

Insight into a Second Edition of “Jimma Abba Jifar (1861- 1974): Social, Economic and Administrative History”

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The Second Edition of this book was prompted by the enthusiastic feedback from readers of the First Edition. They encouraged its publication, even suggesting translations into Afaan Oromoo and Amharic. This Second Edition includes some changes while including the full content of the First Edition.

One significant change is the modification of the title from 'Abba Jifar II of Jimma Kingdom: 1861-1934: A Biography' to 'Jimma Abba Jifar (1861- 1974): Social, Economic and Administrative History' based on the feedback of First Edition reviewers. This edition expands beyond Abba Jifar II's biography to examine the social, economic, political, and administrative aspects of Jimma. As such, a new chapter was added to cover developments up to 1974, addressing the post-Abba Jifar era. For convenience, a footnoting system has been introduced, along with additional maps, photos, and appendices. Editorial issues, such as correcting typographical errors, were addressed. Some conceptual and factual matters were revisited based on reviewers' feedback.

This author would like to express gratitude to Allah, reviewers and readers without whom this publication wouldn't be possible. With unreserved praise to Dr. Tamrat Wasyhun, Mr. Abdo Adem, and Mr. Nejashi Abdulwali Abdulwakil for their inspiration and encouragement.

The Book

The First Edition of the book, titled "Abba Jifar II of Jimma Kingdom 1861-1934: A Biography," was published in 2012. It primarily delves into the life of Abba Jifar (1861-1934), who served as the King of Jimma Kingdom from approximately 1878 to 1882 and as an autonomous leader in Jimma from 1882 to

1932 within the Ethiopian Empire State. However, this work extends beyond being a mere biography. It aims to explore the social, political, economic, and other aspects of the Gibe region, especially the Jimma Oromo of present-day southwest Ethiopia, from their settlement in the region well into 20th century.

Numerous materials have been produced about the Jimma Kingdom, but very few have focused on King (Mootii) Abba Jifar II. He was unique among the leaders of the Gibe region, as he managed to maintain his autonomy, while others lost theirs. This was largely due to his peaceful submission to Menilek, which significantly shaped his political future and the socio-economic and administrative destinies of his people.

Abba Jifar was a prominent figure during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thus a reconstruction of his history is an apparent necessity. To accomplish this, a range of sources, including oral accounts, written records, and relics, were employed. Although archival sources are limited, a great effort went into compiling and crossreferencing available evidence for this work. The book consists of seven chapters, and the content of each chapter is summarized below.

The chapters

Chapter One introduces the physical location and historical background of the study area. It starts with the founding and coinage of the name "Jimma," the arrival of pastoral Oromo settlers in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the formation of monarchical states known as the "Shanan Gibe" or "Five Gibe" states, and the eventual introduction of Islam and long-distance trade into the region. The introductory chapter also provides insights into the geographical and characteral features of the Jimma Kingdom. Detailing the physical attributes, abundant resources and agricultural variety of the Gibe regions. Jimma serves as a vital nexus in southwestern Ethiopia, connecting the entire region to the rest of the country. Notably,

the Italians, fond of Jimma city, designated it as "Piccolo Roma" and established it as the capital of the six administrative units of Africa Orientale Italiana (AOI).

Chapter Two delves into the birth of Abba Jifar II in 1861, his early leadership under the regency of his mother, Gennee Gummitii (Gumeyti) and later on his own independent rule. It addresses Abba Gommol's request for Menelik's protection and the practical reasons behind Abba Jifar's submission in 1882.

Chapter Three explores the execution of the agreement and Abba Jifar's administration after his peaceful submission to Menilek. It discusses the annual tribute paid by Abba Jifar and the loyalty he maintained despite minor misunderstandings and external instigations. The chapter also notes the absence of politico-military titles conferred by Menilek, along with the eventual end of Jimma's autonomy under Emperor Haile Selassie

Chapter Four analyzes the economy of Jimma and its internal and external interactions. It highlights the region's reliance on trade and agriculture, the attraction of traders due to Abba Jifar's favorable economic policies, advancements within various industries and the kingdom's diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. Jimma's popularity within the region endured after its annexation. The conclusion drawn in this chapter is that Jimma's presence extended beyond the borders of the Ethiopian empire, contrary to certain sources that claimed Jimma was exclusively confined to the empire due to a lack of written records.

Chapter Five delves into the relationship between Islam and Kingship in the Jimma Kingdom. While Islam has a long history in the Gibe region and specifically in Jimma, it officially took root and spread widely during the 19th century, thanks to the efforts of traders and clerics. Islam was the official religion in the Jimma Kingdom, and all kings, from the first convert to the eighth king, Abba Jifar II, supported its integration into the

broader community. Following Jimma Kingdom's submission to Menilek, Islam continued as the exclusive religion due to an initial agreement that prohibited the introduction of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. This agreement remained in effect until the late 1920s, and during this time, Jimma stood out from other regions in the Gibe area for not having any churches. It's important to note that the Kings of Jimma were tolerant and modest towards followers of other faiths.

Chapter Six discusses the nomenclature, personal and family affairs of Abba Jifar II. Notably, the distinct nomenclature of the Gibe region, which sets them apart from other Oromo groups and Ethiopia in general. The practice of replacing Oromo and Muslim birth names with compound names that begin "Abba," signifying "father" or "owner of." For example, names like Abba Jifar, Abba Magal, and Abba Rago are common in Jimma. Although further research is warranted, the origins of this unique naming tradition may be traced back to the Gadaa period, where officials were given titles like Abba Boku and Abba Dula. The chapter also charts the genealogical lineage of Jimma and the Maccaa Oromo. It concludes with the termination of Jimma's autonomy, marked by the appointment of the first non-Oromo governor of Jimma.

Chapter Seven examines Jimma under centralized rule of Emperor Haile Selassie from 1934 to 1974. This chapter explores the evolving administrative system and its repercussions on Jimma and its populace. It addresses social, economic, and administrative aspects up to the point when the military regime, known as the Derg, assumed power in Ethiopia in 1974.

Overall, this book intends to establish the groundwork for reconstructing the history of the Oromo people in the southwestern region, with a particular emphasis on the Jimma Kingdom. Additionally, it aims to contribute to the study of the historically overlooked southern region in Ethiopian

historiography, providing a valuable resource for future research by historians and scholars.