

To construct the above culverts, the IHA Company used cement (915 quintals), crushed stone (327.83m³), stone (530m³), and sand (104.9m³). Furthermore, the company used 180 Italian blasting caps, 16 rolls of fuses, and eight boxes of dynamite. The company also transported cement (915 quintals), crushed stone (302.18m³), stone (530m³), selected material (27.96m³),

⁵⁵⁶ Press and Public Relation Branch, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of January 8, 1969 to April 7, 1969* (unpublished material), P. 14.

⁵⁵⁷ Press and Public Relation Division, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of January 8, 1970 to April 7, 1970* (unpublished material), P. 2.

and sand (1,995m³) to various sites.⁵⁵⁸ However, at the beginning of 1971, no work progress has been shown since the project was officially terminated due to the shortage of funds. The money collected from the local people from 1968 to 1971 was inadequate to continue the project as expected. There were also no funds from the Imperial Ethiopian Government to construct this feeder road. Therefore, the process of the construction work was terminated due to the lack of equipment and funds. As Ato Hailu Shawel describes, by the order of IHA staff, construction materials and personnel were transferred to other projects.⁵⁵⁹

In Bičäna Awrajjä, the local people have complained that the money which was collected for the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa road was exploited by some governor generals.⁵⁶⁰ For instance, before leaving for Gore for other authorities, *Fitawrari* Demisse Asamirew, the former governor-general of Bichena Awrajjä, was asked to provide legal receipts showing the money (Eth.9189 birr) deposited in the Commercial Banks of Ethiopia, Däbrä Marqos branch.⁵⁶¹ In turn, *Fitawrari* Demisse responded by writing to the Ministry of Interior, noting that the legal receipt was in Ato Mersha Jenberie's hand. Ato Mersha, on his part, believed that the legal receipt was in his hand.⁵⁶² Ato Nigatie, Bičäna Awrajjä's chief secretary, also announced that the money (Eth.9189 birr) was deposited in Ethiopia's Commercial Bank, Däbrä Marqos branch, on January 2, 1967, under the receipt number A/C NO.D.3.⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁸ Press and Public Relation Division, *Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of January 8, 1970 to April 7, 1970* (unpublished material), P. 2.

⁵⁵⁹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar to Tahisas* (November to December) 19 67 E.C.

⁵⁶⁰ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, a Letter Written from *Qägñ Azmač* Assefa Tareqe, to Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, Ref No. 16/88/421/3, dated 12/1/1964 E.C.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, Folder No 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, a letter Written from Gojjam Governorate-General Office to Fitawrari Demis, Ref No. 809/2445/1, dated 10/2/1962 E.C.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, a Letter Written from *Däjjazmač* Dereje Mekonnen, Acting Governor of Gojjam Governorate-General, to Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Interior, Ref No. 855/24, dated 19/3/1962 E.C.

⁵⁶³ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, a Letter Written from Nigatie, Chief Secretary of Bičäna Awrajjä, to Gojjam Governorate-General Office, Ref No. 1379/198/281, dated ...

After the failure of Däjän-Moṭṭa road project, Gojjam Development Association (GDA) also planned to construct a Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar (205km) secondary highway. The Association has agreed to construct this secondary highway to link three Gojjam *Awrajjas*: Bičäna, Moṭṭa, and Bahir Dar. The agreement was reached at the end of three days of meetings at the office of the Association. The total cost of this project was estimated to be Eth. 4 million birr. But, I could not find further information on how far the Association had operated to construct this secondary highway.⁵⁶⁴

3.10. The First Unsuccessful Plan of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar Feeder Road Construction

Like that of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road, the genesis of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road dates back to the fascist Italian invasion of Ethiopia. As I noted in chapter three, to meet the requirements of the military control, the Italians connected Bahir Dar with Moṭṭa by motor road. According to informant Yismaw Limenih, the construction of this gravel highway began in 1937. Specifically, the highway radiates at Navega Ṭana, the current Lake Ṭana Transport Enterprise, and leads to Säbatamit and Adét via the former Gambi clinic. To construct this gravel highway, the Italians employed large numbers of forced laborers from the local people and imported Italian laborers. Local Italian *Bandas* (collaborators) played a key role in recruiting the local people for the construction of this highway. For instance, Tirfe Reta of Adét was one of the Italian collaborators who provided the local people to the Italians for this purpose. Besides, the local people and Italian laborers, Eritrean Askaries, which were called by locals as Hamasén, contributed to a paramount role in the construction of this highway.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Senie* (June) 1965 E.C.

⁵⁶⁵ Informants: Yismaw Limenih, Simegnew Getahun, priest Eyaqiem Desta, Tesfahun Mihret, and Walelign Tefera.

The progress of the construction of this gravel highway was very slow due to the intense and unceasing guerrilla attacks on the road workers. As a result, it took almost three years for the Italians to complete Bahir Dar-Moṭṭa gravel highway (1937-1940). The first plan of the Italians was to connect Bahir Dar with Moṭṭa through an asphalt road and extend it to Däjän. But, due to the patriots' surprise attack, the Italians changed their plan and they constructed a provisional highway surfaced with gravel, which was called Telford. It was estimated that this highway was 3 to 4 meters wide. It lacked modern road alignment and design. As a result, the highway was not suitable for high-speed motor traffic. Mostly, Italian armored cars were moved on this gravel highway from Bahir Dar to Adét and Moṭṭa.⁵⁶⁶

However, this gravel road did not provide transport services in the post-liberation period because it was not repaired. Hence, it was only during the dry season that some Land Rover cars moved from Bahir Dar to Adét. For instance, Kassa Equbay transported goods and people between Bahr Dar and Däbrä Mawi without reaching Adet until about 1950. Ato Alebachew Wagaw and Amogne Ayele bought a Land Rover together in the early 1950s to transport goods and passengers between Bahir Dar and Adét. Land Rover automobiles were occasionally utilized by provincial state officials to visit Adét on this road. Under the direction of *Šalläqa* Yayeh yirad Mered, the governor of Bahr Dar *Awrajja* (r. 1957-1963), Adét-Bahr Dar road section was repaired in 1962, and additional automobiles began to provide transportation services.⁵⁶⁷

In the late 1960s, *Aläqa* Sirak Zegeye organized the Yilmana Dénsa District Development Association as a branch of the Bahir Dar *Awrajja* Development Association. The branch association intends to raise funds for local development from the residents of Adét town and

⁵⁶⁶ Interviews with Tesfahun Molla, Yismaw Limenih, and Simegnew Getahun.

⁵⁶⁷ Germew Eskezia, "A History of Yelmana Dénsa District (1901-1974)" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2015), P. 148.

Yelmana Dénsa *Wäräda*. As a result, farmers owning one ox were compelled to pay Eth. \$7.00 birr, while farmers owning a pair of oxen were ordered to pay Eth. \$15.00 birr. However, the quantity of contributions made by the residents of Adét town was determined by their economic capacity. As a result, in 1970, the Adét-Bahr Dar road section, also known as the Wašo Bär road, was repaired by the development organization. Between Adét and Bahr Dar, the branch development organization built minor bridges across the Šäggiz and Andassa Rivers. As a result, since December 1971, passengers and commodities were transported between Adet and Bahr Dar using land Rovers, Lorries and Russian-made public transportation cars known as Meskov.⁵⁶⁸ However, beyond Adét, this gravel road did not provide transport services because it was not repaired either by the Imperial Regime or by public participation in the post-liberation period. Therefore, the local people have frequently requested from the Imperial Regime that this road be built.⁵⁶⁹

Attempts to construct Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar metalled feeder road date back to the Imperial Regime, despite being unsuccessful. It was a parcel of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road program. Concerning this, *Qägñ Azmač* Habte Mariam Welde Kidan, the governor of Bahir Dar *Awrajja*, wrote the following letter to Ato Shawel Welde Mariam, Chief Manager of IHA: “ከሞጣ እስከ ባህርዳር ያለውን መንገድ ለመቀየስ እና ለመስራት የሚጠይቀውን ጠቅላላ ግምት በማዘጋጀት በቁጥር 2212/2022 መጋቢት 17/60 ዓ.ም የተፃፈ ደብዳቤ ከዘርዘር መግለጫዎቹ ጋር ደርሶናል፡፡”⁵⁷⁰ the text, literally translated, could read: “We [Habte Mariam] have received a letter dated 2212/2022, March 17/60 E.C., along with the details of the plan to design and build the road from Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar.” Plans for the construction of this feeder road were divided into three sections: section one from Moṭṭa to Abaya River (30 kms),

⁵⁶⁸ Geremew Eskezia, “A History of Yelmana...,” P. 148.

⁵⁶⁹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Megabit* (March) 1974 E.C.

⁵⁷⁰ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17. 1.11.19.01, a Letter Written from *Qägñ Azmač* Habte Mariam Welde Kidan, Governor of Bahir Dar *Awrajja*, to Ato Shawel Welde Mariam, Chief Manager of the Imperial Highway Authority, Ref No. 2/2246/4107/41, dated...

section two from Abaya to Adét (29 kms), and the third section from Adét to Andassa River (36 kms). The overall expense for this extensive project was estimated to be Eth. \$ 6, 694, 633. 00 birr.⁵⁷¹ For further information, see the following table.

Table 6: estimate overall expenses of Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar feeder road project

No	Road section	Km	surveying work	Designed work	Excavation and Grading work	Crushing stone & Surfacing work	Construction of large bridges	Culvert construction
1	Moṭṭa-Abaya	30	\$52,360	\$34,914	\$1,432,924	\$574,930	\$1,200,000	\$500,000
2	Abaya-Adét	29	\$22,330	\$14,906	\$406,841	\$559,990	\$75,000	\$37,500
3	Adét-Andasa river	36	\$35,420	\$23,634	\$771,374	\$694,010	\$60,000	\$30,000
	Total	95	\$110,110	\$73,454	\$2,611,139	\$1,828,930	\$1,335,000	\$567,500

Source: NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01.

In 1971, topographic surveys, soil investigations, and detailed engineering design plans and specifications were carried out by engineering experts. From January 1, 1972, to March 31, 1972, investigation and surveying of four river crossings were completed.⁵⁷² From April 1, 1974 to June 30, 1974, the design branch prepared bridge construction plans for the following river crossings: Adafé at kms 28, Ṭoul at kms 43, Šäigaz at kms 48, and Šäna at kms 57. However, due to lack of an adequate budget, the overall construction activities were terminated like that of Däjän-Moṭṭa road project.⁵⁷³ We will see briefly the completion of Däjän-Moṭṭa and Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar Feeder roads during the Derg Regime in the next chapter.

⁵⁷¹NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17. 1.11.19.01, a Letter Written from Ato Shawel Welde Mariam, to *Qägn Azmač* Habte Mariam Welde Kidan , Ref No. 2212/2032, dated 26/6/1960 E.C.

⁵⁷²Imperial Highway Authority Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of January 1, 1972 to March 31, 1972 (unpublished material), P. 17.

⁵⁷³Imperial Highway Authority Quarterly Progress Report for the Period of April 1, 1974 to June 30, 1974 (unpublished material), P. 14.

Compared to the total population and the size of Gojjam, there was low level of highway construction before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. The Governorate-General was characterized by short, connected highway lines with fewer kilometers of feeder roads. In fact, before the Ethiopian Revolution, the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar highway was the only all-weather gravel highway in Gojjam, which crossed the province from south to north. Besides, Bahir Dar-Ṭis Abbay (25km) was the only gravel feeder road in Gojjam before the Ethiopian Revolution.⁵⁷⁴ As a result, John Velissarios states that Gojjam needs the development of highways throughout the province.⁵⁷⁵ As Prouty and Rosenfeld describe, one of the grievances in Gojjam between 1941 and 1968 was the lack of infrastructure like roads.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.04, File No. 17.1.11.04.01, Reports of the Imperial Highway Authority.

⁵⁷⁵ John Velissarios, “the Economy of Ethiopia” (MA Thesis, Boston University, Department of Business Administration, 1954), p. 172.

⁵⁷⁶ Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosen, *Historical Dictionary...*, p. 145.

CHAPTER FOUR

A History of Highway Construction in Gojjam during the Derg Regime (1974-1991)

In September 1974, shortly after Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed, a military committee (known as the Derg) was established from different divisions of the Ethiopian armed forces. General Aman Mikael Andom was elected as the Derg's spokesperson and implemented policies for Ethiopia, which included land distribution to peasants, nationalizing industries and services under public ownership, and leading Ethiopia into socialism. The Derg was credited for those policies which enabled the regime at first to gain mass support throughout Ethiopia.⁵⁷⁷ The Ethiopian people had been waiting for so long to see major transformation in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres. However, the overall success recorded over the period was not as expected. Due to political, economic, and social factors, the military government was unable to meet the people's expectations following the revolution.⁵⁷⁸

When we turn our attention to the topic of my interest, the Derg regime had strong conviction that the accessibility of rural and feeder roads played a significant role to the National Revolutionary Development Campaign. Accordingly, unlike the Imperial regime, the Derg Regime gave top priority to the construction of rural and feeder roads, with less emphasis on the national highway systems. Since the 1974 popular revolution, and especially with the establishment of the Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority along a new line, efforts have been made to construct more extensive and integrated feeder and rural roads.⁵⁷⁹ Accordingly, it

⁵⁷⁷Mesfin Kebede, "Rural Road Construction in Ethiopia: Emphasis with the Development of Since 1991" (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Geography, 1998), P. 16.

⁵⁷⁸Derb Tefera, "the Nexus Between Water Supply...", P. 122.

⁵⁷⁹Ethiopian Herald, March-June 1982.

was planned to construct 625 kms of roads in the provinces of Gojjam, Käffa, Harärghé, and Šäwa at a cost of Eth. 4.7 million birr secured from the World Bank.⁵⁸⁰

According to the reports of the transportation and communication performance activity of the province of Gojjam, before 1974, only one all-weather secondary highway and one dry-weather feeder road had been constructed in Gojjam. This secondary highway (366kms) radiates from Addis Ababa and leads to Gondar across the province of Gojjam. As a result, the existing highway did not provide transport services to all *Awrajjas* and their respective *Wärädas* (districts).⁵⁸¹ Therefore, in the immediate post-revolutionary period, the need and the request for road construction were higher than ever before in Gojjam. The *Wäräda* and *Awrajjja* administrators repeatedly asked the government and the Ethiopian Road Authority (hereinafter ERA) for the construction of roads. Thus, to know the accessibility of roads in Gojjam, three continuous field studies were conducted during the Derg Regime.⁵⁸²

The first field study was conducted in 1974. A 16-piece mission team, led by Colonel Zeleke Byene, visited each *Awrajjas* in Gojjamas well as the *Wärädas* from November 12 to January 10, 1974. During the field study, the committee realized that the construction of road was the most pressing question of the people.⁵⁸³ The team reported that inadequate and unreliable feeder and rural roads have hampered the socio-economic development of Gojjam. Its rural population has faced a range of difficulties that hinder agricultural productivity.⁵⁸⁴ Despite the economic potential of the province, especially in the cultivation of food grains, its agricultural development

⁵⁸⁰ Ethiopian Herald, January- June 1978.

⁵⁸¹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ṭir-Yäkatit* (January-February) 1973 E.C.

⁵⁸² NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Doctor Asmelash Beyene, Head of the *Awrajjja* Internal Administration Department, to Gojjam Province Administrative Office, Ref No.1396/19, Dated, 30/1/1968 E.C.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid*, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Doctor Asmelash Beyene, to the Ethiopian Road Authority, Ref No.29181/19, Dated, April 16/1968 E.C.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Zemene Kassie, Deputy Chief Administrator of Gojjam Province, to Ministry of Interior, Ref No.22301/70/94, Dated, July 17/1967 E.C.

was not as expected due partly to inadequate rural and feeder roads. To sell their products at a reasonable cost, peasants were unable to transport their products to different market centers.⁵⁸⁵

Besides, political instability was aggravated in different *Awrajjas* and *Wärādas* of Gojjam due to inadequate rural and feeder roads. Repeated crimes like killing of innocent people, burning of villages, and robbery were rampant in the different parts of Gojjam.⁵⁸⁶

On January 29, 1974, some of the Derg personnel who were promoting the ideology of Ethiopia first planned to conduct a road access study in Gojjam province using a helicopter. However, due to the lack of a helicopter, the second field study was not conducted.⁵⁸⁷

The last and third rural road field studies were conducted from May to June 1974. To construct 1823 km of roads, the rural road construction company called Crown Agent undertakes a study of rural roads in Gojjam. The agent was led by the two engineers, Kenedi Rahed and Ayalneh Yechale. In the space of 21 days, the agent visited the 7 *Awrajjas* and 35 *Wärādas*. After the field study was over, the agent reported the accessibility of roads and the possibility of constructing additional rural roads. It also examined the ways in which rural roads were financed, maintained, and administered. The Crown Agent proposed the construction of 634, 320, 260, 202, 176, 140, and 90 kms of roads in Mätäkäl, Däga Damot, Agäw Midir, Bahir Dar, Bičäna, and Däbrä Marqos *Awrajjas*, respectively. Therefore, the province of Gojjam *Šihifät Bét* (Secretary Office) revealed that plans were finalized for the construction of these roads.⁵⁸⁸ In an attempt to alleviate the problem of communication all over the province, the ERA planned to

⁵⁸⁵NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Zemene Kassie to the Ethiopian Road Authority, Ref No.17833/150/27, Dated, June 6/1967 E.C.

⁵⁸⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 152, File No.17.1.11.1.17.18, A Letter Written from *Fitawrari* Hailu Bera, Deputy Chief Administrator of Gojjam Province, to Colonel Belachew Jemaneh, Ministry of Interior, Ref No.41/Δ/6/6, Dated, December 5/1967 E.C., PP. 1-3.

⁵⁸⁷*Ibid*, A letter Written from Yohannis Haile Selassie, Acting Director General of the State Administration, to Gojjam Province Administrative Office, Ref No.17414/19/5417, Dated, January 22/5/1967 E.C.

⁵⁸⁸ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1967 E.C.

construct 1,110 km of roads in Gojjam within 10 years (1974-1984).⁵⁸⁹ For further information, see the following table:

Table 7: Ten Year Indicative Rural Roads Construction Program for Administrative Province of Gojjam.

No	Name of the project	Kms	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1	Bičäna-Quyi-Däbrä Marqos-Robu Gäbäya	155	40	45	30	-	40	-	-	-	-	-
2	Robugäbäya-Motṭa-Fasil Bridge	100	-	-	10	45	45	-	-	-	-	-
3	Bičäna-Yäjubé	40	-	-	-	-	-	30	10	-	-	-
4	Yähula-Elias-Däjän	85	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	45	20	-
5	Bičäna-Šäbäl-Yäduha	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	33
6	Jiga-Quarit	45	3	21	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Gindäwäin- MärtuläLämariam	25	15	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Tilili-Säkäla	70	15	40	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Wätät Abay-Dagi	20	-	-	15	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	Dangla-Čagni-Čara- Ṭimuha	50	-	-	-	15	35	-	-	-	-	-
11	Addis Qidam-Facil-Fola	50	-	-	-	-	5	40	5	-	-	-
12	Kässa-Azäna-Šašima	55	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	35	-	-
13	Minase-QollaBäräkät- Assäbä	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	12
14	Čagni-Dibaté-Däbrä Zäyit	110	-	-	-	30	50	30	-	-	-	-
15	Čagni-Dibaté-Zigäm	40	-	-	-	-	-	10	30	-	-	-
16	Rambudi-Almähal-Guba- Omédila	180	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	70	70	-
	Total Length (km)	1110	73	121	86	95	175	110	125	150	130	45

Source: NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01.

⁵⁸⁹NALA, Folder No.17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Gebeyehu Ademeqe, Head of Production Campaign and Agricultural Development, to Ministry of Interior, Ref No.1187/ለመ/86, Dated, 21/7/74 E.C., PP. 1-2.

In the post-Revolutionary period, the construction of feeder and rural roads was intensified by the Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority (hereinafter ETCA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as other private firms like Berta and Ethiopian Earth Moving Equipment. But, in the first five years, the construction of feeder and rural roads was minimal due to the inadequacy of capital and manpower.⁵⁹⁰ To facilitate agricultural development, the ETCA gave top priority to the construction of rural and feeder roads in Gojjam. It played an indispensable role in the construction of rural and feeder roads in Gojjam. In fact, during the Derg Regime, most roads in Gojjam were constructed by this authority. For instance, the road from Gindäwäyin-Märtulämaria (25 kms), Durbété-Qunzilla (68 kms), Čagni-Wänbära (150 kms), Mankusa-Biršäläqo (40 kms), Kassa-Gimjjabét (45 kms), Jiga-Quarit (60 kms), and Dämbäça-Färäsbét (61kms) roads were constructed by ETCA. By giving contracts to Berta Private Limited Company and Ethiopian Earth Moving Equipment Companies, respectively, ETCA has also played a key role in the construction of the two feeder roads, i.e., Däjän-Moṭṭa and Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar. The designs of these feeder roads were prepared by the planning and design section of ETCA. The total length of roads built by ETCA was estimated to be 297 kms, which comprises about 29.6% of the total all-weather roads in Gojjam.⁵⁹¹

The Ministry of Agriculture also made some contributions to road construction in Gojjam. The aim of this institution was to connect agriculturally potential areas with market centers and to provide agricultural inputs and other social services to such areas. Accordingly, under this institution, there were separate road construction departments which were responsible for the provision of rural infrastructure throughout the country. However, the contribution of this

⁵⁹⁰Animut Demissie, “the Socion-Economic Significance of Road Transport Development in Gojjam” (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Geography, 1987), p. 11.

⁵⁹¹ Gojjam Province Plan Office, *Short Description of Gojjam Province*, June 1980 (unpublished material), P.51.

institution to road construction in Gojjam was insignificant compared to other institutions. The length of roads that were constructed by the Ministry of Agriculture was 141 kms, out of a total of 1,102 kms of all-weather roads. A road from Çämoga-Yäjubé (17kms), Bičäna-Yädwuha (55km), Buré-Wägdad (34 kms), Dämbäça-Wad Elyas (18 kms), and Yäwla-Däbrä Elyas (17kms) was constructed by the Ministry of Agriculture.⁵⁹² From 1984 to 1991, the Ministry of Agriculture constructed 141 kms of all-weather roads in Gojjam at a cost of Eth. 64 million birr.⁵⁹³

Besides, the two limited private companies, Berta Private Limited Company and Ethiopian Earth Moving Equipment, have played a significant role in the construction of two feeder roads in Gojjam. In 1978, Däjän-Moṭṭa (136 kms) feeder road was constructed by Berta Private Limited Company. Likewise, Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar (115 kms) feeder road was constructed by Ethiopian Earth Moving Equipment in 1984. For the brief history of the Däjän-Moṭṭa and Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder roads, we will see in the next pages. The involvement of local contractors in road building activities had important benefits for the Ethiopian Provisional Military Government Road Authority. For instance, domestic contractors created wider employment opportunities for local people. Besides, unlike foreign contractors, local road contractors often demanded fair and reasonable prices. Thus, the authority saved from exorbitant charges by foreign contractors.⁵⁹⁴

Through labor-intensive rural road building schemes (public participation), rural and feeder roads have also been constructed in Gojjam. For instance, the roads from Amanuél-Girum Elyas (27 kms), Däbrä Marqos-Robu Gäbäya (27 kms), Tilili-Säkäla (35 kms), and other minor roads

⁵⁹²Economic and Social Service Team, *East Gojjam Administrative Region Transport and Communication Evaluation*, May 1980 (unpublished source), P. 16.

⁵⁹³ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Meskerem-Tikmit* (September- October) 1982 E.C.

⁵⁹⁴ Ayele Tarekegn, "the History of the Imperial...", P. 59.

were constructed. Besides, in Mätäkäl *Awrajja*, in Wänbära *Wäräda*, a total of 240 kms of roads were constructed by public participation.⁵⁹⁵

After the revolution, the construction of feeder and rural roads in Gojjam drastically increased both in quality and quantity. As a result, the road accessibility of Gojjam reached 75% and ranked fifth next to Šäwa, Harar, Sidamo, and Wällo provinces, respectively. The remaining 25% of Gojjam were inaccessible to road infrastructure. The road density was about 25.1/1000 km². This implies that Gojjam was relatively more accessible in terms of road infrastructure than the remaining seven Ethiopian provinces during the Derg Regime.⁵⁹⁶ From 1974 to 1989, the length and density of roads were drastically increased.⁵⁹⁷ For further information, see the following table

Table 8: Progress of Rural and Feeder Roads in Gojjam, from 1974 to 1989.

Administrative-Province	1973	1974	1985	1986	1986/87-88/89	At the end of 1989	
	Length (Kms)	Density Km/1000 (Sq.Kms)	Length (km)	Density Km/1000 (Sq.Kms)	New roads		
					Length (Km)	Length (Kms)	density km/1000 (Sq.Kms)
Gojjam	380	6.2	1,290	21.1	248	1,538	25.1

Source: Physical Planning Department, *Development of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, P. 15.

However, the spatial distribution of existing roads in Gojjam remained inequitably distributed. It was highly varied, both in length and density, from place to place throughout the province. For instance, the lowest road length (80 kms) was situated in Bičäna, which was a densely populated *Awrajja*, having a crude population density of 125.8 people per km². But, its road density was 1

⁵⁹⁵ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September- August) 1971 E.C.

⁵⁹⁶ Gojjam Development and Rehabilitation Association, *Gojjam's Economic and Social Development Index*, November 1985, P. 41.

⁵⁹⁷ Physical Planning Department, *Development of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988 , P. 15.

km/3,675 people. On the other hand, the longest road length (258 kms) lies in Qolla-Däga Damot *Awrajja*, which had a crude population density of 89.8 people per km². The reason why Qolla-Däga Damot *Awrajja* had the longest road is that it is situated in the central part of Gojjam through which Däjän-Bahir Dar highway passes.⁵⁹⁸

During the Derg Regime, all *Awrajja* towns, most *Wäräda* towns, and state farms were situated along the primary highway, secondary feeder roads, minor rural roads, and motorable tracks, all of which had good connectivity. With the exception of Bambudi and Almāhal, which had connections with Čagni and the Injibara-Guba feeder roads, all other frontier settlements and towns like Omedla were connected with their respective *Awrajjas* by feeder roads.⁵⁹⁹ But, during the Imperial Regime, only four *Awrajjas* were accessible to transport services out of a total of seven *Awrajjas*. These *Awrajjas* were Däbrä Marqos, Damot, Agäw Midir, and Bahir Dar, which lie along the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar all-weather highway. Besides these *Awrajjas*, only the capital cities of 14 districts had access to transport services. The remaining *Wärädas*, however, were over 230 kilometers on average away from the existing highway.⁶⁰⁰

As I noted above, during the Imperial Regime, within 44 years, there was only Däjän-Bahir Dar (366 kms) all-weather highway in Gojjam. But, during the Derg Regime, within 17 years, 547 kilometers of all-weather roads and 991 kilometers of dry-weather roads were constructed.⁶⁰¹ It was estimated that the Revolutionary government expended Eth. 89, 296, 989 birr to construct 1,538 kms of roads. Of the 1,538 kilometers of roads that were built during the Derg Regime, the longest feeder roads that fulfilled the criteria of secondary highway systems accounted for

⁵⁹⁸ Animut Demissie, "Socio-Economic Significances of Road Transport Development in...", P. 14.

⁵⁹⁹ Ethiopian Herald, June-September, 1983; Physical Planning Department, *Development of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia*, Bahir Dar, July 1988, P. 16.

⁶⁰⁰ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Megabit-Nehase* (March- August) 1979 E.C.

⁶⁰¹ Ethiopian Herald, June-September 1980.

675kms. These secondary highways are Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar (211 kms), Injibara-Guba (216 kms), and Buré-Näqämit (248 kms).⁶⁰²

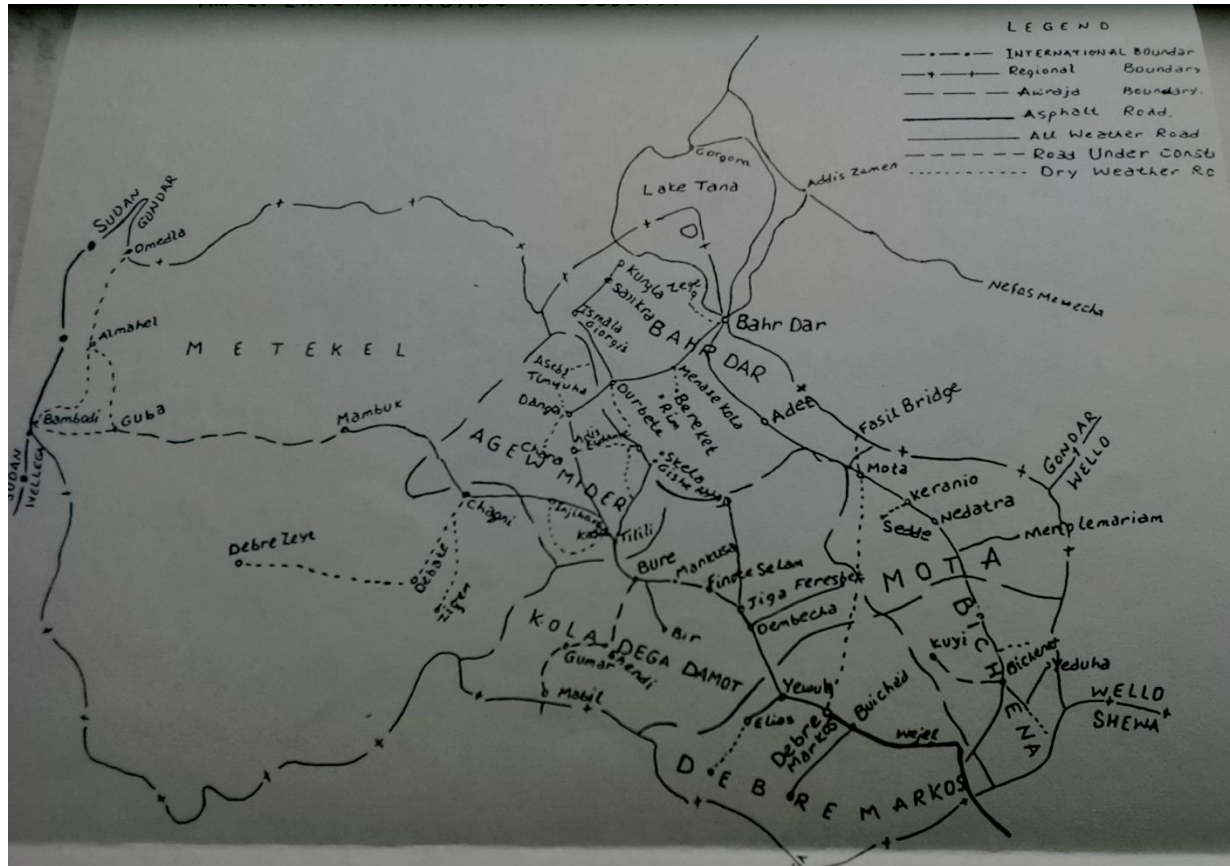


Figure 34: Feeder and rural road in Gojjam during the Derg Regime. Source: Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority, Planning and Programming Department, 1985, p. 7.

4.1. A History of Däjän-Moṭṭa Feeder Road Construction

As I mentioned in chapter three, the genesis of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road construction dates back to the Imperial Regime. The whole construction work, however, was terminated due to lack of funding and equipment. At a meeting held by the Ministry of Public Works and Communication, a discussion was held to construct a road from Däjän to Moṭṭa. At this meeting, Ato Hailu Shawel, the General Manager of IHA, disclosed that the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa (103 kms)

⁶⁰² Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1975 E.C.

feeder road as a parcel of the 5th highway program (1974-1966). Besides, referring to the significance of Dājān-Moṭṭa road, different stakeholders repeatedly requested the construction of this feeder road. The Ministry of Public Works and Communication held this meeting in January 1974, the idea proposed by Basazinew Gebeyehu, the governor of Bičāna Awrajja.⁶⁰³

As I noted in chapter two, during the 5th highway program, ERA planned to construct 539 kilometers of feeder roads in Ethiopia. Of these, Dājān to Moṭṭa feeder road project was a part of this program. Concerning the precondition for Dājān to Moṭṭa feeder road construction, the Plan and Program Manager, Yesuf Ahemed, wrote the following letter to the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, Ministry of Ethiopian State Administration:

ከደጃን እስከ ሞጣ ሊሰራ ስለታቀደው መንገድ ስራ ጉዳይ መጋቢት 10/67 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 22168/45/127/40 ከሀገር አስተዳደር ሚኒስትር መስሪያ ቤት እና የካቲት 11/67 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 204/ል/6/6 ከጎጃም ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ፅህፈት ቤት የተፃፈላችሁን ደብዳቤ ትክክ ግልባጭ ደርሰውን ተመልክቻቸዋለሁ፡፡ ከዚህ በፊት በገለፅነው መሰረት ለደጃን ሞጣ እና እንዲሁም ለሌሎች መንገዶች ስራ የሚሆን ገንዘብ ለመበደር ከኢትዮጵያ ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግስት የተወጣጡ መልክተኞች ወደ ዋሽንግተን ዲሲ ሂደው ከሰነበቱ በኋላ ሰሞኑን ተመልሰዋል፡፡ አስፈላጊውም የብድር ገንዘብ ከአለም ባንክ ተገኝቷል፡፡ አሁን የሚቀረው የመንገዱን ስራ ለተቋራጭ መስጠት ብቻ ሲሆን ይህ እንደተጠናቀቀ የመንገዱ ስራ ወዲያው እንደሚጀመር እንገልጻለን፡፡⁶⁰⁴

For the proposed Dājān-Moṭṭa road construction, we [Yesuf Ahimed] have received your [Ministry of State Administration] letter and I saw a copy of it [letters], written Magabit (March) 10/67 E.C under number 22168/45/127/40, from the Ministry of State Administration office as well as a letter written on February 11/67 E.C under number 204/6/6, from the administrative of Gojjam province Tsihifet Bet [office]. As we have already mentioned, envoys from the Ethiopian Provisional Military Government travelled to Washington DC to borrow money for Dājān-Moṭṭa and other road projects. The necessary loan is obtained from the World Bank. All that remains is to give the road work to a contractor and we will announce that as soon as this is completed, the road work will began immediately.

In December 1974, the ERA opened bidding for the construction of Dājān to Motta feeder road.

In this bidding, both domestic and international well-known contracts were involved. For

⁶⁰³ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Tahisas-Tir* (December- January) 1966 E.C.

⁶⁰⁴ NALA, Folder No. 17. 1.11.19, File No. 17.1.11.19.01, A Letter Written from Yessuf Ahimed, Planning and Programming General Manager, to the Ministry of Interior, Ref No. መደ50/17, Dated, March19/7/1969 E.C.

instance, Nelotir (American), Scan Scana (Swedish), Trap (German), Voristria, and Eprezit Rekina Mazi (Italian) foreign contracts were involved in this bidding. On the other hand, the two domestic contractors, Zorzi and Etberg, competed to win the bid.⁶⁰⁵ Finally, Berta Construction Privet Limited Company won the bidding. Thus, the contract for the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa (102 kms) feeder road was signed on May 29, 1975, between Ato Hailu Shawel, on behalf of ERA and Ato Berhane Abate, General Manager of Berta Construction Privet Limited Company. It was anticipated that the construction of this feeder road would be completed within two and a half years.⁶⁰⁶



Figure 35: Signing of Däjän-Moṭṭa road contract. First from the left is Ato Birhane Abate and first from the left is Ato Hailu Shawel. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1967 E.C.

⁶⁰⁵ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Tahisas-Tir* (December- January) 1966 E.C.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid*, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1967 E.C.

As I mentioned in chapter one, Moṭṭa and Bičäna are among the most surplus-producing areas in Gojjam. As a result, it was anticipated that the construction of this feeder road would enable to transport such produce to various market centers, encourage peasants to enlarge their production in three fold, and change their mode of production. Some Lorries moved from Däjän to Moṭṭa during the dry season. Peasants had to pay a higher transportation cost when using these vehicles to transport their commodities and products.⁶⁰⁷ It is true that transport charges vary depending on the condition of roads. The worse the roads get, the more expensive transportation costs become.⁶⁰⁸ Therefore, it was expected that the construction of this road would alleviate the age-old transportation problems of the Moṭṭa and Bičäna *Awrajja* people.⁶⁰⁹

According to the reports of the company, this extensive project would provide employment opportunities for a large number of local masons, carpenters, engineering experts, and other unemployed people. According to the reports of the experts, this extensive project would include the building of 2 large bridges; the construction of 30 culverts; and the installation of 107 pipes across major and minor rivers.⁶¹⁰

The funds for financing the project were obtained from the World Bank. The total cost of the construction was estimated to be Eth. \$14.6 million birr.⁶¹¹ A comparison of the construction costs and the geometric design of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road compiled by *Ato Adela Lul Seged*, chief of the designs division, *Ato Abera Tadesse*, road survey engineer, and *Ato Asfaw Fanta*,

⁶⁰⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1967 E.C.

⁶⁰⁸ Daniel Gebre Tsadik, “the Problems of Road Transport and its Socio-Economic Impacts in West Šäwa” (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Geography, 1996), P.27.

⁶⁰⁹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1967 E.C.

⁶¹⁰ Ethiopian Road Authority Second Quarter Progress Report, January 1st to May 31, 1975, P. 14.

⁶¹¹ Ethiopian Herald May to September 1975.

chief of photogrammetric section of Däjän-Moṭṭa road project.⁶¹² For further information, see the following table:

Table 9: A comparison of the construction costs and the geometric design of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road

A. Survey Line Roadway Classification	Km	Construction costs
Flat	5 km	Eth. 785, 275 birr
Rolling	7 »	Eth. 1, 344, 427 birr
Hilly	3 »	Eth. 695,556 birr
Total	15 »	Eth. 2, 825, 258 birr
B. line passing through Fälägä Birhan Roadway classification		Survey, design, and construction cost
Flat	3 km	Eth. 477, 237 birr
Rolling	9 »	Eth. 1, 752, 012 birr
Hilly	4 »	Eth. 639, 048 birr
Mount	2.5 »	Eth. 683, 851 birr
Total	18.5 »	Eth. 3, 852, 148 birr
C. Spur Fälägä Birhan to survey line Road classification		Survey, design, and construction cost
Rolling	1.4 km	Eth. 272, 535. 20 birr
Hilly	2.1 »	Eth. 493, 000. 20 birr
Total	3.5 »	Eth. 765, 535, 40 birr

Source: NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.02. See also the design of Däjän-Moṭṭa road project in the next page.

⁶¹² NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.02, Reports of Berta Private Limited Company.

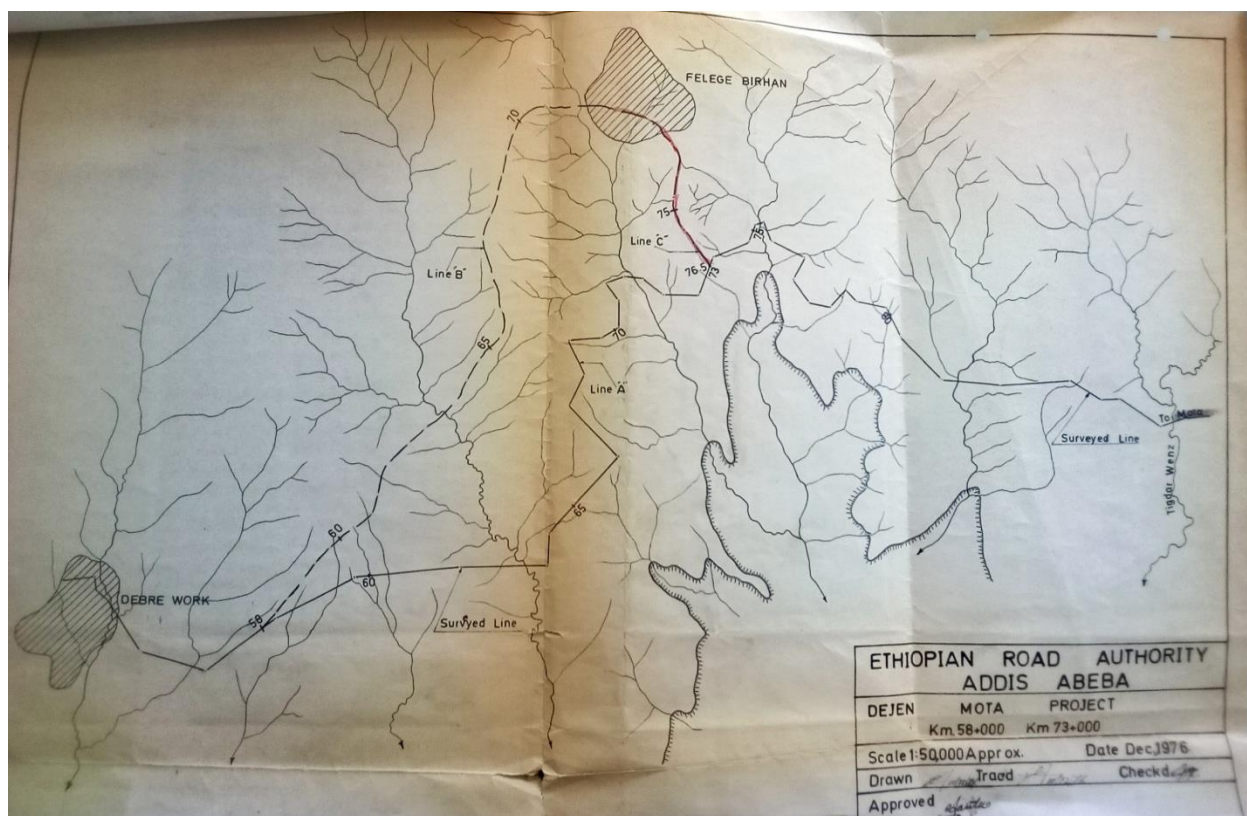


Figure 36: Däjäñ-Moṭṭa feeder road project design. Source: NALA, Folder No 17.1.11.02, File No 17.1.11.02.01.

To begin the actual construction of Däjäñ to Moṭṭa feeder road in November 1976, the contractor wrote a letter to the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia demanding permission to import different types of dynamite from the German company called Nobel. But, the government of Revolutionary Ethiopia did not timely reply to the company's request. Therefore, the company wrote the second letter in November 1976. Later on, the government of Revolutionary Ethiopia gave permission to the company to import dynamite from Germany via Djibouti.⁶¹³ Thus, in August 1976, Berta, a private company, imported gelatin (1,500 kg), blasting caps (500 in number), safety fuse (4,800 meters), electric detonator (1,500 in number),

⁶¹³ DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. 00/00-61, A Letter Written from Colonel Mekonnen Tedeneqe, to Gumruc and Exaiz Enterprise, Ref No. m/9823/29, Dated, 5/6/1968 E.C.

millisecond detonator (1,500 in number), and a detonating machine (1 in number).⁶¹⁴The company returned 1000 kg of gelatin, 3000 blasting caps, 3000 safety fuses, and 1000 electric detonators borrowed from ERA before importing the dynamites from Germany.⁶¹⁵

In December 1976, a team of Berta Construction Privet Limited Company began the surveying and preliminary clearing of the road section on the side of Bičäna *Awrajja*. Specifically, the team began the surveying work at a place called Ṭiq, 27 kilometers away from Bičäna town. They completed the surveying and clearing work as far as a place called Ṭälmma. Even if there were political instabilities in Bičäna and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas*, the team had not faced any security problems during the surveying work. Compensation was given to peasants who lost their crops during the preliminary clearing and surveying work. The contractor gave the compensation after a discussion was held with the local elders. Matured crops which were nearing trashing were, however, cultivated soon by the order of the contractor. However, I could not find information regarding the amount of compensation paid to peasants who lost their crops during the surveying and clearing work.⁶¹⁶

Between January 1st and March 31st, 1976, clearing and grubbing work were progressing satisfactorily. Furthermore, sub-grading works were completed from 28 kms to 38 kms. Earth work (50.15%), pavement (20.25%), minor drainage work (14.85%), and major drainage work (75%) have also been completed by the time this report was prepared (1976).⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁴DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Geremew Sebisibie, Administrator of Gojjam Province, to Bičäna *Awrajja* Office, Ref No. 22041/670/27, Dated, 28/12/1968 E.C.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, A Letter Written from Melkamu Bekele, Deputy Chief Administrator of Gojjam , to Gojjam Province Police Head Office, Ref No. 412/27, Dated, 8/4/1967 E.C.

⁶¹⁶ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Gojjam Province Head Office, to Ministry of Interior, Ref No.4670/27, Dated, February 8/68 E.C.

⁶¹⁷ Ethiopian Road Authority Third Quarter Progress Report, January 1st to March 31, 1976, P. 98.

Within three months (from January to March 1976), the construction of 33 kms of road has been completed. Of these, 20 km of the road section were surfaced with gravel. Clearing and grubbing works of 13 km of road have also been completed. Besides, the building of 6 culverts and the installation of 18 pipes over minor rivers have been completed. Even if the contractor agreed to complete the construction work within two and a half years, Ato Berhane Abate, General Manager of Berta Construction Privet Limited Company, said that we had a plan to complete the construction before the given period ($2\frac{1}{2}$). He also said that the existence of swamp areas makes it difficult to construct the road throughout the year, and thus we have now suspended the project until September.⁶¹⁸ The following archival document substantiates this point.

..... ይኸው የመንገድ ስራ እስከ ሰኔ ወር መጨረሻ ሲሰራ ቆይቶ በአሁኑ ጊዜ ግን የክረምቱ ዝናብ እየበረታ በመሄዱ ምክንያት መቋረጡን በርታ እና ሰራተኞቹ በጉዳዩ በሰፊው ተወያይተው ያስተላለፉልንን ደብዳቤ ትክክል ግልጻቸው ሁለት ገፅ ከዚህ ጋር እየላከን፤ ስለዚህ በዚህ የተገለፀው በበላይ መስሪያ ቤቶች ይታወቅ ዘንድ እናሳስባለን።⁶¹⁹

....*The road work has been going on since the end of June. But now after Berta and its workers have deeply discussed, they decided to terminate the construction due to the increasing of the rain. We send a two page copy of the letter that Berta and workers discussed deeply to the higher officials.*

As the General Manager describes, during the dry season, 700 to 1000 workers were engaged in the construction of Däjän to Moṭṭa road project. Besides, after harvesting their crop, the local people who live in the area through which the feeder road passes have voluntarily engaged in clearing and grubbing works of the road. Ato Birhane praised the residents of the area for their help and cooperation in the construction of this road.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1969 E.C.

⁶¹⁹ DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Berta Private Limited Construction Company, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. 7089/11717, Dated, 19/11/1968 E.C.

⁶²⁰ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1969 E.C.



Figure 38: Partial view of the road from Däjän to Moṭṭa under construction. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile-Nehase* (July-August) 1968 E.C.



Figure 39: challenges of crossing the river Sädé. To alleviate the challenge, the bridge was under construction. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Yekatit-Ginbot* (February-May) 1970 E.C.

In 1977, the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road was in progress. The construction work had reached Fälägä Birhan, the capital city of Enarg Enawga *Wäräda*. However, the road did not pass through Fälägä Birhan. It leads to Moṭṭa, two kms away from the town.⁶²¹ As a result, the

⁶²¹DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Girmachew Sebisibie, Administrator of Gojjam Province, to Bičäna Awrajja Office, Ref No. 4815/18/27, Dated, 28/3/1969 E.C.

administrator of Enarg Enawga *Wäräda*, Gezahegn Jemberie, complained to Ato Atnafu Tariku, chief administrator of Gojjam province, that the road should pass through the town of Fälägä Birhan. He strongly stressed the necessity of the road to control insecurity problems in the town. In line with this, he also describes Fälägä Birhan as a hub for bandits of Bičäna, Moṭṭa, Däbrä Marqos, Finotä Sälam, and Agäw Midir.⁶²²

The town's residents, for their part, sought the road to pass through Fälägä Birhan. Thus, from September to November 1977, the local people wrote repeated letters to Gojjam province administration office requesting the road to pass through Fälägä Birhan. The people also pledged to contribute money provided that the road passed through the town. However, the office did not respond to their request timely. Hence, on December 30 and January 1, 1977, the local people held a meeting at the hall of the district office. In the meeting, the people agreed to elect three representatives who were responsible for presenting their appeals to the higher authorities. Hence, the people elected Ato Mengesha Ferede, Ato Gelaye Desse, and Simachew Kasse as their representatives. However, the petitioners were unable to obtain a response from the concerned body despite their repeated appeals.⁶²³

As a result, on December 10, 1977, some 300 to 500 people interrupted the road construction, claiming that the road should pass through Fälägä Birhan. The incident was announced on the

⁶²²DMUAC, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61 , A Letter Written from *Däjjzmač* Gezahegn Jemberie, Administrator of Enarg Enawga *Wäräda*, to Atinafu Tariku, Chief Administrator of Gojjam Province, Ref No. በመ/ቁ1/69, Dated, November 20/1969 E.C.

⁶²³NALA, Folder No.17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from *Däjjzmač* Gezahegn Jemberie, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No.273/69, Dated, November 24/ 3/69 E.C.

radio.⁶²⁴ Shiferwa Demisse, deputy manager of ERA, disclosed the situation to Ato Atinafu Tariku, chief administrator of Gojjam province, in the following letter:

ከደጃን ወደ ሞገጣ በመሰራት ላይ ያለው መንገድ በኪሎሜትር 73 አካባቢ ፈለገብርሀን አጠገብ በትላንት ዕለት በአካባቢው ህዝብ መቆሙ በፊደል ተገልጦልናል። ተያይዞ የሚገኘው ንድፍ እንደሚያመለክተው መንገዱ በፈለገብርሀን ከተማ ውስጥ ያላለፈበት ምክንያት ከተማው ያለበት አካባቢ በጣም ገደላማ ስለሆነና የመንገዱን ርዝመት በ3 ኪሎሜትር ተኩል ከመርዘሙ በላይ ወጭውን ከአንድ ሚሊዎን ብር በላይ ከፍ ስለሚያደርገው ነው። በመሰረቱ መንገዱ የደጃንን ከተማ ከሞገጣ ከተማ ካገናኘ በኋላ ቀጥሎ ወደ ባህርዳር ለማገናኘት ስለሆነ አጠቃላይ አቅጣጫው ቀጥ ያለና አጠር ያለ መሆኑን አለበት። በተጨማሪም አሁን መንገዱ የሚሰራው ከአለም ባንክ በተገኘ ብድር ስለሆነ መስመሩን ለመለወጥ አይቻልም። የሆነው ሁኖ የመንገድ ስራ ባለስልጣን ወደ ፈለገብርሀን የሚያገባ /በቀይ መስመር የታየው/ ለመሰራት ወስኗል። ስለዚህ ይሄው ለፈለገብርሀን ለአካባቢው ህዝብ ተገልጦ ስራው በአስቸኳይ እንዲቀጥል እንዲደረግና የስራውም መቆም በመንግስት ላይ በብዙ ሺህ የሚገመት ተጨማሪ ወጭ እንደሚያስከትልና የመንገዱም ስራ በታሰበበት ጊዜ ከመፈፀም እንደሚያዘገየው እንዲገነዘቡልን ከአደራ ጭምር እናሳስባለን።⁶²⁵

We [Shiferwa Demisse] received Radio reports indicating that the road under construction from Dājān to Moṭṭa was stopped by local people near Fālāgā Birhan, about 73km. The accompanying sketch shows that the road did not pass through Fālāgā Birhan town because the area around it is very steep and it increase the length of the road by 3 and half kilometers as well it will increase the construction cost by more than one million birr. Basically, the road connects Dājān to Moṭṭa town and then to Bahir Dar, so the overall direction should be straight and short. Besides, the road is currently under construction with a loan from the World Bank, so it is not possible to change the route. Anyway, the road construction authority decided to build a road to Fālāgā Birhan (highlighted red). Therefore, we notify the local people to be aware that this work will be carried out immediately and that the suspension will cost the government thousands of additional money and will delay the completion of the road project.

In 1978, the construction of Dājān-Moṭṭa feeder road was resumed after termination due to the opposition of the people of Fālāgā Birhan. Up to January 1978, 75% of the project was completed. It was anticipated that Dājān-Moṭṭa road project would be completed in March 1978 and open for traffic. The completion of this feeder road would reduce the distance from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar by 80 kms.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴NALA, Folder No.17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, Deputy Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Ato Atinafu Tariku, Ref No. መ250/13-3, Dated, December 2/1969 E.C.

⁶²⁵*Ibid*, Folder No.17.1.11.02, File No.17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, Deputy Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Ato Atinafu Tariku, Ref No. መ250/13-3, Dated, December 2/1969 E.C.

⁶²⁶ *Yezaretu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Nehase* (September- August) 1970 E.C.



Figure 40: A concrete bridge built on the Inat Çä River along Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.

On July 10, 1978, the construction of Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder was completed at a cost of Eth. 16 million birr. Of this, the government covered 44% of the expenditure. The rest is secured by a long-term loan from the World Bank. Across large and minor rivers, two major bridges and 31 smaller bridges (culverts) of varied standards were built. The road, which was 104 km long and 8 meters wide, was built in feeder road standards.⁶²⁷ To construct this feeder road, the contractor employed more than 645 contract and permanent daily laborers, as well as a considerable number of Ethiopian experts.⁶²⁸ In addition, the contractor used the following road construction

⁶²⁷ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.

⁶²⁸ DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Atinafu Tariku, to Ethiopian Workers Union, Ref No.10598/ቤ 511, Dated, 22/10/70 E.C.

machines to build this feeder road: dozers (5), scrapers (3), rollers (4), loaders (2), graders (9), heavy vehicles (38), and light vehicles (33).⁶²⁹

Dājān-Moṭṭa feeder road was officially opened for traffic at a ceremony presided over by *Ato* Atinafu Tariku, chief administrator of the province of Gojjam. At the inauguration ceremony, Atinafu noted that the event was doubly noteworthy because the road is a product of the Revolution and was built entirely by Ethiopian expertise (team). At the opening ceremony, the General Manager of the construction company, a representative of Moṭṭa *Awrajjja* locals, and a representative of the Provisional Office for Mass Organization Affairs emphasized the socio-economic significance of the road to the area. Moreover, *Ato* Atinafu presented various awards to the Berta workers.⁶³⁰ He lauded the selfless sacrifices made by the workers throughout the construction of this road.⁶³¹ Furthermore, the rewards prepared by the Berta workers were presented to the residents of Moṭṭa by Atinafu Tariku. The General Manager of Berta, engineer Birhanu Abate, was also awarded by the company's workers. After the ceremony, the Berta Company and Moṭṭa *Awrajjja* hosted a luncheon for the guests. At the luncheon, the teachers and students of Motta showed revolutionary drama to the guests and were admired by them.⁶³²

The ERA public relations office said that the residents of Moṭṭa and Bičāna *Awrajjjas* have been greatly pleased with the construction of this feeder road and consider it to be the fruit of the revolution. During the Imperial Regime, the people of Gojjam in general were inaccessible to road infrastructure and faced enormous difficulties due to lack of communication facilities. The

⁶²⁹*Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile* July) 1970 E.C.

⁶³⁰*Ibid.*

⁶³¹DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Atinafu Tariku, to Ethiopian Workers Union, Ref No.10598/ቤ 511, Dated, 22/10/70 E.C.

⁶³²*Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile* (August) 1970 E.C.

new feeder road would give impetus to commercial and agricultural activities in the area and would also facilitate the establishment of social services like health and education.⁶³³

According to the agreement, Berta Road Construction Company agreed to complete the Däjän-Moṭṭa road project on March 24, 1977. But, the construction work was delayed due to the shortage of fuel and opposition faced by the people of Fälägä Birhan.⁶³⁴ The proponents of the old feudo-bourgeois also sabotaged the project's progress and pace. The road workers faced repeated attacks from anti-revolutionaries on different occasions. Insecurity problems along Däjän-Moṭṭa route were, therefore, a major source of constant disturbances to the road workers. Hence, in 1978, Berta road workers were given ten guns from Gojjam province military arsenal to defend themselves from an anti-revolutionary attack. Despite their failures, they attempted to abort the construction work on several occasions. Besides, due to excessive rain throughout the rainy-season and the presence of marsh areas along the Däjän to Moṭṭa areas, the project was suspended many times.⁶³⁵

In addition to the construction of Däjän to Moṭṭa feeder road, the company has conducted several development projects voluntarily through which the road passes. For instance, the company constructed several inner roads in the towns free of charge. The company also introduced pipe water and electricity to minor and major towns through which the project passes. In addition, the Berta Company donated the largest staff camp with full equipment located in Bičäna, which would be used as a hospital.⁶³⁶ The Berta road workers, for their part, are involved in other

⁶³³Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.

⁶³⁴ DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Birhane Abate, General Manager of Berta Construction Company, to Berta Workers, Ref No.461/70, Dated, 29/7/70 E.C.

⁶³⁵*Ibid*, Folder No. 112, File No. መ/መ-61, A Letter Written from Atinafu Tariku, to Berta Construction Workers Union, Ref No. 5635/670/49, Dated, 6/6/1970 E.C.

⁶³⁶*Ibid*, Folder No.250, File No.መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Bičäna Awrajja Office, to Engineer Birhane Abate, Ref No.2571/1717, Dated, 6/10/70 E.C., PP.1-2.

volunteer development projects in addition to the construction of the Däjän-Moṭṭa road. For instance, they donated Eth. 2,243 birr and more than 80 pieces of clothing to those people whose property was destroyed owing to the war with Somalia. Besides, they donated their one month's salary to the Ethiopian army. More than 80 skilled workers also pledged to repair roads and bridges that were deteriorated by the Ethio-Somalia war.⁶³⁷



Figure 41: the new feeder road constructed from Däjän to Moṭṭa. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.

⁶³⁷*Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1970 E.C.



Figure 42: Bailey bridge built on the Muga River along Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road. Source: Eighteenth annual report of the Ethiopian Road Authority, P.2.

4.2. The Fate of Däjän-Moṭṭa Road Workers

Berta Road Company began dismissing its employees from the company three months before the completion of Däjän-Moṭṭa road project. The company won the Amibara irrigation project in Awash after completing Däjän-Moṭṭa road project. Unlike daily laborers, the company intended to transfer certain staff experts to the newly commenced project. As a result, the company announced to Gojjam province office that the necessary job opportunities for Berta workers would be created.⁶³⁸ With regard to this, the Berta Workers' Union wrote the following letter to the Coordinating Committee for Revolutionary Campaign of Ethiopia, Gojjam Province:

የበርታ ድርጅት የደጀን-ሞጣን የመንገድ ስራ ፕሮጀክት ከሰኔ 30/70 በፊት በኮንትራቱ መሰረት አጠናቆ እንደሚያስረክብ እና በውስጡ የነበሩትን ሰራተኞች ለማሰናበት ወይም ለመቀነስ የሚገደድ መሆኑን ለጎጃም ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ደጋግመን ገልጸናል። በዚህም መሰረት ከሀምሌ 6/70 ዓ.ም ጀምሮ ከ250 በላይ የሚሆኑ የድርጅቱ ሰራተኞች ከስራ ተሰናብተው በስራ አጥነት በየከተማው በመንከራተት ላይ ይገኛሉ። ሆኖም እነዚህ ሰራተኞች በስራ ላይ በነበሩበት ጊዜ ይከፈለቸው የነበረው ደሞዝ ከእጅ ወደ አፍ በመሆኑ ለጥቂት ጊዜ እንኳ የአለት መተዳደሪያ ሊሆን የሚችል ገንዘብ ባለመያዛቸው እና አሁንም ለአለት ጉርሮ መዝጊያ የሚሆን አነስተኛ የቀን ስራ እንኳ በማጣታቸው ሊቋቋሙት የማይችሉት ችግር እንደደረሰባቸው ለማንም የተሰወረ አይደለም። ስለዚህ በተቻለ መጠን በዚህ ክፍለ ሀገር ወይም በሌላ

⁶³⁸DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Berta Construction Company, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. 500/1/70, Dated, 5/10/70 E.C.

አመች ቦታ በሚከፈቱት የልማት ስራዎች ሁሉ ቅድሚያ ተሰጥቷቸው በተቻለ ፍጥነት ወደ ስራ አለም የሚመለሱበት መንገድ እንዲፈለግልን፡፡⁶³⁹

We [Berta Workers' Union] repeatedly notified to Gojjam province administration office that Berta Company will complete Däjän-Moṭṭa road project before June 30/1970 E.C in accordance with the contract and will have to dismiss or reduced its daily laborers. Accordingly, more than 250 employees of the company have been dismissed and are roaming the town since July 6/1970 E.C. It is not secret for anyone, however, that those workers, who were paid on a regular basis, did not have enough money to live on for a while and they faced serious challenges, who could not withstand due to the lack of even minor day's work. Therefore, we need to find a way to back Berta workers to work as soon as possible, giving them priority in all development projects that commence in this province or in other convenient places.

The chief administrator of Gojjam province, Ato Atinafu Tariku, on his part, claims that the dismissal of Berta workers exacerbated unemployment, which hindered communist Ethiopia's socio-economic development. He also announced to the All Ethiopian Workers Union that when projects in other places commence, Berta workers would be given top priority.⁶⁴⁰ Besides, Ato Eshete Alemu, chairman of the Revolutionary Campaign Coordinating Committee, pledged to the Berta workers that they would be given priority when the Bir Šäläqo settlement scheme and the construction of feeder roads in Gojjam would begin.⁶⁴¹ Moṭṭa Awrajjä administration, on its part proposed that if Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road project began, it would create job opportunities for a considerable number of Berta daily laborers. Besides, the Awrajjä strongly proposed that the construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road would facilitate the easy flow of agricultural products from the locality of Moṭṭa to Gondär via Bahir Dar. Likewise, the construction of this feeder road would enable the peasants of Moṭṭa and its surroundings to transport their crops to Addis Ababa via Däjän. The local people would also benefit from factory products manufactured

⁶³⁹ DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Berta Workers Union, to Gojjam Province Revolutionary and Campaign Coordinating Committee, Ref No. 12885/1/70, Dated, 10/12/70 E.C., PP.87-88.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid*, a Letter Written from Atinafu Tariku, to Ethiopian Workers Union, Ref No. 10598/0511, Dated, 22/10/70 E.C.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid*, A Letter Written from Berta Workers Union, to Gojjam Province Revolutionary and Campaign Coordinating Committee, Ref No. 12885/1/70, Dated, 10/12/70 E.C., PP.87-88.

in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Gondär.⁶⁴² Concerning this, I extract the following letter written to Gojjam province office from Ato Getnet Teshale, vice chief secretary of Moṭṭa Awrajja:

.....በመሰራት ላይ ያለው ከደጀን-ሞጣ መንገድ ስራ ከሁለት ወይም ከሶስት ወር በማይበልጥ ጊዜ ውስጥ ስለሚጠናቀቅ እና ሌላ ስራ የሚያስፈልገው መሆኑን ድርጅቱ ስለጠቆመ ሰራተኞች የስራ ችግር እንዳይገጥመው ከሞጣ-ባህርዳር ያለው መንገድ እዲሰራልን እናሳስባለን።⁶⁴³

...*Since the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa road is being completed in less than two or three months and the company indicates that more work is needed, we [Getnet Teshale] recommended that Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road be constructed and so that the workers [Berta workers] do not face any work problems.*

4.3. A History of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar Feeder Road Construction

Ato Shiferaw Demissie, ERA's General Manager, explains that in the second round of the economic and cultural development program, ERA planned to construct 1,412 kms of roads throughout the fourteen Ethiopian provinces at a cost of Eth. 200 million birr. The government would pay for 20% of the road's construction costs, totaling 200 million birr. The remaining 80% of the budget would be funded by the International Development Association through a long-term loan. This program included the construction of the Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road. In particular, ERA gave special emphasis to the construction of this road under this program.⁶⁴⁴ The following archival document substantiates this point:

...የአገራችንን ልማት ለማፋጠን በጣም ብዙ የሆኑ መንገዶች በየክፍለ ሀገሩ መሰራት እንዳለባቸው የታወቀ እና አጣዳፊም ጉዳይ ነው። ሆኖም የሚሰሩትን መንገዶች የሚወስነው የአገራችን የኢኮኖሚ አቅም እና እድገት ነው። በዚህም መሰረት የሞጣ-ባህርዳር መንገድ ከ1970 እስከ 1975 ከሚሰሩት መንገዶች አንዱ ሁኖ በሴክተር ፕሮግራም ውስጥ ገብቷልና ተራውን ጠብቆ ይጀመራል።⁶⁴⁵

It is well known and urgent issue that the construction of many roads throughout provinces would facilitate the development of our country.

⁶⁴² DMUAC, Folder No.250, File No. መ. ቤ. 118, A Letter Written from Bičäna Awrajja Administration Office, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. 1956/11717, Dated, 22/7/70 E.C.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid*, A Letter Written from Getnet Teshale, Deputy Chief Secretary of Motta Awrajja, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. 1526/563, Dated, February 10/1970 E.C.

⁶⁴⁴ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1972 E.C.

⁶⁴⁵ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መደ50/26-4, Dated, July 27/1969 E.C.

However, it is the economic potential and the growth of our country that determines the way in which roads to be constructed. Accordingly, Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar is one of the roads to be constructed from 1970 to 1975 and entered the sector program. Therefore, it will be started keeping its turn,

The contract for the construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar (109 km) feeder road was signed on December 12, 1980, between Ato Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of ERA, and Ato Adella Lulseged, head of the Earthmoving Equipment Private Limited Company.⁶⁴⁶

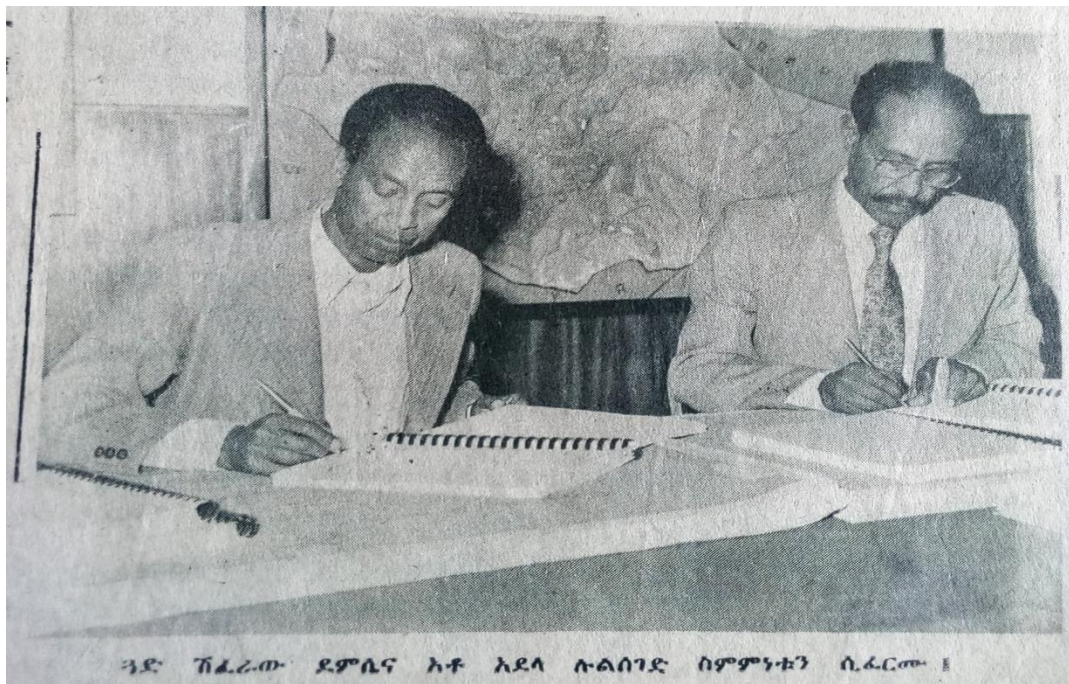


Figure 42: Comrade Shiferaw Demissie (on the right) and Adella Lulseged signing the agreement of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road project: Source, *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1972 E.C.

It was anticipated that the construction of this feeder road would be completed and open for traffic within three years. However, the company promised to complete and hand over the project in less than three years if possible.⁶⁴⁷ The total cost of this project was estimated to be Eth.

⁶⁴⁶NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17. 1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መመ49/14-1, Dated, February 9/1972 E.C.

⁶⁴⁷ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መመ49/14-1, Dated, February 9/1972 E.C.

25,099,633 birr.⁶⁴⁸ This money was secured through a long-term loan from West Germany.⁶⁴⁹ A large number of big and small bridges would be built across the road. According to Comrade Negussie Sahlu, General Manager of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road, the project would create job opportunities for a considerable number of people.⁶⁵⁰

According to the press release issued by ERA, the construction of this feeder road would facilitate reliable transport service that would enable the surplus produce of the area to have easy access to marketing centers. Studies reveal that an estimated surplus produce of over 186, 000 quintals can be obtained from the area through which the road passes. Thus, the construction of this road would enable to transport such produce to market centers easily. It would also facilitate the establishment of social services like health and education. Besides, the road would enable to distribute seeds of better quality, fertilizers, and the like to peasants. As compared with the Buré-Bahir Dar highway, the road would also reduce the distance between Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar by 85 kilometers. The release further pointed out that this would help in reducing the cost of depreciation of vehicles, which would in turn help to save foreign exchange.⁶⁵¹

Preparations were underway to start the construction of Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar gravel road. Along the Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar route, personnel have already begun supervising areas that require special clearing as well as preferable places for building camps for daily laborers.⁶⁵² For instance, the

⁶⁴⁸Ethiopian Herald, January- March 1980.

⁶⁴⁹ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መመ49/14-1, Dated, February 9/1972 E.C.

⁶⁵⁰Ethiopian Herald, March-June 1980.

⁶⁵¹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1972 E.C.

⁶⁵² NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መመ49/14-1, Dated, February 9/1972 E.C.

contractor has completed the construction of a large camp at a place called Gafat in Bahir Dar *Awrajja* to launch the construction work.⁶⁵³

Due to security problems, engineering experts decided to start the project from the direction of Bahir Dar. Local rebels and the feudo-bourgeoisie supporters challenged the military government in Bičäna and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas* to restore the old Ethiopian feudal system ever since it came to power.⁶⁵⁴

However, the locals have complained that the Moṭṭa *Awrajja* previously had no road and that the project should begin from the direction of Moṭṭa. In addition, they proposed that if the project begins on the side of Motta, it would save extra costs for transporting construction materials from Addis Ababa to Moṭṭa. However, if the construction begins on the side of Bahir Dar, it would increase expenses for transporting construction equipment from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar via Däbrä Marqos. Local residents also committed to take the responsibility for controlling insecurities and ensuring that no road workers would face any security problems.⁶⁵⁵ With regard to this, Mesfin Abere, administrator of Moṭṭa *Awrajj*, wrote the following letter to Animut Kindie, deputy administrator of Gojjam province:

እርዝሙቪንግ የመንገድ ስራ ድርጅት ከ ሞጣ-ባህር ዳር መስራት የሚገባውን መንገድ በፀጥታዊ ምክንያት ከዚህ መጀመሩ ቀርቶ በባህር ዳር በኩል ሊጀምር ነዉ መባሉን ስለሰማሁ በፀጥታዊ በኩል ያለውን ሀላፊነት እራሴ ስለምወስድ ስራዉ በዚህ በኩል እነዲጀምር ይደረግልን፡፡⁶⁵⁶

I [Mesfin Abere] have heard that Earthmoving road Company will begin the construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road from the direction of Bahir Dar rather than here [Moṭṭa] due to the insecurity problem. I [Mesfin Abere] pledged to take the responsibility for controlling the insecurity problem and the construction be start for us on this direction [Moṭṭa].

⁶⁵³Ethiopian Herald, September-November 1980.

⁶⁵⁴ *Addis Zemen* News Paper, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1971 E.C.

⁶⁵⁵DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Birhanu Yitayew, for Moṭṭa *Awrajja* Administrator, to Comrade Animut Kindie, First Deputy Administrator of Gojjam Province, Ref No. 4787/መ/መ64, Dated, 22/72 E.C.

⁶⁵⁶*Ibid*, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Mesfin Abere, Moṭṭa *Awrajja* Administrator, to Comrade Animut Kindie, Ref No. 3399/መ/መ83, Dated, 18/6/72 E.C.

In return, Animut Kindie wrote the following to Mesfin Abere: “ስራው የሚጀመረው በሞገታ መሆኑን የኢትዮጵያ መንገዶች ባለስልጣን ያረጋገጠልኝ ስለሆነ፤ ስራው በሚጀመርበት ወቅት በጥበቃው በኩል ከአሁኑ ጀምሮ ዝግጅት እና ጥንቃቄ እንዲደረግ፡፡”⁶⁵⁷ The text, literally translated, could read: “the ERA has assured me [Animut Kindie] that the work will start from Moገጥa. Therefore, starting from today, preparations and precautions should be taken concerning the security of the area.”

Even if the contractor agreed to begin the construction work in November 1980, the actual construction work began on January 13, 1980, due to various factors.⁶⁵⁸ For instance, after the contract was signed, it took a considerable time to transfer the funds to the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. However, the contractor already started moving equipment and materials to the site. The contractor was expected to compensate the delay of the work during the 1980 dry season.⁶⁵⁹

According to Comrade Nigussie Sahlu, General Manager of Moገጥa-Bahir Dar road construction project, the construction of Moገጥa-Bahir Dar (109 kms) road was officially began in January 1980. Within six months (June 1980), 52 kilometers of road have been cleared and leveled in six months. Another 20 kilometers of road have been completely graveled and the construction of 10 small bridges completed with the employment of 200 permanent and 500 contract workers.⁶⁶⁰ The contractor undertook the construction work with two graders, and it left only one kilometer to reach the Abaya River in June 1980. But, to facilitate the construction work, the contractor

⁶⁵⁷DMUAC, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Comrade Animut Kindie, to Mesfin Abere, Ref No. 20/4/ለመ/86, Dated, 19/6/72 E.C.

⁶⁵⁸ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.02, File No. 17.1.11.01, A Letter Written from Shiferaw Demissie, General Manager of Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref No. መመ49/14-1, Dated, February 9/1972 E.C.

⁶⁵⁹Planning and Programming Division, *Twenty Seventh Annual Report of Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority*, 1980 (unpublished material), P. 26.

⁶⁶⁰*Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June); *Ethiopian Herald*, March-June 1981.

needs more equipment. Furthermore, due to the heavy downpour, the contractor was forced to interrupt the construction work until September 1981.⁶⁶¹

According to a report prepared for the year 1982, the construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road reached the town of Adét, the administrative capital of Yilma Ena Dénsa Wārāda. But, there were two surveying options: either the road runs through the town or the road passes away from the town. If the road passed through the town, the residents would benefit economically and socially. However, if the road passes through the town, 121 houses would be dislocated. The Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority agreed the road to pass through the town and 121 homes to be dislocated. The ETCA, on its part, allocated Eth.81, 650 birr as a form of compensation for those people who were relocated from their homes.⁶⁶²

The contractor was supposed to construct 24 kilometers of road during the 1984 reporting period. However, due to lack of construction materials and equipment like heavy vehicles, only 12 kilometers of roads were constructed.⁶⁶³ Therefore, to facilitate the construction work, the contractor imported 1,500 electric compressors from the Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority, which was stored in Šašāmāné dynamite warehouse.⁶⁶⁴ Against all odds, the contractor continued the construction of the road from Adét to Bahir Dar. However, before the contractor completed the road construction and handed it over to ETCA, private vehicles such as Lorries, land-rover cars, and buses began to move on it. These vehicles significantly delayed the

⁶⁶¹DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Birhanu Yitayew, for Moṭṭa Awrajja Administrator, to Comrade Animut Kindie, Ref No. 5500/4/፬፬/69, Dated, June4/1972 E.C.

⁶⁶²*Ibid*, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Comrade Animut Kindie to Bahir Dar Awrajja Production Development Executive Committee, Ref No.51፩፬/86, Dated, 10/1/73 E.C. PP. 1-2.

⁶⁶³Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority's Sixth Month Performance Report on the Sixth Year Production and Cultural Development, P. 9; Department of Planning and Supervision, *Six Year Plan (1979-1984) Evaluation Performance Review* (unpublished material), P.336.

⁶⁶⁴DMUAC, Folder No. 178, File No. ፬፬፬/-61, A Letter Written from Bekalu Mengesha, Head of Fire Arms, Dynamites, Communication, Social and Demonstration Affairs, to Earth Moving Construction Company, Ref No.3-2-1422-29/76, Dated, January 22/1974 E.C.

progress of the construction work.⁶⁶⁵ The following archival document substantiates this point very clearly:

የሞጡ-ባህርዳርን መንገድ የሚሰራው ድርጅት በሰራዊቱ ጥርጊያ መንገድ ላይ የሌሎች መኪናዎች መመላለሻ ስላደረጉት በሰራችን ላይ ችግር ፈጥሮብናል በማለት በአቀረቡት ሪፖርት መነሻ የባህርዳር አውራጃ ፖሊስ ፅህፈት ቤት በቁጥር 1851/2/10 ታህሳስ 28 ቀን 1976ዓ.ም በተፃፈ ደብዳቤ አሳስቧል። ስለዚህ በዚህ ችግር ምክንያት ስራው ወደ ኋላ እንዳይዘገይ እና የተለያዩ ምክንያቶች እንዳይፈጠሩ ጉዳዩ መፍትሄ ይሰጠዉ ዘንድ እናሳስባለን።⁶⁶⁶

Bahir Dar Awrajja police office, in a letter dated December 28, 1976 E.C reported that the company, which is constructing Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road, faced problems due to other vehicles moved on the paved roads. Therefore, we bring this to your attention that the issue be resolved so that work would not delayed and various reasons would not be created.

In 1984, the construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road was completed and opened for traffic. At the inauguration ceremony held in Moṭṭa town, Comrade Tilahun Abebe, the administrator of Gojjam province, made a speech. In his speech, he describes the efforts taken by the revolutionary government to alleviate the transport problems of Moṭṭa Awrajja. He also said that the construction of this feeder road would alleviate the age-old transport problems of Moṭṭa Awrajja. Furthermore, the construction of this feeder road would enable to connect Bahir Dar, Moṭṭa, and Bičäna Awrajjas directly.⁶⁶⁷

As I noted above, Earthmoving Construction Company agreed to complete Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar road project within three years. But, the construction work was delayed due to the shortage of construction materials and lack of transportation equipment like jack hammers, dumpsters, tractors, and scrapers.⁶⁶⁸ The other factor that slowed down the project's progress was security.

For instance, the contractor planned to start the project from the direction of Bahir Dar due to

⁶⁶⁵ Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority's Sixth Month Performance Report on the Sixth Year Production and Cultural Development (unpublished material), P.9.

⁶⁶⁶ DMUAC, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Abayineh Esa, Administrator of Bahir Dar Awrajja, to the Head of National Revolutionary Production and Cultural Development Campaign , Ref No. 2/2563/መ. ከ8, Dated, January 30/1976 E.C.

⁶⁶⁷ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1977 E.C.

⁶⁶⁸ Department of Planning and Supervision, *Six Year Plan (1979-1984) Evaluation Performance Review* (unpublished material), P. 336.

security problem. But, due to the complaints of the residents of Moṭṭa, the construction work began from the direction of Motta.⁶⁶⁹ Generally, the contractor constructed Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road in the following design and standards:

Table 10: Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road design and standards

Road type	Terrain	Design speed (kph)	Road width (M)	Maximum curvature	Maximum Grade
Feeder road	flat	90	7	5°	9%
(Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar)	Mountainous	30	7	None	10%
	Rolling	60	7	11°	10%

Source: Design branch of Ethiopian Road Authority, P. 8.

4.4. A History of Injibara-Guba Feeder Road Construction

Unlike Dājān-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road, which was constructed by contract firms, Injibara-Guba feeder road was constructed by the Ethiopian Road Authority itself (hereinafter ERA). It was anticipated that the project would be completed within six years at a total cost of Eth. 31.8 million birr. Mätäkäl *Awrajja* was among the areas having communication problems in Gojjam province. The farmers were not in a position to transport their products to market centers. It was expected that the construction of Injibara-Guba feeder road would significantly enhance the socio-economic development of the area.⁶⁷⁰

Before the actual work was started, the ERA planned to conduct a feasibility study to determine the benefits gained from constructing Injibara-Guba feeder road. Thus, an investigating team composed of economists, engineers, and cameramen made a reconnaissance field survey of the project area in December 1974. But, the project leader, without finishing the feasibility study,

⁶⁶⁹DMUAC, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Mesfin Abere, Moṭṭa *Awrajja* Administrator, to Comrade Animut Kindie, Ref No. 3399/፬፱፱83, Dated, 18/6/72 E.C.

⁶⁷⁰ Ethiopian Herald, September- October 1977.

was assigned to a rural road study (RRS), and the study was abandoned for about a year until his release from RRS. In 1975, the investigating team resumed reconnaissance field survey after termination due to workload. But, the team suffered from a lack of adequate data related to the study area in libraries, archival centers, and ETCA's documents. The absence of the movie prepared for this study further aggravated the teams' problem. According to the feasibility study, Mätäkäl *Awrajja* was rich in surface water, fertile soil, and adequate rainfall, estimated between 950-1500 mm. The area could offer a great opportunity for agriculture. This assumption was particularly true when they considered the scarcely populated areas. Despite its potential, this place was remote and inaccessible. The construction of the proposed feeder road would open up not only the rural area of the *Awrajja* to truck traffic, but it would also enable to utilize the primary highways of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa as it was underutilization.⁶⁷¹

In 1976, the design branch began the preliminary design and surveying work. Accordingly, 52 kms of design and surveying work was completed from October to January 1976. Likewise, 150 kms of design and surveying work was completed between February and June 1976. At the end of the 1976 reporting period, the ERA had completed the whole preliminary surveying and design work.⁶⁷²

The construction of 216 kms long secondary highway between Injibara and Guba was being sped up in 1977. The construction of 40 kms road was completed at the end of 1977.⁶⁷³ Furthermore, during this period, clearing and grubbing work from 96 kms to 167 kms has been completed. Besides, earthwork from 96 kms to 166 kms has been completed. The base course has also been

⁶⁷¹Planning and Programming Division, *Economic Feasibility Study for Injibara-Guba Road*, October 1976 (unpublished material), PP.1-2.

⁶⁷²Ethiopian Road Authority Second Quarter Progress Report, October 1st to August 31, 1976, p. 13.

⁶⁷³Ethiopian Herald, September-October 1977.

completed from 58 to 77 kms. Furthermore, the construction of 11 box culverts and 4 bridges has been completed.⁶⁷⁴ The government has made a budgetary allocation of Eth. 3, 241,239 birr to cover this year's construction expenses. During this reporting period, there were 219 daily workers on the project, eight of them had specialized skills.⁶⁷⁵ In 1978, Injibara-Guba road project was in progress. For instance, the construction of 15 kms of the road has gravel surfaced. Besides, 50 kms of clearing and grading works were completed up to Mätäkäl.⁶⁷⁶ On July 22, 1979, the construction of 56 kilometers of road from Injibara to Čagni was completed and opened to traffic. Bridges over the Hardi, Durana, and Little Bäläs Rivers were built to various standards. These bridges were built with a 12 meter height and 8 meter width. Likewise, 45km stretch of road from Čagni to the Big Bäläs River was partially surfaced with gravel and began to provide transportation services.⁶⁷⁷



Figure 37: Ato Yessuf Ahmed, Ministry of Transport and Communication, inaugurating the new Injibara-Čagni road section. Source: *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Hamile-Pagumé (July-Pagumé) 1971 E.C.*

⁶⁷⁴Ethiopian Road Authority Third Quarter Progress Report, January 1st to June 31, 1977, p. 43.

⁶⁷⁵Ethiopian Herald, September-October 1977.

⁶⁷⁶ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Hidar-Tahisas* (November- December) 1971 E.C.

⁶⁷⁷ DMUAC, Folder No. 1009, File No. 4151, A letter Written Altaye Ayana, Head of Administration Services, to the Office of National Revolutionary Production Campaign, Ref No. 688/1/71, Dated, July 27/71 E.C., PP.75-76.



Figure 38: A new road constructed from Injibara to Čagni. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hamile-Pagumé* (July-Pagume) 1971 E.C.

In 1980, the construction of Injibara-Guba road was continued beyond Čani and Bäläs towards Guba. For instance, clearing and grading of 96 km of roads has been completed this year. Of this, 75 kilometers of the road completely gravel surfaced. Furthermore, the building of 10 large bridges, the construction of 14 culverts, and the installation of 114 pipes were completed. Ato Getahun Tsegaye, General Manager of the Project, explains that from 1977 to 1980, a total of Eth. 8, 556, 350 birr has been expended for the project. He also said that the rest of 120 km of roads that lead to Guba would be completed in 1981.⁶⁷⁸

In 1981, ERA planned to complete 80 kms of this project. However, due to a shortage of equipment and weather problems, it was possible to complete the construction of 70 kms of road. According to the Equipment Repair Crush Program, field inspection trips were made to Injibara-Guba road project by the task force during this reporting period. After field inspection, the task force planned to deliver additional equipment such as dozers, motor graders, loaders, crushers,

⁶⁷⁸ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1972 E.C.

scrapers, rollers, dump trucks, courier trucks, fuel, and water tankers to Injibara-Guba road project. At the end of 1981, the construction work of the 216km long Injibara-Guba feeder road was completed and opened for traffic.⁶⁷⁹

4.5. A History of Buré-Näqämit Feeder Road Construction

A plan to connect Gojjam with Wolläga governorate-general was dates back to the Imperial Regime. 45 kilometers gravel road that stretched from Alébo town to the Blue Nile was built on the basis of labor-intensive rural road building schemes (public participation). The people of Jarti, Horo, Gudru, and Amoru districts had banded together to clear and level this road, which connected and served their communities. According to the *Awraja* governor, *Fitawrari* Abebayehu Admasu, on any given day, 500 to 1500 people were involved in the construction of this road. The construction of the road was completed from September 27 to December 20, 1972. From Abolé town to Akoté mountain road section (20 kms), vehicles of any kind could move very widely during the dry season. On the other hand, the road section from Akoté Mountain to the Blue Nile edge (25 kms) was suitable for small-sized vehicles during the dry season. Extending the rest road section towards the Blue Nile River was in progress up to the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution. The Imperial Regime also planned to erect the longest bridge across the Blue Nile, which would connect the two *governorate-generals*. On the other hand, on the Gojjam side, there was a rough track that led to the Blue Nile from Buré town. But, all the above activities were terminated due to the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution.⁶⁸⁰

On February 1, 1985, a contract agreement was signed between the ERA and a local contractor, the Blue Nile Construction Enterprise, for the construction of 248 kms of an all-weather gravel-

⁶⁷⁹Planning and Programming Division, *Twenty Seventh Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority*, 1981, P.110.

⁶⁸⁰ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Tahisas-Ṭir* (December-January) 1966 E.C.

surfaced feeder road between Nāqāmit and Buré. The agreement was signed between Comrade Keleta Tesfa Mikael, General Manager of the ETCA, and Comrade Asrat Mindesil, General Manager of the Blue Nile Construction Enterprise.⁶⁸¹

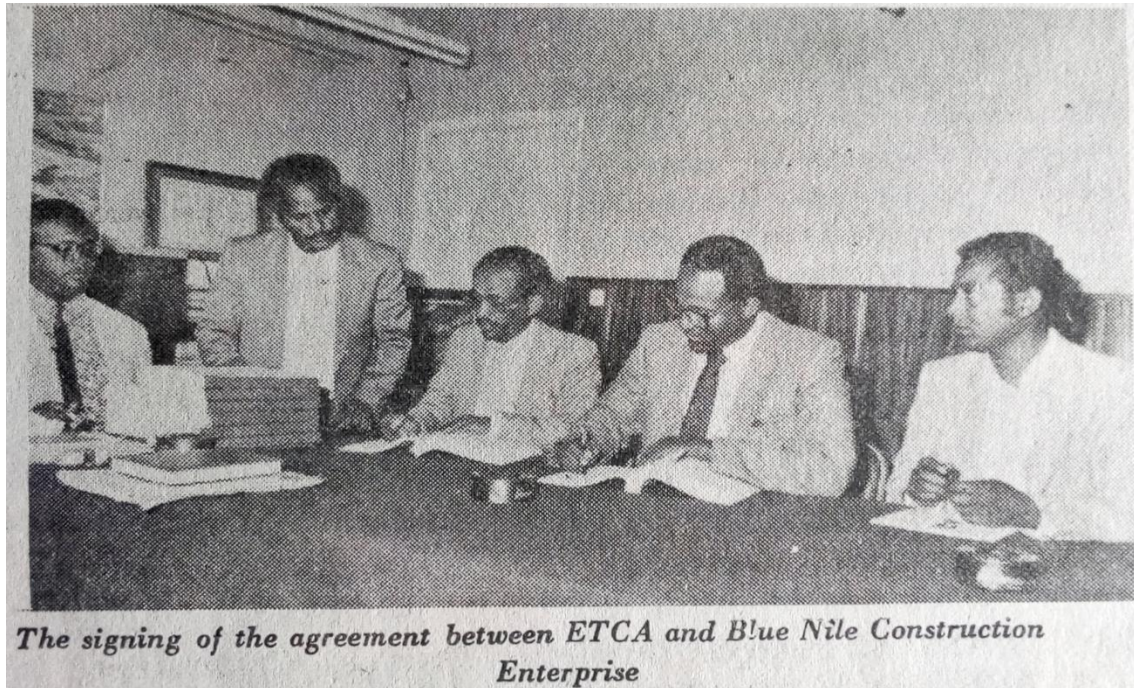


Figure 39: The signing of Buré-Nāqāmit road between ETCA and the Blue Nile Construction Enterprise. Source: Ethiopian Herald, January-March, 1985.

The Blue Nile Construction Enterprise (hereinafter BNCE) competed with well-known domestic and international construction firms to win the contract. For instance, firstly, the company competed with 27 international contractors and won the bidding. Secondly, the company competed with 16 international companies and also won the contract. Thirdly, it was able to win the bidding by competing with major Italian, Swedish, Indian, and Chinese contractors.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸¹Planning and Programming Division, *Fortieth Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority* (unpublished material), P.33; Ethiopian herald, January to March 1985.

⁶⁸² Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Ṭir-Yekatit* (January- February) 1977 E.C.

During the signing ceremony, which was held at the conference hall of ERA, ETCA's General Manager, Comrade Tesfa Mikael, emphasized that the Blue Nile Construction Company should construct this feeder road in high quality to gain international recognition.⁶⁸³ Besides, at the second ceremony, which was held at the Assembly Hall of ETCA, Comrade Keleta noted the strength of the Blue Nile Construction Enterprise both at the national and regional level in the task of constructing quality roads. On his part, Comrade Asrat said that the enterprise possesses the most experienced professionals as well as the necessary materials so as to be able to accomplish the project ahead of schedule. The Blue Nile Construction Authority planned to complete the project within three and a half years (within 42 months). This project was included in the ten-year perspective plan and it was a parcel of the eighth highway program of ETCA.⁶⁸⁴

It was estimated that the total expense for this project would be 83.5 million birr. This budget was obtained from an interest-free loan from the World Bank and from a budget allocation by the Government of Revolutionary Ethiopia. Accordingly, 60% of the cost was covered by the Ethiopian government and the remaining 40% by the World Bank.⁶⁸⁵ It was anticipated that the contractor would employ 1,500 to 2,000 daily laborers to construct this feeder road. 190 meters long concrete bridge would be built across the Blue Nile River. Six culverts would also be built over other minor rivers. The contractor was allocated Eth. 6, 172,529 birr to erect the Blue Nile Bridge. A direct road link between Wälläga and Gojjam as well as indirect links between Käffä, Illubabur, Wälläga, Gojjam, and Gondar would be possible after the project is completed.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸³Ethiopian Herald, January-March 1985.

⁶⁸⁴Planning and Programming Division, *Fortieth Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority* (unpublished material), P.34; Ethiopian Herald, January-March 1985.

⁶⁸⁵Planning and Programming Division, *Fortieth Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority*, (unpublished material), P.34; *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Tir-Yekatit* (January- February) 1977 E.C.

⁶⁸⁶ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Tir-Yekatit* (January- February) 1977 E.C.

This feeder road would be constructed with 6.6 meters width. Depending on the terrain, the designed speed would range from 30 to 80 kilometers per hour. Likewise, the maximum gradient would be 12.5% and the minimum horizontal radius would be 25 meters.⁶⁸⁷

The work of this project was divided into two sections: a section from the direction of Näqämit (188 kms) and the other along Buré side (60km). The construction of the sub-project commenced in May 1985 from the direction of Buré and in October 1985 along Näqämit side.⁶⁸⁸

During the reporting period of March to August 1985, the design branch intended to complete 90 kilometers of preliminary surveying and design work on Buré-Näqämit road. However, the branch was able to finish 131 kilometers of preliminary surveying and design work. The design branch completed the remaining 117 kms of preliminary surveying and design work during the 1986 reporting period.⁶⁸⁹

In the third quarter of the 1987 reporting period, 13 kms of clearing work was completed from the direction of Buré. 10% of the soil cutting and filling work has also been completed.⁶⁹⁰ The following construction works were also completed during the third quarter of the 1987 reporting period.

Table 11: Major works completed during the third quarter of the 1987 reporting period from Buré direction.

No	Type of work	Unit of measurement	Planned	accomplished	Accomplishment in percent
1	Soil cutting and filling	M ³	161,616	172,220.69	106.6%
2	Gravel excavation	»	49,494	20,083.89	40.6%
3	producing crushed stone for base course	»	27,875	6,017.00	21.6%

⁶⁸⁷ Reports of Second Road Sector Project in Ethiopia, Report No-4230, P. 27.

⁶⁸⁸ Planning and Programming Division, *Fortieth Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority*, P.33; Ethiopian Herald, January-April 1988.

⁶⁸⁹ Planning and Programming Division, *Fortieth Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority*, P.11.

⁶⁹⁰ DMUAC, Folder No.ሥንሰ/3291, File No.ፕፕ፳/፭፡3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

4	Gravel surfacing	»	37,209	10,056.80	27.0%
5	Building masonry	»	768	552.30	71.9%
6	Installation of pipes	Meter	1,361	252	37.7%
7	Clearing work	km	-	13 kms	-

Source: DMUAC, Folder No. ቦን አስ/3291, File No. ጎጥጽ/ፈጠ-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

In the fourth quarter of the 1987 reporting period, 15kms of clearing work was completed on Buré side. 90% of the soil cutting and filling work has also been completed.⁶⁹¹ The following construction works were also completed during the fourth quarter of the 1987 reporting period.

Table 12: Major works completed during the fourth quarter of the 1987 reporting period on the Buré side.

No	Type of work	Unit of measurement	Planned	accomplished	Accomplishment in percent
1	Soil cutting and filling	M ³	53,993.96	48,594.56	90%
2	Rock excavation	»	31,000	6,109.50	19.71%
3	producing crushed stone for base course	»	12,152	8,620	70%
4	Gravel surfacing	»	29,532	18,601.44	62.99%
5	Building masonry	»	1,157.3	527.52	45.58%
6	Installation of pipes	Meter	726	252	34.71%
7	Clearing work	km	-	15	-

Source: DMUAC, Folder No. ቦን አስ/3291, File No. ጎጥጽ/ፈጠ-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

In the first quarter of the 1988 reporting period, no clearing and gravel surfacing work were done. However, 27,177.74 m³ of soil cutting and filling work and 20,505 m³ of gravel excavation works were completed. In addition, 44 meters of pipes have been installed, and 451.80 m³ of masonry work has been finished. In percent, the accomplishment of major items of work were:

⁶⁹¹DMUAC, Folder No. ቦን አስ/3291, File No. ጎጥጽ/ፈጠ-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

clearing (0%), soil cutting and filling (53.9%), gravel excavation (78.5%), gravel surfacing (0%), masonry work (64.4%), and pipe installation (86.1%).⁶⁹²

14 kms of clearing and 17,025m³ of soil cutting and filling work were accomplished in the second quarter of the 1988 reporting period. Aside from that, 822m³ of gravel excavation, 2,693m³ of gravel surfacing, and 743m³ of masonry work were performed. In percent, the accomplishment of major items of work were: clearing (191.0%), soil cutting and filling (21.5%), gravel excavation (2.9%), gravel surfacing (14.0%), masonry work (36.0%), and pipe installation (22.1%).⁶⁹³

In the third quarter of the 1988 reporting period, 8 kms of clearing and 100,000 m³ of soil cutting and filling works were accomplished. Aside from that, 1,361m³ of gravel excavation, 6,061m³ of gravel surfacing, and 442m³ of masonry works were performed. In percent, the accomplishment of major items of work were: clearing (85.11%), soil cutting and filling (83.11%), gravel excavation (6.65%), gravel surfacing (72.09%), masonry work (66.97%), and pipe installation (20.03%).⁶⁹⁴

10 kms of clearing and 37,192 m³ of soil cutting and filling work have been completed in the fourth quarter of the 1988 reporting period.⁶⁹⁵ The following construction works were also completed during the fourth quarter of the 1988 reporting period.

⁶⁹² DMUAC, Folder No.ሰንክሰ/3291, File No.ጎጥጽ/ፈጠ-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 13: Major works completed during the fourth quarter of the 1988 reporting period from the direction of Buré.

No	Type of work	Unit of measurement	Planned	accomplished	Accomplishment in percent
1	Soil cutting and filling	M ³	136,142	37,192	27.26%
2	Gravel excavation	»	22,080	1,289	5.84%
3	producing crushed stone for base course	»	3,000	4,242	141.40%
4	Gravel surfacing	»	6,396	5,133	80.25%
5	Building masonry	»	201	9	4.48%
6	Installation of pipes	Meter	253	16	6.32%
7	Clearing work	km	8.1	10	123.46

Source: DMUAC, Folder No. *ዞንአስ*/3291, File No. *ጎጥጽ/ረጠ*-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

In the 4th quarter of the 1988 reporting period, a total of 210 pipe, 6 box, and 1 slab culverts have been constructed. Of 60 kms road, the constructions of 34 kms were completed and the final handing over to ETCA has been done. Besides, the temporary handing over of the remaining 26 km has been completed. The erection of 238 meters long bridge over the Blue Nile was also in progress. This bridge is the second longest bridge in Ethiopia, next to the Baro River Bridge in the Gambella region. The bridge, which is 238 meters long and 47 meters high, has six columns. This bridge also has a unique structure. For instance, the distance between the piers in the middle is 85 meters, and the pillars stand on their own with only pier caps on top. Besides, the pillars are made of prestressed concrete.⁶⁹⁶ From the direction of Bure, the contractor employed 600 to 700 daily workers. But, during this reporting period, there were only 321 daily workers as the work on that side was nearing completion.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁶ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1980 E.C.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ethiopian Herald*, September to December 1988.

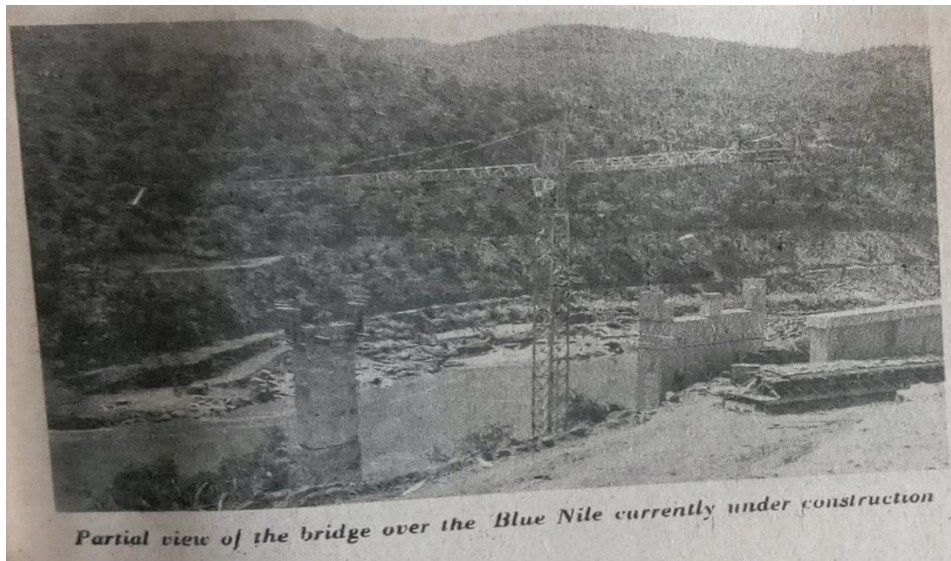


Figure 40: Partial view of the bridge over the Blue Nile under construction. Source: Ethiopian Herald, September-December 1988.

On August 17, 1988, the construction of Buré-Blue Nile road section (Buré end) was completed at an expense of Eth.17, 643,603 birr. According to Comrade Amare Gebre Eyesus, acting deputy manager of the Buré-Näqämit road project, from Buré to the Blue Nile River, the contractor constructed 200 minor bridges across small rivers. The construction of a bridge over the Blue Nile was progressing well. At a cost of 2,053,383 birr, 30% of the project was completed. The construction of the bridge was expected to be completed at the end of April 1990 and would open to traffic.⁶⁹⁸ The following archival document substantiates this point:

ህዳር 18 ቀን 1979 ዓ.ም በቁጥር ጎጥጽ/365/004 በተፃፈ ደብዳቤ የሩብ አመት እቅድ አፈፃፀም እንድናቀርብ በጠየቃችሁት መሰረት የ 1980 ዓ.ም አራተኛ እሩብ አመት ሪፖርት በዚህ ደብዳቤ ሸኝነት መላካችንን እንገልጻለን። በዚህም መሰረት በጎጃም ክፍለ ሀገር በኩል ያለውን የመንገድ ስራ በሙሉ አጠናቀን ያስረከብን መሆኑን እና የሚቀረጥን ስራ የአባይ ድልድይ እና በወለጋ በኩል ያለው የመንገድ ስራ ብቻ መሆኑን እናሳስባለን።⁶⁹⁹

In response to your request to submit a quarterly plan performance report in a letter dated November 18, 1979, No 365/004, we would like to inform you that we have sent you a copy of the fourth quarterly report of 1980. Accordingly, we would like to remind you that we [company] have completed the road works in

⁶⁹⁸ Addis Zemen Newspaper, Ginbot-Nehasie (May-August) 1980 E.C.

⁶⁹⁹ DMUAC, Folder No.፲፯አስ/3291, File No.ጎጥጽ/፭፻3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

Gojjam side and the remaining work is the Blue Nile Bridge and the construction of the road from the direction of Wälläga.

During the 1987 reporting period, the contractor completed 48 kms of clearing and 70 kms of grading work on the Nāqāmit side (Nāqāmit-Blue Nile) road section. In addition to the installation of various sizes of pipes, 11 large and medium-sized bridges were under construction.⁷⁰⁰ In 1988, clearing and grubbing work of 140 kms of road has been completed. Besides, grading and gravel surfacing of 11 kms of road were completed. The construction of 15 large and small-sized bridges was also completed. Besides, the installations of 1,400 pipes were completed. According to the contractor, the project required a large amount of manpower and equipment to complete on time. During this reporting period (1988), the contractor employed more than 820 permanent and contract workers.⁷⁰¹

In the first quarter of the 1989 reporting period, the construction of the Blue Nile Bridge reached 46.3%, with a total cost of Eth.233, 815 birr.⁷⁰² In addition, 95% of Nāqāmit-Blue Nile road was finished during this reporting period. During the reporting period, the contractor was busy in finalizing the construction work on the remaining 10 kms of road and engaged in repairing different items of equipment that were damaged during the construction work. It was expected that the whole construction work of the project would be completed in the near future.⁷⁰³

But, due to several problems, the project was completed in April 1990. For instance, a shortage of fuel, the lack of spare parts, a shortage of construction materials and supplies, prolonged heavy rain, and a shortage of transportation equipment were the main problems that encountered

⁷⁰⁰ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Tir-Yekatit* (January- February) 1980 E.C.

⁷⁰¹ *Yezarietu Ethiopia* Newspaper, *Meskerem-Yekatit* (September- February) 1980 E.C.

⁷⁰² DMUAC, Folder No.ሰንሰ/3291, File No.፲፫/፭-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

⁷⁰³ Annual Reports of the Ethiopian Road Authority, January 1989, P. 33.

the enterprise during the construction work.⁷⁰⁴ Besides, the harsh weather conditions of the Blue Nile gorge significantly delayed the progress of the construction work. In the Blue Nile gorge, the annual average temperature reached 42°C.⁷⁰⁵

The contractor employed a considerable number of people to construct the Nāqämit-Buré feeder road. For instance, on the first road section (Nāqämit-Blue Nile), 1200 unskilled laborers and 6 engineers were employed. Likewise, on the second road section (Buré-Blue Nile), 600 to 700 workers were employed. There were five camps, living quarters, warehouses, and other facilities on both sides of the project. For better working conditions, there were also recreational and sports facilities in the camps. Clean water and health facilities were part of the amenities provided to the workers.⁷⁰⁶



Figure 41: The modern concrete bridge built on the Blue Nile River along Buré-Nāqämit road. Source: Ethiopian Roads Authority Golden Jubilee, p.51.

⁷⁰⁴DMUAC, Folder No.ዞንአስ/3291, File No.ጎጥጽ/ፈጠ-3, Reports of the Blue Nile Construction Company.

⁷⁰⁵Ethiopian Herald, September- December 1988.

⁷⁰⁶Ethiopian Herald, January- April 1988.

4.6. Asphaltting of Däjän-Däbrä Marqos Road Section during the Derg Regime

During the 6th highway program, the construction of new feeder roads continued on a more extensive and large scale than ever. Under the 6th highway program, the ERA was also planned to undertake asphalt surfacing of Awaš River-Gäwané, Addis Ababa-Wäliso, Robi-Kombolča, and Dässé-Wäldiya feeder roads. Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphalt surfacing work was one parcel of this asphaltting program.⁷⁰⁷ Accordingly, asphaltting of the road section which extends from Däjän to Däbrä Marqos was begun in April 1977 by the Ethiopian Road Authority at a total cost of Eth. 8.6 million birr. The total length of this road covered 71 kilometers. Ato Tedla Mulugeta was the manager of this project.⁷⁰⁸ According to Tedla, the project was designed to convert the existing road from a primary gravel highway to a primary asphalt highway. Däjän-Däbrä Marqos road project office brought a large stone crusher from Däbrä Zäyit Air Force used for asphaltting work and placed it near Däjän town. This crusher was bought at an expense of Eth. 2 million birr for the service of Däbrä Zäyit Air Force.⁷⁰⁹ For this project, a total of 142 permanent and 192 contract workers were employed. Of those, 10 workers were women.⁷¹⁰ For these road workers, Däjän-Marqos road project office builds a large camp in Lumamé town.⁷¹¹

After the asphalt surfacing process began in April 1977, the project was suspended for a year because personnel and equipment were transferred to other urgent revolutionary works. In April 1978, however, the operation of asphalt surfacing was resumed after an interruption, and 10 kilometers of asphalt surfacing has been completed within two months. In mid1979, the course

⁷⁰⁷Planning and Programming Division, *Twenty Seventh Annual Report of Ethiopian Road Authority, December 1980* (unpublished material), p. 50.

⁷⁰⁸ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Senie* (May- June) 1971 E.C.

⁷⁰⁹DMUAC, Folder, መ/መ-112, File No. መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from Ethiopian Road Authority, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref. No. 010/335/70, May15/1970 E.C.

⁷¹⁰ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot- Senie* (May- June) 1971 E.C.

⁷¹¹DMUAC, Folder, 178, File No. መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from Gebre Tsadiq Kassa, General Manager of Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority, to Trade and Tourism Office Branch, Ref. No. 595/33/70, July13/1970 E.C.

of asphaltting was more intensified and 45 kilometers of asphalt surfacing as well as the widening of 83 bridges along the road were completed at a total cost of Eth.4.3 million birr.⁷¹²



Figure 42: Labor intensive Dājān-Marqos asphaltting work. Source: *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot* (May) 1971 E.C.

⁷¹² *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot- Senie* (May- June) 1971 E.C.

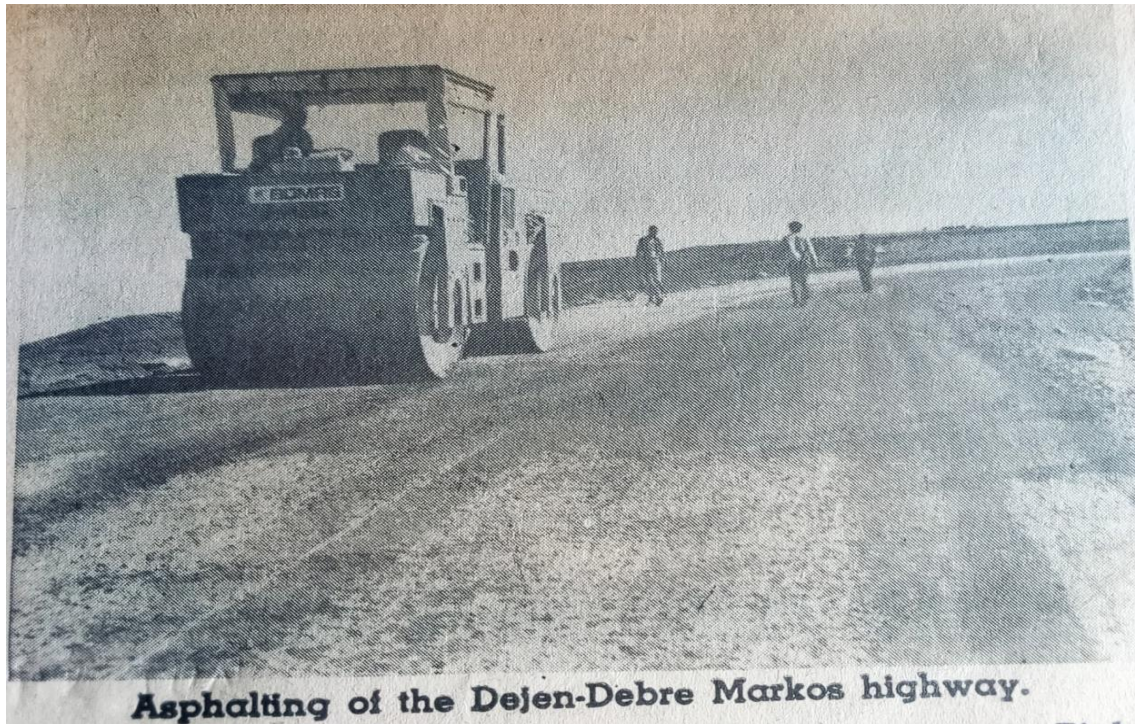


Figure 43: Machine intensive Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphalting work. Source: Ethiopian Herald, April- June 1979.

Asphalting of Däjän-Marqos road project reached Däbrä Marqos town in April 1979. However, the town's power lines and substations significantly slow down the asphalting process. The unevenly installed electric poles made the asphalting work difficult. As a result, Getnet Yeshanew, chair of Däbrä Marqos council, sent a letter to the Däbrä Marqos electric light and power office, requesting that 36 power lines and substations be relocated as soon as possible.⁷¹³ As a result, experts from Addis Ababa traveled to Däbrä Marqos to inspect the electric poles and discuss the ways to dislocate the substations. Following their inspection, they reached an agreement that substations would be relocated under the responsibility of the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority. They also proposed that ERA should pay Eth. 17, 365 birr to the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority. Delays in compensation and

⁷¹³ DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Getnet Yeshanew, Chairman of the Council, to Däbrä Marqos Electric Light Office, Ref. No. 3005/3, dated 30/8/1971 E.C.

substation relocation, however, had significantly slowed the asphaltting work.⁷¹⁴In line with this, the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority wrote the following letter to the Däbrä Marqos municipality: “ከደጃን ደብረ ማርቆስ የሚሰራው የአስፓልት መንገድ ከከተማው ክልል ውስጥ ስለደረሰ የመብራት ምስሰዎችን እንድናነሳ በተጠየቅነው መሰረት የ36 ምስሰዎች የማዛወሪያ 720 ብር (36x20=720) እንዲከፈለን ይደረግ ዘንድ እናሳስባለን፡፡”⁷¹⁵ the text, literally translated, could read: “As the asphalt road from Dājān to Däbrä Marqos arrives in the town, we [Electric Light personnel] recommend paying of Eth.720 birr (36x20=720) for the transfer of 36 pillars, as we have been asked to relocate the electric poles.” After the dislocation of electric poles and substations, the asphaltting work was also slowed down by the rainy season. According to the project manager, if weather conditions remain favorable, asphaltting of the remaining 16 kilometers could be completed by the end of June 1979. But, the rainy season affected the asphaltting work, and the project was terminated until October 1980.⁷¹⁶ Therefore, until the end of the rainy season, all contract workers were sent to their homes. This approach saved both the national economy and significantly reduced unnecessary expenses of the budget allocated for the project.⁷¹⁷ Besides, until the end of the rainy season, equipment and machinery transferred to other urgent road maintenance projects. For instance, in July 1979, this equipment was used to repair the deteriorated Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar road sections.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁴DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Animut Kindie, to Telecommunication Service Corporation, Ref. No. 811/ለመ-86, dated 23/3/1972 E.C.

⁷¹⁵*Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority to Däbrä Marqos Municipality, Ref. No. 1266/71, dated 6/9/1971 E.C.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Altaye Ayana, Head of Administration Services, to Gojjam Province Office, Ref. No. 688/1/71, July27/11/1971 E.C.

⁷¹⁷*Ibid*, Folder No.መ/መ-112, File No መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from Mulugeta, General Manager of Dājān-Marqos Asphaltting Project, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref. No. 013/19/70, June 10/10/1970 E.C., p. 219.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from ERA to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref. No. 636/1/71, July 4/11/1971 E.C., p. 2.

At the end of June 1980, asphaltting of the remaining 16 kilometers was completed. Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphaltting work was completed at a total cost of Eth.6 million birr. The ERA could be able to save no less than 2 million birr out of the 8.6 million birr originally allocated for the project. This positive result was an outcome of the co-operation and intensive effort shown by the workers. The workers had voluntarily increased the working hours from seven to nine. Ato Tedla, the project manager, lauded the selfless sacrifices made by the workers in speeding up the asphaltting process, which at the same time had helped to cut down on unnecessary expenses considerably.⁷¹⁹ It was scheduled that Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphaltting project would be completed within two years. But, due to the above-listed factors, the project was completed within three years.⁷²⁰

However, the asphaltting work had serious quality problems. Due to the poor quality of the project, this asphalt road began to deteriorate without providing transport services for even a year.⁷²¹ Therefore, like other gravel roads, this asphalt road was repaired on an annual basis by the ERA. The asphalt cement (a product of crude oil) used to repair the road was heated by a wooden fire. But, the fire consumed a large number of eucalyptus trees. Peasants in Däbrä Marqos and Wojiäl districts provided a large amount of eucalyptus wood to the Däjän-Marqos road maintenance project regularly. This activity substantially aggravated the level of deforestation in Däjän and Däbrä Marqos.⁷²²

The completion of the Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphaltting work has brought significance in many ways. For instance, it increased the traffic capacity in addition to reducing maintenance costs as

⁷¹⁹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot- Senie* (May- June) 1972 E.C.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid*, *Hamilie* (July) 1972 E.C.

⁷²¹ DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Zerfu Gessesse, Public Security Officer, to Gojjam Province Deputy Administrator, Ref. No. no, dated 7/5/1973 E.C., p. 2.

⁷²² *Ibid*, Folder No. 178, File No. መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from Gebre Tsadiq Kassa, General Manager of ETCA, to Däbrä Marqos *Awrajja* Office, Ref No. 222/5/77, December10/1977 E.C.

well as traveling time. Before asphalt surfacing, the journey from Däjän to Däbrä Marqos took three hours on average. But, after the completion of asphaltting work, the journey was drastically reduced to one hour and thirty minutes. It also reduced operation costs for motorists.⁷²³

In addition to the asphaltting work of Däjän to Däbrä Marqos, the company was actively engaged in other development projects. The local people in Däbrä Marqos town lauded the contribution made by the company. They also requested the company to do further projects in Däbrä Marqos town before leaving for the Wälläga road project. They demanded the building of a stadium and the construction of six kilometers of inner roads in Däbrä Marqos town.⁷²⁴ But, the manager rejected the request because the company had already won the bid to begin the Näqämit road project before the advent of the rainy season.⁷²⁵ Thus, in 1981, the company began to transfer construction equipment to the Wälläga road project. But, officials in Gojjam complained that the Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphaltting work had a serious quality problem and was deteriorating. They also suggested that the Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar road section is a critical route for tourists to visit the historic sites in Gojjam. Hence, the road should be convenient for tourists. Besides, during the winter season, the people who lived along this road were disturbed by particles and dust from the gravel. This road section also needs high repair work regularly. Therefore, further contracts should be signed with this company, and Däjän-Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar asphaltting work should start soon. Officials also claimed that the company should also repair the deteriorated Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphalt road.⁷²⁶

⁷²³ Ethiopian Herald, April to June 1980.

⁷²⁴ DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Animut Kindie, to Däjän-Däbrä Marqos Asphaltting Construction Company, Ref. No. 1258/ለመ/86, dated 10/6/1973 E.C.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Däjän-Däbrä Marqos Asphaltting Construction Company, to Gojjam Province Administration Office, Ref. No. 003/001/73, dated 8/7/1973 E.C.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Zerfu Gessesse, Public Security Officer, to Gojjam Province Deputy Administrator, Ref. No. no, dated 7/5/1973 E.C., p. 2.

Gojjam province Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs also complained that the company should transfer Däjän-Däbrä Marqos daily workers to the Wälläga road project. But, the company was reluctant to transfer daily laborers to the Wälläga road project after the end of the Däjän-Däbrä Marqos asphaltting work. Hence, 162 daily laborers were dismissed from the company following the completion of the project. It was evident that those daily laborers would face serious economic challenges.⁷²⁷

During the Derge Regime, the rest road section (i.e., from Däbrä Marqos to Bahir Dar) had been repaired by ERA. However, there was no fixed time for when deteriorated road sections had to be repaired; rather, it was determined by the condition of the road. It may be needed for repair work one or more times every year. For instance, within eight years (i.e. from 1974 to 1983), the road from Däbrä Marqos to Bahir Dar had been resurfaced thrice by ERA. The repair work included vegetation control, clearing of ditches and culverts, shoulder repairs, filling of potholes, patching of cracks, and emergency operations. The annual cost of desirable recurrent or routine maintenance (assuming reasonably efficient operations and including equipment charges) was estimated to be between Eth. \$200 and Eth. \$1, 000 per kilometer on average.⁷²⁸ The following archival document reveals how the highway was seriously deteriorated until the necessary reconstruction work took place: “በጎጃም ክፍለ ሀገር ከደብረማርቆስ እስከ ባህርዳር ያለው መንገድ ጥገና ስላልተደረገለት ተሽከርካሪዎች በየመንገዱ ላይ እየተሰበሰቡ ከጥቅም ውጭ ሁኔታዎች፡፡”⁷²⁹ The text, literally translated, could read: “in the province of Gojjam, since the highway from Däbrä Marqos to

⁷²⁷DMUAC, Folder No.78, File No.መ/መ-61, a Letter Written from Gojjam Province Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, to Däjän-Däbrä Marqos Asphaltting Construction Company, Ref. No. no, dated 26/10/1970 E.C.

⁷²⁸ Ethiopian Herald, September- June 1979.

⁷²⁹*Ibid*, Folder No.1009, File No.4151, a Letter Written from Deneqew Tegegne, to Road Transport Authority, Ref. No.መ725/11-2, July 20/1971 E.C.

Bahir Dar has not been repaired, vehicles have broken down on the highway and become out of usage.”



Figure 44: The road grader at repairing work on Däjän-Bahir Dar highway near Injibara. Source: Ethiopian Herald, June-September 1979.

CHAPTER FIVE

Socio-Economic Significances of Highways in Gojjam

5.1. Strategic Significances of Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway for Fascist Italy

As I noted in chapter two, above all, the Italian rule in Ethiopia was distinguished by its highway construction achievements. To facilitate their colonial conquest, they constructed the most extensive and impressive highway networks in Ethiopia.⁷³⁰ To check insurgents and achieve their colonial objectives in Gojjam, the Italians established large military camps and garrison centers along the gravel highway (Bahir Dar-Dājān highway). The major Italian garrison centers which were established and concentrated along Bahir Dar-Däbrä Marqos highway were Bahir Dar, Dangilla, Injibara, Buré, and Däbrä Marqos. The Italian major arsenal and garrison at these towns were established in 1937 and served as the main colonial administration of Ačäfär, Agäwmidir, Méça, and other areas that lie along the gravel highway. In addition to these major towns, the Italians also established military outposts in the small towns along Bahir Dar-Dājān highway line to disarm the people, suppress the rebellions, and establish an effective military administration. For instance, they established one of the largest underground garrisons at Piccolo Abbay (a small town in Italian word), 50 kms away from Bahir Dar. According to oral sources, the Italians deposited a large amount of ammunition at this military camp. From this garrison, Italian armored cars and Lorries transported viceroys and logistics to Dangilla as far as Buré and Däbrä Marqos regularly via this highway.⁷³¹

During the war of liberation, Bahir Dar-Dājān highway route was the main theatre of war. In January 1941, the British force moved into Ethiopia from the Sudan in the north and Kenya in

⁷³⁰ Bahiru Zewde, *a History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*, 2nd edition (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1974), P.250.

⁷³¹ Interviews with Yismaw Limenih, Dagnaw Wasie, and Alehegn Belay.

the south.⁷³² During the course of liberation, Sandford decided to use Gojjam as a base for guerrilla offensives, particularly along the highway which radiates from Addis Ababa and leads to northern Ethiopia via Däbrä Marqos and Dangila. The success of any plan for exhausting the enemy's force in Gojjam depended largely upon the Italian garrisons which were built along the main Gojjam highway. As long as the Italians could move freely along this highway, they could easily concentrate their forces at any threatened point.⁷³³

Three military brigades and four black-shirted battalions were concentrated on the three main strongholds in fascist Italy: Dangilla, Buré, and Däbrä Marqos. The British Royal Air Force destroyed these strongholds in August 1940. The Ethiopian patriots have changed their defensive tactics to offensive ones in response to this occurrence, and the Italians have launched a counteroffensive. The Italians were shocked by the threats in Gojjam and soon appointed General Nasi, their most outstanding colonial commander. In February 1941, the Gideon force was organized in the Italian fort of Injibara on the axial highway of Gojjam under the direction of Colonel Wingate. However, Colonel Natale, commanding the Italian brigade, had withdrawn the garrisons of Injibara and moved to Buré. Before arriving in Buré, this brigade was once more severely destroyed by the patriots of *Däjjazmač* Negash.⁷³⁴ The fascist army on the road between Däbrä Marqos and Buré was at risk by Negash's onslaught. 6,000 fascist forces and their armored cars withdrew to Däbrä Marqos from their fortified town of Buré due to persistent guerrilla strikes on its line of communication.⁷³⁵

⁷³² John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), P.205.

⁷³³ Simon Anglim, *Orde Wingate and the British Army, 1922-1944* (New York: Routledge, 2016), P.129.

⁷³⁴ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P.3553.

⁷³⁵ Simon Anglim, *Orde Wingate and the British...*, P. 139.

On February 16, 1941, when one battalion force was approaching the stronghold of Dangila, Colonel Torelli, commanding nine battalions, withdrew to Piccolo Abbay. Then, after a short rest at Mäsänti, he moved to Bahir Dar. He lost several fascist troops in his retreat along the highway when the patriots attacked.⁷³⁶ Hearing that Colonel Torelli's brigade from Dangila had retired to Bahir Dar, General Wingate sent Major A.C. Simonds with one battalion force to ambush the Italian garrisons which remained on the main highway.⁷³⁷

In the new plan, the Ethiopian battalion, supported by patriots, began to attack the forts of Jigga and Dämbäça, which lie on the main highway, while the frontier battalion threatened the outer forts of Buré and Mankusa.⁷³⁸ With regard to Buré assault, John H. Spencer states the following point:

*The Italian army under Colonel Natale, encircled by the Gideon force, had been obliged to abandon the stronghold of Buré at the end of February. Frantic appeals to Khartoum for arms and air support to exploit this victory and to open the road to Däbrä Marqos and Addis Ababa, met with no response.*⁷³⁹

From February 27 to March 4, the Italians also suffered great casualties in Dämbäça and Jigga forts. Two Italian armored cars were captured and ambushed on the main highway. Natale was disgraced by General Nasi and replaced by Colonel Maraventano. On March 17, 1941, the enemy organized and re-occupied the fort of Amanuel with some 1,500 troops. Subsequently, a small Ethiopian regular force and a British force detached the highway between Däbrä Marqos

⁷³⁶ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P.3555.

⁷³⁷ Major General I.S.O. Playfair, *the Mediterranean and Middle East: The Early Success against Italy*, Vol. 1 (Britain: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954), P. 424.

⁷³⁸ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P.3554.

⁷³⁹ John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* (U.S.A: Reference Publication, Inc, 1987), P. 93.

and the Blue Nile.⁷⁴⁰ With regard to this, Simon Anglim describes Wingate's operational plan in the following ways:

My [Wingate] primary objective was to drive the enemy out of Gojjam. After that I intended to move on and cut the north and south communications between the capital and Dessie [not 'harass', as Platt instructed]. I knew the enemy would attack as long as possible along his Roman roads, and that, if I wanted to fight him, I must do so on these roads. I knew that he would resent the attack of Haile Selassie as an assault on his prestige and that if he were not hard pressed he would resume the offensive... with these facts in mind I made the following plan. I would divide my force in to two parts, in the proportion of one to three. The weaker force should contain the northern Italian force until reinforced and strong enough to go on and cut the Dässé-Gondär road. The strong force, under my own immediate command I would direct upon the Nile bridge at Šafartak [at the far western edge of Gojjam, on the main road from Addis Ababa in to Gojjam] thus cutting the enemy's retreat, and then proceed by a process of night attack plus fifth column penetration to reduce the various garrisons.⁷⁴¹

Hence, the preceding discussion describes the strategic significances of Italian gravel highways during the course of liberation struggle. It also implies that during war of liberation fascist Italy concentrated strong force along their gravel highway and waged coordinated assault on the British and Ethiopian forces.⁷⁴²

Some Ethiopian regular forces met with Belay Zeleke, whose help was crucial between the Blue Nile and Däbrä Marqos, where a series of new attacks would be launched on the enemy defenses north and north-west of Däbrä Marqos. Thus, twenty-eight enemy lorries and two armored cars were ambushed and destroyed by the sudden and surprise attack of Belay Zeleke, north of the Blue Nile River along the highway axis.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴⁰ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P.3555.

⁷⁴¹ Simon Anglim, *Orde Wingate and the British...*, P. 134.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*

⁷⁴³ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, PP.3555-3556.

On April 4, 1941, the Italians evacuated Däbrä Marqos. The occupation of Addis Ababa by Ethiopian troops on April 6, 1941, deprived the Italian to use the highway between Däbrä Marqos and Addis Ababa. Under the command of colonel Maraventano, a column of 14, 000 fascist troops, including 700 civilians, withdrew across the Blue Nile at Šafartak.⁷⁴⁴ The whole of the highway line was cleared from enemies, and the way was open for the Emperor Haile Selassie to enter Gojjam.⁷⁴⁵ Following the liberation of Addis Ababa, Emperor Haile Selassie asked a plane to return to his capital. But, General Cunningham ordered the Emperor to return to his capital by land (on Buré-Däbrä Marqos-Addis Ababa highway).⁷⁴⁶ Accompanied by brigadier Sand Ford, Emperor Haile Selassie entered the town of Buré in mid-March 1941. At Injibara, *Däjjazmač* Mengesha Jemberie joined the Emperor. *Däjjazmač* Negash Bezabih also greeted the Emperor in Buré. Ordinary peasants poured into the town and chanted the poem below in praise of Emperor Haile Selassie:

ጣልያን መንገድ ሰሪ፤ እንግሊዝ መሪ ነዉ፤
የኢትዮጵያ ባንዴራ ኃይለስላሴ ነዉ፡፡⁷⁴⁷

*The Italians are road builders, and the British guides;
The flag of Ethiopia is Haile Selassie.*

On April 6, the Emperor entered Däbrä Marqos. After 22 days, on April 28, 1941, the Emperor left to Addis Ababa across the Blue Nile River over the pontoon bridge.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P. 87.

⁷⁴⁵ Major General I.S.O. Playfair, *the Mediterranean and ...*, P. 424.

⁷⁴⁶ John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of...*, P. 93.

⁷⁴⁷ Asrat Arya, "A History of Buré-Damot Wārāda, 1936-1991" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 2010), P. 63.

⁷⁴⁸ Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 July, 1946: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, P.3556; Adane Kassie, "A History of Däjäñ Wārāda...", P. 31.



Figure 45: Emperor Haile Selassie I and Colonel Wingate at Däbrä Marqos, April 1941. Source: W.E.D Allen, *Ethiopian Highlands*, P.4.

On the eve of the failure of the Derg Regime, when the TPLF cut off the Addis Ababa-Buré-Gondar Highway and put Gojjam at risk, Mengistu announced the end of many of the regime's most unpopular socialist measures.⁷⁴⁹ The second revolutionary army's control over Asmāra had already been reduced to a 50-kilometer radius, but the third revolutionary army was still fighting to maintain control over the important supply routes, primarily the Addis Ababa-Assāb, Addis Ababa-Dässé, and Addis Ababa-Gondar roads. The EPRDF units used their *qorāta* (cutting off) tactics efficiently on all fronts during the fight with the Derg Regime. The May Day and Awaš divisions marched from Ṭis Abbay towards Mäšāti and Mārawi to cut off the retreating government troops and commanders along Bahir Dar-Dājān highway, while some units approached Bahir Dar. On February 25, 1991, General Asrat and General Wasihun severed their radio link with Addis Ababa and retreated to Dangila through Bahir Dar-Dājān highway after part of Bahir Dar fell into EPRDF hands on February 25, 1991, around 1440 hours. At Mäšānti,

⁷⁴⁹ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Meskerem* (September) 1993 E.C.

the insurgents attempted to intercept the commanders and seize the 603rd corps' weapons and supplies.⁷⁵⁰

The militants sealed off the main highway at Dājān as the 603rd corps resumed their retreat. The 204th airborne division, which was the fresh force from Belatte training center, was dispatched to Gojjam. The airborne forces, however, discovered that the militants had already cut off the main highway (Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway). They were subsequently told to take up defensive positions in the vicinity of Fičé. For their part, the 603rd corps forces had just one route for retreating to Addis Ababa: the Buré-Nāqāmit highway. However, before their retreat, units of the 603rd corps were bolstered by new recruits who had just completed their training at Bir Šālāqo camp. The two brigades were dispatched to Dājān in order to reopen the main Addis Ababa highway. They were, however, defeated at Dābrā Marqos. The new recruits, who had just completed their training at Bir Šālāqo camp, escaped via the Buré-Nāqāmit highway. On February 27, 1991, at 1230 hours, Dābrā Marqos fell under the EPRDF's hands. The insurgents then hurried to Buré from Dābrā Marqos. On the other hand, government troops had already retired to KIRAMU, in north-eastern Wällāga.⁷⁵¹

5.2. Socio-Economic Significance of Bahir Dar-Dājān Highway to Gojjam, Ethiopia

Highway networks serve as the lifeline for the socio-economic development of Ethiopia since highways facilitate commercial activities among districts and urban centers.⁷⁵² The construction of highways is also critical for the development of the Ethiopian economy. Consumption goods, trade items, construction materials, and the like, which are critical for people's well-being and

⁷⁵⁰ Fantahun Ayele, *the Ethiopian Army: From Victory to Collapse, 1977-1991* (Evanston: North Western University Press, 2014), PP. 199-200.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² DMUAC, Folder No.1009, File No. 4151, A Letter Written from Animut Kinde, Deputy Administrator of Gojjam Province, to Ethiopian Road Authority Head Office, Ref No. 6455/m/m83, Dated, July 25/71 E.C.

technological advancement, can only be easily transported if reliable highway networks are developed.⁷⁵³ In addition to economic development, the construction of highways serves as a means for cultural exchange among nationalities. The expansion of rural roads and highways also paves the way for the unity of the rural and urban masses in the struggle to realize the objective of the economic prosperity of Ethiopia.⁷⁵⁴

Dājān-Bahir Dar highway connects Addis Ababa and the northwestern parts of the country to the Sudanese and Eritrean borders.⁷⁵⁵ It is also used as a transportation route for fuel imported from Sudan, which accounts for 80% of the fuel consumption of industries in Addis Ababa's vicinity. Furthermore, this highway is a significant route as part of the Trans-East African Highway.⁷⁵⁶

The Sātīt Plain is very fertile land with great agricultural potential to be one of Ethiopia's granaries. This highway connects this crop cultivation area to the rest of Ethiopia. The land around Lake Ṭana is fertile with good irrigational potential. This road connects these areas, as well as Birr State Farm, to the towns and rural areas. There are no other alternative routes than this one for the transportation of finished products and raw materials between northern and southern Ethiopia.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵³ Ethiopian Herald, June to September 1982.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid*, March to June 1982.

⁷⁵⁵ Ethiopian Road Authority Report for Däbrä Marqos-Gondar Road, E.221, Vol. 5(unpublished material), P.44.

⁷⁵⁶ Ethiopian Road Authority Report for Rehabilitation of Truck Road, Phase IV (unpublished material), P.2.

⁷⁵⁷ Ethiopian Road Authority Report for Däbrä Marqos-Gondar Road, E.221, Vol. 5(unpublished material), P.44.



Figure 46: Birr state farm near Däjän-Bahir Dar highway at Jigga. Source: United States Department of Interior, *Land and Water Resources of the Blue Nile*, P. 137.

Däjän-Bahir highway is one of the most important and historical routes in Ethiopia. There is a valuable cultural and historical heritage in the vicinity of the highway and in the towns through which it passes. However, before the construction of this highway, none of these historical sites were visited by tourists. The construction of this highway makes it easier for tourists to reach these places.⁷⁵⁸ With the construction of the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar highway, Däbrä Marqos grew as a hub of transit for domestic and foreign tourists who were interested in visiting the northern major attraction sites like Bahir Dar, Gondar, Lalibälla, and Aksum. Before leaving Däbrä Marqos, tourists visited the historic heritage of Däbrä Marqos.⁷⁵⁹

Likewise, the connection of Bahir Dar with Addis Ababa by highway transport ensured a constant flow of foreign and domestic tourists to the Lake Ṭana region. The construction of this highway also paved the way for facilitating tourism development in Bahir Dar. It allowed tourists to visit the most spectacular natural wonders, such as the Blue Nile Falls and the Lake Ṭana monasteries. A number of foreign travelers stayed at the Giywän Hotel in Bahir Dar to visit

⁷⁵⁸ Ethiopian Road Authority Report for Däbrä Marqos-Gondar Road, E.221, Vol. 5(unpublished material), P.44.

⁷⁵⁹ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.11.18, File No. 17.1.11.18.01, A Letter Written from *Däjjazmacč* Dereje Mekonnen, Acting Governor of Gojjam Governorate-General, to Aklilu Haite Weld, Minister of Pen, Ref No.7600/150/27, Dated, February 20/63 E.C., P. 29.

natural and religious heritage between 1964 and 1968. For instance, in 1964 (1310), 1965 (2023), 1966 (1209), and 1968 (4224), tourists visited Bahir Dar.⁷⁶⁰

Beyond the tourism significance, the connection of Bahir Dar by an all-weather highway with Asmāra and Addis Ababa increased the volume and value of trade items which flowed in to and out of the town. Trade in grains, oilseeds, pulses, coffee, butter, and honey, which Bahir Dar collected from its surroundings, expanded significantly. A large proportion of these trade items were transshipped to Gondar, Asmāra, and Addis Ababa. Besides, the highway facilitated the easy flow of manufactured goods from Asmāra and Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. This enriched and increased the number of shop-keepers in the town. This in turn enhanced the position of the town as a depot to increase the volume of trade items that were distributed to villages and towns around Bahir Dar.⁷⁶¹

Moreover, the construction of the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar-Gondar highway increased the level of migration from Gojjam, Bāgēmdir, Tigray, Eritrea, and Šāwa to Bahir Dar. Students between Gondar in the north and Däbrä Marqos in the south had to go to Bahir Dar for further education because the other high schools at Finotäsālam in Gojjam and Däbrä Tabor in Bāgēmdir were opened much later. In 1965, the total number of students in Bahir Dar primary schools, including those of the church, reached 3,138.⁷⁶²

The construction of Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa highway and the completion of the Blue Nile Bridge in 1947/8 significantly facilitated the trade activities of Gojjam. According to oral sources, the construction of this highway has shortened the travel and simplified the trade activities in

⁷⁶⁰ Seltene Seyoum, “A History of Bahir Dar Town: 1936-1974 ”(MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1988), P. 168

⁷⁶¹ Seltene, “A History of Bahir Dar Town...” PP. 148-149.

⁷⁶² *Ibid*, P.171.

Gojjam. It substantially alleviated the difficult journey faced by merchants travelling to Addis Ababa across the formidable Blue Nile gorge with their loaded mules. Following the beginning of transport by lorry from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos, while merchants returned from Addis Ababa to Däbrä Marqos after they sold their commodities, they brought trade items like salt to Däbrä Marqos with a lorry, and later they redistributed it to retailers.⁷⁶³

In particular, after the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar highway was well repaired by IHA, buses and Lorries began to provide transport services on a daily basis to the people through which the highway passes. Long-distance buses have played a major role in the integration and growth of cities and towns that are located along the flow lines of buses. It also had a key role in transitional towns, where the passengers stayed on average for more than half an hour. During this stay of passengers in the town, they may consume the available materials.⁷⁶⁴

The construction of this highway contributes to the rise of urbanization on both sides of the highway and the subsequent access to infrastructure like water. For instance, in the post-Italian period, towns like Bahir Dar, Dangila, and Däbrä Marqos had access to piped water. All these towns are situated along the Addis Ababa-Bahir Dar highway. According to Derib Tefera, the construction of this highway preceded water supply development projects. But many towns in Gojjam, which are situated far away from this highway, did not have access to water supply infrastructure.⁷⁶⁵

Although the highway was mainly constructed for the transportation of goods and people, most road users are pedestrians who use the highway very locally. Thus, this highway was extensively

⁷⁶³ Informants: Biresaw Gashu and Laqie Alemu.

⁷⁶⁴ Informants: Biresaw Gashu and Laqie Alemu.

⁷⁶⁵ Derb Tefera, "the Nexus between Water Supply...", PP. 98-99.

used for local social and economic activities as well as for traditional transportation needs. It makes commercial activities possible or profitable for the permanent shops and bars. The construction of this highway also paved the way for the beginning of roadside trade and markets. Many people come from distant areas to the main road to sell or barter whatever they have. Therefore, the highway indirectly connects the town and rural areas that are found on the two sides of the main routes.⁷⁶⁶

Governmental administrative functions, agricultural marketing, and small commercial activities were associated with this highway.⁷⁶⁷ For instance, the construction of the highway between Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa, which runs through Méça Wārāda, made Mārawi town a political center for the area. Housing also grew steadily along the highway on the outskirts of town.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore, the market of Durbété was located outside of the town, in an area named Asabid, until this gravel highway was constructed. Following the construction of this highway, however, Eftaray Demilew, the governor of Ačäfär Wārāda, shifted the market center to this highway. Thus, the town brought some rudimentary socio-economic development.⁷⁶⁹

5.3. Socio-Economic Significances of Dājān-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar Feeder Road

As I noted in chapter four, for both strategic and economic significance, the Derg Regime gave much emphasis to the construction and expansion of many feeder and rural roads in Gojjam. Bailey Mc Donald examines how roads in Ethiopia were used as a political tool during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1935-1941 and under Mengistu's rule from 1974-1991.⁷⁷⁰ Indeed,

⁷⁶⁶ Environmental Impact Analysis of the Five Roads Selected for Rehabilitation or Upgrading Report, P. 31.

⁷⁶⁷ The United States Department of Interior, *land and Water Resources of the Blue Nile Basin*, vol. 5 (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam, 1964), P.151.

⁷⁶⁸ Melanie Ramasawmy "Uncovering the Social Role of Poultry in Ethiopia" (Dissertation, University of Roehampton, Department of Life Science, 2017), PP. 37-38.

⁷⁶⁹ Informants: Simeneh Muhammed and Dagnaw Wasie.

⁷⁷⁰ Bailay MC Donald, *the Roads of Ethiopia: Italian Occupation and Megistu's Regime*, P. 1.

political instabilities in Bičäna and Motta *Awrajjas* forced the military government to construct Däjän-Motta feeder road in 1978, mainly to facilitate the mobility of soldiers.⁷⁷¹ The following archival document substantiates this point:

ከደጀን እስከ ሞጣ የሚሰራው መንገድ ቶሎ ቢጀመር በአካባቢው ላለው ፀጥታ እና ለአስተዳደሩ መሻሻል ጠቃሚ መሆኑን በመግለጥ፤ የአገር አስተዳደር ሚኒስትር በቁጥር 159645 ጥር 2/67 ዓ.ም የፃፈው ደብዳቤ ደርሶናል፡፡ ስለዚህ በጉዳዩ ላይ ያለውን አሳሳቢነት በመረዳት የቀረበ ሀሳብ ስለሆነ፤ መስሪያ ቤታችሁ ቅድሚያ በመስጠት የመንገዱ ስራ በአስቸኳይ እንዲጀመር እናሳስባለን፡፡⁷⁷²

we[Betru] received a letter from the ministry of interior, written in number 159645, dated 2/67 E.C., stating that if the construction of Däjän-Motta road is started soon, it will be important for the security of the area and the improvement of the administration. Since the idea is proposed realizing the seriousness of the issue, we notify your office [ERA] to start the road work as soon as possible.

Local rebels and feudo-bourgeoisie supporters have resisted the military government in Bičäna and Motta *Awrajjas* to bring back Ethiopia's feudal system ever since it came to power. The military regime, however, was successful in crushing local insurgents and anti-Derg civil political groups like the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP) after Däjän-Motta feeder road was constructed. The construction of this feeder road also enabled to bring social, political, and administrative developments in Bičäna and Motta *Awrajjas*.⁷⁷³

Beyond political implications, the construction of Däjän-Motta feeder road offered significant socio-economic benefits for the residents of Bičäna and Motta *Awrajjas*. For instance, the peasants of Bičäna *Awrajjas* had a great opportunity to transport their production as far as

⁷⁷¹Animut Demissie, the Socio-Economic Significances of Road Transport Development in Gojjam (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Geography, 1987), P. 29.

⁷⁷²NALA, Folder No.152, File No. 17.1.11.17.18, A Letter Written Betru Kidane Mariam, Chief Administrator of Gojjam Province, to the Ethiopian Road Authority, Ref No.102/1/1/6, Dated, January 19/1967 E.C.

⁷⁷³ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June- August) 1971 E.C.

Yätmän, Däbrä Worq, Fälägä Birahn, Qäraniwo, and Gindä Wäyin towns. The construction of this road enabled peasants to sell their production at a reasonable price in these towns.⁷⁷⁴

Likewise, the peasants of Moṭṭa Awrajja had a great opportunity to transport and sell their agricultural production as far as Addis Ababa. The construction of this road also enabled the people to bring trade items directly from Addis Ababa to Moṭṭa. Besides, the number of urban dwellers increased in both Qäranyo and Motta towns following the construction of this feeder road. Most of the Sädé and Awja traders have also started constructing houses in Qäranyo and Moṭṭa towns.⁷⁷⁵ The following archival document substantiates this point:

.....የሞጣ አገራች እንደ ሚታወቀው ሁሉ በቅድመ አቢዮቱ ጊዜ ተረስቶ ያለመንም መገናኛ በጨለማ ውስጥ ይኖር እንደነበር የሚያጠያይቅ አይሆንም፡፡ ከ1966 ዓ.ም አቢዮታዊ ፍንዳታ ወዲህ ግን ሞጣ ከተማ ድረስ መጋቢ መንገድ ተሰርቶ ሀምሌ 2/1970 ዓ.ም ተመርቆ አገልግሎት በመስጠት ላይ ስለሆነ የህብረተሰቡ ችግር በመጠኑ ተቀርፏል፡፡⁷⁷⁶

...There is no question that Moṭṭa Awrajja was forgotten during the pre-revolutionary period, lived in darkness without communication. Since the 1966 revolution, however, the road to Moṭṭa has been constructed and inaugurated on July 2/ 1970 E.C and so that some of the community's problems have been alleviated.

Following the completion of this road, all kinds of vehicles were introduced to Moṭṭa. *Teff*, maize, linseed, and other agricultural items could be transported by traders from Moṭṭa to Addis Ababa, Däbrä Marqos, and Däjän. However, in order to transport products from Moṭṭa to Addis Ababa, the lorry owners demanded extremely expensive transportation costs from the merchants. Endalie Melese, a well-known merchant in Moṭṭa, said that the payment for peseta road transport

⁷⁷⁴ Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Sene-Nehase* (June- August) 1971 E.C.

⁷⁷⁵ Ayele Tariku, "A History of Hulät Iju Inäsé Wäräda...", P. 130.

⁷⁷⁶ DMUAC, Folder, 1009, File No.4151, A Letter Written from Betru Kidane Mariam, to the Ethiopian Road Authority, Ref No. 6455/m/m83, Dated July 25/71 E.C.

costs was negotiated between the two parties in 1980. As a result, the truckers who came from Addis Ababa demanded Eth. 20 birr per quintal.⁷⁷⁷

Prior to the construction of Däjän-Moṭṭa road, let alone to met with Addis Ababa and other far distance *Awrajjas*, the people of Moṭṭa could not be met with the neighboring *Awrajjas* and districts.⁷⁷⁸

The construction Däjän-Moṭṭa feeder road made previously inaccessible areas accessible and further facilitated the economic exploitation of the predominant agricultural *Awrajjas* of Bičäna and Moṭṭa. The coming of various types of vehicles to Bičäna and Moṭṭa from Addis Ababa and the subsequent increase in the movement of people brought a change in the attitude of peasants.⁷⁷⁹

Unlike Däjän-Motta feeder road, the road from Moṭṭa to Bahir Dar was constructed to facilitate movements of goods and people (non-political motive) from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. Because the Addis Ababa-Bičäna-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar route is shorter than the Addis Ababa-Däbrä Marqos-Bahir Dar route by 80 km.⁷⁸⁰ Moṭṭa- Bahir Dar feeder road connected Bahir Dar with Addis Ababa through Moṭṭa. Since Moṭṭa became a center between Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar, the town had the chance to the introduction of some bars in the town. The residents of Moṭṭa also got more opportunities to buy and sell goods. Besides, the people accessed to health services outside the town of Moṭṭa.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁷ Ayele Tariku, "A History of Hulät Iju Inäse Wäraḍa...", PP. 130-131.

⁷⁷⁸ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Hidar-Tahisas* (November-December) 1975 E.C.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid*, *Sene-Nehase* (June-August) 1971 E.C.

⁷⁸⁰ Animut Demissie, "the Socio-Economic Significances of...", P.29.

⁷⁸¹ Ayele Tariku, "A History of Hulät Iju Inäse Wäraḍa...", P. 131.

The construction of Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar feeder road paved vehicles to play an indispensable role for economic development of Bahir Dar and for flourishing of social services like hotels, bars, and restaurants, which provided food, drinking, and bed services for guests who came from Bičäna and Moṭṭa.⁷⁸²

5.4. Socio-Economic Significances of Injibara-Guba Feeder Road

Prior to the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, Mätäkäl and Čagni were the most inaccessible and isolated areas of Gojjam Province. However, the construction of Injibara-Guba feeder road certainly simplified the age-old transportation problems of Mätäkäl *Awrajja*. In this *Awrajja*, rudimentary socio-economic developments began after the construction of this feeder road. The people were able to meet with the neighboring Gojjam *Awrajjas* and *Wärādas* following the completion of this road. The road also enhanced the agricultural development of Mätäkäl *Awrajja*. Agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, and better quality seeds were introduced to peasants. An agricultural product such as grain was transported to other areas from Mätäkäl.⁷⁸³ Following the completion of this road, vehicles began to come to Čagni. The people also began to import new and cheap goods from Addis Ababa. People's ways of life also changed as their mobility increased.⁷⁸⁴

5.5. Socio-Economic Significances of Buré-Näqämit Feeder Road

The construction of Näqämit-Buré road had tremendous socio-economic significance for the provinces of Gojjam and Wälläga. Peasant villages and the resettlement sites that were built along the road benefited from better communication facilities. It facilitated a better exchange of goods and larger marketing opportunities. The road also paved the way for the development of

⁷⁸² Informants: Yismaw Limenih, Addis Ambaw, and Mesfin Admasu

⁷⁸³ *Addis Zemen Newspaper, Megabit-Miazia* (March-April) 1982 E.C.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

the Angär-Didessa river project. The completion of Näqämit-Buré road enabled the whole interior of the south-western part of the country to be opened up for road communication, and one was able to travel from Illbabur all through to Kaffa and Wolläga to Gojjam without the need to travel to Addis Ababa and undertake the longer and more difficult journey. The road enabled Gondar, Tigray, and Eritrea to be indirectly linked with Kaffa, Illubabur, and Wolläga provinces.⁷⁸⁵ Besides, the opening of this feeder road facilitated the movement of people from Gojjam to Wälläga province. For instance, between 1984 and 1997, a significant number of people from Gonča, Däga Damot, and Moṭṭa *Awrajjas* were displaced to Gidda Kirämu *Wäräda*, in Wälläga province, via this feeder road.⁷⁸⁶ But, the main purpose of the construction of Näqämit-Buré road was to fulfill the transportation needs of the people of the two provinces (Gojjam and Wälläga).⁷⁸⁷

Generally, the expansion of road accessibilities substantially improved trade activities and facilitated easier communication between rural and urban communities in Gojjam.⁷⁸⁸ The improvements in the connectivity between districts, *Awrajjas*, and urban centers have facilitated the easy movement of people and goods within the province and as far as other provinces.⁷⁸⁹ For instance, during the years 1982 to 1984 within Gojjam province, the following agricultural products were transported from one place to the other: 269,942 quintals (in 1982), 602,481 quintals (in 1983), and 26,901 quintals (in 1984). Likewise, between 1982 and 1984, the following agricultural products were transported to other provinces from Gojjam: 86,344 quintals (in 1982), 43,312 quintals (in 1983), and 4,740 quintals (in 1984). Besides, from 1982 to 1984,

⁷⁸⁵ Ethiopian Herald, January-April 1990.

⁷⁸⁶ Preceding of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. 3, Edited by Svein Ege et al, P.858.

⁷⁸⁷ Ethiopian Herald, September- December 1988.

⁷⁸⁸ *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, *Ginbot-Sene* (May-June) 1975 E.C.

⁷⁸⁹ Office of the National Committee for Central Planning, *Developments of Transport Networks in North-Western Ethiopia* (unpublished material), P.16.

the following agricultural products were transported to Addis Ababa from Gojjam: 930,015 quintals (in 1982), 957,543 quintals (in 1983), and 897,962 quintals (in 1984).⁷⁹⁰

As I mentioned above, increased road accessibility greatly enhanced Gojjam's commercial activity. The number of merchants has also risen significantly. For instance, there were 8,888 merchants in 1982, 9, 549 merchants in 1983, and 10,113 merchants in 1984.⁷⁹¹

The expansion of road accessibility substantially increased both the demand and supply of public transport vehicles in Gojjam. For further information, see the following table:

Table 14: Supply and demand for public transport vehicles in Gojjam province (1979-1985)

Province	Year	Demand	Supply
Gojjam	1979/80	45	37
	1980/81	48	38
	1981/82	55	46
	1982/83	68	60
	1983/84	70	58
	1984/85	79	49

Source: Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, *Development of Transport Networks in Northwestern Ethiopia*, P. 19.

As I mentioned previously, the mobility of the people and the number of passengers rose sharply as a result of the accessibility of rural and feeder roads in Gojjam. For further information, see the following table:

⁷⁹⁰ Northwestern Ethiopia Plan Office, *A Review Report on Some Economic and Social Services of Gojjam Province* (Bahir Dar, July 1984), P. 16.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid*, P.23.

Table 15: Passengers in Gojjam province, from 1979 to 1985

Province	year	Number of passengers	% of increase over the previous year	Km travelled	% of increase over the previous year
Gojjam	1979/80	597.4	-	2,045.1	-
	1980/81	758.8	27	2,342.5	14.5
	1981/82	902.1	18.9	2,554.5	9.0
	1982/83	992.1	9.8	2,149.6	-15.9
	1983/84	2,197.0	21.4	3,293.0	53.1
	1984/85	1,229.5	-44.1	3,631.3	10

Source: Statistical Bulletin of North-Western Ethiopia Regional Planning Office, P. 20.

Due to the development of road accessibilities, the means of transportation was changed from pack animals to trucks, though the change did not significantly overshadow the pack animal transportation system in the province. Such changes in the means of transportation motivated the production of agriculture and helped peasants to sell their products at a reasonable cost. For instance, before the road from Bičäna to Yädwuha was constructed, the price of one quintal of *teff* was Eth.28 birr. However, after the construction of this road, the price of one quintal of *teff* was Eth.50 birr. From this point, we understand that the development of road accessibility enabled peasants to sell their products at a reasonable price.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹² Addis Zemen Newspaper, *Meskerem-Tikmit* (September-October) 1973 E.C.

Conclusion

Like in other parts of Ethiopia, the transport system of Gojjam was depends on traditional means of transport, which consist of over-head portage and loading on the backs of humans and pack animals. These modes of transportations are still extensively used in rural areas of Gojjam. The most common means of pack animal transportation in Gojjam were donkeys (55%), mules (45%), and horses (5%). Pack animal transport, primarily by donkeys, mules, and horses, was common in Gojjam and was essential for farm and household transportation, as well as local trade.

Before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, a few attempts to construct modern highways in Gojjam were took place. For instance, a rough highway was intended to connect Fičä and Däbrä Marqos through the Blue Nile gorge in the late 1890s. This endeavor did not, however, succeed as planned because of lack of competent labor and funding. *Ras Teferi* (Haile Selassie after 1930) also desired to construct Bahir Dar-Addis Ababa gravel highway via Däbrä Marqos through the assistance of the J.G. White American Engineering Company. Accordingly, the J.G. White Engineering Corporation study group from the United States came in Bahir Dar in 1930, led by L.B. Roberts. Hence, preliminary clearing and surveying of the highway towards Bahir Dar was started in Addis Ababa. Besides, the surveying and clearing of the highway was started on both sides of the Blue Nile gorge between Goha Šiwän and Däjän. At the same time, the construction of a bridge over the Blue Nile at Kanfaro was also part of a plan that would link Gojjam with Bägémdir. Unfortunately, all activities were interrupted by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. From 1937-1939, fascist Italy constructed Bahir Dar-Däjän gravel highway under the supervision of General Ugo Cavallero for their colonial objective.

In the immediate post Italian period, this gravel highway was severely deteriorated by natural factors like flooding. However, the central government had not finance for reconstructing this highway. Thus, the Ministry of Public Works and Communication ordered the reconstruction of this highway through public labor under the responsibilities of *Šambäl* Aemiro Selassie and *Ato* Aweqe Amha. In 1957, it was reconstructed through public participation and temporally alleviated the transport challenges. In 1965, this highway was well reconstructed by the Imperial Highway Authority. The Imperial Regime also planned to Construct *Däjän-Moṭṭa-Bahir Dar* gravel highway. Preliminary clearing and surveying works were in good progress. However, all activities were aborted due to the shortage of finance. Later, the Derg Regime completed the construction of this long gravel highway.

The Derg regime had strong conviction that the accessibility of rural and feeder roads played a significant role to the National Revolutionary Development Campaign. Accordingly, unlike the Imperial regime, the revolutionary government gave top priority to the construction of rural and feeder roads, with less emphasis on the national highway systems. Since the 1974 popular revolution, and especially with the establishment of the Ethiopian Transport Construction Authority along a new line, efforts have been made to construct more extensive and integrated feeder and rural roads in Gojjam. Therefore, during the Derg Regime, 547 kilometers of all-weather roads and 991 kilometers of dry-weather roads were constructed. As a result, during this period, all *Awrajjja* towns, most *Wäräda* towns, and state farms were situated along the primary highway, secondary feeder roads, minor rural roads, and motor able tracks. The road accessibility of Gojjam reached 75% and ranked fifth next to *Šäwa*, Harar, Sidamo, and Wällo provinces, respectively. The remaining 25% of Gojjam were inaccessible to road infrastructure. The road density was about 25.1/1000 km². This implies that Gojjam was relatively more

accessible in terms of road infrastructure than the remaining seven Ethiopian provinces during the Derg Regime.

Due to the development of road accessibilities, the means of transportation was changed from pack animals to tracks, though the change did not significantly overshadow the pack animal transportation system in the province. Such changes in the means of transportation motivated the production of agriculture and helped peasants to sell their products at a reasonable cost. For instance, before the road from Bičäna to Yädwuha was constructed, the price of one quintal of *teff* was Eth.28 birr. However, after the construction of this road, the price of one quintal of *teff* was Eth.50 birr. From this point, we understand that the development of road accessibility enabled peasants to sell their products at a reasonable price.

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List of Informants

No	Name	Title	Age	Place of interview	Date of interview	
1	Mesfin Admasu	<i>Ato</i>	78	Bahir Dar	April 11/8/04 E.C.	He was a soldier and textile worker. His narrates the cost of plane transport in Gojjam before the construction of highways.
2	Alehegn Belay	<i>Ato</i>	87	Piccolo	September 6/04 E.C	He was a peasant and he traveled to Bahir Dar to sell his grain using pack animal. He remembers the challenges of pack animal transport. As he was engaged in Bahir Dar-Dājān highway reconstruction work, his knowledge is also significant about this highway.
3	Beqele Semahegn	<i>Ato</i>	89	Durbété	September 6/04 E.C.	As he was a mason in the construction of highways both the Imperial and the Derg Regimes, he is knowledgeable about Bahir Dar-Dājān highway.
4	Werqu Tayachew	<i>Ato</i>	91	Märawi	October 6/4/04 E.C.	He was a merchant and has good information about Bahir Dar-Dājān highway.
5	Melese Gizachew	<i>Ato</i>	83	Märawi	October 6/4/04 E.C.	He was a merchant and knowledgeable about how Italians constructed Bahir Dar-Dājān highway.
6	Yitbarek Getahun	<i>Ato</i>	91	Märawi	October 6/4/04 E.C.	He was a grain merchant and has deep information about Bahir Dar-Dājān gravel highway.
7	Jemere Gwade	<i>Ato</i>	98	Durbété	February 3/2014 E.C.	He was a peasant, very knowledgeable about the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway by fascist Italy in 1937.
8	Atakilt Amare	<i>Ema hoy</i>	90	Dangila	February 4/2014 E.C.	She is the descendants of local <i>balabats</i> and she narrates the process of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway construction.

9	Aragaw Bezie	Ato	88	Durbété	May 29/2013 E.C.	He narrates briefly the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway in 1937. As he was involved in the reconstruction of this highway, his knowledge about the role of the people during the reconstruction work is significant.
10	Amsalu Molla	Ato	84	Dangila	February 4/2014	He was the worker of the Imperial Highway Authority and narrates the role of fascist road workers in the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway
11	Temelket Adigo	Ato	91	Dangila	February 4/2014 E.C	He was a merchant in Dangila for many years and has deep information about the challenges faced Italians during the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway.
12	Semaw Belay	priest	81	Finotäsālam	June 4/2013 E.C.	His information about the problems of the Italian road workers faced from the local people is paramount.
13	Admassu Alemayehu	Ato	78	Finotäsālam	June 4/2013 E.C.	He narrates the challenges faced Italians during the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway.
14	Dagnaw Wasie	Ato	88	Finotäsālam	June 4/2013 E.C.	He is knowledgeable about the patriot resistance against the fascist road workers.
15	Yeshamble Abera	Ato	97	Piccolo	April 18/2014	His information about how Italians exploited the local people's labor during the construction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway is considerable.
16	Yirdaw Demelash	Ato	76	Ambo Mäsk	January 3/ 2013 E.C.	He narrates about farmers who were denied access to their farm lands because of Italian forceful road construction work.

18	Semaw Tareqegn	Ato	81	Ambo Mäsk	January 3/ 2013 E.C.	He is a peasant and has information about the crop reduction because of forceful road construction by Italians
19	Tilahun Molla	Ato	87	Mäšänti	October 21/ 2014 E.C.	He told me about guerrilla attacks on the road workers were a major source of disturbance for Italian Bahir Dar-Däjä highway workers.
20	Yinager Adane	Ato	76	Mäšänti	October 21/ 2014 E.C.	He narrates the unceasing guerrilla attack against the road workers significantly slowdown the progress of Bahir Dar-Däjä highway.
21	Qomche Ambaw	Ato	83	Däbrä Marqos	April 23/ 2014 E.C.	He worked in different governmental positions during the Imperial and the Derg Regime and very knowledgeable about the deterioration of Bahir Dar-Däjä highway.
22	Simeneh Muhammed	Ato	79	Durbété	January 2/2014 E.C.	As he is a merchant, his information about the problems of vehicle due to the deterioration of Bahir Dar-Däjä highway is significant.
23	Aderajew Girma	Ato	90	Durbété	January 2/2014 E.C.	He narrates due to the deterioration of Bahir Dar-Däjä highway, vehicles always move with tools like shovels, hoes, and pickaxes.
24	Abeje Wendie	Ato	77	Piccolo	March 4/2014 E.C	He is a merchant and has good information about the deterioration of Bahir Dar-Däjä highway
25	Misganaw Balew	Ato	86	Piccolo	March 4/2014 E.C	His description about the damage of Italian concrete bridges along Bahir Dar-Däjä highway is considerable.
26	Yikeber Bitew	Ato	94	Piccolo	March 4/2014 E.C	He narrates how the Italian concrete bridges were destructed by local robbers who demanded girders to

						forge them for different purposes.
27	Teshager Degu	Ato	87	Dibkan <i>Qābālē</i> (in Ačāfār <i>Wārāda</i>)	April 13/2013 E.C.	His description about the destruction of Italian concrete bridges by local people is paramount.
28	Mekuriaw Jenber	Priest	78	Dibkan <i>Qābālē</i>	April 13/2013 E.C.	He was Čiqa Šume. He narrated events in detail.
29	Sewmehon Melashu	Ato	89	Dibkan <i>Qābālē</i> (in Ačāfār <i>Wārāda</i>)	April 13/2013 E.C.	He has good memory about the reconstruction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway by public labor.
30	Andinet Sinte	Ato	94	Dibkan <i>Qābālē</i> (in Ačāfār <i>Wārāda</i>)	April 13/2013 E.C.	As he was engaged in the reconstruction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway, he has good memory the tools used by the people to reconstruct this highway.
31	Dagninet Ayalew	Ato	84	Bahir Dar	April 12/2014 E.C.	He is the son of <i>Fitawrari</i> Ayalew Mekonnen. He worked in different governmental positions and has deep information the reconstruction of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway through public labor.
32	Alem Tegegne	Ato	81	Fändäqa <i>Qābālē</i> (in Méča <i>Wārāda</i>)	March 6/2014 E.C.	He narrates the progress of Bahir Dar-Dājān highway repair in Méča and Ačāfār <i>Wārādas</i> .
33	Amdewerq Alem	priest	86	Fändäqa <i>Qābālē</i>	March 6/2014 E.C.	His information about crossing rivers by using traditional bridges is considerable.
34	Yismaw Limenih	Ato	88	Bahir Dar	April 12/2014 E.C.	He worked in different governmental positions. He has much information about the construction of the Blue Nile Bridge at Kanfaro in Bahir Dar.
35	Mulat Teshale	Ato	79	Piccolo	December 5/ 04 E.C.	He was sort science teacher, but now retired. He explains briefly the difficulties of crossing the Blue River before the construction of the Bridge.
36	Adanech Abere	Ema	83	Piccolo	December 5/ 04 E.C.	She narrates the challenges of crossing

		<i>hoy</i>				the Blue River during the rainy season.
37	Agumas Getahun	<i>Merg eta</i>	90	Dibkan <i>Qäbälé</i> (in Ačäfär <i>Wäräda</i>)	April 19/2014 E.C.	He describes the construction of the modern Bridge across the little Abbay, near Piccolo town.
38	Kassa Simegn	<i>Ato</i>	76	Dibkan <i>Qäbälé</i>	April 19/2014 E.C.	He is the peasant and has good information about the significance of the modern Bridge across the little Abbay, near Piccolo town.
39	Awlew Simeneh	<i>Ato</i>	77	Dibkan <i>Qäbälé</i>	April 19/2014 E.C.	He told me the socio-economic significances of the Bridge across the small Abbay, near Piccolo town.
40	Semegnew Getahun	<i>Ato</i>	85	Moṭṭa	May 11/ 2014 E.C.	He narrates the construction of Bahir Dar-Moṭṭa highway by fascist Italy.
41	Tesfahun Molla	<i>Ato</i>	94	Moṭṭa	May 11/ 2014 E.C.	He describes the construction of Bahir Dar-Moṭṭa gravel highway by fascist Italy.
42	Biresaw Gashaw	<i>Ato</i>	81	Däbrä Marqos	March 5/ 2013 E.C.	He was a solider during the Derg Regime. His knowledge about the socio-economic significances of Bahir Dar-Däjän highway is considerable.
43	Laqie Alemu	<i>Ato</i>	95	Däbrä Marqos	March 5/ 2013 E.C.	He is knowledgeable the commercial role of Bahir Dar-Däjän highway.

Appendix I

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Appendix II

119

ጉዳዩ ፡ ከመጠና መንገድ መጠናክሩ

→ ከክብር ፡ ዓገዳጅ ጋር ጠቅላይ ግዛት ደ/ቤት

ክብር ሆይ ፡

በዚህ ጠቅላይ ግዛት ማከት ገንገሪ ድልድይ ጀምሮ ሕላግ ገሰርዶ
ዓተዘጋው መንገድ በክፍሉ ብቻ ሳይሆን በጋራ ጊዜ ቢሆን ከመጠና በጣም ሕክቶጋሪ
መሆኑን ከውቅክሁ ፡

ነገር ግን በጠቅላላው ገንዘብ ወደ ጊዜ ሕግግነት የሚሰጥ መሆኑም በካይ
በተከፈለ የሚገኝ ወጪዎች ገንዘብ ወይም ከጠቅላላ የሚገኘው ሕንጻድ ድልድዮች የፈለኩ ሕን
ደሆነ ነው ፡

ሐምሌ ፻፳፯ ዓ.ም. በቀኑና ደጋ ደግሞ ከውጪው ዋና ብተማ በቆላ
ካምፕ የሚገኙትን የውጭ ክፍል መምህራን ደገፍ ከመምጣት ገደብ ማርቆስ ተነሳሪ
ገደብ መሆኑን ወደ 16 ጊዜ ማረጋገጥ ሲቀርብ ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን
መንገዱን ወደፊት ከመቆጠል ገጥሞ በጥናው የመጠና መንገድ ካይ ደከሰ ሞል
ላብኝ መጠናው ገንገል በሂደት ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን
መሐድ ከገፈፈ ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን
ወደ ሂደት መሆኑን ታዩ ከዚህ መንገድ ሕክቶጋሪ ታከብሮ በባሌና በቀኝ ውሃው
የሚሰጥ ገንዘብ በጊዜ ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን ሲሆን
ቀካፊ ነበር ፡

ከዚህ ዋናው የተነሳሱት ከሕንጻድ ድልድዮች መፍረስ ስለሆነ በጣ
ም ሕላግ ስለሆኑት ብቻ የሚቀጥሉትን ማሳተፍ ከቀርባለሁ ፡

፩ኛ- ገደብ መሆኑን ወደ ደገፍ ማርቆስ ሲሆን 6 ጊዜ ማረጋገጥ ሲሆን
ድልድዩ ድረስ 15 ጊዜ ማረጋገጥ ሲሆን የተጀመረው ድልድይ ወደህጻናት
ወደደኛውን ሕገር የሚገኝ ሲሆን ድልድዩ መሆኑ የተረፈ ነው ፡

፪ኛ- ድልድዩ የፈለኩ ሕንጻድ ውሃው ገንዘብ መጠናክሩ ብቻ ሳይሆን
በሕገር የሚገኘውንም ለውጭ ክፍሉ ከደኛውም ፡

ገደብ በሕገ ጥያቄው በሂደት ውስጥ የሚጠቀሙ መሆኑን
ይናገራል ፡

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Appendix IX

[illegible]

[illegible]

Appendix XI

[illegible]

[illegible]

ጊ.ት.ዮ.አ.ያ : ንጉሠ : ነገሥት : መንግሥት :

የጽሕፈት ፣ ማረከቱ ።

7.54 :

ከተከበረ = ደጃዝማቸ = ስብከቤ = ሸብረ =
የገብደሙ = ጠቅካይ = ግዛት = እንዲሁ =
ደብረ = ማርቆስ =

የፋክብራ = 2 ሺ ዘጠጥ፡

[illegible]

ከሚገኝበት = ከሀምሳ ጋር =

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၇၆၇၇၃ :

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५ : ०० ११ १ : ०० १

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2444

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[illegible]

[illegible]

Appendix XVI

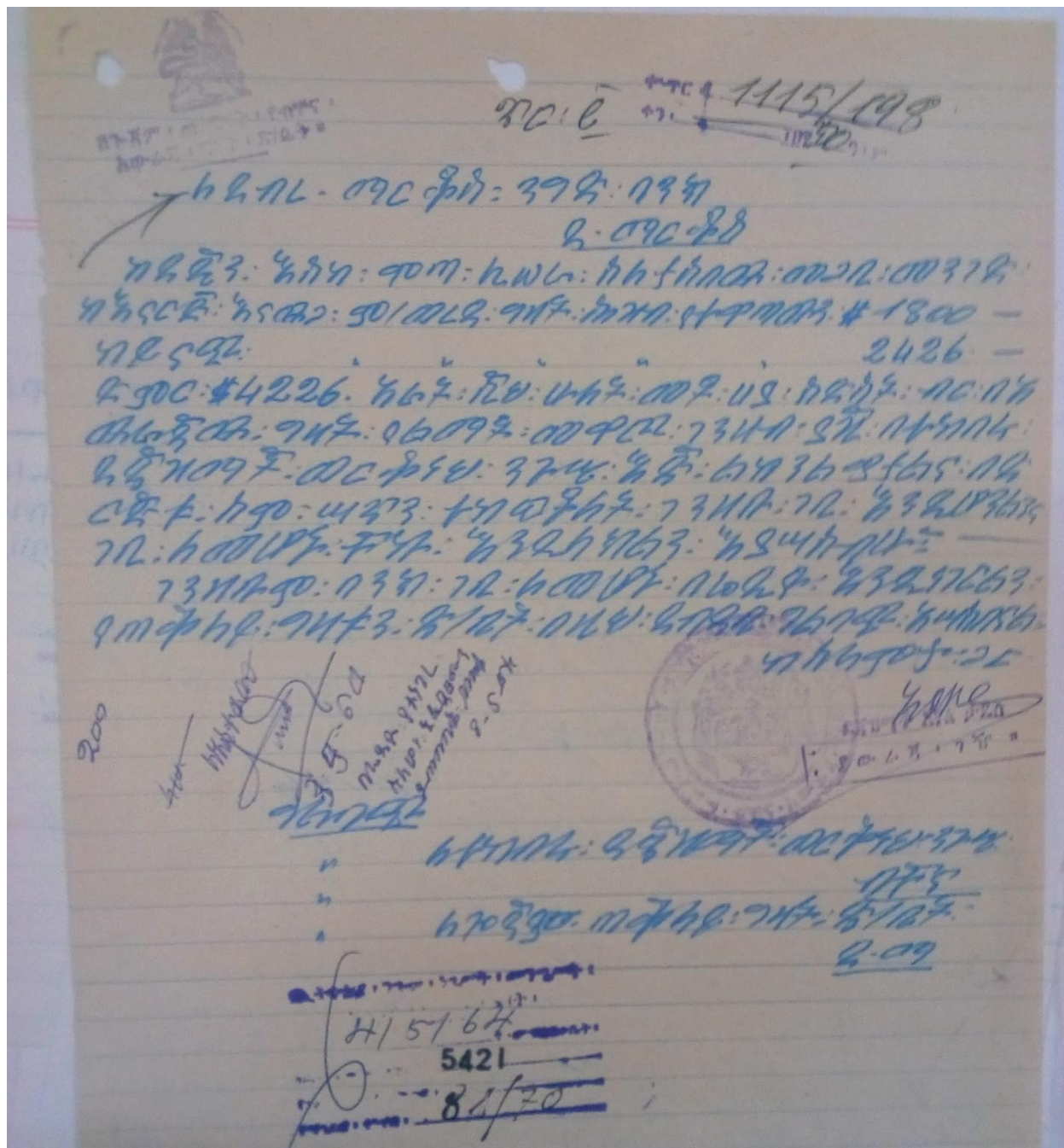
263

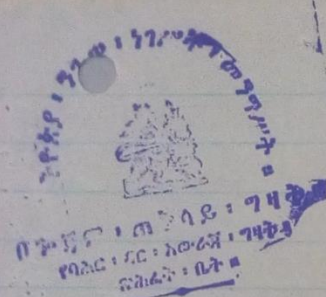
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Appendix XX





2/2312/4107/44
 መጋቢት 10
 አካባቢ ደረጃ ማረጋገጫ ሰነድ
 የጥያቄ ሰነድ ቁጥር
 ደብዳቤ መጥቀስ

የጥያቄ ሰነድ:
 ከጥያቄው አካባቢ ደረጃ ያለው መገንጠያ ጥያቄ
 የሚያስፈልግ የሆኑትን የጥያቄውን መግቢያና
 የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን
 የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን
 መጋቢት 10/31/99 ዓ.ም. የተደረገው ደርሰናል =
 በ አካባቢ አማካኝነት የሚደረግ የጥያቄውን
 የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን

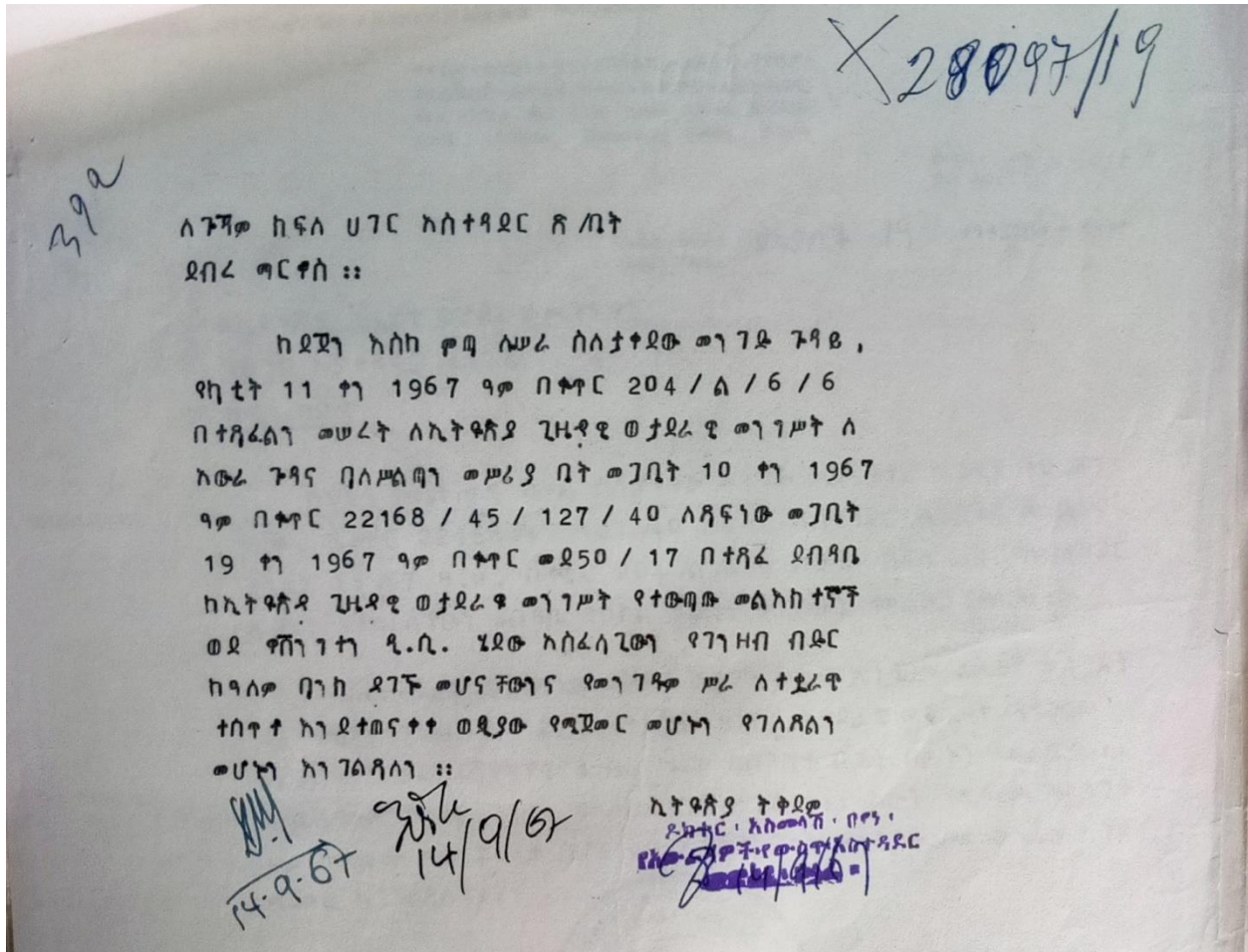

 መጋቢት 10/31/99 ዓ.ም. የተደረገው ደርሰናል =
 1717160
 6835
 670/27

ተ/ሀብተ ግርማ ወ/ ከጥያቄው
 የወራሽ ጥያቄ የጥያቄውን የጥያቄውን

ከአካባቢ ደረጃ
 16 7 60

[illegible]

Appendix XXIV



በጣም የሚያስቸኩል

ቁ 30: 20/6/6
የሀገሪቱ 16 ቀን 1967 - 9.30

38a ለክብር ፊትፊት መጠሪያ ምንጭ
ያገር አስተዳደር ሚኒስትር ይህ ታ
አዲስ አበባ
ክብር ሀይ

የሀገሪቱ ቁጥር: 15.1967
የሀገሪቱ ቁጥር: 22168

127/14
15/6
6

ከደደን አስከ ምጣ ሊሠራ ስለታደሰው መንገድ ከአውራ ጉዳና ባለሥ
ልጣን ዋና መሥሪያ ቤት በቀጥታ መደ50/16.1.ጥር 30/67.9.ም.ሲያ
ፍላጎን ለክብር ነትም መሥሪያ ቤት የመዘገበውን ገላባጭ አስታውሳለሁ ::

በዚህ ደብዳቤ በተሰጠን መሰረት ጥናት ትክክልና ተቀባይነት በኋላ ለ9
ለም ባንክ አቅርቦት ውጤትን በመጠባበቅ ላይ አንገኛለን፤ በሚቀጥሉት
ሁለት ወራት ውስጥ የዓለም ባንክ ጥናትን በመደገፍ ከፀደቀው ሥራው እ
ንገደመር ለተፈጥሮ የሚሰጥ መሆኑንና የሚያገኘውን አክላ ቢኖር እናስታ
ውቃለን” የሚል ነው ::

ከመ/ቤቱ የተነገረን የሥራው አፈጻጸም የሚያስገድደውን አንጂ
በአስቸኳይ ለተጠየቀው መፍትሔ ነው የሚል ተስፋ አያሳይም ::

በላዚህ ክብር ነትም አንደሚያውቀው በዚህ ክፍል በአሁኑ ጊዜ
መገናኛ መንገዶች ማስፈለግ ለፀጥታው አጠባበቅና መቆጣጠር ምቹ እንዲሆ
ን በላህነ በጉዳዩ ላይ አርምቻ ተወስዶ የመንገዱ ሥራ በተሉ በሚቀጥል
በት ሁኔታ ላይ ከክፍሉ መ/ቤት በመነጋገር የተደረገው ውሳኔ በተሉ እ
ንገደርሰን መጠባበቁን በማካተት አሳስባለሁ ::=====

ኢትዮጵያ ትቀደም

የሀገሪቱ ቁጥር: 15.1967
የሀገሪቱ ቁጥር: 22168

በትሩ: ኪዳነ: ማርያም:
ዋና: አስተዳዳሪ:

2091/670/27
11-7-68

ለሽያጭ በፍለ ሀገር አስተዳዳሪ ጽ/ቤት
አዲስ አበባ

7 ከደረሰ አስከ መጠ የመሰረዱት የመንገድ ሥራ ድርጅት ለማ
ከፍጭን ለዚህ ሥራ አስፈላጊ የሆኑትን ልዩ ልዩ አቃዎች ከአዲስ አበባ
በመጣና ከዚህም ወደዚያ የሚላኩትን አቃዎችና መሪያዎች በ12 / በዓት
በጋላ ለሚሰጥላቸው በፀጥታ አስከበሪዎች በኩል ችግር የፈጠረበትን በላሆነ
ለወደፊት አስፈላጊ አቃዎችን ለማሟላት አገደቻል ፈቃድ ይሰጠን በማለት
ከበርታ ከጠንቃቄ ከደረሰ መጠ መንገድ ሥራ ድርጅት ጽ/ቤት መጋቢት ፲፫
ገ 68 ዓ.ም የተጻፈለንን ደብዳቤ ነገሩን ከዚህ ጋር ልከንለቅጧል
ለና ፡

ይኸው በበኩላችሁ ታውቃል አስፈላጊው አርዳታና ክብር አገደረግላለሁ
ቸው ለማመላከት በፍለ ትእዛዝ አገደተላለፍላቸው አናስበባለን፡፡፡፡

ኢትዮጵያ ትቅደም
መንገድ ፡ ወርቅነህ ፡
የፍ ፡ አስተዳዳሪ ።

Appendix XXIX

የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
የፖስታና ቴሌግራፍ ሚኒስቴር : 1770 አዲስ አበባ : ኢትዮጵያ
የቀረፃቸው : አድራሻ : አውራ : ጉዳዮች : አዲስ አበባ

THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF
SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA
ETHIOPIAN ROAD AUTHORITY
Post Office Box 1770 Addis Ababa Ethiopia
Cable Address Highways Addis Ababa
Telex 21180

ተባብሮ : 26759/13-3

Ref. No. _____

አዲስ አበባ : 1988 ሐምሌ 19 : _____

Addis Ababa _____ 19 _____

ለአቶ አጥናፊ ታሪክ
የጉዞ ክፍለ ሀገር ዋና አስተዳዳሪ
ደብረ ግርባኝ

ከደገገው ወደ ዋጣ በመሠረተ ላይ ያለው መንገድ ሥራ በኪሉ ሜትር 73 አካባቢ
ፈለገ ብርሃን አጠገብ በተላገተ ዕለት በአካባቢው ህዝብ መቼት በረዲዩ ተገለጸለና ::
ሥራው እንዲቀም ያደረጉት ከ300 እስከ 500 የሚሆኑ የአካባቢው ሰዎች ሲሆኑ እንዲ
ቀም ያደረጉት ያህን ዓይነት መንገድ በፈለገ ብርሃን ውስጥ ካላለፈለገ በጣለት ነው ::

ተያይዞ የሚገኘው ገደብ እንደሚያመለክተው መንገዱ በፈለገ ብርሃን ከተሞ ውስጥ
ያላለፈበት ያህን ዓይነት ከተማ ያለበት አካባቢ በጣም ገደልግ ስለሆነና የመንገዱ ርዝመት
በ3 ኪሜትር ተሰል ከግርዛው በላይ ወዲህ ከአገሪቱ ሚሊዩን ብር በላይ ከፍ ስለሚያደርገው ነው ::

በመሠረቱ መንገዱ የደገገ ከተማ ከዋጣ ከተማ ጋር ካገናኘ በኋላ ቀጥሎ ወደ
ባህር ላር ለግናኘት ስለሆነ አጠቃላይ አቅጣጫ ቀጥ ያለና አጠር ያለ መሆኑ አለበት ::
በተጨማሪም አሁን መንገዱ የሚሠራው ከዓለም ባህን በተገኘ ብድር ስለሆነ መስመሩን ለመ
ለወጥ አይቻልም :: የሆነ ሆኖ የመንገዱ ሥራ ባለሥልጣን ወደ ፈለገ ብርሃን የሚያገባ
/በቀይ መስመር የታየው/ ለመሥራት ወስኗል ::

በላዚህ ይገኘው ለፈለገብር ሃገር ለአካባቢው ሕዝብ ተገልጦ ሥራው ባስገባ እንዲ
ቀጥል እንደደረገና የሥራው መቼት በመገንጠል ላይ በብዙ ሺህ የሚገመት ተጨማሪ ወጭ
እንደሚያስከትልና የመንገዱ ሥራ በታሰበበት ሁኔታ በመፈለግ እንደሚያዘገየው እንዲገ
ነዘጋጅ ከአደራ ጭር እናባስባለን ::

ገልባጭ : ለአገረ አስተዳደር ሚኒስቴር
አዲስ አበባ
ለብዙ አጭጭ አስተዳደር ጸ/ቤት
በገጽ
ለብዙ አጭጭ ወረሳ ጸ/ቤት

አቶ ወልደሰ ተቀደም
አቶ ወልደሰ ደመቤ
ሥራ አስፈጻሚ

1701 22 17 1971 9.9.

አንደኛው ቀዱህ የቦርታ ኮንስትራክሽን ሃላፊነቱ የተወጠ
የገሉ ማህበር ከ1968 ዓ.ም. ጀምሮ አሰክ አሁን 1971 ዓ.ም. ድረስ
ደደ዁ን መባ ወገቱ ሥረን በመሥረት ላይ ነበር። // /=====

[illegible]

ከላይ አንደተገለፀው ሆኑ በ1970 ዓ.ም. መጨረሻ ላይ ከገና ሞባ ከገደተሠራው መገገብ ሆኑ ከደህንነት ብቸኛው አንደሚሠራ ተደቦ ሲል በመታወቅ ያለው ዕድል በዚህ የሥራ መስክ አንደገና ተሰጥቶ መሥራት በመሆኑ የሚመርበትን ጊዜ ወዘላቂ በናናተኛ ሲጠባበቅ ከቀዳ በጋላ ፕሮጀክት የሚፈጸም ሠራተኛ ያህል በፊት ከዚህ ድርጅት ለነበረበት ሠራተኛት ቀዳሚ በመሰጠት አንደተገለፀ ተደረገ።

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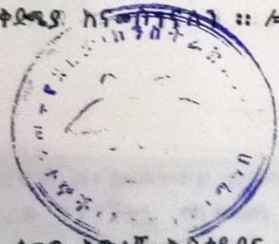
277

ልገሉን ተወግዶ ወደ ሰላማዊ ስህጻን ላይ ይተላለፋል በሚል መልስ ለጥዛወር ረዳቢያ አልመሆኑን ገልጿል። //

በአሁኑ ወቅት በሥራ ስጥነት በየከተሞች የሚገኙ የባቡ ያልፈነዘቡ በሥራ እየተሰማረ የሀገሪቱን ኢኮኖሚ ለማሻሻል አገላለጽ ከፍተኛ ተረት እየተደረገ ባለ በግልበር ተደራጅቶ ከፍተኛ የጦርነት ውጤት ግብዓት የሚገኝን ሠራተኞች ሥራ ለማስገምገም በሚረዳው ዕቅድ ጋር ተወግዶ የሥራ ዲርብጽን ከጋራ ማሳገጥ አገልግሎት መስጠት አገልግሎት በሚል መልስ ሥራ አገላለጽ መረጋገጥ ከ በል ባለመሆኑ የሰፍሎ ሀገሩን ለስተዳደር ጽሑ። በጥቅም አገልግሎት አገልግሎት ይታለን። //

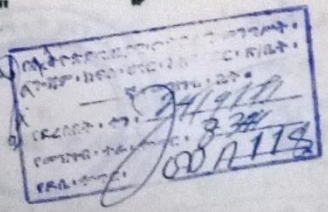
በመሠረቱ የድርጅቱ ሥራ ለሰበካ ልረስ አገልግሎት ሠራተኞች ተዛውረው ሥራ አገልግሎት እውነት ድርጅቱ በአሁኑ ጊዜ ወደሚሠራው ፕሮጀክት ግለ ጉዞ አገልግሎት የገባ ሥራ ፕሮጀክት ወደፊት ለሠራ ወደፊት ወደ ጊዜ ጥፋት ፕሮጀክት ወደ ሰፊነት በጥንቃቄ የወጣ ግብዓት ሥራ አገልግሎት አገልግሎት ለድርጅቱ ትክክለኛ አገልግሎት እንዲሰጥ ይህ ባለሀብት ገንዘብ ጋር ተያይዞ በተረጋገጠ 10.78 ሊሆን ይችላል ሠራተኞች በልጅ ልጅ ወይም አሰሪ አረት የሚታዩ ልረስ አገልግሎት ያላቸው በመሆኑ ባላቸው የሥራ ልምድ በመርከብ በብሔራዊ አብዮታዊ የባህል ዕድገትና ዘመቻ መቃወም በኩል ከፍተኛ የሥራ ቦታ በሚገኝበት ፕሮጀክት ወይም በዚህ ሌላ በሚገኙ የልጅ ድርጅቶች ውስጥ መደብ የሚችሉት ወገን አገልግሎት ወዘከደፉ ከፍሎ ሀገሩን ወይም የሚጠቀሙ መልስ አገልግሎት ስለመገኘት የሚጠቀሙ መልስ በጽሑፍ አገልግሎት እንዲሰጥ ስለሚረዳልን እነዚህ የታዩ አብሮ በቀዳሚ አገልግሎት። //

ኢትዮጵያ ትቅድም
አዲስ አበባ ከተማ አስተዳደር
አዲስ አበባ ከተማ አስተዳደር



ገልበጭ፡

ለዋጪ አወረዳ አስተዳደር ጽሑፍ
ለብቻ " " "
በደብዳቤ፡፡



Handwritten notes and signatures on the left margin, including dates like 11/1/2011 and 11/9/2011.

የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
የፌዴራል ሚኒስቴር ጽ/ቤት፡ መንግሥት፡
የኢትዮጵያ፡ መንግሥት፡ ባለሥልጣን፡
የፖስታ፡ ማቅጃ፡ ቁጥር፡ 1770፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡
የቴሌግራም፡ አድራሻ፡ አውራ፡ ባዳሪዎች፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡

የጥር 000049/14-1
አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ 1972 19 ጥር 72 ዓ.ም

Ref No. _____
Addis Ababa _____ 19 _____

በጎበረተ በበዓዊት ኢትዮጵያ
ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግሥት
የጥቅም ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ጽ/ቤት
ደብረ ግር ቀስ፡፡

ንጹህ ከዋግ አስከባ ሀገር ላይ የሚሠራው መንገድ

በአርአስ ተለቀቀው መንገድ ሥራ በቅርቡ በኢትዮጵያ መንገዶች
ባለሥልጣና በኢ.ሊ.ዲ.ሜ.ን ለሚከተሉት ኃላፊነት የተወሰነ የገሰ ግብር
መከከል በጥንቃቄ መረጋገጥ አገዛዝላለን፡፡ ለመንገዱ ሥራ የሚወለድ ገንዘብ
ከምዕራብ ደርሞ መንገዱ በብድር የተገኘ ስለሆነና በብድሩ ስምምነት መሠረት
ይህ ገንዘብ በተወሰነ ጊዜ በሥራ ላይ መዋል አለበት፡፡

የመንገዱ ሥራ በውሉ መሠረት በጥር 6 ቀን 1972 ጀምሮ በሠሰተ ዓመት
የሚጠናቀቅ በመሆኑ ተፈጻሚ ይህን ገብ በዚህ ጊዜ ውስጥ ከተገኘው አጠር ባለ ጊዜ
መታዘት ይቻላል ዘንድ ድርጅቱ ዘንድ አያደረገ ነው፡፡ በቅርቡ ሠራተኞች በሰዓ
ለዓ መያያዝ ይጀምራሉ፡፡ ለዚህም መሠረድ የሚሆኑ በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ለሰጠው
መንገዱ በሚያሰናበት አካባቢ የሚጠፋበት በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ይህና ሌሎችም ከመንገዱ
ጋር የተያያዙ የያያያዝን በሚያሰክሩ ረገድ ጽ/ቤት ፊት ተባብሮ ለድርጅቱ አገልግሎት
አ የጠየቀ ለሚደረገው ተባብሮ በቅርቡም አናመሰግናለን፡፡

ኢትዮጵያ ተቃዳሚ

ገልበዜ
ለጠገር አስተዳደር ግብር
አዲስ አበባ

የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
የፌዴራል ሚኒስቴር ጽ/ቤት፡ መንግሥት፡
የኢትዮጵያ፡ መንግሥት፡ ባለሥልጣን፡
የፖስታ፡ ማቅጃ፡ ቁጥር፡ 1770፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡
የቴሌግራም፡ አድራሻ፡ አውራ፡ ባዳሪዎች፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡

የጥር 000049/14-1
አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ 1972 19 ጥር 72 ዓ.ም

Ref No. _____
Addis Ababa _____ 19 _____

በጎበረተ በበዓዊት ኢትዮጵያ
ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግሥት
የጥቅም ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ጽ/ቤት
ደብረ ግር ቀስ፡፡

ንጹህ ከዋግ አስከባ ሀገር ላይ የሚሠራው መንገድ

በአርአስ ተለቀቀው መንገድ ሥራ በቅርቡ በኢትዮጵያ መንገዶች
ባለሥልጣና በኢ.ሊ.ዲ.ሜ.ን ለሚከተሉት ኃላፊነት የተወሰነ የገሰ ግብር
መከከል በጥንቃቄ መረጋገጥ አገዛዝላለን፡፡ ለመንገዱ ሥራ የሚወለድ ገንዘብ
ከምዕራብ ደርሞ መንገዱ በብድር የተገኘ ስለሆነና በብድሩ ስምምነት መሠረት
ይህ ገንዘብ በተወሰነ ጊዜ በሥራ ላይ መዋል አለበት፡፡

የመንገዱ ሥራ በውሉ መሠረት በጥር 6 ቀን 1972 ጀምሮ በሠሰተ ዓመት
የሚጠናቀቅ በመሆኑ ተፈጻሚ ይህን ገብ በዚህ ጊዜ ውስጥ ከተገኘው አጠር ባለ ጊዜ
መታዘት ይቻላል ዘንድ ድርጅቱ ዘንድ አያደረገ ነው፡፡ በቅርቡ ሠራተኞች በሰዓ
ለዓ መያያዝ ይጀምራሉ፡፡ ለዚህም መሠረድ የሚሆኑ በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ለሰጠው
መንገዱ በሚያሰናበት አካባቢ የሚጠፋበት በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ይህና ሌሎችም ከመንገዱ
ጋር የተያያዙ የያያያዝን በሚያሰክሩ ረገድ ጽ/ቤት ፊት ተባብሮ ለድርጅቱ አገልግሎት
አ የጠየቀ ለሚደረገው ተባብሮ በቅርቡም አናመሰግናለን፡፡

ኢትዮጵያ ተቃዳሚ

ገልበዜ
ለጠገር አስተዳደር ግብር
አዲስ አበባ

የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ
የፌዴራል ሚኒስቴር ጽ/ቤት፡ መንግሥት፡
የኢትዮጵያ፡ መንግሥት፡ ባለሥልጣን፡
የፖስታ፡ ማቅጃ፡ ቁጥር፡ 1770፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡
የቴሌግራም፡ አድራሻ፡ አውራ፡ ባዳሪዎች፡ አዲስ፡ አበባ፡

የጥር 000049/14-1
አዲስ፡ አበባ፡ 1972 19 ጥር 72 ዓ.ም

Ref No. _____
Addis Ababa _____ 19 _____

በጎበረተ በበዓዊት ኢትዮጵያ
ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግሥት
የጥቅም ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ጽ/ቤት
ደብረ ግር ቀስ፡፡

ንጹህ ከዋግ አስከባ ሀገር ላይ የሚሠራው መንገድ

በአርአስ ተለቀቀው መንገድ ሥራ በቅርቡ በኢትዮጵያ መንገዶች
ባለሥልጣና በኢ.ሊ.ዲ.ሜ.ን ለሚከተሉት ኃላፊነት የተወሰነ የገሰ ግብር
መከከል በጥንቃቄ መረጋገጥ አገዛዝላለን፡፡ ለመንገዱ ሥራ የሚወለድ ገንዘብ
ከምዕራብ ደርሞ መንገዱ በብድር የተገኘ ስለሆነና በብድሩ ስምምነት መሠረት
ይህ ገንዘብ በተወሰነ ጊዜ በሥራ ላይ መዋል አለበት፡፡

የመንገዱ ሥራ በውሉ መሠረት በጥር 6 ቀን 1972 ጀምሮ በሠሰተ ዓመት
የሚጠናቀቅ በመሆኑ ተፈጻሚ ይህን ገብ በዚህ ጊዜ ውስጥ ከተገኘው አጠር ባለ ጊዜ
መታዘት ይቻላል ዘንድ ድርጅቱ ዘንድ አያደረገ ነው፡፡ በቅርቡ ሠራተኞች በሰዓ
ለዓ መያያዝ ይጀምራሉ፡፡ ለዚህም መሠረድ የሚሆኑ በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ለሰጠው
መንገዱ በሚያሰናበት አካባቢ የሚጠፋበት በታያች ሰለጣኝነት ይህና ሌሎችም ከመንገዱ
ጋር የተያያዙ የያያያዝን በሚያሰክሩ ረገድ ጽ/ቤት ፊት ተባብሮ ለድርጅቱ አገልግሎት
አ የጠየቀ ለሚደረገው ተባብሮ በቅርቡም አናመሰግናለን፡፡

ኢትዮጵያ ተቃዳሚ

ገልበዜ
ለጠገር አስተዳደር ግብር
አዲስ አበባ

የኢት

Appendix XXXIII

18/6/72
3397/00/0083

ከመከላከል አገልግሎት፡
ከገዢ አንዳንድ፡ ከገዢ
ከፍተኛ ስሜት፡ ያመጣል ለሁሉም አካላት ከገዢ
ገንዘብ መከላከል ያመጣል፡ መገንዘብ
በጥንቃቄ ያስገኝታል፡ ከገዢ መገንዘብ ያይዛል
በገንዘብ መከላከል፡ ከገዢ መገንዘብ፡ ከገዢ
ከገዢ፡ በጥንቃቄ፡ ከገዢ፡ ያስገኝታል፡ ከገዢ
ከገዢ፡ ከገዢ፡ ከገዢ፡ ከገዢ፡ ከገዢ
ወደፊት ለገዢ፡ ከገዢ

ከገዢ
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[illegible]

ገንቦት 15/1970 ዓ.ም
ቁ. 010/335/70

ለታችኛው ክ/ሀገር አስተዳደር ጽ/ቤት
ደ / ማር ቁ ቤት

መ/ቤታችን ከደጀን አስከ ደ/ማር ቁቤ ለጀመረው አዲስ የአበፋልት መንገድ ሥራ የሚያገለግል የጋው ወደ ሁለት ሚሊዮን ብር የሚጠጋ ትልቅ የፍንጋይ ወፍጭ አምጥቶ በደጀን ከተማ አጠገብ እፅፋዊ ሥራውን በማክሄድ ላይ ነው፡፡

ሆኖም ለዚህ መሣሪያ ጥበቃ ብሉን ከወረዳው አካባቢ ዘበኛች ብንቀጥርም ተደጋጋሚ የሆነ ሥር ቁት በመፈጸሙ ለወደፊትም በመሣሪያው ላይ ሌላ ሁኔታ ይፈጸማል የሚል በግት ፈጥሮብናል፡፡

ይህን-መሣሪያ ቀደም ብሎ ወደዚህ ንገረጅክት ከማበመጣታችን በፊት በደብረዘይት ለዓር ኃይል መ/ቤት ለአዓር ማረፊያው አገልግሎት በሚሰጡበት ጊዜ ከመ/ቤት መደበኛ ወታደሮች አየቱደቦብት ቢጠበቁ የነበረ መሣሪያ በሰሪነ አሁንም በመሣሪያው ላይ ሌላ ከባድ የበርቆም ሆነ የጥፋት ወንጀል ከመፈጸሙ በፊት በናንተ በኩል ለደጀን ወረዳ ፖሊስ መ/ቤት ትዕዛዝ ተላልፎ ጠባቂ ወታደሮች እንዲመደቡን ያደርገልን ዘንድ በትሕትና አባባባለሁ፡፡

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ዘበኛ-መቀጠሩ ከአንዳንድ፡፡

፪ኛው ንግርና- ለህገ-አመጽ

፫ኛው ተደጋጋሚ- የሆነ-ሥር

ቆን- በተረፈሥ- ክሆናሳ

- ግን- ተሠረቀ ?

- ሠፊ- ተሠረቀ?

- በዘበኛቸው አይ?

ግን- ርግጽ- ተሠረቀ? አሁንኑረ

፳፪ኛው ሠራሳ- ያሳረረናል

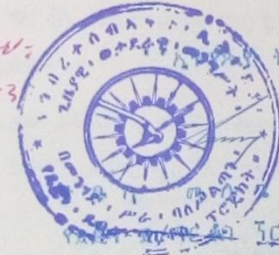
ቅድሚያ- የተሠረቀ፡ ርግጽ- ንግሥት

ሰተገለጸለት- ይረሳ- እኩ- ፋንዘዝ

ሠራሳው- ያሳተግረሉ ተገሎ- ሠራሳ

ደግፋኛው- 38

16-7-70



ተቀደም...

ንገረጅክት ሥ/አበበደጃ

7/7/70

9487

670/27

ቁጥር 811/ከሀሀ.186
23-3-72.

ለመገዳ ሥራ ባለሥልጣን
ለቴሌሜሽን አገልግሎት ድርጅት
አዲስ አበባ

ከደጃገ ደብረ ጦር ቀስ የሚሠራው የአስፋልት ፕሮጀክት ሥራ በደብረ ጦር ቀስ ከተማ አካባቢ በመኃረብ በመገገፍ ዓር የቀመት የመብራትና የሰልክ መስጠታችና አገላላፊ የተቀበሩ ኪቦሮች አገላለጽ ለተረበሰ ጥያቄ በቴሌሜሽን በኩል መሰጠታችን ከአዲስ አበባ ተልከው ፕላን ካጠኑ በኋላ ገብተዋል ለዋናው ሙ/ቤት አቅርበው ሙ/ቤቱም አዲስ አበባ ለመገዳ ሥራ ባለሥልጣን ብር 17365 ገብተዋል አገላለጹና የተከፈለ መሆኑንም አገላለጽታቸው በቴሌ ገሬው የተገለጸለት መሆኑን አስታውሰዋል ነገር ግን በበላይ ሙ/ቤት በኩል ሙ ገብተዋል ከደ.ጣ/አ/ከ/25/3/72 ሕፃር 18 ቀን 72 ዓ.ም በተሻሻለ ደብ ላይ የተገለጸለን ስለሆነ የመገገፍ ሥራ ከላይ በተጠቀሰው ውዝግብ መከፈት ከመቼት በፊት የመገዳ ሥራ ባለሥልጣንና የቴሌሜሽን አገልግሎት ድርጅት ሥራ አስኪያጁ በጥቅም በመወያየት ተገቢውን መፍትሔ ባስገኘው አገላ በጠልገው አናሳሰባለን፡፡

ለአስተዳደር አባልዎ ዘመን፣ ወደፊት
አዲስ አበባ
21/3/72
አገራዊ ክፍል
ቀዳሚ መ/አስተዳደር
ዋ/አቀ መንበር

ገልባጭ/1/

ለከፍለ ሰገራ መገዳ ሥራ ባለሥልጣን ፋ/ሙ/ቤት
ለደብረ ጦር ቀስ ቴሌሜሽን አገ/ቀርገጫ
ደብረ ጦር ቀስ

[illegible]

[illegible]