

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

A HISTORY OF THE TORBAN OBO OROMO IN BOSET *WOREDA*, 1855-1991.

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NOVEMBER, 2018
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO HISTORY DEPARTMENT OF ADDIS ABABA
UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

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NOVEMBER, 2018

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Chapter One

1. Background and Early History

1.1. Origin and Settlement

The Torban Obo Oromo are one of the groups of Borana Oromo who settled mainly in eastern Shäwa. They had predominantly occupied an area extending between Welenchiti town in the east and Ejere in the north.¹ They live in the towns of Welenchitii, Nura Hera, Bole, Doni, Bofa, and in many rural Qäbälés of Boset *Wäräda*.² According to Tsegaye Zeleke some groups of the Torban Obo Oromo like Gumbichu, Gullalle, Yayya and Obori are also found in the present-day Salale.³ The Boset *Wäräda* in which the Torban Obo Oromo mainly inhabiting formerly used to be administered under Yärär and Käräyyu *Awrajja* of Shäwa Province.⁴ Currently, the Torban Obo Oromo mainly live in the Boset *Wäräda* of East Shäwa Zone, in the Oromia Regional State. The Torban Obo Oromo are bordered by the Käräyyu people in the east, Arsi in the south and the Amhara people in the north.⁵

The Torban Obo Oromo belong to the Tulama Oromo branch. The Tulama Oromo are inhabiting central Shäwa. They also had occupied most parts of eastern Shäwa and some parts of west and north Shäwa and Wollo.⁶ The Tulama Oromo are divided into three main clans known as Daaccii, Bachoo and Jiillee. Each clan is further divided into sub-clans and smaller units known

¹Alemayehu Haile, et al, *A History of the Oromo to the sixteenth Century* (Finfinne: Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 1996), p.138.

²*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo and Habebe Rayya.

³Tsegaye Zeleke, “The Oromo of Salale: A History (c.1840-1936)” (MA Thesis, Department of History: Addis Ababa University, 2002), p.15.

⁴MoCT/ NALA/1837/07/ A Letter from Yohannes Haile Sellassie, General Director of the Province to Ministry of Agriculture, 1958 E.C

⁵Alemayehu et al, p.137.

⁶*Ibid.*

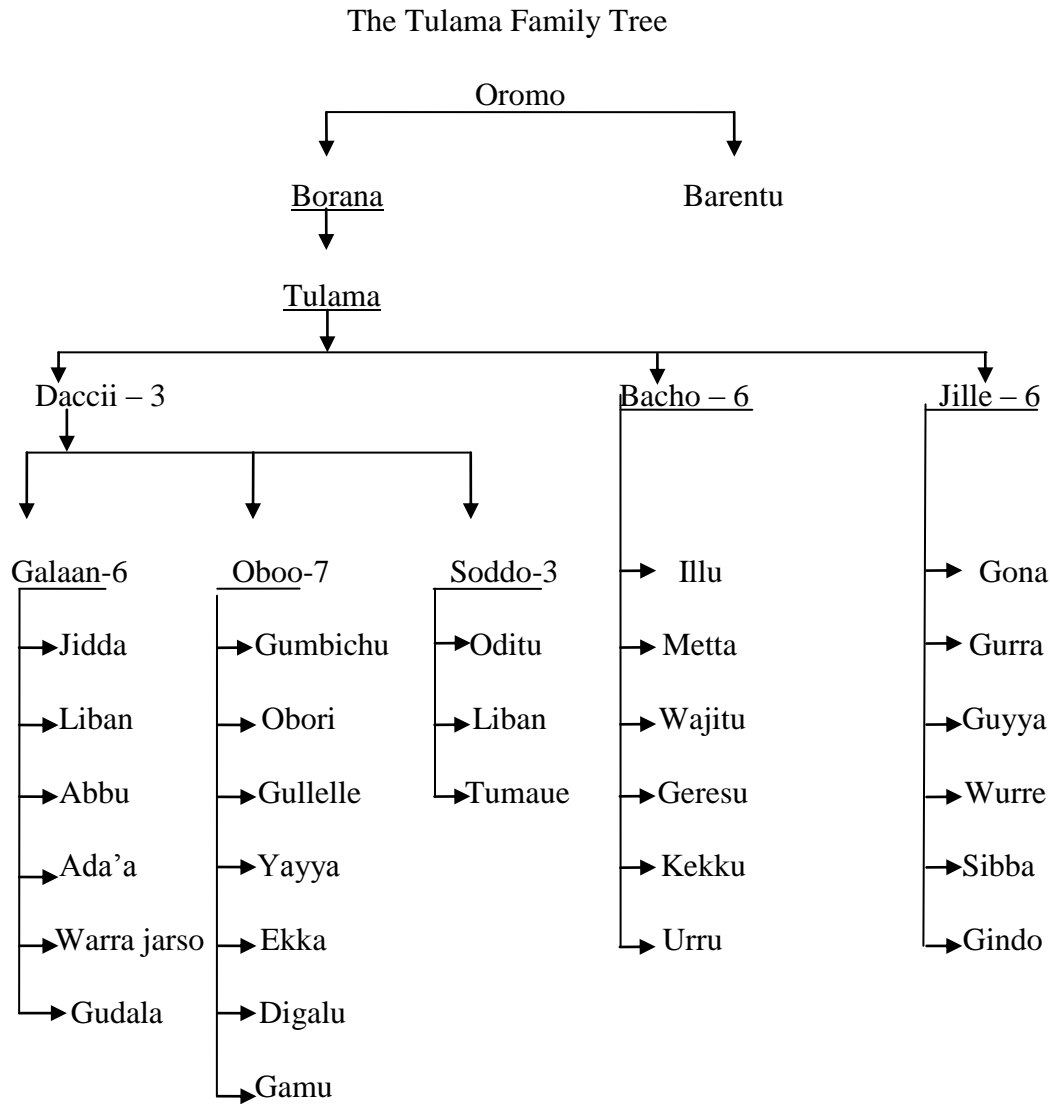
as *mana* and *balbala* in *Afaan Oromo* which literally mean house and door, respectively.⁷ The Daaccii is a major clan of the Tulama Oromo who occupy the vast territory that stretches from the Soddo in Gurage up to Borana area of Wollo. The Jiillee clan of the Tulama also occupy the areas around Lake Ziway, Mäqi River and Wanji. The other clan of the Tulama Oromo called Bacho mainly occupied western Shäwa including Bacho and Kuyyu districts.⁸ Therefore, since the Tulama are divided into three main clans, it is commonly known as *Tulama Sadeen* in *Afaan Oromo* which literally means the three Tulama.⁹

⁷*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Gurmü and Boru Hawas; Alemayehu et al, p.117.

⁸Tsegaye, pp. 14-15.

⁹Alemayehu Haile, *Gada System: The Politics of Tulama Oromo* vol.1. (Finfinne: Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2009), pp.18-19.

The Family Tree of the three major Tulama clans and sub-clans are the following.



Source: Alemayehu Haile (2009:20).

The Daaccii clan is divided into three sub-clans namely Galaan, Oboo and Sooddo. The Torban Obo are: Gumbichu, Obori, Gulalle, Yayya, Ekka, Digalu and Gamu.¹⁰

Gumbichu is widely distributed and settled in eastern and northern Shäwa. From the Torban Obo, Gumbichu is the elder. Therefore, Gumbichu is referred to as *Abba Seeraa* in *Afaan Oromo* which literally means Father of Law.¹¹ Informants stated that Gumbichu say prayers to *Waaqa* at

¹⁰Informants: Dachasa Badhaso, Boru Hawas and Lamma Boriyo; Alemayehu, *History of the Oromo*.....p.139.

¹¹Alemayehu, *History of the Oromo*.....p.139.

the different thanks giving ceremonies before the other Obo clans. Then, Gullele say prayers to *Waaqa* at different occasions.¹²

The other sub-clan of Obo Oromo which settled in a wider territory is Gullalle. The Gullalle can be divided into two major *mana* (houses) and ten *balbala* (doors). The two *mana* (houses) of the Gullalle are known as *mana* Abbuu and Beeraa.¹³ The Gullale Oromo have settled around Finfinne, Adama, and Fantalle. The other sub-clan of Obo is Ekka. The settlement pattern of Ekka is extending from Qäbana River in Finfinne to the east Shäwa. The other groups of Obo have also settled together in different parts of Shäwa.¹⁴

The Torban Obo Oromo have settled together in Boset *Wäräda* of east Shäwa for a long period of time. Though the Torban Obo Oromo have settled in different parts of Shäwa, we find them together in Boset *Wäräda* of east Shäwa. According to informants Gumbichu, Gullalle, Ekka, Obori, Digalu, Yayya and Gamu had settled together in Boset *Wäräda*.¹⁵

The Torban Obo Oromo who lived in Boset *Wäräda* were also known by the name “*Chorre*”. Nevertheless, there is confusion whether the term refers to the people or the land. The neighboring peoples also used to call the Obo Oromo in the study area by the name “*Chorre*”. For example, the Arsi Oromo used to call them “*Chorre*”. The term used to refer not only to the Obo Oromo but also to the other Tuluma Oromo who lived in Arsi. However, some Arsi inhabitants also used to call the Obo by their own name, Obo.¹⁶ Ayalew Gebre who studied land tenure systems among the Karrayyu Oromo used the term “*Chorre*” to refer to the Shäwa Oromo

¹²*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Jambo Gole and Lamma Bariyo.

¹³Alemayehu Haile, *Seenaa Oromoo Hanga Jaarraa 20^{ffaa}* (*History of Oromo to the Twentieth Century*) Vol. 2. (Finfinne: Bole Printing Enterprise, 2016), p.367.

¹⁴Alemayehu, *History of Oromo to the Sixteenth.....*, pp.139-140.

¹⁵*Informants*: Dagafa Dachasa, Guta Boru and Reta Jima.

¹⁶*Informants*: Ragasa Tufa and Girma Ragasa .

who lived around Welenchiti town of Boset *Wäräda*. He stated that the Shäwa Oromo called “*Chorre*” who lived around Welenchiti town introduced farming to the Karrayyu land by clearing forests and hoeing the ground. In addition, the “*Chorre*” who arrived from the areas of Welenchiti introduced ox-drawn farming to the Käräyyu land since 1985.¹⁷

Alemayehu Haile also indicated that the Oromo who settled around the areas of Adama, Welenchiti, Karrayu, Arsi and Jille are known by the name “*Chorre*”. However, he stated that “*Chorre*” was the name given to the feature of the landscape rather than the population.¹⁸ John Markakis who studied the land distribution process in Yärär and Käräyyu *Awrajja* in 1974, also used the term “*Chorre*” in his work. According to him “*Chorre*” was a *Meketel Wäräda* (sub-district) situated in the Adama *Wäräda* of Yärär and Käräyyu *Awrajja*. In his work, the term “*Chorre*” mainly refers to the land around Adama not the population.¹⁹ Our informants also stated that the term “*Chorre*” refers to the land not the population. Therefore, the term was initially applied to the landscape rather than the Torban Obo who lived in Boset *Wäräda*. In addition, the term was not used by the Obo Oromo who lived in the study area to call themselves.²⁰

Different literature give due emphasis to the origin of the Oromo. The origin of the Oromo was deliberately distorted for political reasons by the governing classes. Unlike the origin of the Oromo, the social, political and economic life of the Oromo were not given due attention.²¹

However, sources stated that the Oromo used to live in the south central highlands of Ethiopia

¹⁷Ayalew Gebre, “When Pastoral Commons are Privatized: Resource Deprivation and Changes in Land Tenure Systems among the Karrayyu in the Upper Awash Valley Region of Ethiopia,” *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.2, (2009), p.289.

¹⁸Alemayehu, *History of Oromo to the Sixteenth.....*, p.139.

¹⁹John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Addis Ababa: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.132.

²⁰*Informants*: Ragasa Tufa and Girma Ragasa and Zanaba Boru.

²¹Alemayehu, et al, *History of the Oromo.....*,p.35.

and their land around Haro Walabu, Ganale and Wabi Shabale Rivers were fertile. Nonetheless, internal and external developments resulted in the Oromo expansion.²²

In the first half of the sixteenth century a segment of the Oromo started their mass movements from the south central of Ethiopia. The movement was led mainly by the Macha and Tulama pastoralist groups.²³ According to Mohammed Hassen, Haro Walabu, which is supposed to be the homeland of the Borana, is located about 48 to 60 kilometers east of Lake Abaya. He also stated that during the Oromo population movement, the Macha-Tulama had mostly settled in central Ethiopia. The Oromo population movement in general and the Macha-Tulama movement in particular had different phases.²⁴ The Tulama and Macha moved to the central, western and north western regions of Ethiopia from the area of Madda Walabu (Haro Walabu) in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, they used to live with the other Oromo groups on the south eastern highlands.²⁵ According to oral sources the Tulama Oromo used to live in Shäwa for a long period. The land where the Tulama Oromo settled had been economically important. The soil of the area was very fertile for production. Therefore, this area attracted many peoples to settle. As a result, the area had been a center of conflict for a long period.²⁶

There are several views on the origin of the Obo Oromo who live in Boset *Wäräda*. The settlement patterns of the Torban Obo Oromo in the present land were tied with the great population movement of the sixteenth century. Alemayehu stated that the wide distribution of Gumbichu Oromo in different parts of Shäwa was related to the population movement of the

²²Tesema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early- 20th Centuries" (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Michigan State University, 1986), pp.13-14.

²³Tesema Ta'a, "The Place of the Oromo in Ethiopian History: 2003 OSA Conference Keynote Address" *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.11, No.1 and 2, (2004), p.2.

²⁴Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1994), pp.18-19.

²⁵Dechasa Abebe, "Ethnic Interactions in Jama Basin of North Shewa, Ethiopia: A Survey of Historical Study (c.1700-1880s)" (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012),p.24.

²⁶*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Lamma Boriyo and Bose Gada; Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....p.26.

sixteenth century.²⁷ Oral traditions collected from informants in Boset *Wäräda* stated that the ancestors of the Oromo who are found in the area had lived at the place known as Madda Walabu before their expansion. They left Madda Walabu and inhabited central Shäwa with the other Oromo. According to these informants, the Torban Obo Oromo moved to their present settlement, mainly eastern Shäwa, from the areas of Finfinne. They used to settle in and around Finfinne for a long period. However, the pressure from the Shäwan rulers evicted them from their settlement in and around Finfinne and pushed them to the area they inhabit today. The forces of Menilek II displaced the Torban Obo Oromo like Gullalle from their homes and land. The pressure from Menilek forced Gullalle Oromo to leave their land to the conquerors and move to the areas of east Shäwa. They mainly settled in the areas of Adama and Arsi. Some of them also moved to Gafarsa and Bacho areas.²⁸

1.2. The Socio-Cultural and Political Institutions among the Torban Obo Oromo

1.2.1. The *Gadaa* System

In the first half of the sixteenth century, when the Macha and the Tulama Oromo started their expansion, they were organized under the *gadaa* system. Therefore, the *gadaa* system was able to give effective leadership, military organization and religious leadership for the Oromo during their expansion.²⁹ According to Asmarom Legesse *gadaa* is a system of sharing power peacefully. In *gadaa* system all age groups take turns in assuming the responsibility to perform

²⁷Alemayehu, et al, *History of the Oromo*....., p.139.

²⁸Alemayehu, *Seenaa Oromoo*.....,p. 388.

²⁹Tesema, “The Place of the Oromo.....,” p. 2.

domestic labor, take part in wars, lead their people, and make laws. Thus, it is an effective method of distributing authority and responsibility to the society.³⁰

Like the other Oromo, the Tulama Oromo had long practiced the *gadaa* system. They had strong relation with the *Abba Muda* at Odaa Nabee.³¹ The Tulama Oromo used Odaa Nabee as religious and political center. It was the *gadaa* center for the Tulama Oromo. The Torban Obo Oromo used to practice their political and religious affairs at Odaa Nabee.³² Oral sources among the Torban Obo indicated that they had long practiced *gadaa* system which involved the society according to their age. The generations of all age groups have the role to accomplish different activities. The Torban Obo Oromo used to pass through *gadaa* grades in which they assumed different tasks in different grades. The Torban Obo were organized under *gadaa* system and performed their socio-cultural activities both at *Malkaa* and *Tullu*. They solved their social problems through their *gadaa* system.³³ Donald Levine described *gadaa* as one of the most complex system of social organizations ever developed by the human mind. The duration of each *gadaa* grade is eight years. There was a ceremony during the transition from one *gadaa* grade to another.³⁴ Therefore, *gadaa* was a system which governed every aspect of the Oromo life.³⁵

In addition to Odaa Nabee, the Torban Obo Oromo used to perform their prayers at *Karra Torbaa*. *Karra Torbaa* is the renowned place located on Boset Mountain. The *Karra Torbaa* (the seven gates) represents all the Torban Obo Oromo. At this place the Torban Obo were equally

³⁰Asmarom Legesse, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press Inc., 2000),p.128.

³¹Tesema, “The Place of the Oromo.....,” p.4.

³²*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhso and Ragasa Tufa; Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama.....*, pp.84-90.

³³*Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Lamma Boriyo and Dachasa Ifa.

³⁴Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of Multi Ethnic Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1974), p.132.

³⁵P.T.W. Baxter, et al (eds.), *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika institute, 1996),p.150.

involved and praised their *Waaqa*. Therefore, it was the most respected place among the Torban Obo.³⁶ According to informants they used to praise their *Waaqa* seasonally. The Torban Obo Oromo mainly conducted the ritual practices in autumn and spring seasons at *Karra Torbaa*. They performed their ritual practices at *Karra Torbaa* (on the Boset Mountain) and considered it as the custodian that protects the Torban Obo. They believed that *Waaqa Torbani* (*Waaqa* of the seven), the God of the seven Obo Oromo protected them from all the problems. They usually pray to get rain and peace at *Karra Torbaa*.³⁷ In addition, they pray for prosperity, healing and children.³⁸

The role of *Qaalluu* and *Qaallittii* was great in this ritual practice. They were visited by the believers in their ritual house known as *Galmaa* to worship *Waaqa*. The blessing was obtained from the *Ayyana*. And *Ayyanaa* delivered the message through the *Qaalluu* and *Qaallittii*.³⁹ According to H.S Lewis the status of *Qaalluu* was dependent on *Ayyanaa*, spirits associated with *Waaqa*. It was involved in the everyday affairs of the society and concerned with human behavior and moral order. The society believed that it had the power to harm and bless human directly or indirectly.⁴⁰ In another instance, the Torban Obo believed that they had contact with *Waaqa* through *Wadaja*. *Wadaja* was a ritual practice performed by the believers to get contact with *Waaqa*. The believers performed it to get peace for their family, country and rain to get good harvest.⁴¹

³⁶*Informants*: Boru Hawas, Ragasa Tufa and Sefa Ragasa.

³⁷*Informants*: Jambo Golle and Lamma Boriyo.

³⁸*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Ifa and Ragasa Gurmu.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Herbert S. Lewis, “*Gada*, Big Man, *Qaalluu*: Political Succession among the Eastern Mecha Oromo,” *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 12, No.1 (Michigan State University Press, 1990), p.49.

⁴¹*Informants*: Ragasa Tufa, Girma Ragasa and Sefa Ragasa.

1.2.2. The *Irreechaa* Ceremony

The Torban Obo Oromo are also active participants of the *Irreechaa* Ceremony. This ceremony involved the process of thanks giving to *Waaqa* on mountain top and near water bodies. There are two types of *Irreechaa* practiced among the Oromo. These are *Irreechaa Malkaa* and *Irreechaa Tullu*. These are thanksgiving near a river or lake and on mountain top, respectively. *Irreechaa Malkaa* also called *Irreechaa Birraa* (*Irreechaa* which is celebrated in the spring season) and *Irreechaa Tullu* also called *Irreechaa Arfaasaa* (*Irreechaa* which is celebrated in the autumn season).⁴² The *Irreechaa Malkaa* takes place when the rainy season ends, in the month of September. The *Irreechaa Malkaa* was very significant and was considered as a day of happiness. The disrupted relations of people due to heavy rain and large volume of the rivers started. It was also the day of opening the court ceremony.⁴³

The Torban Obo Oromo practiced both *Irreechaa Malkaa* and *Irreechaa Tullu*. The Torban Obo Oromo lived in Boset *Wäräda* practiced *Irreechaa Malkaa* at Malkaa Xeeboo (Tebbo River). At Malkaa Xeeboo, the participants of the *Irreechaa* ceremony give thanks to *Waaqa* that helped them to see the light after the dark rainy season.⁴⁴ During *Irreechaa* Ceremony, the participants of the ceremony carry green grass and flowers. According to informants green grass is very important in *Irreechaa* ceremony because it is a symbol of productivity and fertility. Therefore, the participants of the ceremony immerse the green grass and flowers they hold in the river or lake and sprinkle their body. The participants of the ceremony usually sing “*Maree woo*” during the *Irreechaa* ceremony. They praise their creator by the song on the way to the *Malkaa*

⁴²*Informants:* Boru Hawas, Dagafa Dachasa, and Jambo Golle.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

for the ceremony.⁴⁵ On the other hand, *Irreechaa Tullu* takes place when the rain starts. *Tullu Boset* (Boset Mountain) has served as thanksgiving place for the Torban Obo Oromo during their Mountain *Irreechaa*.⁴⁶ According to the informants when the Torban Obo went to this *Tullu* (mountain) for prayers, they took with them sacrificial animal. They call this sacrificial animal *Kormaa* (Bull). After they reached *Tullu Boset*, they slaughtered a *Kormaa* as a sacrifice.⁴⁷

1.2.3. Conflict Resolution Systems

The *gadaa* system encompasses different institutions through which social, economic and political problems were resolved. The Torban Obo Oromo used to solve their socio-political and economic problems through peaceful means. They have significant social values in mitigating conflicts. These conflict resolution systems were *Jaarsumma*, *Gumaa*, *Siinqee*, *Kallacha*, *Caaccuu*, *Bokkuu* and *Qaalluu*.⁴⁸

Jaarsummaa is a common method of conflict resolution that has been used across all the Oromo in general and the Torban Obo in particular for a long period. It is mediation by community elders to solve the problems among the conflicting parties. The elders accomplish such roles through their institution called *Jaarsa Biyyaa*, elders of the country.⁴⁹ According to Alemayehu *Jaarsumma*, mediation by elders was applied to solve minor conflicts between individuals, families, husband and wife. The cases that were not solved by these elders were transferred to the *Hayyuu Gosaa* (experts of the clan).⁵⁰ Therefore, among the Torban Obo Oromo, the elders have

⁴⁵*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Boru Hawas and Ragasa Tufa.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Bose Gada and Jambo Golle.

⁴⁸*Informants*: Boru Hawas, Guta Boru and Birqi Dhugo.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰Aemayehu, *Gada Sysetm: the politics the Tulama*.....,p.195.

the responsibilities to settle disputes and establish peace in their community. These elders usually follow the procedures to settle disputes among the conflicting parties. They made different investigations on the causes and results of the conflict. The procedures were made in order to pass fair and acceptable decision.⁵¹

The other significant conflict resolution method among the Torban Obo Oromo is *Gumaa*. It is indemnity for the loss of life. Informants stated that killing someone is strictly prohibited by the *gadaa* system. There is a great respect for the soul of a human being. However, individuals may kill each other intentionally and unintentionally for different reasons. If a human soul is passed in the hands of an individual he/she has to pay *gumaa*, compensation.⁵² A murderer cannot live in the society without paying *gumaa* for the lost life. There was a process called *Harkaa Bafanna* among the Torban Obo Oromo. It was the process to pay *gumaa* for the lost life. The society prohibited killing and never tolerated the killer. The killer must be separated from the family until *gumaa* was paid.⁵³ The killer went to the other clan until *gumaa* was paid. There was also punishment for the killer in the *gumaa* system. The killer did not pay *gumaa* from what he/she has produced. The compensation for the lost life was expected not from the property of the killer. The killer and his/her family have to beg money for the compensation for the lost life from the clan or other members of the society. This was one of the methods to punish the killer.⁵⁴

There were procedures to be followed in *gumaa* system. The killer had to go away from his/her residence. Then, the killer had to report the case to elders. The killer's relatives also selected and sent highly respected and accepted elders to the family of deceased for settling the problem.

⁵¹*Informants:* Guta Boru, Dachasa Ifa and Bose Gada.

⁵²*Ibid.;* Alemayehu, *Gada Syetm:the Politics of the Tulama*.....p.190.

⁵³*Informants:* Ragasa Gurmu, Boru Hawas, and Bose Gada; Dirribi, p. 294.

⁵⁴*Informants:* Bose Gada, Dachasa Ifa and Ragasa Tufa; Alemayehu, *Gada Syetm:The Politics of the Tulama*.....p.190.

These elders were expected to negotiate the case until the response was given to them. There was a process called *Izgoo*.⁵⁵ This was a process made by the elders of the killer to say *Izgoo* for several days to get acceptance to pay *gumaa* for the lost life. This negotiation for peace took long time to get response from the family of the victim. On the average, the elders of the killer family repeatedly asked for peace from five to nine days. Finally, the family of the victim were expected to give response and fixed the date for further discussion. Therefore, after further discussion was made the lost life was to be compensated according to the *gadaa* principles.⁵⁶ According to informants the Torban Obo followed *Seeraa Caffee* in paying *gumaa*. There was a promise made between the family of the killer and the family of the victim during *gumaa* payment (*Harkaa Bafanna*). There was what the elders called *Shanaan Goomoo* in the process of *gumaa* payment. This was the cattle used in the process of *gumaa* payment. The numbers of cattle used in this *gumaa* Payment (*Harkaa Bafanna*) were ranging from five to nine. From these some of the cattle were slaughtered and the others were left for the family of the victim.⁵⁷

The other means of dispute resolution among the Tulama Oromo was *Siinqee*. According to Dirribi *Siinqee* is literally described as a straight and thin stick held by married woman on special events. It was the most respected and the sign of fertility among the Oromo.⁵⁸ Zelalem Tesfaye explained that *Siinqee* is not merely a term for material symbol, it also refers to an institution. According to him, the political and democratic rights of women are represented and respected through this separate institution.⁵⁹ In addition, it was an instrument to fight against any activity

⁵⁵Informants: Bose Gada, Guta Boru and Lamma Boriyo.

⁵⁶Informants: Bose Gada, Guta Boru and Dachasa Ifa; Alemayehu, *Gada Sysetm: the Politics of the Tulama*....., pp.191-193.

⁵⁷Informants: Lamma Boriyo, Bose Gada and Guta Boru.

⁵⁸Informants: Birqi Dhugo and Ragasa Tufa; Dirribi, p.124.

⁵⁹Zelalem Tesfaye, "Ethiopia When the *Gada* Democracy Rules in a Federal State"(MA Thesis, Department of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies, University of Tromso, 2012),p.119.

that hurt the basic rights of a married woman. A married woman holds *Siinqee* to all ceremonial events as a sign of their honor and as an indication of their married status. *Siinqee* had also economic significances because it used to mobilize collective labors during work.⁶⁰ A woman that holds *siinqee* was known as *Haadha Siinqee*, the mother of *siinqee*. A woman that holds *siinqee* was highly respected and had the power to stop conflicts among individuals or groups. Thus, the mother of *siinqee* also contributed a lot in settling disputes among individuals and groups in the Tulama Oromo.⁶¹ A woman among the Torban Obo also used *siinqee* for the above mentioned purposes. However, the use of *siinqee* among the Torban Obo Oromo gradually diminished because of the influence of Christianity.⁶²

The Torban Obo Oromo had also used *kallachaa* as an instrument of dispute resolution. Informants believed that *Kallachaa* was a type of metal that is obtained from a fallen thunder. It used to settle conflicts among conflicting parties. In addition, it was used in the process of settling disputes and other socio-political issues. The people had a great respect for the *kallachaa* and considered it as a damaging object if not respected.⁶³ According to informants *Kallachaa* was also used in the process of *gumaa* payment. The use of *kallachaa* in *gumaa* showed that it was highly respected. It is not only respected but also feared. Therefore, it was a significant instrument among the Torban Obo Oromo in solving socio-cultural problems.⁶⁴

The other sacred object which was used in conflict resolution among the Tulama Oromo was *caaccuu*. It was a sacred ornament worn by women to solve different social problems including

⁶⁰Kuwee Kumsa ,”The *Siinqee* Institution of Oromo Women” *Journal of Oromo Studies* (Vol.4, No. 1 and 2, 1997),pp.121-122.

⁶¹Alemayehu, *Gada Sysetm:the Politics of the Tulama*.....pp.196-200.

⁶²*Informants*: Birqe Dhugo, Lamma Boriyo and Bose Gada.

⁶³*Informants*: Birqi Dhugo, Ragasa Gurmu and Boru Hawas; Dirribi,p.124.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

conflicts. Like *kallachaa*, *caaccuu* was also a highly respected object which had the power to stop conflicts. It was an indication of authority for women and usually worn when they go for the prayers and negotiations.⁶⁵

Among the Torban Obo Oromo, *Bokkuu* was also extremely respected. It was the scepter held by *Abbaa gadaa*, *gadaa* leader, as a sign of authority. *Abbaa Bokkuu* has the authority to stop conflicts in the name of *Bokkuu* and no one refused the order. Therefore, *Bokkuu* played a crucial role in resolving conflicts among the Tulama Oromo.⁶⁶

The other important peace-making institution of the Torban Obo Oromo was *Qaalluu*. It was a religious institution contributed a lot in settling disputes among the society. Hence, the spiritual leaders played a great role in solving social problems among the society.⁶⁷ However, the expansion of Christianity among the Oromo negatively affected these conflict resolution institutions. The sacred objects of the society like *caaccuu* and *kallachaa* were highly opposed by Christianity.⁶⁸ The conquest of Menilek II aggravated the problem of cultural disintegration among the Oromo. The occupation was followed by the devastation of the indigenous socio-political institutions. The political situation of the time was highly affected the religious practices of the Oromo people. Among the Tulama Oromo, the expansion of the Ethiopian Orthodox weakened the function of the indigenous religious institutions.⁶⁹ The process of conquest and the

⁶⁵Dirribi,p.122.

⁶⁶Alemayehu, *Gada Sysetm:the Politics of the Tulama*.....,p.194.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp.200-201.

⁶⁸Dirribi Demissie, *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization* (Finfinne: Finfinne Printing and publishing S.C, 2011), p.122.

⁶⁹Jeylan Wolyie,“The Functions of African Oral Arts: The Arsi-Oromo Oral Arts in Focus”(African Study Monographs,2005),pp.23-24.

subsequent developments which had an impact on the political and socio-economic life of the Torban Obo Oromo would be discussed in the next chapter.

1.2.4. Marriage Systems

Like the other Oromo, the Torban Obo Oromo have different wedding systems and wedding arrangement process. Taddesse Barisso explained that the marriage system of Guji Oromo is based, in most cases, on self-selection and on arrangements made between the families of the bride and the groom.⁷⁰ The Torban Obo have different types of marriage. The types of marriage practiced by the Torban Obo Oromo were *Irra Yaasa*, *Dhaala* (Levirate), *Hawwii*, *Buttaa* (Abduction) and *Kadhaa*.⁷¹

Irra Yaasa was a form of marriage rarely practiced among the Torban Obo Oromo. It was a sudden form of marriage in which the families of the bride do not have any information until the elders of the groom came to their home. Then, the groom and his elders stand at the gate of the bride's family and asked for the bride. The groom and his elders came to the home of the bride with a horse.⁷² In this form of marriage, the families of the bride were usually forced to give their daughter. The family of the bride discussed the case immediately with their relatives and allowed the marriage. The positive acceptance of a marriage was considered as significant for the whole life of their daughter. There was a belief that a horse's back does not return without a bride. According to the tradition, the refusal of the bride will lead to a curse and harms the life of their daughter.⁷³

⁷⁰Taddese Beriso, "The Pride of the Guji-Oromo: An Essay on Cultural Contact and Self-Esteem" *Journal of Oromo Studies* (Vol.11, no.1 and 2, 2004),p.14.

⁷¹*Informants*: Ragasa Gurmu, Sefa Ragasa and Dachasa Badhaso.

⁷²*Informants*: Girma Ragasa, Lagasa Ragasa and Ragasa Gurmu.

⁷³*Informants*: Boru Hawas, Ragasa Gurmu and Dachasa Badhaso.

The other form of marriage which was rarely practiced among the Torban Obo was *Dhaala* (Levirate). It was a type of marriage between a widow and her deceased husband's brother. This marriage was mainly arranged to protect the children and the widow. This marriage had negative impacts on the society. It affected the society through sexually transmitted diseases because it was the practice of having more than one wife at the same time. Hence, its negative impact on the society gradually resulted in the decline of this type of marriage.⁷⁴

The other marriage type Practiced in the Torban Obo society was *Hawwii*. This was a marriage based on the interests of the bride and the groom. The elders involved in this marriage mainly for the approval of the marriage.⁷⁵

There was also a marriage type known as *Buttaa* or Abduction among the Torban Obo Oromo. This was a type of marriage arranged without the consent of the girl. The boy and his groups abduct the girl without her awareness. They usually preferred to abduct her when she was alone. Therefore, they wait for the day she went to fetch water from the river or collect woods from the forest alone. After the abduction, the boy that abducts the girl sends the elders to the family of the girl. The elders intervened in the case to negotiate and reconcile both families. However, like *Dhaala* (levirate), *Buttaa* (abduction) marriage system had also different social problems because it was a form of marriage by force. It was a type of marriage against the rule of law. This resulted in the decline of this type of marriage.⁷⁶

The most widely practiced marriage system among the Torban Obo Oromo in the past was *kadhaa*. It was marriage arranged by the families of the groom and the bride. The elders of the groom asked the bride's family to arrange marriage. This type of marriage was mainly based on

⁷⁴*Informants:* Girma Ragasa, Lagasa Ragasa and Ragasa Gurmu.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶*Informants:* Ragasa Gurmu, Boru Hawas and Girma Ragasa.

the interests of the family to arrange to marriage. Both groom and bride mostly accepted this type of marriage.⁷⁷

There were marriage arrangements before the wedding among the Torban Obo Oromo. One of the major arrangements was *Uumoo*. *Uumoo* was the process of sending elders to the family of the bride by the groom or his family.⁷⁸ These elders repeatedly go to the house of the bride's family in the morning for the request of their daughter. The numbers of these elders expected to be an even number usually four. The elders hold *waddessa* (strait and respected stick) in their hands and asked the daughter for marriage by standing at the gate of the daughter's family. The head of the family discussed the case with the relatives and accept or reject the marriage. The elders of the groom must visit the home of the bride's family up to four days. On the fourth day or the fourth *Uumoo*, the exact date of marriage ceremony will be fixed.⁷⁹

The other major marriage practice among the Torban Obo Oromo was *Rakoo*. *Rakoo* was a sacrifice of a goat or a sheep to the new bride. This sacrifice made before the bride enters into her new home. *Rakoo* was considered as sign of successful marriage. Thus, a girl to whom *Rakoo* was assumed to become a legal wife. It was also considered as a sign of respect for the woman. *Rakoo* was considered significant not only for the bride and the groom but also for the wellbeing of children to be born.⁸⁰ According to Negaso Gidada the ritual of slaughtering the animal and smearing each other with its blood was called *rakoo*. Accordingly, *rakoo* indicated the marriage contract.⁸¹ Therefore, *Rakoo* was one of the marriage ceremonies in which the

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*, pp.111-114.

⁸¹Negasao Gidada, *History of the Sayyo Oromo of Southwestern Wallaga, Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886*(Frankfurt, 1984),p.149.

husband sacrifices a sheep or an ox on the side of the door. That sacrifice was also known as *Rakoo Kaka*. It was a marriage with an oath of the blood which no one would change it.⁸²

1.2.5. Institutions of Adoption

Like the other Oromo, the Torban Obo Oromo also practiced the institutions of adoption. They practiced *guddifachaa* and *moggaasa*. These were the most important institutions through which the Oromo used to include the members of other society into the family. The Torban Obo Oromo practiced *guddifachaa* because of different reasons. According to informants *guddifachaa* can be implemented between relatives who did not have children. This was very important because it was a means through which the family members got the chance to have children. There was also *guddifachaa* practiced outside the family members. Such kind of *guddifachaa* was mainly practiced to include the other groups of society. This was a type of *guddifachaa* in which the Oromo gave care and shelter to helpless individuals among them. Thus, *guddifachaa* was not an easy task because the adopted individual had equal rights in all aspects with adopting family.⁸³

There was significant ritual practice made during *guddifachaa*. The ritual practice was important to announce the *guddifachaa* and the membership of the adopted individuals to the family. After the *guddifachaa* was accomplished the adopting family and the adopted persons had to consider one another as a family. According to Alemayehu Haile, children adopted from relatives were known as *Lammacha Lammii*. Therefore, *guddifachaa* was a method of getting children and means of solving various problems with the neighboring peoples.⁸⁴

⁸²Ayalew Kanno,(trans.), *An Ancient People Great African Nation: The Oromo*(Finfinne, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2008),p.247.

⁸³*Informants*: Ragasa Tufa and Dachasa Ifa.

⁸⁴Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*pp. 179-180.

The Torban Obo Oromo also used to practice the institution of *Moggaasa*. They used to adopt non- Oromo to their clans. This institution also played a role in solving the socio-economic problems by including the members of the other society into the Oromo clan.⁸⁵

The significance of the aforementioned social, political and religious practices among the Torban Obo Oromo gradually diminished as the power of the *gadaa* system declined. According to Mekuria Bulcha the socio-political institutions of the Oromo were not stagnant and were transformed through time. Hence, the *gadaa* system of administration was replaced by kingdoms ruled by *mooti* or kings among the Maccaa Oromo.⁸⁶ The *gadaa* system began to lose its power because of different factors. Its powers were weakened because of external and internal factors. Externally, the political system of the country resulted in the formation of the groups who willingly or unwillingly participated in the political system. The involvement in the political system reduced their participation in the *gadaa* system. This affected the function of the *gadaa* system negatively. In another way, internally, the *Mootii* political system emerged among the Oromo. Nevertheless, there were different assumptions regarding the emergence of local leaders and states among the Oromo. The decentralizations of the *gadaa* system led to the emergence of autocratic and hereditary local leaders.⁸⁷

In the Gibe basin, the Oromo were undertaking a process of agricultural development that would lead to the emergence of states in the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ According to Mohammed Hassen,

⁸⁵*Informants*: Mokomin Roba, Mul'ata Tufa and Dachasa Ifa.

⁸⁶Makruia Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity," *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996),p.54.

⁸⁷Asafa Jalata, "My Conversation with Sisai Ibssa," *The Journal of Oromo Studies, Vol.18, No.1* (A Publication of the Oromo Studies, 2011), pp.96-98.

⁸⁸Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), P.45.

agriculture contributed a lot for the formation of states in Wallo, Gibe Basin and Wallagga. The change in the way of production among the Maccaa Oromo made the value of land very significant. Therefore, land became source of conflict among local leaders which resulted in the formation of states.⁸⁹

The Tulama Oromo also experienced relatively the same transformation in their socio-economic and political system. The transformations among the Tulama Oromo were similar to the areas where the *mootii* form of administration emerged.⁹⁰ The Tulama Oromo began to be ruled by clan leaders following the increase of the power of clan leaders. The power of the local leaders highly increased and resulted in the formation of notable clan leaders among the Tulama Oromo. The well-known clan leaders among the Tulama Oromo were the Matako Family, the Gobana Family, the Garasu Duki Family and Dinagde Family.⁹¹ In addition, several clan leaders like Tufa Muna, Habebe Tufa and Dula Ara'e had emerged. Therefore, the clans among the Tulama formed their own monarchical rules which was against the *gadaa* governing rules and structures.⁹²

In the other way, although Odaa Nabee served as a unifying regional center, the Tulama power was progressively decentralized into local governors. Most of the Tulama groups formed their own *gadaa* government, elected officials and *Caffee*. For example, the Bacho Oromo formed their own *Caffee* known as *Caffee* Ballo, and the Galaan formed their own *Caffee* known as *Caffee* Galaan south of Addis Ababa. The *Caffee* among the Tulama branch thus functioned at

⁸⁹Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*(Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1994), pp.88-90.

⁹⁰Tsegaye, pp.22-23.

⁹¹Tesema, "The Place of the Oromo.....," p.4.

⁹²Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama.....*p.236.

both local and higher levels. These *Caffee* took different responsibilities for maintaining order and peace, and giving justice locally among different clans of the Tulama Oromo branch.⁹³ The other clans of the Tulama also formed their own *gadaa* center in different areas. For example, the Jillee formed their own *gadaa* center at Odaa Danbal, soddo at Odaa Kallacha, Gumbichu at *Caffee* Donsa and Gulallee at Hora Finffinne.⁹⁴

1.3. The Torban Obo Relations with their Neighbors

The Torban Obo Oromo have both peaceful and hostile relations with their neighbors. The accounts of hostile relation of the Torban Obo Oromo with their neighbors came mostly during the earlier periods. In the early period, their neighbors particularly the Argobba had repeatedly conflicted with the Torban Obo Oromo. The hostile relation of the Torban Obo Oromo with the Argobba was mainly caused by competition over grazing land.⁹⁵

The hostile relation with the Argobba was further intensified by cattle raids. The Argobba raided cattle from the Torban Obo Oromo which resulted most of the time in conflict. According to informants the Argobba raids cattle not only from the Torban Obo Oromo but also from their other neighbors, the Käräyyu Oromo. The conflicts between the Käräyyu and Argobba most of the time emanated from the cattle raids by Argobba. This resulted in chaos and frequently loss of life in the area which was not far from the Torban Obo Oromo. Hence, there were tensions and

⁹³Tsega Etefa, "Pan-Oromo Confederations in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.15, No.1(The Oromo Studies Association, 2008), p. 22.

⁹⁴Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....p. 235.

⁹⁵*Informants*: Rata Jima, Dagafa Dachasa, Lamma Boriyo and Boru Hawas.

security problems for several years in the border areas of the Torban Obo Oromo with their neighbor Argobba.⁹⁶

A letter written from Yärär and Kärräyyu Awrajja Police Office to the Ministry of Interior in 1967 E.C recorded the situation as follows:

በአርጉባና በከረዩ ኅሳዎች መካከል በተፈጠረው ግጭት ምክንያት የአርጉባ ኅሳዎች ሶስት ሰዎችን ገድለው 4500 የሚሆኑ የቀንድ ክብቶች ከከረዩ ዘርፈው ወደ መልካ ጅሎ በማምራታቸው የፀጥታ አስከባሪዎች ደርሰው በሰላም ክብቶቹን እንዲመልሱ ቢጠየቁም ተኩስ ከፍተው እምቢተኝነታቸውን ከመግለፃቸው በላይ ከምንጃር ከ3000 ሕዝብ በላይ ተከታይ አስከትለው ክብቶቹን ይዘው ሄደዋል።⁹⁷

Because of the conflict that occurred between Kärräyyu and Argobba three Karrayyu's were killed and about 4500 Kärräyyu cattle were raided by Argobba and were taken to Melka Jilo. Even though security forces asked them to return the cattle to the Kärräyyu peacefully, they refused and opened fire. Above all, they were accompanied by 3000 people from Minjar and took the cattle to their area.

In addition, there was a border conflict between the Torban Obo and Argobba who lived in the Amhara Regional State. This border conflict repeatedly resulted in loss of life and created enmity

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷MoCT/ NALA/ቀ3/ገጠ1/72/ A letter from Yerer and Karrayyu Awrajja Police Office to Ministry of Interior in 1967 E.C.

between the Argobba and the Torban Obo. This hostile relationship also affected their socio-economic interaction because there were low trading ties among them.⁹⁸

According to informants the Torban Obo Oromo maintained friendly relations with their neighbor, the Käräyyu Oromo. In this regard, the Käräyyu maintained *Jaala* (friendship) with the Torban Obo in which they practiced transhumance to the area in the time of dry season. Therefore, the system of *Jaala* had played enormous role in avoiding conflicts over the resources between these groups.⁹⁹ Some informants also stated that the Obo Oromo are highly respected by the Käräyyu because Obo is the elder. This contributed a lot in maintaining friendly relationship between the Torban Obo and the Käräyyu Oromo.¹⁰⁰

However, according to Buli Edjeta, in the 1970s and 1980s Käräyyu entered relatively into conflict with their neighbors including the Tulama Oromo. The main cause of the conflict between the Tulama Oromo and the Käräyyu was grazing land. The development of irrigation schemes in the Awash Valley limited the Käräyyu to a small plot of land. They were displaced from the extensive land used for their animals as grazing land. The loss of the grazing land forced them to search for the pasture land and water points for their animals. Therefore, they began to search for grazing land which resulted in conflict with their neighbors including the Tulama Oromo. Moreover, such conflicts between the Käräyyu and their neighbors resulted in animal raiding which had intensified the conflicts between the Käräyyu and their neighbors.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸*Informants:* Dagafa Dachasa, Rata Jima and Guta Boru.

⁹⁹ *Informants:* Dachasa Ifa, Guta Boru, Rata Jima and Dagafa Dachasa.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Buli Edjeta, "The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Development Induced Impoverishment: The Case the Käräyyu Oromo of the Upper Awash Valley" (Social Anthropology MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University), p.79.

The Torban Obo Oromo mostly maintained harmonious relations also with the Arsi Oromo. They had trading relations with the Arsi Oromo. According to informants Arsi Oromo supplied the markets of the Torban Obo with their cattle. They sold their oxen and cows to the Torban Obo Oromo in Doni and other towns. In addition, the Torban Obo practiced marriage ties with the Arsi.¹⁰² Nevertheless, there was occasional minor conflict between the Torban Obo and the Arsi Oromo.¹⁰³ According to the informants this minor conflict between the Torban Obo and the Arsi Oromo took place mostly during the reign of the *Därg*. The main cause of this conflict was grazing land.¹⁰⁴

The Torban Obo Oromo also developed amicable relations with the people of Adama. They maintained trading ties with the people of Adama. They supplied the Adama people with crops like maize, wheat, sorghum, *teff* and also fruits and vegetables. The Torban Obo mostly bought non-agricultural products such as clothes, salt and soap from the Adama.¹⁰⁵

1.4. Economy

The Torban Obo Oromo in the past were pastoralists. Before agriculture became the dominant economic system, the extensive lands of the Torban Obo Oromo were covered by the forests. There was substantial land for grazing which supported the practice of animal husbandry among the Torban Obo. Therefore, their economy in the past was dependent on animal husbandry particularly cattle, goats and sheep.¹⁰⁶ According to Tsegaye the Tulama Oromo were also

¹⁰²*Informants:* Lamma Boriyo, Boru Hawas and Ragasa Tufa.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Informants:* Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhaso and Ragasa Gurm.

pastoralists in the past. The Tulama villages by the middle of the nineteenth century were similar with those of the pastoralists. Their houses by then were not permanent because of the Shäwan Amhara penetration into their land. Thus, they used to build not stable houses. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the permanent attacks from the Shäwan kingdom into the Tulama land made animal husbandry significant because they could not burn their herds easily as they wanted. Unlike crops on the field, the local people took their herds to defensive areas with them in the time of the incursions. Thus, they preferred to practice animal husbandry than sedentary agriculture.¹⁰⁷

However, gradually agriculture became the major economic activity among the Torban Obo Oromo. In the 1940s, agriculture was one of the major economic systems of the Torban Obo Oromo. They produced different crops both for consumption and market. They mostly produced crops like *teff*.¹⁰⁸ In the 1960s, the life of the Torban Obo Oromo was mainly dependent on agriculture. The government made some material support to reduce the number of unemployment by providing agricultural land, seeds and tractors. This indicated that agriculture became the main economic system of the Torban Obo Oromo.¹⁰⁹ The report made by Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Early Warning and Planning Services made in 1985 stated that the residents of Boset *Wäräda* was mainly agriculturalists. The agricultural practice was mainly dependent on farming during the rainy season.¹¹⁰ The other report made in Boset *Wäräda* in 1973 E.C stated that the residents of the *Wäräda* mainly produced crops like maize and sorghum.

¹⁰⁷Tsegaye, p.24.

¹⁰⁸MoCT/NALA/10/7411/1/ A Letter from Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* to Ministry of Agriculture in 1945.

¹⁰⁹MoCT/NALA/ A Letter from Haile Giyorgis, Yerer and Karrayyu administrator, to Shimelis Adugna, General Commissioner in 1967 E.C.

¹¹⁰MoCT/NALA/ A Report on the Nutritional Assessment of four *Wärädas* in Yererna Karrayyu and Haikochena Butajira *Awrajas*, Shewa Administration Region in 1985.

They also produced wheat, barley and *teff*. In addition, they produced vegetables like potatoes and different fruits.¹¹¹ According to informants the Torban Obo produced crops such as wheat, sorghum, *teff*, and maize for a long period. They also produced different vegetables for consumption and to sell in the towns.¹¹² As indicated above agriculture was the main economic activity of the Torban Obo Oromo. However, various factors made the Torban Obo Oromo subsistence farmers. Their agriculture was mainly dependent on rain. This resulted in crop failure which mainly emanated from shortage of rain.¹¹³

Moreover, there was another problem that the farmers of the Torban Obo Oromo faced in relation to their agriculture. The birds also harmed their crops and reduced the production. A Letter from Shäwan *Ṭäqlay Gezat* to Ministry of Agriculture stated that there was strong damage of crops because of birds in Boset *Wäräda*. There was a request from the government to support the farmers by sending medicines and experts to rescue the crops of the farmers from the birds.¹¹⁴ However, the government did not save the crops of the farmers. The response given to the farmers was that the case was beyond the capacity of the government and it was internationally under study.¹¹⁵

The other factor that repeatedly damaged the crops of the Torban Obo Oromo in Boset *Wäräda* was pests. In 1967, the crops of the farmers were damaged by the pest locally known as *boombii* (scientific name *Pachnoda Interapta*). The pest mainly damaged the crops such as wheat and sorghum. There was an attempt from the government to prevent crop damages caused by pests.

¹¹¹MoCT/NALA/ ṅ22/፲/14/3269/ A Report from Aid and Rehabilitation Commission to Ministry of Interior in 1973 E.C.

¹¹²*Informants*: Ragasa Gurmu, Lamma Boriyo and Girma Ragasa.

¹¹³*Informants*: Ragasa Gurmu, Dachasa Badhaso and Bose Gada.

¹¹⁴ MoCT/NALA/10A0/57/ A letter from Yohannes Haile Sellassie to Ministry of Agriculture in 1958 E.C.

¹¹⁵MoCT/NALA/817/1/5/32/58/ A Letter from Zegeye Aberu, General Director, to Ministry of Governorate in 1958 E.C.

However, the pesticide used by the farmers to protect their crops from the above mentioned pest was unsuccessful because it only destroyed about ten percents of the pests. As a result, the crops on extensive farm lands were damaged.¹¹⁶

In addition, the area where the Torban Obo Oromo lived was frequently affected by drought. In 1971 E.C the vast areas were affected by drought. The crops of the farmers were destroyed and they suffered from shortage of food. The Torban Obo also lost numerous cattle because of drought. They also sold their cattle to escape from the drought and later on to recover from the drought.¹¹⁷

There were several factors that contributed to the transformation of the Torban Obo Oromo to sedentary agriculture. The projects established on the Awash Valley were significant in this transformation from animal husbandry to sedentary agriculture. According to Helmut Kloos the lowlands of the Awash Valley were settled by semi-nomadic pastoralists like Jillee, Kärräyyu and Arsi in the 1970s. The Jille Oromo practiced dry farming on small plots in favorable areas to supplement their milk and milk product diet.¹¹⁸ The developments of agricultural projects in the Awash Valley attracted laborers from different parts of Ethiopia. In 1976, there were about eighteen projects in operation in the Awash Valley. The shortage of local farm laborers in the Awash Valley as well as the inexperience of local pastoralists in farm work and their unwillingness to give up completely their herding way of life for sedentary farming forced these

¹¹⁶MoCT/NALA/ አ354/361/ A Letter from *Däjazmach* Mammo Siyum, the governor of Shewa Keflä Hagär, to Dr. Dagnachew Yirgu, Minister of Agriculture in 1967 E.C.

¹¹⁷MoCT/NALA/ ሸ22/ግ/14/3269/ A Report from Aid and Rehabilitation Commission to Ministry of Interior in 1973E.C.

¹¹⁸Helmut Kloos, "Farm Labor Migrations in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia" *International Migration Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (The Center for Migration Studies of New York Inc., 1982),p. 135.

projects to get labor from outside. The percentage of the Tulama Oromo who worked as laborers in the Upper and Middle Awash projects were about 13.9%.¹¹⁹

Therefore, the mechanized agriculture established in the Awash Valley had economic significance for the settled population around the Valley. Pastoralists settled around the Valley came progressively more into contact with the projects in Awash Valley in the 1970s. The Jillee and Arsi wanted employment on their own initiative in the irrigation schemes.¹²⁰ The Nura Hera Agricultural Project also created job opportunities for the society as permanent and contract laborers. The establishment of Agro-processing industry along the Awash Valley had also contributed a lot in creating job opportunities. The projects established in the Awash Valley including the Nura Hera also affected the pastoralists negatively. The significant area of best grazing land was taken by irrigation agriculture and pastoralists were displaced. This blocked pastoralists of the area from this grazing land and affected their day to day activities.¹²¹

Another significant economic activity among the Torban Obo Oromo was trade. The completion of the Ethio-Djibouti railway had socio-economic significance for Ethiopia. It had served as a means of transport for both goods and passengers to and from Ethiopia.¹²² The construction of the Ethio-Djibouti railway had also contributed for the establishment of the towns like Mojo, Bishoftu, Adama and Welenchiti.¹²³ The Ethio-Djibouti railway that passed through Welenchititi town had contributed a lot both for the establishment and the development of the town. In

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*,pp.138-139.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*,p.143.

¹²¹Assefa Kuru, "Fate of Conquered Peoples and Marginal Lands Under Imperial Rule: The Case of the Awash River Basin" *The Journal of Oromo Studies* (Vol.4 No 1 and 2,1997, p.191.

¹²²Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002),p.101.

¹²³Asafa Jalata, "Urban Centers in Oromia: Consequences of Spatial Concentration of Power in Multinational Ethiopia" *Journal of Oromo Studies* (Vol.17, No. 2, 2011), p.57.

addition, the main road from Addis Ababa to Dire Dawa, Harar, Afar and Ethio-Somali crossed Wenchiti town. This was very important for the economic development of Wenchiti town which served as the capital of Boset *Wäräda*. The Torban Obo Oromo have weekly markets to sell and buy different commodities. They usually attended markets in the Wenchiti town on Saturday, in Bofa on Monday, in Doni and Bole on Sunday. Therefore, trade was one the economic basis of the Torban Obo Oromo.¹²⁴

¹²⁴*Informants:* Birqe Dhugo, Sefa Ragasa, Boru and Jambo Golle.

Chapter Two

A History of the Torban Obo Oromo from 1855-1913

2.1. The Torban Obo on the Eve of the Conquest of Menilek II

Since the beginning of the 18th century, the Tulama Oromo underwent a decline in social, political and economic aspects due to internal and external factors. The power of the *gadaa* system had started to diminish in the central part of Ethiopia where the Tulama Oromo was settled. The socio-political transformation and external pressures resulted in diminishing of the *gadaa* power.¹²⁵ The expansion of Christianity and external pressures gradually weakened the practice of the *gadaa* system. The Tulama Oromo had also adopted some of the cultures of their neighbors. This contributed for the decline of the *gadaa* power among the Tulama Oromo. The diminishing in the *gadaa* power also resulted in the loss of unity among the Tulama Oromo. Following the weakening of the *gadaa* power, the Tulama Oromo lost their usual communications. This affected their cooperation and unity. The lack of unity among the Tulama Oromo intensified the desire of the Amhara to occupy their land. Thus, the weakening in the *gadaa* power paved the way for the attacks from the Amhara.¹²⁶

There was competition among clan leaders who emerged following the diminishing of the *gadaa* power. They competed for the dominance and to acquire extensive territories. To accomplish their desire, they collaborated with the Shāwan leaders and fought against each other. The Tulama clan leaders became instruments of the Shāwan policy of expansion like creating

¹²⁵ Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....pp.228-229.

¹²⁶ Dechasa, p.59.

conflicts among the Oromo clans to ease their expansion. This affected the unity of the Tulama Oromo and facilitated the condition for the Shāwan leaders to occupy their land.¹²⁷

The land where the Tulama Oromo settled had been fertile and strategically important. This attracted the Amhara rulers to settle in the area. As a result, the area had been a center of conflict which resulted in the confiscation of the land that belonged to the Tulama Oromo.¹²⁸ The Amhara repeatedly overrun the Tulama land. The occupation of Ankober by Amehayes (1743-1774) supported the Amhara to make continuous attacks on the Oromo. The Tulama Oromo suffered from the war of conquest made by Amehayes. He started his war of conquest from the Abichu Oromo. After the war, the Abichu's fertile land was controlled by the Amhara force led by Amehayes. Consequently, the Abichu were forced to pay tribute to the Amhara leaders who made their seat at Ankober. However, the Abichu continuously rebelled against the Amhara leaders.¹²⁹

The other Shāwan ruler who made continuous war of the conquest against the Tulama Oromo was Asfawesen (1774-1807). He made his expansion to the areas of the Torban Obo Oromo in which his policy of expansion threatened the Gumbichu and the Obori Oromo. He also made his territorial expansion to the Galaan and Abichu Oromo. After the death of Asfawesen, Wasenseged (1807-1811) continued the policy of territorial expansion. He also mainly strengthened the territories occupied by his predecessors. He conquered Abichu, Obori and Galaan.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....,p.241.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.61.

¹³⁰ W.C. Harris, *The Highlands of Ethiopia Vol.3* (London: Longman, 1844),p.37.

A strong process of political and social integration of the Tulama Oromo into the kingdom of Shäwa was started by the beginning of 19th century during the reign of *Nigus* (King) Sahle-Sellassie (r.1813-1847).¹³¹ The Shäwan rulers including Sahle-Sellassie used different techniques in order to incorporate the Tulama Oromo in general and the Torban Obo Oromo in particular. For example, one of the major techniques used to incorporate the Tulama Oromo was to create conflicts between the clans. When the conflicting clans had weakened each other by the war, Sahle-Sellassie used to side with one of them. As a result, he had easily controlled the land of these clans.¹³²

The strategy to breed conflicts between the clans to seize the Tulama Oromo land was successful in creating conflict between the Abichu and the Galaan. The Abichu and Galaan fought each other for seven years.¹³³ In this war, the Galaan was always victorious. Later, he intervened in the war and defeated the Galaan.¹³⁴ Therefore, Sahle-Sellassie used internal war between the Abichu and Galaan in order to integrate the Tulama Oromo into the Shäwan Kingdom. He supported the Abichu against Galaan during the war. During the war with Galaan, *Nigus* Sahle-Sellassie was supported by *Ato* Matako, the then Abichu local leader. The support he got from *Ato* Matako was very important in incorporating the extensive Tulama Oromo land.¹³⁵

Therefore, through the support of *Ato* Matako, Sahle-Sellassie brought the Abichu under his control. Matako was given the status of *Abägaz* of the southern territory of the kingdom. He

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p.63.

¹³²Tabor Wami, *Partisan Discourse and Authentic History* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 2015),p.484.

¹³³Abbas Haji, “Arsi Oromo Political and Military Resistance against the Shoan Colonial Conquest, 1881-1886,” *Journal of Oromo Studies* Vol.2 No.1and 2(1995), p.3.

¹³⁴Bahiro Biyansa (*trans.*), *Oromia* (Addis Ababa, 1985),p.68.

¹³⁵Dechasa, p.64.

forced the payment of tribute to the kingdom and recruited and mobilized armed forces. However, in the 1830s, the friendly relation between Matako and Sahle-Sellassie was interrupted. This resulted in conflict between Matako and Sahle-Sellassie. Their friendly relation was interrupted mainly because of Matako's demand for marriage alliance between his son and the daughter of Sahle-Sellassie in which the latter refused. As a result, they fought each other and Matako was defeated and captured.¹³⁶

After Matako was killed by Sahle-Sellassie in 1837, Abichu was governed by the local leader named *Ato* Marach. Like *Ato* Matako, Marach also collaborated with Sahle-Sellassie to support the incorporation of the Tulama Oromo. Therefore, Marach supported to expand Shäwan territory further into the west. He supported and secured the incorporation of the Galaan, Obori and Salale Oromo.¹³⁷

The other internal conflict among the Tulama Oromo had occurred between the Obori and Galaan clans. The internal conflicts among the Tulama Oromo helped Sahle-Sellassie to support one Oromo group against the other. The conflict between the Abichu and Galaan were aggravated by the involvement of Sahle-Sellassie in which he sided with the Abichu against the Galaan. In addition, he was supported by the Abichu to conquer the other Tulama Oromo. The campaign of Sahle-Sellassie against Galaan, Gumbichu and other Tulama Oromo was possible through the support of the Abichu.¹³⁸ By 1839, the Oromo south of the kingdom of Shäwa like Abichu, Galaan, Soddo and Ada'a were the major tributaries of the kingdom of Shäwa.¹³⁹

¹³⁶*Ibid.*,p.65.

¹³⁷Tabor,p.484.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹³⁹Isenberg and Krapf, *Journal of C.W. Isenberg of J.L. Krapf: Detailing their proceeding in the Kingdom of Shoa and Journey in other Parts of Abyssinia in the years 1839, 1840 and 1842*(London, 1843),p.78.

According to Tabor Wami the main factor for the continuous defeat and incorporation of the Oromo into the Shāwan kingdom was the abandonment of their cultural values that linked them together. The *gadaa* system which brought the Oromo together highly weakened from the beginning of the 18th century. Thus, this affected the unity among the Oromo. The Shāwans effectively used the opportunity created and made several attacks against the Oromo. The other factor that supported the Shāwans to subdue the Oromo under their kingdom was the effective use of the European military advisors.¹⁴⁰

The Shāwan kings including Sahle-Sellassie made continuous and devastating incursion against the Tulama Oromo in general and the Torban Obo Oromo in particular. They devastated the human life and property during their expansion. For example, the campaign of Sahle-Sellassie claimed large property destruction during his wars of conquest to the Oromo land.¹⁴¹ Krapf, who followed Sahle-Sellassie during his invasion against Sululta pointed out:

*.....As the Oromo of Sululta did not pay their tribute in horses and cows, the king gave orders for all their villages to be destroyed by fire. The Soldiers take all they can get in the houses and then burn them. As the harvest was over, king could not, as he generally does, burn the fruits but much wheat was destroyed with the houses.*¹⁴²

From the above quotation one can understand that the attacks from the Shāwan leaders resulted in the plundering of the resources of the Tulama Oromo. There was huge destruction in property because of fire.

The other technique used by the Shāwan rulers to incorporate the Tulama Oromo was marriage alliance. The marriage alliance was made between the Shāwan leaders and the Tulama Oromo.

¹⁴⁰Tabor,pp.484-485.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*,p.485.

¹⁴² Isenberg and Krapf, pp.197-198.

The local leaders from both sides practiced political marriage alliances. According to Harris, Sahle-Sellassie relayed more upon political marriage than the war force to incorporate different areas. Hence, Sahle-Sellassie made marriage alliance with the sister of Jarra, who was chief of Mullo.¹⁴³

In addition to the political marriage and wars of the conquest, the Shāwan rulers used religion to incorporate the Tulama Oromo into their kingdom. They used to carry out Christianization to subdue the Tulama Oromo. Therefore, they constructed Churches in the Tulama Oromo land. For example, Sahle-Sellassie established churches in the Galaan and Abichu Oromo lands.¹⁴⁴

According to Odd Eirik Arnesen, the expansion of Sahle-Sellassie in different areas of the Tulama Oromo was possible through the support of local Oromo leaders rather than the permanent Shāwan rule over these areas. The Shāwan nobility including Sahle-Sellassie joined military strategy with political intermarriages with Oromo clan leaders. In doing so, they reduced the cost of military campaign and easily occupied the Tulama land. Their policy of divide and rule was also significant in controlling extensive areas of the Tulama Oromo. Therefore, it was through the process of intermarriages, Christianization and military campaign that the Tulama Oromo areas were made the tributary of the Shāwan Kingdom.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³Harris,pp.42-43.

¹⁴⁴Dechasa,p.68.

¹⁴⁵Odd Eirik Arnesen, “The Becoming Place : The Tulama Oromo Region of North Shoa,” *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996),pp.224-226.

2.2. The Process of Conquest, Resistance and Incorporation into the Imperial Ethiopian State

After the death of Sahle-Sellassie in 1847, the Shāwan control over the Tulama Oromo remained nominal.¹⁴⁶ However, Haile Melekot made wars of conquest to control Oromo land fully. He was not strong enough to control Oromo land like Sahle-Sellassie and died in 1856.¹⁴⁷ The situation changed after Menilek came to power and renewed the expansionist policy of his predecessors that started in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁴⁸

Thus, like Sahle-Sellassie, Menilek also introduced different strategies used to incorporate the Tulama Oromo in general and the Torban Obo Oromo in particular. First, he collected different firearms that supported him in conquest and prepared war leaders. Additionally, he used the policy of triggering conflicts between the clans in the areas where he intended to overrun.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, to support his invasion policy Menilek imported modern military weapons from western countries. He bought better weapons, which made his conquest easier and more successful. He also used to import military technicians from the western countries to facilitate his invasion policy.¹⁵⁰ In addition to create conflicts among the Oromo clans, Menilek also recruited some war leaders from the Oromo like that of Gobana Dacci to incorporate the Oromo of Tulama.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Guluma Gameda, “Conquest and Resistance in the Gibe Region, 1881-1900,” *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.3 No.1 and 2, (1996), p.55.

¹⁴⁷ Tabor, p.486.

¹⁴⁸ Guluma, p.55.

¹⁴⁹ Tabor, 486.

¹⁵⁰ Dirribi, p.443.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.446.

Menilek invaded the Tulama Oromo not in a single campaign. He made several campaigns in different directions and assigned effective war leaders to incorporate the Tulama Oromo and their land.¹⁵² Therefore, Menilek began to invade the areas of the Tulama Oromo like the Gullalle, Abichu, Galaan and Salale. He started his first attack from the Gullelle Oromo who mainly settled in and around Finfinne. The Gullelle Oromo who were governed by Tufa Muna were ordered to submit to Menilek. The Gullelle Oromo fought against the army of Menilek and they were successful in defending their territory from the army of Menilek from 1874 to 1875. Nevertheless, in 1878, the army of Menilek led by *Däjäč* Meshesha Seifu succeeded in controlling the Gullelle Oromo and their land.¹⁵³

Nonetheless, according to Benti Getahun, it was after fierce resistance of *Ras* Gobana that the Gullelle Oromo led by Tufa Muna were defeated and brought under the rule of Menilek II.¹⁵⁴ According to Richard Greenfield Tufa Muna who led the Gullalle against the army of Menilek died in the battle. However, he strongly fought against the army of Menilek.¹⁵⁵ After the conquest, the Torban Obo Oromo who were ruled by their own clan leaders had preferred the ruler of their clan to the conquerors. Tamene Bitima who collected Oromo poems on Menilek's invasion of Gullelle and Ekka pointed out:

Oromo

...Cufaa koo Cufaa koo
Cufaa Jalan bulaa
Yaa Leencaa Gullalle
Dur Sumayyuu Abdanee

Gloss

My Barricade, my barricade
I live under your protection
The shield of Gullalle
The sustainer of our hope

¹⁵²Eshetu Erena, *Ye Oromo Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 2001), p.223.

¹⁵³Tabor, pp.487-488.

¹⁵⁴Benti Getahun, "An Overview of Some Factors Limiting the Migration of the Oromo to Addis Ababa," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.2 No.1 and 2(2001), p156.

¹⁵⁵Richard Greefield Ethiopia: A New Political History(New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1965), p.98.

Tufaa Koo Tufaa Koo

My Barricade, my barricade

Tufaa yaa Ilma Munaa

*Tufa, the son of Muna.*¹⁵⁶

One can understand from this poem that the Gulalle Oromo were interested in the rule of their clan leader. They considered their leader as a protector and sustainer of their future hope. In another battle to invade the Tulama Oromo, the armies of Menilek led by *Ras Gobana* fought against the Abichu and Galaan from 1876 to 1877. Finally, the Abichu and Galaan Oromo were defeated and were included to the areas under the rule of Menilek. The other area where the armies under the leadership of *Ras Gobana* were overrun was Salale. He defeated Salale Oromo and incorporated them into the rule of Menilek from 1876 to 1877.¹⁵⁷ *Ras Gobana Dacci* had played a significant role in controlling vast Oromo areas under the rule of Menilek. He brought the Tulama Oromo areas like Soddo, Galaan, Abichu and the others under the rule of Menelik.¹⁵⁸

Like in Arsi and eastern Oromo, the war of conquest among the Tulama Oromo was also so harsh. However, the intensity of war of conquest among the Tulama Oromo was relatively different. The Tulama areas where there were fierce fightings include the Abichu, Jidda, Gulalle, Meettaa, Bachoo and Sooddoo.¹⁵⁹ These Tulama Oromo fought strongly against the army of Menilek. They were united under their local leaders to fight against the invading forces. The Gulalle Oromo were united under their leader Tufa Muna and resisted the war of conquest but were finally defeated and incorporated into the rule of Menilek.¹⁶⁰ The Meettaa and Bachoo were also united under their local leaders like Caangaree Sookile and Birratuu Golee, respectively,

¹⁵⁶Tamene Bitima, "On Some Oromo Historical Poems," *Paideuma*, Bd.29 (Frobenius Institute, 1983), p.319.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*,506.

¹⁵⁹Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....p.241.

¹⁶⁰Greenfield,p.98.

fought against the army of Menilek. However, the wars of conquest finally brought these local leaders and their land under the rule of Menilek.¹⁶¹

In addition, the Torban Obo Oromo like Gumbichu, Ekka and Oborii made strong resistance but were finally conquered and incorporated into the Imperial rule by the army led by *Ras* Goobana Daccii.¹⁶² The notables of the Torban Obo Oromo made different unsuccessful attempts to expel the forces of Menilek from their territory. But their forces were defeated due to the modernity of the army of Menilek led by Gobana and consequent military superiority.¹⁶³

Here, it is important to discuss another reason why the Tulama Oromo failed to defend their territory from the Shäwan conquerors. On the eve of the conquest, there was lack of coordination among the Tulama Oromo following the diminishing of the *gadaa* power. This resulted in the socio-political and religious transformation among the Tulama Oromo. The introduction of Christianity to the area affected both the *gadaa* system and unity of the Tulama Oromo.¹⁶⁴

The relation of the Tulama Oromo with neighboring states had gradually affected their unity because the leaders of these states got the opportunity to intervene in their political affairs. The emergence of clan leaders who entered into conflict with Shäwan kingdom weakened the power of the Tulama Oromo. They fought against the Shäwan kingdom for territorial expansion and dominance separately. There was no cooperation among clan leaders to resist the Amhara conquest instead they sided with the Shäwan kingdom to takeover one another. Thus, this

¹⁶¹ Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....,p.241.

¹⁶²Tsegaye,pp.66-67.

¹⁶³*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Lamma Boriyo and Ragasa Tufa.

¹⁶⁴ Alemayehu, *Gada System: The Politics of the Tulama*.....,pp. 240-241.

resulted in rivalry among local leaders who competed to acquire power and wealth. Therefore, such rivalry of the Tulama Oromo exposed them to Shāwan conquerors.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, the unity of the Tulama Oromo was weakened in the nineteenth century because the clan leaders never trusted each other. The clan leaders mainly feared the domination of one another. The competition of clan leaders for more territorial gains affected both their unity and strength to defend their territory. Menilek understood the internal weaknesses of the Tulama Oromo and implemented the divide and rule policy to incorporate them. Thus, his policy of divide and rule was significant in controlling different areas by reducing the unity among the Tulama Oromo.¹⁶⁶

In addition, the conquest made by Menilek into different Tulama areas was successful because of modern firearms. The modern firearms he imported supported his expedition into the Tulama Oromo. He got firearms and expertise from European powers that strengthened his military power. The French, Italians and the British supplied Menilek with modern weapons and expertise to expand his territory. Hence, these modern weapons made his territorial expansion and war of the conquest successful.¹⁶⁷

However, the significant factor for the success of Menilek's territorial expansion among the Tulama Oromo was the collaboration of the Tulama Oromo.¹⁶⁸ The Tulama Oromo also became an instrument of Shāwan expansionism by enrolling as soldiers and military commanders. For example, they were highly enrolled in *Ras Därke*'s army who defeated and incorporated Salale.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p.236.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Asafa Jalata, "The Question of Oromia: Euro-Ethiopian Colonialism, Global Hegemonism and Nationalism, 1870s-1980s," (PhD Dissertation: State University of New York, 1990), pp.87-88.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*,p.242.

Therefore, Menilek's diplomacy in winning the Tulama prominent war leaders like *Ras Gobana Daaccii* was so significant in incorporating the Tulama Oromo.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, *Ras Gobana* also played a prominent role of the conquest of southern territories. He also fought the Oromo between the Upper Awash and the Gibe Rivers and forced them to pay tribute to the Shāwan king. Therefore, *Ras Gobana* helped Menilek to conquer extensive regions of Ethiopia.¹⁷⁰

2.3. The Impacts of the Conquest on the Socio-economic and Political Systems of the Torban Obo Oromo

The conquest of the Tulama Oromo in general the Torban Obo Oromo in particular by Menilek had tremendous religious, political, social, economic and cultural repercussions. The system of administration applied to a certain region varied on the basis of different factors such as the intensity of resistance during conquest, the economic value and strategic significance to the empire. The conquest was followed by harsh administration and extensive exploitation. The areas that strongly resisted during the conquest put under harsh administration. There were areas among the Tulama Oromo where harsh administration system was imposed. These include Abichu, Jidda, Gulalle, Soddo, Metta, Bacho and others.¹⁷¹

As of the mid-nineteenth century, the religion of the Tulama Oromo was tremendously transformed. The majority of them abandoned the *Waaqeffannaa* religion and embraced Christianity. The main factor that led to this transformation was the conquest of the Tulama Oromo by the ruler of Christian Amhara Empire. According to Dachasa Abebe the process of Christianization in the Tulama Oromo was not only made through peaceful way of church

¹⁶⁹Abbas,p.4.

¹⁷⁰Guluma,pp.55-58.

¹⁷¹ Alemayehu, *Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....p.241.

building and preaching Christianity. There was an act of forceful Christianization by abolishing indigenous religious practices after 1878.¹⁷²

After the conquest, the Orthodox Church supported the Imperial regime through Christianization of the conquered society. The Church assisted the regime in teaching the society to obey the king and his rule.¹⁷³ The priests also implemented psychological war upon the Oromo under the banner of Christianity. They used to deceive the society by encouraging that the kings have the power to unite the society with God. Therefore, such practice of the priests made the followers of the indigenous religion which felt ashamed of practicing their own religion and affected their religion, *Waaqeffannaa*.¹⁷⁴ According to Mohammed Hassen the attack on Oromo cultural institutions increased with the conquest and incorporation of the Oromo into the Ethiopian Empire created by Emperor Menilek. Following the conquest, the Oromo institutions of self-government were destroyed. The Oromo *Caffee* (Assembly) was abolished.¹⁷⁵ This eliminated the socio-political significance of the *gadaa* system. The system of administration introduced following the conquest prohibited the practice of the *gadaa* system. The Tulama Oromo also failed to practice *gadaa* system from their center at Odaa Nabee because the imposed administration prohibited gathering at the center. Like the other Tulama Oromo, the Torban Obo Oromo were also prevented from their *gadaa* center.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷²Dachasa, p.123.

¹⁷³ Alemayehu, *Gada System : the Politics of the Tulama*.....p.242.

¹⁷⁴Dirribi, p.450.

¹⁷⁵Mohammed Hassen, "Oromo Nationalism and the Continuous Multi-faceted Attack on the Oromo Cultural, civic and Political Organizations," *Exploring New Political Alternatives for the Oromo*.(CMI Report, 2009),p.27.

¹⁷⁶*Informants: Lamma Boriyo, Ragasa Tufa and Dachasa; Alemayehu, Gada System: the Politics of the Tulama*.....p. 242.

The other measure taken by Menilek to endanger the Oromo indigenous religion happened in 1900. By 1900 he banned the well-known Oromo pilgrimage to the land of *Abba Muuda*. The pilgrimage mainly maintained the contact of spiritual father with the society and it was a symbol of the Oromo unity. The Oromo from different areas met each other through this pilgrimage. Therefore, the imposed administration following the conquest disallowed the Oromo from meeting their spiritual father. The religious aspects of the pilgrimage and the unity obtained through the pilgrimage were destroyed.¹⁷⁷

The other practice that hurt the Oromo indigenous religion after the conquest was landlordism. The Oromo who were converted to Christianity were allowed to be landlords and work with the officials. Those who refused conversion were neglected and reduced to the status of tenants. This practice affected both the indigenous religion and the followers of the religion.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, such kinds of practice affected the religious and cultural institutions of the Torban Obo Oromo that had a considerable effect on their daily lives. Their sacred objects used for different purposes intentionally interpreted wrongly and their usage gradually reduced.¹⁷⁹

The conquest also affected *Waaqeffannaa* religion because it prohibited the official practice of *Irreechaa* ceremony. This had a negative impact on the cultural development of the Tulama Oromo. However, some of the Tulama Oromo including Galaan continued to practice *Irreechaa* in secret at Hora Arsadi.¹⁸⁰ Following the conquest, the political significance of the *gadaa* system was suppressed and was replaced by the rule of the invaders. The Oromo notables began

¹⁷⁷Mohammed, "Oromo Nationalism.....",p.27.

¹⁷⁸Wemlinger, Cherri Reni, "Identity in Ethiopia; the Oromo from the 16th Century to the 19th Century," MA Thesis, (Department of History, Washington State University, 2008),p.96.

¹⁷⁹*Informants*: Jambo Golle, Birqe Dhugo and Ragasa Tufa.

¹⁸⁰Gemechu J. Geda, "Pilgrimages and Syncretism: Religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia," (PhD Dissertation: University of Bayreuth, 2013),p.179.

to involve in the administration of the invaders which was too different from the *gadaa* system.¹⁸¹

After the conquest *gadaa* was officially banned and this reduced the *gadaa* system to be practiced in different degrees in parts of Oromo land. The *gadaa* political system which used to create conducive socio-economic and political environment was covered up by the rule of invaders.¹⁸² Like the other Tulama Oromo, the Torban Obo Oromo was also prevented from practicing their *gadaa* system at Odaa Nabee. This reduced the political value of the *gadaa* system among the Torban Obo Oromo. Therefore, following the conquest, the official practice of the *gadaa* system diminished among the Torban Obo Oromo.¹⁸³

The other consequence of the conquest was the decline in social cohesion among the Torban Obo Oromo. Following the conquest the social cohesion of the Tulama Oromo were disrupted. According to Tesema Ta'a the conquest affected strong family attachments and mutual support among the Oromo. Their strong common sense of belonging to one another and shared life were highly interrupted following the conquest. In another way, the cooperative traditions of the Oromo were negatively affected. Therefore, the cooperative traditions which contributed a lot for socio- economic developments of the Oromo were highly endangered following the conquest.¹⁸⁴ Like the other Oromo, the cooperative traditions among the Torban Obo Oromo were also

¹⁸¹ Mekuria Bulcha, "Beyond the Oromo-Ethiopian Conflict," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, vol.1, No.1(1993),p.12.

¹⁸² Bichaka Fayissa, "Aspects of Oromo Cultural Endowments and their Implications for Economic Development," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol.3, No.1 and 2(1996),p.40.

¹⁸³ *Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Guta Boru and Lamma Boriyo.

¹⁸⁴ *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhaso and Guta Boru; Tesema Ta'a, "Traditional and Modern Cooperatives among the Oromo," *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996),pp.206-207.

affected following the conquest. The cooperative tradition like *Jiigii* faced a problem mainly in relation to land policy of Menilek.¹⁸⁵

The other impact of the conquest on the Tulama Oromo was economic plunder. There were several factors that forced Menilek to plunder the resources of the Oromo. He wanted income for his large army to feed. In addition, he needed capital to pay for the weapons that he was importing from different European countries. Therefore, he had actively participated in increasing the sources of income for his activities.¹⁸⁶

The other far reaching consequence of the conquest was serfdom. The land holding system among the Torban Obo Oromo was changed following their inclusion into Ethiopian Empire. According to Markakis Emperor Menilek II introduced land measurement into Shäwa Oromo in 1879. Then, he ordered the registration of land in Shäwa Oromo under the various forms of tenure. The unit of measurement employed was the *gaša*. The measured land was classified based on the quality of land as *läm* (fertile), *lämtäf* (semi-fertile) and *täf* (uncultivated).¹⁸⁷ The Tulama Oromo were reduced to *gäbbar* and began to provide labor services as well as a share of their produces or crops for the soldiers. After Menilek's conquest, the peasants had to bring many customary forms of feudal tribute for warlords in Addis Ababa. They had to travel to Entoto for days from areas of Adama, Salale and Abichu. The peasants had to submit a portion of their produce to landlords and to the government as a tribute. They paid their tribute in grain, honey, butter, sheep, goats and others.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Jambo Golle and Ragasa Tufa.

¹⁸⁶ Mekuria, p.5.

¹⁸⁷ Markakis, p.109; *Informants*: Dachasa Ifa and Guta Boru.

¹⁸⁸ Tamene, p.322.

According to Tamene after their arrival in Addis Ababa, the peasants were forced to wait for days before presenting their tribute to the feudal lords. They suffered a lot to share what they did produced by own for the feudal lords in Addis Ababa.¹⁸⁹ According to the informants the Torban Obo Oromo also paid their tribute in grain and goats and sheep. They submitted their tribute to the feudal lords in Addis Ababa.¹⁹⁰ In addition, some areas were expected to supply food for the Palace and Court. For example, Emperor Menilek selected Ada'a to supply food to the Palace and the Court. According to James C. McCann Menilek directly controlled the Ada'a land and the Palace received the rights of income and forceful labor over the Ada'a farmers. Thus, the resources of the farmers were highly exploited by the palace.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Informants*: Jambo Gole and Lamma Boriyo.

¹⁹¹ James C. McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800-1990*(The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995),p.204.

Chapter Three

A History of the Torban Obo Oromo from 1913-1974

3.1. Administration

The military success of the Shāwan's was followed by the establishment of their own social, political and economic systems among the Torban Obo Oromo. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Torban Obo Oromo in particular and the Yārār and Käräyyu *Awrajja* in general came under the Shāwan control in the initial phase of the Shāwan expansion.¹⁹² Under the Imperial rule, Boset and its surrounding was initially administered as *Meketel Wārāda* (*Sub-district*) in the *Adama Wārāda* of the Shāwa *Ṭeqalay Gezat*. Thus, Welenchiti town and its surrounding initially were administered in the Boset *Meketel Wārāda Gezat* (*Sub-district*) of the *Adama Wārāda*.¹⁹³ However, in the mid 1940s, Boset was administered as one of the *Wārāda* in the Yārār and Käräyyu *Awrajja* of Shāwa *Ṭeqalay Gezat*.¹⁹⁴

The Boset *Wārāda* was divided into different areas of *Çeqa Šums*. According to informants the notable *Çeqa Šums* in the study area were Jima Mojo, Haqo Jima, Hamda Kotu and Masha Afaru.¹⁹⁵ The Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé* in the *Wārāda* were ruled under the *Çeqa Šum* of Badhaso Charchar.¹⁹⁶ The *Çeqa Šums* had different tasks to accomplish during the Imperial regime. They transmitted the orders of the government to the people. They accompanied the government officers when they visited different areas and settled minor disputes among the

¹⁹²*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Guta Boru and Rata Jima; John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Addis Ababa: Oxford University press, 1975), p.132.

¹⁹³MoCT/NALA/4372/2/ A Letter from *Shāwa Ṭeqalay Gezat* to Ministry of Public Health in 1942 E.C.

¹⁹⁴MoCT/NALA/ 10/7411/1/ A Letter from Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* to Ministry of Agriculture in 1945 E. C.

¹⁹⁵*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo and Ragasa Tufa.

¹⁹⁶MoCT/NALA/h/11685/1157/2 A Letter to Imperial Government of Ethiopia in 1966 E.C.

society.¹⁹⁷ The *Çeqa Šums* had also appointed elders and were engaged in solving disputes among conflicting parties. They were involved in recording birth and death rates in their jurisdiction. They were expected to inform the *Wäräda* governor every three months, the number of persons who died and were born in the locality.¹⁹⁸

3.2. System of Land Tenure and Taxation

The land holding system among the Shäwan Oromo was changed following their inclusion into the Ethiopian Empire. To strengthen his power against the *Mälkeña*, Menilek attempted to redistribute land in Shäwa in the late 1870s. He took this measure because the *Mälkeñas* had controlled vast land in Shäwa. Thus, he made an inventory of all lands in Shäwa in 1879. This was followed by measurement of land in Shäwa in 1879-1880. However, land measurement and redistribution was started in a small area and later expanded to all areas of Shäwa.¹⁹⁹ Then, Menilek ordered the registration of lands in Shäwa Oromo under the various forms of tenure. The unit of measurement employed was *gaša*. The measured land was classified based on the quality of land as *läm* (fertile), *lämtäf* (semi-fertile) and *täf* (uncultivated).²⁰⁰ The land holding systems of the Torban Obo Oromo were also changed following their inclusion into the Ethiopian Empire. They were evicted from their land in most cases and their land was over taken

¹⁹⁷ Harbans Singh Mann, *Land Tenure System in Chore (Shoa): A Pilot Study* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the Faculty of Law Haile Sellassie I University, 1965), p.40.

¹⁹⁸ MoCT/NALA/File Folder 1.2.48.09/Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, *A Pilot Study of Agricultural Land Disputes in Lume and Yerer and Karrayyu Awrajja* (Addis Ababa: Department of Land Tenure, 1969), p.41.

¹⁹⁹ Dechasa Abebe, "A Socio- Economic History of North Shäwa" (PhD Dissertation, University of South Africa, 2015), p.103.

²⁰⁰ Markakis, p.109

by the settlers. This changed the nature of the land holding system among the Torban Obo Oromo.²⁰¹

The coming to power of Haile Sellassie had further tightened the land holding system among the Torban Obo Oromo. There was full control over the appointment of officials in the area. The *gäbbar* system was highly strengthened in the study area. Therefore, the Torban Obo Oromo were brought into the feudal system of the Ethiopian economy.²⁰²

There were several land tenure systems in Shäwa *Ṭeqalay Gezat* (the Governorate General of Shäwa). The main systems of land tenure in Shäwa *Ṭeqalay Gezat* (Governorate General of Shäwa) were *gäbbar*, *sämon*, *madäriya*, *siso*, and *quter gäbbar*.²⁰³ The land tenure systems and land tax collection processes passed through different changes. The Imperial regime made several changes to land tax collection. The land tax imposed in 1942 had classified the land into three categories namely cultivated, semi-cultivated and uncultivated. The land tax decree introduced a fixed tax charge. Accordingly, the government levied on a *gaša* of measured land fifteen Ethiopian dollars for cultivated, ten Ethiopian dollars for semi-cultivated and five Ethiopian dollars for uncultivated. By this decree, the church had also acquired the right to collect land tax.²⁰⁴

In 1944, the government increased the amount of land tax paid per *gaša*. The land tax charge per *gaša* of cultivated, semi-cultivated and uncultivated was raised to fifty, forty and fifteen Ethiopian dollars, respectively. The decree also abolished the dues and the provision of labor

²⁰¹*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Lamma Boriyo and Bose Gada.

²⁰²*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Guta Boru and Dachasa Ifa.

²⁰³Mann, p.65.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 12.

services required from the peasants.²⁰⁵ In 1966, the government declared the other land tax decree. By this decree, the *restä-gult* owners ordered to pay land tax directly to the government treasury.²⁰⁶

There were different types of land tenure systems in the study area. The types of land tenure that existed among the Torban Obo Oromo who lived in and around Boset *Wäräda* were *gäbbar*, *sämon*, *restä-gult*, *madäriya* and *hudad-rest*. The *Madäriya* land was grants made by the government to its workers in lieu of salary during their term of office or as pension for life. The *Madäriya* land was converted into *rest* according to Proclamation No. 221 of 1956. However, some *madäriya* lands were not converted into *rest* among the Torban Obo Oromo even in the 1960s.²⁰⁷

In the 1960s, there were three important land tenure systems among the Torban Obo Oromo who lived in Boset *Wäräda* and its environs. These were *gäbbar*, *sämon* and *restä-gult*. The vast agricultural land in the study area was *gäbbar* and followed by *sämon* and *restä-gult*.²⁰⁸ The *gäbbar* was land tenure system in which a person acquired land by purchase, grant and inheritance. The *gäbbar* paid land tax to the government as prescribed by law. In addition to land tax, the *gäbbar* who owned land by purchase, grant or inheritance were subjected to various dues. They were required to render personal services to the government officials.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the dues and services rendered by the *gäbbar* were abolished by the land tax proclamation No.70

²⁰⁵Ann K.S. Lambton, "Ethiopia: An Approach to Land Reform" *the School of Oriental and African Studies* Vol.34, No.,2 (Cambridge University Press,1971),p.225.

²⁰⁶Peter Schwab, "The Tax System of Ethiopia" *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol.29, No.1. (American Journal of Economics and Sociology,Inc.,1970), p.80.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p.12; *Informants*: Jambo Golle and Lamma Boriyo.

²⁰⁸ *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhaso and Guta Boru; Mann, p.14.

²⁰⁹Mann, p.12; *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Ifa and Guta Boru.

of 1944. Thus, the owners of the *gäbbar* land only paid land tax, *asrat* (tithe), education tax and health tax directly to the government.²¹⁰ The other land tenure system that existed in the study area was *sämon*. According to proclamation No. 2 of 1942, church had the right to collect land tax, *asrat* (tithe) and education tax from the people who had settled on the *sämon* land. Hence, the Proclamation legalized the church right to collect tax.²¹¹

The other land tenure system applied in the study area was *restä-gult*. This was a land tenure system in which a person acquired the right to collect land tax from the landowners who settled on the land at the rates prescribed by the law. Accordingly, the individuals who possessed *restä-gult* had obtained the right to collect the government land tax from the landowners based on fixed rates, fifteen Ethiopian dollars for *läm* (*fertile*), ten Ethiopian dollars for *läm-täf* (*semi-fertile*) and five Ethiopian dollars for *täf* (*uncultivated*) per *gaša*.²¹²

Therefore, the holders of *restä-gult* were allowed to collect land tax from those who settled on the land. But, they paid only a portion of the tax to the government. The grant was usually transmitted by inheritance after the payment of an inheritance fee, with the approval of the government.²¹³ However, the bill for the abolition of *restä-gult* was passed by the parliament in 1964.²¹⁴ According to the Proclamation, the landowners or *gäbbar* who hold land within *restä-gult* were forced to pay land tax, education and health taxes directly to the government treasury. The *restä-gult* holders were also made to pay land tax to the government treasury. Accordingly,

²¹⁰*Ibid.*

²¹¹*Ibid.*

²¹²*Ibid.*,p.13.

²¹³Lambton, p.244.

²¹⁴Mann,p.12.

fifteen Ethiopian dollars for *läm* (fertile), ten Ethiopian dollars for *läm-täf* (semi-fertile) and five Ethiopian dollars for *täf* (uncultivated) per *gaša* was paid to the government.²¹⁵

The landlord-tenant relationships gradually emerged among the Torban Obo Oromo. There was no written agreement between landlord and tenants. The landowner can evict the tenant at will and even there was no notice for the terminating tenancy. The majority of the tenants had made verbal tenancy agreements in which the landowner had the right to terminate the agreement. However, some tenants had written agreements with landowners.²¹⁶

The majority of the tenants that existed among the Torban Obo Oromo were owners of *siso* land. They shared one-third of their produce as rent to the landowners. In addition, the tenants also rendered different services to their landlords. They transported the landlord's share of the produce from the threshing floor to his house or granary. The tenants were also responsible for constructing and erecting the landlord's granaries. They also supported the landlord by constructing fences and houses.²¹⁷ According to some of my informants the tenants were also expected to visit the landlords on holidays. They brought different foods and animals that were slaughtered on the holidays like sheep and goats to the house of the landlords. Some of the tenants also brought honey and butter for the landlords during their visit.²¹⁸

During the Imperial regime, there were several agricultural land disputes in the Yärär and Kärräyyu *Awrajja* of the Shäwan Province. In the *Awrajja*, there were series of agricultural land disputes which were caused by different reasons. The study conducted in 1969 showed that there

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.13.

²¹⁶*Informants*: Guta Boru, Ragasa Tufa and Bose Gada.

²¹⁷*Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Bose Gada and Guta Boru.

²¹⁸*Informants*: *Ibid.*

were agricultural land disputes in the Yärär and Käräyyu *Awrajja*. The main cause of the agricultural land dispute in the *Awrajja* was related to landlord-tenant relationship. In this regard, disputes were mainly caused because of tenant's failure to pay land rent to the landlords and mismanagement of farmland by the tenants.²¹⁹ In the *Awrajja*, most of the time, farmland mismanagement dispute arose when the tenants contributed to the damage of crops either intentionally or unintentionally. Hence, farmland mismanagement included damage caused by herds owned by the tenants. This resulted in disputes between the landlords and tenants because landlord's share could be reduced due to mismanagement of farmland.²²⁰

There were disputes that emerged between landowners and tenants in the Torban Obo Oromo. The majority of the landowners were not Oromo. They were settlers who owned the vast land among the Torban Obo Oromo. Those landowners forced the tenants not only to share their produce but also to accept their religion. Consequently, the landowners forced the tenants and the other Torban Obo Oromo to accept Orthodox Christianity. As a result, because of the pressure from the landowners, most of the tenants became nominal Christians. In order to preach Christianity among the Torban Obo Oromo, churches were constructed. Priests were also assigned to baptize the people. But, the landlords played a significant role in expanding religion and influencing the people than the assigned priests in the area. Therefore, this was one of the sources of dispute between the landlords and tenants.²²¹

²¹⁹ MoCT/NALA/File Folder 1.2.48.09/Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, *A Pilot Study of Agricultural Land Disputes in Lume and Yerer and Karrayyu Awrajja*(Addis Ababa: Department of Land Tenure, 1969), pp.5-11.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, p.11.

²²¹*Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Guta Boru and Bose Gada.

The other cause of the agricultural land disputes in the *Awrajja* was landlord's failure to pay compensation for the improvements made by the tenants on the farmland. These improvements included planting trees and clearing forest to expand agricultural land.²²²

There were also disputes which emanated from land sale and donation in the *Yärär* and *Kärräyyu Awrajja* in the 1960s. The disputes from sale of land caused when the seller failed to transfer land to the buyer.²²³ The majority of landowners who sold land in the Boset *Wäräda* were the Amhara. They owned an extensive land and sold it to the Torban Obo Oromo who lived in the *Wäräda*. The vast landowner like Asfa Tessema sold land to the Torban Obo Oromo. The Amhara landowners were visited on holidays by the tenants and those who bought land from them. As indicated earlier, the tenants took sheep, goats, butter, honey and food for these landowners on holidays. However, the tenants brought all these gifts to the landlords only to satisfy the needs of the landlords.²²⁴

There was the process of granting land to foreign countries by Emperor Haile Sellassie in the *Wäräda*. The land around the Awash Valley was given to foreign countries like Britain, Dutch and the Italians. In the 1950s and 1960s, many people were evicted from their own land. The Second Five Years Development Plan (1963-1968) further intensified the eviction of the people settled around the Awash Valley. The plan envisaged the development of the Awash Valley

²²² MoCT/NALA/File Folder 1.2.48.09/Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, *A Pilot Study of Agricultural Land Disputes in Lume and Yerer and Karrayyu Awrajja*(Addis Ababa: Department of Land Tenure, 1969), p.11.

²²³*Ibid.*, p.17.

²²⁴ *Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Guta Boru and Bose Gada.

through large scale commercial farming. Therefore, there was land alienation by the government and foreign countries.²²⁵

The Torban Obo Oromo lived around the Awash Valley also faced such eviction and they lost their vast land to commercial farming owned by settlers and foreigners. This created disputes among the people and government as well as foreign owners of the land. Such disputes were sometimes expressed by burning the resources owned by the foreigners.²²⁶ In this regard, a letter written from Lieutenant Colonel Ketema Meshesha to the Ministry of Interior in 1967 E.C stated that:

በየረርና ከረዩ አውራጃ በቦሳት ወረዳ በ24/4/67ዓ.ም ማንነቱ ያልታወቀ ሰው የሚስተር ፓቱስታ ምንትናሬ ንብረት የሆነ የጥጥ መጋዘን በውስጡ ጥጥና 1000/አንድ ሺህ/ጆንያ እንደያዘ ግምቱ 24,250 ብር የሚያወጣውን ንብረት በእሳት ለኩሶ አቃጥሎበት አምልጧል.....²²⁷

In the Yärär and Käräyyu Awrajja in Boset Wäräda on 24/4/1967 E.C a person who was not known burned a property that belonged to Mr. Patusta Mentinare. This person was burned a cotton store with its cotton and one thousand sacks and escaped. The total estimated cost was about 24,250 Birr.

Similarly there were the activities of burning resources in the other areas of eastern Shäwa within the same *Awrajja*. For example, in Ada’a *Wäräda* there was a huge burning of resources caused

²²⁵Buli Edjeta, “The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Development Induced Impoverishment: The Case the Karrayyu Oromo of the Upper Awash Valley” (Social Anthropology MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University), pp.52-54.

²²⁶*Informants:* Ragasa Tufa, Lamma Boriyo and Dachasa Badhaso.

²²⁷MoCT/NALA/ቀ3/ፐጠ1/2/134/ letter written from Lieutenant Colonel Ketema Meshesha to Ministry of Interior in 1967.

by the local people. In 1966 E.C, about twenty eight people were sued because of crime related with burning of the agricultural resources and equipments. They burned tractors and other agricultural materials in their locality.²²⁸

Thus, the Imperial land tenure system among the Torban Obo Oromo had far reaching adverse effects on the majority of the people. These effects include landlessness, insecurity of tenure, tenancy, eviction or mass exodus, share cropping and labor services. The land of the Torban Obo Oromo were over taken by the settlers and resulted in landlessness of the majority of the people. They provided several labor services to these settlers to survive on the land that belonged to them. They were also forced to share their produce to these landowners and to accept their socio-cultural practices.²²⁹

3.3. Development of Infrastructure

The First Five Years Plan (1957-1962) of the Imperial regime gave priority to infrastructure development. The plan gave attention to the development of transportation, communication and electric Power.²³⁰ However, the development of infrastructure in the Boset *Wäräda* during the Imperial regime was very poor. There were severe shortages of pure water supply in all areas of the *Wäräda*. There were also poor health and transportation services during the Imperial regime almost in all areas of the Boset *Wäräda*.²³¹

The road infrastructure in the Boset *Wäräda* was underdeveloped during the Imperial regime. There were no roads that linked different *Qäbäles* in the *Wäräda*. The infrastructure for road

²²⁸A Letter written from *Shalaqa* Haile Giyorgis Gutama, Crime and Traffic investigation Department Officer, to Ministry of Interior in 1966 E.C.

²²⁹*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Dachasa Ifa and Tilaye Wolde Giyorgis; Welde Yohannes Workineh and Gemechu Melka, *Oromiya: Yetedebekew Ye Gif Tarik* (Commercial Printing Enterprise, 1986),p.30.

²³⁰John M.Cohen and Dov Weintraub, *Land and peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: the Social Background to a Revolution*(Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975),p.7.

²³¹*Informants*:Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Tufa and Boru Hawas.

transport was backward even within the Yärär and Käräyyu *Awrajja* and had shown little progress throughout the imperial regime.²³² The road from Adama town to the capital of the *Wäräda*, Welenchiti was very poor in the 1950s. In 1958, the Road from Adama town to Awash town was destroyed by flood. The road from Adama town to Awash town that passed through Welenchiti town connected Shäwa *Teqlay Gezat* with Härär *Teqlay Gezat*. Many delegates of the government who travelled to Härär *Teqlay Gezat* used this road. However, the quality of the road affected the travel to Härär *Teqlay Gezat*. In 1959, when Prince Sahile Sillassie, the son of Haile Sellassie visited Awash, the road between Adama and Awash town was highly destructed by flood. It was not comfortable for transportation system.²³³

There were several letters written from the *Awrajja* governor to the Imperial government that highly requested the improvement of this road. The governor of the *Awrajja*, Kebede Bizunesh stated in his letter about the significance of the road for the country and that the guests from different areas used the road.²³⁴ However, there was little effort from the government to repair and improve the destroyed road between Adama and Awash towns.²³⁵

In addition, many bridges in the area were destroyed by flood and affected the movement of people. In the late 1950s, both the road and bridge between Adama and Awash towns were affected by flood and needed improvement.²³⁶ The Emperor planned to visit Härär and its people in December 1959. However, his visit to Härär was cancelled because of the damaged road that

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ MoCT/NALA/1378/9/ A Letter from Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* to Shäwa *Teqlay-Gezat* in 1951 E.C.

²³⁴ MoCT/NALA/ 5400/9/ A Letter from Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* to Shäwa *Teqlay-Gezat* in 1951 E.C.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

connected Shäwa *Teqlay Gezat* with Härär *Teqlay Gezat*.²³⁷ Therefore, there were several requests from the *Awrajja* to repair and improve the road in the Boset *Wäräda* during the Imperial regime. The government ordered that the road must be repaired soon in October 1959. Nonetheless, the order was not carried out and the road was not repaired until March 1959.²³⁸

In the 1960s, there were attempts to improve roads in the *Awrajja*. The road from Addis Ababa to Adama town was improved. The improved road had increased the movement of the people and agricultural products. It reduced the travel time from Addis Ababa to Adama to two hours on Lorry-travelling in 1965. However, it took six hours to travel from Addis Ababa to Adama on Lorry-travelling in 1953.²³⁹

The road in the Boset *Wäräda* was not only affected by flood but also by the land cracks. The *Wäräda* is located in the Ethiopian Rift Valley where the possibility of cracks was very high. In August 1966, the cracks occurred in the northeast of Welenchiti town and crossed the railway line. The cracks covered more than one kilometer. The railway traffic was completely stopped for a few days because of the cracks. Nevertheless, the railway services gradually started but all trains were ordered by the officials to slow down over the area for the sake of security. In Welenchiti town, the holes formed due to cracks reached up to seven meters in width and about thirty meters in depth.²⁴⁰

²³⁷MoCT/NALA/419/19/ A Letter from Šaläqa Bekele Haile to *Däjazmač* Kebede Bizunesh, the Governor of Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* in 1951 E.C.

²³⁸MoCT/NALA/2349/19/ A Letter from Lemma Welde Gebriel to the Office of Road Authority in 1951 E.C.; MoCT/NALA/ 5400/9/ A Letter from Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* to Shäwa *Teqlay-Gezat* in 1951 E.C.

²³⁹ J. Baker, “Developments in Ethiopia’s Road System” *Geography*, Vol.59, No.2 (Geographical Association, 1974), p.152.

²⁴⁰MoCT/NALA/ A Report on Surface Cracks and Subsidence’s in Modjo(Haile Sellassie I University, 1971),p.2.

The lives of the Torban Obo Oromo were at its worst condition throughout the Imperial regime. There was poor health service in the *Wäräda*. Health related problems because of the frequent outbreak of epidemic diseases complicated the life of the people. Many people died because of epidemic diseases such as malaria.²⁴¹ Describing the situation in the area, a letter from the general governorate to the Ministry of the Interior stated:

በወለንጪቲ ከተማና በዙሪያውም የሚገኘው የቦስት ምክትል ወረዳ ግዛት በሽታ የሚይለየው በጣም ቆላ አገር ስለሆነ በየጊዜው ናዝሬት ከሚገኘው ሀኪም ቤት ሄደው እንዲመረመሩ ለማድረግ በከተማው ውስጥ የሚገኘው በሽተኛ የበዛ በመሆኑ የሚቻል ቢሆን ከሀኪሙ የሚሻል ሀሳብ እንዲቀርብልን።²⁴²

The Welenchiti Town and its surrounding, Boset Meketel Wäräda Gezat (sub-district) is a desert country and frequently affected by diseases. It is impossible to go to the healthcare expert in Nazereth for further investigation because the numbers of patients in the town are very large. We request the health expert to recommend the possible idea.

The people of the *Wäräda* highly requested the construction of the health center in Welenchiti town, the capital of the *Wäräda*. There was no advanced health center in Welenchiti town. They travelled to Adama to get effective treatment for their health problems.²⁴³ In 1942, several houses in the *Awrajja* selected for the establishment of clinics. The *Awrajja* governor selected appropriate houses and places to establish clinics and hospitals. The *Awrajja* governor selected

²⁴¹ *Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Tufa and Boru Hawas.

²⁴² MoCT/NALA/4372/2 A letter from Shäwa General Governorate to the Ministry of the Interior in 1942 E.C.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

Welenchiti town for the construction of a hospital.²⁴⁴ However, the attempt made to expand health institutions in the town was ineffective. The problem of health institutions continued throughout the regime.²⁴⁵

In 1972, the outbreak epidemic diseases killed many people in the Boset *Wäräda*. The epidemic diseases spread throughout the *Wäräda* and killed many people within a few days.²⁴⁶ The epidemic diseases were also spread to agricultural development areas in the *Wäräda*. Many workers of the agricultural development centers died because of epidemic diseases. The spread of the epidemic diseases was very high in Nura Hera Agricultural Development Center.²⁴⁷ In this agricultural development center, many workers died from epidemic diseases. The epidemic diseases killed many workers within less than one day. However, the Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Health intervened and relatively controlled the spread of the epidemic disease in Nura Hera Agricultural Development Center.²⁴⁸

The Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda* had also suffered from high spread of malaria. There was high spread of malaria in the Boset *Wäräda*. Almost all areas in the *Wäräda* were highly affected by malaria. There were attempts from the government to curb the spread of malaria in the Boset *Wäräda*. There were few health institutions which intervened in an attempt to control the spread of malaria. Nonetheless, these health institutions lacked personnel and medicine.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴MoCT/NALA/1722/99/ A Letter from *Qähazmaç* Alula Bekele, the governor of the *Awrajja* to *Shäwa Teqlay Gezat* in 1942 E.C.

²⁴⁵*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Boru Hawas and Bose Gada.

²⁴⁶MoCT/NALA/10929/682/29/ A Letter from *Šaläqa* Tsegaye Tesema to *Awrajja* Police Office in 1965 E.C.

²⁴⁷MoCT/NALA/10929/682/29/ A Letter from Ministry of Public Health to the Imperial Ethiopian Police Office in 1965 E.C.

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*

²⁴⁹*Informants*: Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Tufa and Ragasa Gurmu.

There were severe problems of water in the Yärär and Kärräyyu *Awrajja* including the Boset *Wäräda* during the Imperial regime. At the *Awrajja* level, there were efforts to solve the problem of water. In 1959, the *Awrajja* identified the areas where there were severe problems of water. Hence, the *Awrajja* selected areas with severe water problems and requested the government to establish water ponds.²⁵⁰ The government ordered the *Awrajja* governor to select areas with high water problems and to study the costs needed for the project. The government accepted the plan to dig water ponds for the people of the *Awrajja* as one of the solutions to the shortage of water.²⁵¹ The Torban Obo Oromo lived in Boset *Wäräda* used water from Tebbo River for their consumption. But the River was polluted by animal and human waste. As a result, many people in the *Wäräda* suffered from a variety of water born diseases.²⁵²

The use of pipe water services in the *Wäräda* was started by the French Railway Company before the Italian Occupation. The railway passed through Welenchiti town and highly needed water. The Company mainly developed this water project for the trains because the trains during the period used water as the source of power. Therefore, through the support of the Company, the Tebbo River began to serve the people of the *Wäräda* through pipe. Accordingly, Water from Tebbo River was collected in three tankers established for this service in Welenchiti town.²⁵³ The established water project provided service to the trains, people of the town and the surrounding people and cattle. But the trains began to use fuel as source of power in the 1960s and stopped to

²⁵⁰MoCT/NALA/ A Letter from Dawit Kifle Agzi to Endalkachew Mekonnen in 1951 E.C.

²⁵¹MoCT/NALA/601/14/51/ A Letter to Däjazmaç Kebede Bizunesh, the Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* governor, in 1951 E.C.

²⁵²*Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhaso and Boru Hawas.

²⁵³MoCT/NALA/ A Report from Adinew Feleke and Assefa Mandefro, the Representatives of the people of the *Awrajja*, in 1954 E.C.

use water in Welenchiti town. This resulted in reduction of burden on water service in Welenchiti town.²⁵⁴

However, after the company stopped to use this water service, there was poor water service and management in Welenchiti town. The tankers formerly established in the town were closed and the water stopped to be collected into the tankers. This had highly affected both the people and the cattle of the area. The people were forced to travel for about eight hours to get water for themselves.²⁵⁵

It is important to note that the people of Welenchiti town put pressure on the people who came to the town from different villages in the *Wäräda* to get water. They refused to share water for the people of the villages. To solve this problem, the *Awrajja* asked the Ministry of Interior for one supervisor in order to use water in the town equally in 1962.²⁵⁶ One of the areas in the *Wäräda* which was highly affected by the shortages of water was Dongorre. The people of the area were forced to travel for about ten hours to get water both for their consumption and their cattle. Their travel to Welenchiti to get water most of the time was unsuccessful. This was mainly because the people of the town intentionally closed the pipe water during day time and opened it at night.²⁵⁷

The water supply from Tebbo River was inadequate and could not meet the requirements of the people of the *Wäräda*. Several areas of the *Wäräda* requested water supply services in their area. The Population lived in Dongorre area asked the government for the construction of pure water project in their area. They wrote a letter to the Imperial government that requested pure water services in their area. They explained that their cattle also suffered from shortages of water and

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*

²⁵⁷MoCT/NALA/ A Letter from Dongorre Population to Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1966 E.C.

travelled a long distance to get water. In their letter, they explained problems in relation to water service in Welenchiti town. The letter also held a message that they could not get water service from Welenchiti town because of poor water management.²⁵⁸

The other area in Boset *Wäräda* with severe water problem was Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé*. This *Qäbälé* was under supervision of *Çeqa Šum* Badhaso Charchar in 1973. The population of the area used water from a very deep hole. The people of the area died in this deep hole while they fetched water. The deep hole also failed to give water as needed by the population of the area. Therefore, the people of the area repeatedly requested the government for the establishment of pure water project in their area.²⁵⁹ The problem of water in Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé* also gained the attention of the government. A letter written to the National Water Resource Development Commission gave emphasis to the severity of water shortages in Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé*.²⁶⁰ There were some attempts made by the government to solve the problem of water in Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé* in 1973. The government sent engineers to the area to make study on how to provide water service for the people. But, the study made by engineers stated that the water project in the area needed high capital. Therefore, due to shortage of the capital, the attempt to provide pure water to Gemu and Borchata *Qäbälé* had failed.²⁶¹

Therefore, there was shortage of water almost in all *Qäbäles* of the Boset *Wäräda* throughout the Imperial period. The people of the *Wäräda* used water from streams in their localities and some

²⁵⁸MoCT/NALA/ A Letter from Dongorre Population to Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1966 E.C.

²⁵⁹MoCT/NALA/h/11685/1157/2 A Letter to Imperial Government of Ethiopia in 1966 E.C.

²⁶⁰MoCT/NALA/10306/57/33/40 A letter from Kifle Hagos, Deputy Minister of *Awrajjas* Internal Administrator to the National Water Resource Development Commission in 1966 E.C.

²⁶¹MoCT/NALA/ A letter from Dawit Kifle Egzi, Public Water Service Department Manager to the Ministry of Interior in 1966 E.C.

areas used deep hole. These streams and water holes were contaminated and water from these sources highly affected the health of the Torban Obo Oromo in the *Wäräda*.²⁶²

The effort to expand modern education in Boset *Wäräda* was started during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie. The first modern school was opened in Welenchiti town during the Imperial regime. However, there were no schools in the rural areas of the *Wäräda* and only few students attended the school from the Torban Obo Oromo. The majority of the students were sons of the settlers and the *balabats*. The children of the settlers and *balabats* were highly enrolled to get modern education.²⁶³ There were few children from the Torban Obo Oromo who were enrolled to get modern education in Welenchiti town. However, these students faced different problems in the school. The education and other government services were provided only in Amharic. Their language, *Afaan Oromo* was banned in the school and there was the act of assimilating the students into the Amhara culture.²⁶⁴

In most cases, the children of the Torban Obo Oromo did not get access to modern education in the area. If the children of the Oromo in the area were enrolled to get modern education, the land of their families were confiscated. Therefore, the Oromo in the *Wäräda* were not willing to send their children to school due to the fear that their land may be confiscated from them.²⁶⁵ Hence, in the school the Torban Obo Oromo students were highly mobbed. They were subjected to many biases and prejudices against their family and history. Their language, name and history reduced

²⁶²*Informants:* Ragasa Gurmu, Bose Gada and Habebe Rayya.

²⁶³*Informants:* Lamma Boriyo, Habebe Rayya and Ragasa Tufa.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*

to marks of shame and backwardness. These factors made the children of the Torban Obo Oromo either to quit or not to attend modern education.²⁶⁶

3.4. Religion and Socio-Cultural Conditions during the Imperial Regime

The Torban Obo Oromo were predominantly the followers of *Waaqeffannaa* religion. They believed in *Waaqa*. They considered *Waaqa* as the source of nature and provided them rain, peace and fertility.²⁶⁷ They maintained their ritual practices both at the Rivers and Mountains. However, the religion of the Torban Obo Oromo was highly endangered during the Imperial regime. There was huge pressure from the government officials to force the people to accept Orthodox Christianity during the reign of Haile Sellassie. The Torban Obo Oromo were forced to accept Orthodox Christianity. If the Torban Obo Oromo were converted to Christianity, they were allowed to be landlords and work with the government officials. However, if they did not, they were reduced to become tenants. They were neglected and faced several problems from the government officials assigned in the area for different activities.²⁶⁸

The vast land in the *Wärüda* was in the hands of the Amhara. Thus, the Amhara who owned the vast land sold the portion of the land only to the Torban Obo Oromo who were converted to Christianity. The Torban Obo Oromo who were not converted to Christianity did not even get land as burial sites. Therefore, in order to get land, the Torban Obo Oromo were converted to Christianity. The Torban Obo Oromo who lived around Boset Mountain were baptized by *Mämehiré* Tegenu.²⁶⁹ They were forced to throw out their own cultural objects used for different purposes. Their cultural objects like *Caallee*, *Caaccuu* and *Kallachaa* were intentionally rejected

²⁶⁶*Informants*: Rata Jima, Habebe Rayya and Jambo Golle.

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*

²⁶⁸*Informants*: Bose Gada, Dachasa Ifa and Guta Boru.

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*

by the priests and settlers. Thus, the Torban Obo Oromo were expected to throw out these objects in order to accept Christianity. In addition, the priests forced them not work on the days dedicated for saints and angels. Moreover, they were forced to circumcise before the proper age set according to their culture.²⁷⁰

However, the Torban Obo Oromo practiced their ritual practices alongside with Christianity. Though priests ordered them to fast foods and animal products, they ate and drank these animal products in their home. They used their several cultural objects in secret at home. They continued to use their cultural objects like *Caallee*, *Caaccuu* and *Kallachaa* for different ceremonies. But, the significance of these objects were hated by the priests and settlers. This negatively affected the uses of these cultural objects. Thus, the Torban Obo Oromo were forcefully converted to Christianity and became nominal Christians during the Imperial regime.²⁷¹

In addition to religion and cultural institutions, there were the processes of replacing the Oromo towns' names by Amharic names in the *Wäräda*. The name of the capital of the Boset *Wäräda*, Oolan-Citii town was changed into Welenchiti town. The attempts of changing the Oromo town names into Amharic names was not only limited to the Boset *Wäräda*. For instance, Bishoftu town was renamed as Debre- Zeit and Adama town was renamed as Nazereth in the *Awrajja*.²⁷²

The Torban Obo Oromo faced economic, political, social, cultural and religious problems during the Imperial regime. In their land, they were forced to live in severe poverty but their labor and products served the ruling class. Their labor was exploited by the landlords who owned the

²⁷⁰*Informants*: Ragasa Tufa, and Dachasa Ifa and Guta Boru.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*

²⁷²*Informants*: Guta Boru, Dachasa Ifa and Caalii Abara.

extensive land in society. These landlords considered themselves as powerful and superior which psychologically reduced the *gäbbars* into strong feelings of powerlessness and landlessness. In addition, they were socially and culturally humiliated by the Imperial regime.²⁷³

Moreover, the Oromo self-help associations were discouraged during the Imperial regime. The regime banned the Oromo self-help association like Macha-Tulama Association. Though the Association was established with the objectives of eradicating illiteracy, building health centers and schools, constructing roads and developing the cultures of the Oromo, it was officially banned by the government in 1967.²⁷⁴

Finally, the pressure from different groups of society that needed economic and social changes resulted in the end of the Imperial regime. The Imperial land tenure system faced opposition from the scholars of the period. They believed that, to bring both economic and social changes, land reform was very important. Their idea was supported by the student movements of the 1960s. They had opposed the system by using the slogan of “land to the tiller.”²⁷⁵ Their opposition continued until the downfall of the Imperial regime and can be considered as one of the causes that hastened the downfall of the regime.²⁷⁶

²⁷³*Ibid.*

²⁷⁴Dirribi Demissie, *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization* (Finfinne: Finfinne Printing and publishing S.C, 2011), pp.458-460.

²⁷⁵Assafa Endashaw, *Ethiopia Perspective for Change and Renewal* (Singapore: Seng Lee Press Ltd.,2002),pp. 181-182.

²⁷⁶Gebbru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p.13.

Chapter Four

The Torban Obo Oromo from 1974-1991

4.1. Administrative and Political Reforms

The 1974 Revolution brought the end of the feudal system of administration. It resulted in changes in the system of political administration. Moreover, the Revolution brought an end to the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the long rule of the “Solomonic dynasty”.²⁷⁷ The Revolution also ended the Imperial complex land tenure systems which involved private land owners, state and church. Thus, the Revolution abolished landlord-tenant relations and the peasants were liberated from feudal operations and injustice.²⁷⁸ Then, the government came under the control of the Provisional Military Administrative Council commonly known as the *Därg*. The Revolutionary regime carried out different social and political reforms at the national level. In December 1974, the government declared the national campaign for development through cooperation. The campaign consisted of students and teachers from schools and higher institutions.²⁷⁹

In 1975, the government proclaimed a land reform which was intended at bringing a transformation in land tenure system and political structures. The government also established numerous Peasant Associations that served as the lowest administrative bodies of the country. They were given several tasks to implement the proclamations of the land reform.²⁸⁰ The Torban Obo Oromo were experienced these reforms made by the regime. There was the Villagization

²⁷⁷Paul Brietzke, “Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4.(Cambridge University Press,1976),p.637.

²⁷⁸Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press, 1966), p. 197.

²⁷⁹Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State: Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950 -2000s* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2009), p. 142.

²⁸⁰Marina Ottaway, “Land Reform in Ethiopia, 1974-1977” *African Studies Review*, Vol.20, No.3 (African Studies Association, 1977), p.79.

program which was one of the concerns of the *Därg* regime. The land tenure systems among the Torban Obo Oromo were also changed following the downfall of the Imperial regime.²⁸¹

The land reform, Peasant Associations, villagization program, different campaigns and socio-economic developments during the *Därg* regime among the Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda* will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2. Land Reform and Peasant Associations

The *Därg* government abolished the old feudal system and reformed the land ownership of the country. In 1975, the government introduced a new reform to land and society. The regime announced proclamation No. 31 of 1975 to reform the land. The reform got support from the people of the country and was considered as a significant change because it brought a radical reform which was requested for many years. The land and other properties were nationalized and distributed to the landless peasants.²⁸² The Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda* also benefited from the land reform of the 1975. Their land which was shared by the state, church and *balabats* during the Imperial regime was redistributed to them. They got the right to produce on their land after the reform.²⁸³

Therefore, the land reform of the 1975 radically changed the nature of land holding system among the Torban Obo Oromo. The reform had abolished the Imperial land sell and rent that were widespread in the study area. It abolished the landlord-tenant relationship and made farmers owners of the fruits of their produce. In addition, the 1975 land reform proclamation had also

²⁸¹ *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Habebe Rayya and Rata Jima.

²⁸² Teferra Haile Selassie, *The Ethiopian Revolution from a Monarchical Autocracy to a Military Oligarchy* (London: Kegal Paul International, 1997), p.159.

²⁸³ *Informants*: Lamma Boriyo, Habebe Rayya and Bose Gada.

abandoned the intermediaries in the tax collection including *balabats*.²⁸⁴ The proclamation made rural lands, the agricultural and pasture lands under the peasants. Thus, both agricultural land and grazing land became the resources of the peasants after the reform.²⁸⁵

The other immediate action of the *Därg* government was the establishment of the Peasant Associations. The Peasant Associations were formed by the former tenants and landless peasants. They were established as a means to implement the new land reform.²⁸⁶ The Peasant Associations were given the responsibility of land administration, land distribution and settling disputes among peasants. In 1985, the government formed about 55 Peasant Associations in Boset *Wäräda*. The total number of the population of the *Wäräda* during the period was 82, 215.²⁸⁷

Thus, the Peasant Associations distributed land to landless peasants in the *Wäräda*. They were given the tasks of administering public property and solving rural peasants' problems. They had also carried out collectivization and villagization programs in different areas of the *Wäräda*. The peasant associations were established by the society and played significant role in distributing land and solving disputes among the people of the *Wäräda*.²⁸⁸

However, Peasant Associations which were formed during the *Därg* regime in the Boset *Wäräda* had several problems. Though deep study has not been conducted on the formation and performance of peasant associations, the government established peasant associations very

²⁸⁴John M. Cohen, *Revolution and Land Reform in Ethiopia* (NewYork: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 97. ; *Informants*: Habebe Rayya and Lamma Boriyo.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p.38.

²⁸⁶John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2006), p.165.

²⁸⁷MoCT/NALA/ A Report on the Nutritional Assessment of four *Woredas* in Yererna Karrayyu and Haikochena Butajira *Awrajas*, Shewa Administration Region in 1985.; *Informants*: Ragasa Tufa and Dachasa Badhaso.

²⁸⁸*Informants*: Dachasa Ifa, Jambo Golle and Lamma Boriyo.

rapidly. The peasant associations were not perfect in distributing land equally to peasants. They became the sources of disputes in several areas of the *Wäräda*. This complicated the distribution of the land among peasants and became one of the challenges of the 1975 land reform.²⁸⁹

The *Därg* also made a reform to urban land in 1975. The proclamation nationalized all urban land and made urban land the property of the government. It also made a reform to urban houses. The former houses owned by nobilities and government officials were confiscated. This reform aimed at regulating the rent of urban houses. It gave chance to own land and houses for urban landless residents.²⁹⁰ The government nationalized some houses in Welenchiti town. These houses were given to some landless residents of the town.²⁹¹

There were several factors that challenged the land reform in the Boset *Wäräda*. There was continuous drought that affected the Torban Obo Oromo in the *Wäräda* in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, about three thousand farmers in the *Wäräda* needed food support from the government. A letter written from the *Awrajjä* governor, Haile Giyorgis Tasew, to Commissioner Shimelis Adugna requested urgent food assistance to the farmers of the *Wäräda*.²⁹² In 1981, about 41,000 people of the *Wäräda* affected by the drought and needed daily food assistance from the government. They had repeatedly requested food and crop aid from the government. They had also asked seeds like wheat, barley and *teff* for their agricultural activities.²⁹³

²⁸⁹*Ibid.*

²⁹⁰Paulos Milkias, *Haile Selassie: Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia* (New York: Cambria Press, 2006),p.252.

²⁹¹*Informants*: Jambo Golle and Lamma Boriyo.

²⁹²MoCT/NALA/ A letter written from Haile GiyorgisTasew, the governor of the *Awrajjä* to Main Commissioner Shimelis Adugna in 1967 E.C.

²⁹³MoCT/NALA/ ሽ22/ግ/14/3269/ A Report from Aid and Rehabilitation Commission to Ministry of Interior in 1973E.C.

The drought resulted in the rise of the price of the crops in the *Wäräda*. The price of crops like corn, sorghum, barley and *teff* were highly increased in 1981. For example, the Price of corn rose from 30 birr to 75 birr, sorghum rose from 28 birr to 85 birr, *teff* from 45 birr to 85 birr and barley from 25 birr to 60 birr per *Kuntal* in 1981. The rise in the price of crops made the life of farmers very difficult. They sold several cattle to recover from the drought. However, because of the rise in the price of crops, they could not afford to buy crops. There was also a shortage of crops in the market which was caused by the drought. The shortage of crops in the market was one of the causes for the rise of the price of crops in the area.²⁹⁴

In addition, in 1981, there was the rise of the price of cattle in the area. This was mainly because large numbers of cattle died because of the drought in 1980. This resulted in a shortage of cattle in the market. The shortage of cattle in the market raised the price of cattle in the area.²⁹⁵ There were some measures taken by the *Awrajja* administration to rescue the life of the society affected by the drought. The *Awrajja* ordered farmers who lived in the areas rarely affected by drought to contribute money to support the highly affected areas. Nonetheless, this attempt failed because the farmers were not willing to contribute money.²⁹⁶

In 1985, there was another drought that affected the entire population of the *Wäräda*. The drought extremely affected the population and caused food shortage in the *Wäräda*. Twenty four peasant associations were affected by food shortage and 31,960 people of the *Wäräda* needed daily food assistance. The drought resulted in the death of numerous livestock. There was lack of

²⁹⁴*Ibid*

²⁹⁵*Ibid*

²⁹⁶*Ibid*

plough oxen which was caused by the drought. This worsened the life of the farmers and became one of the major problems of the area.²⁹⁷

4.3. The Socialist Reforms of the *Därg* Regime

The *Därg* government introduced several socialist reforms in the country. The government declared the national campaign for development through cooperation in 1974. The Program was commonly known as *Zämäcä* (Campaign) and involved several teachers and students from senior high schools and higher institutions. The *Zämaçöç* (Campaigners) aimed at disseminating the policies of the *Därg* government among the rural population.²⁹⁸ The Campaign for Development Through Cooperation was also introduced to Torban Obo Oromo in 1974. The students and teachers were involved in the campaign and taught the rural population the policies of the *Därg* regime.²⁹⁹

The adults and children of the Torban Obo Oromo were reached through literacy campaign which was carried out by these campaigners. The *Zämaçöç* (campaigners) taught the local people the Amharic alphabets and numbers. They were also taught health and agricultural education. The campaigners expanded literacy campaign to areas of Marko Sala and Dongorre in the Boset *Wäräda*. The adults and children from Dongorre taught in Dongorre Najje literacy campaign center. This center was established during the reign of Haile Selassie to teach the children of landlords in the area. However, the adults and children in most of rural areas of the *Wäräda* were taught under trees and temporary centers established for this program. The regime collected

²⁹⁷MoCT/NALA/A Report on the Nutritional Assessment of four *Wärädas* in Yererna Karrayyu and Haikochena Butajira *Awrajas*, Shewa Administration Region in 1985.

²⁹⁸John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.60

²⁹⁹*Informants*: Jambo Golle, Lamma Boriyo and Habebe Rayya.

several tents from self-help associations like *Idir* for literacy campaign. The adults and children were taught in those collected tents.³⁰⁰

The campaign for development through cooperation was relatively successful in expanding education in rural areas. It had relatively supported adults to read and write in Ge'ez alphabets. It helped adults and children to be familiar with numbers. According to informants several books were distributed by the campaigners to the adults and children in the *Wäräda*. But, literacy campaign had failed to teach these adults and children in their language.³⁰¹ The campaign for development through cooperation was not successful in the area in bringing the intended development. Though there was education on hygiene and agricultural development by the campaigners, there were limited health institutions and agricultural development centers during the *Därg* regime in the *Wäräda*. The local people also believed that the campaigners were sent to them only to disseminate the ideas and policies of the regime.³⁰²

The other major concern of the *Därg* government was Villagization. It was the program that forced peasants to leave their former settlement for the planned villages that were relatively clustered to provide social services. The program was intended to facilitate the delivery of social services like health and education to the people. It was also intended to improve agricultural production and land use of peasants.³⁰³ The government collected and settled the Torban Obo Oromo in selected areas of the *Wäräda* in 1986. Then, the government organized them under different farmers' associations. The Villagization program was carried out in different areas of

³⁰⁰*Informants*: Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Ragasa Tufa.

³⁰¹*Informants*: *Ibid*.

³⁰²*Informants*: *Ibid*.

³⁰³Saheed A. Adejumobi, *The History of Ethiopia* (London: Green Wood Press, 2007),p. 132.

Boset *Wäräda*. It was carried out in the areas like Marko, Sala, Dongorre and others in the *Wäräda*. The program forced the Torban Obo Oromo to leave their former settlements which were mainly around their farm lands.³⁰⁴ Though the program was aimed at providing social services to the peasants collected in selected areas, there were low social services established in the Boset *Wäräda*. However, the regime provided water supply for the peasants settled in Dongorre. The Dongorre villagization program was relatively successful because the government provided water well for the settled population. Thus, the majority of population settled in the area was not dispersed.³⁰⁵

Nonetheless, the villagization program was unsuccessful in the study area. The majority of the settlers had returned to their former settlement areas. This was mainly because the peasants were forced to walk a long way to their fields. The village sites were not chosen based on the interests of the majority of the peasants.³⁰⁶ Moreover, there was lack of social services established for the settled population. There were epidemics which broke out in several areas of the *Wäräda*. But, the government failed to provide health institutions and medical service for the society who had settled together in different village sites. Thus, few promises regarding service provision were fulfilled. This forced the Torban Obo Oromo to leave the planned village sites by the regime to their former homesteads.³⁰⁷

In 1975, the *Därg* government introduced another socialist reform to the country. The government introduced collectivization which failed to get support from the peasants. The collectivization program was intended to involve the peasants in large collective farms by

³⁰⁴ *Informants*: Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Ragasa Tufa.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Informants*: Bose Gada, Bose Lata and Dachasa Ifa.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

leaving their own individual farms. There were some pressures from peasant associations to implement this program in the rural areas of the country. However, the peasants were not willing to leave their own lands. Some peasants joined collective farms in the areas where the government provided incentives like tractors for their agricultural activities.³⁰⁸ The process of collectivization forced the Torban Obo Oromo to leave their fertile agricultural lands. The fertile agricultural lands were given to the cooperatives by evicting the peasants from their own lands. There was the process of distributing less fertile lands to the evicted farmers. This highly reduced the production of the farmers and made their life difficult.³⁰⁹

In addition, the *Därg* government introduced marketing quotas which affected the daily life of the Torban Obo Oromo. During the *Därg* government, there was price control of the crops of the society. The roads were blocked to buy crops from the farmers on the market days with the price set by the government officials.³¹⁰

According to informants the socialist reforms of the *Därg* government affected the socio-cultural and economic developments of the society. The cultures of the Torban Obo Oromo were affected by the government officials. Their cultural instruments used for different purposes were collected from them. For example, the drums used by the society for different ritual practices and ceremonies were collected from them and distributed to the government music associations commonly known *Kinet*. The societies were prohibited from practicing their ritual practices both at *Malkaa* (River) and *Tullu* (Mountain). For example, the annual ritual practice performed at *Karra Torbaa* was protected and biased by the government officials assigned to the area for

³⁰⁸John M. Cohen and etal, “Rural Development Issues Following Ethiopian Land Reform” *Africa Today*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (Indiana University Press, 1976),p.14.

³⁰⁹ *Informants*: Bose Gada, Guta Boru and Dachasa Ifa.

³¹⁰ *Informants*: Bose Gada, Bose Lata and Dachasa Ifa.

different activities.³¹¹ The government also put pressure on the society not to practice the *gadaa* system. The government imprisoned several *foollee* while they practiced their *gadaa* system. This affected the social and cultural practices of the Torban Obo Oromo lived in the Boset *Wäräda*.³¹²

The regime also exploited the labor of the Torban Obo Oromo in different ways. They were obliged to cultivate the lands that belong to the officials of the peasant associations. They were also expected to cultivate the lands of militias engaged in national service. Moreover, the regime affected the Torban Obo Oromo by recruiting their youngsters for national military services. They were recruited as militias to serve the country in different fronts. These youngsters were recruited forcefully and mostly captured on the market days or from their homes without their consent. As a result, the Torban Obo Oromo lost large numbers of their youngsters in wars. This left bad memory on the residents of the *Wäräda*.³¹³

4.4. Infrastructural Development

There was relatively better infrastructure development during the *Därg* regime in the Boset *Wäräda*. There were some attempts to construct dry weather roads that linked different *Qäbäles* of the *Wäräda*. The inhabitants of the *Wäräda* contributed a lot in construction of roads through their labor. They also involved in repairing roads that damaged by flood during rainy season.³¹⁴ However, there was low road infrastructure development during the *Därg* regime in the Boset *Wäräda*. There was no improved road that linked the *Qäbäles* of the *Wäräda* with the capital of

³¹¹*Informants:* Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Lamma Boriyo.

³¹²*Ibid.*

³¹³*Informants:* Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Habebe Rayya.

³¹⁴*Informants:* Lamma Boriyo, Dachasa Badhaso and Rata Jima.

the *Wäräda*. Therefore, absence of improved road infrastructure was the major obstacle for the socio-economic development of the area.³¹⁵

Like other social services, the provision of health care service among the Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda* was underdeveloped during the *Därg* regime. The area was highly infected by malaria which had a great impact on the life of the society.³¹⁶ In Welenchiti town and its surrounding more than four people daily died from malaria in 1981. The area in the *Wäräda* like Biresa was highly affected by the spread of malaria. The report made by rehabilitation commission in 1981 stated that more than twenty five people in this area died from malaria in a month. To give medical support, health expert was sent to Biresa area. Nonetheless, the health expert sent to Biresa area was returned due to shortage of medicine. The shortage of medical supplies resulted in loss of human life in the area.³¹⁷

The shortage of medicine was common in different health institutions established during the *Därg* regime. The *Awrajja* health institutions' officer confirmed that there was shortage of medicine in almost all health institutions in the *Awrajja*. The shortage of medicine was also prevalent in neighbor health institutions of the Boset *Wäräda*. The Clinics like Awash, Awash Melka and Awara Malka were faced shortage of medicine in 1981. The Clinic in Welenchiti town also highly requested antibiotic and Chloro quinine to treat malaria.³¹⁸

Nonetheless, the *Därg* government relatively intervened in campaign to control malaria in the Boset *Wäräda*. Committees were established and reported several malaria cases in the *Wäräda* to

³¹⁵*Ibid.*

³¹⁶*Informants:* Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Tufa and Bose Gada.

³¹⁷MoCT/NALA/ ሽ22/ግ/14/3269/ A Report from Aid and Rehabilitation Commission to Ministry of Interior in 1973E.C.

³¹⁸*Ibid.*

the concerned bodies in the 1980s. These committees visited the areas and people affected by malaria. During the *Därg* regime, some institutions were established in the *Wäräda* to control malaria. There was malaria prevention organization which established to curb the spread of malaria in the area. The organization contributed a lot in the campaign to control the spread of malaria in the *Wäräda*.³¹⁹

To some extent, the *Därg* regime provided better modern education to the Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda*. The regime succeeded in opening some schools and literacy campaign centers.³²⁰ The Torban Obo Oromo children attended modern education in Welenchiti town. Some of the students from different *Qäbäles* of the *Wäräda* enrolled to get modern education in the town. Moreover, education reached the mass of people in different *Qäbäles* of the *Wäräda* through literacy campaign. Both families and children were taught through the literacy campaign. Thus, a significant number of the Torban Obo Oromo participated in the literacy campaign. They were taught Ge'ez letters and Arabic numbers through the literacy campaign.³²¹ Therefore, in addition to the School in Welenchiti town, the literacy campaign centers like Dongorre Najje, Marko and Sala contributed a lot in expanding education among the society.³²²

The Problem of water supply which was common in the *Wäräda* during the Imperial regime also continued during the *Därg* regime. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was severe water supply problem in the *Wäräda* mainly because of the drought. Many areas in the *Wäräda* suffered from water supply problems.³²³

³¹⁹*Ibid.*

³²⁰*Informants:* Habebe Rayya, Lamma Boriyo and Ragasa Tufa.

³²¹*Ibid.*

³²²*Informants:* Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Lamma Boriyo.

³²³*Informants:* Lamma Boriyo, Habebe Rayya and Rata Jima.

In the *Wäräda*, the *Qäbälé* like Harebona was highly affected by the water problem. There was an attempt from the government to minimize the problem of water in the *Qäbälé*. There was the process of distributing water for the residents of the *Qäbälé* by using truck. The Shell Company involved in distributing water by truck for the residents of the area in 1985. However, the truck of the Company stopped its function because of the other tasks.³²⁴ This affected the residents of the area. The Adama municipality was asked by the *Awrajja* to provide water for the residents of Harebona *Qäbälé* by truck. But, the request was failed because the municipality had only one truck which served the town in controlling fire accident.³²⁵

The Adama municipality was not willing both to provide water and to give the truck to Harebona *Qäbälé*. The truck of the municipality had only the responsibility of protecting the resources of the town from fire accidents. A letter from Adama municipality to the *Awrajja* governor stated that the *Awrajja* must take another measure to solve the problem of water in the area. The municipality stated that the car could not provide service for the other areas.³²⁶

The *Därg* government took some measures to solve water problems in the Boset *Wäräda*. In some areas of the *Wäräda*, the regime planned to dig water wells for people. The areas like Galdiya, Malka Jilo, Dongorre and Feto were selected for digging water holes.³²⁷ To save the life of the society who lived around the Welenchiti town, the fuel vehicles passed through the town ordered to provide water to the society. Accordingly, the fuel vehicle owners namely Abebe

³²⁴MoCT/NALA/1873/ A letter from *Balambaras* Tezera Fird Awok, the General Secretary of the *Awrajja*, to *Qänazmač* Solomon Abebe, the *Shäwa Keflä- Hagär* Development Manager in 1967 E.C.

³²⁵*Ibid.*

³²⁶MoCT/NALA/1/024/12633/ A Letter from Adama Municipality to Yerer and Karrayyu *Awrajja* in 1967 E.C.

³²⁷MoCT/NALA/ A Letter from Dawit Kifle Ezgi, Field Operation Manager, to the Aid Commission in 1967 E.C.

Abera, Zeleke Wolde, Alemu Bahirun, Beriha Amde and Zeleke Reta showed willingness and provided water to the society who lived around Welenchiti town.³²⁸

Thus, the owners of the vehicles were ordered to wash and clean their vehicles before fetching water. The people were advised on the usage of water provided by these vehicles for safety reasons. However, the daily activities of these vehicles were providing fuels to the country. They took the responsibility of distributing water to the society on their way to Djibouti. They were also expected to provide water service only to the society who lived along the highway.³²⁹

There was also high water problem in the capital of the *Wäräda* during the *Därg* regime. The water engine which was used to pump water for the town stopped to give services in 1985. This affected residents of the town. The National Water Resource Commission was requested to solve the problem of water in the town. However, the Commission failed to give urgent response to the town and its residents.³³⁰ The problem of water which was caused due to lack of water pump engine continued in 1986. The water pump of the town was not repaired or replaced until 1986. There was an attempt from the government to repair the water pump in the town. The National Water Resource Office borrowed ten thousand birr to the town in order to repair the water pump of the town. However, the process to repair the water pump took more than a year and increased water problem in the town.³³¹

Thus, there was low water infrastructure development during the *Därg* regime in the Boset *Wäräda*. The problem of water was very high in rural areas where there was low government

³²⁸MoCT/NALA/ñ/22/9/35/ A Letter from Assefa Bogale, Aid organizing Office Manager, to Road Authority in 1967 E.C.

³²⁹MoCT/NALA/139/499/67/ A Letter from Haile Leul Getahun to Aid Commission in 1967 E.C.

³³⁰MoCT/NALA/h/2637/558/2/ A Letter from Abebe Tilahun to the Ministry of Interior in 1967 E.C.

³³¹MoCT/NALA/1432/813/68/ A Letter from Yared Shibeshi to the Ministry of interior in 1968 E.C.

involvement. Some attempts were made by the regime to provide water for rural areas were unsuccessful because of low intervention. The attempt to dig water ponds for rural areas was affected by the continuous shortage of rain in the area in the 1980s. The residents of rural areas were forced to travel long distance to get water for their consumption.³³²

Generally, the Torban Obo Oromo in the Boset *Wäräda* was constantly affected by natural disasters. They straggled with locusts, epidemics and drought and crop failures throughout the *Därg* regime. There were lacks of social services established to serve the population of the *Wäräda*. The problems of social services were very high in rural areas. This affected their daily life and resulted in the death of several people of the area.³³³

4.5. The Torban Obo Oromo on the eve of the Downfall of the *Därg* Regime

The Torban Obo Oromo were interested in some of the reforms of the *Därg* regime. The reforms made by the government on the land helped them to own lands. The land reform abolished the landlord-tenant relationships which exploited the labor of the Torban Obo Oromo. They acquired the right to produce on their land. In addition, they got grazing land for their cattle. Thus, the reform made on the land acquired the support from tenants lived in the Boset *Wäräda*.³³⁴ However, the other socialist reforms of the regime faced opposition from the Torban Obo Oromo. The socialist reforms of the regime like collectivization and villagization were opposed by the people. These programs were mostly carried out without the consent of the masses by the government which was finally resulted in the failures of the programs. The villagization program exploited the labor of the Torban Obo Oromo. They were forced to construct several houses in

³³²*Informants:* Dachasa Badhaso, Ragasa Gurmu and Ragasa Tufa.

³³³*Ibid.*

³³⁴*Informants:* Bose Lata, Tullu Bushe and Guta Boru.

selected village sites for the program. Thus, they spent their time and labor on constructing these houses. This affected even their agricultural activities because the program of villagization consumed their time.³³⁵

The collectivization program also faced opposition from the Torban Obo Oromo. The program forced them to leave their fertile land to the collective farmers. They were obliged to farm on less fertile lands. This reduced their production and resulted in opposition of the program.³³⁶ The *Därg* policy on conscription of militias for national military service was also highly opposed by the Torban Obo Oromo. The youngsters were recruited for the national military service by force. This increased the opposition to the policy of the *Därg* from the Torban Obo Oromo.³³⁷

In another way, the *Därg* government failed to stop conflicts broke out in several areas on the border of the Torban Obo Oromo. There were border conflicts in the Boset *Wäräda* which was mainly prevalent during the *Därg* regime. These border conflicts affected the daily life of rural inhabitants. The conflicts were mainly caused because of grazing land and cattle raiding. The conflict occurred between the Argobba and the Torban Obo Oromo on the border endangered the life of rural areas. It intensified cattle raiding and deteriorated the relation of the people.³³⁸ As a result, there were low trading ties between the Argobba and the Torban Obo Oromo because of conflicts. These conflicts created tension among the society lived on the border of the Boset *Wäräda*. The regime failed to solve border conflicts in the area. This resulted in the outbreak of

³³⁵*Ibid.*

³³⁶*Ibid.*

³³⁷*Informants: Ragasa Tufa, Boru Hawas and Dawiti Cala.*

³³⁸*Ibid.*

several conflicts caused by grazing land and cattle raiding. It also paved the way for other conflicts mainly between the Karrayyu and Argobba.³³⁹

During the *Därg* regime, there were continuous conflicts on the border which was created tension among the society. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were permanent conflicts in the neighbor areas of the Torban Obo Oromo. There was conflict over pasture and water resources between the Karrayyu and the Argobba. There were cattle raiding which intensified the conflicts between the Karrayyu and Argobba. There were also conflicts between the Arsi and the Karrayyu.³⁴⁰ Such conflicts affected the daily activities of the Torban Obo Oromo who lived on the border. It resulted in creation of minor border conflicts with the Arsi. However, this minor border conflicts stopped and the people maintained harmonious relationships with the Arsi. The conflict between the Argobba and the Torban Obo Oromo continued and there was no peaceful relationship throughout the *Därg* regime.³⁴¹

These conflicts and cattle raiding on the border areas were highly increased on the eve of the downfall the *Därg* regime. There was high problem of security which highly threatened the life rural populations. The problem of security worsened during the transition period and gradually was controlled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).³⁴²

³³⁹*Informants:* Boru Hawas, Guta Boru and Lamma Boriyo.

³⁴⁰Buli Edjeta, "The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Development Induced Impoverishment: The Case the Karrayyu Oromo of the Upper Awash Valley" (Social Anthropology MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University), pp.76-78.

³⁴¹*Informants:* Guta Boru, Rata Jima and Boru Hawas.

³⁴²*Informants:* Guta Boru, Dachasa Ifa and Bose Gada.

Conclusion

The Torban Obo Oromo had predominantly settled in eastern Shäwa. They live in the towns of Welenchitii, Nura Hera, Bole, Doni, Bofa, and in many rural Qäbälés of Boset *Wäräda*. The Torban Obo Oromo belong to the Tulama Oromo branch. The Tulama Oromo are divided into three main clans known as Daaccii, Bachoo and Jiillee. The Daaccii clan is divided into three sub-clans namely Galaan, Oboo and Sooddoo. The Torban Obo are: Gumbichu, Obori, Gulalle, Yayya, Ekka, Digalu and Gamu. From the Torban Obo Gumbichu is the elder. Thus, Gumbichu is referred to as *Abba Seeraa* in *Afaan Oromo* which literally means Father of Law.

The Torban Obo Oromo moved to their present settlement from the areas of Finfinne. They used to settle in and around Finfinne for a long period. However, the pressure from the Shäwn rulers evicted them from their settlement and pushed them to the area they inhabit today. For example, the pressure from Menilek II forced Gullalle Oromo to leave their land to the conquerors and move to the areas of east Shäwa.

The Torban Obo Oromo had long practiced the *gada* system. They used to practice their political and religious affairs at Odaa Nabee. In addition to Odaa Nabee, they used to perform their prayers at *Karra Torbaa*. *Karra Torbaa* is the renowned place located on Boset Mountain. They are also active participants of the *Irreechaa* Ceremony. They practiced both *Irreechaa Malkaa* and *Irreechaa Tullu*. The Torban Obo Oromo used to solve their socio-political and economic problems through peaceful means. They have significant social values in mitigating conflicts. These conflict resolution systems were *Jaarsumma*, *Gumaa*, *Siinqee*, *Kallacha*, *Caaccuu*, *Bokkuu* and *Qaallu*.

The Torban Obo Oromo have different wedding systems and wedding arrangement process. The types of marriage practiced by the Torban Obo Oromo were *Irra Yaasa*, *Dhaala* (Levirate), *Hawwii* and *Buttaa* (Abduction) and *Kadhaa*. There were marriage arrangements before the

wedding among the Torban Obo Oromo. One of the major arrangements was *Uumoo*. *Uumoo* was the process of sending elders to the family of the bride by the groom or his family. The other major marriage practice among the Torban Obo Oromo was *Rakoo*. It was a sacrifice of a goat or a sheep to the new bride.

The Torban Obo Oromo have both peaceful and hostile relations with their neighbors. There was hostile relation between the Torban Obo Oromo and the Argobba. Nevertheless, the Torban Obo Oromo have peaceful relations with the Arsi Oromo, the Karrayyu and Adama.

The Torban Obo Oromo in the past were pastoralists. There was substantial land for grazing which supported the practice of animal husbandry among the Torban Obo. However, gradually agriculture became the major economic activity among the Torban Obo Oromo. They produced wheat, barley and *teff*. In addition, they produced vegetables like potatoes and different fruits.

In the early 18th century, the Tulama Oromo underwent a decline in social, political and economic aspects due to internal and external factors. The power of the *gada* system had started to diminish in the central part of Ethiopia. The decline in the *gada* power also resulted in the decline and loss of unity among the Tulama Oromo. The main reason for the weakness of the Tulama Oromo was the occurrence of disunity among different clans. The decline of the power among the Tulama Oromo resulted in the attacks from the Amhara. The Shäwan rulers repeatedly overrun the Tulama land. For example, Amehayes, Asfawesen, Wasenseged and Sahile-Sillassie occupied the Tulama land. They used different techniques in order to incorporate the Tulama Oromo in general and the Torban Obo Oromo in particular. For example, one of the major techniques used to incorporate the Tulama Oromo was to create conflicts between the clans. The other technique used by the Shäwan rulers to incorporate the Tulama Oromo was marriage alliance. The marriage alliance was made between the Shäwan leaders and the Tulama Oromo. They Shäwan rulers also used religion to incorporate the Tulama Oromo into their

kingdom. Menilek II also made several campaigns in different directions and assigned effective war leaders to incorporate the Tulama Oromo and their land. The conquest of the Tulama Oromo in general the Torban Obo Oromo in particular by Menilek had tremendous religious, political, social, economic and cultural repercussions.

The land holding system among the Shäwan Oromo was changed following their inclusion into the Ethiopian Empire. The coming to power of Haile Sillassie had further tightened the land holding system among the Torban Obo Oromo. There was full control over the appointment of officials in the area. The *gäbbar* system was highly strengthened in the study area. Thus, the Imperial land tenure system among the Torban Obo Oromo had far reaching adverse effects on the majority of the people. These effects include landlessness, insecurity of tenure, tenancy, eviction or mass exodus, share cropping and labor services.

The *Därg* government introduced several socialist reforms in the country. However, these reforms were not successful among the Torban Obo Oromo.

Glossary

Abbaa Bokku.....	a leader of <i>gada</i> in power
Abbaa Muda.....	the spiritual leader
Abbaa Seeraa.....	father of law
Ayyanaa.....	sprits
Bokkuu.....	scepter held by Abba <i>gada</i>
Caaccuu.....	a sacred ornament worn by women
Caffee.....	general assembly
Galma.....	the sacred house
Gumaa.....	indemnity for the loss of life
<i>Irrecechaa</i>	thanks giving
Jaala.....	friendship
Jaarsa Biyyaa.....	the elder of the country
Kallacha.....	a type of metal used to solve conflicts
Korma.....	bull
Malkaa.....	river
Mootii.....	king
Odaa.....	Oak tree
Qaalluu.....	religious institution
Rakoo.....	marriage oath and ceremony
Siinqee.....	ritual stick hold by married woman
Tullu.....	mountain
Uumoo.....	marriage arrangement process
Waaqa.....	sky god
Wadaja.....	ritual practice performed by the believers
Waddessa.....	strait and respected stick hold by elders
Jaala.....	friendship
Jaarsa Biyyaa.....	the elder of the country
Kallacha.....	a type of metal that is obtained from a fallen thunder

Kormaa.....	bull
Malkaa.....	river
Mootii.....	king
Odaa.....	holy tree served as political center of the Oromo
Qaalluu.....	religious institution
Rakoo.....	marriage oath and ceremony
Siinqee.....	a straight and thin stick held by woman
Tullu.....	mountain
Uumoo.....	marriage arrangement process
Waaqa.....	sky god
Wadaja.....	ritual practice performed by the believers
Waddessa.....	strait and respected stick held by elders

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List of Informants

No.	Name of Informants	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	Birqi Dhugo (W/ro)	60	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	She has invaluable information on the influence of Orthodox Christianity on the socio-cultural practices of the Torban Obo Oromo.
2	Boru Hawas (Ato)	62	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He is a resourceful informant on the socio-cultural practices among the Torban Obo Oromo.
3	Bose Gadaa (Ato)	60	26/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has reliable information on the land tenure system and the history of the Tulama Oromo in Boset <i>Wäräda</i> .
4	Bose Lata (Ato)	72	12/12/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has invaluable information on the history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
5	Caalii Abara (W/ro)	59	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	She has a good Knowledge on the cultural objects of the Torban Obo Oromo.
6	Dachasa Badhaso (Ato)	70	22/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has invaluable information on the early history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
7	Dachasa Ifa (Ato)	65	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has good information the land tenure system during the reign of Haile Selassie and reforms of the <i>Därg</i> regime.
8	Dagafa Dachasa (Ato)	57	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has a good knowledge on the Torban Obo Oromo relations with their neighbor.
9	Dawiti Cala (W/ro)	62	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	She has a good knowledge on the reforms of the <i>Därg</i> regime.

10	Gamachu Chala (Ato)	60	20/10/2010 E.C	Adama	He is a good informant on the <i>Gumaa</i> system among the Tulama Oromo.
11	Girma Ragasa (Ato)	60	26/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He is a good informant on the marriage systems among the Torban Obo Oromo.
12	Guta Boru (Ato)	60	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	His father was the landlord during the reign of Haile Sellassie. He has good information on the land tenure system in the area.
13	Habebe Rayya (Ato)	60	22/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has a good information on the education system during the <i>Därg</i> regime.
14	Jambo Gole (Ato)	68	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has invaluable knowledge on the history of the Oromo in Boset <i>Wäräda</i> .
15	Kubaya Ayane (W/ro)	60	26/10/2010 E.C	Adama	She has good information on the cultural history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
16	Lagasa Ragasa (Ato)	56	26/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has good information on the cultural history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
17	Lamma Boriyo (Ato)	72	22/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has a good knowledge on the early history of the Torban Obo Oromo in Boset <i>Wäräda</i> .
18	Mokonnin Roba (Ato)	63	23/06/2010 E.C	Abomsa	He is the Gullalle Oromo living in Arsi. His families were from Shäwa. He is invaluable informant on the history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
19	Mul'ata Tufa (Ato)	73	23/06/2010 E.C	Abomsa	He is living in Arsi but his families were from Shäwa. His information on the settlement patterns of the Tulama Oromo is important.

20	Ragasa Gurmu (Ato)	62	22/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has a good Knowledge on the traditions of the Torban Obo Oromo.
21	Ragasa Tufa (Ato)	75	26/10/2010 E.C	Adama	He has a good knowledge on the ritual practices of the Torban Obo Oromo.
22	Rata Jima (Ato)	53	23/10/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He is a good informant on the economic basis of the Torban Obo Oromo.
23	Rorisa Gado (Ato)	64	23/06/2010 E.C	Abomsa	He is the Ekka Oromo and lived in Arsi. His families were from Shäwa. He is a good informant on the <i>gadaa</i> system.
24	Sefa Ragasa (Ato)	50	26/10/2010 E.C	Adama	He is a good informant on the trading activities of the Torban Obo Oromo.
25	Tilaye Wolde Giyorgis (Ato)	65	23/06/2010 E.C	Abomsa	He is living in Arsi but his families were from Shäwa. He is a good informant on the eviction of the Tulama Oromo from different parts of Shäwa.
26	Tullu Bushe (Ato)	72	12/12/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He has invaluable information on the history of the Torban Obo Oromo.
27	Zanaba Boru (Ato)	61	23/06/2010 E.C	Welenchiti	He is a good informant on the marriage arrangements among the Torban Obo Oromo.

Declaration

I, the under designed, declare that this thesis is my work and all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Girma Geda

Signature _____

Place: College of Social Sciences

Addis Ababa University.

Date of Submission: Nov.19, 2018.

Appendix-1

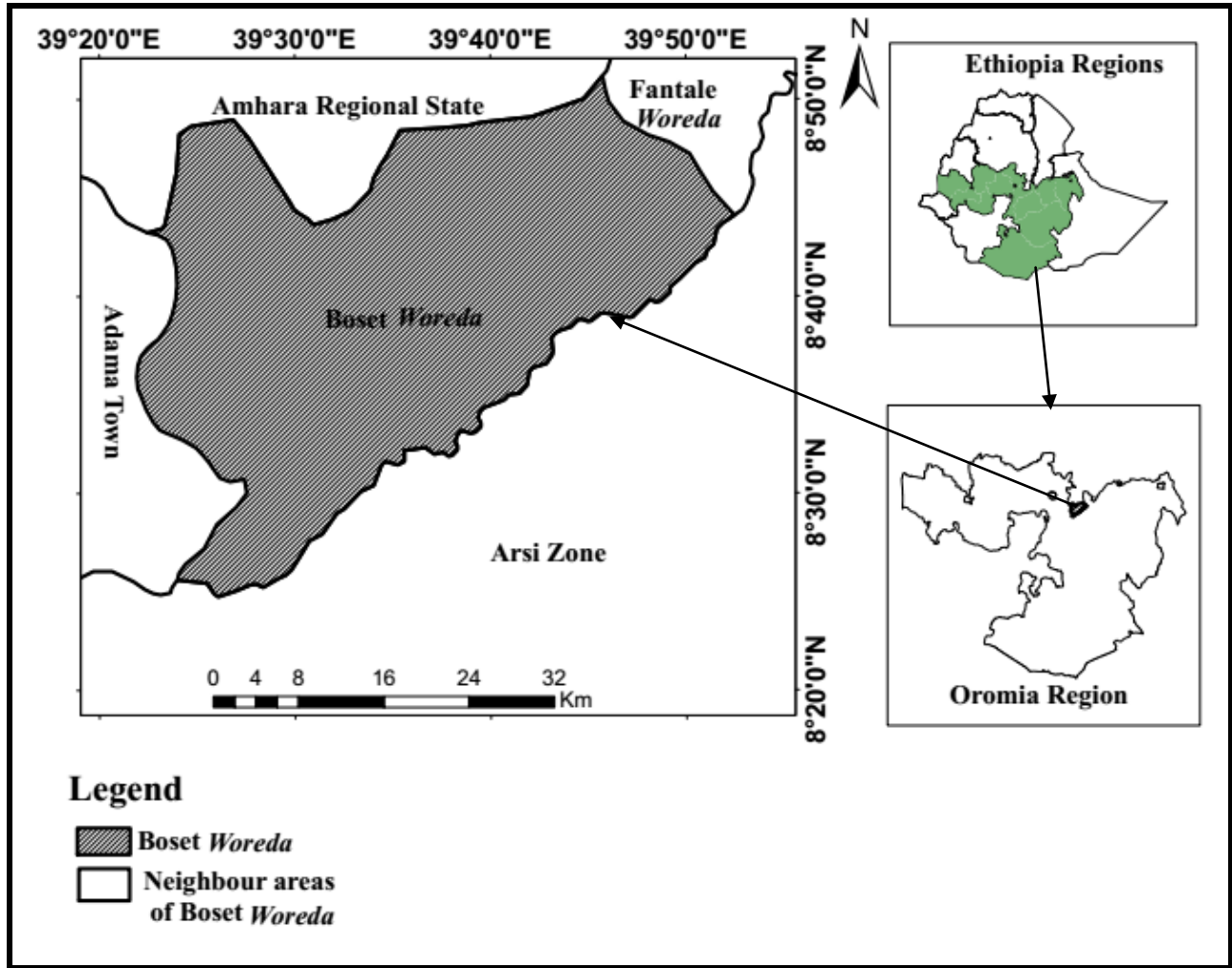
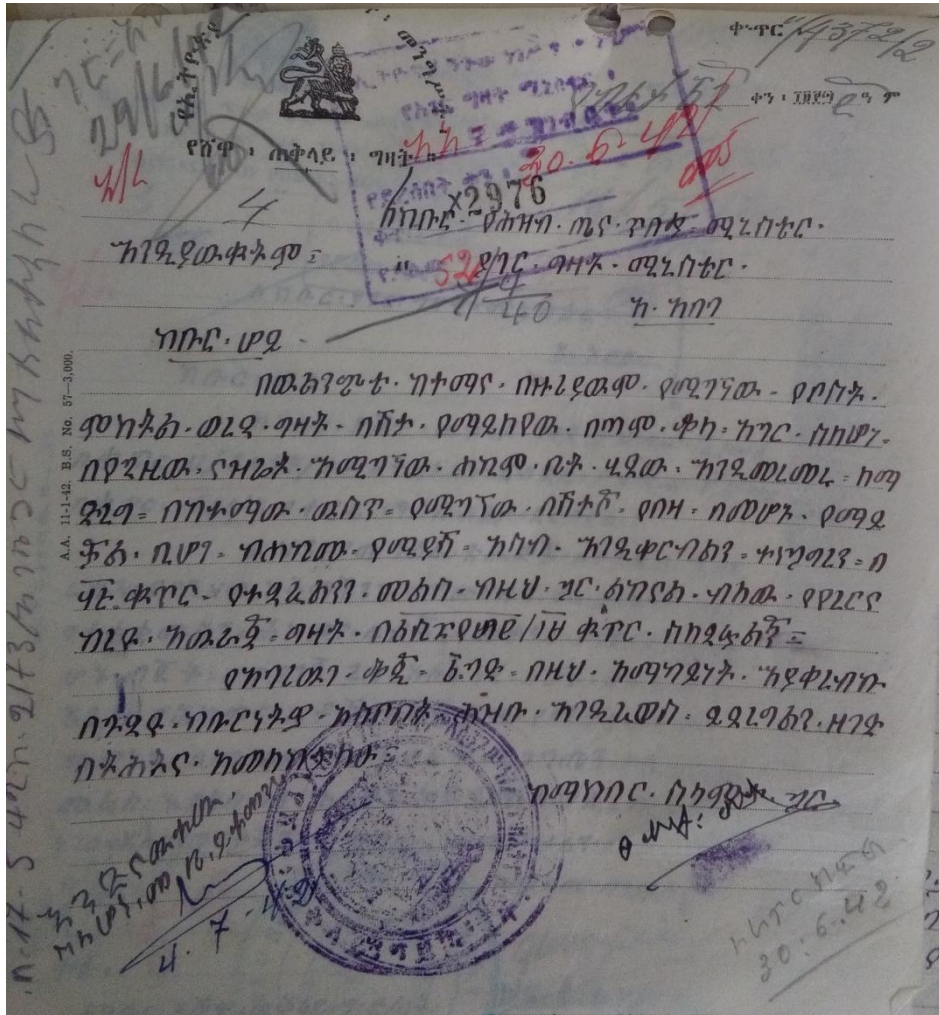


Fig.1. The Map of the Study Area



Key to Transliteration Systems

Vowels	Symbols	Examples
1 st order	ä	በ =Bä
2 nd order	u	ቡ=Bu
3 rd order	i	ቢ =Bi
4 th order	a	ባ=Ba
5th order	é	ቤ=Bé
6th order	e	ብ=Be
7th order	o	ቦ=Bo

Sounds

Consonant	Symbol	Example
ጠ	Ṭ	ጠቅላይ = Ṭäqalay
ሸ	Š	ጋሻ = Gaša
ሸ	Ṣ	መልክሻ = Mälkeña
ቸ	Ĉ	ደጃዝማች = Däjazmaĉ
ቀ	Q	ቀበሌ = Qäbälé
ጭ	Ç	ጭቃ ሸም = Çeqa Šums

AFAAN OROMOO TRANSLITERATION

1. The Oromo Vowels

Short	Long	Example
a	aa	<i>Waaqa</i>
e	ee	<i>Seeraa</i>
i	ii	<i>Siinqee</i>
o	oo	<i>Uumoo</i>
u	uu	<i>Caaccuu</i>

2. Consonants

Oromo consonantal phonemes are geminated by doubling the phonemes. For example, 't' in *Buttaa* 'abduction' is geminated.

There are phonemes used in the thesis which are represented by paired alphabets. These are ch, dh and sh.

Sound	Example
ch	<i>Irreechaa</i>
dh	<i>Haadha</i>
sh	<i>Shanan</i>

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge many individuals for their generous support in the completion of this thesis. First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor professor Tesema Ta'a for his patience throughout the whole work of my thesis and for his constructive comments.

Secondly, my heartfelt gratitude goes to Hailu Megersa for his genuine cooperation and assistance during my field work. I would also like to acknowledge all my informants for their invaluable cooperation and information during the field work. My appreciation also goes to the workers of National Archives and Library Agency for their patience in serving me with best cooperation. My special gratitude also goes to my colleagues Desta Sharew, Girma Ragasa, Bahiru Arega and Tilaye Zewdie for their moral support during writing the thesis. My deepest appreciation extends also to my family and friends who supported me during the writing of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my wife Helen Megersa for her all rounded support during my work.

Abstract

This thesis attempts to reconstruct the history of the Torban Obo Oromo in the period between 1855 and 1991. It tries to explore changes and continuities in the social, economic and political systems in this period.

The thesis was conducted through a systematic data collection from various sources of information. The extensive library based research was done to gather information from both published and unpublished sources. It also depended on collection and analysis of archival sources from National Archives and Library Agency. Moreover, oral sources which collected from the elders of the study area were used to reconstruct the history of the people.

The thesis starts with a description and analysis of the traditions on the origin and settlement patterns of the Torban Obo Oromo. The Torban Obo Oromo mainly occupied central Shawa in the sixteenth century. They moved to eastern Shawa to escape the hardships imposed on them by the Shawan-Amhara rulers. Therefore, the thesis attempts to address how and why the Shawan-Amhara rulers repeatedly overrun the Tulama Oromo land from the beginning of the 18th century. Moreover, it attempts to reveal the socio-cultural, political and economic history of the Torban Obo Oromo. They underwent a transformation in social, political and economic aspects due to internal and external factors from the beginning the 18th century. These socio-political transformations resulted in the decline of the gada power. The thesis also attempts to explore the process of the Torban Obo Oromo conquest by the imperial army of Menilek and its impacts on the socio-economic and political systems of the Torban Obo Oromo. Their inclusion into the Ethiopian Empire had tremendous religious, political, social, economic and cultural repercussions.

The thesis also attempts to explain the exploitation of the Torban Obo Oromo under the oppressive gäbbar system. Their land holding system was changed following their inclusion into the Ethiopian Empire. Then, then landlord-tenant relationships were emerged. The Torban Obo Oromo were forced to provide several services to their landlords. Thus, they were expected to share their produce and rendered labor service to the landlords. In addition, some attempts made in the developments of infrastructure were another major emphasis of the thesis under the imperial regime. Finally, the historical significance of the 1975 land reform, the establishment of Peasant Associations, collectivization and villagization programs which undertaken by the Därg government are discussed in line with their success and failures among the Torban Obo Oromo.

