



Law, Social Justice & Global Development
(An Electronic Law Journal)

Trade For Peace Not For Conflict: Harari Experience

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This is a **refereed article** published: 31st July 2013

Citation: Abubaker, A, 'Trade for Peace not for Conflict: Harari Experience', 2013(1), Law, Social Justice & Global Development Journal (LGD)

Abstract

Harar and Hararis history is much related with trade. But little is said about the fact that they have been using trade as a means of securing and maintaining peace. To preserve Harar and extend trade beyond it they made trade concessions to the Oromos and allowed the Somalis to derive income by protecting caravans that went out from and came into Harar. They allowed their currencies to circulate beyond the city-state while at the same time permitting foreign currencies to be used in the city state. Thus, trade for Hararis was not a source of conflict; rather it was a means of achieving and maintaining peace. This article suggests that underlying the idea of peaceful trade were values such as righteousness, honesty, sincerity, diligence, trust, non-discrimination and fairness in the relations among traders. Legal rules among which the sanctity of property rights and of contract were paramount functioned to protect these values.

Keywords

Harar trade, ethical and legal values, export/import, tax, price, property rights, sanctity of contract, market, currency, peace, development

1. Introduction

Many scholars and travelers (Abbas Ahmed, 1992, Ahmed Zekaria, 1997, Burton, 1966, Caulk, 1977, Muhammad Hassen, 1973 Pankhurst, 1968, Stitz, 1976 and Waldron, 1984 etc.) wrote about Harar trade history. While some wrote about the coins of Harar others wrote on how the Hararis preserved Harar as a market place and secured the trade route applying various methods to regulate the relations they had with the surrounding people. Nevertheless, they have not said much about how Hararis used trade as a means of avoiding conflict and maintaining peace. That inspired me to identify and discuss some of those methods relying on the literature and reports produced by scholars and travelers in order to examine their relevance to contemporary Ethiopian society. It is worthy, however, first briefly to discuss how Harar moved from being the capital city of the militant kingdom of Adal into a mercantile city-state.

2. From Capital City to Mercantile City State

Sir Richard F. Burton visited the Islamic city of Harar in 1885 staying ten days disguised as Sheikh Abdullahi from Yemen (Yusuf Ahmed, 1961:375). Quoting Makrizi Burton (1966, 180) informs us Harar was a capital of Hadiya whereas others (Hussein Ahmed, 2010:112, Mahfuz Zekaria, 2000:9, Waldron, 1984: 23) tell us Harar was the capital city of *Adal*. Before Harar became the capital city *Dakar* was the capital city of Adal. In 1470 Harar replaced *Dakar* which started to decline.

As early as the fourteenth century, some members of the ruling family of the *Walasma* dynasty of *Ifat* shifted their political centre from the eastern Shewa region to the highlands of Harar. Under the control of the rulers from *Ifat*, the town of Harar and its environs thus became the nucleus of the sultanate of *Adal*, which gradually extended its hegemony into large parts of the hinterland of Zeila, and challenged the Christian kingdom in the north. (Hussein Ahmed, 2010: 112)

While Burton (1966:182) suggested that Harar was established in the 7th Century and described it as a mere mass of Bedouin villages before the reign of Imam Muhammad (or properly Ahmed), Haggai (1994:29) described Harar as an urban center in the 13th century. According to Burton (1966:182) and (Abbas Ahmed, 1992:3-4) Harar was founded by Arab invaders or those Arab groups who Harris (1844: 221) refers to as sons of Yemen migrated from Hadhramaut who in the 7th century conquered and colonized the low tract between the Red Sea and the high lands. Nicholl (1997:120) also agrees with Abbas Ahmed on who founded Harar though the twelfth century is the period he prescribed for its establishment. Other sources, for instance, David (2007: 1) informs us “Harari tradition has witnessed a certain Haboba, the true founder of the city and its Emir.”

It seems there is a difference between Burton and Abbas Ahmed as to who those Arabs were. While Abbas Ahmed specified the Arabs as migrants from Yemen Hadhramaut, Burton identified them simply as Arab warriors. Furthermore, since conquest presupposes the subjugation of the inhabitants of the area conquered then we may say Burton assumed the original inhabitants were people who were conquered by the Arabs, the migration explanation may or may not presume the existence of original inhabitants nor relationship based on subjugation.

Unlike Burton, Mahfuz Zekaria (2000:4) agrees with Haggai for he noted that Harar was found by Aw Abadir, the legendary father of Hararis who settled *Haran, Aware, Gasa, Wergar, Gature, Addis* and *Abogn* clans establishing advanced administration in 940-950 A.D. in the present site of Harar. Similar folklore is told about who selected the present location of Harar. "A group of religious and civic leaders who met one day to determine a suitable site to establish a new city chose four sites. After long argument, a choice was made and Harar was built on the site of the present old walled city. The choice was made because of the suitable elevation, the splendid landscape and the many rivers and streams in the area." (Amare Getachew & A.D. Krikorian, 1973: 354)

Whoever was the founder, Harar acquired its present shape in the days of Amir Nur Ibn AL-Mujahid (1551-1568). According to Harari tradition, the Amir on one occasion sitting on *Gey Humburti*- the Navel of Harar- begged *Khadir*, (the nearest equivalent figure in the literature of Christians and Jews, is Melchizedek or Melchisedek) that some Sharif might be brought from Mecca and build a permanent city (Burton, 1966:186 Mahfuz, 2000:17) His request was accepted and Sharif Yonis, his son Fekr-el Din and a descendant from the *Ansar* or Auxiliaries of the Prophet were settled at Harar.

Nicholl (1997: 120) broadens the rule of Harar to include a large and fertile province, Hararghe, and its peaceable agricultural inhabitants. The Amirs who ruled Harar were Seventy two in number according to Wagner (1974:213) or 76 as mentioned by Abdu-Khalil (2007:30-34) For the purpose of this paper it is only necessary to mention the most prominent Amirs.

Amir Mahfuz was a religious-military leader fought the Abyssinians for almost thirty years taking advantage of the forty days rigorous fasting days when the Abyssinians were less capable of carrying arms (Harris, 1844:269, Burton, 1966:181, Haggai, 1994:30). After his defeat and death he was succeeded by his son in law Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim known as *Gragn* by the Abyssinians who occupied and ruled Ethiopia for 15 years till he was defeated by the Portuguese army (ibid, 182).

Imam Ahmed was succeeded by his nephew, Amir Nur who after defeating Galaudius¹ returned to Harar with the beheaded head of Galaudius as trophy. As a consequence, both Abyssinians and Harar were weakened. Thus, “taking the advantage of the exhaustion of the two states, the migrating Oromos overran both, damaging them irreparably for long time.”(Muhammad Hassen, 1980:228) As a consequence the Adal kingdom shifted its capital to Awsa leaving Harar to its own fate. Surprisingly while Harar survived miraculously Awsa disappeared. Harar was possibly saved by the *Jagol*, the wall around the city built by Amir Nur (Ahmed Zekaria, 1997:18).

The effects of the occupation of those territories by the Oromo people were multi-dimensional. The Oromos over-ran many cities such as *Sem, Shoa, Negeb, Dekker, and Haragaya* (Ahmed Zekaria, *ibid*) which were probably satellites of Harar either eliminating the people or adopting them. The internal revolt also was another factor to weaken Harar (Caulk, 1977:369). Harar then was isolated from its vassals and continued to be "the seat for an Amirate which, although small in size, was noted as a center of trade and Islamic learning in the horn of Africa." (Abir, 1968:9) How did Harar manage to survive?

Before we proceed it is worthy to throw light on the socio-political system of the Oromos that enabled them to defeat and invade villages and hold a grip from time to time on Harar. The *Alla, Jarso, Nole, Obora, Anniya* and *Ittu* are the main Oromo clans living around Harar and Harar province (Muhammad Hassen, 1973: v&vi).² Each *Gosa* or clan consisting the confederation had its own government headed by a *Bokko* (*ibid*, VI). They also had a common political institution called the *Raba-Dori* situated at Gara Mullata, “about three days to the South-West” of Harar (Neumann, 1902:374).

They were organized in “ a system of classes (*luba*) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political and ritual responsibilities” (Waldron,1984:1) where there was especial age group assigned to defend and wage war against enemies and sometimes one clan against another (Caulk, 1977:371). That made it hard to defeat the Oromos. Describing their skill in warfare Burton (1966:189-190) has the following to say: “These Oromos are tolerably brave; avoid matchlock balls by throwing themselves upon the ground when they see the flash, ride well, use the spear skillfully.”

Mukhtar described the courage of the Oromos who mustered thousands of armed and mounted men (Caulk, 1977: 371; Muhammad Hassen 1980:232) as follows:

¹ Son of Dawit II by Sable Wangle He ruled Ethiopia from September 3, 1540-March 23, 1559.

² The first four clans are designated as the sons of Qalu, from where the name of their confederation is derived from, i.e. Afran (four) Qalu.

The Oromos might well have been equal or superior of the Egyptians. In numbers they were overwhelmingly superior; in knowledge and skilful use of terrain, they certainly surpassed the Egyptians. But the possession of firearms and artillery gave the Egyptians a decisive victory wherever and whenever they fought with the Oromos.

Using that skill and courage they, however, defeated a British agent Piten who had ridden with his 500 militiamen trained by British officers to restore order (Pankhurst, 1958: 57). Hararis, however, resorted to various mechanisms to have peace with the Oromos.

Caulk (1977:372-373) informs us that Amirs used various mechanisms to smooth their relations with the neighboring Oromos. They offered clothes either made in Harar by Hararis or imported. *Amir Abd al-Shakur ibn Yusuf (1783-1794)*, went with a friend to the *Jarso* and other *Nole* clans, taking bales of sheeting for the first time to these Oromos in order to deal in peace with them. Caulk further noted that these gifts may have been a subsidy to free the way for salt and other caravans which must have arrived through the *Nole* country. Cloth imported by the Hararis initially as luxury turned into a necessity for the Oromos who replaced leather wrap with it.

As we will see when we discuss price setting Hararis applied preferential treatment by allowing Oromos to buy goods in Harar for fixed prices while they normally sold their products at market price. Hararis taught advanced methods of farming to those who were settled and allowed them to sell their products to the town people. Moreover, they taught them and converted them into Islam. (Caulk, *ibid*)

To win the Oromos' friendship the Amirs encouraged intermarriage and inter-adoption. Oromo chiefs and their lineages and commoners involved in such marriages and adoptions received special treatment and services when they came to the Harar (Abbas Ahmed, 1992:50).

By doing so the Hararis created a rift between the Oromos who turned into settled farmers and those who were semi nomadic pastoralists. Caulk (1977:372-3) maintains that the alliance between the Amirs and the Oromos who settled and turned into farmers with some dozens of matchlock men protected Harar from being invaded by semi nomadic pastoralists. "Yet the townsmen must have benefited as much from cooperation between farmers, traders and cattle breeders as from war. Otherwise, like the Adal Emirate at Awsa, Harar would have been engulfed." (*ibid*)

Furthermore Hararis empowered the Oromos in the administrative hierarchy under different titles. The titles were *Malaq*, *garad*, *damin*. The *Malaq* was a chief of the smallest unit in administration. The *damin* was chief of a village and the *Malaq* was chief of a 'clan' with authority over several *Garads* (Muhammad Hassen, 1980: 230).

Historically the Somalis were in alliance with Hararis till they were isolated by the expansion of the Oromos (ibid) Thus, the rapprochement with the Oromos allowed Hararis to renew their relationship. The two ports, Zeila 180 miles and Berberah 220 miles away from Harar were in full control of the Somalis. The Somalis provided passages and supplied camels to transport import and export goods (Blundell, 98, Caulk, 1977, 374). They also served as *abban* for they were not having much trouble when passing those territories held by the Oromos with whom they intermingled (Caulk, 1977:369).

3. Harar as a Trade Center

To continue as a prosperous trade center, Hararis had to secure their city and the trade routes to and from the coast through various mechanisms including trade concessions. Scholars attribute additional factors such as geographical location, climate and weather, etc. Of equal or greater significance were the legal structures of property rights and business as well as ethical values championed by all traders in Harar. (Yusuf Ahmed, 1961: 393)

This paper will identify those values and discuss how they regulated relations among the traders on the one hand and those between traders and the public and the government on the other hand. It will also consider the differently organized relations between the government and the people in the surrounding areas who derived benefits by securing the trade route and supplying Harar with products which were either consumed locally or exported.

Key players in the Harar trade, therefore, were local and foreign merchants and their agents, ordinary citizens, people in surrounding areas, and government officials and institutions. The multi-faceted relationships were regulated through property rights, price settings, taxes, agency, etc. Apart from discussing these the paper also discusses the mechanisms the Hararis applied to defuse tension with their neighbors, especially with the Oromo people.

Values constitute an underlying issue in Harari governance and trade relationship. Thus, according to Božović (2007:173) the most important personal values are righteousness, courage, honesty, tolerance, goodness, sincerity, and fairness.” These are supplemented by mutual trust, mutual benefit and interest, good intention, compromise and tolerance. These values assist us to decide what is good and what is not, i.e., to differentiate between good action and bad action and regulate our behavior accordingly. When these values are applied to business they manifest as “group of moral actions an individual or group of individuals adhere to during all forms of business activities” Božović (2007:175). Their violation may bring failure in business.

Let us take trust, a value that is essential in business. Constant disrespect for contractual obligations may erode the confidence and trust one could have in a merchant or business partner. Moreover, the effect may not be limited to an individual merchant who disrespects his obligation but extend to the whole group. For instance if a merchant from Shawa repeatedly disrespects his promise the victim of the non-performance would attribute the quality of promise breaker not only to the individual merchant but the Shawa merchants as a group. So to avoid this, the Shawa merchants would apply sanctions such as reprimand, isolation or restriction, even withdrawal from doing business with the promise breaker.

Hence, in the absence of modern mechanisms of monitoring business transactions respecting various business values by all parties involved in trade was essential for smooth functioning of trade.

4. Harar City and Rural Addis Ababa

Fitawrari Tackle Hawariyat was nine year old when he entered Harar with Menelik's³ army that defeated Amir Abdullah's small army at Chelenque battle. He had been living at Addis Ababa just before he left and came to Harar which he described as follows:

የግንብ ከተማ በቤት ላይ ቤት የተሠራበት አይቼ አላውቅም። ሰቆች እና መደብሮች በውስጣቸው ሰንትና ሰንት ዐይነት የባሕር ዕቃዎች የተደረደሩባቸው እና የተሞሉባቸው ናቸው። ይህን ሁሉ ባንድ ጊዜ ማየት በባለገር ውስጥ ላደገ ልጅ ያስደንቃል? ራስ ያዞራል፤ ልብ ያማልላል። (ፊታውራሪ ተክለ ሐዋርያት 1999)

In English script it reads as follows.

Yegenb ketma bebet lay bet yetsrabet ayeche alawqem. Suqoch enna medaberuch bewestachew sentena sent aynet yebaher eqawuch yetderederubachew enna yetemolubachew nachew. Yehen hulu band gize mayet bebalger wust ladege leje yasdeneqal? Ras yazoral. Leb yamalelal” (Fitawrari Tackle Hawariyat, 2007/8)

This may be translated

I have never seen before a town built with large stones blocks and houses with stories. The shops and stores are stuffed with various types of goods imported from abroad. A boy who has grown in the country side cannot help but stand in awe of observing all these events at a time. He suddenly feels very excited and happy (Fitawrari Tackle Hawariyat, Autobiography in Amharic, 2008/9)

With the same tone he described the then Addis Ababa:

አዲስ አበባ የከተማነት መልክ ገና አላወጣም ነበር። ትልቅ ሰፈር መሰሎ ይታያል፤ ድንኳኖች በጎጆ ቤቶች ጣልቃ ገባ፤ እዝህና እዚያ ተበታትነውበታል። ... ገበያ፤ መደብርና ቤተክርስቲያን አልነበሩትም።

³ Menelik ruled Ethiopia from 1889-1909. He was ruler of Shoa from 1865-1889

Addis Ababa yekatamanet melk gena alawatam neber. Teleq sefer meslo yetayal. Denkwanoch begojo betuch talaq geba ezihenna eziya tebetatnwebetal. Gebaya, medeber enna betekirstian alnebrum.

Addis Ababa has not yet taken the shape of a town. It looks like a garrison. Soldiers' bivouac tents are scattered here and there among cottages. There are neither markets, nor shops nor Churches.

This fact was confirmed by Herbert Weld, (1900:103) who after enumerating Debra Brehan, Liche, and Antotto as selected capitals described each of these places as permanent camps rather than a city, a movable seat of government and headquarters of the army selected according to circumstances of position or surrounding advantages in the way of supplies of wood, etc.

It is not surprising that the heart of a boy who came from the country side, i.e. Addis Ababa leapt when he saw the event in Harar, i.e. a town built with stone engaged in export/import trade. The impression Harar created on that boy was confirmed by Burton, (1966:192), and Pankhurst, (1968:409), who described Harar as essentially a commercial town or prosperous trade center at the time the Hararis were defeated and their city-state was fallen into the hands of Menelik II.

The defeat of Harar, however, was not absolute as Dr. Teshale Tibebe (1995:43) beautifully states:

When Menelik II entered the city-state in 1887 it was in his capacity as the highest representative of the 'idiocy of rural life' of agrarian Shewa. The army of the city-state was no match for Menelik II's. Menelik's superiority was, however, a superiority of arms not of civilization. Harar was the only place, other than Jimma, that Menelik II occupied that was by any standards more advanced than the social relations that were represented by Menelik II. ...The Gabbi Lebash Showans had to learn the rather sophisticated urban splendor of Harari civilization. It was a contest between agrarian-orthodox-Christian-parochialism against urban-Muslim-cosmopolitanism. The Showans won militarily, but not civilizationally; the Hararis lost militarily, but won civilizationally. Twentieth century Ethiopia followed the urban-civilizational path of the nineteenth-century Harar. To this day, Harar implies urban, civilized culture. Compare Harar with say, Debre Markos.

In ordinary language when Harar was a walled city-state our contemporary capital city Addis Ababa was a collection of soldiers' bivouac tents and cottages. While Harar was using coins in the 19th century for transactions there were no permanent markets and shops in Addis Ababa. While Harar engaged in import/export business Addis Ababa and its environs were supplying items which Harar exported in order to import items, for instance a type of cloth referred to as *abujadid* loaded with 300 horses, mules and donkeys

(Pankhurst, 1968:417) to be sold to Addis Ababa. Harar was, therefore, a trade center linking Ethiopian high lands with the external world.

5. Harar Trade Routes

As the boy stated the shops and stores were stuffed with goods and merchandises imported from abroad, i.e. Yemen, Arabia, India, China, etc. using two trade routes from Zayla or Barbara. Whereas the first rout was the one which cuts through the Somali *Eesa* territory the second one was through the mountains of the *Nole* tribe that belongs to the Oromo People (Burton, 1966: 192). The imported goods and merchandise were not only used for local consumption in Harar. Some were taken either by Hararis or merchants from the high land to the interior part of Ethiopia high land especially to the province of Shawa and Arsi, (Hetch, 1992:6, Pankhurst, 1968:413) using the trade routes those which converged at *Aleyu Amba* and finally connecting Shawa with Harar (Ahmed Hassan, 2001:141). Thus, “Harar was essentially a commercial town and a point of contact between the rich interior Ethiopia and the countries of the Gulf of Aden and beyond.” (Abbas Ahmed, 1992:53)

6. Traders

Hararis were farmers before abandoning their land and turning principally into traders. Among the reasons for such move was the loss of land to the Oromos in the 16th century or attraction by the lucrative trade (Abbas Ahmed, 1992:49). Then after, as Paulitschke quoted by Yusuf Ahmed (1961: 394) trade became the occupation of Hararis and consequently that made Hararis born traders.

Other peoples including *Alla* clans of the Oromo in the west and south, the *Babile* to the east and the *Nole* in the north, the *Issa* in the lowlands northwards to the sea; the *Gari* and *Bartari* (who thrust the Oromo back from the Jigjiga plain and mingled with them); the Ogaden Somali who with another branch of the Oromo, the *Anniya*, who occupied the headwaters of the Wabi Shebelle to the south of the *Alla*, *shared an interest in long-distance trade and were fellow Muslims* (Caulk, 1977:370-371).

Harar, however, brought together not only fellow Muslims from the east and south of Ethiopia. It also served as a gathering ground for both Christians and Muslims from the Christian highland and other parts of Ethiopia. Merchants from Shawa used to come to Harar and do business with their Harari partners. Forefathers of Jalalle, Sheikh Muhammad Saleh, and Asma Georges commonly known as *Alaqa Atsme* were some of the merchants who participated for a long time in the Shawa-Harar trade. (Ahmed Hassan, 2001:142)

The *ferengis* (foreigners) who were residing either in Harar or Eden were also engaged in import and export business. These included, Alfred Bardey a French merchant, Arthur Rimbaud, the former French poet became Alfred’s agent in Harar, Mr. Piten a British

agent, Gaetano Sacconi an Italian who engaged in whole sale trade, etc. (Pankhurst, 1969:57). There were also Indians and Pakistanis like Muhammad Ali who was “doing a thriving business in Japanese fabrics in which nearly all Harari women were dressed” (Geoffrey, 1935:179) and whose house is still admired and then caused the Harari women to develop a certain basketry pattern named 'Muhammad Ali *Gar*. (Hitch, 1987:2)

Foreign merchants were also running local business. Armenians and Greek communities involved in the trade of modern medicine commonly known as *Harar* (Ahmed Hassen, 2001:148). “Indians, Syrians, Greek and Italians and several Egyptians who engaged in selling cotton cloth, clothing, glassware, brass and copper, drinks and preserves” (Pankhurst, 1968:410). Therefore, Harar served as one of the main links between the Red Sea/Indian Ocean coast and the Ethiopian highlands” (Bender & Dawit, 2010:3)

Earlier when Harar was occupied by the Turku-Egyptians (1875-1885) there were “3,000 Amhara Christians, 5,000 Somali Muslims, a handful of Arab, Turkish, Greek, Indian, Syrian, Italian and Armenian traders, and French missionaries all living among 25,000 Harari Muslims (Bender & Dawit, 2010:4). This representation continued even during the reign of Haile Sellassie for “every race and creed seemed to be represented here-Somalis, Oromos, Arabs, Egyptians, Danakil, Indians, Greeks and Armenians” as narrated by Geoffrey Harmsworth (1935:178) who visited Harar in the early 19th. Then (the market served as a point of cultural contact (Abbas Ahmed, 1992:59).

Harar had, therefore, most probably developed a mechanism to overcome the difference in cultural, language and legal system of those merchants to enable them to communicate and do business. Harar and Hararis, therefore, have a reputation to bring together through trade and business people with different back ground and beliefs to prosper together as their prosperity depended on their cooperation. Hence the benefit based on non-discrimination was mutual.

7. Trade Environment

Harar was described by Blundell (1900:101) and Harris (1844:221) as a place of prosperity and wealth. He said “It would be hard to imagine a more beautiful situation for a great city than that of Harar. It stands 5400 feet above the sea, with every condition that makes for wealth and prosperity-fertility of soil, industrious agricultural population, and central position, and what is so rare in the catalogue of advantages of an African town -with an extraordinarily healthy and invigorating climate.” Abbas Ahmed (1992:67) added the prevailing security, the existence of investment opportunity and the availability of local agents ready to work with foreign merchants as factors which attracted merchants from distance region.

Fertility of soil, industrious agricultural population, healthy, invigorating climate, etc. were additional factors to attract trade and contribute to Harar's wealth and prosperity. Its especial geographical location and political importance were mentioned as additional factors by Yusuf Ahmed (1960:393) I suggest that the legal framework, which included the right to property described as a corner stone of liberty by Sandefur, (2006:1-2) was also a key element in Harar's prosperity. In recognition of private ownership of land and house, the *Amir* through a *Qadi* would issue a title deed to the owners. (Yusuf Ahmed, 1960: 386) The main elements included in the title deed were:

1. The name of the owner of the property, and how it came to him or her;
2. The nature of the property, whether house or land, with specification of the type of house or land;
3. The location of the property;
4. The size of the property in *garib*, (equivalent to 1296 sq. meters) or fraction such as *nus*, *rub*, *habbah* and *danik*;
5. The limits of the property on all sides, with reference to neighboring farms or houses, or rivers, or public streets;
6. If purchase or sale were involved, the question of whether the contract was formally and materially examined;
7. The witnesses to the contract are always mentioned at the end of the document;
8. Seal of the *Qadi* and signature of witnesses.

Once ownership right was granted nothing would stop the Hararis, who were not dependent exclusively on rain water to cultivate their farm, from being industrious. They were skilled also in irrigating their land using water that was collected from streams and springs into the reservoir called "*kuri* which is a wide and shallow basin enclosed with easily available materials like mud, piece of wood and herbs to hold water from the stream." (ibid, 384)

Using springs or streams or rain water, they cultivated fruit trees, coffee, *chat* (the mild narcotic plant also known as *khat* or *qat*) and some plants producing condiments and certain commercial crops like *wersi* (safflower). Major Muhammad Moktar (Mutar Bey) an Egyptian officer quoted by Yusuf Ahmed (ibid, 382) listed lemons, a sour orange-like fruit (*safargen*) and fourteen types of grapes, opium poppy, pumpkins and cotton. Burton quoted by Yusuf Ahmed (1961, 382) mentioned plantations of coffee, bananas, citrons, limes, cotton and sugar cane. He also mentioned pomegranates locally referred to as *rumman*. Figs, beans, *halibut*, (which when powdered has a bitter taste and is used in soup) sunflower, *ufu*, (red seeds often used for medical purposes), two kinds of pepper, henna (a plant producing a reddish dye to paint hands and feet-usually those of brides and grooms) and cabbage, together with other vegetables and condiments.

8. Exports and Imports

With the exception of fruits some of the farm products were either consumed or taken to the local market where they were either exported or exchanged for money or other products. In earlier times selling fruits from your farm was taboo. Farmers who produced fruits from their farm land distributed the same to their relatives, friends, and neighbors leaving a portion for one's own consumption. (Yusuf Ahmed, 1960: 383) Other products were either sold or exchanged at the local market. After enumerating coffee and safflower as the principal commodities of the export trade Burton (1966:192-193) states "The coffee of Harar is too well-known in the market of Europe to require description" The quantity was 200-300 tons per year.

Chat with a market price of a quarter of Indian rupees per parcel was another commodity that was either consumed locally or exported to Aden. About 280 camel loads consisting of a number of parcels, each containing about forty slender twigs with the leaves attached, and carefully wrapped so as to prevent as much as possible exposure to the atmosphere were annually exported (Burton, *ibid*).

These trade items were brought to the Harar market by the Hararis and as Burton (*ibid*, 193) noticed by Oromos. Locally woven clothes, which according to Burton (*ibid*, 194) surpassed the produce of England's manufactures in beauty and durability, ear-rings, bracelets, wax, butter, honey, mules, sorghum, wheat *karanji*-a kind of bread used by travelers-*ghee* and all sorts of tallow were also brought to Harar and then exported to different parts of the world (Harris, 1844: 222, Burton, 1966: 193 Pankhurst, 1968:53-55).

The *Alla* west of Harar supplied part of the coffee, tobacco and safflower which the town's merchants sent to the coast. Others hunted elephant in the valleys south of Harar and brought the ivory to the amir, who monopolized this trade; in exchange, they received cloth imported from India or perhaps the finer variety which was woven in the town from locally grown cotton. Besides ivory, ostrich feather and musk were a monopoly of the royal family (Burton, 1966: 193). In addition, skin and hides, including lion and leopard, goats and sheep, cows and oxen, donkeys, mules, horses, ostrich feathers, ivory civet and other agricultural products were brought to Harar market either for local consumption or to be sent to abroad (Pankhurst, 1968:53-54).

Slaves who were brought in from *Kaffa* and adjacent regions and bought in Harar for a few meters of Indian textile or shell-beads called *gurdummo*, used by the Oromo women as necklace were also export items (Burton, 1966:193). It is mentioned that Jalállé's, (one of the merchants from Showa I mentioned earlier) grandfather and his business partners used to bring, each turn, to the market of *Abdul Rasul* about 90 to 100 slaves who were used to

transport *amole chow* (blocks of salt) while they were derived to a market in search of the highest price. (Ahmed Hassen, 2001:142143) When Burton visited Harar women slaves were sold for 100 to 400 *Ashrafs* and the boys from 9 to 150. (Burton, 1966: 193)

From the proceeds of the export, textiles consisting of European, American or Indian sheeting, (one type of the '*tay eraz*' women's gown is called '*bombay*' after the striped, heavy silk with which the upper part of the dress is lined; this silk is said to have been imported from India, i.e. Bombay, (Hitch, 1987:2) copper, zinc and lead, beads and coral-colored silk thread, salt, dates, rice and sugar, paper, gunpowder, rifles were imported to Harar either for immediate consumption or export to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) (Harris, 1844: 222, Yusuf Ahmed, 1960: 395, Pankhurst, 1968:413). Corrugated iron and sewing machines were also for the first time imported to Ethiopia by the Harari merchants (Pankhurst, *ibid*). There were two consequences:

The British consular in Harar quoted by Pankhurst (*ibid*) reported that quite a number of houses had roofs from the corrugated material. There is story narrated by Harari elders that Menelik's palace was covered by such material delivered from Harar to stop the leaking drops of water during the summer rains. Covering roofs with corrugated iron thus became an expression of wealth and status. Second the importation of the sewing machines put Harar on an advantageous position to those who used manual labor to produce cloth as it enabled the Hararis to produce quality cloth in greater quantity and export it to other parts of Ethiopia.

As values promote either individualistic interests or collective interests or both (Schwartz and Bilsky 1990: 879) when a few Amirs of Harar monopolized the export of ivory, ostrich feathers and some other goods they promoted individualistic interests and when the big merchants helped the small ones they promoted collective interests. Therefore, from the aforementioned discussion we can observe that not all Harar trade was based on good business values.

9. Taxes, Tax Payers and Collectors

This section discusses how by being a venue for export and import trade and consequently clearing-house for both goods which were imported and exported Harar attained the privilege of managing and collecting taxes from both exporting and importing business activities. A key question is whether the *Amirs*, Turku-Egyptians and other tax-collectors treated everybody fairly and equally which is a very important value in business.

Characterizing the taxation system as simple, Burton (1966:192) stated that the cultivators were taxed 10% of their harvest while traders were charged 16 cubits of cotton clothes per

donkey load when passing through any of the five gates. Moreover, according to Yusuf Ahmed (1960:10) the Oromo farmers from some thirty miles north-east of the town seem to have been the Amir's tax-paying subjects. As mentioned by Abbas Ahmed (1992:78) during the reigns of Amir Abd-alkarim and Amir Abu Baker the neighboring Oromo farmers paid the annual tax in cattle.

I think this type of tax was different from the tax that was paid by those Oromos who were entrusted with the Amirs' herds and returned some of the calves they bred as a form of tax or rental (Caulk, 1977: 374). There were also taxes which were levied by the Amir on every slave passing through his dominion from Shawa and taxes collected from storage services. Nevertheless, as Salt quoted by Pankhurst (1968:409) early in the 19th century, the Amirs were exempted from paying taxes on the ivory and coffee they exported and on items they were imported.

Yusuf Ahmed (1961:387) and Muhammad Hassen (1973:2) mention the *garad* or the *damin*, who were in the administrative hierarchy of the Emirate of Harar, were responsible for collecting taxes and tithes. Tolls and other fees as well as other taxes from the peasants were also collected by the powerful Oromo chiefs in alliance with Hararis (Caulk, 1977:372, Jan, 2010). This lucrative role may have convinced the Oromos of the value of preserving Harar with its great market. For instance, the *Jarso* and their neighbors were exacting payments, clan by clan for passage through their territory (Caulk, 1977:372).

Amir Muhammad (1856-1875) imposed an extra tax referred to as *Mahaleq Oromo* to pay tribute to Oromo chiefs thus draining wealth from Harar (Waldron 1984:6). The Hararis thus withdrew their support from Amir Muhammad and he was ousted and finally killed by the Turku-Egyptian forces. What led Egypt to occupy Harar had been discussed by many scholars including E. Sylvia Pankhurst (1958), Avishai Ben-Dror (2008) and Caulk (1971, 1975). Some of the reasons stated by these scholars were the Egyptian intention to build an empire that encompassed the whole Nile basin and the Red Sea. It could be to modernize Harar. The main reason, however, was to protect the interest Egypt had over the Nile River and its basin. Thus, when the Turku-Egyptians occupied Harar they took over the power of collecting taxes from both the Emirate of Harar and the Oromos. According to the Shawa merchant who kept diaries preserved for generation the taxes levied by the Turku-Egyptian were heavier. (Ahmed Hassen, 2001:143)

Menelik II had not yet acquired Emperorship when he started preparation to occupy Harar. He was only king of Shawa. Then why did he give priority to occupation of Harar? The following were stated by some historians as likely reasons.

1. Harar could serve as an advance base for Menelik's army to penetrate to the east to Somali land and south east of the Awash valley which is rich in resources to supply

export items necessary to pay for arms trade and logistics for Menelik's army; (Barnes, 2001: 98)

2. It provided Menelik easier contact with European trade and ideas;
3. It served as a base to halt the potential expansion of Turks and Egyptians;
4. To have trade arms free from those Ethiopian princes who controlled the transit trade north wards of Shawa; there were about ten or so Europeans in Shoa who were engaged in arms traffic. Pierre Labatut was the most prominent. (Nicholl, 1997: 182)
5. To acquire plenty of ammunition and stores left behind at Harar by the Egyptian army on its evacuation on May 1885;
6. To halt the threat of expansion of some European countries such as France whose reconnaissance visited the Bay of Tajura on April 1884;
7. Harar was one of the few areas in North east Africa which had developed commercial agriculture based on the export of coffee which would enable Menelik to pay for fire arms from Assab and Bay of Tajura after 1884;
8. Harar possessed a custom house where there was a regular cash supply (Caulk, 1971 1-8, including 5,6 & 7)
9. To have a free hand while fighting the Italian aggression which Menelik probably anticipated, i.e. not to be stabbed from behind according to Harari historian Sheik Ahmed Kebu (Personal communication I had with him on 30, 2011). Menelik probably learnt that from past experience.
10. To expand and consolidate the Christian Empire (Gibb, 1999: 90)

After Harar was occupied by Menelik, he introduced a tax system that enabled the merchants to pay their taxes at Harar. This put Harar in an advantageous position for all the bulk of the Shoan trade passed through Harar which gave confidence to Menelik to pledge the Harar customs revenue as a guarantee of interest and repayment for the 4,000,000 lire loan from Italy. When Menelik sent Ras Makonnen to Rome to sign a Treaty the Italian Government agreed to lend Menelik 40,000 lire on the security of the customs of Harar (Starkie, 1938: 125/6). That trade of Harar should be used as collateral at this point to secure an international loan, suggests the value of the regional centre to the overall economy of the country. (Gibb, 1996: 60), (Pankhurst, 1968:478) Harar, therefore, had experienced various types of taxation under different rulers, rich sources of information on different cultures of Ethiopia.

The application of some principles of taxation may improve trade while others may retard it and bring impoverishment, riots or even revolution. Whenever the tax imposed by any tax collector is fair it enhances economic development. On the other hand whenever taxes are discriminatory and unfair they become counterproductive. As I have said quoting Pankhurst (1968:409-410) one of the Amirs who exported coffee and ivory was exempted

from paying taxes. As noted by Caulk (1977:382) notables of Oromos who were given the old Harari title *Garad* were also exempted from paying a tithe on their harvest and herds to Egyptians.

Furthermore a document written by Jalállé's father (Shoan merchant) tells us the story of heavy taxation imposed on the local merchants by the Turku-Egyptians during their occupation of Harar. The statements in this document which discuss this period, contain the following: አወይ የሰው ነገር በቃኝን አያውቅም። እማያገባው አገር ሐረር መጥቶ ይክን ኩሉ ክፈሉ ብሎ በእኛ በባላገር ላይ መቀረጡ... በእነሱ ምክንያት ያዳም ዘር ሐረር ላይ መጨነቱን ግን አይሰቱትም። (Ahmed Hassen, 2001:143)

In English script “*away yesew neger beqagnin ayawqem. Emayagebaw ager Harar metito yeken kulu kefulu belo benegna bebalager lay meqretu ... benasu mekeniat yadam zer Harar lay machnaqun gen aysetutem*”

Rough translation “Human beings are greedy. It is unfair for a foreign power to invade another country and impose such heavy tax. Hope they will understand how much the descendents of Adam are suffering from the heavy tax they imposed.”

According to Jalállé's explanation the Turku-Egyptian forces imposed such heavy taxes because they as occupying force did not care for the local merchants. It seems, therefore, there were groups, may be Egyptian merchants, who received favorable treatment while the local ones did not. That discrimination, therefore, was according to Jalállé contrary to one of the basic principles of taxation, i.e. fairness. (Smith, 1993:450) The occupying forces might have determined the amount of taxes payable not on the bases of income of the individual merchant; but the nationality.

Yet Jalállé used the term *yadam zer* meaning descendents of Adam to refer to those who suffered from the heavy tax imposed by the occupying forces. If that was the case, there was no discrimination based on nationality. The unfairness, therefore, might have related to its failure to consider the income of each merchant in determining taxes.

The tax collected by the Turku-Egyptian was not limited to traders. As Caulk noted (1977: 382) “in 1882, one-third of the taxes reported to Cairo were levied from payments of those submitting to obtain peace. Another third came from fees for new titles. Even Oromo women were selling their various products in exchange for cash to pay tax.” It might be that the Turku-Egyptian power imposed those multiple heavy taxes to pay salaries to its soldiers who might have transferred that payment wholly or partly as a remittance to their country through the Egyptian Bank established in Harar. On top of the occupying forces tax

system being discriminatory it was, therefore, probably used to drain Harar's wealth in an unfair manner.

10. Agency

Some Amirs were engaged in trade. For instance a manuscript which is analyzed by Yusuf Ahmed (1961: 397-398) throws some light on the register of trade goods acquired by the Amirs as private traders. Burton (1966:193) also mentioned that ivory and ostrich feather trading was monopolized by Amir Ahmed (1852-1855). According to Burton (1966:193) and Yusuf Ahmed (1961:397-308) the Amirs did their import and export business through a *wakil* or agent. Abdullah Idris, Abdurrahman Ghazzali and Ali Sadik were mentioned as agents of Amir Muhammad (1856-1875) Those agents would entrust the goods to caravan protectors known as *abban* who in return handed over the goods to other agents at the Berberah or Zayla ports.

The *abban* or caravan protector (Yusuf Ahmed 1961:396) usually belonged to the *Issa* or the *Gadabursi* clans, gave carrier services not only to the Amirs. They were entrusted with export or import goods by individuals who were financially capable of organizing a complete caravan consisting of 30 or more camel or donkey loads. Merchants unable to carry on export trade individually in such a scale came together and cooperated to share the cost among them-selves. These cooperating merchants also sold and bought goods purchasing in the markets of Berberah and Zayla for traders who could not join the caravan. (ibid, 1961:395)

In modern business, the owner of haulage truck or lorry for instance, promises to maintain in perfect working order and with full equipment including good tyres, tools, jacks and everything necessary for quick transport of goods. Similarly in those days when *abban* (from Somali or Oromo chiefs) made agreement with traders or their agents, it was their responsibility to provide healthy and strong camels, mules or donkeys for the quick and safe transport of goods. They were also responsible to protect the merchandize from theft, carelessness and waste. (ibid, 1961:396)

The *abban* on top of providing protection to the caravan and making available transportation provided guides who would lead the caravan to its destination. That seems the reason they are mentioned as travelers guides by Ahmed Hassen (2001:143). Hence, "whenever a merchant wanted to dispatch his goods he made his arrangement through the *abban*. Once the goods were loaded and passed to him, it was the *abban* who was responsible for their delivery at the place of destination which was usually Berberah, Zayla, or *Tajura*, along the coast, or else *Ifat*, *Awsa*, or *Bale* in the interior." (ibid) Certainly, they would also give similar services from those places to Harar as well.

According to Waldron (1984:4) *abban* were Somali agents who took care of the caravan when it crossed areas held by the Somalis. In areas resided by the Oromos the *abban* probably had to make new arrangements with the local chiefs to travel across those areas or make payments to the *Jarso* and their neighbors who were exacting payments, clan by clan, for passage. “The Nole, as well, despite their reputation for fierceness, were hospitable to merchants, during the Egyptian occupation at least, because they also hired the change of transport required when leaving the lowland, Issa territory for the climb towards Harar.” (Caulk, 1977:372)

Though Yusuf Ahmed (1961:396) tells us some Somalis who held the transportation in monopoly exposed the merchants to abuse and extortion the *abbans* who were acting on behalf of Amir or ordinary citizens were acting adhering to the values related with agency. From the side of the *abban* we assume acting with good faith, acting in the exclusive interest of the merchants, account all the profits accruing to the merchant, act as *bonus paterfamilias* etc. were some of the values the *abban* were promoting. Remunerating the *abban* for what he accomplished, advancing or reimbursing expenses and costs incurred by the *abban* to carry out the agency, releasing the *abban* from any liability he incurred while carrying out his duty in the interest of the merchants were some of the values adhered to by the merchants.

To illustrate this Stitz (1975:10) told a story of a Harari who traveled to *Ifat* and died while returning in 1863 taking cloth belonging to four other people and their donkeys. The Qadi distributed the profit among those whose goods he had sold but first deducted the expenses the deceased had incurred on his way. Stitz also tells us, when leaving for *Ifat* or to the coast for trade, how Harari merchants entrusted their town property to a friend or a Qadi who received and carefully administered it for the benefit of the merchants and their families. In one case the Qadi rented the garden of a man who left for trading for a sharecropper, regularly sold the crops paying the wife of the owner a yearly allowance. Moreover, the Qadi had houses and walls of the absentee Harari repaired covering the cost from the absentee man’s rents.

Ordinary traders came together and cooperated to share the cost among them-selves as well as to help small merchants in selling and purchasing at destinations which they could not have access. In doing so they were promoting what Moore and Bruder (2005: 254) refer to as universalistic ethical hedonism or otherwise known as utilitarian values according to which one ought to seek the greatest pleasure for the greatest number of people. On the one hand when a few Amirs monopolize ivory and Ostrich feather trade as well as exempt themselves from paying taxes we may say they were promoting a value referred to as egoistic ethical hedonism, according to which one ought to seek his or her own pleasure

(ibid). Hence these values were governing the relations between small traders and big traders on the one hand and between the ordinary Hararis and Amirs on the other hand.

11. Coinage in Harar and the First Bank in Ethiopia

Mint (coinage) (Latin *moneta*, "mint" or "money"; derived from *Moneta*, a surname of the goddess Juno, whose temple at Rome was used for coining money), establishment for making coins, or pieces of metal designed to circulate as money. (Encarta, 2009) Harar also had its own coinage. The old Harari currency was the *Mahaleq*.

Barker (1842:238) and Ahmed Zekaria (1997:25) while discussing Harar coin they mentioned a small copper coin called *Mahaleq*; 22 units of which were equal to a nominal coin called *ashraf* and 40 units of the latter are equal to one German Crown. The *Mahaleq* which was derived from the Harari word *Maheleq* (to count) resembles the *diwani* of Jeddah; with one side inscribed in Arabic characters *La illaha illa-Allah* and the reverse the name of the reigning prince (Harris, 1844:222). Similar description was given by Burton (1966:191) about the coins of Amir Ahmed.

The combination of the phrase *La illaha illa-Allah* and the name of the reigning prince on the coin could be a reflection of the close alliance between religious institutions and the administration of Harar. In history various symbols are used by different countries on their coins. For instance the coins and paper moneys of the United States have the official Great Seal of the Bald Eagle. We find this seal also on the passport issued by the United States to its citizens. In similar fashion to the Bald Eagle, the *La illaha illa-Allah* might have constituted the symbol of Harar.

Payments by merchants were not, however, always made in those coins. Clothes either locally made or imported or salt could be accepted to secure passage for instance. As noted by Ahmed Zekaria (1991:25) *amole chew*, salt bars, or blocks of salt piece of clothes or iron, gun cartridges, and Maria Theresa dollars were some of the media of exchange used in the earlier periods of Harar. While there is no express reference to cash transactions in literature we assume the currencies used in Harar were most probably referred to as *ashraif* and *mahaleq* as mentioned by Barker (1842:238) and Burton (1966:191).

Harari currencies displayed at the Permanent Exhibition of the Sheriff Harar City Museum opened on 24th December, 2008 take back the use of coins in Harar to 871 A.D. while Kahl (1969) extends the period of coinage from 742 A.D. through 1887. Though Ahmed Zekaria (1997:25) noted "the consistent use of currency had started with the reign of Abd al Shakur (1756-1783) a document reveals Amir Talha who ruled Harar from 1111-1134 bought real property for 300 *ashraf* (Wagner, 1974:215).

Cruttenden quoted by Ahmed Zekaria (1991:25) tells Harar coins were in the form of gold, copper or silver and were in use beyond the boundaries of Harar. They were in circulation in North East Africa as noted by Paulitschke. Abbas Ahmed (1992:56) also mentioned their circulation in such areas as *Ifat*, *Churcher*, *Zayla* and *Barbra*. For instance he narrated how a widow living in *Ifat* and whose husband was Muhammad Yayaha al Dulal received 39 *Ashraf* as inheritances.

As Burton (1966:191) noted some Amirs, for instance Amir Ahmed (1852-1855) had the intention to limit the use of the currency within the city of Harar, Dr. Freeman-Grenville quoted by Pankhurst (1968:475) records the discovery of two coins issued by Amir Abdullahi (1885- 1887) on the Benadir coast of present day Somalia. Harar coins were in use “as far as *Ras Asseyr* on the Somali coast, Mogadishu, Chelenko” (Ahmed Zekaria, 1991:26). The circulation of the Harar coins outside Harar could be taken as evidence of the strength and influence of Harar economy beyond its boundary.

At the time other currencies were also in circulation in Harar. For instance Barker (1842:238) tells us Maria Theresa dollars were used as currency in addition to the Harari coins. *Riyal Qirshi* and other types of currencies were once in circulation in Harar. During the Turku-Egyptian occupation Harar had two currencies, Harari and Egyptian side by side (Ahmed Zekaria, 1991:27). Furthermore, when the British ended Turku-Egyptian occupation and took over the administration of Harar they paid Indian rupees for those Hararis and Somalis they trained to protect Harar when the occupation ended. (Pankhurst, 1965:56)

Even Menelik II minted his first local currency referred to as *Mahaleq* made of silver approximately 15mm in diameter and bearing the date 1892, at Harar. (Kahl, 1969 Wood, 1936:51) The utilization of various currencies with different unit of values presupposes free market (Murray, 2002:49) and money exchangers who did the exchange in open air usually at market places as depicted by Blundell (1900:99). As we will see in the next section, the determination of prices by various factors and not by the government also constitutes evidence of the free market in Harar.

We noted earlier that there were many foreign merchants doing import/export business. The Turku-Egyptian army was probably paid in cash unlike those who were either granted land or paid in kind for their service. It is, therefore, plausible to assume ordinary money exchangers could not satisfy the existing demand for the exchange and supply of money. Therefore, the Egyptians founded the Egyptian branch bank referred to as the Egyptian Bank in Harar to provide foreign exchange service to those foreigners and Harari merchants engaged in import/export business and pay salary to their occupying army.

This raises the question where did the merchants hoard their extra money or where did they borrow the money to run their business before the establishment of the Egyptian Bank? There were four possibilities. One could hoard the money in a secret place for instance burying it in the ground within ones compound; or trust the money with a friend or a Qadi as merchants did when they left for the port or inland or keep it with gilders especially with gold smiths who were accustomed to storing valuable and precious metals which could serve as guarantee. The last option could be the Amir's mint. All options bore risk though the risk of the last institution could be very high for there could be a possibility of being confiscated by the Amir as once in British history Charles I who was in need of money in 1638, shortly before the outbreak of the civil war, confiscated the huge sum of £200,000 of gold, calling it a "loan" from the owners (Murray, 2002:57).

The individuals or gold smiths who were entrusted with the money probably lent it to those who need money to do business transactions. Both keeping the money and lending it require confidence in the honesty, goodness, skill or safety of a person or institution. These were, therefore, probably basic business ethics or values which were adhered to by the merchants in Harar and without which Harar would not have emerged as intercontinental trade center.

The Egyptian Bank as any other bank probably did the following. May be it adjusted domestic credit, managed a reserve of specie or foreign exchange with which stabilized exchange rates, lent out the savings of others and deposit money (Murray, 2002:57) To that end the Egyptian Bank most likely won the confidence of the public which is based on basic value in business, i.e. mutual trust.

That seems the reason why the establishment of that bank signified the flourishing of the already existing trade in quality and quantity. For instance, Pankhurst (1968:410) quoting Paulitschke tells us that whereas scarcely 70 caravans had reached Harar every year under the Amirs the number soon increased to about 400 under Turku-Egyptian rules. This enabled two currencies, i.e. Egyptian and Harari, to circulate in Harar. As a passing remark it is worth mentioning that the Egyptian Bank preceded the Abyssinia Bank which was established with the help of Egyptian Bank capital in 1903 in Addis Ababa. (David, 2007: 24)

Even after the British expelled Turku-Egyptian army and Menelik occupied it, Harar continued as an intercontinental business and trade center for a while. Milanko Raitchevitch who kept in his log persons he met with their seals and signatures noted that there were eleven companies in Harar engaged in import/export business while there were only four in Dire Dawa in 1903. (See the annex) The frequency of caravan coming to Harar

and leaving for both the inland and the port increased. Many more European, American, and Indian traders arrived in Harar to do business. (Pankhurst, 1968:410) As Kunni quoted by Pankhurst (ibid: 478) suggests the economy of Harar had entered an era where bankers' *drafts* were used to perform business transactions. The reason could be what was reported by the British Consular agent and others at Harar. According to that report in 1899-1900 exports were 2,774,000 Maria Theresa dollars, while the imports reported by Ries and Gerolimato on the similar year were 4,992,800 and 3,822,650 Maria Theresa respectively. (Pankhurst, 1968:412-413)

It is not, therefore, surprising that Blundell (1900:101) described Harar as a bone dropped by England while she was growling at France, and picked from their noses by the Abyssinians. I do not disagree with Mr. Blundell though his idea signifies colonial ambition. What is rather more surprising and abhorrent, and to shift the metaphor is the killing of the goose that laid the golden egg by the Abyssinians turning Harar from a developed intercontinental trade and business center into a military garrison (Cedric, 2001:98).

12. Setting Prices

As the following lines reflect the prices of commodities were at least set by the market. ዘጠና አምስት በራ አምጥተናል...ዋጋውን እሱ ራሱ አላህ ያብጀው (Ahmed Hassen, 2001:142). *Zetana amest baara amtetenal. Wagawun esu rasu Allah yabejew*. Rough translation: "We have brought ninety five slaves. Let Allah himself take care of the price." Burton (1966:193) reported that the price of female slaves varied from 100 to 400 *asharafī*, and boys were sold from 9 to 150 *asharafī*. Similarly Burton also mentioned the market as a factor to determine the price of chat.

Stitz (1975:8) also discussed some of the factors which determined the value of land. The fact that it is irrigated or not irrigated was reason to bring variation in prices. According to an example cited by him while irrigated land was priced for 100 *ashraf* non irrigated one was only 10 *ashraf*. Availability of water, exposition, the elevation, the steepness of the terrain, the distance from town and the security were other factors which determined the price of the land. Abbas Ahmed (1992:65) mentions additional factors such as the presence of trees and the fertility of the soil.

The pricing also used to be adjusted with inflation as can be seen from a case in the Qadi register which was analyzed by Stitz (1975:9). An owner of a house leased his house taking into account the coming inflation. So in the lease contract which was concluded in 1838 it was provided for a fixed increase of the rent to 50 *ashraf* in the second year, 60 in the third

year and 70 in 1841. The type of the materials used to build the house, depreciation and other related factors as well determined the price of the house. For instance, in 1825-1830 an average wooden house was sold for 6 *ashraf* while a stone house was sold for 183 *ashraf* (Abbas Ahmed 1992:65).

Stitz praised the Hararis as people with ability to think in economic terms and understood the functioning of a money economy. Money economy, however, may not exist without the basic principle or value which is described by Adam Smith as the invisible hand, by the *Ifat* merchant as Allah and as various factors by the manuscript analyzed by Stitz. Hence, non-interference policy of the Amirs in the market and determination of the prices by the market was the value that governed the relationship between sellers and buyers.

Nevertheless, there was a time when Amir Uthman al-Habashi (1567-1589), Amir Nur's successor granted the Oromos the right to purchase imported cloth at price fixed by the government for the Oromos in return to leave Harar to survive as a convenient market place. (Waldron, 1984:2) This was one of the prices paid by the Hararis to preserve their walled city from being attacked by the Oromos. The free flow of currencies and the determination of prices by the market were necessary for Harar to prosper. Property rights which were essential for free market, as we will see next were upheld by the Hararis as basic requirement for prosperity.

13. Property Rights

Even though the trading of ivory, ostrich feathers, and other items were monopolized by some Amirs and their families; the basic value related to property right was respected i.e. economic freedom: the rights to acquire, use, transfer and dispose of private property. This was mainly manifested by the title deed issued by the Harari government after registering the immovable property once the claimant proved the ownership right he/she had over the property.

Property was either transferred for consideration or gratuitously. Both were the rights of the Hararis. They were also entitled to lease their house or land (Ahmed Zekaria.1997:25). From the Account-Book of Amir Abd Al-Shakur analyzed by Ahmed Zekaria we also understand immovable properties, land and houses were transferred either through inheritance, sales, gifts or *Mahr* (financial settlement given by the groom to the bride) through a contract made in the presence of witnesses, sealed and registered by the Qadi. *Sijil* (register) and *Diwan* (chancery) were the two institutions where the registration of the immovable was made and the copy of the title deed was kept. (Wagner, 1974:218)

The registration, witnesses, and the Qadi would enable Hararis to implement one very important ethic or value of business, i.e. *pacta sunt servanda*, sanctity of contract. (DiMatteo, 2000:27) “For it prevents injustice and dissention by keeping in memory for all times, how by it (i.e. the register and the chancery) the judicial decisions are made effective the Holy Law...what was settled of that which *nobody should be free from being strictly bound* to it may it be the dowry or anything else, so that a demand should not be repeated and dissent should not exist.” (Wagner, 1974:218, emphasis added) Furthermore, one of the manuscripts analyzed by Stitz (1975:3) describes the task of the Qadi as keeping records which deals with inheritance, dispute and transactions so that there should be no trouble and conflict later on. The value which respects the rights citizens have over their property is, therefore, basic to peace and economic development.

14. Conclusions and Recommendations

Whenever Harar is discussed three points may not be disregarded. These are Harar as a center of Islamic education, commerce and trade and as a symbol of peace. Hararis utilized the first two as a means to achieve and sustain the third one. Historically villages or small cities like Harar were over-run by the Oromos which resulted in complete disappearance of those villages or little cities with their people who were either completely annihilated or adopted by the Oromos (Caulk, 1977:369). The Hararis, however, realizing negotiation with the Oromos would save their city from destruction convinced the Oromos preserving the city would serve their interest better than destroying it.

Thus, by the beginning of the 19th century, the relations between Harar and the settled Oromos had developed into mutual economic interdependence. This economic interdependence and political necessity brought a closer alliance between the city's administration and the settled Oromos. Such alliances reflected economic as well as political necessity (Muhammad Hassan 1973:1).

Also, in order to carry on trade to the port at Zeila, Hararis maintained alliances with Somali-caravan protectors under the unifying force of Islam. Records from the Emirs' households from the seventeenth century on demonstrated numerous alliances with Oromo and other non-Harari, principally through kinship, including intermarriage, adoptive brotherhood and Islam brotherhood. Thus the basic patterns of interdependence were foundational to the city's development (Jan & Dawit, 2010:3)

Aside from having peaceful relations with the surrounding people Hararis controlled some trade items to safeguard their interests. One of those items was salt. It was controlled by the Hararis as a key to the survival of the city. (Waldron, 1984:3) Waldron further noted that

controlling the salt market put Hararis in an advantageous position for according to Bloch quoted by Waldron “he who controlled salt controlled the people.” This was also other mechanism Hararis used to preserve their city, trade and trade routes

Once peace is secured merchants belonging to different local communities such as Oromos, Somalis, Harari, Argoba, Shawa, and *ferengis* could converge on Harar market to exchange their diverse trade goods. While the market served as a point of cultural contact the diversity of trade goods also shows clearly the extent of commercial relations among many ethnic and class groups (Harris, 1844: 383). This also rejects the allegation that Harar was an isolated, forbidden city.

Waldron, however, asserts those relations were not always entirely in favor of the Hararis. For instance, Amir Muhammad Ali’s adoption by the Oromo chiefs by the *elm gosa* ceremony exposed Harar to the regular provision of hospitality to visiting Oromos, (Muhammad Hassen, 1973:13-15; Caulk 1977:377-8). The Amir had to pay regular tribute to the Oromo chiefs including 10% tithes from the Hararis farms, taxes collected on goods of merchants as they entered and left the city, income drawn from his own farm and may be on export of ivory and other items. Since these incomes did not satisfy the lust the *amir* and the Oromo chiefs he imposed a special hospitality tax referred to as *Mahalaqal Oromo* on the citizens. He further exacerbated the economic situation by debasing the existing coin by replacing the silver with copper (Waldron, 1984:6) and used the silver saved to settle his debts.

I do not disagree with Waldron’s assertion that the relation was unbalanced and unfair. It was a cost paid by the Hararis to protect the city from complete destruction in similar fashion to others who suffered from Oromo expansionism. The Hararis did not, however, allow that unfair and unbalanced relation to continue for sooner or later it would have slowly ruined their city too. Thus they invited the Turku-Egyptian forces to occupy Harar and did away with the Harari Amir and Oromo alliance (Abbas Ahmed: 1992:46, Muhammad Hassen 1980:232).

Basically therefore, negotiation and cooperation rather than confrontation were promoted by the Hararis, where necessary, to protect their city and enhance peace which is essential to economic development. Thus, the value of respect, mutual benefit and cooperation governed the relations between the Hararis and the Oromos. The sustenance of these values depended greatly on the principles of righteousness, honesty, sincerity, diligence, trust, non-discrimination and fairness in the relations among traders. Legal rules among which the sanctity of property rights and of contract were paramount functioned to protect these values.

Whenever these values are eroded people will resort to other means to restore them. That seems the reason why Hararis either invited the Turku-Egyptian force to occupy Harar or at

least gave no resistance to that force. Again when the Turku-Egyptian administration started to violate those values the Hararis started silent resistance against that rule. As Pankhurst (1958: 57) noted when the British forced the Turku-Egyptians to leave Harar they (Hararis) were dancing rejoicing that their tyrants had been removed.

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