

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THE FACE  
OF FAMINE  
THE CASE OF BOORANA OROMO, SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA**

**BY  
GEMECHU TAYE**

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**INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THE FACE  
OF FAMINE  
THE CASE OF BOORANA OROMO, SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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Master of Arts IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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## ACRONYMS

AFD	Action For Development
BLPDP	Boorana Lowland Pastoral Development Programme
CARE	Co-operation for Relief Assistance Everywhere
GTZ	German Technical Co-operation
ILCA	International Livestock Center for Africa
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
PA	Peasant Association
SORDU	Southern Rangelands Development Unit
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission

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# **Transliteration**

**INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL STRATEG IN THE FACE OF FAMINE  
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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to investigate the indigenous survival strategies of Boorana in the face of famine. To this effect different research methods are employed. Some of these are participant observation, case studies, interviews and analysis of secondary data.

The results of the study show that though the Boorana experienced famine many years before and in the past few decades, they have been recurrently facing this crisis. It also shows that to cope with this crisis, the Boorana have developed their own mechanisms. These mechanisms are the development of indigenous (customary) resource management strategies, i.e. land, pasture, water successful herd management, cultural early warning system, food rationing, resorting to famine food, mobility strategies dependence on market and the like. It also shows that the households respond to famine differentially depending on their resources.

In addition, the Boorana have developed social institutions which have roles in resource mobilization, exchanges and upon which households rely during normal and crisis time. These social institutions are part and parcel of the *Gadaa* system. The study also found out that the Boorana try to involve themselves in non pastoral activities as a means to survive famine. Some of these strategies are recently introduced. This shows that aspects of change and continuity in their coping mechanisms.

Based on the result of the study it has been recommended that these indigenous knowledge has to be preserved and strengthened and be used in combination with external aid to overcome famine and to curb the food insecurity of the pastoralists in general and the Boorana in particular.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Statement of the Problem

Pastoralism is a mode of production that depends on natural forage. In arid and semi-arid regions, this requires constant or periodic movements in search of pasture, a factor that differentiates this form of livestock production from ranching and other forms of live stock husbandry (Markakis, 1993; Barfield, 1993).

Pastoralists in Ethiopia constitute about 5 million, people i.e 12 percent of the total population and occupy about 61% of the total land of the country. The Boorana and Karrayyu Oromo, the Somali, Afar, Nuer, Arbore are some of pastoral groups in the country (Coppock,1994:17; Tafesse, 2000:35; Getachew,2001:66).

Some of the major pastoral problems in Ethiopia are the marginality of the area (arid and semi-arid) they occupy, unreliable rainfall, shortage of water, poor infrastructure, social service and market service. The appropriation of pastoral communal resources by the state, the expansion of protected areas, privatization of land, the encroachment of farming into grazing land, occurrence of drought and famine are also the problems of the pastoralists (Ayalew,2001).

Recently, pastoral production systems in the Horn, including that of the Boorana, have under pressure. According to Fratkin (1994); Manger (1996) and Egeimi (1996) the crisis

is caused by both internal (drought, climate, ecology, etc.) and external (integration into commercial economy, individualization, agricultural alienation of land for agriculture etc.) factors, where the latter factor is the first effecting pastoral economy.

Like other pastoralists in the Horn, the Boorana have repeatedly faced the tragedy of either short or prolonged famine. More recently, in the year 1999/2000 drought and famine resulted in livestock and human death. As a result, the number of people vulnerable to famine and who needed food assistance in Boorana zone was estimated to be about 800,000. The pastoralists in the zone in general and the Boorana in particular, constitute a good deal of this number and they have not recovered from the famine (Boorana Zone Disaster and Prevention Bureau(BZDPB), 2000; Boorana Zone Culture and Information Department(BZCID), 2000; Ethiopian Herald, February 20 ,2001; Helland, 2000).

The diversity of the environment within which people live requires an sets of adaptations. Peasant and pastoral households have long-standing indigenous strategies to cope with drought, seasonal food insecurity and severe food shortages. Some writers have perceived that pastoralism is inherently crisis ridden production system, backward-and traditional. Pastoralists are also viewed as people who manage their resources out of rationale economic principles, attach more cultural than economic value to their stock, ever wandering, causing desertification, exhibiting large herd size, lacking market orientation and disappearing in the face of drought and famine in the future.

However, recently many scholars have agreed that pastoralism is not a crisis ridden and the pastoralists devise environmentally suited adaptive strategies or cultural values intricately bound to the economic adaptation (Fratkin, 1994; Manger, 1996; Egeimi, 1996;). Accordingly, Pastoralism in East Africa in general and the Boorana in particular, constitutes an age-old tradition that historically proved capable of adaptation to arid and semi- arid region. Thus, the Boorana Oromo are not simple spectators in the face of this crisis. They have developed different types and forms of indigenous survival strategies to cope with famine. Among other things, the digging of deep water wells and the concomitant complex organization, especially the institutions of social security (cooperation and restocking) are worth mentioning (Asmarom, 1973; Bokku, 1996; Helland, 2000; Huqqa, 2000).

This research, therefore, attempts to examine closely the survival strategies of Boorana Oromo in the face of famine. Survival strategies in this research are defined as indigenous mechanisms developed by Boorana to cope with famine. The problem the research seeks to address is that the Boorana mobilize all resources of the community using their indigenous survival strategies as an important means to overcome famine. In other words, it is true that the continuation of relief aid is indispensable in saving lives. Equally, the Boorana have their indigenous ways of coping with famine. More specifically, varied strategies of resource management (livestock, land, water) are among the adaptive responses. Changing the pattern of mobility, engagement in non-pastoral activities such as trade are some of the adaptive responses. Moreover, the practice of asset disposal, changes in normal diet, division of labor, the use of environmental knowledge for early warning and the establishment and maintenance of

successful economic and social relationships both within and beyond the community are also the aspects of the surviving strategies that will be studied in this research .The study also seeks to establish whether community institutions (social security or insurance mechanism of restocking and feeding individuals or families) and social networks such as intra and inter-households, sub-lineage, clans and kinship structure with their culturally defined law and rule enacting body have roles and are the source of resource exchanges and mutual support in the process to survive at the time of famine. It also tries to find out the Boorana perceptions of drought and famine survival strategies. Along with this, the study also seeks to understand the role of variables like wealth, which results in differential effects of famine and responses as well as change and continuity in these strategies . In brief the study attempts to investigate the built-in indigenous survival strategies of the Boorana households.

Pastoralist response to famine is not a new subject, but it has not been given the importance it deserves in the literature on Ethiopian famine and seasonal food shortages. For example, researchers like Mesfin (1984), McCann (1984); Adhana (1987), Dessalegn (1987, 1991), webb et al (1994) have studied famine and or famine survival strategies. However, they have focused merely on peasants. Only few researchers like, Cossins (1972), Devitt (1977) and Toulmin (1985) have identified diversification of assets' disposal and raiding as critical survival mechanisms among pastoralists. Similarly, Seman and Holt (1979) dealt with nutritional status of the population of Eastern Ethiopia (Ogaden). In the case of the Boorana, Getachew (1995) and Almayehu (1998) have traced famine coping mechanisms. Bokku (1996) has also briefly discussed about the Boorana welfare institutions. In general, the same person

stated that the documents on pastoralist response to famine are not widely researched. Moreover, little or no attention is paid to indigenous pastoralist early warning practices, their famine perceptions, their views of famine survival strategies, social institutions and social networks like kinships which are embedded in the socio-economic system as a cultural knowledge. With this regard, how the Boorana perceive famine and famine survival strategies are not examined. Furthermore, the dynamism in these strategies both within and beyond the society resulting from socio-cultural relation is also often less treated. They also overlooked the differential response to food insecurity by communities, households and individuals. This research, therefore, tries to fill these gaps in dealing with and investigating the indigenous survival strategies of the Boorara in the face of famine.

In doing so, the research will contribute to anthropological knowledge by demonstrating the importance of understanding pastoralist knowledge and indigenous survival strategies and household dynamics in the process of coping with famine. With regard to Boorana, the research will help to understand the indispensability of their indigenous knowledge of coping with drought and famine and if these are improved, strengthened and extended they might form a viable and indigenous system of drought and famine survival to improve their food security.

The research will provide important information on policy implication in that one has to start from the existing knowledge and practices as a point of departure to improve the program of food security in the area in combining with external aid so as to overcome famine at local, regional and national levels.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objectives**

1. Examine the indigenous survival strategies of Boorana in the face of famine, especially at a time when there is no or limited external assistance.
2. Assess the role of Boorana value system in response to famine

### **Specific Objectives.**

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. To identify different types, forms and phases of survival strategies developed by Boorana in response to famine.
2. To describe the role of Boorana social institutions and networks in famine response and the rules that regulate the functioning of the Boorana institutions and networks which have significant bearing on famine survival strategies.
3. To highlight Boorana perceptions of famine and famine survival strategies as well as the differential response of individuals, households and groups to famine.
4. To assess change and continuity in these strategies

## **3. Methods ,Fieldwork Experience and Limitation**

The research was basically qualitative and was based on both primary and secondary data. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were the principal data collection method employed in the study. Other research methods like unstructured interviews, case-studies and focus group discussions were also used to supplement participant observation. I have also used secondary data collected from different organizations.

The fieldwork process was conducted in three successive phases. The first phase of this fieldwork began in August (3/8/2001) and lasted until September (24/9/2001). The second one was from October 2,2001 to December 25 and the third was from March 4 to March 16, 2002.

During the first phase of the fieldwork, the first week was devoted to obtaining research permission letter from concerned organizations or from Boorana Zone and district offices. This was followed by surveying the field site or selecting the most useful site for the fieldwork. Then effort was made to familiarize myself or establish rapport with community members, especially Boorana elders. Since I had already good relation with the elders, key informants and other members of the community in my previous encounter I did not face problem in establishing rapport. The relation helped me to identify meetings of Boorana on social and economic issues. On these gatherings elders and my former friends introduced me with the people. Thus, I was fortunate to tell the people why I was there. Moreover, that opportunity helped me to identify more potential informants in addition to those I knew before.

After site selection and identification of knowledgeable informants, I spent some times with these people, posing few general questions to them and holding informal talks. In the last days of the first phase of my fieldwork, I started to participate and observe community activities. This helped me to devise the direction of the second phase of fieldwork.

After a few days break in September 2001 for consultation with my supervisor, I began the second phase full-time fieldwork using participant observation, which characterized my entire stay in the field. Participant observation was used in combination with in-depth interviews. These methods were aimed at collecting data on how the Boorana respond to famine or survival strategies i.e. crisis anticipation /early warning/, resource management strategies (and, water and grass use and livestock); the role of kinship and other social support networks, communal prayer, recovery and restocking process, social and territorial organizations. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were also used to show adjustment to food consumption, market dependence and non-herding strategies. To this effect, participation in and observation of the daily routine of community such as social, economic and cultural activities, meetings, assemblies dealing with resource use and management strategies, restocking through kinship and recovery processes were conducted. Moreover, the participation in and observation of social and political gatherings, clan and village meetings (pastoral meetings), religious ceremonies (communal praying) were carried out. Observation of relief distribution sharing and gifts was also conducted .

I also participated in different meetings and workshops on pastoral production and development activities organized by NGOs in which pastoral communities from Boorana Zone and Kenya (Ethio-Kenya cross- border workshop) took part. The issues raised on the workshops included drought, famine, market, and indigenous ways of drought and famine survival strategies. The third phase of the fieldwork focused on collecting data needed to enrich my study.

Unstructured interviews were systematically conducted with a number of selected Boorana elders (men and women), key informants, victims of famine, government and NGO staffs. The aim of conducting unstructured interviews with Boorana elders was to know the custom (***aadaa***) of the Boorana, especially the role of ***Gadaa*** System in general, and kinship and other social and economic support networks in particular, as strategy to cope with famine. Unstructured interviews were also conducted to know and reconstruct the practice of reduction of food consumption, asset disposal, exchanges, community cooperation and prayer, early warning, the shift to non-herding activities and resource management during the drought and famine. Moreover, unstructured interviews were held with selected men and women from the community and government and NGOs staffs to reconstruct history, causes, nature, impact of drought and famine.

Another method used for data collection was focus group discussion. This method was used to gather data on community level issues, which include people's interrelations, views, concepts about drought, famine survival strategies, causes of famine, the role of ***Gadaa*** system and other institutions as famine survival strategies. The group was composed of eight members among which three of them were women. The selection criteria were based on age, gender and wealth.

Case studies were conducted on individual households who were victims of famine restocked or rehabilitated. An attempt was made to generate data on Boorana ***aadaa*** (custom) linking with survival strategies, mutual assistance through kinship organization, other social support networks and recovery processes. Case studies also targeted to

show differential response to famine, resource disposal process, change in food habit and shift to non-herding activities.

The study also employed relevant archival and documentary sources, unpublished and published, found in different government and non-government organizations. Data were gathered from organizations such as Agriculture Bureau, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office, Economic Development and Planning Bureau, NGOs and SORDU. The data collected from these sources were used to look at the dimension and extent of famine in the historical perspective: Together with this literature other secondary data from different sources provided data on the history, culture, climate, demography, physical features, ecology, social and economic settings. The secondary data were also used to analyze causes of famine the forms of responses to famine by the community and government . Furthermore, academic and research literature were also used to supplement data from the above organizations.

Although the study has ostensibly achieved most of its objectives, it has also faced certain limitations. The first problem the researcher faced was related to the time the research was carried out and the nature of the research topic. As far as the time of the research is concerned, it was conducted during the recovery phase of the famine. Thus, such problems forced the researcher to stress reconstructing the nature, magnitude, impact and the forms of response during the drought and famine through interviews, case studies and other methods.

Apart from this, the researcher also encountered certain problems related to nature of topic. These include data on the number of people that died as a result of famine and

the impact of Ethio- Eritrea war on pastoralists in general, and the Boorana particular. Officials were usually reluctant to disclose the number of people that died as a result of famine and the impact of the war on relief aid. Hence, the problem was over come by spending more time with concerned persons and authorities to establish rapport and to make clear to them that my research has no any affiliation with any group. Moreover, attempt was made to informally converse with and interview members of the community who were eye witnesses the effects of drought and famine . Hence, invaluable data were obtained in this way, which could have been possible other wise. Further more, the dearth of secondary data on the subject i. e famine and survival strategies especially among the pastoralist were serious challenges. There are no systematically recorded data on famine. Besides this, during my fieldwork, I did not visit a few parts of Boorana land due to security problem. Furthermore, due to time factor, limited resource and scope of the paper, the study also did not raise certain issues like gender pertaining to Boorana survival strategies and famine, which were touched only in passing. Thus, further research is needed to clarify government early warning, the issue, of women (gender), relief aid, development issues, inter-ethnic relations.

Data collection was also focused on Yablloo district though other districts were occasionally visited. In spite of all these problems and limitations, the study has achieved its objectives,. I hope the study of survival strategies of the Boorana contributes to the already existing literature on pastoralists in general and Boorana, in particular in paving ways for those who are interested to carry out further research. The researcher being an Oromo, has no problem of communicating with his informants. This also helped the researcher to understand some of the cultural symbols, and values that

are embedded in the culture easily. Furthermore, being culturally an insider helped me to establish rapport and win the trust of the people very easily. This has also given me an opportunity to get access and observe and to some degree to participate in various socio-economic activities as well as ceremonies associated with the **Gadaa** system since 1994. In other words, the researcher got the opportunity to enquire about the community, its culture and social organization.

#### **4. Rationale for the Selection of Research Topic and Site**

My research interest in issues of Boorana survival strategies is to a large extent the reflections of my life experiences in Boorana since 1994. Due to my daily activities that are related to cultural study, I was variously involved in pastoral life style i.e. **Gadaa** System. Along this, since 1994 I have closely observed the impact of recurrent drought and famine in Boorana, and how the Boorana culturally respond to crisis. The pastoralist way of life and pastoral environment such as Boorana's complex water wells with its concomitant social organization of the **Gadaa** system stimulated my curiosity and interest in this topic . All these influenced me to embark on this study and to document some of the aspects of famine and its coping strategies.

As it was already stated in the statement of the problem Yaaballo was selected as a major research site. This is due to the fact that Yaaballo is one of the most drought and famine prone districts in the zone. In *Yaaballo* there were famine victim's who were settled in some Kebeles. Moreover, *Yaaballo* is where one can see the shift from

herding to other economic activities either to diversify their household economy or as a means of survival (eg. petty trade). *Yaaballo* also borders *Guji* land and other non - Oromo groups, and it is very important to see their economic and social relations. It is also one of the areas where one can observe Boorana culture as it are functions. Although *Yaaballo*, especially *Diid Hara Kebele* ,was selected as a main research site other famine affected *Kebeles* and districts were also visited.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

### 1. Literature Review

East Africa, with a large variety and number of pastoral societies, has historically been the focus of anthropological studies. There are various misunderstandings and explanations that have often been offered to the pastoral societies in general and East African pastoralists in particular. Some of the widely held views are the conceptions of the pastoralists as “traditional”, stagnant, backward, and sticking to conservative social structures and anti- development. All these faulty assumptions in the literature affect the proper understanding of pastoral production systems, the complex processes of changes and mislead development programs (Barfield, 1993; Egeimi, 1996; Fratkin et. al, 1994). Pastoralists are not wandering; they are rational in their economic, social and political values and they know where and why they are going. Above all, these misconceptions about pastoralism and pastoralists affect the proper understanding of their indigenous survival strategies and coping mechanism that have developed over centuries.

In the history of anthropological studies of East African pastoralists, Herskovits (1926) in his popular thesis of the “Cattle Complex” marked the beginning of distorted images. Herskovits viewed East Africa as an area characterized by a unified cattle culture where prestige is associated with cattle ownership appeared to overshadow their economic value to the point of irrationality.

Few researches were conducted up to 1960. An example of these works were Evans - Prtichard on Nuer (1940), Baxter on Boorana (1954), Gulliver on Turkana and Jie (1955),

and Lewis on the Somali (1961). According to Fratkin et. al (1994) these researchers have put major emphasis on the unique fit between the pastoralist peoples and their arid lands, between their particular social organizations and the demands of mobile livestock production.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of anthropologists emerged with ample data on various aspects of East African pastoralism focusing on ecology, especially in studies about the regions experiencing extensive drought and famine. Among other things, the view of African pastoralist as ecologically insensitive as such gained prominence through the popular thesis of the “Tragedy of commons”. The central contention of this view is that individual pastoralist seeks to maximize return from the commonly held resources by keeping as large a herd as possible without caring for the ecology. Thus, it causes desertification. The tragedy of the commons has been repeatedly under criticism for it is calling the individualization of the communally held resources and this limitation of the strategies for herd movement and efficient use of resources by denying the pastoralists the means to cope with risk and uncertainty (Lane and Moorehead, 1995; Lane, 1998; Booku, 2000). The critics of this view argue that pastoralism is an appropriate and efficient adaptations to pastoralist environment and they deploy elaborate ecological knowledge and herding strategies in management and utilization of scarce resources and also effective in desertification control. Herd mobility is also encouraged under communal system to cope with scarce resources (Abdel - Ghaffar, 1976: Oba, Baxter, 1990vi; 1994a,24; Manger, 1996: 24; Oba, 1997a; Fratkin, 1998: 123). Thus, individualization of the communal resources is detrimental to the indigenous survival

strategies and coping mechanisms which have a critical role in resource management during drought and famine.

In the 1980s, the discussion of the pastoral production has shifted to dealing with variations in social organizations and adaptations experienced by different pastoral populations including multi-resource exploitation and dependence on non-pastoral products ( Fraktin, 1994). Since 1990s, new studies appeared linking anthropology, history, ecology and development. Some of these studies have focused on the Sahelian drought 1968- 1973 and the explanation of the deterioration of conditions of African pastoralists with Ethiopian famine (Johnson, and Anderson, 1988; Galaty and Johnson, 1990; Baxter and Hogg, 1990;).

There are different approaches to understand famine and its causes. In the modern Western discourse, famine is habitually referred to as disaster event focusing on a mass starvation unto death caused primarily by drought (Seyoum-Smith, 1986:126; De Waal, 1989: 5-6; Walker, 1989: 26-30; Keen, 1994:1). According to DeWaal (1989: 5-7; Walker, 1989: 26-30; Keen, 1994:1) such a simplistic view has led others to advocate the notion of food availability decline as a major cause of famine. This view assumes that inadequate food supply is arising from population increase and climatic or environmental factors.

The views of disaster and food supply are challenged by Sen's (1981) view of "entitlement theory". In this case it is argued that famines are not caused by shortages of food supply but due to individual failure to afford whatever food is available (Walker,

1989: 30; Keen, 1994: 4). This theory is criticized for ignoring the institutionally based entitlement (politics of famine), considering the victims as passive spectators and focusing on poverty and market forces. In other words, it ignores the institutions which expose these victims to famine

Out of these critics, another view which conceptualized famine not as a disasterous event but as a process with beneficiaries come out. Accordingly, famine results from a social, political, economic and process of changes. Amrita Rangasami (1985:1748) in Keen has suggested that the famine process can not be defined with reference to the victims of starvation alone. "It [famine] is a process in which benefits accrue to one section of the community while losses flow to the other." Famine as a process progressively depriving the victim community out of its assets including the ability to labour. For example, price movements during famine in Northern Nigeria in 1973-1974 were observed to have certain beneficiaries (Watts, 1983:440). Moreover, the acquisition of land by certain groups during famine has been observed in Rajasthan, India (Jodha, 1975:1616) and in Bangladesh (Hartmann and Boyce;1979:26). Contrary to Sen's view that famine necessarily involves mortality, others argue that famine may, but need not result in mortality (Seyoum-Smith, 1986; De Waal, 1989:5-6; Walker, 1989: 26-36; Keen, 1994: 5-6). Generally, the famine disaster approach is based on outsiders view while famine as a process is drawn on famine victims experience or local perceptions of famine (Walker, 1989: 33-39).

Very recently, however, researches like Egeimi and Manger (1996) have focused on broad themes i.e. resource management instead of crisis management which is narrow

developmental one. According to these scholars, drought and food shortages are not new to the desert edge. While the dimension of the tragedy are to some extent clear, its secrets and causes are not. This has been attributed to the failure of social science research to understand the political, economic and social determinants that cause the crisis while focusing on nature, population pressure, ignorance or irrational land use. They conclude that pastoralists are culturally adaptive agent to the limitations of nature. However, their basic relationship to nature has been negatively affected and eroded by the working of structural processes of marginalization. As a whole, in the view of political ecologists, vulnerability to famine is a structural historical process shaped by the effects of geographical, ecological, political and economic marginalizations. These variables influence the functioning and changes in famine survival strategies and expose people to famine. Thus, development and modernization has failed to solve the age old problem of subsistence crisis and even in some cases aggravated them(Egeimi, 1996:30-33).

Famine victims are the vulnerable groups in the society. The groups who lack material resources (land, food, shelter etc.), access to support structures (organizationally) and socio-intellectual entitlement supported by strong ideology (traditional wisdom or knowledge) are easily vulnerable to famine. The degree of vulnerability varies in terms of age, sex, wealth, household, village and region (Walker, 1989: 30-33).

During famine, basic food (grain) price increases while that of the value of the assets like livestock reduces. Thus, the rich get richer and poor get poorer is a theme common to all famines (Walker, 1989: 32-33, Keen, 1994).

Famine was not uncommon in many parts of the world including Africa in the remote past. Today, however, it dominates international images of the Third World, particularly Africa. There are few documents on the history and nature of famine in Africa before the 19th century. In available literature it has been depicted that in the 1880s, 1970s and 1980s peasants and pastoralists in Africa have faced severe famine. The pastoralist communities, especially those in Kenya, Sudan, Sahel and down through South Africa were affected by famine which resulted in human and animal death, and subsequently the breakdown of social fabric. Also, in the 1990s and the year 2000, some countries in the Horn of Africa also experienced acute shortages of food and it seems that famine is still on agenda (Seigel, 1975; Swift, 1977; Johnson and Anderson, 1988; Pankhurst and Johnson, 1988; De Waal, 1989; Rau, 1991; Webb et al. 1994; Keen, 1994; Egeimi, 1996).

More specifically, in Ethiopia famine has tormented many peasants and pastoralists during the 19th century. This does not mean that there was no famine before this period (Mesfin, 1984; Pankhurst and Johnson, 1988; Johnson and Anderson, 1988; Goyder and Hugh, 1988; Walker, 1989: 117; Jansson, et al, 1990; Webb et al, 1994). Although it is not well documented, during the largest famine of the 1980s only it is estimated that between the range of four hundred thousands to six hundred thousand people died (De Waal, Alex, 1997: 359-364).

In the past few years, it seems that the magnitude and the extent of famine is increasing among the pastoralists in the country. In the year 2000 famine, many pastoral households lost their livestock and it also left the livelihoods of several households in a

precarious situation where the vulnerable groups- children, women and elderly suffered considerably (Helland 2000). The Boorana society today, like other pastoralists in the Horn, has been caught in a protracted crisis. This crisis has its most dramatic manifestation, in frequent famines, the latest in early 2000. Various explanations have been offered regarding this crisis. The first groups are those who focused on internal factors while over glossing the external factor. Helland (1997, 1998), who belongs to this group, contends that the viability of Boorana pastoralism as such is disturbed by an increase in both human and livestock population. Having used ecological perspective and in adopting a Malthusian/ Spencerian view, Helland perceived drought and famine as a periodic natural adjustment means to curb the increased population densities which is beyond the carrying capacity of the land.

The advocator of another variant ecological perspective, Coppock (1994) also notes that Boorana pastoralism is in irreversible decline and alternative livelihoods need to be made available to pastoralists in the future. Both have negative views on the continuation of famine relief in Boorana. These scholars seem to have followed the Malthusian explanation of famine.

Out of these critics, the views of the predicament of Boorana pastoralism both from internal and external factors, but with emphasis on the latter one have got ground currently. According to Salaha (1999) and Bokkuu (1996, 2000), the proponents of this view, the crisis of Boorana pastoralism has to be seen in terms of origins and dynamics of the decline of partoral economy, vulnerability and consequences of erosion of traditional Boorana structure because of structure historical processes of

marginalization and faulty interventions. In short, it is not only attributed to drought or nature. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that Boorana is under the pressure of drought and famine.

Nevertheless, peasants and pastoralists are not passive victims of famine. They implement various coping strategies to avert risk against their livelihood system. (Dessaiegn (1987); De Waal 1989: 122-125; Campbell, 1990; Rau, 1991; Egeimi, 1996). has distinguished two forms of famine survival strategies: crisis anticipation and crisis survival strategies. The former is used during normal time while the latter is employed at a time of stress. Crisis anticipation is the basis of crisis survival strategies.

The purpose of the daily activities of rural communities is to ensure or protect the household's long viability through loss management. According to Corbett, household food shortage and the approach of famine are frequently anticipated well in advance and strategies are carefully planned to minimize the impact of the stress. Rural communities have "early warning" system or crisis anticipation mechanism which is analogous to government modern early warning system. In Wallo, northern Ethiopia, all the peasant's intellectual, social, religious and magico-mystical resources are used to anticipate and prepare for disaster based on information from weather and environmental change and rural market behaviors (Dessaiegn, 1987; 134-163; Walker, 1989: 39). Social insurance mechanisms and social networks have important role in preventing famine function situation, asset building and diversification in insuring food security. The section of the society affected by food shortages is helped by mobilizing resources. The Afar, for

example, have traditional institutionalized mutual aid associations (Jodha, 1978; Walker, 1989: 48-49; Ali Said, 1994: 195-205).

In the literature on famine responses carried out by peasants and pastoralists the following are some of the common types of the strategies people employ to cope with famine in India, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia. These are changing cropping and pasturing practices, rationing food, increased use of kinship transfer and loans, transactions with neighboring communities (exchange network, trade), diversification of income sources of the household assets, resorting to non-agricultural or herding activities, temporary migration in search of work, the sale of non essential possessions and excess animals. These are the strategies first used in response to famine. They explicitly or implicitly show that famine survival strategies are logical extensions of every day livelihood survival strategies (normal strategies) (Longhorst: 1986; Dessaegn, 1987: 167-170; Garine and Harrison 1988; Johnson and Anderson, 1988: 94-96; Walker, 1989: 48-52; Waller and Sobania, 1994: 61-63; Egeimi, 1996: 29-49; Yared, 1999;). Moreover, the strategies of delayed or reduced food consumption, reduction of expenditures, grain purchases, storing food, reliance on wild food, relaxing food taboo, fall back activities are documented among the Bengal (India), Karawaja and Sahelian herders. These do not affect their subsistence base (Horowitz, 1975: 215-216, 219-223, 387-389; Swift, 1977: 457-475; Scott and Gormley, 1980: 96-98; Garine and Harrison, 1988: 379-404; Walker, 1989; Keen, 1994: 122-128; Frank Muhereza, 1996: 98-99).

Furthermore, in India and Africa the selling of essential livestock, agriculture tools, borrowing money from outside kinship relations, land mortgaging or selling, resorting to distress migration and food aid are commonly recorded as crisis management strategies

if the stress is prolonged (Walker, 1989: 39-52). Finally, raiding, selling child labour, begging, theft, decoy, prostitution, taking refuge and the like are depicted in some cases as famine coping strategies (Adana, 1987; Garine and Harrison, 1988: 400-402; Walker, 1989: 48-52; Johnson and Anderson 1989, 94-96; Waller and Sobania, 1994: 61-63, 144-147, 150-154; Egeimi, 1996: 29-49). For example, in Kenya many Boorarna of Maarsabit District withdrew into Ethiopia though some returned when condition improved. The Maasai also took refuge among the Kikuyu during 1890s famine (Dahl and Hojor 1979; Waller and Sobania, 1994: 61-62).

In Ethiopia, the Afar pastoralists of Awash valley use the mechanism of changing herd composition, hunting and stock alliances between community members to cope with drought and famine (Walker, 1989; Ali Said, 1996: 195-205). Turton (1988) also studied the resilience and inventiveness of the Mursi of Southern Ethiopia who use migration to higher altitudes and shifts to sedentary activities as a response to famine. Among the pastoralist group of Oromo, the *Karrayu* of Upper Awash Valley migration to towns and the shift to non-herding income earning sources like selling fire wood and the like are recorded (Assefa, 2000; Ayalew, 2001).

There are different approaches to understand these peasant and pastoralists decisions and choices between various options in the face of seasonal food shortages and famine. One of these is the "sequencing approach". In this case, the victims first employ the strategies which are reversible. In other words, they sell non-essential possessions, which do not affect the basis of their potential economy. If the stress is prolonged they sell their essential (core) assets like land, livestock etc. Bringing together all the

examples of coping strategies from Africa and India the adherent of this model identified four common pattern of sequence stages through which famine victims pass. These are those strategies people would employ to cope with seasonal food shortage, crisis management, distress migration and the last stage is starvation and death (Walker, 1989: 49-52; Dessalegn, 1987: 167-170; Devereux, 1993).

On the other hand, there are researchers who have conceptualized coping strategies of famine victims contrary to the "sequencing approach". They argue that households are confronted with different constraints, options and possibilities at a given point in time. They also utilize different coping strategies simultaneously, pursue different strategies in different periods of the year and there are intra-and inter-community and household variations in types of strategies employed. For instance, vulnerability factors like wealth and flexible sources of incomes affects response to famine (Corbett, 1988; Walker, 1989; Shipton, 1990: 363-364; Adam, 1992: 203; Yared, 1999, 125, 144-145).

According to (Walker, 1989) famine is a process, the strategies are also evolving in process and for victims famine survival strategies are not developed over night. They are the logical extension of past experiences and daily activities. Generally, there are few studies which approach famine strategies from victims views as evolving process. This research, therefore, tries to fill this gap by addressing the issues already identified in the statement of the problem in investigating the indigenous survival strategies of Boorana in the face of famine.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Physical and Socio- economic Settings

### 1. LOCATION, PHYSICAL FEATURES AND CLIMATE

The Boorana inhabit parts of Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya. In Ethiopia, they live in Boorana zone of Oromia Regional State which comprises six *anaas* or districts (See Annex 4). These districts are *Liiban, Areeroo, Yaaballo, Taltallee, Dirre* and *Moyaale*. The asphalt road that connected Addis Ababa and *Moyaale* -Kenya passes through the Booranalnd, particularly the region where the deep-water wells are concentrated. The Boorana Oromo are bounded by *Guji* and Arsi Oromo groups to the North and north east; groups in Southern Peoples Nation and Nationalities like , *Burji* and *Konso* to the west, the Somali to the east and Kenya in the south (Asmarom, 1973; ZABA,1998).

The physical features of Booranalnd are highly variable. Topographically, most of the Boorana landscape is gently undulating across an elevation of 1,000 to 1,700 meters down South and southeast. However, there are occasional mountainous areas (mountain ranges, scattered volcanic cones and craters) rising to 2000 meters, particularly the *Yaaballo – Meggaa* and *Areeroo* plateau. The Boorana generally classify their land with reference to topographic features as *Gammojji, Carii* and *Badda* referring respectively to the lowlands, middle range altitude and highland (Bokku, 2000: 46-48). Along the lower basin the *Daawwa* River flows southeast dividing Booranalnd into two to join the *Gannale* River at the Ethio- Somalia border. The other two surface rivers ***Gannale*** and *Sagan* flow on the east and west of Booranalnd to the South directions.

The origins of these three rivers are from highland areas bordering the Boorana in the north.

Volcanic crater lakes also form another interesting physical feature of Booranaland. These are mostly situated in western part of Boorana especially in Dirre Region. Example of these crater lakes from which salt is mined are *Booqee*, *Soodda* and *Magaadoo* (Bille, 1983; Coppock, 1994: 52-53; ZABA, 1998, *Huqqa*, 2000:1;). Although they are not natural physical features, the hand dug traditional Boorana Eela, literally subterranean deep-water wells are the “lifeline” of Booranaland and also creating an amazing features of human creativity.

There is scarce information on the soil types of the area. However, Coppock (1994) suggests that Quaternary deposit, basement complex formations and volcanics dominate the geology of the area. Some of soil types are *Orthic*, *Acrisols* and *Vertisols*. The former is limited in agricultural potential with low base saturation. *Vertisols* occur usually in valley bottoms and bottom lands of valleys and other sites with impeded drainage and may be expected to have greater fertility than soils on slope or hilltops. Overall, the rangelands of East Africa are low in fertility. Boorana is, therefore, not exceptional.

The Boorana plateau is rich in various types of minerals though not as rich as the highland districts. For example, the *Dirre* sub- region is known for salt mining from volcanic crater lakes, *Booqee*. The bars of white salt are mined from the *Soodda* crater lake for both human and livestock consumption. The purgative black salt is also mined

from *Diillo* and *Magadoo* crater lakes in addition to mineral water provision for human and livestock population. Recovering salt from these lakes is the source of employment near Mega. Salt water is also important feed intake for camels at *Diilloo*, *Goraye* to the southwest (Coppock, 1994;43-44; Bokku, 2000).

With regard to the types of vegetation growing in Booranaland, there are several native species of grasses and woody plants dominated by savanna vegetation containing mixtures of perennial herbaceous and woody vegetation. In other words, the area is covered with light vegetation of predominantly pod yielding acacia families and varieties of thorny bushes of low forage value. Previous reports indicate that the vegetation pattern of the Boorana region varies according to the moisture gradient, ecological zone and grazing intensity. Most of the feed that the Boorana livestock utilize predominantly originate from natural pasture, which comprised natural grasses, browse and bushes. In short, the Boorana Rangelands are the best grazing areas in Africa as the ecology favours pastoralism more than farming. Although they are disappearing varieties of wild animals such as tiger, field ass etc including birds are found abundantly (Corra 1993; Coppock, 1994; ZABA, 1998; Bokku, 2000).

Concerning the climate, the area is dominated by semi-arid weather conditiona. Thus, characterized by this type of climate, the average temperature and rainfall vary from 19 to 25 and 450 to 700 millimeters respectively. Ther rainfall pattern is bimodal with a long rainy season from March –May - *Ganna* and short rainy season from September- November, *Hagayya*, in the area.

Table. 1 **Seasonal Characteristics of a “normal year” according to the Boorana "Traditional" Calendar**

<b>No</b>	<b>Seasons (local name)</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Period</b>
1	Ganna	Long/big rainy season	March to May
2	Adoolessa	Cool, humid air, small showery ( <i>Sorroo</i> ), and at the end dry	June to August
3	Hagayya	Small/ short rainy season	September –November
4	Bona	Dry season, very hot, windy and dusty	December to February

The long rainy season accounts for about 60% of the annual rainfall. In addition to its bi-modality, the rainfall pattern is unreliable, erratic and highly variable in amount, timing and distribution (Huqqa, 2000). During drought years, the amount of rainfall is less than the normal figure. The bi-modality of the rain and the prevailing high surface evaporation results in less efficient rainfall and more moisture deficiency. This in turn affects the availability of pasture and surface water resources. According to the data obtained from *Yaaballo* meteorological station, the total amount of rainfall for main rain season of the year (2001) was 215.1 milli metres, which is 53% less than the amount for normal year. This shows deviation from the normal amount of yearly rain

In Booranalnd, a monthly rainfall under 60% results in very little or no grass growth. This has effect on length of growing season and or the process of any form of crop production (Bill, 1983). In the absence of adequate surface water resource, the major sources of water for Boorana are the *Eela*. According to my informant, Borbor Bulee, they are the most dependable water source upon which the Boorana rely, especially during dry seasons both for human and livestock consumption. Some of these *Eela* or wells are called *Tulaa*, literally meaning deep -water wells in terms of water yield volume

and reliability. The wells are important in economic and social life of Boorana around which the society is organized. There is also *kaa'ima*, meaning all the flood availed surface waters which are occasional sources. Examples of these are rock depression, *Maddo* (temporary oasis) and *Haroo*, pond water (Helland, 1977a; Coppock, 1994; Bokku, 2000).

## **2.THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.1 The Boorana Oromo, the Conquest and Its Results**

According to Getachew (2001:66), in Ethiopia the pastoral areas cover about 61% of the total land and it is approximated to comprise 5 million people. The major pastoral groups are Afar, Isa, Somali, Arbore, Geleb, Hamar, Mursi, Karrayyu and Boorana (Kaarina and Tihut, 1999:1).

Among these pastoralists, the Boorana are one of the semi- nomadic groups of Oromo. They are the branch of the Oromo whose language belongs to the Cushitic sub- family common to most of northeastern Africa (Lewis, 1966; *Asmarom*, 1973). Melba (1990) referring to work of Bates (1979) suggests that the Oromo are very ancient race and indigenous stock in this part of East Africa. The name Boorana is derived from the noun *booroo*, and the people refer themselves to as 'Boorana *Booroo*' ' the people of *Boorna* ( Informants, Borbor Bulee and Nuuraa Diida).

According to the 1994 Population and Housing Census, the total population of Boorana zone is 1,536, 054 with average density of 22 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. Out of this figure, the Boorana account for over half a million (Huqqaa, 2000:1). The six lowland districts

inhabited by Boorana are the areas of sparse population settlement owing to the adverse effects of the physical environment on population settlement. Almost all the Boorana Oromo live in rural areas. The average household size of the zone is 5.36, a figure which the Boorana share too. Demographic studies on the Boorana plateau in the late 1980s estimated a net population growth rate of 2.5% (Coppock, 1994; ZABA, 1998). The livelihood of the people depends on pastoralism and limited crop production. Generally, being remote and sparsely populated, the Booranaland is poorly developed in infrastructure and other social services. There is no single industrial enterprise for wage labour employment.

Both oral data and scholars like Lewis (1966), Asmarom, (1973) and Bokku (2000), support the position that the Boorana Oromo have lived in their present land for many centuries. However, historically the population of the Boorana has not always been restricted to its present territory. They further suggest that it was extended over the regions presently occupied by the Somalis. For example, a major part of the area now occupied by the Somali (Region 5) was Boorana territory during the last few centuries. In the words my informant, Boruu Madhaa, the current administrative division has taken away a vast territory, including Boorana ceremonial sites that are now part of Somali Regional State.

According to the indigenous territorial divisions of the Gadaa administration, the Booranaland is divided in to *Liiban* and *Dirre* Regions, the land to the east and west of *Daawwaa* River respectively. The *Liiban* region is sub- divided into *Golba*, the lowland areas and *Diida* Liiban, the upland plain areas. This region has a unique place among

the Boorana because it is the religious region, *Lafajila*, where several sites, *ardajila* are located and the *Gadaa* in power is expected to perform ceremonial activities at each religious site. The *Dirre* region consists of sub- regions such as *Wayyaama*, *Goomolee*, *Dirre* with its *Tulaa*, deep wells, Malbe and *Golboo* (Bokku, 2000; informant Borbor Bulee).

The Oromo in general and Boorana in particular have developed the *Gadaa* system of administration which is central to their value system. The *Gadaa* governs and regulates all aspects of their life i.e. social, economic and political. Thus, the power to administer Boorana and their land is vested in *Gadaa* by law (*seera*). In this regard, the *Gadaa* system diffuses usufruct right among members by delegating authority to various geographical units and *gosa* organizations for the utilization and routine management of the resources. However, this has been made to fall under pressure since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Manger (1994) and Fratkin (1996), pastoralists are culturally adaptive agents to the limitation of nature through their indigenous systems. However, historical process of marginalization and imposition of alien structure have affected this. This is exactly what happened to the Oromo, particularly their pastoralist groups. Thus, the Boorana and their pastoral production system began to face problems beginning with the conquest of the then Abyssinian rulers in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Africans fall under the yoke of colonialism, northern part of present day Ethiopia, Abysinia (Donham, 1986) also expanded to become the Ethiopian Empire. This process did not surpass the Oromo and the Boorana who were

brought under Abyssinian rule. According to Markakis (1993 and Buli, 2001), this loss of autonomy by the pastoralists for the first time due to incorporation by the colonial power, including Ethiopia's marked the beginning of the long process of pastoral predicament. Now let us focus on the process of the conquest of Boorana and its results very briefly.

Booranaland was conquered and incorporated into Ethiopian Empire by the forces of Menelik II on the eve of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was during the Gadaa office of *Liiban Jaldeessa* from 1888-1896 (Informants, Nuuraa Yaabichoo and Borbor Bulee). According to *Holcomb* and *Sisai* (1990) the conquest and incorporation was a part of the large process of inventing a dependent colonial powers in East Africa. AS corroborating with secondary source

Waaqoo Aboo says that the Abyssinian rulers were successful in the conquest of the Oromoland with the modern firearms received from the European powers. Not only this but also cattle disease and the subsequent famine had reduced many Boorana Oromo to destituting. This development had weakened the resistance of the community and *Menelik II* forces led by *Asfaw Darge* and later by *Fitawrarii Habte Georgis Dinagde* controlled Booranaland (See also Melba, 1988).

One of the results of this conquest was that the *Gadaa* system of administration, which survived intact until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has continued to be weakened by the pressure exerted on it from the Abyssinian control structure. A typical example of these structures is the introduction of the *Gabbar* system. After the physical occupation of the land, the conquerers imposed the *Gabbar* system of tenancy on the

indigenous land management. According to Helland (1996: 142-143) each "*naftagna*" (rifle men, soldier-settler) was allocated a number of Boorana families who were obliged to supply him with labor and material contribution like livestock, water, firewood, honey and dairy products" This was followed by consolidation of feudal structure and imposition of authority under *Haile Sellase*. As Borbor Bule suggests, for this purpose, the government bodies chose the *Qaalluu* institution, which is of hereditary feature to rule the Boorana indirectly. Accordingly, they appointed one *Qaalluu* from each moiety as *Balabbata*, as state agent for local administration and tax collection.

Moreover, the Abyssinian administration brought in thousands of people from outside the region and developed numerous garrison towns. On the other hand, thousands of people were removed from the region by the *gabbar* system while others took refuge in north Kenya. This created space for more settlers from outside the region and in such settlement areas the government established administrative centers and such settlers introduced cultivation of crops particularly at Iddilolaa, Megga, Yaaballoo etc. This had impact on delicate ecological environment of the Boorana pastoral production system and thereby the resource tenure of Boorana was changed . To elaborate this further, a

Significant part of the pastoral territory was taken over and communities of pastoralist were confined to certain areas which led to overgrazing and deterioration of the grazing land. In some cases, people began to use wet and dry seasons grazing areas permanently. Major water development and farming based on individual land right were developed. This is against the communal land tenure.

In 1975, the “Socialist” Ethiopia administration implemented a land reform policy which changed the feudal land tenure system. The *Derg*<sup>1</sup> regime established the peasant Association or *kebele* structure as the lowest administrative unit in the rural areas. This has further weakened the pastoral production system. as it limited pastoral mobility patterns and affected the indigenous pastoral territorial organization. Imposing a Peasant Association structure on pastoral communities brought about these impacts. This control structure effectively limited and restricted every small unit of pastoral communities into a specific area that made the pastoral production system weak. It is not only limitation in land use and the herding of stock but also affected the core of the pastoralists survival strategy. The effect was two folds. On the one hand the herding of stock is far more localized than it had ever been and, on the other hand, contact broke down even between the same pastoral groups. The PA had authority to collect tax and to fine. In other words, PA is tax collector, prosecutor, judge, police, decision-maker, resource mobilizing agent, conscriptor, land allocator, relief register and distributor etc. (see the imposed structures; kebele institutions).

## **2.2 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

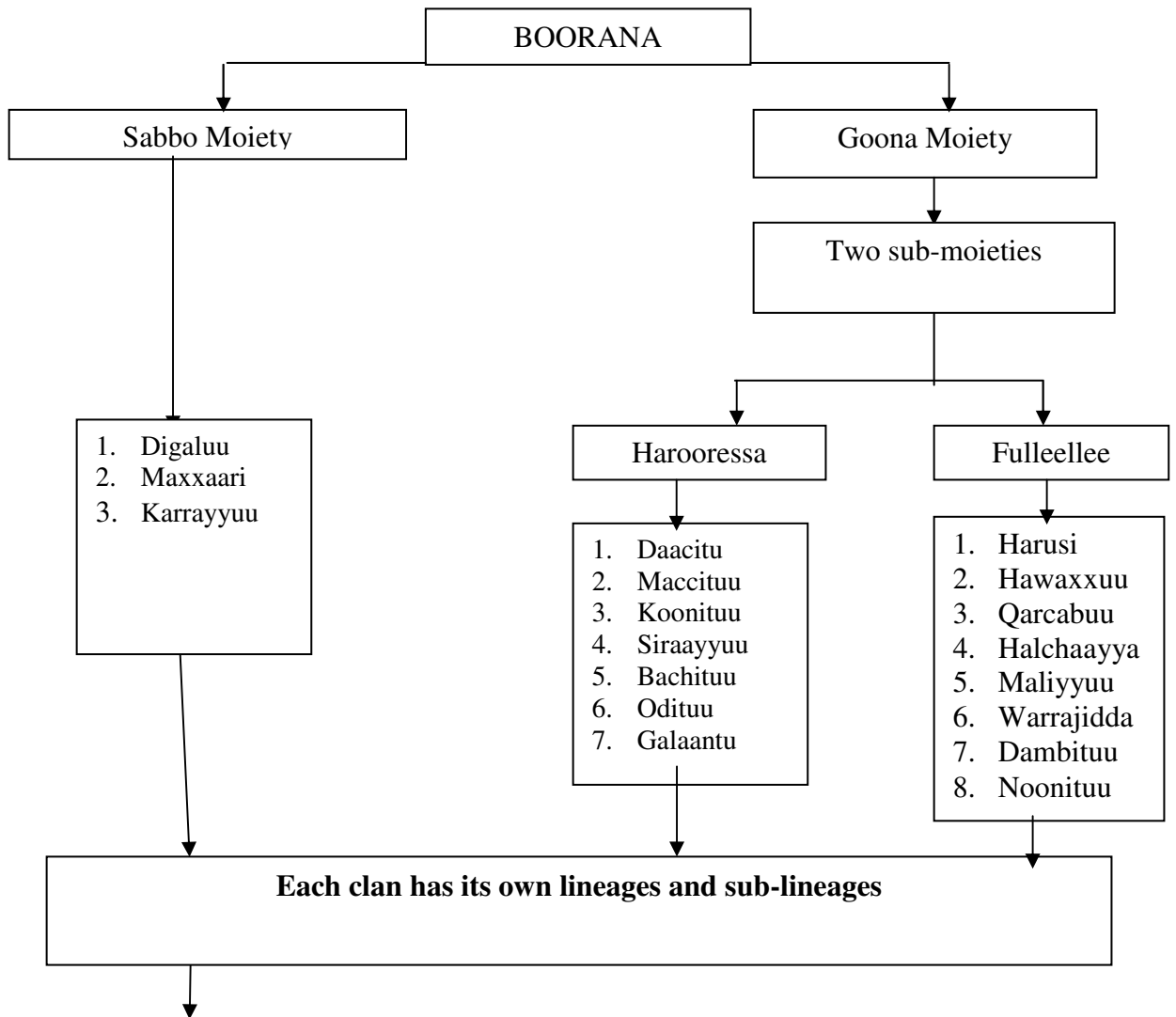
### **2.2.1 The Moiety System and Marriage**

Duality is one of the most important aspects of the Boorana Oromo Social organization. The Boorana Oromo are divided into two intermarrying dual organizations (moieties), *Sabbo* and *Goonā*. *Sabbo* and *Goonā*, in turn, are divided into three and fifteen *gosa*, clans, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The committee of military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991

**Figure 1. Boorana Oromo Gosa (Clan), Organization**



Each *gosa* (clan) is divided into further sub-units as *mana* and *balbala* “house” and “door” respectively.

Among Boorana Oromo, descent is reckoned only through the male line. Each clan constitutes a corporate group in that they share many collective rights and obligations. i.e. *gosa* members help each other and they have obligations in assisting the needy members. They also participate in ritual, maintenance and regulation of water sources and settle their disputes amicably at *Kora gosa*, the clan meeting, imposing fines on

wrong doers and seizing property. In general, a clan provides a wider network of mutual assistance than individual lineages and the moieties communally manage pasture and water resources as well as soci-economic activities (See Bokkuu, 2000).

## **Marriage**

All human societies have some forms of marriage. But the nature of marriage institutions varies. According to my informants, Borbor Bulee and Waariyoo Kaatoo, the most important aspect of Boorana marriage is that the Sabbo- Goona structure divides all the Boorana into two exogamous units or marriage relationships. This serves as a social control mechanism which promote strong social ties between members of the two moieties. For a man of the *Sabbo* moiety all *sabbo* women are said to be his “sisters” while the women of *Goonna* are his in-laws (*sodda*).

The most common form of marriage among Boorana is *kadhaa*, which literally means marriage through the negotiations of both parents. The immediate parilineal kinsmen are consulted in the process of marriage negotiation and payment of bride wealth, which is paid in cattle. According to traditional marriage laws made by *Gumii- Gaayyoo* i.e pan-Boorana Assembly when a virgin gets married, the groom had to first sacrifice an animal of “*rakoo*” that is shedding blood of the sheep on threshold. The slaughtering of the animal of “*rakoo*” i.e. the sheep of blessing constitutes the legitimacy of marriage contract. The performance of this marriage ritual symbolically serves the bond between the girl given in marriage and her parent whilst at the same time establishes a new bond between the girl and her parents in laws.

Hence, after being married, the father is referred to as “*Abba Warra*”, father of the homestead; and the head of the household while the mother is referred to as “*Hadha warra*”, mother of the homestead. Both concepts show the legitimacy of marriage.

A wife is, therefore, desired to give birth to as many children as possible and male offsprings are preferred to females especially in the case of first born son. This is because, the *Hangafa* is expected to replace his father and becomes his legal heir. The Boorana law prohibits having a love affair with an unmarried girl as this is disgraceful (*koobuu, caban* and also marriage to relatives which is taboo (*haraamuu*). The Gumi *Gaayyoo* Assembly of 1997 stipulated that these resolutions be applicable to the Boorana who have been converted to Islam as well. The number of wives a man can have depends on his economic situation and labour power, which is the primary motive for polygamy among Boorana Oromo.

### **2.2.2 THE GADAA SYSTEM**

Institutions are prerequisite for the functioning of any social system. *Gadaa* is a term employed throughout the Oromo nation in the Horn of Africa. Asmarom states:

*Gadaa* refers to the organization of the society into cyclical generation system or generation sets which succeed each other every eight years in assuming socio-political office or in sharing collective military, economic, political and social responsibilities. Each *Gadaa* class comes to power and ends with formal power transfer ceremony. The *Gadaa* classes or sets known as *Luba* are the group of people who share the same status and perform their rites of passage together. These groups pass through stages of development which are known as *Gadaa* grades i.e. a conceptual scheme that defines the kind of activities, rights and duties the groups assume successively throughout their active careers. At each stage of development the class holds a different set of corporate responsibilities, including the responsibility of offering political and military leadership to the society for a limited period of time during their progress through life (1973: 52-69).

In short, these different *Gadaa* grades are associated with different functions. Thus, the *Gadaa* grades as described by Asmarom (1973:52-69) and stated by Borbor Bulee are

*Dabballe, Gammme, Kuusa, Raba Didiqqaa* (Junior Raba), *Raaba Gugudda*, (senior Raaba), *Gadaa, Yuuba* and *Gada Moojji*.

**Dabballe:** is the first grade, which includes all the sons of the *Gadaa* class (*Luba*) who are in power as leaders of Boorana society.

**Gamme:** are older boys between the ages 8 and 16. They are given the responsibility of looking after livestock. At senior *Gamme* stage they often take the family herds away from the parental settlements where they lead a life of adventure, *foora*,<sup>2</sup> when a young man take the family herds into untamed, river valleys for months or two or three years (Asmarom, 1973:57-58).

**Kuusa:** is the fourth grade after completing the *Gamme*. During the years of adolescence, the boys are initiated and elect their six leaders known as *Hayyuu*<sup>3</sup> Councilors. The election of *Gadaa* councilors takes place at the same time as the transition rites of the class from *Gamme-Kussa* is preformed. All six officers, along with many others to be recruited later, bear the generic designation of *Hayyuu*, councilors. From then on, this council that they have formed governs the entire life of the grade (Asmarom , 1973:61-64; Gemechu, 2001).

The ***Raaba didiqqa*** (Junior Raaba): When the boys complete the 24<sup>th</sup> year of their life, they become junior warriors, and begin to take part in formal military campaigns. They do not lead the campaigns themselves but follow older generation sets who usually organize such campaigns (informants, Borbor Bulee, Boruu Madhaa, Dullacha Diida; see also Asmarom, 1973).

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<sup>2</sup> *Foora* is the time when the young men take the family herds into the untamed river valleys. In other words, it is the practice of taking livestock to distant grazing areas or cattle camps by adolescent young men and men and women. Life away from the permanent settlement is also referred to as *Foora* (Asmarom, 1973: 57-58).

<sup>3</sup> *Hayyuu* is the generic name designated to all officers, elected during the transition rite from *Gamme* to *Kuua Gadaa*, grades along many other to be recruited later (Asmarom, 1973:61-64; my personal communication with Diida Dullacha)

**The Raaba Gurgudda** (senior Raaba) is Gadaa grade which consists of senior warriors who devote most of their time to military activities. During this period, they also marry. Upon completion of the first part of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade on the fortieth year of the Gadaa cycle, they perform the *Dannisa* (fatherhood) ceremony. After this, they are allowed to start raising sons. It is these children that enter the first grade.

**The Gadaa Grade:** It is upon completion of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade that they now become Gadaa. The six *Hayyuu* councillors, previously elected in the *Kuusa* grade (grade 3) now assume power not only as the leaders of their own generation set but also as leaders of the entire society. The elected council at *Kussa* grade leads the activities of its own generation set for 21 years before it assumes responsibility of leadership for the entire society. In this 6<sup>th</sup> grade when its leaders are installed as the leaders of the entire Boorana society, the set (*Luba*) reaches the apex of its power. This governing class or *Luba* remains in power for a period of eight years and hands over power to the next *Luba* at a designated place called *Ardajilaa*, and a designated time in the Month of “*Gurraandhala*” (February). Time reckoning expert called *Ayyaantuu* plays a critical role in determining the time and the method of the handing over of power. The power hand over ceremony is known as the handing over of the *Baallii* which means the transfer of political power.

The current *abba Gadaa* (head of the Gadaa) is *Liiban Jaldeessa*. After completing the eight- year term as leaders of the entire society, the class (*Luba*) goes into partial retirement and the leaders become *Yuuba*. This semi- retired *Luba* takes a center stage in the *Gumii Gaayyoo*, Pan- Boorana assembly or multitude assembly convention that takes place every eight years. The Gadaa system has legislative body for enacting law

and rules. This legislative body is known as, *Gumii Gaayyoo*, the Pan-Boorana Assembly that take place once in every eight years time. This assembly redefines the existing laws and makes new societal laws, and the law making and amending process has been constantly exercised by subsequent *Gumii Gayyoo* (Goollo, 1997). The 37<sup>th</sup> *Gumii Gayyoo* assembly in which I participated took place in 1997.

In general, the assembly sets rules and laws governing the whole life of Boorana Oromo i.e. economic, social and political aspects. For example, it sets rules for mutual assistance or *Buusaa – Gonofa*, which means sharing and restocking. Hence, the *Gumii Gaayyoo* is the final supreme authority in Boorana land.

According to Asmarom (1973), upon completion the first grade of partial retirement (grade 10) on the 80<sup>th</sup> year of the *Gada* cycle, the age grade (*Luba*) enters the final grade that is *Gadaa- Moojji*. It is a sacred grade and the people in this grade enjoy great respect as ritual leaders of the society. At the end of this sacred grade the *Luba* comes together for the final ceremony of their life that constitutes the formal end of the *Gadaa* life cycle. As Borbor Bulee and Jiloo Aagaa say, beyond this, the class becomes an embodiment of the societal value and strictly keeps the taboos and participates on ritual ceremonies to bless the land and the young. Another important institution is *Hariyya*. This is a group of people born in the same eight- years period that is an age set. The two groups (*Gadaa* class and age-set) are cross-linked, crosscutting, structural units that operate as complementary institutions. There are various rituals and ceremonies performed by the *Gadaa* classes and other members of the society at household and community level. Generally, hierarchy and balanced opposition are the

democratic ethos that form the basis of the *Gadaa* system in which power is checked through a balancing mechanism.

### **2.2.3 THE QAALLUU INSTITUTION**

Almost all the Boorana are the followers of indigenous Oromo religion which is a belief in a single *Waaqaa*, God. The believers or the followers are known as *waaqeffataa* whereas the act of believing in a single supreme, *Waaqaa*, God is known as *Waaqeffanna*. *Waaqaa* is the creator of everything. There are various ritual and ceremonies associated with Oromo religion. These are *dhibaayyuu*, *Hulluqqoo*, etc. (For the detail see Bartles, 1990; Asmarom, 1973).

From the very beginning up until now, the *Qaalluu* institution is very complex and plays a central role in the Oromo socio-political system (Asmarom, 1973; Bartles, 1990). In fact, there are aspects of change and continuity. According to Diida Galgaloo, *Qaalluu* is an Oromo religious leader and he is believed to be sent by God as supreme spiritual leader who works for the peace of Boorana. He leads ritual performances and prayers and anoints the participants as a religious piety. He and his *gosa* members are believed to be the most senior men and “the purest” of all the Boorana. *Qaalluu* is of divine origin and hereditary and so is his office. The *Qaalluus* are also the leaders of the two Boorana moieties, *Sabbo* and *Goonaa*.

The *Qaalluu* and his councils perform several rites, rituals and ceremonies. The most important aspects of the *Qaalluu* institution and activities that impinge directly on the *Gadaa* are the *Muuda* Ceremony, performed by the *Gadaa* class in power to honor the

*Qaalluu* and the *Lallaba* ceremony in which the *Qaalluu* organizes and oversees the election of *Gadaa* leaders. The *Qaalluu* also presides over the resolution of conflict between families clans and moieties. So far we have seen how *Gadaa* classes (*Lubas*) successively follow one another in assuming political office and societal responsibilities. This is one of the principles that organizes society among the Boorana. The Boorana , however, is not only organized in time but also in space.

#### **2.2.4 BOORANA TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION**

According to Boorana elders, Borbur Bulee and Nuraa Diida, the Boorara territorial units which have a link with *Gadaa* system and important in resource management, mobilization and other socio-cultural activities are the following. The primary /smallest/ territorial unit is *ibidda*, the hearth, which comprises a household or residential unit while family (*Warra*) is the second level of organization. The family among the Boorana Oromo usually consists of a male head, wife or wives, male and female offspring and other dependents. The male head is known as *Abba Warra*, father of the homestead, while the mother is referred to a *Hadha warra* “mother of the homestead”. Wives are classified into senior wife (*Hangafa* or *Niitii Gamme*) and junior wives. All wives, apart from the first one, are referred to as second wives (*maandha*), whether they are third, fourth or fifth. The extended family keeps a common herd in which each wife, owns here own milk cows

The primary role of the family institution is to produce new members of the society and socialize them in such away that they are integrated to the society. Thus, socialization particularly early socialization is the most important role the family plays.

The third level of organization after the family in an ascending order is known as *shanacha* or *Mogga*. Members of adjacent common cattle kraal in a given village constitute a homestead (*Mogga*). This is also known by alternative name *Labata*. As Borbor Bulee says the Abba-Shanacha is responsible for managing the overall affairs of the unit ensuring its peace and security; allocating labor for different tasks; settling disputes between individuals and families and representing the overall interest of the unit at the level of the village (*Olla*), which is the next level of an organization in ascending order.

According to Abba Ollaa Dooyyoo Dullacha, several *shanacha* are organized into village (*Olla*) i.e minimum of five *shanacha* comes to form an *Olla*. An *Olla* is headed by *Abba Olla* who oversees the social, economic and ritual activities of *Olla* and maintains close links with other *Ollas* in the area based on the custom and law. He also handles cases which are beyond the authority of the heads of the *shanacha* under his leadership. People living in the same *Olla* are expected to share resources and cooperate in tasks of herding and watering livestock as well as participating in all other community affairs. In general, intra- village mutual support and association on social activities are its main occupations

Adjacent villages in a certain locality form a spatial unit called *Ardaa*. The *Ardaa* has council of elders, *Jaarsa Ardaa*. These elders deal mainly with the management of communal pasture (Baxter, 1970; Oba, 1998). They are entrusted with the responsibility of splitting of herds into dry sock (*loon foora*) and lactating stock (*loon warra*). The dry

stock usually moves and encamps at site distant mile from settled areas while the lactating stock are allowed to graze around the main settlement. The council also decides on allocation of the pasture around the main villages as a reserve for the weaker stock, especially calves.

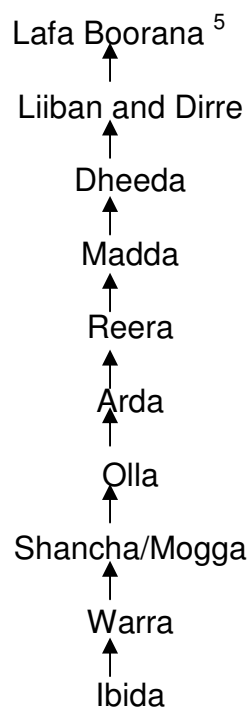
There are various social, economic, political and religious ceremonies performed by the *Ardaa* members. Among these *Kormaa- Korbeessa Ardaa* is prominent. It is a ceremony which strengthens the solidarity among members of the *Ardaa*. A small bull (korma or korbeessa) is sacrificed by the *Ardaa* in order to pray for peace, fertility and wellbeing of the whole Boorana and the *Ardaa*. The the *Gadaa* councilor (*Hayyuu*) who resides in the *Ardaa* represents the *Ardaa* to the outside world and sometimes he delegates his authority to the elders (Jaarsa ardaa.) (informants, Sora Boruu, Moluu Qancooraa).

The same informants further state that a number of neighbouring *Ardaas* constitute *reera*. Physical features such as hills, mountain valleys demarcate two *reeras*. Headed by an *Abba-Reera*, the members of *reera* cooperate on mobilization of labour for joint use of pasture and ponds burial of the dead and associated ceremonies. A territorial unit or organization higher than *Reera* is *Madda*. A *Madda* consists of several *reera* and is commonly named after a permanent water point. According to Bokku (2000), the *Madda* has its own ceremonies such as the *Kormaa- Korbeessa Madda* and *Korma Madda* in which water well-related affairs are discussed and decisions are made.

As Borbor Bulee and Diida Dullacha describe, *Dheeda* is the highest unit of territorial organization in terms of resource management. It has its own head (Abba- Dheeda).

Dheeda refers to sub- regions within the two broader regions of *Liiban* and *Dirree*. The former has two *Dheedas*, and the latter five. The council of *Abba-Dheeda* represents all the grazing territories of the Boorana which are responsible for maintaining law and order and promoting peace and harmony (nagaa Boorana). The *Abba-Dheeda* has links with the *Gadaa officials*. Finally, the *Gadaa* assembly constitutes the most inclusive level of social, political and economic organization. According to *Borbor Bulee*, the well known authority on Boorana *Gadaa* system, “Everything that concerns the Boorana concerns the *Gadaa*”.

Figure 2 Boorana Territorial Organization



Source: Adapted from Hogg, 1993.

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<sup>5</sup> Booranaland

### **2.2.5 THE IMPOSED STRUCTURES: *KEBELE* INSTITUTIONS**

*Kebele* administration was formed during the *Derg* regime. The *kebeles* are the lowest hierarchal government administrative unit. They were established on the lower administrative political level to administer, distribute and redistribute land whenever necessary. Their structures still exist. These government administrative structures, which were imposed parallel to the territorial organization of the Boorana for tax collection and security purposes have more or less replaced traditional *Madda* structure. Initially, *Kebele* and *Madda* were spatially terminus. However, with the development activities, which involved the construction of large ponds, permanent settlements were established around ponds out of which some acquired *kebele* status. According to Bokku (2000) *Diida Haraa*, for example, has an independent *kebele* status though in Boorana traditional social structure it is only part of a larger *Madda*. Moreover, recently, another new government imposed structure *Qaxanaa*, is proliferating. It is a practice of replicating "Peasant Association" structures into several smaller units equivalent to the Boorana traditional *Ardaa*.

The *Kebele* as a unit of local administration space is subordinate to the decision of the district Administration and is entrusted with the translation of federal or regional policies and program into action. In short, PA is the government structure among the rural population that serves at the grass root level as tax collector, prosecutor, judge, police, decision-maker, and the like. The naming of grass root structure of the Boorana people as "peasant association" has been imposed on the pastoralist Boorana despite its irrelevance to their situations.

In addition to this grass root hierarchy, there are other institutions like agricultural office, Southern Rangelands Development unit (SORDU), Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), Cooperative Promotion Offices and others who are working closely with *kebele* structures. Besides, there are non-governmental organizations of various origins: religious affiliated, international, and local ones. In general, they undertake relief and development-oriented programs in rural Boorana and all of them have their own impacts on the indigenous Boorana pastoral management and survival strategies.

### **3. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

#### **3.1 BOORANA ECONOMY: PASTORAL PRODUCTION SYSTEM**

##### **3.1.1 Livestock Production**

Pastoralism forms the basis for Boorana economy and it constitutes the single most important economic enterprise of the household. In other words, the economic base of Boorana household is their livestock and livestock products. Thus, livestock rearing is the mainstay of their livelihood and they keep diversified herds of cattle, camels, small stocks and equines. However, cattle are the primary concern of Boorana household in livestock production. The size of camel and small stocks is on the increase. According to the reports of the Southern Rangelands Development Unit (SORDU) (1988), the total estimate of livestock population in six districts of Boorana areas was 3,227,952. This is shown in Table 2

Table 2. The total livestock population in six districts of Boorana pastoral areas.

Name of the districts	Cattle	Goats	Sheep	Camels	Donkey	Horse	Mules	Total
Liiban	435,512	425,464	153,295	328,080	28,317	88	579	1,369,335
Yaaballo	219,060	65,993	15,660	11,660	3,434	346	975	361,504
Taltalle	171,214	68,195	39,384	39,384	3,181	-	46	282,960
Moyaale	130,943	49,615	17,771	17,771	3,556	79	2,366	264,090
Dirre	460,893	132,780	63,961	63,961	12,777	3,331	2,785	721,224
Areero	177,426	51,163	18,724	18,724	2,622	643	1,255	273,839
Total	1,592,948	793,210	308,795	308,795	53,887	4,487	8,006	3,227,952

Source: Southern Rangelands Development Unit (SORDU), 1988.

In spite of this large number of livestock population the major purpose of production is for subsistence. They derive their food directly in the form of milk, milk products, meat and blood. Milk is the main item in the Boorana diet and is consumed in different forms: Fresh milk (*aannanmi'ii*), Yoghurt (*Itittuu*). Subsistence food is also obtained indirectly in the form of purchased cereal, tea, sugar, coffee through the sale of animals and animal products like skin, hide, butter and milk. Coppock (1994) notes that wealthy households mostly sell butter while poor households bring fresh milk to the market in the peri –urban areas. Cattle are by far the dominant species marketed and the supply of animals is highly variable according to seasons of the year. During the drought years, the terms of trade are against Boorana because the price of animals is low. Varieties of products such as hide and skin are also used for making household materials such as containers, sleeping mats, leather clothes and ornaments.

### 3.1.2 Livestock Management and Resource Tenure System

The characteristics of Boorana livestock husbandry are similar to those in drylands or arid Africa. It is dominated by dual herding system where animals are divided into home based stock (*warra*) lactating stocks and satellite herds (*loonfoora*). The husbandry is also dominated by maintaining of female structure, milking management of cows, intensive hand rearing of nursing calves, sharing tasks according to gender and age (Coppock, 1994). The Boorana land use pattern is communal and any body has access right to resources. They divide the land into dry and wet grazing areas. The introduction of individual farming, cisterns and ranches result in changes in this communal tenure.

Among the Boorana, pastoralism not only serves as a source of food for households but it has important socio- cultural benefits. First, cattle ownership highly defines the identity of a Boorana. It is their culture and a central element of their social and political organizations (Bokku, 2000). Secondly, cattle play a paramount role in marriage as bridewealth, in establishing and maintaining relations and legitimization of clan leaders for *Gadaa* office, *hayyuu*. Thirdly, cattle are essential for several *Gadaa* ceremonies including the power transfer and also significant for ceremonies performed by the households such as childbirth, naming, burial etc.

In the Boorana economy in general, and livestock husbandry in particular, the household is the unit of production. Livestock production and management is often organized within household units headed by a man and wife or wives, children and other dependents. The Boorana household structure and composition also has women-

headed households, which are usually found in peri-urban locations. These women are poor who lost their cattle and moved to urban areas. Most of These women control and manage their livestock and resources as male heads of the household do. The average production unit or family may depend on some 15 cattle with 8 milking cows, 7 small ruminants, occasional equine or camel for transport and a few chickens (ibid). The members of household unit are the primary recipients of the products of livestock and share duties for family livestock and other resource.

As Borbor Bulee asserts, with regard to the labour allocation, the members of a household share responsibilities for livestock husbandry and management activities, particularly herding, watering and milking. Children or young men mostly do herding. Watering is a heavy duty and carried out cooperatively among herd owners. According to Helland (1980), most wells require 10-40 people to operate as the men form a line to pass the water up in small leather buckets from a deep well. Watering is carried out by the most able-bodied persons from the family, predominantly by the husband or young men but rarely done by a wife. Household with shortage of labour also recruits a human power from other households through “borrowing” or fostering of children from relatives.

Other important features of the Boorana economy that need to be mentioned are the resource tenure, the nature and form of resource holding. According to Gemechu (2001), the Boorana designate “property by the term “*hori*” and property ownership is termed as *qabeenya*” derived from the verb *qabacchuu*, meaning “to have or “own”. Thus, in terms of traditional Boorara law, *qabeenya* refers to the relationship between the owner and everything that he owns. The three distinct forms of property ownership

among the Boorana are those collectively owned by the society, the ones owned by a group or a family and those which are privately owned.

As abba Duuba Waariyoo says, according to the traditional Boorana law (*seera*), land, water, pasture and all other natural resources are not individually owned. These are owned and protected by the law. The law recognizes that the Boorana land tenure system is communal and the land belongs to the entire Boorana. The law ensures that every Boorana has equal access rights to use resources i.e. land, water, pasture, tree etc. However, the law recognizes the rights of a group or clan to water wells. Livestock are individually owned by the nuclear family but managed and controlled by the male head of the household. But, there are livestock privately owned by individual. There are either given as gifts on different occasions. Example, andhuura, bridewealth, etc.

Although all the households to a large degree depend on pastoral production, variations in wealth among the Boorana households have always prevailed. A survey of the Boorana household by Mulugeta (1990) reports 51% as poor 31% as middle and 18% as wealthy. Wealth is measured by the size of livestock herd a family owns. Recently, however, the average number of all livestock species owned by per household is decreasing because of recurrent droughts and famine.

Generally, in order to maintain a sustainable use of resources and management, the Boorana pastoralists have over many centuries built up wider social and territorial organization under which pasture land, including water, is governed. Thus, the

management of water (See Bokkuu, 2000 for details), pastureland and other resources is undertaken within a framework of the Boorana resource tenure system.

According to Baxter (1970), Asmarom (1973), Bokku (2000), the construction and utilization of well in Boorana are both arduous jobs requiring clan cooperation in terms of labour, tools and consumable resources such as milk and animals required to feed the workers. These demands are the main factors in the emergence of associate clan relations in clan well ownership. As Huqqaa Dhokii states, the clans maintain their own water wells and utilize them according to the rule about the water wells (*seera eela*). If the a person in charge of water wells management (*abba Herrega*) is found mismanaging, he is immediately dismissed from his responsibility. In the Boorana tradition, property rights in well is established by being either in the well owning clan or its associate clan. However, well sharing and using is possible by other clans. In contrast to clan based in water resource management system, pasture resource management system is based on territorial units. Pastoral production is, therefore, not open access grazing, but it is based on these local territorial units.

However, the Boorana have experienced far-reaching changes in resource tenure and management. According to Bokku (2000) varied external factors, notably the development intervention promoted by state policy through individualization of the pastureland in a form of farming, grazing or with private water cistern and commercialization of ranchers have contributed to their change.

### **3.2. Non-Pastoral Pursuits Among the Boorana: Crop Production**

Traditionally, the Boorana were exclusively pastoralists. In the course of time, however, farming was introduced into Boorana rangelands and a few Boorana households mostly drought affected, were involved in limited crop production to supplement their pastoral production. According to *Oba* (1998), settler soldiers and immigrant farmers introduced farming and later expanded by resettlement strategy, which was the reestablishing of the destitute families. In 1994, it was estimated that upto 3.4% of the Booranalands were cultivated (Coppock, 1994). Today, the land under cultivation is increasing (Galgalo, 1997). Most of the cultivated lands are concentrated around towns and the size of the farms is small, most not exceeding a hectare.

Maize, sorghum, burely and legume plants are the major crops cultivated. Maize is mostly cultivated during long rainy season (*Ganna*) while drought tolerant crops like sorghum and legume are planted during short rainy season, (*Hagayya*). The production process is based on household labour and it is primarily to supplement livestock production. Draft oxen are usually used for ploughing. Recently, comel traction is introduced by NGO. The yield from crop production is very little and highly opportunistic. This is because of erratic rainfall and drought. In general, the Boorana have no confidence in farming and consider livestock production as an invaluable and honourable activity of their economy. Therefore, they are predominantly pastoralists and have very little crop production, trading and daily labour activities in and around towns (Coppock, 1994; Alamayehu, 1998). In a focus group discussion held with Boorana, they perceive them selves as pastoralists rather than as cultivators. They said, "We have begun farming (obruu) very recently."

# CHAPTER FOUR

## AN OVER VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF FAMINE IN BOORANA

### 1. Boorana Views of Famine: Concept and Causes

As scholars cited in (Sen, 1981:39-40; De Waal, 1989: 9-30; ) have argued that famine is has been defined as a particularly virulent form of starvation causing a wide spread death. Contrary to this view, in Asia and Africa mortality is not a necessary condition of famine. In Bangladesh, the culture defines famine as scarcity, when times are bad and when alms are scarce and there is famine nationwide. The Sahelian herders use the concept famine for the crisis that involves death and the rise of the price of millet (DeWaal, 1989: 74-77) and in Sudan the Darfurian identify famine as that involves hunger, destitution, social breakdown and 'famines that kill' (ibid, 6-7).

Although there are localized aspects of understanding or conceptualizing famine, the central point of the concepts of famine in the Third World is the fact that it grows out of the actual experiences of victims. Especially, in Africa the words of "famine" are typically the same as the words for hunger. For example, in Swahili it is *njaa*, in Hausa, *Yunwa*, in Darfur, *ju'* (hunger) which is often substituted for *maja'a* (famine) which also involves the concept destitution and death, and in Amharic *rehab* all used for both 'hunger' and 'famine' (DeWaal, 1989).

Though the dilemma of what terms were to be used faced the writers of drought and famine and the debate is still going on, the starting point for the analysis of famine

should lie within the understanding of those who suffer famine themselves. Because the implication of the anthropological studies are that even when people are dying from starvation, the conceptual center of famine for both victims and people studying may not necessarily be the same as starvation (ibid). Similarly, this is what one can do to understand famine in Boorana and, hence, the Boorana concept is fundamentally more convincing when it comes to analyzing the nature of famine in this area than the English definition.

Thus, the Oromo in general, and the Boorana in particular use the word *beela* for famine. The term is derived from the verb *beela'uu*, meaning *be/go hungry*. Boorbor Bulee, says “famine (*beela*) does not necessarily involve mortality. The word *beela* is used for both hunger and famine. *Beela* (famine) it is used to refer to a community, country or village suffering from severe food shortage, inability to get access to food or buy because of destitution; the episode may or may not involve death associated with all manners of sufferings, social breakdown and dependency. In the context of this study, therefore, the word *Beela* is used as defined above. The Boorana have comprehensive knowledge of famine. They conceptualize it from their own experience and cultural context. For instance, famine names refer to and symbolize their experiences and their views. Famine names mark the *Gadaa* periods and the leaders of *Gadaa* in which they took place. They also tell us about the effects and diseases responsible for the death of animals and people. Moreover, famine names indicate organizations which donated food relief and imply the causes and responses of famine.

Several observers have noted that drought and famine are not new to the desert edge. However, while the dimensions of the tragedy are to some extent clear, its secrets and causes are not. According to Manger (1996) and Egeimi (1996), this has been attributed to the failure of social research to understand the economic, political and social determinates that cause the crisis, while focusing on nature, population pressure, ignorance and irrational land use. Famine, however, is caused by multiple factors. It has been argued that pastoral production systems and their social organizations were unable to cope with drought or crisis. This was as a result of the impact of structural process of marginalization which lead to the break down of these entities. The idea is that through this process the pastoralists are exposed to incorporation of pastoral economies into the market economy, alienation of land for farming, the general insecurity arising from civil wars and conflicts, misguided national and international policies as well as factors arising from climate and ecology (Manger, 1996: 10-12; Egeimi, 1996; 32-33; DeWaal, 1989; Watts, 1983: xxiii; Bokku, 2001 :1). Generally speaking, much research on famine in recent years as reviewed, for example, in Devereux (1999) has stressed the complexity of its causation and the inappropriateness of attributing it simply and solely to natural disasters such as drought (Sandford and Yohannes, 2000:4). The causes are natural, economic, political and social. The 2000 famine in Ethiopia's pastoral areas was caused by all these factors. Particularly, a lapse in the humanitarian attention to food needs led to shortage food availability for distribution to pastoral areas as early as in 2000. It was to some extent caused by diplomatic coolness (a political causes) between the Ethiopian government and its traditional Western food donors caused by different approaches to the Ethiopian-Eritrean dispute. Ethiopian's pastoralists are, therefore, paying the price of the lapse.

Like many other East African pastoralists, the Boorana Oromo are deeply affected by both internal and external factors which have caused transitory and severe food shortages or famine. However, the desire to construct a simple cause and effect relationship have led scholars to focus on internal factors such as drought, population and the like as the major causes of famine. Among others, Helland (1997, 1998, 2000) and Coppock (1994) have emphasized these factors. Especially, Helland considers vulnerability and famine as a periodic natural adjustment to curb the increased population and an animal density which is beyond the carrying capacity of the land.

Contrary to this view, other scholars like Salah (1993a, 1993b, Salah and Abdel Gaffar (1999) and Bokku (2000) contend that the causes of famine in Boorana are many and complex i.e external and internal. They argue that it is not so much the environmental processes which underlines the prevalence of famine, but the degree of vulnerability to the adverse results that does. Thus, the social nature and dynamics of vulnerability are emphasized. This means the rural pastoral economies are “traditionally” well adapted to withstand drought and famine. However, under the burden of external forces, they became rotten and succumb to famine when subjected to the adverse results of drought or environmental factors. Hence, drought is the last straw for the people whom political and economic process have already rendered marginal insecurity.

One of the causes of vulnerability and famine is inappropriate development policy. According to Watts (1983; xiii) development or commercialization affected remarkable resiliency of African communities to climatic stress and pharaonic sequences of famine

have become common phenomena with the coming of colonial rule. In the late 1960s in several African countries large scale commercial ranches were initiated with the aim to modernize the pastoral groups and their mode of production. As a result of these imposed changes towards private holdings, communal property rights faced problem (Tilahun, et al, 1994; Sandford, 1983) and aggravated vulnerability to famine..

As one of the African pastoralist groups, the Boorana also faced inappropriate development policy interventions which affected their resource tenure and indigenous organizations. One of the most far-reaching imposed change began in the 1960s when the Southern Rangeland Development Project (SORDU) was launched. According to the discussion held with the heads of SORDU, the ranches were aimed at removing the unproductive immature cattle from the rangelands, encouraging the pastoralists to integrate livestock production into the market, introducing improved management techniques and providing sources of beef for export and the internal market. Recently, private ranches are expanding at expense of wider pasture area. For example, in Surupa *kebele* about 64,000 hectares of land enclose for this purpose by private investors which was primarily used by the pastoralists from Yaballo and Hagere Mariam. Moreover, farming and water development initiatives also contributed to individualization of communal tenure system. Individuals and group have begun to construct private cisterns, which were introduced by NGOs like CARE- Ethiopia.

According to Alake (2001), although the constitution of 1995<sup>6</sup> and 1997<sup>7</sup> ensure the tenure security of the peasant and the pastorlits to their land, the government

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<sup>6</sup> Proclamation of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Fedral Negarit Gazeta, No.1, 21 August 1995, Addis Ababa Ethiopia

administrative officials allow private investors to establish private ranches on the community grazing land under the pretext that land is not utilized. However, the idea of unutilized land is against pastoral land use system. For the pastoralists, there is no land which is unused or unsettled( Informant, Borbor Bulee).

Land is used adaptively in response to erratic rainfall distribution and variations in the availability of pasture. In Dirre district, about 23km<sup>2</sup> of land in Dubluk Pastoralist Association has been encroached up on by two business men for private use (ibid). The area has traditionally been used as dry season grazing by three pastoralist associations. When such areas were encroached, community members were not consulted.

These developments have impacts on Boorana resource tenure (land, pasture and water). The most far-reaching consequences are individualization of the holdings which curtail community access to pasture land (Bokku, 2000). These consequences are expressed in the form of owning individual farm plots and cisterns. This in turn brought about fodder scarcity, constraint herd mobility, fierce competition over limited space and affect communal land tenure. Moreover, it results in continued overgrazing of the same area as opposed to traditional system of relieving the rangeland and consequently results in range degradation and decline in livestock productivity. Thus, he concluded that the current non-sustainable agricultural expansion has already exposed pastoralism to a consistent process of viability erosion with consequence of vulnerability exacerbation among the poorer sections of Boorana pastoralists. In short, the encroachment on the potential grazing areas by private investors will increase livestock

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7 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Negarit Gazeta No. 54 Proclamation No. 89/1997

vulnerability to drought and famine, which causes the mortality of livestock due to shortage of pasture and weakening of their survival strategies.

War and ethnic conflicts are also other contributing factors to famine in Boorana. According to Boorana elders , Waaqoo Aboo and Borbor Bulee, the Boorana had experienced different wars and ethnic conflicts in their history. To begin with, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Boorana were conquered by Menelik II forces. This had impact on the Boorana household economy, which by then was not fully recovering from the severe famine of the century. This was followed by clashes with other ethnic groups mainly the Somali during the *Gadaa* office of *Bule Dabbasa* and the 1977- 1978 war between Ethiopia and Somalia, which again resulted in extensive cattle raiding whereby many Boorana households became destitute, dislocated and resettled in villages.

The frequent raids from competing groups, such as Somali continued. Since the coming to power of the incumbent government in 1991 the conflict has taken a new dimension. The Somali encroachment has become significant where under the new administrative division the Boorana were forced to abandon the well complexes on which they survived for centuries like *Ela Gof* and *Leh* to Region Five ( Somail Region). Alake (2001) has noted that recently, the Somali pressure continued and they are currently pressing on through armed forces and political pressure to transfer the Boorana districts of *Liiban*, *Moyale*, parts of *Dirre* and *Areero* to Region Five (Somail Region). Meanwhile, the unhealthy relations between the Boorana and *Garri* frequently erupted into clashes and killing each other. The most recent ones took place in September 2000 and from August - November 2001. The latter happened when I was conducting the second phase of my

fieldwork. As a result of this ethnic conflict several people died and wounded, households were dislocated and assets such as livestock were raided from Boorana.

The Boorana accuse the government as the cause of this ethnic conflict. The petition they presented to The Federal of Ethiopian Government clearly shows this fact. One of these petitions was presented in 1997 at Gumii Gaayyoo, Pan Boorana assembly, in which I participated. Gollo (1997) states this as follows:

It is undeniable fact that after the demise of the previous [Derg] regime, there has been vital misunderstanding between the Boorana community and the present EPRDF regime. In our opinion, the root cause of conflicts was the government. Currently among many violations of our rights we think the major one is misappropriation of rights in certain districts of the Boorana territory. These are boundary shifting in some areas to Region 5, e.g. in Moyale warada, Moyale town, Goof, Lehi, Dhokisu etc. *In Areero warada, Uudat, Waleena, Dhedheertu* and the neighboring localities which are forcibly given over to region 5 *In Liiban Warada, Fiiltuu Uudat*, surrounding areas. We kindly request your excellency to re-examine these... and return our land to us immediately so that we may utilize it for ritual ceremonies, grazing and other economic purposes (Gollo, 1997: 28-29).

To sum up, the effects of this long-standing conflicts and war episodes are many. First, livestock have become less dependable as a sole source of food. Also, many of the different drought grazing reserves that have been traditionally used as fall-back areas for cattle have been lost due to demarcation based on the new administrative division. Moreover, the shrinking of grazing land and loss of water points are highly restricting the mobility strategy of the pastoralists which in turn results in poor economic base of Boorana households. This has made them unable to ride and buffer the effects of

successive disasters i.e. drought and conflicts. Put differently, the ability of Boorana households to handle one seasonal food shortages or famine is affected and they became vulnerable to recurrent famine as their survival strategies are undermined.

Another cause of famine in Boorana is recurrent drought. The Boorana Oromo term for drought is *oolaa*. It comes from the verb *ooluu*, meaning to be absent. *Oolaa*, literally means absence of rain when expected. The Boorana attribute the causes of the absence of rain when expected (*oolaa*) to their cosmological order. Accordingly, for them drought is sent by God to cause famine. Thus, in their view famine and drought are manifestation of the wrath of God and punishment for man's violation of *aadaa* (custom) which governs and maintains the relationship of human being with God and nature.

According to the focus group discussion held with Boorana elders and other members of the society, the relationship between drought and famine is complex and an interrelated chain of processes. Drought is caused by God, because it is God who has absolute power to bring rain. The absence of rain results in shortage of pasture and water which in turn brings about over grazing, desertification and diseases affecting livestock and their productivity. The effects of all these inter-related factors bring about famine. An increase in the number of population also has its share on environmental degradation. The cumulative effects of all these further affected the household food security over time.

Finally, the loss of livestock and livestock products to unfavorable terms of trade as well as the lack of adequate market access have affected the household food security and exposed people to vulnerability and famine. Thus, the present subsistence crisis of

Boorana is the total results of economic, political, social and natural factors or processes. Therefore, it is erroneous to assume that the current subsistence crisis in Boorana are simply the outcome of malevolent nature, population pressure or mal-adaptation. Many other scholars share this view. Among these, Salah (1999) and Bokku (2000) have shown explicitly the degree of social nature and dynamics of vulnerability to adverse results of environmental processes that underlie the prevalence of famine and are detrimental to its cause. In other words, economic, political, social factors have exposed the Boorana to adverse effects of environment.

Oral sources from victims of famine also substantiate this fact. According to my informants Nuuraa Diida and Guyyoo Liiban before the Boorana were incorporated into Ethiopian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the land was fertile, productive, they were prosperous, lived a lavish life and drought and famine were rare. A key informant on Boorana history and culture, Borbor Bulee, describes this as follows:

Before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Boorana was favourable for life. There were relatively abundant grasses for animals and the rain condition was good. Land and livestock are productive: meat, butter and milk were excess. We were well off. Grazing areas were vast, animal diseases were less. Drought and famine, and conflict were not frequent. However, nowadays things have completely changed. Land and livestock are not productive, there is poor diet for both animals and humans. As a result of the introduction of farming, ranches and water development large potential dry and wet season grazing areas are taken over and our cattle lack adequate grazing areas. The number of people increased and towns established on water points. Demarcation of territory contributed to frequent conflict and new administrative structures arrived and individual land owning, cisterns and ranches were introduced. Above all, drought and famine have become recurrent and the Boorana way of life adhering to *Waaqa* (God) and the practice of rituals declined. At present, famine repeatedly happens and we are compelled to rely on the assistance from aid agencies. Most of the people are destitute even to the extent we can not help each other as we did in the past.

To sum up, the Boorana view famine as episode and a process where it has multiple causes and effects. In other words, famine has an initial phase when different factors putting pressure on their resources, the crisis phase and recovery phase.

## 2. Famine and Its Consequences: The Scene of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

The Boorana remember many famines and place them in historical context. According to oral and documentary data (Boku 1996 ), for the first time in their history, the Boorana experienced drought and famine during the *Gadaa* office of *Bulee Dhaddachaa* (1668-1776). This was followed by drought and famine of *Gadaa* office of *Saaqqoo Dhaddacha* (1808-816) who was the son of *Bulee* by *Gadaa* class (*luba*). The evidence of famines in these periods is scanty. However, the nature, magnitude and the dimension may be understood from Boorana wealth of literature, which have still survived. My informant Borbor Bulee puts it:

***Oolaa Bulee Dhaddachaa.-***

***Oolaa Saaqqoo Dhaddacha***

***Oolaan Abbaafi Ilma***

***Dootii Haadhaafi Ilme***

Which means

Drought during the *Gadaa* office of *Saaqqoo Dhaddacha*

Drought occurred during the *Gadaa* offices of both the

“father” and the “son”

When mother with her child died of famine.

The central point of this literature is that it indicates the tragedy of drought and famine in each *Gadaa* period, which in turn indiscriminately killed human and animals. They are "father" and the "son" in ***Gadaa*** classes.

Once again, the Boorana were affected by the episode of famine during the *Gadaa* offices of Diida Bittaattaa and Haroo Adii (1864 -1871). The former one was locally named as *agarri Gadaa Diida* (sever famine during the *Gadaa* office of Dida Biltaattaa). According to Boorana these droughts and famines also resulted in human and animal death associated with widespread diseases.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Boorana had experienced severe droughts and famines twice. The first drought is locally known as *Oolaa Qoollajjii* and it was referred to as drought period in the *Gadaa* office of *Guyyoo Boruu Ungulee* (1880-1888). *Oolaa* is drought while *Qoollajjii* is an untanned dry cattle hides (Bokku, 1996). According to Boorana elders, during this time, drought and famine killed a considerable number of livestock. The people exchanged the hides of collapsed animals with crops such as maize and sorghum to Guji Oromo and Knoso, etc... Hence, the famine was named after the strategies people used to survive.

The second drought was locally known as *bara cinnaa* or *bara cinnaa Tittee Gurraachaa*. *Bara* literally means during, or period of time, while *cinnaa* refers to mean to vanish or discontinue. *Tittee Gurraachaa*, means 'black fly'. According to my informants *Borbor Bulee* and *Waaqoo Aboo* during this time drought and famine were associated with renderpest epidemics. . It was the worst of its kind and *Tittee*

*Gurraacha*, literally black-fly infestation of all orifices had caused a serious livestock loss. As a result, the Boorana lost almost all of their livestock; the number of population reduced dramatically, people ate carcasses and most of them became destitute (*Qollee*) and resorted to hunting and gathering. Lions and Hyenas attacked people, although carcasses were prevalent. Boorana came together and settled in large villages to defend themselves from animals. During this time, few livestock survived and the Boorana shared the remained ones. According to Gollo (1997) some of the survivors moved across the borders to the relatives and respective clans in order to request for a share of food. People like Baxter (1993: 152) has drawn parallelism of this crisis with the 14<sup>th</sup> century Black Death in England which claimed two thirds of the entire English people.

This was further exacerbated when Menelik II army conquered the society who have not yet covered from the effects of *Bara cinna*. Hence, the aftermath of the conquest and famine made the beginning of twentieth century a period of general crisis for the Boorana Oromo. In other words, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by recurrent famine which also continued in the twenty first century as we shall see below.

### **3. Famine and its Consequences in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries in Boorana**

Although it is not unique, a devastating drought and famine occurred between 1973 to 1975 during the Gadaa office of *Gobba Bulee*. This famine has a special place among the Boorana at least for two reasons. First, ever since the famine conditions appear indistinctly and in a threatening way affecting the people frequently and widely. My informants Jaatanii Galgaloo and Nuuraa Yaabichoo underlined that before this time

famine rarely happened i.e. once in one *Gadaa*. The second reason is that food aid began in Boorana for the first time. This relief operation was organized by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), under the leadership of Mr. Harald urolafson. Red maize, literally Baadalla diima, was distributed to drought-hit pastoralists. Among the Boorana this time is remembered as Bara Baadalla Haro or Bara baadalla Diimaa, literally the era of Haraldur's maize or the era of red corn (Bokku, 1996). Famine was, therefore, named after either the relief food distributed or the distributor whom the Boorana refer as Haroo. Thereafter, food aid to the Boorana became a regular feature until today.

The famine of the first half of 1970s was followed by the 1977 – 1978 Ethio- Somalia war. The consequences of this war were so great that it forced many Boorana households in a precarious economic situation and famine. As a result, the destitute households were made to move to resettlement camps or villages.

The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were also period of chronic famine conditions. The Boorana witnessed recurring famines in 1983/1984, 1991/1992 and 1996/1997. According to Boorana elders Boruu Madhaa and Boruu Guyyoo, the 1983/1984, famine was the worst of its kind in the century. Although there are no systematic data on the figure of the loss of life, both in terms of livestock and human beings, this famine killed a great deal of livestock and several people died of hunger and hunger-related disease. It also displaced or dislocated many families and the destitute families were gathered at resettlement villages. Getachew (1995) has describes the drought and famine condition as follows: "rainfall over the last four years has been variable, and a poor year in 1983 has been followed by virtually rainless year in 1984". The study conducted by Coppck

(1994) indicated that the severe condition of drought has resulted in 60% decrease of cattle (mortality, slaughter, and sales), in the worst affected parts of Boorana.

The terms of trade between livestock and grain also significantly declined while sales of animals dramatically increased. The amount of grain purchased by selling animals was highly reduced. According to the same source, pastoralists terms of trade had been reduced by 90% ( Coppck, 1994) . Pre-drought price of Ethiopian Birr 1.00 per kilogram of live weight for cattle declined to Ethiopian Birr 0.30 by 1984. This was mirrored by an increase in maize price from Ethiopian Birr 0.40 per kilogram to Ethiopian Birr 1.00 during the same period (ibid.).

Again, in 1991/1992, Boorana was hit by severe drought and famine that lasted for more than a year and half. The victims described it as one of the worst of its kind during the century. The impact of the extended drought and famine on livestock and human lives was immense as usually. The communities described it as situation where “Livestock mortality was widespread and carcasses were lying all over the place particularly at water points”. Without sustained emergency relief measures, increasingly high rates of human mortality could have happened (Getachew, 1995: 252). According to Webb et al (1994:91) in 1992, there were about 200,000 pastoralist famine victims relying on relief aid in central Boorana. Though it is difficult to know the figure of livestock mortality, it was estimated that on average every Boorana household had lost 79 percent of its cattle, 95 percent of camels, 83 percent of equines and 60 percent sheep and goats (Alemayehu, 1998: 24; Getachew, 1995:252). According to Getachew (1995), a number of factors have triggered the 1991/1992 crisis in Boorana. These were the effects of

failure of rainfall in 1991 and its delay to rain on time, widespread livestock death associated with disease which affected foot and mouth of the livestock. There were also the depressing of livestock market, increase of the price of food grains, and poor nutritional status of population and ethnic conflict between the *Garri* and Boorana. All these exacerbated and worsened the situation. The livestock mortality was variable by locality and individual household. As a result of significant livestock losses many households became destitute and dropped out of the traditional pastoral sector and became farmers in pre- urban settlement.

In 1996/97 drought and famine continued to strike Boorana. According to the data obtained from Boorana households, the problem arose in the beginning of the year 1996. This was because of the inadequacy of short rains season in the previous year of 1995 and the delayed onset of long rains in 1996 and its low amount. This affected the condition of pasture, water and this condition forced the pastorlists to move earlier towards the dry grazing areas with their dry stock in search of water and pasture which result in overgrazing. According to livestock loss assessment conducted by Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC, 1997: 15), at the end of drought period the Boorana households were reported to have lost up to 85 percent of their livestock in *Dirre* and Taltalle districts only. The death of livestock caused significant deterioration of household economy and losses of human lives. It was observed that almost all classes of animals, even camels were found dead. All the earlier famines affected the Boorana households' food security and weakened their response during the years 1999/2000 drought and famine.

### **3.1. The 1999/ 2000 Drought and Famine**

In the year 1999/2000 famine threatened many parts of Ethiopia's pastoral areas including Boorana. This famine has been said by the people as one of the most severe famines to have affected the area. According to the victims of famine, there was failure of rainfall during the years 1997,1998 and 1999. Similarly, the quantitative data obtained from *Yaballo*, *Moyale* and *Taltalle* stations in these years indicate the cumulative deficit of rainfall below average (Sandford and Yohannes, 2000; PRFSATW, 1999). At the end of 1999, the record of cumulative deficit was by far worst in the short rainy season (*Hagayya*), and in 2000 there was no rainfall in long rainy season (*Ganna*) before the end of the first quarters.

The consequences of this problem on livestock economy of Boorana and people were great. There were no grass and water for the livestock and water and food for the people. Ponds dried up and wells sank so deep. As a result, animals and people were obliged to trek long distances to get access to daily food and water. As drought continued, the impact on human and livestock became alarming. According to *Alake* (2001), a total of 171 people died of hunger between September 1999 and May 2000 in *Yaballo* and *Dirre* districts alone. Most of these people were children and elderly. Besides, human morbidity (*bobbosuu*) was very high and poor nutritional condition was reported by the informants. My informants Jaarso Boruu and Inseene Gufuu who live in *Diida Hara* state about the drought and famine of 1999/ 2000 as follows:

There was no rain for four solid rainy seasons consequentially. There was little or erratic rain. It starts late or stops early. Especially the insufficient rain during 1997, 1998, repeated in the 1999 and worsened in 2000. As a result, pasture tended to decrease and ponds happened to dry from their source

and wells decreased. To alleviate the water problem, aid agencies like CARE constructed about 30 cisterns which are water storage wells. Though we used the constructed cisterns wells, we could not get enough water and grass. As a result, some people moved to "traditional" wells and the Gujii border. The rest people were provided water for their animal as well as for themselves through aid agencies. Yet, because of the over crowding of animals the land was overgrazed and degraded, especially around water wells. Because of the lack of pasture, animals grew thin, weak and fell down everywhere. The owners of animals themselves being weak like their animals have tried to raise the fallen down animals. To overcome this disaster, a household lended a hand to its neighbor in raising animals. Some animals died and were dragged out alternately. As the number of dead animals was very high the people started to leave them unskinned. As the drought grew worse and worse, the mass death of the animals increased. Even, the wild animals kept reserved from eating the carcasses which stench and later polluted the environment. To see this embarrassing scene, a group of journalist came and took a film and went back. As time went by, the people continued to die of the famine and the animals perished empty belly. The narrators continued to say that the amount of aid was limited to a few people. Those who have money can buy what to eat where as those who do not have money died of starvation. Later on, it was realized that all the members of the community become victims of the famine. As a result, the relief aid was distributed among all. Eating meat and butter, and drinking milk is the custom of Boorana. They rarely eat grain food. Due to the death of the large number of animals, the above-mentioned products became scarce. This largely affected old men and children who are mostly dependent on milk. There were people who died of famine in our Kebele. However, relief aid has saved many lives. Today, many people in our *kebele* do not have livestock and 300-400 people still depends on relief.

Thus, one can infer from the above statement that the effect of the drought on human and livestock was enormous. The most affected parts of Boorana (northern strip) have suffered catastrophic losses up to 80 percent, 50 sheep, 30 goats, 20 percent equines, 10 percent camels (Sandford and Yohannes, 2000: 8-9). Although the effects of the

drought were felt within a short time after the failure of short rain season in Hagayya in 1999, mortality was often at its highest in the first month after heavy rains in May 2000.

Like the previous droughts and famines, the 1999/2000 famine was associated with livestock diseases and tick infestation that exacerbated the drought problems. The 'black fly' locally known as Tiitte Gurraacha bite both humans and livestock. It particularly attacks weak domestic animals entering any orifice (mouth, nose and anus). The ethnic conflict between Garri and Boorana also had worsened the situation. Consequently, grazing areas, which could have reduced the impact of drought on livestock, were abandoned.

During the drought and famine the terms of trade between livestock and grain deteriorated badly. The price of food grains in all markets of Boorana increased significantly. As a result, the purchasing power of pastoral households was depressed. During the drought, livestock supply was high because pastoralists were exchanging large number of animals for cereals. Thus food insecurity occurred when there was no food shortage in local markets. After the drought the price of cattle rose gradually as usual.

The impact of drought, famine and disease have always fallen in different areas and on different household within the same community.

In the case of Boorana, this is also true. In less affected areas mortality was: cattle 30 percent, sheep 20 percent, goats 20 percent, equines 10 percent and camel 10 percent (Sandford and Yohannes, 2000). To be specific, at district level, mortality was worst in

Yaballo, Dirre and Taltallee, with 76, 789; 87, 645; 75, 039 respectively in terms of number (BZDPPC<sup>3</sup>, 2000, Alake, 2001). My informant Dooyoo Dullacha states that the extent of livestock loss also vary at *kebele* level. For instance, in Yaballo, *kebeles* such as *Dhadim*, *Bildiim* and *Carri* were less affected as compared to *Diida Hara*, *Ela wayye*, *Diida Yaaballo*, *Harar Weeyyuu* and *Yaaballo*, *Adee*, *Hara weeyyuu* and *Adee Galchat*. Even within a given Kebele the effect was not uniform. For example, in Diida Harar, where the livestock death toll was reported as 24,853, part of the *Kebele* bordering the *Gujii* highland and belonging to *Goomolee* ecology was able to survive. According to my informant, Dooyoo Dullacha, the area has trees and grasses for livestock forage.

The differential impact was also witnessed at household level. According to my informants, Borbor Bulee and Guyyoo Boruu, it was reported that there are households who completely lost their livestock while others were left with a few heads. The factors that had contributed to these differential effects were the number of livestock, spatial and species diversity, household structure and management experience. The larger the number of livestock the household had the more it could survive. The more the livestock were dispersed into different ecological zones such as Dida, Gonnlee, etc with necessary labour power the more they survived. The diversity of the assets of the household was also very important. Households with more diversified livestock and/or cattle species had better chance of survival. For example, the death was less serious among sheep and goats, equines and camels in the worst and less affected areas compared with cattle. In terms of age, mortality was high for very old and very young immature animals. The structure and management experience had also affected the survival of livestock.

In other words, most of the time households with less labour supply and elderly and female heads were more affected during the crisis.

As we have already mentioned, famine is selective. Its victims are society's most vulnerable groups such as poor households, poor widows, old people and children (Walker, 1989). In Boorana too, the food insecure group of people or the victims are female headed households, those families who have lost their animals due to drought and ethnic conflicts and those households with large number of family but less number of livestock.

In general, as a result of recurrent drought and famine, the Boorana household economy is in a precarious situation. As a result of the impact of drought and famine, the number of pastoralists in need of relief aid increased. The reason was that income and food obtained from livestock has declined due to drought stress. Many cows died and the remaining milk-supplying animals dried up due to nutritional stress or the death of their calves, and cows which were pregnant mostly aborted.

The impact of drought and famine is not only economic but also social. One of the living memories of famine's social effect was the death of people. Some individuals who lost cattle during the course have been observed to have gone abnormal or insane and others committed suicide. For example, a pastoralist called *Waariyoo kaateeloo* who lived in *Romso* Kebele in *Dirre* district owned 400 cattle before the onset of 1999/2000 drought and famine. *Waariyoo* lost 360 head of cattle and he finally committed suicide (informant *Alake Bante*). In *Diida Hara* few people also got mad and survived with the

help of community. In some cases, famine resulted in family split. It also resulted in the postponing of ritual and ceremonies of marriage, naming, etc. This happened because the cattle and their products have great contribution to the performance of ceremonies. According to my informant Jiloo Aagaa when the postponing of some ceremonies are not possible, the people used Solanaceous fruit to liken it with the cattle to be slaughtered for the ritual and ceremonies. The Solanaceous fruit symbolizes the cattle. Some pre-famine rich people became middle or poor people. As a result, the overall member of poor people grew alarmingly. Most of these destitute people live in former resettlement villages such as Ade- Galchat, Hiddii lolaa etc. looking for relief aid from government and NGO's. Stealing, eating alone, raiding kin and neighbors were not reported during famine years.

### **3.2 The Recovery Process.**

From the victims point view famine is seen as a process, not a one-time event. It evolves and is episodic in nature, having three distinct phases. Walker says:

An initial period of gestation in which a number of factors converge in attenuating food supplies; a period in which the inaccessibility of food reach critical dimensions in terms of human survival and creates modes of behaviour which diverge extensively from the accustomed routines; and a period of recovery (1989:35).

Among the Boorana too, famine has gestation, critical (crisis) and recovery phases. We have already seen the first two phases i.e. when food supplies affected by multiple factors and gave way to critical phase of human survival. Now we shall see the recovery phase taking an example of 1999/2000 drought and famine.

The Boorana are now in a recovery process from the famine of 1999/2000. In Boorana economy, drought and famine recovery is complex and dependent upon a number of processes. In the first place, the recovery phase involves that drought must end, sufficient rain must come to improve pastures and water availability, price recovery for livestock regain and effective purchasing power of the people restored. It is also based on recovery of Boorana household consumption patterns i.e milk and meat, and physical improvement of livestock as well as the recovery of the livestock reproductive cycle and restocking which takes a long time. Finally, the Boorana community has a built-in system for voluntary redistribution of their resources that serves as a mechanism for loss recovery.

The first process involves sufficient rain to improve pastures and water. According to *Yabballo* District Food Security Assessment, pastures and water condition for the rainy season of 2001 are found to be sufficient due to good germination of annual and perennial grasses. However, the concentration on potential grazing areas has caused a great pressure on existing pasture. This was due to the minimized potential and alternate grazing areas of the pastoral community. This forced the community to use enclosure (*kaloo*) which otherwise were reserved for dry period. *Kaloo* is reserved for dry period for home based herds. Hence, this put the quick recovery process in questions.

As far as livestock condition is concerned, due to high number of the death of cattle in the year 1999/2000, the average livestock possessed by households was at a bottom. (See annex 4). However, a few animals when survived have fully recovered due to

favorable rain situation. They are in good condition in their health status. But, the major source of food for pastoral community during this time has dropped very sharply because of significant losses of milking cows during the past drought.

With regard to crop production, recovery depends on climatic condition during a particular season of production when the rain is adequate to support plant growth and maturity. The interviewed household heads reported that the initial growth performance of crop was good and normal almost for all types of crops until the flowering stage. However, due to early cessation of this year, (2001) long rain and the prolonged dry spell has resulted in withering of several varieties of crops. Crop pest (army worms) observed on *teff* and wheat and grasshopper attacked haricot beans at succulent stage. There is also a lack of oxen. In order to support agricultural activities, several NGOs operating in Boorana have supplied short maturing varieties of crop like maize, sorghum, etc. Currently, early cessation of rainfall at flowering stage of crops has caused a significant production shortfall. For example, of the total population of Yaballo district about 35.7 % (32,679) people were found food insecure and need relief aid (YWFSAs, 2001:10).

In terms of market conditions the price of livestock in different market centers has significantly improved compared to the past two to three years of this time of the year. The major reasons for this are, the improved body conformation of the livestock, because of improved rain condition, and increased terms of trade from the central part of the country has become high and contributed to remain in increased rate. But, in July (2001) cross border market has failed due to disagreement created between Ethiopian

Moyale and Kenya Moyale government officials. The issue was related to market center and the taxation of live animals. This situation resulted in a rapid price decline of these animals. This, in turn, affected the recovery process.

In almost all market centers, the current price of staple foods is lower than the same time of last year. The major reason is the increase in supply of cereal and poor purchasing power. The supply of haricot beans in the local market has also increased due to reasonable harvest of this year production and this has contributed to significant market price decline (0.50 Birr 1kg)

The numbers of relief dependent also show decline (see Annex 2) . For example, according to Boorana Zone DPPC in the year 2001 from the total population of the Yaballo district 31,000 people still survive on relief food through February to June 2001. This was 36% decrease from the figure of last year. However, the allocated resources have never met the total requirement. Therefore, the communities have shared the grain through traditional support system to save the lives of needy population. Different NGOs operating in the area and the government have supplied different types of livestock to the drought-affected households particularly pastoralists through restocking program (see Annex 3.) Thus, the Boorana are at recovery process using different strategies including food aid.

During my fieldwork, I witnessed that relief food were still distributed to the Boorana since they were not yet able to stand on their own feet or fully recovered. Even the

meeting of the Early Warning Department of *Yaballo* district in which I was a participant reported that there would be food shortages in this year (2001/2002) and a proposal for the continuation of relief aid. This was due to the less amount of rain in short rainy season at the end of the year 2001. In addition to its amount, the rain was not evenly distributed. I observed that there was little rain in *kebeles* like *Diida Hara*, one of the areas highly affected during the 1999/2000 drought. Most of the interviewed household herds in Dambii village (Olla) told me that they moved their cattle to west, northwest of *Yaballo* where there was a relative rainfall. However, in those less affected areas a smaller proportion of household was entirely dependent on relief aid. Totally, had it not been for the relief aid the death toll would have been incalculable.

Another process on which the Boorana economy depends to recover is mutual assistance system (*Buusa Gonofaa*), which provides assistance such as temporary lending of milk cows (Dabaree) gifts (Kenna or Gumaata) of animals and food for members of the community. However, the voluntary redistribution of resources has been weakened due to recurrent drought and the corresponding heavy losses of household resources. This does not mean it stop functioning. This has an impact on the system that plays major role in the recovery process, because of the expanding needs of the many households who lost their resources. Hence, there is continuity and changes in Boorana survival strategies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Survival Strategies to Famine: Boorana Views of Survival Strategies

#### 1. Introduction: Boorana views of survival strategies

In chapter three, I tried to discuss the tragedy of short or prolonged drought and famine repeatedly facing the Boorana. In this and the consecutive two chapters, I focus on the most common indigenous survival strategies which have been and are still employed by the Boorana to cope with this crisis.

The Boorana have equivalent concepts for the terms survival and strategy. While they name survival as *dandammii*, they call 'strategy' as *mala*. When *mala* and *dandammii* are joined together and form *mala dandammii* these words can probably best replace /explain the phrase survival strategies.

Famine has been a recurrent feature of the Boorana lives life and these people have developed sophisticated cultural mechanisms that operate within the context of the *Gadaa* system to survive this crisis. Using these indigenous survival strategies and coping mechanisms as important means to overcome famine, the Boorana mobilize all resources of the community.

In Boorana views, these mechanisms are not developed overnight. They are the result of accumulated knowledge of resource management strategies and the process of responses to recurrent drought and famine. In other words, they believe that their

survival strategies are evolving in process over time or the strategies they use today emanate from their past experience. There is Boorana saying “*Nama oolaa darbee qaabatetu oolaa jalaa ba’a*” which can loosely be translated as “only those who experienced drought and famine previously can survive the present and future crisis”. Hence, the Boorana view that survival strategies are process or logical extensions of the normal time as well as the hardships they went through during drought and famine. That is to say that adjustments are not picked off the shelf when threatened. Rather, they involve long-term strategies of resource management employed by households to mitigate the risk of losing assets and income. These long-term strategies are primarily aimed at preserving their economic basis so that they ensure survival whenever they face drought and famine and make quick recovery after the crisis. Some of these strategies are diversification of herds, economic activities, restocking, resource exchange etc.. To clarify more, the purposes of the daily activities of Boorana households are to ensure their long viability by maintaining long term strategies of resource management. In line with this, Corbett (1988:1107-1108; Walker, 1989) say that adjustment over time is a form of household response to crisis that is insurance stage (long term strategy), crisis stage and distress migration.

To sum up, in the case of Boorana there are strategies used before the crisis, during the crisis and after the crisis. Therefore, the ways the Boorana respond to drought and famine are characterized as chains of adjustment over time where the success of crisis survival and recovery strategies depends on the mechanisms that a household uses during normal times, particularly crisis anticipation or early warning system and resource management.

## **2. An Early Warning System or Crisis Anticipation**

Crisis anticipation refers to all activities of a predicative and defensive nature employed to foresee the probable course of events in the immediate future and thereby helps a household to prepare alternative resource management strategies in order to minimize danger ( Dessaiegn, 1987).

The Boorana have developed a cultural system of disaster forecasting and preparedness based on their long-age experiences. This cultural early warning system is the most important aspect of Boorana survival strategies as it is concerned with anticipation of weather condition, livestock, grass, water, disease, market behavior, environmental changes and social affairs.

The Boorana households frequently anticipate crisis well in advance and plan strategies cautiously to mitigate its future impact. Anticipating the occurrence of drought and famine need sufficient preparation before their actual occurrence. For this purpose, they mobilize human resources and use accumulated knowledge in collaborative and cooperative ways. Comparable data can be presented from the research conducted in Walloo–Northern Ethiopia. According to Dessaiegn (1987) all community intellectuals, social, religious and mystic resources are deployed to anticipate and prepare for disaster. Among the Boorana too, crisis anticipation is a collective effort where all human resources of varied knowledge and background are used in forecasting crisis and preparing for it.

It has been already mentioned that the purpose of early warning system is to collect information, on various aspects of Boorana life i.e. economic, social, political, cultural and natural conditions using different indices of measurements.

The first source of information for the Boorana cultural early warning is *Ayyaantuu*. As my informants, Borbor Bulee, Nuuraa Diida and Diida Qaraasaa told me *Ayyaantuu* is an expert in time reckoning who has knowledge of reading or observing the arrangements of celestial bodies by examining the relative positions of stars and the moon. He tells days, months, years and also forecasts how the relative positions of stars and the moon influence human affairs. This person knows when rain is to begin and stop depending on the relative position of the stars and the moon. The deviation of stars from their normal positions and the times they are expected to appear means crisis is imminent. For instance, if the *Bakkalchaa*, which is one of the stars needs to appear in conjunction with moon, is not visible, we anticipate drought and famine. My informants Diida Qaraarsaa and Borbor Bulee further say:

Changes in daily weather, the coming of drought and famine and other bad or good fortune can be predicted by observing different signs formed around the sun and moon. For instance, if pond (*Haroo*) like circle is formed around both the sun and moon, especially when they are overhead, it has a meaning in our culture. This situation symbolizes at least three things. These are rain, war and drought and famine, which are associated with specific signs that one can read or observe. In the first place, if the center of the pond-like circle is black and is surround by red color, it implies the coming of rain. In the second place, if the form or shape of pond is similar to cattle skin that is stretched and staked into the ground, the implication is inevitability of drought and famine. Specifically, it symbolizes the death of cattle. In the third place, if the shape or form of the pond is similar to cattle enclosure (*kraals*), it symbolizes war. Beyond that, bad or good fortune can be forecast by examining the color of cloud and the sun. If the color of cloud and the sun is abnormal, especially red in color, it indicates the changes in daily weather, the approach of drought and famine and other things related to bad fortunes. Moreover, the formation of *rainbow* (*sabbata waaqaa*) shows the disappearance of rain.

Thus, the reading of relative positions of stars and the moon and different signs of celestial bodies by the astrologist, *Ayyantu* plays an important role in the Boorana survival strategies, especially as an early warning system.

Another source of information for Boorana early warning system is *Uuchuu*. In the words Diida Qaraarsaa, who is *Uuchuu* himself, *Uuchuu* is a person who has knowledge of reading *Uusaa*, which literally refers to intestinal parts (*marrumaan*) of an animal including the fatty transparent (*mooraa*). The knowledge of *Uuchuu* is not hereditary but it is learned through transferring practice (*dabarsaa*). *Uuchuu* reads the *Uusaa* of a bull, goat and sheep slaughtered by individual households and community.

Though *Uusaa* of all these livestock is culturally valuable, that of the cattle is preferable. With regard to the importance of *Uusaa* as the source of information for early warning system, Diida Qaraarsaa, Alakee kateeloo and Godaanaa point out:

There is nothing impossible to be examined from *uusaa*. It shows all kinds of bad and good omens (*faroo*) facing an individual, household and community. More specifically, it predicts weather condition or the coming of rain, the approach of drought and famine as well as the appearance of war, disease etc. *Uusaa* also reveals what happened to a person or household particularly with cases associated to health and economic conditions.

To conclude *Uuchuu* is a futurologist, who is engaged in the practice of examining *uusaa*, which is one of the most important elements in the Boorana cultural value.

The persons known as *Raagaa* are also other sources of information in anticipating what happens in future. According to kateeloo Daboobessaa, who is *raagaa* himself, *raagaa*

are prophets who have a divine power and a great role in anticipating what will happen in the future. Such famous diviners are believed to have revelation message from God on social, political and economic events that are likely to happen. As observed during my field work, diviners are highly respected by the community and their spiritual guidance has a great role in Boorana culture. Some of the famous prophets of Boorana are Moroo Uchumaa, Areeroo Boosaroo, Boruu Mallee, Dhadacha Reeba, Goollisa Gobba, Ogaraji Doyyoo, Ammessa Baalaa and others. These people have knowledge of predicting the coming crisis such as drought and famine.

Animal behaviors are also other sources of information for Boorana cultural early warning system or crisis anticipation. Cattle react to their environment in different ways, and in Boorana view their reaction tells that something good or bad is going to happen. According to Jiloo Taadhii, Jaatanii Diida and Borbor Bulee, if cattle are willing to move to their *Kraals* at the sun set, if they are being satiated (*suga'uu*) or get saturated with a little feed, if they do not compete for grass greedily and provided that the cattle affectionately lick each other, these behaviors are considered as the signs of good omens ( *faroo*) i.e rain is likely to come and there will be peace and stability.

According to Borbor Bulee, Diida Qaraasa and Jiloo Taadhii, , bad omens and the coming of drought and famine, on the other hand, are also implied when cattle empty their bowel or discharge their urine while lying down as well as when they resist to return to their *kraals* after being taken to watering point. It is also believed that similar misfortunes are likely to take place if cows refuse to join the calves and fail to respond to the call of their off-springs and their owners. Moreover, if cattle unusually become

aggressive or gluttonous ( *sabdaa'uu*) and break their *kraals* to go out in search of grass at night, these also symbolize bad omens, especially the coming of drought and famine. These situations can happen while there is abundant food or when there is a strong desire for more than what is right and reasonable. These too, *forecast* ( *dha'uu*) famine. (Informants, Diida Qaraasa and Jiloo Taadhii). The Boorana households use these indices to anticipate future events and to make decisions on how to respond to these incidents.

Still there are futurologists who are involved in forecasting what will happen in the future from omens and natural indices. One of my field work interviewees, Qaraarsa Diida, states that these people are gifted with the knowledge of identifying various sounds and singings uttered by birds to predict about environment.

Moreover, these are men of knowledge who analyze environmental changes based on the signs and specific types of livestock disease especially that of cattle which occur during previous drought and famine. Furthermore, the decrease in levels of water and the condition of wind, which is unusually stormy and cold is believed to have been followed by crisis. This does not result from divine rather it is an outcome of empirical knowledge developed over time.

The various rituals, ceremonies performed and assemblies organized at different levels in the *Gadaa* system are also other sources of information on crisis anticipation. As Stated by Borbor Bulee, Guyyoo, Libban and Boruu Madhaa, the *Gadaa* in power performs various rituals, ceremonies and holds assemblies at different ceremonial

places in which members of the community are taking part every eight years. Besides, there are rituals and ceremonies performed and public meetings held at household, village, clan and community levels. These do not need wait for every year. In all such occasions, participants exchange their experience and information on livestock, water, grass, weather, market, crops, environmental conditions as well as other social, political and economic affairs.

My personal observation also indicated that the Boorana cultural greeting system, too is a source of information for early warning system. In Boorana culture, when people meet, they ask one another to know if they are at peace, if all the human beings and livestock are well. They also ask one another to know whether their country receives sufficient rain and conditions are good for grass and water. In this way, they exchange information about different ecological zones of Boorana territory, weather, rain, livestock production, disease, grass, market behavior and environmental changes. In general, they exchange information on social, economic and political issues.

The Boorana also consider the behaviors of both short and long rainy seasons to predict what may come later on. Informants Diima Jirmoo and Boruu Ganyaa told me that these situations include the coming of rain at right time, its irregularity and its amount. For example, if it starts late and stops early, they predict that it will affect grass and water condition. Hence, these force the households to devise alternative resource managements strategies such as grazing, watering, mobility and herding. They may decide to move early or late to dry season grazing or to save their grazing enclosure ( *kaloo*) or to use it.

Assessment of market behaviors is still one of the built-in strategies of Boorana early warning system. As the Booranaa elders, Borbor Bulee and Jaarsoo Boruu assert, the Boorana closely follow up market behaviors in their locality and far away. The purpose is to know the price of livestock and to decide which livestock brings relatively a good price to sell and at which market they find things they buy with cheaper prices. This involves black market and internal market at different levels and areas. Since there is a direct relationship between the availability of grass and water, these situations affect the physical condition of cattle and in turn their price. The larger the supply of livestock which are not in good physical condition and are not usually marketable indicates the shortage of food and cattle products, and as a result, some households sell their basic assets. According to Abba Gaaloo, some other sell their cattle when price is good and buy more cattle or other species when price declines. Then, with the money they earn from selling, they deposit a certain amount at the bank anticipating the decline of price and the crisis. This informant said, “ I my self sold 10 cattle of mine and deposited the money at bank.” Accordingly, if there is a decline in price, it is an indication of unusual large supply of livestock whose physical conditions have deteriorated and this in turn shows that people are beginning to sell their assets because of shortage of cattle products.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that the Boorana believe or anticipate recurrent happenings of drought and famine based on their past experience related to *maqabaasaa* of the Gadaa system. According to my key informants, the late Gobbaa Bulee, Aгаа Adii, Boruu Madhaa and Borbor Bulee, *Maqabaasaa* is the seven recurring

cycles where each cycle is closely associated with certain natural occurrences giving rise to some events of drought and famine. Therefore, the Boorana elders anticipate the *Gadaa* cycles in which this crisis takes place.

This information on different social, economic and political aspects of the society as well as environmental conditions are disseminated to the community members through individuals, relatives or formally on rituals, ceremonies and assemblies organized at different levels. Thus, the Boorana have cultural early warning system dealing with social, political and economic conditions based on the collective effort of the society, particularly men of knowledge. The early warning system has an influence on household decisions as we shall see below.

### **3. A Customary Resource Management Strategy**

The Boorana have developed efficient and successful customary resource management strategies which function in the framework of the *Gadaa* System. These customary resources management strategies are the result of centuries accumulated knowledge which are based on their ingenuity and strength of character. The three major resources which are critical and can be exploited according to these customary resource management strategies are land, pasture and water. In other words, these customary resource exploitation strategies are concerned with the three major resources.

### 3.1. Patterns of Land Use and Mobility Strategy in Boorana

Boorana land tenure is communal. This tenure system facilitates equal access to and the right to use the resources for all Boorana. Accordingly, every Boorana is entitled to the right of grazing his livestock to any areas he/she needs in Boorana land. This does not, however, mean the Boorana land use pattern is an open access grazing. There are customary rules and laws pertaining to land use pattern. As Soraa Boruu and Borbor Bulee assert, these rules and laws are concerned with settlement pattern, a flexible use of pastureland by dividing into wet season area, dry season grazing area and drought reserve area.

Under the customary land use pattern, the Boorana also have specific areas of the land preserved for the performance of various rituals and ceremonies. Recently, the cultivation of land has been introduced and the pattern to utilize the land is incorporated into their customary rules and laws.

To begin with, the Boorana land use pattern is concerned with their settlement pattern. Among the Boorana settlement is not arbitrary. The heads of village and *ardaa* are in charge of managing the settlement pattern. The purpose is to preserve vast land for grazing and watering. For example, settlement at *mataa tika* which implies the best grazing area kept for communal use of the area, is impossible. In addition, the customary land use pattern does not allow settlement between villages and water points as this blocks or intercepts the routes along which the communities take their cattle to watering. Thus, one is supposed to settle in the expected areas (villages). The Boorana

give due attention to cattle routes/ roads to water wells and grazing lands. This gives to cattle vast and flexible grazing land for normal and drought times.

Soraa Boruu and Borbor Bulee further state that the Boorana divide their land into wet – season area, dry-season grazing area and drought reserve area based on their customary rules. This systematic land use pattern is based on the mobility of herd and people between the wet and dry season grazing areas. This pattern of seasonal movement is governed by the availability of pasture and water. In fact, not only pasture and water are governing mobility of herds and people but also there are other reasons such as cattle disease, tick ( *tse tse* fly), drought, ethnic-conflict, ritual – ceremonies and assemblies of the *Gadaa* system.

During the wet season which ranges between March to May, the Boorana households, move to wet grazing zones of up land areas ( *Diida*). At this time, water and pasture are sufficiently available. It is astonishing to observe an abrupt changes in vegetation growth and to become green soon. In this period, or as this season sets in, the Boorana households and their herd move to wet grazing zones of upland where abundant and good quality of pasture, surface water, hand and machine-dug ponds ( *Haroo*) are available for both human and livestock. The availability of these resources provides them with a breathing space as they are relieved of the burden of shortage of water and grass. As a result this is the time when the Boorana mostly perform ritual and ceremonies. Until they use the wet-grazing areas, the dry season grazing areas get replenished. This in turn avoids or minimizes rangeland degradation and enables them

to keep forage and water as a reserve for drought and famine. Abba Duuba Waariyoo contends the pattern of land use in the following way :

As the dry season sets in, our herds and we move to dry season grazing zones where dry pasture and permanent water wells exist. Until the beginning of rainy season we depend on these water wells and dry grass of this dry grazing zones. This is our regular land use pattern at normal times. Every year at the beginning of dry season, we, the Boorana, begin the utilization of well water after performing *dhibaayyuu* ceremony.

If the dry-season is prolonged and drought occurs the Boorana households change or adjust their resource management strategies and mobility patterns. They continue to depend on the permanent and deep wells and recently machine-dug large ponds until rain comes when they go back to their wet season grazing. Even some of them move to areas closer to highlands, valley bottoms, hills, river areas ( *Sagan river* ) and other areas they think have a little rain or grass in stead of moving to their wet grazing areas as there is no rain. In this case, they do not follow the seasonal mobility pattern to move to wet grazing area. Thus, to cope with drought and famine, they change their mobility time, pattern and directions. The strategy of communal land use makes possible of getting access to vast and varied grazing ground and through skillfull movements of households could minimize the worsening effects of drought and famine. Even if it is out of the regular mobility time, the Boorana move to drought grazing areas. These drought reserve areas include permanent deep wells, valley bottoms, up hills and areas closer to highland areas and regions receiving high amount of rainfall. At times of drought, the Boorana households intensively and carefully exploit such areas as they have grass and trees (branches with leaves) to be fed on by livestock. Hence, during drought and famine the Boorana households adjust their strategy; some households partially abandon their village and move in response to crisis. Moreover, they change their

herding practices by increasing the number of *foora* animals. Furthermore, they move early and change their routes of movement in search of grass and water and they travel a long distance for grazing areas and watering during the crisis than normal periods. One of my key informants illustrates his mobility pattern in response to the 2000 drought and famine as follows:

### **Case 1**

#### **Diida Qaraarsaa**

I live in Yaaballo District, Dharritoo Kebele in particular area known as Hara Weeyuu. My livelihood depends on pastoralism. In 1999, when the *Ganna* season kept on decreasing, I decided to move to sufficient pasture area. I had 70 cattle of which I left 20 of them to my family. The rest 50 cattle, I took where I moved to. From Hara Weeyuu I moved with my cattle to Qaancaroo and Diilloo of Dirree district where there are water wells. However, I faced shortage of grass there, too. Then, I moved to Goobso, where little Autumn rain (*Hagayya*) appeared. A few of my cattle died. Thus, I moved to Maagoolee. I stayed for three months nearby Maagoolee wells in Halchiisa area. The coming of big rain (*Ganna*) delayed and my cattle continued to die. Towards the middle of Ganna season of the year 2001, a little rain appeared. As a result, I went back to Qaancaaroo and Dharritoo where my family dwells. Only one milk cow survived of these left behind while 23 survived of 70 cattle.

As the above case indicates, the most successful households are those who adopt mobility strategy to cope with drought and famine. This is because mobility enables them to exploit spatial variation in rainfall and the consequent growth of vegetation.

Let us take another case for more clarification of mobility a strategy of coping with drought and famine.

## Case 2

Abbaa Gaaloo

I reside in Yaballo district in Diida Haraa Kerbele, Dambala Abba Canaa village. I am a pastoralist. I had four wives and seventeen children. I experienced famine for four *Gadaas*. Particularly, the famine occurred in the year 2000, during the *Gadaa* office of Boruu Madhaa, was very much severe. On my part, I anticipated the coming of drought and famine and I got prepared earlier to move to where grass and water are available. As the rain season (*Ganna*) appeared to be short in the preceding year of 1999, I realized the coming of famine. Consequently, I sold 10 cattle of mine and deposited the money at bank. With some money I bought medicine and salt for the rest of my cattle. When the short rain was absent, I moved from Dambalaa Abba Canaa to Borbor. Later on, I was forced to leave Borbor and move to Wayyaama, the border of Region Five (Somali Region). Then, I went to Tamasa pond. Again, the area became overgrazed and drought grew severe and, as a result, cattle died. Thus, I moved to Hoggeellee where I thought is a little bit better. The 2001 *Ganna* rain has not yet come. Eventually, when the delayed rain appeared, I came back to my former *arda* or village. The cattle I took along with me almost survived. And today I have 80 cattle. Those who remained at Dambala Abba Canaa, my indigenous place, lost almost all of their cattle they possessed. For example, of the 60 cattle I gave to my brother for later return in a form *Dabaree*, only 10 cattle could survive. My son who did not go to famine unaffected areas also lost all his cattle. Hence, I sold some of my cattle and subsidized him. Apart from this, I offered him a bull for the ritual performance of naming his elder child. For other four persons, I lent 2 pairs of oxen. Those persons in return helped me in labour service. In such way I managed to survive the 2000 drought and famine.

The Boorana land use pattern also involves reserving of hilly or valley bottoms for the use of dry and drought periods. The reserved area is known as *Gaara or lafa seera* which means the hill area or land put under the custody of law and rule so as not to be used by anybody before the right time. If household is found violating this customary rule it will be penalized (Informant, Boruu Guyoo)

Mobility is also made for the performances of various rituals, ceremonies and administrative affairs of the *Gadaa* System. In Boorana land, there are ceremonial grounds (*arda jila*) preserved for the performance of ritual ceremonies. Hence, the customary land use pattern of Boorana also take into consideration that reservation and preservation of ritual lands and routes. The *Gadaa* in power follows an established

mobility routes to perform ritual ceremonies at each ritual sites. These are not settled by people except for temporary ceremonial performances. It is not also used for farming or cultivation though some are to day under pressure by external forces. According to my informant, *Nuraa Diida*, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *Gadaa* mobility routes used to cross the *Gannale river* every eight years. This has been curtailed by the government pressure since the time of the *Gadaa* office of *Saaqqoo Dhaddacha* .

The importance of this mobility by the *Gadaa* in power and the community is that the households or families move to perform these ritual and ceremonial activities taking some of their cattle with them while leaving behind some others at home. This makes the community households survive drought and famine as their livestock are dispersed into different ecological zones. Nowadays, the *Gadaa* in power and the *Raaba* move between Liiban and Dirree Regions to perform socio-economic activities. In fact the Boorana move to Liiban Region to cope with drought. Thus, it can be explained through their saying:-

Oolaa Liibanitti dheetu,  
Jabaa Bonaa Ollaa dhiiraatti dheetu.

which means

A household moves to Liiban in time of drought and famine,  
Refuge is taken among the successful households in herding during  
a prolonged dry season.

Therefore, mobility is one of the strategies needed for successful herd management. Successful herd management also includes access to water, grass and labour of the household to cope with famine

Village or individual mobility is not a simple wondering. It is usually well planned and socially supervised. If decision is made by the household or village to move, they set out for scout to check the availability of grass, water and to assess the security of the areas for human and livestock. This ground reconnaissance is known as scout *habuuruu*. In Boorna saying:-

Dooyyaatu malee nyaaphii hinlolu,  
Habuuruu malee warri hingodaanu.

which means

Enemy operates no war without advance spying,  
Family never moves without scouting where to go.

Consultation with *ardaa* and village leaders to get their approval is also needed to settle in Boorana village. So, the scouting group consult with the village or *ardaa* heads. Moreover, it is not culturally acceptable for a person or household to depart from his/its former village without revealing to his neighbors. In Boorana culture, such persons or groups perform the ceremony of *Buna-qala* and thereby bless one another on the occasion. Mobility does not necessarily involve all members of the family. Though it varies from household to household, very often, old persons and under aged children and their mothers, together with their a few milk cows, are made to stay in the villages in the wet-season grazing areas.

A recent development in connection with land and pasture use is the strategy of reserving grazing enclosure ( *Kaloo*) for dry and drought times. Enclosures are reserved mostly for calves, weak animals and lactating cows to be used during dry season. Moreover, my informants *Dooyoo Dullacha* and *Kateeloo Daboobessa* told me that they also used it in times of drought and famine for other categories of livestock. *Kaloo* is established at village or *ardaa* level and opened when it is necessary to be used and

managed by institutions. Nowadays, *kaloo* sites have become common and permanent grazing area in Boorana. In Diida Hara, which is one of the wet grazing areas, *kaloo* is mushrooming here and there. The main reason for the prevalence of *Kaloo* is the introduction of big machine dug ponds. In addition to *kaloo*, the Boorana households especially women collect and store forage ( *hay*) during wet season to be used in times of drought and dry season (See Annex 5).

The collection of grass and tree branches from the nearby forest at valley bottoms and highlands are the most important strategies used by Boorana households where household members particularly women spend much of their time during drought and famine. During 2000 drought and famine, some NGOs operating in Boorana land and government organization such as agricultural office supplied grass that was brought from high land areas to Boorana.

Although the Boorana are predominantly livestock raisers, recently farming economy have been introduced as survival strategy in order to ameliorate the famine situation. The customary land use rule and law enacted by *Gumi-Gaayyo* assembly, however, decreed that farming should be done in localities of higher altitude where farming is suitable. This is also to save grazing lands for livestock and also to prevent the cultivation of ritual and sacred places as well as not to affect mobility pattern to which helps survive drought and famine.]

#### 4. Water Use in Boorana

The development of complex water wells including other water resources like ponds and the communal management systems are also the most invaluable survival strategies for the Boorana in the face of drought and famine. The Boorana communally dig-wells and ponds or rehabilitate the old ones. These wells and ponds are the most important source of water upon which the Boorana depend for the consumption of human and livestock, particularly the big machine dug ponds and the permanent deep water wells are the life line of Boorana survival in the face of drought and famine.

The utilization of these water resources operates within the communal water resource management based on clan access rights. The Boorana thoughtfully and carefully manage their water and fairly distribute it. To this effect, the clans elect the *abba herrega* ( the water usage regulator) a man in charge of water resource usage. Accordingly, when water is sufficient animals are allowed to consume to their full capacity. As the dry season begins, they provide their animals with water at different intervals to save this resource. Among the Boorana, the taking of animals to water every day is known as *oba* while the providing of cattle with water in an interval of a day is known *dhabsu*. As the availability of water decreases, the gap of providing water widens. Hence cattle are provided with water every three days which is known as *limaalimma* and every four days. In times of drought and famine, however, they are taken to sources of water at more restricted intervals so that water is economized to be used for a longer period. This time interval of getting water especially for cattle can last for seven days. Camels and goats withstand shortage of water more than cattle whereas horse mule and donkey are less resistant than cattle to shortage of water.

One thing to be mentioned regarding water resource management strategy is labour cooperation. Watering animals is the most back-breaking and arduous work and it needs cooperation at community, village and household levels. This labour cooperation becomes the most important survival strategy during drought and famine, the time when the Boorana resort to complex well systems and big machine dug ponds to collect water at the very deepest.

As the level of water decreases the labour input and the time invested increases. This in turn makes the task laborious. My informant *Lookoo Jiloo* says:

This makes the people wait till midnight. Cooperation is highly needed to water our animals and people as well as to maintain and rehabilitate water wells. Households coordinate their labour. Some draw out water from wells and some others bring cattle to drink and drive back. Still others clean animal manure and let animals drink water in a limited number. Thus, these all situations need cooperation and division of labour. The *Abba Herrega* is expected to accomplish his tasks of managing this resource. If he is found to be unfair and unable to manage the resource, the community immediately uproots him.

## **5. Diversification and Maximization of Herds**

Another indigenous mechanism that the Boorana developed in the process to cope with drought and famine is herd diversification. Although cattle are highly valued among the Boorana, herd diversification is becoming increasingly important. Hence, from the mere rearing of cattle, they have been able to introduce the production of camels and small stocks, too. In words of Borbor Bule, nowadays, the composition of camels and small stocks is at an increasing rate as a coping mechanism. In the past, camel did not constitute part of the Boorana household livestock and was not used for diet. Camel rearing began during the *Gadaa* office of *Abbayi Horoo*. (1560-1567) Moreover, the

remaining of other animals such as donkey and chicken are also recently at increasing rate. Herd diversification helps to maintain greater insurance, range of production and resilience of households.

First, households, who possess diversified herds, are more ensured than those who do not diversify their production of livestock. This is because camels, small ruminants and cattle are differentially withstanding the effect of drought and famine. For example, cattle may become vulnerable to the impact of drought and famine whereas camels and small ruminants survive as they are drought resistant.

Secondly, diversification helps to contribute to greater range of production. The more households are likely to diversify production of livestock is the more they are likely to get an optimum and even surplus production. For instance, households can increase their option by either consuming or selling their animals and their products. Thus, at a time when cattle like cows become without milk as a result of drought, households can use milk products of camels or small ruminants. They can also sell small ruminants for immediate needs instead of losing a cattle or camels which are highly valued for the household economy.

Thirdly, the importance of diversification for greater resilience is that households with different species of livestock recover quickly from the impact of drought and famine as compared to those with less diversified herds. This is because all species do not have the same recovery rate. For example, small ruminants have rapid recovery rates compared to other livestock like cattle. The reproduction of these small ruminant is

rapid and also their off-springs are more in number than that of cattle so that households depend on them as their subsistence life. As a result of their fast reproduction and recovery rates, they can be sold and re-invested to buy other cattle. Besides, camels play similar roles in that they can be sold and exchanged for other cattle which the households may have lost in the face of drought and famine. This does not mean that camel and small stocks are the only one to be sold for recovery. Cattle and other animals are also sold if they survive drought.

The fact that camels and small stock i.e. goats and sheep are browsers, which can feed on bushes and thorny leaves that are scarcely available during drought and famine, helps them to survive and to continue reproduction and to give dairy products. Thus, during drought their products ( milk, meat etc) are used to supplement households diets and generate income which contribute to their survival. They can also attract good price when drought becomes heightened. Since they have good physical conditions relative to cattle, camels are also used for transporting water and fodder for animals during drought and famine. Donkeys are reared only for transportation purpose.

The case of one of the household-heads obtained from my field notes illustrates more about how the Boorana diversify their economy to cope with drought and famine.

### **Case 3**

#### **Boruu Guyyoo**

I reside in Yaballo district and in Dharrito Arda (kebele). I live on rearing livestock like cattle, camel, small, ruminants, donkey, hen. Besides, I am engaged in farming. Before the severe drought and famine of the year 2000, I had 500 cattle, 20 camels and 50 donkeys and also unspecified number of goats, sheep and chickens. At the end of the drought of 2000, 250 cattle 20 camels, 50 donkeys, small ruminants and chickens survived

for me. Especially, I used my pack animals to fetch water and fodder for my cattle during the crisis. This helped me to minimize the effect of drought and famine. Had I not used these pack animals, my livestock would have been totally lost. I also bought legumes and cereals when they were cheap and sufficiently available which I sold them at good prices when their supply decreased. When milk and milk products of livestock are abundant, I and my family depend on them by saving the yield I get from farming, especially maize for time of dry and drought periods. Finally, I managed to survive in such away the year 2000 drought and famine.

This case shows that during drought and famine households who have diversified their livestock holding have better chance of surviving.

Apart from diversification of species, pastoralists may follow a strategy of increasing herd size in seasons of good rains and grass availability in order to off set the decrease in herd size in the inevitable bad years with high mortality ( Dahl and Hojort, 1976; *Odegi Awuoundo 1990*). In the case of Boorana, an accumulation of livestock in cattle, small stock, and camels are considered as shield for the household. In general, they believe that the larger the herd size is the better the chance of surviving through the frequent drought, disease and famine. At analytical level there are households with a large number of livestock lose more than those who have less number of live stock. As an example, my informant, Taadhicha Warriyoo, told me that of 300 cattle he had, only one cow survived while another informant of mine, Jaarsoo Guyyoo, said that of the 10 cattle he had, two of them survived during the year 2000 drought. So successful herd management som times dependes on chance (Gaaroo) through which God gives to some one. These are mostly those who herd a single type of livestock, especially cattle and those who have shortage of labour and are unable to separate their cattle into different ecologies. Generally, households with large herd size have more chance to

cope with famine. This mostly depends on successful herd management. (See the attached source).

The Boorana also have developed a successful herd management strategy which enables them to survive in the in face of drought and famine. Successful herd management ( *Waraguu*) requires not only access to grazing and watering but also techniques of dispersing and segregating their livestock to different ecological zones.

The Boorana have songs in their literature to praise those who successfully manage their cattle and to blame those how mismanage their properties. For praising as an example, they say:- “*Abbaan ilmatti lakkise tolaan ilmaa abbaa jalaa hambise*” which is loosely translated as “ Father left property to his son and his careful son managed it”. Thus, cattle are lost only not because of absence of rain but also because of an un successful management.

The Boorana disperse their cattle from home-based herds to satellite herds in response to variations in rainfall. This division of herd into temporary dry stock (*foora*) and lactating stock ( *warra*) helps as a strategy to avoid or to lessen the competition made for pasture and water in one area especially during drought. It also prevents land degradation as those taken to *foora* get an opportunity of grazing in inaccessible rangelands. Inaccessible is from settlement camps. In other words, it helps to exploit the underutilized range resources and avoids cattle raids by an enemy. Most of the time some of homestead stocks are made to join the *foora* when there is shortage of water

and grass during drought and when rainy season begins, they will be back to region the homestead (*warra*) livestock.

Most successful households cope with drought and famine by way of dispersing and segregating their livestock into different ecologies according to animal species. Mostly cattle, camel and small ruminants have specific or respective grazing areas while cattle are made to feed on grass (small ruminants and camels are made to feed on) forest or bush lands. Especially with regard to camel, the Boorana believe that camels damage the environment particularly with their hooves and pollute the environment with their urine and waste. Consequently, they prefer to graze cattle and camel at different ecologies. This enables them to exploit differences in micro-environments, i.e different patches of land are best suited to the needs of particular classes of stock depending on different species, different ages, and different production categories ( dry or lactating cows). For example, small ruminants are mostly grazing at the Southwestern lowlands of the Boorana where bush and thorny leaves are available (Informants, Borbor Bulee and Boruu Guyyoo).

According to Dooyoo Dllacha, successful households who cope with drought and famine are also those who have sufficient access to labour. This is because successful herd management needs access to a labour resource. Accordingly, households with adequate productive labour forces have more possibilities than others who do not have adequate labour to split-up family's herd, especially during drought. Households use different strategies in order to get access to labour. In the first place, the household basically depends on the number of its children to meet all grazing and watering

problems. Access to labour can also be possible through child fostering where labour is exchanged for cattle. The cattle given to such person is known as *andhuura* literally umbilical cord, which implies cattle given for that individual in exchange for his labour. Moreover, access to labour can be possible through *baannata* literally a household in short of labour power can request labour from his neighbor for various purposes. On such occasion a household prepares food for the participants. Furthermore, marriage is also another means through which a household obtains access to labour. In a polygamous family, households split their cattle according to the number of wives they have. They might be situated in different ecologies. Very recently, these households are found to be placing one of their wives in towns. Beside pastoral activities, these women are involved in petty trade.

## Chapter Six

### The Role of Kinship and other Social support Networks as Famine Survival Strategies

Survival strategies include the establishment and maintenance of successful economic and social relationships, both within and beyond the community. These economic and social ties are reinforced and expressed or manifested in different types and forms of institutionalized coping mechanisms which operate within framework of the *Gadaa* System as a whole, economic and social networks of the community such as inter-households, lineages, clans, kinship in particular and otherwise.

Some of the various types and forms of these institutionalized indigenous coping mechanisms that the Boorana have developed and used are discussed as follows.

#### 1. The *Dabaree* Institution

The term “*Dabaree*” is derived from the verb “*dabarsuu*” literally meaning pass on some thing to somebody. Depending on the context in which it is used the institution could be defined as an institutionalized practice where by a large herd owner loans different categories of stock to other members of the community based on the terms prescribed by the custom (*aadaa*) and law (*Seera*) such that the interests of the two parties is mutually served. Hence, *Dabaree* is a resource exchange or transaction institution. It is a loan of livestock for a house hold in short milk and breeding stock. This can be due to

war, drought, lack of grazing and the like. According to my informants, Borbor Bulee and Abbaa Gaaloo Waraabuu the transaction /loan/ of *dabaree* stock takes place among the households belonging to the same clan (*dabaree-gosaa*) or among different clans (*dabaree sabboo-gonaa / Jaalaa-Soddaa*) or close relatives (*firaa-fixaa*).

The close relatives include sister of one's mother (*Areeraa*) sister of one's father (*adaadaa*), brother of one's mother (*abuuyyaa*). The resource transfer (*dabaree* stock) is also possible between Boorana households and other households of other Oromo groups as well as other ethnic groups like Gabra etc.

According to the rules and laws prescribed by custom, a Boorana household in short of *dabaree* stock has a right to ask for *dabaree* stock his close relatives, clansmen or friends, but he/she does not force members out of one's other clan. In the transaction of the stock the "giver" of the *dabaree* stock makes the receiver pledge so that the receiver takes care of the cattle given to him as his own. This care includes, providing the cattle with sufficient pasture and water, protecting them from predatory animals, inspecting their health condition, etc. The "giver" of *dabaree* has a right of canceling out relation with the receiver in the event that the receiver fails to manage the cattle well. In the case of *dabaree gosa*, an approval of clan members is needed. This approval is based on the inspection of condition of cattle under the supervision of the *Hayyuu*.

As we have mentioned already the provision of assistance is built on the recognition of the mutual inter-dependence of the members of the community and on the need for reciprocity. Thus, the stock exchange or loan of *dabaree* stock depends on the interest of the two parties. The Oromo have a saying, "*Horiin duumessa /fixeensa*". It literally

means property is like “a passing cloud” or “*Pershing dew*”. The implication is that the wealthy of today may become the poor of tomorrow. In order to survive, a person must, therefore, not only invest in material but also establish strong social relations that enable him stand in a good position in the event of crisis. Thus, cattle play great role in establishing relations. *Dabaree* also helps the survival of animals from epidemics and drought and thereby alleviates problems of overgrazing. Furthermore, *dabaree* avoids putting pressure on the water in the wells and alleviates shortage of manpower required to manage a large number of animals. The *dabaree* giver also gets social acknowledgements, prestige and status in the society, especially in leadership at political level. Beyond this, rich households loan livestock to poor households in exchange for herding labour. Hence, it is one way of getting access to labour and solving the acute problems of labour. The rich households exchange livestock to poor households in exchange for herding labour. Oba (1994:18) states this as an invisible investment.

In this institutionalized resource exchange or loan the *dabaree* receiver on his part gets benefits. The receiver of the *dabaree* stock has the right to use product of the cows, milk and butter and even can meet his household need by selling cattle, especially bulls upon the consent of the giver. Besides, he can be allowed by the owner to slaughter for household consumption and on certain ritual-ceremonies (informant Abbaa Gaaloo Waraabuu). Hence, *dabaree* form of relation is a means of redistributing wealth among the Boorana households and thereby solves their food insecurity.

The most common types of *dabaree* are milk cows (*dabaree ameessa*) and breeding bull (*dabaree-kormaaa*). The milk-cows are transferred by the owner when the receiver

cows are dry or when the milk-cows are not sufficient. The duration might be for one lactating period or more depending on the owner's interest. The transfer of breeding stock takes place when a need arises for breeding purpose on temporary basis. This happens when the receiver has no breeding stock at all or when he is interested in a selected type of stock. The number of breeding stock is usually one whereas that of the milk-cow can be one and more. The recipient is also expected to reciprocate provided that he can do and when the "giver" is in need of *dabaree* stock. It is better to consider the following case to reveal the importance of *dabaree*.

### **Case 1**

#### **Guyyoo Daboobessa**

He is a dweller of Diida Hara Kebele in Yabello district. He had 80 cattle before the 2000 year drought. When the drought occurred in 2000 year, 78 of his cattle died and only 2 survived. His clan loan him four *dabaree* cattle. Using these four cattle with his formerly survived two cattle, he led his family life up to now.

This case shows that the person is rich but due to condition beyond his capacity such as drought he lost almost all of his cattle. As a result, his clan members lend him *Dabaree* stock. In general, the *dabaree* form of economic relation as embedded in Boorana Gadaa system improves and builds up the resource base of the households at normal times and thereby serves as an insurance to cope with drought and famine. It is also indispensable for recovery phase of famine survival strategy.

## **2. The *Buusa* Institution**

The term *Buusa* is derived from the verb *Buusuu* which means "to pour something". According to my informants, Alakee Diida and Borbor Bulee, *Buusa* Institution is the

type of voluntary contribution or sharing among the households or families. Thus, *Buusa* institution is one of the coping mechanisms that the Boorana have developed to cope with crisis and even when there is no severe stress.

Milk sharing (*buusa*) is an important aspect of this institution. The practice of milk sharing among the Boorana households by and large is a moral obligation. However, when it comes to households belonging to the same lineage or clan it is an obligatory one. As the same informants stated though milk sharing is a common practice during normal time, it becomes one of the most important survival mechanism during and after drought. One of my interviewees Jaatanii Gollicha said, “In our (Boorana) culture, sharing is one of the most important means of coping with drought and famine. Milk is one of the resources we share among households, villages and beyond.” Hence, it often happens that in the village there may be households that have milk cows while others may be dependent on a very restricted number of lactating animals. The lack or shortage of milks is not only due to poverty in cattle but also a result of drought, undelivery of cattle and other causes. As soon as the cows are milked, milk is poured into the milk container and placed outside the house of the needy households. According to Gemechu (2001) milk contribution is to protect human dignity built to the value system of Boorana Oromo. Thus, among the Boorana, begging is prohibited because it is viewed as the most dehumanizing thing in their culture.

Another item to be shared is meat. This is practiced, particularly, when some relatives or neighbors cannot offer animals for slaughter from their own herds. This sharing mechanism is very important during dry, drought and famine times when the poorer

*Boorana* get meat through this meat sharing (*Jifuu*). As Borbor Bulee and Alakee Diida said, during drought and famine the *Boorana* villages commonly decide among themselves that the rich households slaughter animals and those who do not have cattle to be slaughtered get a good share from each wealthy household in the village. Hence, sharing is common and people share with their neighbors, immediate relatives, close friends and clan members. During drought and famine sharing and assisting poor households increase greatly. In the words of my informant Inseene Gufuu, the *Boorana* households also share grain that they buy, get from limited yields and get as relief aid as one form of survival.

Gift (*Kennaa*) is also another form in which economic ties and social support networks are expressed during normal time, drought and famine period. Gifts are offered in the form of food (milk, meat, grain) animals, livestock and especially on ceremonial days in the form of coffee, tobacco and livestock. Those gifts offered on ceremonial occasions are known by the generic name '*gumaata*'. These gifts create social ties on which individuals and households "fall-back on" as coping mechanisms during drought and famine. Gift is also an important coping strategy during recovery phase for households who lost their cattle.

Other forms of animal exchanges and social relationships are centered around marriage. The act of transferring bride-wealth creates new bonds with the wife's or wives' kinship groups. Wife's or kinship groups share herding labor, loans of animals, sharing food or cattle. Thus, the relation a person establishes through marriage services as a chain of assistance during drought and famine. In other words, animal

transactions, reciprocal exchanges of assistance, gifts, sharing resources and common ritual practices expressing their relation and ties, which in turn help as “fall-back” during drought and famine. Thus, elderly parents move into their son-in-laws, relatives who live outside famine strike area and are able to provide food and refuge. Households with wider kinship split their members to reduce the number of the households. So that they are made to depend on relatives and friends with less labour power but adequate food (Informant, Diida Qaraarsa).

Boorana households contract herding with kins and friends who live in towns where the Boorana can make use of milk and milk product. These economic and social ties are important, especially, during drought and famine as a mean of acquiring assistance for those households who have lost their cattle due to drought (Informant, Abba Duuba Waariyoo).

### **3. The Gonofa Institution**

The Gonofa institution is one form of indigenous institution. The term is derived from the verb gonofuu, literally meaning "to force". It is an institution through which the law imposes obligatory contributions of animals, especially, cattle to rehabilitate custom re-establish those who have lost their properties due to drought, famine, war and other calamities. The law also obliges household to contribute or offer cattle to poor households when they are expected to perform ritual ceremonies. In other words, it is an institutionalized insurance or social security to fall back on during ritual ceremonies.

There are culturally defined rules and laws that govern and regulate the functioning of this institution in which they operate. The implementation of their rules and laws is supervised, evaluated and controlled through open and participatory discussion at different levels of community management groups, clan assembly, *Gadaa* official meetings, and the general and supreme assembly of Gumi-Gaayyoo, a legislative body to enact rules and laws. According to the laws and rules enacted by this legislative body:

First, it is the obligation of all Boorana clans to assist the impoverished. In other words, the custom of *aadaa* of the Boorana obliges every Boorana to restock those families who have been impoverished due to the drought, famine war, etc.

Secondly, the *Hayyuu* and *Abba Qa'ee* are responsible for supervising the implementation of the *Buusa - Gonofa* rules. *Abbaa Qa'ee* is one who is empowered by respective clans to organize and lead the *Buusa Gonofa* meeting and procedures. The *Hayyuu* and all other members of each clan have to be serious enough to listen to the plight of the poor.

Thirdly, the rule asserts that those who have lost their cattle as a result of mismanagement or negligence may not get contribution. They call such a person '*nama okkoteen fixe*', a person who lost his cattle by misusing and selling unnecessarily. As a result of this value which discourages mismanagement every household is careful.

Fourthly, if the impoverished person is entitled, according to the rules prescribed in customary law, he/she has the right to claim restocking. Fifthly, the law applies reinforcement measures (*Jinfessuu*) on those members of the clan who refuse to contribute. *Torban*, literally a group that has seven members, is ordered to enforce the laws of *Gumii-Gaayyoo*. These seven men are sent to cattle enclosure (*moonaa*) of the person who refuses to contribute and seize the required cattle, some times, in excess of the original demand. Hence, to force (*Jinfessuu*).

Sixthly, the Boorana *Buusaa-Gonofaa* customary law states that the minimum numbers of livestock needed to keep the Boorana within the 'traditional' orbit are five cattle. The idea is that the number of cattle should at least be five to keep that household above the poverty line. The clan councilors, including the *abba Qa'ee*, know the wealth status of their clan members. The wealth status of an individual Boorana is very important in meeting the *Buusa-Gonofa* obligations. Thus, mutual, intra-clan interdependence mechanism is a useful cohesive tool to keep the Boorana together and It is a remarkable coping mechanism that encourages food security of the Boorana households so that they could easily withstand drought and famine. In such away *Buusa-Gonofaa* is aimed at preserving the resource base of a household through rehabilitating and restocking. The practice usually happens as there is differential effects of calamities on clan wealth.

The customary law of *Buusaa- gonofaa* allows only cattle to be offered. Milk stock or Heifer is offered to a person who does not have even a single head. The meeting of *Buusaa gonofa (Kora gosaa)* is organized by the *Abba Qa'ee* who offers *sangaa gosaa* (a bull to be slaughtered) for the clan members and participants of the meetings. All

members of that clan are expected to participate at the meetings. For example, if the meeting is that of the *Daccituu* clan, all lineages should attend the meeting to discuss issues like pond and *ela* maintenance, conflict resolution, *Gadaa* affairs and others part from *Buusaa – gonofaa*. On such meetings, the clan investigates the causes of impoverished person, whether he/ she has lost his/ her cattle because of misfortune, drought, mismanagement or others causes. Having identified the impoverished individual to be entitled, the *Buusaa Gonofa* institution allows restocking to the person. Let us take an example of one clan to show the way *Buusa Gonofaa* functions. *Daacituu* clan as an example of *Buusa- Gonofaa* Association or Organization.

A. *Daccituu* clan lineages (*miiloos*)

1. Alchaayyaa
2. Daraartuu
3. Sooddituu
4. Luullituu
5. Liibanoo.

Each of these lineages (*Miiloos*) or house can further be subdivided into door (*balbala*). Within the *Daacituu* clan, lineages from 1-5 with their sub- lineages, have an obligation of restocking and rehabilitating each other by contributing cattle through the *Buusaa Gonofaa* institution. Members also have the right to be restocked or rehabilitated if they have fulfilled their obligations. If there is an impoverished individual in one of these lineages, all have to contribute though his immediate relatives are expected to help first. The clan also discusses issues of resource utilization, assisting the impoverished and other related matters of the *Gadaa*.

The Clan (*Dacituu*) members have restocked and rehabilitated different members of their clan at different times. One of these people is *Boruu Jaarsoo*. What my informant, *Boruu Jaarsoo*, told me can best clarify *Buusa- Gonfaa* institution as case material.

## **Case 2**

*Boruu Jaarsoo*

Before Ethio- Somalia war I had 10 cattle. When the war took place during the *Gada* office of *Bulee Dabbasaa*, I lost my 10 cattle at a particular *Kebele* known as *Utaallo* in *Yaballo* district because of this war. My clan contributed nine cattle. In our culture, *Bussa-Gonofa* contribution is made to a person who has lost his/her livestock in drought, war, etc is known as *hirba*. Thus, I managed to recover from such a loss, due to *Buusaa-Gonofaa*. In our *adaa* (Custom), *Buusaa Gonofaa* is an insurance on which victims can rely! Today, I possess sufficient number of cattle.

*Buusaa* here refers to contribution of cattle. Let us take one more example to show how the *Buusaa Gonofaa* works by taking the Case of *Digaluu clan Buusaa Gonofaa* for the victims of 2000 famine. *Boruu Guyyoo*, (*abbaQa'ee*) who belongs to this clan explains the contribution *Buusaa Gonofaa* institution has for those who have lost their cattle due to drought and famine as follows.

## **Case 3**

*Boruu Guyyoo*

I live in *Dharriitoo Kebele, Yaaballo*. I belong to *Digaluu* clan and *Nuurtuu* lineage. I was born during the *Gadaa* office of *Madha Galmaa*. As I grew up as a matured person to manhood, I was elected *Abbaa Qa'ee* by members of my clan. I organized the clan meeting to restock and rehabilitate our clan members who lost their cattle or livestock due to the 2000 drought and famine. I slaughtered one bull for the clan members who attended the meeting. The clan meeting spent and stayed about 15 days in our *olla*. At this time, 20 persons who needed help were assisted through the institution of *Buusa Gonofaa*. I myself gave one cattle to *Nuuraa Waaqoo* who was *Abba Bokkuu* during *Gadaa* office of *Boruu Madhaa*.

Let us take another case to explain more the organization and implementation of *Buusa Gonofaa*. *Annaa Duuloo*, who belongs to Digaluu clan, states his own case as follows:

**Case 4**  
Annaa Duuloo

My name is *Annaa Duuloo*. I am from *Digaluu* clan, *Walaajjii* lineage. Because of repeated drought and famine in our area, the cattle I had were constantly dwindling, decreasing. During the severe drought of the year 2000, I lost all of my cattle. In accordance with our *aadaa* (culture) an assistance was made for me through *Buusaa – Gonofaa*. Accordingly, the clan I belong to offered me eight cattle. Among those who contributed are my cousin, *Golloo Jiloo*, gave me one heifer; my elder brother, *Diidaa Halakee*, offered me one cow and one heifer, totally two cattle; my brother's son contributed me one heifer and one ox; *Boonsoora Kushanoo* is a person from my own lineage; he gave me one heifer; and *Jaarsoo Diimaa*, from my sub lineages contributed one young-male calf. All of these are from *Digaluu* clan and *Walaajjii* lineage. The lineage members of our clan are *Tiittii*, *Walaajjii* and *Udumtuu*.

Hence, these cases show that the Buusa-gonofa is a very important institution, which the household depends on as coping mechanism to crisis, especially during recovery phase. Thus, the most successful households to cope with drought famine are those who rely on kinship and other social support networks.

**3.1 The Institution of *Hirba***

It is one institution of restocking a household who lost his cattle due to war. This household is known as destitute (*Qollee*). In this case as soon as the household lost its livestock clan members contribute and give to the destituted ones see case 2 above.

#### 4. The Jaalaa Institution

Another social security mechanism on which the *Boorana* households depend during famine is the 'Jaala' institution. The term *Jaala* is derived from the *Oromo* term '*Jaallachuu*' meaning to like or to be affectionate. It is a bond partnership creating a mechanism and network by which individuals needing assistance 'falls back on' during the crisis i.e famine and drought. The *Boorana* have such relation among themselves and with other people even beyond their community.

Marriage enables an individual household to establish economic and social relations with a particular group or groups of affines. These groups help each other. In this process, properties are transferred from one family to another in the form of bride wealth, particularly, animals forming the basis of these transactions. There are also reciprocal exchanges of assistance, gifts, and sharing of resources.

Apart from this relation, throughout his life an individual may deliberately create bond partnerships with other groups of people within the *Boorana* community and beyond to expand the networks. They exchange animals in the form of gifts, and also share and borrow resources. They also participate in each other's rituals and ceremonies.

As my informants Soraa Boruu and Borbor Bulee state, the *Boorana* also have such relation with other communities. For example, the *Boorana* have such relations with the *Guji Oromo*. The marginality of the ecology that the *Boorana*, *Gujji* and other pastorlists occupy results in an irregular food supply. This necessitates bond relationship that involves sharing of resources, loans of labour in the form of unmarried sons to assist in

herding and dispersing animals in the form of *'Dabaree'*. Such a bond helps to create and promote a better management when gifts of animals take place in times of needs. Thus, these people are not isolated as self – sufficient societies. They are in a bond relationship. Reciprocal exchanges i.e. gifts, sharing, animal transactions and communal ritual practices create relations and reinforce the *Jaalaa* institution during normal time. Hence, through *'Jaala'* institution, the *Boorana* and *Gujji* households acquire valuable information and knowledge about environmental conditions, trading goods, craft production and experiences of other pastoral and agro-pastoral groups. This sharing of ideas and contacts has advantage during crises like drought, famine, war and raids. Such contacts and information- sharing become safety valve serving as a network of assistance. For instance, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century drought and famine, when rinderpest and small pox affected the region, such sharing of knowledge and information networks helped both communities. Those who lost their animals in the pastoral economy were forced to take refuge with their neighbors until they recovered from the disaster (*Gemechu, 2001*). The *Boorara* also took refuge among the *Boorana Oromo* in Kenya during crisis.

As any other agriculturalists and pastoralists use each other's areas as place of refuge when their crops failed or their stock died, so do the *Boorana* and *Gujji*. They share grass, water, crop, stem and enclosure (*Kaloo*). Such mechanism is possible due to the existence of the *'Jaala'* institution and common ritual practices of the *Gadaa* system. One of my informants, *Waaqoo Godaanaa*, puts the importance of *Jaala* relation as follows:

## Case 5

### Waaqoo Godaanaa

My name is *Waaqoo Godaanaa*. I live in *Bildim Raasoo Kebele* in *Yaballo* District. I am from *Gujii Oromo*. We (*Boorana* and *Gujii*) have '*Jaala*' relations. It is mutual benefit for both of us. During the year 2000 drought and famine, the *Boorana* were seriously affected. There were many households from *Boorana* who took refuge among us, the *Gujii*. We also moved to the *Boorana* area whenever we faced drought and famine. Even at the normal times, very often, we move to the *Boorana* grazing areas known as *Goomolee* where grass of good quality exists. This grass is believed to enable cattle to mate earlier the usual time. The *Boorana* allow us grass and water as well as bulls for our cows to have good breeding species. This is the result of our relation built-in the culture of *Jaalaa* and common cultural value, *the Gadaa System*.

Waaqoo Godaana further explains the importance of *Jaalaa* institution taking the case of

Qixxee Ruufaa, one of his *Jaalas*.

## Case 6

### Qixxee Ruufaa

Qixxee Ruufaa is from *Boorana* and he lives in *Carii*, one of the *Kebeles* in *Yaballo* District. His *kebele* borders our land, *Gujii*. The *Boorana* and we, have *Jaalaa* to each other. He is my *Jaalaa* from *Gujii*. *Jaalaas* assist each other during drought and famine. In the year 2000, drought and famine hit our land including that of the *Boorana*. But the *Gujii* land was not highly affected. It is *highland (baddaa)*. We, the *Gujii*, have cattle and agriculture. Drought and famine became serious in *Boorana* and then Qixxee moved along with his family and cattle to *Gujii* land. During this critical time stayed there and we shared grass, enclosure and water as well as food. We (*Gujii*) had *Warqee (falsebanana)* used for food). In this manner, he could save all of family and most of cattle, and later on, he returned to his former place, *Carii*, when the area got rain. Not only his household but also there were other households who survived as a result of *Jaalaa* relationship.

Still another person, *Bagaajaa Diidaa*, explains his own experience regarding the importance of *Jaalaa* institution as a coping mechanism to drought and famine.

## Case 7

### Bagaajaa Diida

I reside in *Areerii kebele*, *Yaballo* district. I belong to *karrayyu* clan. *Boorana* and *Gujii* are brothers. *Gujii* and we drink from the same *Burqaa Galgaloo Iyeessaa* (the spring of *Galgaloo Iyeessaa*), which is found in *Carii*. This sharing of the same spring water resulted from *Jaalaa*. The *Boorana* and *Gujii* are *Jaalaas* to each other. For instance, I have *Jaalaa* with *Alakee Badhachoo*, who lives in *Burqaa Arbichoo* in *H/Maariyam*

(Gujii Land). At a certain time in the past, I gave two cattle and 3 goats of mine to Alakee Badhachoo twice. Reciprocally, he gave me *Warqicha*, *Baddallaa* (maize), etc. as he possessed these food items. During the dry season, drought and famine times, we (the Boorana) move to the Gujii highlands. Particularly, at the critical moment of the drought, I moved to Alakee's area. As Alakee and my another Jaalaa, Dhugoo Sorsoo (Gujii), were engaged in farming apart from animal herding, they helped me during the Gadaa office of Gobbaa Bulee. Dhugoo Sorsoo, who now lives in Galaana Abayyaa (Gujii land), helped me also during the year 2000 drought.

Besides its economic functions, the institution serves as a process of creating a social integration and ties among individual groups within and from outside the community. Therefore, the bond relation among the *Boorana* and *Gujii* and other groups is an important survival strategy in the face of drought and famine. To sum up, the *Jaalaa* institution functions within the community and beyond, and it is an important form of social support network as coping mechanisms with drought and famine.

## **5. Communal Prayer and Cooperation**

Cooperation and community prayer is one form of response to famine. The *Boorana* perform various religious rituals and ceremonies in cooperation as a response to anticipated crisis and after its actual occurrence. In *Oromo's* culture as whole and in their religion specifically, *Waaqa* is the creator and the supreme that is capable of doing every thing. It is believed that it rescues people from whatever calamities may face them. The leading actors, the Qaalluu, Gada officials and elderly persons are experts in ritual ceremonies.

According to my informant *Qaamphee Dabbasaa*, the *Boorana* perform communal prayers in which they express the faith they have in *Waaqaa* in time of good and bad. For instance, when they face drought and famine they perform various religious

practices at household, village and community levels. Among these religious performances the *Hulluuqqoo* and *dhibaayyuu* are worth mentioning. The term *hulluuqqoo* comes from the verb *hulluuquu*, literally meaning sleep through a narrow opening, bend and pass under. *Hulluuqqoo* is the ceremony performed by the *Boorana* community in reaction to drought and famine as well as any other problems so that they pass through and fortune comes. In this case, the narrow opening symbolizes drought and famine.

*Dhibayyuu* literally means libation. It is a religious ritual or ceremony that can convey a broader meaning than we can present it here. It is one of the *Oromo* religious ceremonies performed by the community. The procedures of the ceremony involve slaughtering of cattle, pouring of milk (*aannan*) on ground, under *odaa* (sacred tree under which they perform this practice), near wells etc. There they pray to God (*Waaqaa*) so that famine, drought and disease will be driven away, and rain and prosperity come to them.

For this communal prayer (*dhibaayyuu*) they slaughter *Goromtii-Roobaa* literally *goromtii* is female goat that has not yet given birth while *rooba* is simply rain. Thus, they have a perception that they get rain if they slaughter this female goat. The meat of animal slaughtered as a sacrifice is commonly blessed and eaten. On such occasions (*Dhibaayyuu*), in which I participated they sing a song with the expectation of good fortune, prosperity, peace (*Nagaa*) and rain to come. For instance, they say:

Hoo hinfooree:- Ho, there to come pouring,  
Foroorsaan roobe:- That which pours rain,  
Roobee laga Yaase:- Raining that results in springs,  
that increase in volume,  
Ilmee Laguu basse:-There to come times of getting,  
enough milk,  
Hoo Roobaan Siigale :- Ho comes heavy rain.

All members of the community participate in the ceremony led by the *Gada* officials, *Qaalluus* and elders versed in this particular performance. The participants are expected to dress in cultural clothes. In general, the *Boorara* consider this communal prayer as *faluu*, meaning to devise or plan, i.e. think about something in order to solve a problem. In the context of *Boorana Oromo*, this implies that to devise or plan to survive drought and famine by performing communal religious prayer in which members of the community participated cooperatively.

## Chapter Seven

### Adjustment to Food Consumption, Market Dependence and other strategies

#### 1. Adjustment to Food Consumption

Household's means of subsistence grows worse as famine becomes critical. As a result it needs careful management of available food resources and adjustment to consumption. Careful resource management or adjustment involves different strategies. Some of the major strategies are curtailing the mixing of food items or varieties, quality, voluntarily and compulsorily cutting down of consumption, giving priority in food allocation, to children, elders, etc., reducing frequency and amount of food intake, adjustment to food budget and change in diet types especially gathering edible roots and fruits. Moreover, households store food for dry and drought periods.

Comparable data can be presented from other areas on rationing and substitution of food. Bollig and Gobel (1997) mentioned the existence of various reports about the rationing and substitution of food among pastoralists which have been important strategies to cope with drought. Dessalgne (1987) also reports adjustment by peasants to food consumption as a response to famine.

The major Boorana households diets are milk, blood and meat. On coffee ceremonies, beans are mixed with butter and milk. Adjustment to food consumption is made by Boorana households to cope with drought and famine. According to my informants,

konsolee Qabballe and Elemaa Liiban, at normal times a household uses a variety of food items whereas during drought and famine the variety of food items is almost reduced. As the food stock of the households is exhausted, the household is forced to depend on a limited variety. Unlike the normal times, the amount of grain to be used for Boorana diet surpasses the quantity of animal products when crisis becomes worsened. As a result of change of diets from animal products to grain, the pounded and boiled cereals mixed with small amount of milk and butter become important meals.

When drought and famine grow worse, the mixing of grain with small amount of milk and butter is curtailed. Rather, one kind of diet either milk or butter is used with grain. Moreover, gradually, cooking oil bought from market replaces animal products during famine. However, this adjustment depends on the resources of the households. In terms of differential responses, the wealthier families stand in a better position to cope with drought and famine.

As my informant, Borbor Bulee says, historically grain supplies i.e sorghum, maize, etc; came from Gujii Oromo and Konso. Later on, farming was introduced and a few Boorana households began to cultivate crops. As famine period advances, maize became the most important item of food and it is grounded, boiled and small amount is given to the members of the family. Hence, the resorting to grain takes place during drought time when cattle products exhausted and more income is allocated to food purchase by adjusting their budget i.e cereals, *warqicha* (false banana).

Another way of food rationing is to decrease the amount and frequency. The frequency of meal served is often only once a day and even the usual meal is absent at all. The amount served also decreases when supply of fresh milk declines. Priority and special attention is given in food allocation women, elderly persons particularly children and pregnant women. With regard to this Waankee Galgaloo, said: “*Ilmeen haftee an due’ee daaraa dabarfachuu wayya.*” Literally it is better if my children continue to survive despite my death. Thus, this is the reason why we give priority to our children. Even well into the famine, the quality of food taken decreases and households depend on roasted cereals or boiled grains.

Meat is another important food item for Boorana households. As the drought and famine become severe, the Boorana households have to feed on meat by slaughtering cattle. Slaughtering of animals for food is done on individual household or in group at village level as it is a common form of coping with drought and famine (Informants, Inseenee Gufuu and Boruu Guyyoo)

The storing of food is also one of the strategies that the Boorana households use to survive drought and famine. My informants Dooyyoo Dullacha and Alakee Diida Put this situation as follows:

Food can be stored in different forms. These are *Doolaa*, *Foon jajii* and *Itittuu*. *Doola* is a food type processed from ingredients of butter, fatty meat and butter spice (*Urgoo dhadhaa*) by melting or putting on fire. *Doolaa* is mostly prepared during the normal wet seasons when animal products are abundant and used in period of dry-seasons, drought and famine times. It lasts at least for a year. The role of women is critical in processing, storing and managing food. I also stored it in a form of *foon jajii*, literally meat cut into chain likes strip and smoked by hanging above the fire in order to dry for preservation purpose. Besides, salt is added to help its preservation for a long time and to prevent it from rotting. *Itittuu*, literally yorgut can be stored for a month and used. However, *Doola* is the most important and commonly used diet.

Another survival strategy that the Boorana households employ is *iddanna* meaning letting cattle blood while it is alive, especially during drought and famine for consumption. This kind of adjustment to food becomes important. When milk supply declines during dry season, drought and famine to compensate for the insufficiency of milk (food). The Boorana elders, Mohamed Daalacha and Borbor Bule state that goats and camels blood is also used though the latter one is a recent development in Boorana survival strategy. They do not always let out blood of herd milk. Especially, milk cows, breed bulls and immature and vulnerable livestock are usually spared. In this case blood is consumed in two ways i.e. boiled with water and milk as *laabee* or drunk mixed with milk. Though *iddanna* is frequently used during prolonged dry-season, drought and famine, it is also practiced at normal times for different reasons, especially, for sick persons.

Relaxing of food taboos is also one of the strategies used by *Boorana* households during the severe drought and famine years. For example, they have begun to adopt to previously and culturally unconsumed food types. These include chicken, Camel and their products. Even today a large number of *Boorana* community are not using chicken and its products. But, there are a few households who use chicken either as a diet or as a source of income. camel meat and its blood is not consumed by some people

including the *Qaalluu* and the *Gadaa* officials. They believe that they will suffer bad fortune if they consume it.

Still other strategies that the *Boorana* households depend on during famine are famine food. In other words, *Boorana* may also practice gathering of forest food like wild fruits and roots during the short dry season. As drought and famine advance, the *Boorana* depend more on roots. The *Boorana* households have ample knowledge of their environment and natural resources. This deep botanical knowledge helps them during such crisis (Informant, Borbor Bulee).

The major famine food that the *Boorana* households resorted to during drought and famine are wild fruits, roots, leafy plants and seeds. According to my informant *Borbor Bulee* and *Malluu Waariyoo*, the *Boorana* identify different types of edible plants used during drought and famine in their local names. Some of these are:

**Table 3**

Different Types of Edible Plants Used During Drought and Famine.

Fruits	Roots and Tubers
Urbuu	Kurtee
Hammeessa	Camee
Dheka	Gadara
Ogomdii	Burii
Ejersa	Hobbe
Waakkoo	Harkfato
Biqqaa	Miichu

Andaraka	Singo
Madhera	Gumbo
Dhagmasa	Raafuu (Shaana)
Garsee	

Some of these famine food is consumed, particularly by the youngsters at normal times. In the words of my informant, Inseenee Gufuee the bark is stripped and the inner softer part is boiled in water to take out the bitter cane of the plant and is or prepared as soup. *Raafuu (shanaa)* is a plant leaf and its stem is collected, from their environments cooked and consumed. Women have excellent botonilgical knowledge in this case and they prepare it. There is still another wild fruit used during drought and famine. To illustrate this, let us consider the following case:

### Case 1

#### Mallu Waariyoo

Mallu and the Boorana were compelled to rely on fruits and roots of wild plants during famine. The wild plant fruits and roots are not very often available near by. People need to go a long distance in search of them. Of the useful fruits, *garsee*, which is picked off a tree, requires a long process to be eaten and it takes, in fact, about 9-10 hours to stay on fire. They add salt when boiling. The importance of boiling '*garsee*' fruits with salt is to get rid off its poison content. She further states that apart from such fruits there are also roots that are obtained by digging the ground deep as famine advances. Mostly, it is not possible for a single person to accomplish this task and as a result, cooperation is employed among household. After the roots are dug out they will be brought home to be scrapped off their sheath /peel/. Then, they are boiled with salt and eaten. Mallu states that when famine becomes serious, there are people who would feed on "unusual" plants. Consequently, those people could not get relief as they failed to get-rid-off excrement. These people who eat "unusual" plants dehydrate and will have difficulty in their bowel movements. So, boiling avoids this kind of problem.

Resorting to “famine food” is, therefore, one form of responding to famine. However, resorting to “famine food” depends on the resources and kinship relation of the households. This is because mostly poor households rely on such relations.

People also resort to hunting wild animals as drought and famine coping strategies. Traditionally hunting was widely practiced by *Boorana*. Some of the preferred game are Oryx, gazelle, giraffes and antelopes. Recently, however, hunting has declined in importance as a food source. This is because of intensified hunting due to the introduction of firearms and deforestation which have seemingly led to large-scale migration by wildlife to the parks in northern Kenya (Informant, Borbor Bulee)

## **2. The Role of Market Dependent Response to Famine**

Asset disposal is one of the strategies households adopt during famine. Although the selling of livestock takes place both at normal and crisis time, the number of animals supplied to market during crisis increases. The *Boorana* households often sell their livestock during dry and drought period when they need to purchase cereals to supplement their diet. During this time, cattle are often in poor condition. Market supply of cattle is high as few buyers are available in the market. This reduces the price. On the other hand, grain price is high and this results in unfavorable condition in terms of trade for the *Boorana*. Sales decisions are made usually in the middle of drought i.e. when many households are supplying animals to market. As a result an excess supply, brings declining in sale value. Buyers mainly, traders, are from different ethnic groups and take the cattle either to border or to black markets in

Kenya as well as to the market in the highland. The Boorana sell their cattle at rural markets or take to major market like Haroo Bakkee, Dubuluqi, Elawyyee, Moyyaalee etc. The type of animals mostly sold are unproductive female cattle, aged animals and bulls. As Gryseels and Jutzi Holt, and Culter cited in Dessalegn (1987), argued asset disposal during crisis used by all households is sequential that households sell their smaller-stocks which include sheep, goats, often young calves and then followed by young cattle, cows and finally cows and oxen.

However, this finding concludes that the system of asset disposal varies from household to household. The fact that asset disposal is not uniform among households is the result of the fact that it depends on wealth, specific needs, arrangements made with other social networks (kins and friends), the demand and the behavior of market price also affect the nature of household disposal.

To elaborate further, the differential accesses to economic resources give rise to differential responses to drought and famine. The poorer Boorana households resort to the strategies such as selling of charcoal, firewood, local beer, selling forest product, migration for wage labour, severely reduced sales and expense, collecting wild foods and relying on kinship and social support. On the other hand, wealthier households are able to store food for use in times of drought as contingencies and have wider options to sell their livestock as they have diversified economies. Below are the cases of different persons to illustrate more about the adoption of various coping strategies which may not occur in a standard and universal sequence.

## Case 2

Elema Luukuu.

Elema lives in Yaballoo district Diida Hara Kebele. She considers herself to be one of the poor households. Before the drought of year 2000, she had four cows. Because of the year 2000, two of her cows died and two other survived. She did not sell these two cows to survive the drought. Instead, she started making charcoal which she sold to urban dwellers. From the income she earned by selling charcoal (cilee), she managed to cover household expenditures such as buying coffee, tea, grain and clothes. The researcher asked why she embarked upon this non-pastoral activity as this does not constitute the Boorana's cultural value and she replied, "*Nama garaachaan / beelaan du'utu ceera malee nami cilee gurgurun ceera miti.*" It means no bad or shame in selling charcoal but starving to death by sitting idle is rather bad or shame (ceera). This was the reason why she is engaged in charcoal selling. Apart from this, she used to fetch water and sell. By doing so, she saved two of her cows through the drought time.

## Case 3

Waankee Galgaloo

Waankee resides in Dharritoo Kebele. During the 2000 drought and famine, first he sold his bull and then went on selling his heifer followed by cows. He did not sell his two goats which are drought resistant. He says that he slaughtered these ruminants for household consumption during the drought and famine. In this ways, he managed to save two of his cattle and a donkey through the drought time.

## Case 4

Qaamphee Kateeloo

Qaamphee lives in Diida Hara Kebele. He says that he sold his cattle which fetched him a good price during drought. With the cash he obtained, he bought heifers for cheap price. With the remaining money, he covered a household expenditure.

## Case 5

### Shakkannee Alakee

He inhabits in DiidaHara Kebele, Dambala abba Canaa village. He is engaged in pastoralism and limited farming. During the drought of 2000, he did not sell any of his livestock. He got good yields from his farms. Through the drought and famine time, he sold grains and cereals he stored to meet his household needs.

These show that households pursue different strategies to cope with famine. Even there are rich households who buy grain /cereals/ when the price falls down and sell when the price rises during drought and famine. Besides, they also sell bulls for good price and buy young bull, and heifers during the recovery stage (Informant, Guyyoo Boruu).

There are also households selling up to ten their cattle at once and deposit the money at Bank so that use it in the course of famine . They also use it to buy livestock to replace the lost assets, particularly during recovery proces (Informant, Abba Gaaloo Waraabuu). Still others, depend on clan or close relative gift, sharing and *dabaree* stock. They save their cattle by taking *dabaree* animals. (Informants, Areeroo Guyyoo)

Households who sell their utensils (household assets) such as milk containers (*cicoo*, *Sorooroo*), *Barcuma*, spear and jewelry are not reported. This is because the selling of household asset is considered as taboo or shameful, especially the selling of milk container is considered as bad fortune.

Survival strategy includes successful economic ties expressed in local and regional trade. According to my informant *Nuuraa Diida* and Borbor Bulee, trade with highland

and other neighboring people had a long history. They organize trading caravans who take untanned skin, cattle and salt to these areas, especially during drought and famine. They exchange these goods for different items. The Boorana began to sell skin (*gogaa*) during the *Gadaa* office of Guyyuoo Boruu, when they sold un tanned skin to Gujii, Konsoo and to other highland people in exchange of grain and false banana (*warqicha*) etc. (Informants, Liiban Golloo and Borbor Bulee). They also buy coffee, tobacco and the like either for household consumption or for ritual-ceremonies. With the money they obtain from the sell of cattle, they also buy materials like cloth and utensil. The Boorana also exchange cattle for *kallacha* , which is used by *Gadaa* class to come to power, with Konso. Thus, these economic ties are used as a means to rely on during the crisis.

## **2.1. Cross-Border Trade**

In addition to the trade relation with the highland people (local trade), the Boorana have cross-border trade, particularly in livestock with Kenyan and Somali traders. This cross-boarder trade is not a new phenomena for the Boorana. Rather, it has been existing for centuries and serving as a major outlet for the Boorana livestock, and a means of earning better income. Thus, it is one important meanses of their livelihood strategies up on which they depend.

According to GTZ /BLPDP market survey (1998:52), the volume of livestock trade to Kenya in 1998 was estimated to be 35,000 - 50,000 cattle 100,000-110,100 sheep and goats and 9,000 - 10,000 Camels.

Unfavorable terms of trade with the internal market forced the Boorana and other pastoralist to be involved in cross - border trade. According to Getachew (2001:73), this unfavorable terms of trade for Boorana in the country's market and the higher prices for grain and other commodities have resulted in poverty.

Cattle /Livestock are bought at the primary collection markets such as Taltalle, Yaabello, Nagelle etc. and are taken to the secondary collection markets. The location of Moyalee on the Kenya border has important role for this cross-boarder trade where varieties of goods are exchanged for cattle/livestock. The interviewed households say that the internal livestock marketing has problems such as very lowprice, inadequate of market to accomodate high livestock supply, high taxation expense, goverment restriction and control of cross-border trade (Informants, Borbr Bulee, Qaraarsaa Diida Mohammed Daalachaa).

Since the political inclusion of the Oromo ingeneral and the Boorana in particular into the Ethiopian Empire, this cross-border trade has been considered as contraband where the government put strict control on it. New actors have been involved in this trade. But, for the Boorana it is an old age economic activity wich they do not consider as illegal activity. Thus, in practical sense, it is part of their normal livelihood strategies. Such restrictions have direct effect on Boorana food security and thereby weaken their livelihood strategies.

However, the connection Boorana have with the wider system of market in whtever form it is has been playing the major role in their coping mechanisms to recurrent drought and famine.

In general, animals are used to meet the needs of household consumptions. This sale of animals is one of the widely adopted practice during the critical time of famine used to buy food, especially by the poor households. However, deprive of livestocks at such critical times markedly declines. Hence, the Boorana households were in loss of basic assets. Market dependence is still one of the responses to crises though it varies among households resulting from diversity of their resources and the wider social support networks they have.

### **3. Other Strategies to Cope with Famine**

Apart from the previously mentioned strategies in response to drought and famine, some Boorana households undertake non-pastoral activities (diversification of activities) as an important coping mechanism. This non-pastoral activity includes crop cultivation, selling charcoal and firewood, construction materials (*mologaa*), gum-Arabic collection, extraction of honey, wage and daily labour, self employment (petty trade), smuggling, moving to towns and the like.

Although agriculture involves high risk in the Boorana environment, some households especially those who lost totally their cattle during recurrent drought and famine cultivate crops as a coping mechanism. Those who obtain a good harvest complement their household food items though for a limited time. Hence, they do not go to buy grains and cereals early during famine as compared with those who do not engage in some kinds of agriculture. But, not only household, who lost Their cattle embark on limited cultivation. There are some households who involved in limited farming even if they have not totally lost their cattle.

Even there are a few households who do not buy grain throughout the drought and famine periods. Shaakkanee Boruu and Guyyoo Boruu told me that their households have never bought grain. Their households depend on milk and other livestock products during wet-season and save maize and other cereals they get from crop cultivation for dry, drought and famine.

However, they do not hesitate to disclose that crop production depends on climatic condition and livestock rearing is better than crop cultivation since it is possible to sell and escape away from the impact of the drought, which is impossible in the case of crop cultivation. Nevertheless, Boorana households attempt to diversify their economy though farming is an opportunistic game in the face of unreliable climate. There are households who lost all of their livestock and as a result could continue with farming and trade activities. Later on they were able to invest on pastoralism. A case in point is Galgaloo Jaarsoo, who at one point in his life lost all of his cattle moved to villagization or settlement in Areeroo and embarked on farming and again reinvested on pastoral sector. This dynamism is contrary to the established sedentarization scenario that households who lost their livestock completely turn to crop cultivation.

In Boorana culture, there is a strict rule against the practice of cutting of trees. Such activity is culturally unacceptable and a person who is found doing this is stigmatized and punished. Despite this strict customary law, some people are forced to engage in selling of fuel wood, charcoal and construction woods (*mologaa*) as a source of food security since recent times of drought and famine. Thus, following the serious crisis this practice has become the source of income for vulnerable households. Firewood is sold almost by women while males mostly sell construction wood. I observed and interviewed women who brought fuel wood and charcoal to sell in towns like Yaballoo, Dubuluqi etc. All of these people, Kanaa Jirmaa, Darmii Alakee and Elemaa Luukun, attribute the increasing sale of firewood to deep poverty, which results from loss of cattle.

As Sakkee Galgaloo said, firewood and charcoal sellers in Yaballo come from all the kebeles surrounding the town. For the convenience of selling days, these kebeles are divided into three zones where all of them sell firewood in turn in intervals of three days. In her words, they reached upon an agreement to prevent the decline in the price of the firewood. This woman could not wait for the day on which her zone has to sell. Then, she brought firewood and unfortunately members from other kebeles (zone) saw her and forced her not to sell and even took the firewood away. I asked her why she broke the agreement and she replied me in short; "I and my family do not have anything to eat". Hence charcoal and firewood selling has become survival mechanism in response to the impact of drought and famine. It shows the magnitude of poverty among the ones affluent Boorana pastoralists.

The victims are also used to selling wood and wood products such as *idda haadee* (the root of *haadee* tree) used as tooth brush, and ropes, mats, basket, curved milk container, etc. as coping strategy to famine. The selling of all these items increases during and after drought and famine. This self-employment in the form of retailing of items also involves the selling of incense (eg. *Qayya*) of different varieties, food stuffs i.e milk selling, sugar, tea, salt (both for people and livestock), cooking oil, maize, coffee as well as local beer, tobacco and other items. Households who lost their cattle, particularly female-headed households are involved in this petty trade as strategy to cope with famine either solely to rely on it or wisely to diversify their income sources. Some of them are successful in reinvesting on livestock from the profit they obtain (informants, Qaballee konsoolee, Xummee Boruu, Taadhii Gurraachaa, Qabballee Waariyoo).

Traditionally, the selling of milk is unacceptable. The Boorana believe that selling of milk brings about bad luck (faroo hamaa) which results in total losings of cattle. The rationale behind this cultural explanation is that at that time the Boorana live lavish life. But, as the food security or Boorana households worsened due to the impact of recurrent drought and famine, they began milk selling as a means of diversifying their income source, which they depend on. Milk selling is very important strategy during normal times, early part of drought and famine as well as during recovery phase. Especially, the Boorana women who are near to urban centers (most of them female household heads) participate in this petty trade. Some of them buy milk from distant rural villages an bring to urban market whereas other households sell milk from their own source. They use the money to buy items used for households' consumption. I observed and interviewed some Boorana households who sell milk and buy maize or other cheap grain in Yaballo market. They said that since milk is expensive than maize we sell and buy other food items so that it is enough for our family. So, Boorana women sell milk and buy grain in stead. They also sell haricot beans and buy maize sine the price of the latter one is cheap and large for that particular season. They also sell butter and fat processed from camel fat and meat to be used as cooking oil. By doing so, the Boorana women and households create such self-employment, as a response to famine. Women milk (milk products) traders also come as far as from Gujii to Yaballoo. According to Little (1994 : 165-170) in Fratkin, et al petty trading in milk became part of the survival strategies of many Somalis after drought, war or other hardship. The role of women in milk trade is important and it provides an important food to settled households, especially durring dry season.

Another important strategy employed by some Boorana households is participation in smuggling directly or indirectly. According to Xumme Diida and Diida Galgaloo this creates important income source. The composition of the participants includes women and men. Some of them act as *duddaan nyaatee*, literally go between for smugglers. Most of them are women and girls. I visited these people while they were engaged in this activity i.e waiting for goods from Moyalee and receiving from traders and passing it to town. In fact, this could not have been possible in the absence of one of my assistant and the trust ship I built with the people in the area. Those who have camels and donkeys are more benefiting by renting them out for the purpose.

There are also households who are engaged in *dallaalaa* (broker) in local and cross-boarder cattle trade. There are also some household who extract salt for human and cattle and sell at markets of Yaballoo, Dubuluqi, Meggaa and other towns. They also sell different colours of lime-stone for painting houses by extracting from the nearby village.

The extraction of honey from forest known a *soroobuu* is another component of income source . Those who have opportunity of getting honey sell it to meet their needs. This mostly takes place at the beginning of the crisis. However, my informant, Borbor Bulee says, in Boorana the production of honey becomes almost impossible because of frequent drought, lack of water and degradation of forest.

According to Qabballe Konsoolee and Waankee Galgaloo temporary wage labor or daily labor also serves as a means of survival. The Boorana people rarely engage in

temporary wage labor or daily labor during normal times. But, as a result of the impact of drought there are poor households who move to peri-urban and urban and are forced to engage themselves in daily labour, such as fetching water to semi-urban dwellers with payment or by selling water. Moreover, they load sands on trucks and pile sand along the road side. This selling of their labour might be in the form of transporting loads, splitting woods, fetching water for the town dwellers. Women are mostly engaged in fetching water. Some households send their girls (children) to town and make them dwell among the relative while living with their relatives they are expected to give services like fetching and selling water. There, from the income they earn from the selling, they send some amount to their parents as a remittance.

Furthermore, there are households who move to gold mining area (Burjuiii) centers like Shaakkisoo and Areeroo at normal times and during occurrence of famine, especially after they lost all of the livestock. The selling of labour in such mining areas highly increased during and after drought or famine. Concerning temporary migration to mining centers Xumme Mallacha says: "We move to Daawwaa mining center where we work as daily laborers to extract mines. This is because of deep poverty resulted from the loss of cattle due to drought." To sum up, change and continuity are aspects of Boorana survival strategies in the phase of famine.

#### **4. RELIEF AID**

Another strategy on which the pastoralists depend on to cope with famine is relief aid. As to the Boorana the first relief aid was organized by the local mission when it was funded from Norwegian Church Aid. Since then relief aid has become a common feature Boorana pastoralists. In this emergency interventions, governmental and non-

governmental organizations were involved. Some of the NGOs engaged in this emergency aid, particularly during 1999/2000 drought and famine were Action For Development (AFD), CARE, GTZ, SOS-SAHEL, GOAL, COOPI, SCF/USA, NCA/EECMY etc.

According to loss Assessment Report in Lowland districts of Boorana zone (2000) a total of 19642Metric tone of food aid has been distributed to 41128 beneficiaries during the first part of the year 2000 only. This relief aid performance has been carried out in a form of relief food provision, medical, fodder, and water supply and livestock (cattle, camel etc) restocking. The major food items distributed are maize, wheat, oil, pulses and other food items. Relief aid is given either directly or indirectly through EGS/Employment Generating scheme where the able bodied person in the community are made to involve to earn cash or food for work.

The relief provision donated during the past crises was not adequate as the Boorana view. Its arrival also delayed. Because of these reasons many households are exposed to asset loss and human death. However, they disclose that relief aid played a crucial role in saving lives of specially people.

As the Boorana suggest emergency intervention become more effective on condition that it arrives on time, is supplied adequately and aims at preserving their economic base. Had the previous relief been adequate and timely it could have saved more of both lives and livelihoods. Generally, relief aid is one of form of coping strategies with crisis. Hence, relief aid should aim at saving both lives and their economy i.e helps

reduce the loss of their assets in distress sale when price is too cheap. Thus, the continuation of relief aid is indispensable as it strengthens their indigenous coping mechanisms.

## **5. Aspects of Change and Countunity**

The Gadaa system in general and the different institutions such as *Dabaree*, *Buusaa*, *Gonafaa* etc, which function within this system, have great roles as coping mechanisms for the Boorana. However, the status of these institutions are gradually weakening as a result of different factors. Some of the major ones are the role of super imposed structure, recurrent drought and famine.

The successive Ethiopian regimes have super imposed their respective administrative structures and systems of governance on the pastoralist (Ayalew,2001). In the case of Boorana too, similar super imposed structures were imposed on their indigenous structures and systems. Examples of these super imposed structures are "Peasant Association", settlement schemes and ranch development aimed at modernizing their pastoral production system (see chapter 3). Such interventions weakened the links among the Boorana territorial, social organizations governed by the Gada system. According to Getachew (2001), there are political and administrative marginalization without any attempt to integrate the Boorana knowledge, institutions and without giving particular attention to them and their value. Thus, all these have been weakening the Boorana indigenous coping mechanisms.

As I have tried to show in chapter four, recurrent famine results in weakening of the Boorana economy. As a result of drought and famine, the average livestock individuals possess declined. This in turn brought about the increase of the number of poor households who need assistance. My informant, Borbor Bulee contends that the number of households who needed assistance or support was very few while the number of rich those who have ability to support the poor was larger in the past. But now the situation is being reversed. Consequently, the poorest of the poor are screened to be supported. Even those who are likely to assist the poor have no the same wealth

status as those ones in the past. In general, the number of those households who are able to support the poor households is highly decreasing.

Due to these mounting economic, political and natural pressures on the pastoral production system and social institutions, the Boorana have devised alternative coping mechanisms. To this effect, some households have been involved in non-pastoral activities such as combining limited farming along with the pastoralism, production of charcoal and firewood, fetching and selling water, moving to urban to seek jobs, wage labour, trade in cattle, grain, milk, tea, local beer, forest products like Qayya etc. (see chapter 7) Besides, diversification of livestock, change in food habit, depending on relief aid, educating their children and depending on them after they have been employed, are worth mentioning. Moreover, there are changes introduced in resource use like *Kaloo*, individual cisterns, digging and rehabilitating ponds, *eelas* using machine etc.

Development interventions promoting state policy and NGOs have roles in changes in Boorana traditional resource management systems. Water cisterns were introduced by ILCA. Currently, international live stock research institute ILRI and CARE-Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere. The function of the cisterns was to store water filled in the tank by flood during raining season. According to my informant Abbaa GaalooWaraabuu, cistern possession is highly privatized in most cases. Hence, individualization of communal resources like pasture, land use for cultivation and *Kaloo* cistern and cistern associated enclosures are profound change in Boorana indigenous coping mechanisms.

External interventions are also manifested in livestock development. A case in point is the Ethiopian government livestock development program geared to promoting commercial links between the low lands and highlands through the development of marketing, and infrastructure networks. According to Coppock (Coppock, 1999), the first project was First Livestock Development Project (1958-63)

Despite all these changes, pastoralism still continues to dominate the Boorana ways of life and as a result the Gada system is still intact.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This research aimed at examining the indigenous survival strategies of Boorana in the face of famine, especially at a time when there is no or limited external assistance. It also assesses the role of Boorana value system as a source of resource mobilization and exchange in response to famine.

Historically, the Boorana rangeland belongs to one of the pastoral areas assumed to be the most productive rangelands in Africa. However, low amount of rainfall and its spatial and seasonal variability coupled with human and other related factors have caused transitory and severe food shortages resulting in famine. Over the past decades, drought and famine have become common phenomena. In other words, though the Boorana experienced droughts many years before, they have repeatedly faced the tragedy of short and prolonged famine in recent decades. More recently, in the year 1999/2000 drought and famine resulted in loss of livestock and human death.

Famine, as an interrelated chains of processes has multiple causes and effects. It is the aggregated result of economic, political, social and natural processes. The Boorana have a comprehensive knowledge of drought and famine. In Boorana view famine has an initial phase when different factors put pressures on their resources, the crisis phase and recovery phase. The major causes of vulnerability and famine are inappropriate developments, land alienation, limitation of mobility, war and ethnic conflicts, recurrent

drought, loss of livestock and their products to unfavorable terms of trade, low and inadequate market access, population pressure, ecological degradation and the disruption of their “traditional” institutions.

The Boorana remember many famines and place them in a historical context. For the first time in their history, the Boorana experienced drought and famine during the Gadaa office of Bulee Dhaddacha (1668-1776). Since then have been recurrently hit by drought and famine. More recently, in the year 2000, the Boorana experienced one of the severe drought and famine. Based on the improvement of pasture, water and social network, the Boorana could recover from this crises.

The consequences of these drought and famine on Boorana economy, human life and social structure are, however, immense. These recurrent crises resulted in loss of livestock, human death, vulnerability to destitution, dropout of the “traditional” pastoral life style, food insecurity, dependency on relief aid and the weakening of the Boorana indigenous institutions. These effects, however, are differential among the Boorana households. Famine is viewed as a process where it has germination, crisis and recovery phases. Nowadays, the magnitude and recurrent nature of famine are increasing.

To cope with such crisis, they Boorana have developed an interacted social system that is interwoven with resource management for centuries. In the three consecutive chapters, (5,6 and 7), attempts have been made to discuss these survival strategies developed and used by the Boorana to cope with famine. In Boorana views, these

survival strategies have developed in the long process of resource management that operate within the *Gadaa* system. The most common strategies as discussed in this study are Boorana cultural early warning system, a customary resource management strategy, the role of kinship and other social support networks (the *dabaree*, the *Bussa-Gonofaa* and the *Jaala* institutions, communal prayer and cooperation), adjustment to food consumption, market dependency and other strategies.

Through their cultural early warning system, the Boorana anticipate crisis and plan strategies to respond to it. Among the Boorana, crisis anticipation is a collective effort where all human resources of varied knowledge and background are used in forecasting crisis and preparing for it. The sources of information for the Boorana are cultural early warning, an expert in time reckoning (*ayyaantuu*), prophets (*Raaga*), *uuchuu*, animal behaviors, weather conditions, market behaviors, omens and natural indices to predict about environment, ideas exchanged on rituals, ceremonies, assemblies and the culture of greeting system. Whether this indigenous early warning has its own weakness or strength, the people depend on it.

Under customary resource management strategy employed by Boorana, the patterns of land and pasture use as well as the mobility strategy, water use, diversification and maximization of herds and successful management have been discussed as the most important coping mechanisms.

The Boorana have developed a communal resource tenure management system. This communal resource tenure helps for a flexible use of pastureland by dividing into wet-

season areas, dry-season grazing area and drought reserve area. This systematic land and pasture use pattern is based on mobility, which is one of the strategies used for successful resource management. The Boorana customary land use pattern is also concerned with settlement pattern, the strategy of reserving grazing enclosure (*Kaloo*) for dry and drought times. In order to cope with drought and famine, the Boorana also introduced farming.

Moreover, the Boorana have developed complex water wells and other water resources like ponds and their communal resource management. These water resources are the most invaluable survival strategies. The utilization and exploitation there resources operates within the communal water resources management based on clan access rights. Furthermore, the most successful households in coping with drought and famine are those who have diversified their herds, increased their herd size, successfully managed their herds by dispersing into varied ecologies, splitting animals into satellite and lactating herds.

As indicated earlier, kinship and other social support networks have great roles in resource mobilization and exchange to cope with drought and famine. The various types and forms of these institutionalized indigenous coping mechanisms used as fall back are the *dabaree*, *buusaa*, *gonofa* the *jaalaa* institutions as well as the communal prayer and cooperation. These institutionalized coping mechanisms operate within the framework of the *Gadaa* system.

*Dabaree* is the provision of assistance built on the recognition of the mutual interdependence of the members of the community depending on the interests of the wealthy and poor households. It is the transfer of livestock to help a household in short of breeding and milk cow due to drought, famine war or other calamities. *Buusa* or sharing of resources is also one form of resource exchanges in the process to survive drought and famine. Thus, the sharing of resources (milk, meat, grain, etc.) is common and people share among themselves and even within households and beyond the community. Gifts, marriage relations and borrowing are other forms in which social support networks are expressed during famine.

The Boorana have developed the institution known as *gonofa* which is an intra-clan mutual dependence mechanism through which the law imposes obligatory contributions of animals, especially cattle to rehabilitate and reestablish those who have lost their properties due to drought, famine and war. Hence, *gonofa* is an institutionalized insurance mechanism for households to fall back on during drought and famine.

Another social security mechanism on which the Boorana households depend on during famine is the *jaalaa* institution. This bond partnership created among different Boorana households, within and beyond the community helps as a resource exchanges and as institutionalized alternatives during crisis.

Cooperation and community prayer too is one form of response to famine and drought. With regard to this, the Boorana perform various religious responses to the anticipated

crisis and after its actual occurrence. On such occasions, animals are slaughtered and those households in short of food depend on these resources.

The other strategies are involvements in non-herding activities which include extractive enterprise such as charcoal making, production of gum-Arabic, honey collection, crop cultivation, daily or wage labour, participation in petty trade, selling firewood, milk selling, smuggling, crop cultivation and the like.

Adjustment to food consumption, market dependency and involvement in non-herding activities are also other types and forms of survival strategies that the Boorana use to cope with famine. Some of these adjustment strategies are reducing the mixing of food items and qualities, cutting down consumption, reducing frequency of meals and amount of food, giving priority to food allocation to some members of the households, changing types of diets and storing food. The Boorana also depend on consumption of cattle blood, resorting to famine food obtained from their environment in the form of fruits, roots etc. Besides, they have adapted the previously and culturally unconsumed food types.

Moreover, the Boorana households often sell their livestock during dry and drought. They need to purchase grain to supplement their diets. The nature of asset disposal varies among households. Hence, asset disposals, especially cattle are strategies upon which the Boorana depend on to survive famine.

The central argument of this thesis is that the Boorana have developed survival strategies to cope with these recurrent famines. Thus, the research findings concluded that the Boorana have never been simple spectators in the face of famine. Accordingly, they have developed various types and forms of survival strategies in response to famine. They mobilize all resources of the community using these strategies to alleviate the impact of famine even when there is no or limited external assistance. In other words, though the continuation of relief aid is indispensable in saving lives, pastoral households have their own coping mechanism.

The research also indicated that the secret of Boorana survival in the face of famine lies in their built-in mechanisms that underpin economic and social structures like cultural early warning system, customary resource management, social institutions and other social support networks as well as mobility strategies.

Moreover, the research findings showed that adjustment to food consumption, market dependence, engagement in non-herding activities are also important aspects of Boorana survival strategies in the face of famine.

Furthermore, the research findings demonstrated that the Boorana survival strategies are the result of long process of experiences they have developed in response to crises and managing the scarce resources. These strategies are adjustments overtime. Though there are changes and continuity in Boorana adaptive strategies, pastoralism still constitute important aspect of the life.

The study also examined the differential effects and responses to famine which depend on different variables like wealth, diversification of assets and it demonstrated that famine and its coping strategies have different phases. In other words, the research also concluded that the strategies used to cope with famine are not uniform. They vary among different households depending on their resources, social networks, success full management of herds, mobility and the like.

Finally, the research has shown that all major aspects of the Boorana survival strategies operate within the framework of the Boorana value system which are imbedded in their *Gadaa* institution. Thus, the Gadaa system with its operational social and territorial institutions is the core of Boorana meager resource management and pastoral adaptation.

It has already been mentioned that the Boorana survival strategies are indispensable to cope with famine. If they are improved, strengthened and used, they can form a basis for a sustainable food security of Boorana. Therefore, policy makers and development practitioners have to integrate this knowledge into their plans and actions so as to overcome famine, food insecurity and poverty at all levels. The Boorana should be represented in plain and implementing famine allevation policy. As there are mounting pressures on these survival strategies, especially on Gadaa, attention is needed to preserve and use such accumulated knowledge.

In general, the nature and type of pressure on Boorana pastoralism is increasing. The Boorana adaptive strategies also underwent changes to cope with these multiple pressures. Thus, change and continuity are aspects of Boorana survival strategies.

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