

A Historical Analysis of Magaalaa Guddoo (Gidir Magaalaa) Market Centre in Harar City (1938-1991)

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Abstract: This paper presents the historical developments in and around Magaalaa Guddoo market centre in Harar city. It discusses the role of early market centres in the early civilizations in Ethiopia by focusing on Magaalaa Guddoo. Magaalaa Guddoo was the biggest and the oldest market centre of Harar city which pulled together all the merchants and merchandises coming into Jugol (the wall that surrounds the historic Harar city) through all its gates. That was why different writers regarded it as ‘the central market’ or ‘the main market’. It is estimated that this market centre was founded in 13th or 14th century. The paper discusses the establishment of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre; changes and developments in the market by focusing on the Italian period, the imperial and the military regimes. The commodities exchanged in the market, the major actors who used the market, illegal trade, and finally the decline of the market was discussed in detail. Journals, books, archival materials, material remains, oral informants, and magazines were used intensively for the study. Oral informants were identified using snowball sampling method. The findings show that political changes, shifts in supply and demand, and illegal trades are interrelated and have a significant impact on the development and fall of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre. Besides, strategic location and the availability of items of trade are the main factors in the emergence and expansion of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre.

Keywords: Illegal trade; Items of trade; Magaalaa Guddoo; Market centre; Merchandises; Merchants

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1. Introduction

In history, trade and market centres contributed a lot for the development of ancient cities and towns. The early civilizations of Africa were based on trade and trade routes. There were long distance trading routes interconnecting different parts of the continent, even before the arrival of Europeans. The market centres of those times not only served as the heart of the then civilization, but also as the centre of art and manufacturing (Osei, 1966: 5-7; Woods and Woods, 2009: 37-57).

In Ethiopia, the emergence and decline of great civilizations like the Aksumite Empire were related to trade and market centres (Habtesellassie, 1972: 84-208; Abir, 1980: 7). Marcus (1994:5-11), in one of his works, indicated the attempts of Aksum to dominate the commerce, trade routes and sources of supply in the region. Especially in the nineteenth century, trade and commercial links served as unifying agents of the northern and southern parts of Ethiopia. The two important trade routes which connected south-west Ethiopia to north, and western part to east were the 'main bases of the process of unification'. Market centres like Jiren, Saqa, Assandabo, Basso, Darita, Yarar, Soddo, Rogge and the others were dependent on trade and trade routes. And, towns like Harar, Matamma, Gondar, and Alyu Amba were the destinations and 'cross-roads' of such trade routes (Zewde, 1991: 21-24; Abubaker, 2013). In general, trade routes and market centres had both economic and political significance for the Ethiopian state.¹

Above all, trade was (and still is) an important means of living in eastern Ethiopia. This is because the region is dominated by the Muslim merchants and is found at 'favourable geographical location.'² That is, proximity to Zeila, Berbera and ports of Djibouti. One of the major trade routes in the country was also originated from Obock, Tajura and Zeila, and extends/stretches to Jaldessa, which served as the 'transshipment centre' for the long-distance traders. Then the route passed through Balawa and Kombolcha to enter into the walled city of Harar, which is regarded as a 'big emporium on its own right'. Bekele (1982: 1-5) said 'It was probably the best urban centre in the whole of the Horn of Africa at the turn of the century.' The income from trade was so enormous that it contributed to the wealth and growth of the Harar city. This shows how important Harar was for the commercial activity of the time and how it benefitted from its strategic location. Zewde (1991: 22) regarded Harar as the 'commercial centre of the east'.

Regarding the significance of Harar to foreign trade of the country, one Frenchman considered it as 'an entrepot Colossal'. He explained that the railway opened Ethiopia to foreign trade; large number of merchants from different parts of the world entered Harar, 'unlocking Menelik's empire to foreign industry and trade' (Bekele, 1982: 46). Zeleza (1993: 299) confirmed this by showing that the export trade through the city of Harar from 1899-1900 was approximately 2.7 million MT dollars. That was

¹ Shiferaw Jammo indicated the increasing role of trade in the GDP of Ethiopia, from 5% in 1950 to 10% in 1974. Look at his article 'An Overview of the Economy 1941-74', in Shiferaw Bekele, Ed. *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia*, (Senegal: CODESRIA, 1995), pp. 25, 26.

² Presented on *Harar Global Capital of Peace: where the Old Meets the New*, a documentary film produced by Harari National Regional State. Harar: Sine-pix Film Studio, 2001.

why Rey (1935: 30), who visited Harar in the twentieth century, characterized it as the ‘centre and market town’ of the eastern region.

Merchants of long-distance trade enter Harar through the gate of *Bab-el-Futuh* (*Assum Bari* or Zeila gate³) and leave for Addis Ababa through the gate of ‘*Shoa Bari*’ (*Asmadin Bari*⁴) (Bekele, 1982). In front of each gate of the Wall of *Jugol*, intensive trade activities took place, with different people interchanging different commodities. For instance, at the *Asmadin* gate, a variety of foodstuffs; at the *Assum* gate, livestock, mainly brought by the Oromo people; and at the *Argoba* gate and *Suqutat* gate, various fruits, vegetables, spices and khat⁵ were sold (Bosredon, 2004). From the five gates of *Jugol*, three of them directly march to Magaalaa Guddoo market centre, which is located at the centre of the city. (See the map in the appendix).

Historically, Magaalaa Guddoo was the biggest market, not only in Harar city, but also in the region, which pulled together all the merchants and merchandise coming into *Jugol* through all its gates. That was why different writers regarded it as ‘the central market’ or ‘the main market’ (Bosredon, 2004: 25-28). ‘Magaalaa Guddoo’ is an Oromo term which literally means ‘the big town’. It denotes that the market centre was so big, and all items of trade were found there. It is also called ‘Gidir Magala.’ Gidir is a Harari term which means ‘big’, they also use to refer to a place where all kinds of products are brought to by different merchants⁶ (Informants: Ibrahim Ahmed, Haji Ahmed. *Jugol*, August 2011). Thus, I used ‘Gidir Magala’ and ‘Magaalaa Guddoo’ interchangeably in this paper. Starting from its establishment until the mid-twentieth century, it remained the only big market in Harar. And, almost all kinds of cereals, cash-crops, clothes, foodstuffs and vegetables were found in and around the market of Magaalaa Guddoo.

This paper investigates the establishment of the market and the changes and developments during the Italians period, the Emperial and the Derg regimes. The study shows that political changes, shifts in supply and demand, and illegal trades are interrelated and have considerable impact on the development of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre. Besides, the strategic location and availability of items of trade were the main factors in the emergence and expansion of the market centre. This study also shows how market prices were influenced by the surrounding industries.

³ This gate has many other names like ‘the gate of conquest’, *Masjid bari*, *Amir bari*, *Falana bari* and *Aksum bari* or Bab el-futah in Arabic. See the map on the appendix.

⁴ This gate also called *Din bari*, *Babul nasir*, *Asmadin bari*, and *Hamaresa bari*.

⁵ Khat, chat or qat (*Catha edulis*) can be defined as chewable green leave which has the effect of a euphoric stimulation on the users and consecutive uses potentially results in addiction.

⁶ In Harar, place names, market centres and the name of gates are named differently by different languages, ethnic groups and even by individuals. For instance, one of the gates is named by the Harari as ‘*Asmadin Bari*’; by Egyptians ‘*Babul nasir*’; by Richard Burton, ‘*Hamaresa bari*’; by the Amhara ‘*Shawa bari*’; and the others. See a book entitled “*Kä Misirraq Afrika Bäzurya Ginb Yätatarüch Bîchagna Tintawi Katama*”. Harar: Harar publishing press, 1999 E. C, pp. 35-38.

2. Research Methods

Both primary and secondary data sources were used in this study. The primary data were gathered from archives and informants. Letters, correspondences, manuscripts, coins and artifacts in Harari municipality office, Sherif Harar City Museum, Arthur Rimbeau Museum, and Harar city are used. Secondary sources like books, journals and newspapers from Haramaya University, Arthur Rimbeau Museum, Harari Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau are intensively reviewed. To identify informants, snowball sampling technique was used. According to Gilbert (2001: 1), snowball sampling technique is the best approach to 'Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations'. After randomly identifying one elder, he/she was asked to lead the researcher to other potential informants whom he/she thinks will have information on the issues being discussed. The researcher continues searching for informants until data saturation. Few unstructured questionnaires were used to obtain as much data as possible, but most of the data were obtained by probing based on respondent's answers. Information gathered from primary and secondary sources were organized and classified based on themes. Then, the researcher carefully analyzed and interpreted the data by comparing to each other. The study focuses on a time period between 1938, a time when Italians reformed the market and constructed a big building in the centre of the market, and 1991 (a period when Magaalaa Guddoo lost its prominence).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Establishment of the Market

There is no consensus, neither among scholars nor my informants, on when did Magaalaa Guddoo Market centre was founded. Some informants traced back to the establishment of Harar city itself. They claimed starting from the beginning that there were small and informal traders around the present-day centre of the market (Informants: Abdulaziz Saliha, Usmael Hassan. Jugol, August 2011). Others mentioned the end of 13th or beginning of the 14th centuries as the beginning of the market by a 'well known person' named Ali Hamdon, who established it to facilitate the exchange of goods among the producers (agriculturalists surrounding Harar city) and the consumers (the residents of the city) (Informants: Idris Said, Fatiya Ahmed. Jugol, August 2011). Nevertheless, there is no doubt among my informants and recorded evidence that Gidir Magaalaa is the oldest market centre in Harar city, which is one of the ancient cities in Africa.⁷

After its establishment, it served as the meeting place of the local merchants of Harari, Oromo, Somali, Afar, Argobba and Amhara ethnic groups. In addition, foreign merchants of Arabian, Turkish, Armenian, Yemeni and Indian origins were the main traders in Gidir Magaalaa (Informant: Abdulahi Mohamed Sherif. Jugol, 2011). This can be proved by the coins which were discovered in Harar and are now

⁷ The only market which may compete with Magaalaa Guddoo in terms of age is 'Faras Magaalaa, which previously served as marketplace of horses, but now it already disappeared. A documentary film entitled Harar Global Capital of Peace: where the old meets the new, also said, "Gidir Magaalaa" (the big market) could be said the old Harar market.'

kept in the Sherif Harar City Museum. There are coins of more than nine countries that had trade relation with Harar city.⁸ In addition, the evidences in the museum show that Harar minted and used more than five types of its own coins long before the twentieth century.⁹ Moreover, the first Bank in Harar was established between 1875 to 1885 by the Emir of Harar (perhaps, the first in Ethiopia) around Magaalaa Guddoo market centre (Informants: Abdusabour Ahmed, Abdalla Ali Sherif. Jugol, August 2011). A magazine published by Harari region's social affairs office also supports this fact (Yähizbi Adarajajät Bahilina Mahibärawi Guday Büro Matsihet, 2008). The goal was probably to facilitate the trades around the market and to serve the increasing number of foreign merchants. The building which was used for this purpose is still standing in Harar city.

The Italian occupation of the 1930s was a turning point in the history of Magaalaa Guddoo. They not only reformed the market, but also constructed a big building (like a mall) in the centre of the market in 1938. The merchants used the hall to sell and distribute their goods. It was designed and constructed by Italian engineers and large number of local laborers did the physical work. My informants estimated that more than seventy workers were engaged in the construction (Informants: Ramadan Idris, Fatuma Yusuf. Jugol, August 2011). The building has the shape of two 'U's facing each other, and it has internal and external parts (See picture 1 of the appendix).

The internal parts of the building were given to the Muslim butchers, who used to sell meat outdoors on the wooden boards. The external parts were given to the owners of apparel shops or boutiques. The middle of the building was occupied by women who sell firewoods, spices, vegetables, basketry products and cereals. That is why some of my informants regarded the changes introduced by the Italians in and around Magaalaa Guddoo as 'modernization' (Informants: Jemal Abdulahi, Usmael Hassan. Jugol, August 2011).

The motive behind the Italians to construct this magnificent building for the traders was evident. *Ato* Maftu Zekaria (one of my informants), who wrote a number of books on the history and culture of Harar, raised at least two reasons: to win popularity among economically dominant merchants and the local people, and to redress the Christians who were opposing them by winning popularity among the Muslim community. For the same purpose, they built Mosques, established sharia courts and supplied pipe water for the Muslim community of Harar (Informant: Maftu Zekaria. Jugol, August 2011). This sounds true, because the Italians built no Christian churches or did nothing specifically for the Christians in Harar. Abdalla Ali, another informant, said 'this showed the Italians attempt to divide and rule'.

In addition, the Italians confiscated the property of foreign merchants (especially the Indians) and transferred to the local Harari people. One side of Gidir Magaalaa

⁸ The varieties of coins in the museum and the varieties of language minted on them are some of the indicators that the coins are from more than nine countries. Moreover, some coins have name of countries where they are minted and used.

⁹ Look also Ahmed Zekaria, 'Harari coins: A preliminary survey', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (Vol. 24, 1991, pp. 23-46). In addition, look, Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia* (London: Lalibela House, 1961), p. 267.

market, called *makina-girgir*, was a place where foreign tailors sat and sew garment to the local market. These foreigners were numerous, and they also employed many local Harari residents. After their occupation, the Italians took and transferred all the property and houses around *makina-girgir* to the Harari employees. Since then, the area has been occupied by the local tailors and it was named '*makina girgir*' after their sewing machine, *makina* (Informant: Abdalla Ali. Jugol, August 2011).

After 1945, during the regime of Haile Selassie I, each room in the Italian building was rented for 7.50 Birr to licensed local traders.¹⁰ By these periods, the trading activity in the market was so enormous, although there were few improvements in the market. At the same time, one part of the building was transformed into a prison because of the increasing number of crimes around the market (Informant: Ibrahim Abdurahaman. Jugol, August 2011). Another development after the withdrawal of the Italians was the rise of the interests of the neighboring colonial powers in Harar's coffee and hides. They considered Harar coffee as 'excellent in flavour and compares favourably with any other coffee'. The French, British, Italians and Germans brought finished goods (mostly cotton products) to the Harar market and bought coffee and hides from Harar (Rey, 1935: 226-235). This enhanced the expansion of Magaalaa Guddoo market, which started to play a significant role in the international trade. One of my informants considered this period as a 'peak of Magaalaa Guddoo' (Informant: Ibrahim Abdurahaman. Jugol August 2011).

During the *Derg* period, two important events led to the decline of the market. First, an overall renewal was made and the roads in the market were widened. At the time of the renewal, merchants were removed and forbidden to trade in the market. This paved the way for the establishment of small market centres at different places, decreasing the role of Magaalaa Guddoo as the only place to find goods. The socialist *Derg* also expelled foreign merchants who were leading suppliers and buyers of goods from the market (Informants: Ali Abane, Fatuma Yusuf. Jugol, August 2011). These had a negative impact on the development of the Harar city in general and Magaalaa Guddoo market centre in particular.

3.2. Merchants and Merchandise

The items of trade and leading merchants who were actively involved in the market of Magaalaa Guddoo had been changing throughout the years. The existing evidences show that the Oromo were the leading traders from the beginning. Sidney (1984: 23-39) indicated that the first negotiation made between the Oromo and Harari was a 'market treaty' and that they had 'mutual economic interdependence'. He stressed that the Oromo were the leading group in the Harar markets until the coming of foreign interventions. They brought coffee, saffron, hides, cattle and ivory that Harar used to export. In return, they bought goods like clothes and salt from the markets of

¹⁰ Most of the people who owned the arcades during Haile Selassie get old and their children inherited during the *Derg* regime. They rented one arcade by 300 Birr but only pay 7.50 Birr for the government. This trend continued still today.

Harar¹¹. Bosredon's (2004: 23-32) research on Harar showed the continuation of such trend in the twentieth century.

From the local traders, the Harari, Argobba and the Somali were also the main actors in the trade in Magaalaa Guddoo. It seems that there was a division of labor: the Oromo and Argobba came to the market mainly with their agricultural products like coffee, vegetables and cereal products; the Somali were basically known for their pastoral products like butter, milk, goat and sheep; while the Harari traded manufactured goods like clothes, basketry products and galleries that they imported from the Arab countries and India. Nonetheless, the Oromo also provided livestock products like meat, butter and live oxen, after which one of the *Jugol* gates, '*Sangaa Barrii*', an Oromo word for ox gate was called (Informant: Abdusabour Ahmed. Jugol, August 2011).

The Amhara people were the other merchants who traded in Gidir Magaalaa. Especially, after the occupation of Menelik, they began to trade in Magaalaa Guddoo as retailers who bought goods from producers and resold in the market (Informant: Idris Said. Jugol, August 2011). The domination of the market by the Gurage was a recent development. "It is possible to say that there were no Gurage in Magaalaa Guddoo until the rise of the *Derg*". It was during the *Derg* regime and especially after 1991 that the Gurage started to dominate the markets in Harar city (Informant: Adam Ali Sherif. Jugol, August 2011).

As already indicated above, foreign merchants from Arab countries, India, Turkey and Armenia were the major participants in the commerce of Gidir Magaalaa. Hecht (1987:1) indicated that Harar at one time 'depended on international and intercontinental trade'. Foreign merchants came to the market with textile products and luxurious goods like perfumes and jewelries, and returned to their home countries after buying hides, ivory, coffee and other cash crops (Informant: Ali Abane. Jugol, August 2011). Both the domestic and foreign merchants used donkeys and camels as means of transportation. Donkeys were specially used by the locals while foreigners preferred camels because they endured many hardships and had to take a very long journey in the desert up to the coastal ports of Zeila, Berbera and the others (Informants: Fatiya Ahmed, Usmael Hassan. Jugol, August 2011).

There were also influential merchants who had monopolized the trade in Magaalaa Guddoo. For instance, Mohamed Ali, an Indian merchant, dominated the trade in this market in the 1940s and 1950s. He monopolized the import and export business of Harar, even to the extent of producing and distributing 'Fanta tonic' drinks in Harar. His business was not limited to Harar; he traded as far as Addis Ababa. Harre (2015:291) studied about Mohamed Ali's company named G. M. Mohamedally & Co from 1886 to 1937. His book clearly presented how trade in Harar in particular and Ethiopia in general was dominated by this company. He said "In Harar, success proved indeed to be fast." All the commerce was dominated by Mohamed Ali.

¹¹ Moreover, Muhammad Hassan and Caulk Richard indicated the continuation of such trend in 19th and 20th centuries. Look Muhammad Hassan, 'The Relation between Harar and the surrounding Oromo between 1880-1887' (BA. Thesis: Addis Ababa University, pp. 5-43); and Caulk Richard, 'Harar Town and its Neighbours in 19th c'. Journal of African History, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1997, pp. 369-386.

Magaalaa Guddoo as the only big market at the time and closeness of Mohamed Ali's residence to the market shows the specific significance of the market at the time.

Mohamed Ali imported *Abujadi*¹², *Foota*,¹³ *Mamudin*,¹⁴ perfumes and other luxurious goods from India and the Arab countries. In return, he exported coffee, ivory and hides to foreign markets. He had strong relationships with the royal families and especially with Haile Selassie.¹⁵ The palace of *Ras* Mekonnen, the father of Emperor Haile Selassie, which now serves as Sherif Harar City Museum, was said to be built by Mohamed Ali and his employees from India (Informants: Abdalla Ali Sherif, Aster Desta. Jugol, August 2011). (See picture 3 on A and B in the appendix).

He was a celebrated businessman at the time. One of my informants remembered: 'when he arrived in Harar, the situation seems like a King had come' (Informant: Woyinishet Birhanu. Jugol, August 2011). His luxurious and splendid two-storied residence with more than ten rooms, which is currently situated in the east of Magaalaa Guddoo, justifies his status and wealth at that time (See C on picture 3 in the appendix). Although most part of the building was destroyed (currently only its foundation is on the site), the building which served as a storehouse reveals the hugeness of Mohamed Ali's capital and the vastness of the import-export trade he carried out at the time and his huge role in the development of Magaalaa Guddoo.

There are some interesting things to say in relation to the nomenclature of commodities traded in Magaalaa Guddoo. They help us identify the countries that had trade relation with Harar and merchants who traded in the market. For instance, textile products sold in Magaalaa Guddoo were named after the countries they came from: *Shinawi*, from China; *Bombey*, from Bombay; *Jawe*, from India; *Atlas*, from Morocco and so on (Informant: Abdalla Ali Sherif. Jugol, August 2011).

There were changes throughout history in the types of trade items in Gidir Magaalaa. After declaring Harar as 'essentially a commercial town', Richard Burton¹⁶ (1856: 337-338) listed the trade goods of the time. Export items included ivory, coffee, tobacco, safflower, cotton, mules, wheat, ghee, honey and sheep's fat. Items of import were silks, brasses, sheet copper, rice, loaf sugar, gunpowder and paper. In 1888, Harar produced and exported 200 to 300 tons of coffee (Yusuf, 1961) which increased to 3000 to 5000 tons annually in the twentieth century (Rey, 1935: 226). As a central market, Magaalaa Guddoo played a significant role in the exchange of these items of trade. However, after 1950s, most of the merchandise in Harar in general and Magaalaa Guddoo in particular, which were listed by Burton disappeared from the market and others drastically declined in amount. By discussing some of the items of trade in Gidir Magaalaa in detail, we can understand why and how this happened.

¹² A flat white textile product which can be forged into different traditional dressing style by local sewers.

¹³ A kind of flat cloth used to cover the upper part of the body. It is found in wide varieties color and size.

¹⁴ A white soft textile brought from Arab countries. At the time (1950s and 1960s) one meter of 'Mamudi' was bought by 1.50 Birr. Still it is a popular clothe in the Muslim community; especially, among the Oromo women.

¹⁵ Other two of my informants including Abdalla Ali Sherif mentioned as Mohamed Ali has blood relation with Haile Selassie.

¹⁶ The first foreigner who entered Harar disguising as an Arab merchant and recorded the history of Harar.

As indicated above, coffee was one of the important items together with other cash crops like cotton, safflower and tobacco.¹⁷ Most of these products were coming from the surrounding Oromo and especially the Ala, people who were/are found to the west of Harar. The leading merchants and the governors encouraged the local farmers to produce cash crops. Moreover, Caulk (1977: 381-382) indicated that ‘Those who hesitated to begin planting grain and coffee were attacked until they agreed to nominate leaders who would be responsible for parcels of virgin land’. These forced the local farmers to focus on the production and dissemination of these cash crops. This was because if they do not do that they will be attacked. The objective was to encourage local producers and traders to focus on the production and dissemination of the above cash crops.

In the twentieth century, although coffee remained the main item of trade in Magaalaa Guddoo, the sales of goods like ivory, tobacco, safflower and cottons considerably declined (Informant: Ibrahim Ahmed. Jugol, August 2011). This was because of the environmental, human and market factors. For instance, in the second half of the twentieth century, tobacco became the main import of Harar city through contraband trades; ivory declined because the number of elephants hunted in the neighbouring localities considerably declined; and cotton plants were gradually replaced by khat. In addition, there was no urge from governors or merchants to plant cotton, safflower or other cash crops like the earlier periods (Informants: Hussein Ahmed, Usmael Hassan. Jugol, August 2011). As a result, cash crops listed by Burton (1856) in the 19th century declined and gradually disappeared from Harar and Magaalaa Guddoo market in the 1950s.

On the other hand, khat emerged as the dominant item of trade in Gidir Magaalaa. It was believed that khat was ‘first cultivated and used’ in the largely Muslim dominated areas of eastern Ethiopia (Abbink, 1992: 89-93). After a time, it has become one of the popular items that has been produced and consumed by the Harari, Oromo, and Amhara, and later by the Gurage (Informant: Hussein Ahmed. Jugol, August 2011). Nevertheless, before the 1950s, there was no evidence showing that Harar exported this item; it was mostly used for domestic consumption.¹⁸ Since the 1950s, however, because of the increasing demand both internally and externally, expansion of the transportation system and shortage of land, khat emerged as a dominant product replacing coffee. After the occupation of Hararghe by Menelik, land was allocated for state officials and soldiers and this created shortage of land. The construction of Djibouti-Dire Dawa railway facilitated the transportation of cash crops in the region. As a result, farmers replaced their farmlands with khat products (Gebissa, 2004). Cochrane and O’Regan (2016: 28-29) also indicated that after 1950s, millions of farmers replaced their land with khat. Since 1990s, khat has

¹⁷ In addition to the items discussed here, Abate Alula added legume and hides as export item of Harar. Refer his article, ‘The Growth and Development of Small and Medium Sized Ketema Settlements in the Harar Highlands’, IV, *Congresso International de istudi Ethiopic*, (Roma, 10-15 pril 1972), Roma Academeia Deilincei, 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 727-744.

¹⁸ Richard F. Burton mentioned about Khat trade around Zeila during his visit and its popularity in Yemen and parts of the Arab world, but it never related with Harar. Refer Richard F. Burton *et al.*, (1856) pp. 77-79.

become the dominant product in Harar and other parts of Ethiopia due to ‘market forces, as khat fetched higher profits for farmers.’

In addition, starting from the 1980s, products like glass bead, copper wire, used clothes, beverages, firewood, canned foods, coffee tree leaves,¹⁹ vegetables, various spices, salt, rubber shoes, empty Jerry-cans and plastic bottles have started to overwhelm the market of Gidir Magaalaa (Bosredon, 2004). This signals the dawn of its decline. Presently, the alternative name for Magaalaa Guddoo is ‘Meat Market’ because it is the main item of trade. From the Italian occupation until now, the internal part of the building in the market has been occupied by butcher shops²⁰ (Informant: Ramadan Idris. Jugol, August 2011). The following table shows some of the products and their prices in the 1950s and 1970s. It is obtained from my informants who used to trade in Gidir Magaalaa market centre.

¹⁹ A popular drink named ‘*Ashar*’ was made from this. It is mainly popular in Dire Dawa, Harar and Jijjiga.

²⁰ Although there was no consensus among my informants, some of them explained that slaves were also another important item of trade in Gidir Magaalaa particularly until the coming of Italians.

Table 1. Some of the goods and their prices in Magaalaa Guddoo in the 1950s and 1970s

Item	Food items			Livestock (Medium sized)			Textile products			Cereal products per kg*		
	Butter 1 kilo	Meat 1kilo	Oil 1 litter	One goat	One Ox	One Camel	One <i>Gogora</i> 1 meter	<i>Abujadi</i> 1 meter	One <i>Fota</i>	Corn	<i>Teff</i>	Wheat
Prices in the 1950s	2.50 Birr	1.75 Birr	2.25 Birr	40 Birr	170 Birr	200 Birr	7 Birr	0.33 Birr	6 Birr	0.30 Birr	0.35 Birr	0.30 Birr
Prices in the 1970s	3.50 Birr	2.50 Birr	3.00 Birr	54 Birr	220 Birr	300 Birr	9 Birr	0.50 Birr	9 Birr	0.55 Birr	0.60 Birr	0.90 Birr

Source: Compiled from different informants

* Although there was no measurement in kilograms at the time in most parts of Magaalaa Guddoo, my informants estimated approximately. For example, cereal products were measured by '*tasa*', a metal which holds equal or little more than one kilogram. Accordingly, one *tasa* of corn was sold by 0.30 Birr and *teff* by 0.35 Birr.

As it is seen in Table 1, the prices of almost all the foodstuffs, livestock and cereal products increased by 100% in the 1970s; particularly, the price of wheat increased by 200%. This was due to a strong demand created by the food factories in Dire Dawa and Harar city. Baldet (1970: 51-55) said: ‘industries of Dire Dawa depended mainly on the raw materials from Hararghe province’. Thus, the flour factories in Dire Dawa and other food factories in Harar needed large amounts of wheat from Harar market, increasing its demand and prices.

Similarly, the meat processing plant established in Dire Dawa increased its supply of frozen beef to 64.36 kg and corned beef to 479.55 kg in 1977 (Maikälawî Pilan, 1979). Evidently, this could have raised the demand for livestock in the region, consequently mounting their prices. Above all, Hamaresa edible oil and flour factory in Harar, which produced 3.98 thousand tons of flour in 1977, also took most of its inputs from Harar markets (*Ibid*). Moreover, the drought of the 1970s and the rise of oil had significant impact on the overall prices of goods in the market (Marcus, 1994: 181). Generally, the expansion of industry, which led to the rise of demand for raw materials and the 1970s ‘oil shock’, led to the boom in the price of goods in Gidir Magaalaa market. These negatively affected the development of the market.

3.3. Illegal (Unofficial) Trade and the Decline of the Market

The trade in and around Magaalaa Guddoo was predominantly informal and was neither controlled by the government nor subjected to taxation. At the beginning, illegal trade was difficult in Harar because of its walls. The Emir of Harar collected taxes for both import and export items through his representatives at the five gates of *Jugol* wall²¹ (Informant: Ibrahim Abdurahaman. Jugol, August 2011). These representatives were called *Barigoyita*, which literally means the lords of the gates. In addition to collecting taxes, through the medium which they call ‘*Mahlaq*’, they had also registered all people and items that trafficked in and out of Harar through the gates of the city (Informant: Abdalla Ali Sherif. Jugol, August 2011). The tax collection system was well organized and there were custom offices and recite issuance. See the recite and stamps used on each of the gates on picture 2 in the appendix.

However, after the construction of the railway that traversed Dire Dawa, illegal (unofficial) trade, a trade which is not subjected to taxation and beyond the control of the state, became common in Harar. It was after this that the markets of Harar started to be dominated by goods imported through Djibouti, unofficially. My informants call this ‘contraband trade’ (Informant: Ibrahim Ahmed. Jugol, August 2011).²² Others related the increase in illegal trade with the irregular taxation policies in the

²¹ Presented in *Harar global capital of peace: Where the old meets the new*, a documentary film produced by Harari National Regional State. Harar: Sine-pix Film Studio, 2001.

²² A research work by Rift Valley Institute also indicated ‘from the 1970s to the early 1990s, Dire Dawa’s economy was highly dependent on contraband goods coming from Djibouti and Somalia’. According to my informants these trends started in 1950s/60s and have an impact on Harar economy too. Look a paper entitled ‘Expectations and belonging in Dire Dawa drivers, dynamics and challenges of rural to urban mobility.’ Submitted to the research and evidence facility. Rift Valley Institute, 2018.p.12.

region. Tax collection in Harar, which reached its peak during Menelik, was abandoned by the Italians during their brief occupation. After returning from exile, Haile Selassie institutionalized and introduced different reforms and started to collect taxes again. It was at this point that some merchants refused to pay taxes and started an organized illegal trade in and around Harar, and this had a significant impact on Magaalaa Guddoo (Informant: Maftu Zekaria. Jugol, August 2011).

Since the 1950s, illegal trade has become beyond the control of the state. Some of such traders were well organized and equipped with firearms; even there were frequent fight with the soldiers and tax officers around the wall of Harar²³ (Informant: Ibrahim Abdurahaman. Jugol, August 2011). As shown in Table 2, the number of illegal traders in Harar had been on the rise starting from 1987 and reached its peak in 1992. That was because of the political instability and the resultant loose of control in the region.

Table 2. Number of illegal traders in harar markets in the 1980s and 1990s

Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number of illegal traders	137	157	813	859	843	999	916	995

Source: Hararī Hizb Biherawī Kililawī Māngist Yāpilanina Ikonomī Limat Bīro, *Yā Hararī Hizbkilil Statistikal Abstract Mātsihet*, Harar: Bā Hararī Hizb Biherawī Kililawī Māngist Yāpilanina Ikonomī Limat Bīro, Tahisas 1996 E.C, p. 77.

The ‘contraband’ traders loaded their merchandise like tobacco, ‘*Shisha*’²⁴ used clothes, perfumes and electronic equipment from Djibouti. Animals like donkeys and camels were used to ship into Harar market, especially during the nighttime to elude capture by state police. This trade had a significant impact on Magaalaa Guddoo and the economy of the Harar city in general. For instance, new marketplaces outside the wall of *Jugol* emerged at different places. ‘*Showa Bari*’, ‘*Taiwan*’ and recently ‘*Sijara Tara*’ were the prominent ones.²⁵ These new marketplaces shifted the balance of trade from Magaalaa Guddoo, because the goods in these places were priced lower than the goods in Gidir Magaalaa. This was because most of the trade activities in these new marketplaces (which is outside of the wall and difficult to control) were brought without taxation. In addition, these three new markets were dominated by the Gurage retailers, who bought goods from the contrabandists and resold with low price (Informants: Ramadan Idris, Askale Mekurya. Jugol, August 2011). Most of the time, the Gurage preferred to sell goods at a low price (they get large profit by selling large quantity). As a result, they attracted more customers from Magaalaa Guddoo.

²³ My informants are discussing about illegal trade, a trade which is beyond the taxation system of the time as contraband.

²⁴ Wikipedia defines it as the molasses-based tobacco concoction smoked in a hookah.

²⁵ Recently, the import of contraband goods changed from Djibouti to Artishek, Togwachale of Somalia, and Ethiopian Somali.

Because of this a large number of people started to flow to these new markets and new suburbs emerged around the wall. The expansion of illegal trade not only affected Magaalaa Guddoo traders, the income of Harar from trade also drastically decreased. One recent report indicates that illegal trade still remained the main challenge in Harar city (Ministry of Works and Urban Development, 2006).

Next to illegal trade, the diminution of the role of Harar in general in the local trade can be mentioned as the cause for the decline of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre. Bosredon (2004: 24) said 'Harar's role in trade had slowly, but surely, started to dwindle'. Evidences show that, starting from the military regime, only small traders with low quality and quantity of products traded in the markets of Harar, particularly Magaalaa Guddoo. The merchants, items of trade and capital that circulated in the market declined drastically. Bosredon mentioned two reasons for the decline of commerce in Harar: the emergence of other trade centres, and the loss of independence. On the first point, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2010) stated that Harar's 'trading activities, eclipsed by [that] of Dirē Dawa [. . .] in the twentieth century'. Having the advantage of railway, the trade in Dire Dawa became more profitable than that of Harar and attracted more buyers and sellers.

Nevertheless, evidences show that the association made by Bosredon between the decline of commercial activities in Harar and the loss of its independence was not convincing. It seems that this was generalized by looking at the ostensible realities in Harar since the occupation of Menelik in the 1880s. But sources reveal that the process of unification and the events since then facilitated the trade in the region and increased the strategic importance of Harar in the country. Regarding the trade activities in Ethiopia after the end of the unification process, Zewde (1991: 94) indicated that Shewan's victory at Embabo in 1882, the decline of Gondar and Matamma after the conflict with Mahdist, the shift of focus to south, and the establishment of Addis Ababa as a centre had the 'effect of giving the eastward route, terminating at Zeila or Berbera on the Somali coast, precedence over the north-bound route'. Harar is the main destination and crossroad for the trade in the 'eastward' and particularly for the traders from Zeila or Berbera because of its geographical location. Thus, the occupation of Menelik, which, according to Bosredon, was the 'loss of independence', cannot be mentioned as a cause for the decline of trade in the city. Rather, it increased the strategic importance of Harar for trade in the newly unified state of Ethiopia.

In addition, the establishment of other marketplaces at different locations surrounding Harar is a more plausible reason for the decline of trade in Harar and the role of Magaalaa Guddoo. For instance, Haramaya, Beddenno, Beddeesa, Gelemsoo, Chelenqoo, Kersa and others previously did not have their own marketplaces and used the only market in the region, Magaalaa Guddoo. Since the 1950s, most of these places have established their own market centres and became self-sufficient to some extent. After this, people in those areas began to come to Harar only in search of high-quality goods (Informant: Ramadan Idris. Jugol, August 2011; Look also Bosredon, 2004).

The last but not the least is the role of the Italians. Although Italy reconstructed the market and tried to modernize, it also took some measures which negatively affected the market. First, as indicated above, Italy expelled foreign merchants that played a significant role in the development of the market. In addition, in an effort to redirect the trade through Italy, they introduced ‘complicated maze of permits’ which affected ‘the whole business community’ in Ethiopia, including traders in Magaalaa Guddoo. (Harre, 2015: 291).

Generally, Magaalaa Guddoo had a tremendous economic and social significance for the city of Harar, its community and for the whole region in general. Besides providing the people of the city with different goods and foodstuffs, the market played important role in the ‘social life of the people’. The trade in the market increased the income of the farmers and at the same time promoted settlement (Abate, 1974: 727-744). Gidir Magaalaa, not only hosted all kinds of goods, but it was also a meeting place for the Somali, Oromo, Argobba, Afar, Harari, Amhara and Gurage people. A documentary film produced by Harari National Regional State presents this case as follow:

The unique nature of [Gidir] magala [was] the existence of different tribes with their unique cultural dressings, and as a result, the Europeans named it the colourful market. It [was] colourful mainly because the market serve[d] different nations and nationalities with their cultural commodities.²⁶

Above all, the decline of Magaalaa Guddoo played important role in fostering the role of women in commerce. The decline of the market and the expansion of small traders boosted the role of women. For instance, regarding the trade in Gidir Magaalaa and the role played by women, Bosredon (2004: 28-34) used the expression: the ‘Harari Saleswomen’. The trade of khat, which he called the ‘women’s world’, was dominated by women. Moreover, he talked about ‘women coffee vendors’ who were found at the centre of the market. Gibb (1996: 101) also referred to the women khat traders in Gidir Magaalaa as ‘regular market ladies’. Silimilarly, Hecht (1987: 17) indicated that this is a great achievement in a society where women’s social and economic security depended only on marriage and ‘women were not entitled to learn or to practice trade [and] make a living’! Thus, Gidir Magaalaa also increased the role of women in the economy and their status in the society.

4. Conclusion

The process of the foundation of Gidir Magaalaa (Magaalaa Guddoo) market centre proved the theory of Cantillon (2010: 31). According to him, ‘Entrepreneurs [Ali Hamdon, in the case of Magaalaa Guddoo] establish markets in centrally located villages provide the necessary conditions under which prices are established between supply and demand’. After its establishment, Magaalaa Guddoo served as the heartbeat of Harar city and the destination of the long-distance traders from Zeila, Berbera and Djibouti, and the meeting place of the Oromo, Amhara, Somali, Gurage

²⁶ Presented in *Harar Global Capital of peace: where the Old Meets the New*, a documentary film produced by Harari National Regional State. Harar: Sine-pix Film Studio, 2001.

and others. It was the oldest and the biggest market centre in the region. The only market which may compete with it in terms of age was '*Faras Magaalaa*', a market that a French poet Arthur Rimbeau, who lived in Harar between 1881 and 1891, took its picture. *Faras Magaalaa*²⁷ was a place where horses were bought and sold.²⁸ Written evidence as well show the historicity of both *Gidir* and *Faras Magaalaa* ('Harar integrated development plan project, Report 2006). But, the former was more famous and bigger in terms of the items of trade and merchants it brought together.

The history of Magaalaa Guddoo shows the strong relationship between the royal family and the leading merchants. For instance, the tie between Emperor Haile Selassie and Mohamed Ali was evident at the time. The monarch provided the merchants with suitable conditions for trade; in return, they paid taxes and supported the existing system (Informants: Ibrahim Ahmed, Aster Dasta. Jugol, August 2011). However, during the *Derg regime*, the relation between the government and the merchants, especially foreigners, were not good. They were expelled from Harar and Ethiopia and their properties were nationalized by the government (Bosredon, 2004). This had a negative impact on the development of Magaalaa Guddoo.

Moreover, this study revealed the relationship between market centres, the availability of items of trade, and the strategic value of locations. The people and the land surrounding Harar provided the city's residents with agricultural and livestock products, which played a significant role in the expansion of commerce in Magaalaa Guddoo market centre. Thus, the rich market of Harar was not without the fertility and prosperity of the surrounding areas, particularly Oromiya. Strategically, Magaalaa Guddoo was found in the centre of Harar. In addition to pulling together the roads from the five gates of the *Jugol* wall, Gidir Magaalaa was situated at an intersection between quarters of Harar city. Moreover, it was found only 219 miles or 352 km from Zeila and Berbera ports. This facilitated foreign trade and export of goods from the market, increasing the demand for goods.

Finally, the change in the policies of government and the types of commodities had its own impact on the development of Magaalaa Guddoo market centre. The irregular taxation policies together with the construction of Dire Dawa railroad facilitated the illegal trade and the decline of the market. Exposure to foreign goods through contraband trade fundamentally changed the goods in the market from ivory, coffee, safflower, woven cottons, wheat, ghee, honey, and sheep's fat to relatively unprofitable, less significant and unsustainable items like glass bead, copper wire, used clothes, '*shisha*', beverages, canned foods, coffee tree leaves, plastic shoes, empty jerry-cans, tobaccos and bottles. Currently, Gidir Magaalaa is reduced to a market where one can only find meat, staples and household equipment.²⁹

²⁷ Faras Magaalaa is a market found near Magaalaa Guddoo. It is known for its trade in horse at the time.

²⁸ *Harar global capital of peace: where the old meets the new*, film produced by Harari National Regional State. Harar: Sine-pix Film Studio, 2001.

²⁹ It was evident that some of the market centers in Harar city are disappearing. For instance, the market around *Bedroberi* is already nonexistent at present. May be the fate of Magaalaa Guddoo is the same if the concerned bodies are not in a position to take necessary measures.

Nevertheless, Harar in general remained an important commercial centre and a major source of coffee and khat, although not famous as the previous times.

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7. Appendices

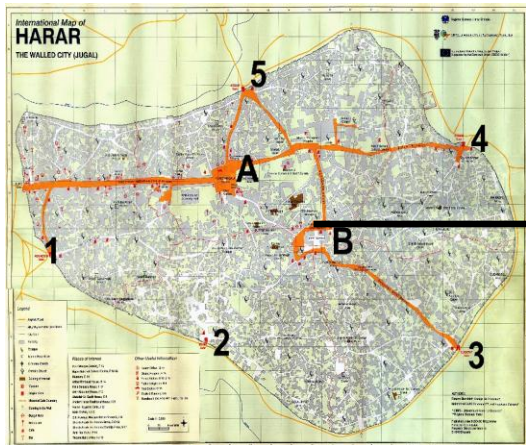
List of informants

No.	Name	Age	Date and place of interview	Remark
1.	Abdalla Ali Sherif (<i>Ato</i>)	-	01/01/2012, Harar	Owner and administrator of Sherif Harar City Museum. Provided me with valuable information regarding the market during and after the Italians.
2.	Abdulahi Mohamed Sherif (<i>Ato</i>)	65	13/12/2011, Harar	Shop owner in Harar city. He gave information on the foreign merchants in the market.
3.	Abdulaziz Saliha (<i>Ato</i>)	68	16/12/2011, Harar	A trader in the market of Magaalaa Guddoo. Provided information on the origin of the market.
4.	Abdusabour Ahmed (<i>Ato</i>)	72	11/12/2011, Harar	He is a tour guide in Sherif Harar City Museum. He is resourceful regarding the merchants and items of trade in the market.
5.	Adam Ali Sherif (<i>Ato</i>)	54	9/12/2011, Harar.	He is a worker in Sherif Harar City Museum. His information on the Gurage merchants in Gidir Magaalaa was important.
6.	Ali Abane (<i>Ato</i>)	71	11/12/2011, Harar	Shop owner in Harar. He is resourceful on the merchants, items of trade, and decline of the market.
7.	Askale Mekurya (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	73	12/12/2011, Harar	Trades different items like potato, onion, tomato and other vegetables. She offered information about merchants

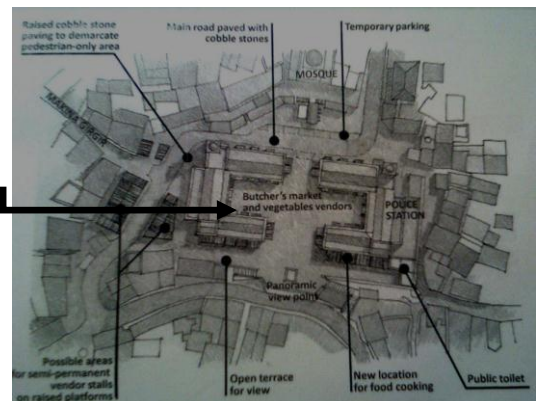
8.	Aster Dasta (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	57	11/12/2011, Harar	like Gurage. Resides in the house of Mohamed Ali in Harar and her family has direct contact with him.
9.	Fatiya Ahmed (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	61	9/12/2011, Harar	Small trader around the market; information on the means of transportation was from here.
10.	Fatuma Yusuf (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	67	8/12/2011, Harar	Small trader in the market of Magaalaa Guddoo since the <i>Derg</i> regime.
11.	Genet Mengiste (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	71	14/12/2011, Harar	Sells different spices in the market since the <i>Derg</i> regime.
12.	Hussein Ahmed (<i>Ato</i>)	74	16/12/2011, Harar	A farmer who lived around Harar and engaged in Khat trade.
13.	Haji Ahmed (<i>Ato</i>)	78	11/12/2011, Harar	A shop owner and trader in Harar.
14.	Haji Yusuf Ahmed (<i>Sheik</i>)	85	13/12/2011, Harar	A pensioner who lives around Magaalaa Guddoo.
15.	Idris Said (<i>Ato</i>)	64	16/12/2011, Harar	A shop guard in the market who offered information about the merchants.
16.	Ibrahim Ahmed (<i>Ato</i>)	80	11/12/2011, Harar	Meat trader in Gidir Magaalaa. He gave valuable information; especially, regarding the buildings.
17.	Ibrahim Abdurahaman (<i>Ato</i>)	62	15/12/2011, Harar	Now working in the Harari People Regional State Culture Heritage and Tourism Bureau. He is a resourceful informant on the origin, expansion and contraband trade.
18.	Jemal Abdulahi (<i>Ato</i>)	60	15/12/2011, Harar	A teacher who provided information on the Italian building.
19.	Maftu Zekaria (<i>Ato</i>)	42	16/12/2011, Harar	Published many books on Harari people's history, culture and heritage. Now, he also works in Harari People Regional State Culture Heritage and Tourism Bureau. Gave valuable information on the building and contraband trade.

20.	Ramadan Idris (<i>Ato</i>)	75	11/12/2011, Harar	A teacher in Harar. Gave information on the Italians' reforms in the market and the decline of the market.
21.	Usmael Hassan (<i>Ato</i>)	85	14/12/2011, Harar	A guard who lived in the inner part of Magaalaa Guddoo for more than 50 years. Gave information on the contraband and decline of the market.
22.	Woyinishet Birhanu (<i>Wayzaro</i>)	63	13/12/2011, Harar	Now lives around the house of Mohamed Ali. She has seen Mohamed Ali.

Picture 1: Map of the walled city of Hara (Jugol) and its gates marching to Gidir Magaalaa (B) at the centre.



Source: Taken from a DVD “Harar Global Capital of Peace: where the old meets the new. 2001. Film produced by Harari National Regional State. Harar: Sine-pix Film Studio.



Source: Taken from a discussion document ‘The Regeneration of the Magaalaa Guddoo area in Jugol’ (Part II), Thursday 09, December 2010), p. 5.

Key to the map:

A. *Faras Magaalaa*

B. *Magaalaa Guddoo*

1. *Asmadin Bari (Shewa Bari, Din Bari)*
2. *Badro Bari (Alim Bari, Jihad Bari, Kara Badwa)*
3. *Suqutat Bari (Babul Salam, Sanga Bari)*
4. *Argob Bari (Id Bari, Kara Erer)*
5. *Assum Bari (Masjid Bari, Zayla Bari, Falana Bari)*

Picture 2: The recite and stamps used to collect taxes on the gates of Jugol in 19th and twentieth century.



Source: Obtained from Sherif Harar City Museum

Key:

- 1= Recite used in 1920s to collect taxes from goods traded in Harar.
- 2= Stamps used to collect taxes from items came through the gate of *Sanga Bari* or *Suqutat Bari*.
- 3= Stamps used to collect taxes from the items which interred Harar through the gate of *Erer Bari* or *Argob Bari*.

Picture 3: Photo showing Magaalaa Guddoo and its merchants at different times in History



Source: Picture A, B, E and F are taken from the useum of Arthur Rimbeau in Harar. Picture C and D are current pictures taken by the author.

Key:

A= The Arab merchants and Haile Selassie at the centre on the left side.

B= Mohamed Ali (on the right), Haile Selassie and his family sitting.

C= The residence of Mohamed Ali, currently found on the eastern part of Gidir Magaalaa market centre.

D= Magaalaa Guddoo's internal part, now serves as a meat market.

E= Meat market around Magaalaa Guddoo before the coming of Italians, taken by Arthur Rimbaud.

F= Merchants, their camels and the Italian soldiers around Magaalaa Guddoo in the second half of the 1930s.