

SOME NOTES ON THE GREAT WALLS OF WOLAYTA AND DAWRO

HAILU ZELEKE

Abstract

This article deals with the stone fortifications of Dawro and Wolayta, which are one of the achievements of human creativity and handwork in southern Ethiopia. A brief account of local information and description of the walls of Dawro and Wolayta precede a discussion of local myths and history, which leads to hypothesis that will be taken as indicators of future historical and archaeological research.

Keywords : Ethiopia, fortifications, Dawro, Wolayta

NOTES SUR LES GRANDES MURAILLES DU WOLAYTA ET DAWRO

Résumé

Cet article évoque les fortifications du Dawro et du Wolayta, l'une des manifestations de la créativité et du travail de l'homme dans le sud de l'Éthiopie. La description de ces murailles et la relation des informations locales s'y rapportant sont ici suivies d'une discussion des mythes et de l'histoire locale, qui conduisent à émettre des hypothèses devant servir de fondements aux futures recherches historiques et archéologiques dans la région.

Mots clés : Éthiopie, murailles, Dawro, Wolayta

This article is the result of a rapid archaeological survey which was conducted by the ARCCH in Wolayta and Dawro Zones along the Omo River, in areas where stone fortifications were known to locals and have been mentioned by modern commentators. This rapid archaeological impact assessment was initiated in response to the developmental project Gilgel Gibe III Hydroelectric Project, which will disturb or alter the landscape along the Omo River, thereby potentially endangering archaeological sites. Mid-Day Consulting Engineers, which is a firm responsible for Environmental Impact Assessment on behalf of Gilgel Gibe III Project, has reported to the

Authority for the Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, (ARCCH) that during surveying, it encountered elongated stone ramparts in Wolayta and Dawro zones, along the Omo River. Based on the report, a preliminary archeological survey and a rapid impact assessment have been conducted along the Omo River, in Wolayta and Dawro Zones from January 28 to February 4, 2007. The objectives of this study were, therefore, to assess the values of the stone fortifications of Wolayta and Dawro, to evaluate the impact of the Gilgel Gibe III hydroelectric dam construction on these cultural remains, and to recommend mitigating measures for the possible effects of the project on the cultural remains.

The team of the archeological survey is composed of the following experts: Hailu Zeleke (Historical Archeology expert at the ARCCH), Bamlaku Tadesse (Pre-historic Archaeology expert at ARCCH), Menase Girma (Historic and Pre-historic Archaeology expert at SNNPR Information and Culture Bureau), and Bedelu Amare (Environmental expert from Mid-Day Consulting Engineers). The team has surveyed five *kebele* of the Kindo Koyesha Woreda, which is the only woreda that will be affected by the project. These are Fejina (Fegena Mata), Chercha, Patata, Menera and Gocho. In the Dawro zone, the study team has surveyed accessible and endangered sites of Loma and Gena Bonsa Woredas, particularly Zimawaruma *kebele*.

Wolayta Zone is situated within what is referred to as the "enset culture" region of southwest Ethiopia, bordered in the south by Kocha and Boreda Abaya (Gamo), in the southwest by the Omo River (Dawro), in the north by Hadiya and Kembata, and in the east by the Blate River and Lake Abaya (Sidama). Languages spoken in Wolayta are part of the Omotic language group¹, which occupies the middle basin of the Omo River. The geographical position of Wolayta has made the people of Wolayta the natural link between the Omotic peoples and the eastern Sidama. The population of Wolayta was estimated at 1.7 million in the 1994 census.

Dawro Zone is located between N 06°52' and 07°13' in latitude and E 37°07' and 37°26' in longitude. It is found 474 km southwest of Addis Ababa. Dawro shares boundaries with Wolayta and Kembata to the east, Keffa to the west, Gamo and Gofa to the south and Jimma to the northwest. *Dawrots'ua* is an Omotic language with a close affinity to Wolayta, Gamo and Gofa languages. The Dawroland is mostly rugged and mountainous and extends

¹ The Omo group spreads northwestward as far as Kefa and southeastward as far as Lake Abaya and beyond the upper reaches of the Galana Sagan River, east of Lake Chamo; see E. CERULLI (1956), C. BECKIGHAM & G. HUNTIGFORD (1954).

down to the vast plains along the Omo and Gojeb Rivers². The 1994 census indicated that the total population of Dawro was over 273,000 (see ill. 1).

Observations about the walls

During surveying, the Wolayta side bordering the Omo River, the survey team observed the remnants of a wall, which the locals call Ijajo keelaa. In Menera *kebele*, the team encountered two different rows of the wall of Ijajo. Menera site is found at about 20 km on the Bele-Gocho road, at a place called Boke. It is located at 325503m northing (UTM), 759469m easting, and 842m above sea level. The site is located at about 1-1.5km east of the Omo River. The topography of the site is a steep river slope with grasses and bushes covering the surface. Today, the land around the site is abandoned. No human activities are observed. However, the gravel road, leading to the Salini Camp at Gocho, cuts the stone ramparts into two at this specific location and creates Menera 1 site to the right and Menera 2 to the left.

The dimensions of the wall at Menera 1 are 25m length and 2.6m height. The width of the wall is about 1m. The "Wall of Ijajo" is made with slabs of locally available basaltic stones, carved so carefully that no mortar was required to hold them together. However, there are no observable stone artifacts, potsherds or other archaeological materials at Menera 1 site. Menera 2 is located in front of Menera 1 across the road at 325576m N and 759519m E (UTM) and at an elevation of 844m above sea level. Menera 2 is found on the same topography as Menera 1, 1-1.5km away from the Omo River to the east. Here the dimension of the stone rampart is 50m in length, 3.5m in width and 2.3m (maximum) in height. The stone rampart is constructed in the same fashion, with the same material and without mortar. The stone rampart, which is found in Menera 1 and 2, was originally on the same row. It appears to be the last defensive wall against an enemy, who might have crossed the Omo River from west to east. Unfortunately, the road that leads to the Salini camp has cut the wall into two and has damaged it severely.

Menera 3 is situated 100m south of Menera 1 and 2. The same road cut the next row of the Ijajo fortification at this location and puts Menera 3 to the right and Menera 4 to the left. It is located at 325518m northing, 759408m easting (UTM) and 850m above sea level. The topography of the site is a gradual river slope where the land is scrapped. Menera 3 is found at about 1.5-1.7km east of the Omo River. The dimensions of the stonewall at Menera 3 are 15m length, 2.4m width and 2.2m maximum height. Menera 4 is located in front of Menera 3 across the road, at exactly 325554 m northing and 759430m easting (UTM) and 856m above sea level. The topography and

² The people of Dawro used to be referred to by the derogatory name Kullo. They call themselves either Omoto or Dawro (E. CERULLI, 1956).

vegetation of Menera 4 site is similar to that of Menera 3. The dimensions of the remnant wall are 40m length, 2m width and 1.5m maximum height.

In addition to Menera 1-4, the remnants of the "Wall of Ijajo" are observed in the neighboring *kebele*. Fejena 1 site is located 10 km away from the Bele to Turcha road, a few meters away to the right. It is located at coordinates 329030m northing, 763776m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 1085m above sea level. Another remnant of the Ijajo wall is clearly observed about 100m away to the left from the main road. At Fejena 2 site, the remnant of the "Wall of Ijajo" is in a very good condition and the chain of the wall goes through the hill. It is located at coordinates 309038m northing, 763935m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 1083 m above sea level.

Gocho is found at about 30 km from Bele town, where the remnants of the fortification are observed at about 500 m-1 km on the top of the hill. This well-constructed wall goes in the north and south direction and turns into the valleys. It is located at coordinates 319279m northing, 758139m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 929m above sea level.

In the Dawro zone, the team surveyed Zimawaruma *kebele* and its surroundings extensively. The team surveyed Zimawaruma because during the consultations with local authorities and elders, they identified the site as part of the risk sites, which appear to be located near the Omo River. Zimawaruma is located at about 22km from Bele town on the Bele-Turcha road. At Zimawaruma, the Bele-Turcha road, which was constructed in 1993-94 (Ethiopian calendar) by Salini Construction, cuts the stone fortifications made in four rows into two and left them to the left and to the right of the road. On the right side of the road, the survey team have surveyed the area for three hours and discovered four rows of stone ramparts which are known as the Halala keelaa ("Wall of Halala").

The first row from the Zimawaruma village to the Omo valley (from west to east), is identified as Tachia 1 site. It is located at 323845m northing and 764565m easting (UTM), and at an elevation of 1136m above sea level. The second row from the village to the valley, Tachia 2, is located at coordinates 324032m northing, 764548m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 1086m above sea level. The third row, Tachia 3, is located at coordinates 324239m northing, 764644m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 1059m above sea level. The fourth row from the village to the Omo River or the first row from the River to the Meseno village is located at 324635m northing, 764789m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 985m above sea level.

On the other side of the road (to the left), the survey team observed different sections of a single row of the stone fortification at place called Dermesa. The wall is the first row from the gorge. It is located at coordinates

325700m northing, 762506m easting (UTM) and at an elevation of 984 m above sea level.

The stone fortifications of Halala that are found at the sites mentioned above were made with basaltic stones. The heights of the walls vary between 2-3m high depending on the landscape. In Dermesa 2 site, the team observed and measured a stone rampart which has 5m width and 3m height. As observed today, the walls of Wolayta and Dawro were generally built in a similar fashion with the same raw material and probably with the same technology. However, different types of stone constructions were observed in some sections of the walls. In areas where walls display big stones at the base, flat slabs are carefully stacked, the intermediate space being filled with smaller slabs piled with care. Both walls were crafted with locally quarried stones, without the use of mortar or cement, and rise as high as 3m with walls up to 5m thick³. As observed, the heights of the walls vary according to the landscape: where the landscape was hilly, the height of the walls would be short, whereas the walls tended to be higher in the plain area. These walls, together with a deep ditch usually associated to them, formed a defensive barrier surrounding both Wolayta and Dawro.

Local information about the walls

The "walls" or "fortifications" of Wolayta or Dawro were not called by such names, be it by the neighboring people or by written historical sources. Those names and the myths that have come with them appear to have originated locally. Ethiopian and European historians (Beckingham & Huntigford, 1954; Haberland, 1964, 1975, 1981; Tsehai Berhane Selassie, 1975) who visited the area in the mid and late 20th century mentioned the walls as simple fortifications, they also assumed incorrectly that the impressive masonry walls of Wolayta were only made on the eastern frontier to protect the area from the Arsi Oromo.

The stone rampart which is found in Wolayta along the Omo River is locally called Ijajo Keelaa or the "Wall of Ijajo". Elders claim that a person named Ijajo, who was a border commissioner (*Washi moconaa*) during the reign of Kawo Aggattoo⁴, constructed the wall. Another stone rampart also built on the eastern frontiers of Wolayta, from Kucha to the Blate River, is called

³ In Dawro zone, at a place called Dermesa, we observed and measured a stone rampart, which has 5m width and 3m height.

⁴ Based on genealogy, Kawo Aggattoo ruled Wolayta from about 1753 to 1792. He followed the policy of his father Kawo Sana and conquered new lands. He conquered Damota and built his palace on the ruins of Kawo Sato Motola's palace. In Wolayta, the king had the title *Kate* or *Kawo* (ELIAS AWATO & *al.*, 1999).

Amadoo Keelaa (the "Wall of [Kawo] Amado")⁵. Local informants claimed that the length of the stone ramparts is more than 67km and that it was built to protect Wolayta's frontiers from outside invaders.

The stone rampart surrounding Dawro's frontiers, on the other hand, is named Halala Keelaa or the "Wall of Halala". Locals claim that the wall was built during the reign of Kati Halala⁶ to protect Dawro's frontiers from outside invaders. This stone fortification was constructed on the Gofa, Wolayta, Kembata, Kaffa and Jimma frontiers. Dawro's elders also claim that the total length of the wall of Halala is about 170km.

Local legends collected in Wolayta and Dawro tell that big boulders were cut into pieces and were utilized for the construction of the stone ramparts, and that no mortar was used. Two to seven rows of stone fortifications are still observed in some areas. Elders from Dawro claim that seven rows of stone ramparts are still observed, for example, between Keyel and Zaba Garaba in Dawro Zone⁷, along the Kembata, Wolayta and Gofa frontiers. The elders claim that this is a better-fortified and better-constructed section of the wall of Halala. Conversely, on the Jimma frontier, the fortification wall is short. This, according to locals, might be due to the scarcity of stones on the Jimma frontier.

Oral history among the Dawro also hold that the Halala Keelaa originally had seven gates. These are the gates of Yeli, Zimawaruma, Zabagarada, Dara, Aba, Kaffa, and the gate of Qala Mitsa, which were protected by guardians who were appointees of the *Kati* (the king)⁸.

Elders from Wolayta and Dawro strongly claim that the construction of the walls took more than one generation. To express the excessive length of time required from the laborers, elders of both ethnic groups said that a man who left his wife pregnant to go and build, would return to find his son already grown up⁹. According to legend, the constructions of both walls drew heavily on the local resources for construction materials, and were carried out in line with the kings' order. A party composed of armed men and local

⁵ *Kawo* Amado ruled Wolayta from about 1792 to 1827. He expanded Wolayta's territory towards Bolosa, and divided his expanding territories into eight Dana (ELIAS AWATO & *al.*, 1999).

⁶ In Dawro, the king had the title *Kati*. *Kati* Irashu ruled Dawro between about 1732-1757, and *Kati* Halala from about 1757 to 1782 (ELIAS AWATO & *al.*, 1999).

⁷ During surveying, we encountered four rows of walls of Halala at a place called Tachia about 22 km south of Bele town.

⁸ According to locals, Zimawaruma is one of the gates of the Halala Keelaa, but during survey, nobody could locate it.

⁹ This is a well-established story throughout Wolayta and Dawro. Some told that a man who left his wife pregnant to go and construct, will be joined in the field by his already grown up son. TSEHAI BERHANE SELASSIE (1975) mentions similar story in relation with the construction of the ditches in Wolayta.

people participated in the construction of the walls. In Dawro, it is widely believed that large portion of the society, especially men, may have lived year-round near the construction site. Most were probably farmers, forced to work for a limited period of time. However, elders claim that the king permanently employed traditional specialists, filled the positions that required the most skilled masons, metalworkers, and guards... Legends also claim that animal power and iron were used during the construction of the walls.

The stones used for construction were quarried from the surrounding area in both zones¹⁰, but in the case where there was no concentration of stones they alternatively made ditches. Ditches were dug, for example on the Jimma frontiers of Dawro, in Damot Gale and Damot Wayde in Wolayta¹¹. Legends also tell us that builders of the walls utilized animal power and iron tools during the construction of the walls. Indeed, Data Dea (1997) mentioned that during his ethnographic field survey in Dawro, he learnt that iron-smelting was still practiced in a small community called Oskha Dencha¹², located in a rugged area of mountain ridges, hill slopes and lowlands between the old kingdoms of Dawro, Konta and Kafa. Based on Data Dea's account, Halaand *et alii* (2000) conducted ethnoarchaeological observation in Oskha Dencha in 2000 and confirmed that iron-smelting activities have been carried out in traditional ways by the indigenous peoples of Dawro and its whereabouts for generations.

The Kingdoms of Wolayta and Dawro

Like other societies in southern Ethiopia, the history of Wolayta is characterized by waves of migration from surrounding areas, particularly from Dawro, Kembata, Hadiya, Gamo, Sidama, Gofa and Koyra. According to oral history, the first settlement was in Kindo Didaye, in the present-day Ofa *woreda*¹³.

Before its incorporation into the Ethiopian empire in 1894, Wolayta had long been an independent kingdom with developed state structures dating back as far as c. 1230¹⁴. Since then, Wolayta has been ruled by two dynasties:

¹⁰ It is still observed naturally concentrated boulders not far from the walls in Wolayta and Dawro.

¹¹ Damot Gale *woreda* is bordered to the North with Kembata and Tanbaro; Damot Woyde *woreda* is bordered by Sidama Zone to the East.

¹² Oskha Dencha is located at an altitude of about 2000 meters, overlooking the Omo River valley to the south and the small Dencha River to the west; see also R. HAALAND *et al.* (2000).

¹³ Ofa *woreda* is located southwestern Wolayta, bordering the Omo River to the West and Kucha and Boreda to the south (ELIAS AWATO & *al.*, 1999).

¹⁴ Different authors offered different years for the beginning of organized political structure in Wolayta: ABAYNEH GIRMA (1971) in 1230, but C. BECKINGHAM & G. HUNTIGFORD (1954) in 1268, and TESHOME TADESSE (1984) in 1180.

first the Wolayta-Mala dynasty¹⁵ which is believed to have ruled from the 13th to the end of 15th century, and the Tigre dynasty¹⁶ which had overthrown the Wolayta-Mala dynasty and ruled until Menelik's conquest in 1894. The last king of Wolayta was *Kawo Tona*.

The Tigre rulers of Wolayta had repelled many raids by the Arsi Oromo and other surrounding peoples. They also made fortifications as a defense on their frontiers.

Until the 19th century, Dawro was a centralized kingdom, when it was reduced to a tributary status by the armies of Menelik in 1891. In Dawro, there was a dynasty called Kauka, which reputedly came from Gondar (Dambiya). Since about 1700 AD, the Kauka dynasty had created a big state from a great number of petty chieftainships on the territory between the Gojeb and Omo Rivers in the north, east and south and the Kaffa high mountains in the west¹⁷. Among the rulers of the Kauka dynasty of Dawro, Kati Irashu and Kati Halala were famous. Kati Halala was the grandson of the king of Kaffa. During his reign, Dawro incorporated Konta. He fought against Wolayta, Kambata, Kaffa, Gofa, and Kucha and built stone fortifications to defend his territories from outside invaders¹⁸.

Discussion

Although the history and culture of the walls of Ijajo and Halala have been told orally for centuries in Wolayta and Dawro, written historical sources never mention them. Thus, the presence of these stone fortifications was not known outside the region until recently. In the historical literature, the existence of the stone fortifications in southern Ethiopia is mentioned in relation to the expansionist Tigre dynasty of Wolayta and the Kauka dynasty

¹⁵ The Wolayta-Mala dynasty is said to have come from Mount Kucha, a small tribal area next to Wolayta. Beckingham and Huntigford (1954) argue that this dynasty was the second dynasty in Wolayta. The first dynasty is said to have come from Damot in the time of Yekuno Amlak (1268) and the name of the first king is given as Moti Lami...

¹⁶ The Tigre dynasty of Wolayta came from Tigre, that is the so-called Tigrean colony of Endageny in Gurage, which was founded in the time of Amda Tseyon I (C. BECKINGHAM & G. HUNTIGFORD, 1954; J. BUREAU, 1990).

¹⁷ Some authors (e.g. DATA DEA, 1997) state that the kingdom of Dawro was characterized from the very beginning by fierce power competition between various clan leaders. Even a saying goes on that before the Kauka dynasty, there were attempts by clan leaders to unite Dawro clans to form a political structure. The Kauka rulers of Dawro claimed they came from Northern Ethiopia, Dembiya, but traditions reports from Wolayta, Basketo, Kaffa, Janjaro...royal clans claim immigration from other areas with higher culture (ORENT AMNON, 1969; C. BECKINGHAM & G. HUNTIGFORD, 1954).

¹⁸ According to oral history, Kati Halala built stone fortifications surrounding Dawro's territories. He made it on Gofa, Wolayta, Kembata, Kaffa, Jimma, and on the frontier of Goldeya pastoralists.

of Dawro. Beckingham and Huntigford (1954: lxvi) state that the Tigre rulers of Wolayta expanded the territories of Wolayta to the surrounding region. Haberland (1981) also supports this idea and argues that most rulers of Tigre dynasty of Wolayta had conquered new lands from their neighbors and incorporated it into their state between 1600 and 1894. He further explains : "... It was a systematic annexation policy. It can be seen not only in that the official frontier was advanced after each war campaign, but also, in that the conquered area was protected by mighty earth ramparts and trenches, stonewalls, and thorny hedges..."

Haberland (1981) further claims that such frontiers' fortifications were renowned in southern Ethiopia where there were no natural barriers as abysses or mountains or dense forests to provide protection. Beckingham and Huntigford (1954: lxvi), state that the fortification was made on the eastern frontier of Wolayta as a defense against the Arsi Oromo. The ruins of some of this stone fortification remain north of Lake Margarita and the Wayo and Blate Rivers. Elias Awato *et alii* (1999) argue on the other hand that the stone fortifications were not only made on the eastern frontier, but also on the south, west and even on the northern frontiers of Wolayta. Tsehai Berhane Selassie (1975) also states that the kings of Wolayta built trenches and walls to defend their boundaries and that these artificial frontiers are still visible. The same author cites Azaïs and Chambard (1931) and mentioned the dimension of the wall as two meters high and one kilometer long. Despite mentioning the name *Kawo Agatoo* in relation to defensive ditches, Tsehai says nothing about the stone fortification constructed during his reign. Nevertheless, he claims that *Kawo Damote*, who ruled Wolayta after Amado and Agatoo, was the most famous builder of the ditches and the walls.

This possibly demonstrates that more than one king made stone fortifications protecting Wolayta's frontiers from outside aggressors at different periods of time. The exact time of the reigns of these kings however is still unknown. Therefore, the accurate years of construction of the walls of Wolayta will also remain conjectural until intensive archaeological studies offer best dates. The same is true regarding the history of the walls of Dawro.

Haberland (1981), while clearly stating the presence of stone fortifications in southern Ethiopia, gives credit only to the Tigre rulers of Wolayta for building such fortifications. Oral history, however, told us that the rulers of the Kauka dynasty of Dawro also built similar wall around their kingdom. The founder of the Kauka dynasty of Dawro developed their dynasty basically in the same way as Wolayta and other kingdoms of the south, and claimed their origin from Dembiya (Gondar), northern Ethiopia. Oral history testifies that since 1700, the rulers of Kauka dynasty expanded Dawro's territory by incorporating new lands from their neighbors. Particularly king Halala not only expanded his territory in all directions, but also, made fortifications and

trenches on Dawro's frontiers as a defense against its neighbors. Elias Awato *et alii* (1999) state, following oral history, that King Halala, who ruled Dawro c. 1757-1782, made fortifications on the Wolayta, Gofa, Kembata, and Kaffa as well as on the Jimma frontiers.

Most authors developed Wolayta and Dawro's chronologies following genealogies, using a 20-25 years period to calculate a generation. But given that oral history always on reconstructions, it cannot be ruled out that the walls (or portions of the walls) of Wolayta and Dawro might have been made prior to the 18th and 19th century during the medieval period (in the 16th century and before). If this was the case, which medieval kingdoms were based in the area?

Some researchers (such as d'Abbadie, 1890) linked the medieval state of Dawaro with the Dawro¹⁹. However, Haberland's research in 1970 in the district of Dawro/Kullo concluded that there was no noticeable connection between Dawaro and Dawro.

The history of the people of Southern Ethiopia since the 13th century mostly relies on Christian accounts, which cannot be related to the oral history of Wolayta and Dawro. Before the contact with the Christian empire became inevitable, the whole area is said to have been part of an important state, Damot. Damot referred to the region immediately south of the Blue Nile, and west of the sources of Awash River. Its boundaries are vague, but Tadesse Tamrat (1972) states that it may have extended as far south as the region of Innarya²⁰. To the east, it probably bordered on Hadya, and some authors (e.g. Conti Rossini, 1925: 612, 616, 630) even thought that the Wolayta region might have also been included in it. However, the southern borderland of the kingdom of Damot is difficult to set. Tsahai (1975) claims that the historical Damot where Abuna Takla Haymanot evangelized was situated in what was known as Jebat and Mecha in Shoa and perhaps some parts of northern Chamo and Gurage district, which is far north of Wolayta. The partial and patchy hagiographical data and chronicles which link the northern Omo region with Damot only strengthen the myth.

On the other hand, to a certain extent, instead of Damot, the geographical position of another medieval state mentioned in the written source, Ganz, possibly encompassed the regions of the Omo and Gibe Rivers. On Almeida's

¹⁹ Antoine d'Abbadie went as far as associating the whole area between Kaffa in the west and Harar in the east with the ancient state of Dawaro. According to E. CERULLI's (1936) hypothesis, a historic connection between Dawro and Dawaro could also be suggested by the fact that immigrants or refugees from the East preserved the name and some cultural traditions of their former country in their new home on the middle Omo (U. BRAUKAMPER, 2002).

²⁰ According to Almeida's reference, the territory of Innarya extended as far as the vicinity of Bale. In Kembata, the Innarya clan is still considered the oldest population of the area; see U. BRAUKAMPER (2002).

map, Shoa and Gafat bordered Ganz to the north, Damot to the west, Gurage and Hadiyya to the south, and Wag to the east. Alvarez, in the 1620s, mentioned a region called Gamu as a southwestern neighbor of Ganz. Braukamper (2002) argues that if we accept that the geographical position of the old Gamu is similar to the present day Gamu and Gofa, the ancient Ganz should be located in the region of northern Omo, south and east of Kembata and northwest of Gamu.

In Zere Yaeqob chronicles, during the 15th century, the Ganz people appear as a sub-group of the Hadiyya and to have held principality in the region of Wolayta. Braukamper (2002) claims that at that time, Ganz was politically and culturally a dependant state to the Christian kingdom of the north. He further argues that the ancestors of the contemporary Wolayta people were originally limited to a small mountainous region in Kindo, at the border of Gamu, and did not begin to expand over their present area until the beginning of the 18th century.

Although the history of the Omo/Gibe region after the 16th century went unrecorded except in back history, because of Gran Ahmed's jihad and the Oromo expansion, archaeological remains of the old Christianity still appear as far south as in Wolayta and Gamu Gofa.

It is safe to hypothesize that the builders of these walls used techniques, which might have been developed by local inhabitants of southern Ethiopia. The Konso and neighboring people of Southern Ethiopia also constructed similar stonewall without mortar since ancient times. However, they made the wall not to protect themselves but to retain the soil from erosion and for irrigational purposes²¹. Anyway, examples of defensive walls are known in Ethiopia, such as the 3,342 meter-long walls encircling the city of Harar, locally known as the *Jegol*. One of the city's local rulers of medieval times, Nur Ibn-Mujahid, erected this wall in the sixteenth century, and he is said to have dug a defensive trench around the town²². All over the world, the primary function of the building of walls is defense. The main aim in fortifying a fixed position is to erect a physical barrier that cannot be suddenly overrun and that is strong enough to enable the defending force to hold the position for a period of time. However, the building of fortifications might be initiated by local necessities, external pressure and a sense of insecurity²³. According to

²¹ In the mountainous area of south-western Ethiopia, a number of small ethnic groups, generally known as the Burji-Konso cluster, employ stone terracing. (H. AMBORN, 1989; C.R. HALLPIKE, 1970, 1972).

²² The Jegol, which ensured the cities safety in former days, however, is made of locally available ashy stone or calcareous tuff, held together with mud, and reinforced with heavy juniper flat timber (see also W. LESLAU, 1965; TADDESE TAMRAT, 1972; S. TRIMMINGHAM 1952).

²³ The basic concepts to erecting stone fortification remained unaltered until the age of gunpowder. See Marguerita Z HERMAN, 1992; S.T.OY, 1955; A.W. LAURENCE, 1979; W. ANDERSON, 1970.

oral history, the rulers of Wolayta and Dawro made stone fortifications to protect their frontiers against their neighbors and against each other. Some authors (e.g. Haberland, 1981) argue that the rulers of Wolayta were expansionist and therefore, they built the fortifications after they had conquered new lands. It would also be possible that the walls of these two states were built not to protect themselves from each other, but to protect them from a third mighty force. This would support the hypothesis that the walls of Wolayta and Dawro were made during the wars of Ahmad Gran or during the expansion of the Oromo.

Even though literature and oral history give clues about the traditions and story of the walls of Wolayta and Dawro, they might not be helpful in dating this period of Southern Ethiopia history. Therefore, intensive archaeological and ethnoarchaeological studies on the material culture of Wolayta and Dawro are urgent to trace the real history, chronology and culture of the region. With a history of more than 200 years, some of the sections of the walls of Wolayta and Dawro are now in ruins. Some have even entirely disappeared. However, they are still appealing in their magnitude and historical significance. Nonetheless, the walls do not yet get the attention of the researchers, wardens of cultural heritage, tourists and local elites. Thus, the walls are not yet incorporated into the identity of the peoples of the two zones in particular and of the Southern Nations and Nationalities in general.

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