



The Medieval History of Maji Awraja: Unveiling the Ethiopian Empire's Influence in Southwestern Ethiopia

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Abstract:

This article delves into the medieval history of the Southwestern region of Ethiopia, with a particular focus on Maji Awraja. employing a qualitative methodology, the study draws upon primary sources such as military and Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) relics discovered within the Maji localities. These artifacts were obtained from the Dizi people, who claim descent from northern settlers of mixed origin. Additionally, oral data was collected from Maji, the research site, while secondary sources, including articles and published/unpublished materials, were also utilized. Situated amidst a mountainous triangle, Maji is surrounded by three rivers: the Dima-Akobo to the northwest, the Omo to the east, and the Kibish to the southwest. Its strategic location, overseeing Sudan to the west and Kenya to the south, offered a remarkable view and made it an ideal position for establishing military garrisons during the medieval period of the Ethiopian Imperial Army.

Until recently, our understanding of the Medieval Ethiopian Empire's territorial expansion in the southwestern direction was limited to Emperor Menelik II's official claims and the accounts of a few expatriate scholars and travelers. The discovery of military and religious artifacts in Maji provides compelling evidence of the existence of a medieval empire and its administration, characterized by two significant institutions: the army and the Church. The presence of military equipment and Orthodox Christian religious materials in this region predating the 1898 conquest suggests that Maji was an integral part of the Medieval Ethiopian Empire. By shedding light on this previously overlooked history, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the Ethiopian Empire's influence in the Southwestern region, emphasizing the role played by the military and Christian communities.

Keywords: Medieval History, Maji Awraja, Ethiopian Empire, Southwestern Ethiopia, unveiling Dizi, Military Settlement and Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Background to the study area

Maji locality, where this historical material evidences are found, was the name of an *Awraja*, a district, and the name of a town. It is presently placed under the West Omo Zone of the Southwestern Peoples regional state. Formerly it was one of the administrative sub-divisions under the former Kaffa imperial province. It is bordered by the Sudan to the west, the River Omo in the south and southeast, and to the east by Kaffa *Awraja* and River Omo.

The material evidences are found at the hands of individual from the Dizi ethnic people who claim descendants of northern Ethiopian immigrants. The Dizi in general inhabited the cold part of Maji *Awraja* mostly in the northern, central, and southern highlands that range from 2600 to 3000 meters above sea level. The high and

rugged places of Maji are concentrated in the northern and south and progressively become a plateau in the central area south of the town of Maji and the extreme northwest (from Beru to Jabba), and low land wooded to the south and western part.

The climate appeared similar to the other *Dega*/cold temperate parts of the country, where valleys cut districts from districts and even villages from villages. Except in the deep-cut valleys where the temperature is hot and humid in the Dizi-inhabited part of Maji *Awraja* the temperature is cold.

It is the cereal-growing part of the country, millet, wheat, barley, *teff*, oat, pulses, and others and it also carries cattle to some extent. Unlike their neighbors, the economy of Dizi was based on intensive cultivation conducted with digging sticks¹ and later on hoe and plow cultivation practiced.² Suri and Me'enit (the Bodi) inhabited the dry lands of Maji who were subsisting on agro-pastoralism and hunting and gathering.³

Besides the dense natural forests, the district was covered with thick short grass which makes the area home to many wild animals like elephants, lions, and rhinoceros and other precious natural resources like gold.

Some historiographical notes on the territorial Extension of Medieval Ethiopian Empire

Merid Wolde Aregay in his PhD dissertation attempts to evaluate and describe available sources on the political geography of Ethiopian Empire in the eventful 16th and 17th centuries.⁴ According to him with the sources so far at his disposal, it is by no means easy to define the extent of the Ethiopian empire and to delineate its boundaries. He further argues that the chronicles of the 16th century and the earlier centuries are, as a whole, silent about the provinces far removed from Shawa. (ibid. P. 18) As a result, Merid argues that there are practically no indications as to how far to the south and southwest the empire was extended. (Ibid, p. 26)

Similarly, Christopher Clapham in his article entitled "The European Mapping of Ethiopia, 1460-1856" has a look at a series of maps especially from 1574 until 1856, and describes some of their features. In all described maps of the 17th, 18th, and late 18thc there is no mention of the peoples and place names or physical features of the Southwestern region, particularly around the Omo River and Maji.⁵ The only European map that he mentioned was Augustus Peterman's map "Abyssinia and the adjacent countries" published in 1856 placing the Suro [Me'enit Goldiya] as one of the people of the region as it lies south of Kaffa.⁶

However, Emperor Menelik II in his circular of 1891 to the Governments of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia justified his conquest as part of his motive to restore the ancient boundaries of Ethiopia in the following words: "I shall endeavor, if God gives me life and strength, to re-establish the ancient frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Khartoum, and as far as Lake Nyanza (Victoria)".⁷

Moreover, European writers and traveler sources corroborate the veracity of the claim of the Emperor. One of the early 20th-century European writers on Ethiopia was Darley H. whose writings are in complete agreement with the claim of the Emperor. He writes that the original Abyssinian occupation and Christianization of Kaffa took place at least five hundred years ago. He further states that Abyssinians lost their hold on Kaffa during the great Islamic invasion of Mohammed *Gragh* in the 16th century and its re-conquest was undertaken by Menelik II in 1897.⁸ Similarly Huntingford, G.W.B. writes that Menelik II decided to bring back into the Abyssinia Kingdom all the independent states which at one time or another had been part of it.⁹

On 20 January 1881, Emperor Yohannes IV crowned Adal Negus TekleHaimanot of Gojam and Kaffa, the strongest kingdom in the southwestern region.¹⁰ Saheed A. Adejumobi in his book *The History of Ethiopia* writes that Menilek II (1889-1913) directed Ethiopia's return to southern and western regions abandoned in

¹ Haberland, Eike, "An Amharic Manuscript on the Mythical History of the Adikyaz (Dizi, Southwest Ethiopia)." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Vol. 46. No.2, 1983, p. 128,

² Gebre-Hawariya Amare, "A History of the Dizi people of South-west Ethiopia, C.1898 -1991" M.A thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2013, P.8

³ Jon Abbink, "Authority and Leadership in Surma Society (Ethiopia)". *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studie Documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, Anno 52, No. 3, 1997, P.325

⁴ Merid WoldeAregay. "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom, 1508-1708, with Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and Their Consequences.", Ph.D. dissertation School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1971, pp. 18-117

⁵ Christopher Clapham, "The European Mapping of Ethiopia, 1460-1856", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. ½, (June-December 2007), pp. 293-307

⁶ Ibid, p. 304

⁷ Salvadori, Cynthia, *Slaves and Ivory Continued*. First Edition, Shama Books, Addis Ababa, 2010, p.17

⁸ Darley Henry, *Slaves and Ivory: a record of adventure and exploration in the unknown Sudan and among the Abyssinian Slave Raiders*, London, 1926, p.197

⁹ Huntingford, G.W.B (ed), *The Glorious Victory of Amdā Šeyon, King of Ethiopia*. Oxford: University Press, 1965.P. 22

¹⁰ Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* Huntingford, G.W.B (ed), University of California Press, Berkeley · Los Angeles · Oxford, 1994, P.80

the seventeenth century.¹¹ The other Western scholar Erving E. Beauregard argues that Menelik II had restored the imperial power into areas where it had separated since the 16th century.¹²

Others, however, write that there is no shred of evidence that Abyssinian/Ethiopian power has ever been felt as far west as Khartoum. According to these group of writers the Abyssinian/Ethiopian rule never extended even to the adjacent Oromos let alone stretching to Lake Nyanza.¹³

As a result, many other scholars and researchers argue that the military expedition of Emperor Menelik II into southern and western regions was undertaken for the first time and its primary motive was to add new areas and control lucrative natural resources.¹⁴

This article would fill the existing lack of a shred of evidence that confirms Medieval Ethiopian power has ever been felt at least as far as Lake Rudolf, if not Lake Victoria. This article based on the material historical evidence will shed light on the extent of the Medieval Ethiopian Empire and consolidate the claim of Emperor Menelik II and the views of travelers and writers mentioned above in this regard. The following part of the article is devoted to interpret and describing the historical material evidences, and the related practices and traditions.

Description of the Material Evidences Discovered and the historical significances

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in some detail the medieval war equipment/weapons and EOC holy materials. The Medieval Christian highlanders fought with the very weapons used by Aksumites. One of the weapons used by Aksumites was a sword. There were different types of swords. The curved single-edged (*gorade*) and straight-double-bladed swords. Swords are also varied based on their functions. A sword with broad-bladed and short was better for attack than defense. According to EOC church sources a full-fledged church or established church must have at least the following two categories of holy materials at its disposal for full religious services. The first group of materials is the objects that are used during praying inside the church compound which include the objects obtained in Maji and the second group of materials is the objects that are used during church festivals.

The War/military Equipment: The Straight Double-Bladed Gold and Silver made Sword of Maji¹⁵

This sword was found at the family home of a person of the Adikas section of the Dizi people who claim ancestral origin from Tigrai. The owner also claims a direct blood relation with the founding father of the Adikas section of the Dizi people, *Abbagaz*.

A Silver blade sword with a Silver, other unknown other material and gold handle, the golden part of handle is decorated with carving/incised design of an eagle and a snake, and on the other side of the handle there is an unknown creature and incised alphabets. The sword is unique as its blade and hint and guards were made from monolithic silver. It appears to owe nothing to the Solomonic dynasty as it contains an eagle but may be to Egypt, Rome, or Greece. It also carries a slightly incised design of Cyrillic or Greek letters.

It is 93 centimeters long and 2.5 to 1.4 centimeters wide. From its size and its formation, one can understand that the use function of the sword was a ceremonial, ritual, a symbol of status, warfare, and slashing rather than for actual fighting, a sword used by high military dignitaries.

According to informants, this sword may have been used by *Abbagaz*, the founding father of the Dizi ethnic people to denote him as the war leader. Swords, like this object, were an important symbol of military power and were often seen at battles and military parades. They were also used in mock battles during the festival to celebrate military victories in which the king and other titled men would take part. The swords produced for actual fighting in Ethiopia were the curved single-edged swords (*grade*) with broad-bladed and long/short, which were better for attack than defense.

According to Merid Lebne Dingle was the first Solomonic emperor to import swords.¹⁶ Merid further writes that local swords were not strong and dependable, as the smiths were not good at tempering iron. Probably intending to improve the quality of military weapons Lebna Dengel may have begun to buy the equipment for

¹¹ Saheed A. Adejumobi (2007). *The History of Ethiopia*. The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, London, 2007, P. 34

¹² Erving E. Beauregard, "Menelik II: Another Look", *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol.5, No.2, 1976, P.22.

¹³ Daniel Gemtessa, "Abyssinia/Ethiopia: State Formation and National State-Building Project Comparative Approach", Department of Political Science University of Oslo, 2014 p. 23

¹⁴ Belete Bizuneh, "An agrarian polity and its pastoral periphery: State and pastoralism in the Borana borderlands Southern Ethiopia, 1897-1991" Ph.D. Dissertation in History, University of Boston., 2008, P.1

¹⁵ This sword is one of the historical material sources obtained from Maji during my field research work. It was discovered in Maji district, Adikas Kebele at Gaybitta village in the hands of Mr. Chara Adikas. A Further and detailed research must be done to determine the origin and age of this sword and other themes.

¹⁶ Merid, p. 128.

men and horses discarded by the overthrown Mameluk soldiers.¹⁷ Medieval Ethiopian emperors were known for their expansionist policy and practices in to different parts of the Horn of Africa. For instance, Tibebe Eshete states it that the Medieval Ethiopian rulers had made energetic attempts to expand their control over the peripheries and to the coasts,¹⁸ Maji given its favorable climate and rich natural resources would not be an exception.

In their expansionist military activities iron weapons were necessary and also necessary for the defence of the kingdom. This sword inevitably tells us of the conquest of Maji and its environs by Ethiopian imperial military force at least in the 17th century.

As of the discovery of this military equipment in this part of the empire, we can believe that there was an imperial regiment garrisoned in Maji, and the province of Maji was probably administered by the military commanders. Therefore, Maji was within the empire, however, the information we have is so limited that no satisfactory description of its administration can be attempted.

It is well known that in the military history of Ethiopian Imperial state conquest/military campaigns or garrison settlements often followed or accompanied the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This could lead us to discuss the remnants of the church materials obtained /found in Maji localities.

The Church Material Remnants discovered at Maji localities

In the military history of Ethiopia soldiers and leaders prayed even on the battlefield, every high-ranking officer came to the battlefield with his own Church, priests, and father. Both the priests and the sheikhs have their soldiers and they also participate in the battlefield with weapons. The following material relics of EOC are found in Maji localities.

***TṢelat*¹⁹**

A Consecrated wooden board from an Ethiopian Orthodox Church (*tablet/tsetlat*) the Ark of Convent named Saint George is found in the hands of Dami Karu/Burji, who is among the sections of the Dizi people who claim origin from the northern part of Ethiopia and also considered themselves different in terms of religion. Still keeping the strict EOC regulation the *Ṣelate* especially is not allowed to be visited or exposed to ordinary people. Informants narrate that when their ancestors departed from Tigray they had with them the Ark of the Covenant and other religious materials²⁰. Concerning this point, Kabada Tasama in his published work writes that and as translated:

They first brought it to this country as soon as they entered this country, but now they don't allow anyone to show it, they say it is the ark of the covenant of St. George which is to be found in the hands of Dami Burji and Gazh Burji who placed it in an honored place where only five selected individuals used to enter and pray.

This ark of covenant Over time, it is covered with a lot of skin and appears to be large, which proves that it is an ark of covenant inside.

This ark of covenant When the house is considered to be the house of God, when the foundation was dug, cattle were killed and blood was shed on it. After the house is built, no one touches the tree that is found in the area because it is considered clean.

When there is some unexpected disease or locust disaster in the country, they gather in the same place and pray. These are five in number, neither less nor more, and they enter the house and beg, as per the church law, they are called five delegates. Although its possession has changed over time, it is proof that as they say, they were Christians first and they migrated from the county of the Amhara to the present country.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Tibebe Eshete, "Towards a History of the Incorporation of the Ogaden: 1887-1935", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* Vol. 27, no.2, 1994, p. 70

¹⁹ Tsetlat means an Ark which means a dwelling place, an abode, a manifestation of God.

²⁰ Informants: Adisu Läma, Bantä Yirga Gobäna, Birhanu Aykab Kuri, Kéyani Kurolu, Maryamé Dirm

²¹ Kabada Tasama, *YeMaji-Goldiya Wubet / The Beauty of Maji -Goldiya*, *Birhanena Selam Haile Selassie I printing* Addis Ababa, 1955, pp. 76-77

Church Hand Bell/woshugents²²

I discovered the Church hand-bell made of bronze as one of the Church holy item together with the above described sword in the same family of Adikas. There is no doubt that this bronze made bell is a typical Ethiopian Orthodox Church bell but remains in the hands of a family, with full knowledge of the local EOC priests and deacons.

Long before this, Kebede writes it that in the hands of some of the nobles, it is found that the holy goods of the church are still held in honor.”²³

Later on also, Eike Haberland, writes it that to this day they possess a brass hand-bell of Ethiopian Orthodox priests (Tigre, 14th century?).²⁴

The use of bells for general social and religious purposes in the Ethiopian church is ancient. The church handbell is useful not only for summoning the faithful to religious services but also for giving an alarm when danger threatens. However, among the Dizi according to Kebede the Church hand Bell was used during the succession ceremony to be held at the house of God.

As Kebede writes it “the next chief will be appointed in the same place [the house of God] striking a bronze hand Bell”.²⁵ Informants also revealed that the handbell was used by Adi Burji to summon people for civil purposes.²⁶ However, the contemporary Dizi family hung iron-made bell which is like the Church –bell around the neck of their favorite bull.²⁷

Tsenhah/Censer²⁸

Tsenhah/Censer is another Ethiopian Orthodox Church Holy item which is used for burning incense during Church services. It symbolizes the Trinity and the blessed ever Virgin Mary that the flame (divine) Christ doweled on her womb. It is one of the sacred properties of EOC. It can be made of gold, silver, or metal. The *Tsenah* which I discovered in Maji was made of Silver. It was discovered in Maji district, Adikas *Kebele* at Gaybitta village in the hands of Mr. Chara Adikas, where I found the above described items. Priests and deacons of the Adikaz Georgis church at Adikaz *Kebele* told me that they used to take the material temporarily every year during the annual festival of the church and then they used to bring it back to the owner.²⁹

Ecclesiastical Vestments and a burial garment

Among the remnants of Ecclesiastical Vestments found are priests' clothing which is a robe/ *kabba*, with a black and golden stripe. (informants: Mr. Bedilu, Gobita, Mr Tademe Komorut and Mr. Birhanu Ayikab) Kebede also writes it that “a cloth similar to a Church vestment is preserved in their hands”³⁰

Together with the ecclesiastical garments there is also a red and thick burial garment or *gimja* as the Church men use to refer it.

According to informants, after wearing the red clothes, as the same as the EOC burial ceremony, among the Dizi traditional burial ceremony the coffin goes around the ark's inn 3 times for farewell, and then it rests at the door of the ark's inn on the 4th round. According to the funeral ceremony of the EOC, the dead body must be covered with a red and thick cloth, called *gimja*. In the traditional funeral ceremony of the Dizi it is only after the farewell that the weeping dances /*Dag*/are performed, then after it goes to the funeral. Both Church objects are found in the home of Dami Karu, a descendant of the first migrant.

The Two Large Ethiopian Orthodox Church Drums

The Russian traveler, Alexander Bulatovich, who accompanied the conquering force of Emperor Menelik II in the Southwestern region of Ethiopia in 1898 chronicled all the details of the events surrounding the conquest. Accordingly, on April 22, 1898, during their return marching to Andracha (in the return back journey from Lake Turkana to Kaffa) and in his reconnoiter the space between Mount Say and Mount Beru Bulatovich

²²This church Bell is one of the historical material sources obtained from Maji during my doctoral field research work. It was discovered in Maji district, Adikas Kebele at Gaybitta village in the hands of Mr. Chara Adikas. A Further and detailed research must be made to determine the origin and age of this sword and other themes.

²³ Kebede, p.67

²⁴ Haberland, p.242.

²⁵ Kebede, p.77

²⁶ Informants: Burké Berjina, Kukuba Gédi, Sagu Niyang, Sheburu Komuru, Siyan Kurolo, Wäldä- Maryam Gäbrä- Selassé/Guzdu Duma

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸God commanded Moses in the Torah to make a golden Incense burner. In this example, it still works today.

²⁹ Informant: Deacon Firew HaileMichael)

³⁰ Kebede, p.77

informed us that he had found two large drums of the same shape as those in EOC in one of the home probably in the home of Dami Burji one of the Dizi chiefs' house hung on walls among the columns.³¹

Oral traditions and Practices

Besides the above-described material evidences, the Dizi oral traditions about Orthodox Christianity connects with their migration from the northern Ethiopian region in possessing religious objects that are similar to the Aksumite period.³²

For many centuries the area between Kibish, Akobo, and Omo was the crossroads for various peoples, its inhabitants may have been from different places of origin.

Sections of Dizi claim their ancestral origin from the Christian highland kingdom (Tigre and Amhara)³³ and areas across the Omo River particularly from the present-day Gamo and Gofa zones of southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples regional state which are separated from Maji by Omo River, near to the medieval imperial provinces of Bahr G amo and Suf Gamo.³⁴

In substantiating their claim of northern Ethiopian origin the chief of Adikaz and Dami Burji have in their possession of material relics of northern and Orthodox Christian origin which are the subject of this article.

Eike Haberland shared with us an Amharic manuscript on the origin of one of the chiefs of the Dizi people, Adikaz. It was written in 1955 as dictated by the old Adikaz. Regarding the origin of the Adikaz chief family, it states that

.... First, I will tell you about the family of Adikas. It is said that our family came from Gemo Gofa, but it is said that he came from the country of Amhara. It is said that the father of Adikas, Gaz Burji, crossed the Omo and conquered the country. (Haberland, p. 244)

Thus the cause for the migration was military conquest of the region. For military purposes, Maji commands a spectacular view and a strategic one. Located up in the mountainous triangle between three rivers, the Dima-Akobo to the northwest, the Omo to the east, and the Kibish to the southwest, for it overlooks the Sudan to the west and Kenya to the South. Therefore, it was a favorable place for the establishment of military garrisons for the Ethiopian Imperial army of the medieval period. For the Christian highlanders, Maji is highly favored due to its strategic position and also as it is rich in natural resources and favorable climate.

Moreover, Crummey's data collected from Haberland, Käfa oral tradition and Bieber revealed that between the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, some number of Christian groups undertook religious activities in the "pagan" societies of southwest Ethiopia.³⁵ This missionary activity might have had reached the Maji territory. In substantiating his argument, he has given us material objects including the phallic brass forehead ornaments (*kallicha* in Amharic), the remains of a clergy headband of blue material, a saddle and horsewhip. Weaving was unknown among the Dizi until the introduction of fabric garments and clothes (*abajädid*) in 1900s. Haberland's statement was later confirmed by Tadesse Tamirat, according to him Christian migrants had long been moving from Tigre in the north to further south to Shewa.³⁶

In congruent with this, many years after the study of Haberland, Jon Abbink the famous anthropologist who studied the Maji awraja society. based on oral traditions states that the Dizi were exposed to the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian missionary of the Middle Ages in some aspects though he insisted that the Dizi continued to maintain their traditional religion until their loss of independence from the Ethiopian government in 1898.³⁷

More recently Gebrehawaria Amare in his M.A thesis writes it that the Dizi still celebrate the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Holidays, like *Maseqal* (September 27), Saint Gabriel *Tahesas* (December 28), Saint Mary, and Easter in some corrupted form and style. This was due to the long time disconnection with the mother Church, probably due to the sixteenth century upheavals happened in the region as a whole. The basic

³¹ Richard Seltzer, *Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes, Country In Transition 1896-1898* (translation) The Red Sea Press, Asmara., 1993, p.237

³² Informants: Burké Berjina, Kukuba Gédi, Sagu Niyang, Sheburu Komuru, Siyan Kurolo, Wäldä- Maryam Gäbrä- Selassé/Guzdu Duma, Mr Tademe Komorut and Mr. Birhanu Ayikab.

³³ Haberland, p. 242

³⁴ Merid Wolde Aregay, p. 78)

³⁵ Donald D Crummy, "Kafa and Christian Survivals in South West Ethiopia." A Paper Prepared in Advance for the Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Faculties of Arts and Education. Addis Ababa University, 1968, p.4

³⁶ Tadesse Tamirat , *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, Oxford University Press, London., 1972, p 120

³⁷ Jon Abbink , 'Ethnic Conflict in the "Tribal Zone": The Dizi and Suri in Southern Ethiopia. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Dec., 1993,) pp. 675-682.

elements of the celebration remained the same. All these Holidays are celebrated through dining, dancing, and drinking.³⁸ Informants also informed me that there is a tradition of door-to-door chanting and dancing of young boys during the Ethiopian New Year (September 11) and *Maseqal* (September 27), which is the tradition among the northern Ethiopian Christian society. Also, they are so firm in their Orthodox Christianity tradition that a Dizi Christian claims that the influence of Orthodox Christianity in the Dizi area is traced back to the ancient and medieval times of the Ethiopian Christian missionary movement.³⁹ Unlike the rest of the people of southwestern Ethiopia, except the Kafficho (65%) more than 50 % of the Dizi are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Christianity.⁴⁰

The Linguistic Evidences

Based on his notable informants and his knowledge of Tigire language/ *Tigrigna* Gebrehawariya supported the Dizi claim of origin from Tegray by linguistic terms. He mentioned for instance, the *Tegregna* term for water, “*May*” as it corresponds to the Dizi word for water, “*Ay*” and *Abba Gaz* (Tegreña word for war leader) relates to *Gaz* (Dizi term for the same purpose). They added that *Adikyaz* (section of the Dizi people) is a word derived from *Tegreña* term with a rough meaning “Where is your country? (Ibid.) Similarly, I was very much surprised by their mastery of the Amharic language and to some extent their mastery of its nuances and hidden meanings. The Dizi also take Amharic names.

One can safely argue it that although these Orthodox Christian missionary and population movements into the southwest were not documented well, the material evidences described above, from the available oral tradition about the migration and settlement of the sections of Dizi people and their cultural practices and the linguistic evidences it is possible to infer the gradual northern Christian community and military settlement and military conquest of the Southwestern particularly Maji and its environs to take place in the Medieval period.

In general, of these evidenced and helped us to believe that there was a medieval imperial regiment garrisoned in Maji, and the provinces of Maji was administered by the Medieval Ethiopian military commanders. Therefore, Maji was within the empire, however, the information we have is so limited that no satisfactory description of its administrative nature can be attempted. We need to endeavor in this regard in the future.

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³⁸ Gebrehawariya, P. 8

³⁹ However, Christianity does not seem to have made a real impact until after the middle of this century, when regiments of Christian soldiers were garrisoned in the different parts of the province as new churches were established.

⁴⁰ Gebrehawariya, P. 8

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