

CONTINUITY AND CHANGES IN
THE STATUS OF WOMEN: *THE CASE OF ARSI
OROMO LIVING ADJACENT TO UPPER WABE
VALLEY (DODOLA)*

By

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*Continuity and Change in the Status
of Women: The case of Arsi Oromo Living
Adjacent to Upper Wabe Valley (Dodola)*

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Preface

This thesis, entitled *Continuity and Change in the Status of Arsi Women* attempts to explain the lives of Dodola Arsi Oromo women and economic and cultural repercussions on their status.

It outlines the main reasons for the relegation of the status of Dodola Arsi women. The paper also highlights the relevant socio cultural features of this society in general and that of women in particular. It also describes the major social, cultural and economic changes which have occurred in the society both as a result of cultural contact and introduction of “modernity”. Therefore, the paper is divided into five parts. The first chapter introduces statement of the problem and literature review, objectives of the study, methodologies used for the selection of the research sites and data collection, field experience, limitation of the study.

In chapter two, background of the study area and the people is discussed. In this chapter geographical setting and socio-physical environment is discussed at large. Traditional institution of Dodola Arsi men and women and their impacts on the status of Dodola Arsi women is the main focus of this chapter. Under this heading *Gada*, *Ateete* and *Qanafaa*, *Siinqqee* and *rakko* institution will also be discussed. In the same chapter the impact of religion on the status of Dodola Arsi women is also briefed.

Chapter three states briefly the important aspects of tradition of the status of Arsi Oromo of Dodola. Thus, this chapter highlights the socialization and status as concept and

practice, preference to Male-born child, socializing males and females to different tasks and roles, and the social position of Dodola Arsi women.

Chapter four contains the gist of the topic: continuity and change. In this chapter, Dodola Arsi Oromo marriage and its impact on the status of women, rare forms of marriage practices, sex-related crimes perpetrated on Dodola Arsi women, Modern Education and its Impact on the status of women is viewed. In the same chapter gender constructed status change of Dodola Arsi Oromo women and the status change of Dodola women from Economic Determinism theoretical perspective is subsequently presented. The last chapter, summarizes the whole discussion and makes concluding remarks about the status of Dodola Arsi Oromo women.

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to explain the causal factors for relegation of the status of Dodola Arsi women both from cultural view and economy determinist approach through a comparative study of Serofta and Nagelle Meexamo PAs. To this end, it begins with a discussion of social organization which shows that, according to the traditional social category, there are five levels in the form of Kinship structure in the Dodola Arsi Oromo. Namely: *Mana*, *Warra*, *ardaa*, *balbala* and *gosa*. These are interconnected with lineages and clans. Traditionally, there is *Gada* practices which governs the political, economic and cultural life of the Dodola Arsi Oromo. However, women are excluded from the *Gada* class which is the main source of public status. Nevertheless, there are women's institution like *ateete*, *Qanafaa*, *Siinqee* and *rakoo* by which women safeguard and defend their interest both in the family and in the community. These are female enterprises.

The study has found that in both PAs, there are similar cultural and economic environment which have direct impact on the status of women. Thus, both in Serofta and Nagella Mexama, the socio-economic status of women is lower than that of males which emanated from sex biased socialization ideology in particular, and socio cultural values in general. Based on this, it is argued that cultural values exert substantial influence on the status of women. In this thesis, it is also argued that in Serofta and Negelle Meexama, traditional social status of women persists, albeit in altered forms, long after fundamental changes took place in their political and economic base under the disguise of "modernity". Traditional marriage practices which have impacts on the status of Dodola Arsi women also persisted with slight change in forms. Rare forms of marriage practices which do not have cultural approval and which entails negative impact on the

status of women are also introduced. With that, sex related crimes were also perpetrated on women. However, though modern education is introduced, it did not change much the status of Dodal Arsi women. Their participation is very low both in schools and professional fields. This have direct repercussion on economic self-reliance of women. The women are still fettered with traditional norms and values both in domestic and public sphere.

Through an analysis of economic achievement of individual women, it was argued that within the framework of structural opportunities and constraints, there is some place for women to improve their economic condition which help raise their low economic status. The economic prospect of women as an individual and category can be elevated by reconsideration of women's traditional institution, by increasing decision making power of women both in the household economy and in public, by facilitating women's accessibility and control of resource particularly to agricultural lands and imputes and promoting women's technology through intensification of education opportunities. In the final analysis, it was suggested that the present low position of Dodola Arsi women is the result of both cultural and economic leverage which made their male counterpart superior in community in general, and in the household in particular.

CHAPTER ONE

BASIC CONCEPTS, LITERATURE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Basic Concepts: Change, Social change, Status, Continuity.

The dictionary meaning of change are so many. One of these is "Something new and fresh used in place of something old" (Logman Dictionary of English (1986). However, the meaning given in this way is narrow and not descriptive. The meaning given by Nisbet (1972:2) is more plausible and comprehensive. According to Nisbet "change is a succession of difference in time in persisting identity". three important facts can be observed from this meaning. When change takes place, there is an observable difference; with observed difference, there is reference and duration of time in which the difference appeared; and with the change that appeared, identity of the subject under change persists. On the other hand, from anthropological perspective, Malinowski (1954), Brown (1972), Persell (1987), Farely and Macionis (1990) defined social change as a readjustment of social structure. Although the definition given above have their own points of emphasis, they all revolve around [alteration] in something and/or phenomenon which is also the focus of this paper.

The other important concept in this work is the term "status" Linton (1936:113-114) defined 'status' as the place of individual in society defined as a collection of these right and duties with

role defined. However, "Weberians"¹ (1960:105-106) accepting the above definition, emphasizes 'class' and that both "class" and "status" have close interacting relations and that the latter is determined by the former.

Gould and Kolf (1964:647) argue that in modern social science status denotes position in a social system involving reciprocal expectation of action with respects to occupant of other position in the same structure. The latter definition emphasizes place of respect or prestige within a social system. Thus, in this thesis, I have made use of both Linton's and Weber's understanding and definition of status though other meanings are not ruled out. On the other hand, in this context continuity is the perpetuation of cultural patterns [status]. Every human society has social past. Past commitment exerts a powerful influence on the way that societies respond to current circumstances. So, because of historical influence, and because of complex web of interrelationship, societies usually do not adopt to new conditions optimally. Barrett argues that there are always elements that persists from prior condition and that inevitably sets limit to future flexibility enforcing continuity or persistence of status patterns. In sum, it is commitment to tradition both in theory and practice (A.Barret, 1991:211-215).

So the general nature of social change and factors affecting the status of women are among issue of acute debate between scholars for long a time. One of points among the debate was the cause of social change which is the focus of the next sub section.

1.2 Review

1.2.1 Controversies on The Theory of Social Change.

The on going debate on theories of social change tends to be a formulation of the problem either in conflict frame or in a functional frame. Proponents of the two schools of thought, however, seldom reach a point of operationalizing variables and testing propositions.

Among the proponents of conflict frame, Karl Marx and Fredrik Engels were the vanguards. Marx (1970:11-13) advanced a dialectical theory in which an impulse within a society is a force which pushes everything towards change. Accordingly, it is an inner conflict or contradiction

¹ Weberians- Adherants of theory of Max Weber

which leads to change in a society. So, as to assert his theory, Marx explained the issue of social change as follows:

When we are thinking about social change and trying to identify causes, the basic contradiction we must look for are of three main kinds: Contradiction between the productive force and production relation: contradiction between the economic bases and the ideological superstructure, and contradiction which may exist within the superstructure itself..." (Ibid.,)

Thus, Marxian theory stress and emphasizes the economic contradiction in the society as a sole manipulator of social change. According to this model, the process of change is dynamic and ever changing. However, this is not palatable for the functionalist trends. Malinowski (1945: 15,19,26,31,741,1960:119)) developed anti Marxian view of the issue denying, the occurrence of whatsoever change of traits except satisfaction of new needs.

For Malinowski, if at all change occurs, it is through cultural contact which may occur through conflict, cooperation and compromise between indigenous and intrusive culture. So, for functionalists, the units of transformation are not traits but organized system of institution.

Though there is no land breaking difference between the view of functionalists, and structuralist, the structuralist model as advanced by Firth (1951:61) underlines the interaction between and individual and group within established structure as a cause for social change. Accordingly, for a change to be dynamic, it must allow for individual action. So structuralist firmly argue that it is not an interaction of culture that bringforth change. This theory emphaizes the role of individual in social change. Parsons (cited in McLeish 1969:65-66), on the other hand, argues that, as the concept of system implies interdependence of the elements or variables, there is no predetermined causal sequence in the sense that some single overriding factor is responsible for initiating change. According to Parsons's view, then, the Marxist dichotomy of base and

superstructure has fallen short of locating the source and process of change in the economy. For Parsons, the crucial focus lies in the system as a whole with no specified loci.

So unlike the Marxian Mode, "Parsonnians"² Ibid.,71-72 recognize change as manifestation in the form of boundary phenomena. Accordingly, its appearance is signaled by a breach of a boundary wall of society. The breakthrough brings into play various adjustment mechanisms which come into action in other parts of the system. Disturbance of equilibrium could be either endogenous and/or exogenous. Both kinds of change work together influencing each other. Genetic change in the population, change in the technique of exploiting nature, or in the form of cultural influence or war are among instances of exogenous causes of change. On the other hand, endogenous changes are attributed to strains within the system itself. These strains result from certain disequilibrium between input and output across the boundaries of the sub-system. Several things can happen to these stress and strains as they can be resolved, arrested, isolated or compensated for by change in the structure of the system. Adjustment within a system will normally be associated with reorganization of role. This can take several forms, involving the disappearance or the creation or the modification of roles. Changes of this kind are more complex and continuous than changes where roles are not affected. (Ibid.,)

Thus according to Parsons (Ibid) unless affected by slight changes, it is only large scale innovation that affects value. To involve value in the process of change, social innovation must be both large scale and of high impact. Accordingly, changes in value rapidly affect norms and work back through sub collectivities to roles. Before change takes place, ancient allegiance must

² Parsoninas's Adherants of theory of Tallot Parsons's

be broken. This study examines whether such abstract sociological model holds true for Arsi Oromo of Dodola.

The most profound social changes are associated with, and marked by change in the integrative subsystems. Such change may be produced by outside factors. For example, religious beliefs may be taken over from some other group. Social value can get changed from within. Norms, rules and values associated with religious beliefs within, may profoundly resist the change (Ibid.,). When summed up, Parson's theory of social change underlines that there is no predetermined causal sequence in the sense that some single overriding factor is responsible for initiating social change. So, he asserts that social change takes place as a result of the interaction of multiple factors both from within and out side the system. However, Weber (Cited in Marie and Neal,1965:2) agrees with Marx interpretation that, ideas reinforcing the new economic order are created from the discontent within the old order, and hence are embodied in the history of that old system. In fact he disagreed with Marx as value is class determined. This according to Weber narrows the functions of value.

Nevertheless, when summed the cause for social change is complex and interrelated. It cannot be attributed to certain causal factors. Therefore, as this study cannot view all these complex factors, it will examine status aspect of social change of the Arsi Oromo of Dodola from two antagonistic theoretical perspectives; from within and without.

Undoubtedly, “status” is an aspect and reflection of socio-cultural development. But the most theoretical wrangling around women's status at present is whether status is a product of biology or culture and/or whether it is dynamic or static. What are the causes for women to have lower or higher status? What are the different theories and debates among the scholars on the issue? Is

there status change in the life of Dodola Arsi women? What are the causal factors? What are elements of changes? Do women have equal status with men? What factors arrest and/or promote the changes? Are there elements of continuity in the status of Dodola Arsi women? What socio cultural and economic factors are responsible in arresting the status change? These will be the subject of the subsequent discussions.

1.2.2 Status Construction And Equality -Inequality Debate

The theory of gender and gender constructed status has a very short history when compared to other perspectives. It is only since the last three decades that the issue of women in general and their position in and contribution to society in particular started to deserve attention (Keesing 1989:1981). In fact, no concrete reason has been in a place for such an invisible position of women.

One obvious reason for relegation of women into secondary position, lies in their biological sexual difference from men as Rogers states: *It is thought "natural" that a women's place is in the home and that she has a very specific set of tasks which are thought to be universal because they are based on the biological imperative of sex. The most important role for women, defining their entire life is portrayed as the bearing and bringing up of children (1980:11)*

Elaborating the matter further from western cultural view point west and Zimmerman (1991:15) argued that "... *Things are the way they are by virtue of the fact that men are men and women are women, a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing in turn preformed psychological, behavioral and social consequences*". Although the term biology¹ by itself is generic entailing further unpacking, undoubtedly, it has been a bedrock for the differential

¹ Recent argument such as by Money (1988) indicate that the biological sex difference between men and women is not distinct rather a continuum made up of chromogonal (sex, gondal sex and harmonial sex).

conception of men and women, and as a consequence for obscuring the social position of women at large.

I too, sharing this concern, reviewed relevant theoretical formulation in the light of Dodda Arsi Oromo on gender role and the resulting social position of women as follows.

Tiger (1969:64) sharing the idea of biological determinists asserts that men's domination in politics and occupational spheres is the result of an in-built male bonding character, involving in turn power, force, crucial or dangerous works, and the conscious exclusion of female from such bonding. Tiger's argument stresses that the underlying factor for male domination and female subordination is the physical difference. This physical difference in turn gives rise to the differential socialization culminating in a role differentiation between women and men. He explains: *I have suggested the fact that males are stronger than female, that they are directly socialized to accept and use violence, that they form the major structure of defense and police in all community, all generally reflect a genetically programmed behavioral disposition (Tiger, 1969:86)*. Even though he tried to perceive women's subordination at cultural level's differential role performance, his emphasis rather rests on the function of biological difference (men are physically stronger, but women are weaker).

However, the seemingly unshakable biological paradigm in the differential explanation of women no longer continued unquestioned. Thus, since the nineteenth century, the study of women has gained a new dimension. Feminist scholars began probing into factors that relegated women to lower position. By examining classical literatures and comparing and contrasting it with objective conditions of women, they (scholars) have been attempting to identify the factors. Probably the work of Margaret Mead (1935) is a pioneering one. In this respect, in her work "*Sex*

and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies," she discussed about the category of "Men" and "Women" stressing the "maleness" and "femaleness" as cultural constructs and that they vary from culture to culture [entailing variable status]. Following Mead's seminal work, however, on intensive work on gender was rare until early 1970s. Nevertheless, since 1970s, the debate around gender related status has been intensified as generated particularly by the feminist movement.

In the continuing study of women's status in a society, conceptualizing "gender" as an analytical category has increased and gradually replaced the focus on women. This is because gender appeared to provide the key for talking about differences between men and women without assuming universal male dominance and female subordination, and relying upon linked dichotomies based on the ideas about the biological bases of sexual differences. (Bormand and Jonathan 1996, Waylen 1996)

Though different meaning and interpretation are given to "gender", if not identical the explanation given on the relation between men and women are similar regardless of the form they may take. Barbara Rogers (1980: 12-13) contrasts gender with sex. According to Rogres, "Sex is a physical distinction [While] gender is social and cultural". Viewing gender (but not sex) in terms of the division of labour, she also states, "In talking the division of labour between men and women in different societies, we are talking exclusively of gender roles [from which status is derived] rather than the sex roles which are determined by biology".

Rogers's argument identifies two major points: that the division of labour between men and women is gender based, and that gender is social and cultural construct while sex is biological. And this implies that status is also the reflection of gender roles.

Taking the argument a little further, Elson (1995) discusses gender in terms of social relations that differentiate male situation from female situations. She states:

Gender relations are the socially determined relations that differentiate male and female situations. people are born biologically female or male, but have to acquire a general identity. Gender relations refer to the gender dimension of the social relation structuring the lives of the individual men and women, such as the gender division of labour and gender division of access to and control of resources (1995:1)

Elson's view of gender relation defines the position of male and female members in the socially and culturally arranged structures. Her argument is more important for it touches upon gender construction not merely as a mere division of labour between sexes, but also as gender favored rights, access to, and control of resources [which are the resources of prescribed status].

From both arguments of Rogers and Elson, what we can comprehend is that, gender constructed at social and cultural level prescribes normative roles and right to its male and female members entailing respective statusquo. Other scholars like Lorber and Susan (1991:11) however, look at gender not as a stable and unchanging but as being produced within a given social and historical context consisting potential for change. Unlike the argument of Rogers and Elson, these scholars view that individuals with their active involvement either can do gender in ways that maintain the status of relation or challenge them.

In the discussion of the relation between women and men and their status, the point that immediately comes to mind is the natural sex difference (biological disparity) that symbolically and physically differentiates them. Natural sex difference, as a function of biological factor, categorizes women and men into different lines heralding the resultant difference as predeterminers. However, Lorber and Susan's (1991:8) arguments indicates natural difference of men and women to be significant but being widened in the process of doing gender.

An equally important debate regarding gender constructed [status] is the public/domestic dichotomy. A number of scholars seem to agree that the status of women is not equal to that of men for different reasons. For Rosaldo and Ortner (1974:7-10), women confined to the domestic sphere do not have access to the sort of authority, prestige and cultural values which are prerogatives of men. Hence they conclude that women's status and prestige are shaped by their association with the domestic world. I too, sharing this concern, have reviewed relevant theoretical formulation in the light of Arsi Oromo community of Dodola' . However, Rosaldo has not completely ruled out the physical difference between men and women. But she tended to see it at cultural and social level where men's activities are accorded more recognition than those of women. Her observation stresses that an asymmetry in the cultural evaluation of male and female and the importance assigned to women and men appears to be universal. She says: *Every where from those societies we might want to call most egalitarian to those in which sexual stratification is most marked, men are the lover of culture value.. everywhere men have some authority over women, that they have a culturally legitimate right to her subordination and compliance. (Ibid., 4)*

Therefore, according to Rosaldo, women's unequal footing with men in public spheres contributed to the universal subordination of women. And as a recommendation, she underlines that women will gain power and equal value with men if they are able to transcend domestic limits either by entering men's world or by creating a society of themselves. (Ibid.,4)

On the other hand, Ortner (Ibid., p 73) in her nature-culture dichotomy model, explained that culture has the ability to transform. As she puts, it "socializes nature". In her analytical framework, she categorized women with nature, and men with culture. Ortner's assertion

logically goes like this: if nature is subordinated to culture, by implication, women are subordinated to men [hence they have low status when compared with men].

Basing her conclusion on the work of Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Leacock (1972) attempts to attach the beginning of status differentiation to the development of monogamous marriage and private property in which male usurped the decision making power of women (particularly in production sphere). Accordingly, the emergence of class society abolished the previous structure of communal living and communal ownership and has transformed women's socially necessary labour into a private service of the family. She asserts that:

Women's low status did not simply follow their declining importance in food production when men moved into agriculture... However, what was basic was that this transition [from primitive classless society to class society] occurred in the context of developing exploitative relations whereby communal ownership was being undermined, the communal kin group broken up, and the individual family separated out as an isolated unit, economically responsible for the maintenance of its members and for the rearing of the new generation. The subjugation of the female sex was based on the transformation of their socially necessary labour into a private service through the separation of the family from the clan. (Leacock 1972:40-42)

Leacock's argument stresses that the separation of the family from the clan and the institutionalization of monogamous marriage has paved the way for the development of private property which ended in the subordination of women to men. Leacock did not say women's productive labour ceased with the emergence of class society. But in class society, it lost its value of social significance and came to be controlled by men who headed the independent family. In short, according to Leacock (Ibid., Fasto sterling 1992:12), the development of private property, brought in the confinement of women to a single family and removed their previous decision making power which has resulted in the subordination of women to men [thereby relegating the status of women].

Studies in Africa display that the advent of colonial administration has exacerbated women's subordination to men in a family by reshaping Africa's gender relation. Colonial governments reshaped the gender relations of Africans as a result of the introduction of cash crops as solely controlled by men. Women who previously had equally participated in production with men (even surpassing men in most cases), and who almost had equal decision-making power in production, have been relegated to the production of subsistence foods. The benefit of cash crops as exchange value and the producing technology remained to be men's monopoly (Davison 1988, Koopman 1995, Guyer 1984, Bryieson 1995) (stated in Davision 1988:13).

Davison's argument indicates that the introduction of cash crops not only realized men's benefits from the sale of cash crops, but also their increased right over women's uncompensated labour for cash crop production. In this manner, the colonial governments have widened the gender relation gap and hence intensified the subordination of women in an un-precedented way.

On the other hand, the status of women in Ethiopia is repeatedly indicated to be secondary and inferior to men (Hanna 1990, Levine 1974). But the underlying factors of this inferiority are not properly established. Perhaps the work of Zenebework Taddesse (1982:217) is notable in trying to investigate causes of women's subordination in Ethiopia. She argues that the overall patriarchal system of kinship structure and absence of women's access to the land-holding rights are the main factors of women's subordination in this country.

Although studies among the Oromo do not show much about gender provoked status of women in relation to men, owing to the patriarchal nature of the society, women are generally considered inferior to men (Trimingham 1965:190, Huntingford 1969:33).

Despite the lower status of women, Trimingham (opcit) argues that the social position of Oromo women is good. According to him, Oromo women have many rights that would enable them to make considerable influences. However, he did not mention the type of rights that the Oromo women have and the influence that they could make.

On the other hand, Asmarom (1973:20) in his intensive work among the Borana Oromo seems to agree with Trimingham as regards the better social position of Oromo Women. But unlike Trimingham he took it further by explaining the gender relation aspect of the society. For Asmarom, there are two separate domains (domestic and public) for the respective roles of women and men in the Oromo society. According to this classification, the domestic domain belongs to women as the public domain is to men.

He further explains that, in spite of the explicit right of a man as a household head, *abba manaa*; it is a woman who has a defacto control over the domestic scene. All activities performed within the domestic domain including the preparation and distribution of food, sleeping arrangement, etc. are managed by women. Likewise, all public tasks including knowledge of complex ritual procedures fall within men's public domain. Gender role reversal is shame and is imposed as a taboo. So, such a strict gender division of labour coupled with taboos against role reversal contributes not only to a cohesive and an integrated nature of the family, but also to the better position of women in the family (Ibid., 20-22).

Although Trimingham and Asmarom stressed the better social position of women among the Oromo, they did not deny the relative superior position of men (Trimingham 1965:190, Asmarom 1973:20). In fact, it is Asmarom who provided us with a sound explanation concerning the better social position of Oromo women. However, he too, hardly dealt with the social and cultural

explanations for the devaluation of status of Oromo women. This study seeks to bring forth such socio-cultural explanation in the light of Dodola Arsi Oromo.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Gender derived status, as one of the reflections of social relation, has increasingly received the attention both in academic and practical areas. Undoubtedly, it has become an issue of global concern. In Ethiopia, too, gender derivated status of women has become more debatable than ever before. Despite this, however, there exists a gap in understanding the dynamism of gender derived status in the country at grass root levels. The gap becomes even wider as the meaning and understanding given for gender derived status varies from culture to culture. In a broader sense, this study seeks to contribute its part to the better understanding of the relation between gender role and status and elements of continuity and change in the light of Arsi Oromo of Dodola.

As gender is a social and cultural construct, (Rogers 1980:12) [status too, is the reflection of gender role. So, logically status is also a social and a cultural construct]. As Elson (1995:1) put it, in the process of construction, gender differentiates male situation from female situation and defines men's and women's position in the society. So, it is in the process of gender construction that culture embedded status of men and women is established. This in turn promote the structure of domination and subordination on the feminine (West and Zimmerman 1991, Lorber and Susan 1991). In the social and cultural construction of gender derived status, women's and men's positions remain asymmetrical. As Rosaldo pointed out, women may be important, powerful and influential, but it seems that, relative to men of their age and social status, women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority (1974:17).

Different scholars forwarded different factors for the lower value attached to women. Tiger (1969:86) and his groups had given physical weakness of women as an underlying differential socialization and the differential enactment of prescribed roles.

However, according to Rosaldo (1974:23), because women are confined to domestic sphere, men whose domain is in public overtook the control of domestic domain of women. On the other hand, Ortner (Ibid.,) argues that the pan-cultural second status of women has to do with the symbolic identification of women with nature as opposed to men's association with culture. This is to relate to women's responsibility to bear children, while men's being in the realm of culture, is to socialize and culturize them the idea which strengthens the supremacy of male over women in one way or another.

Studies in Ethiopia, in generic terms, show women's inferior status compared to men's (Hanna 1990, Levine 1974, Zenebework 1982). Nevertheless, these studies do not explain much about the underlying reasons for women's inferiority in the society. Moreover, Ethiopia is a country of different nations and nationalities whose cultures vary greatly. For instance (Lemlem, 1974, Guday 1998) emphasized economic and socio-cultural variables for the relegation of the status of women in Ethiopia. The issues related to marriage pattern, inheritance right, access and control of resource and the typical socio-cultural set up of ambilineal social organization of northern Ethiopia. But these factors may not apply to Arsi Oromo women who are in different socio-cultural set up. By the same token Dejene (1994) seems to focus on the denial of access of women to land. So, this study attempts to examine if these socio-cultural and economic variables are contributive to Arsi Oromo women of Dodola. Also, it tries to establish socio-cultural explanations for the subordinate position of women among Arsi Oromo.

1.3.1 Objective of the study

1.3.1.1 General objectives

The general objective of this study was collecting and documenting ethnographic data for explaining continuity and change of status among Arsi Oromo women of Dodola. Arsi Oromo consists mainly of *Abiyyuu, Doda, Futtalle, Baabboo, Hebano, Gannataa*, sub clans under *Sammuu*, the son of Mando Arsi of *Bareentu/Barii aantuu/Oromoo Mando* Arsi Oromo constitute one of those Oromo communities where indigenous Oromo social, economic and political practices are simultaneously is alive with encroaching social change activities. The community involves itself into the imposed change situation but still with great preservation of its own socio-cultural practices. Despite this, however, so far no anthropological studies have been conducted in this area. Indeed, under the general survey of Oromo in Ethiopia and Sikko Arsi Oromo in Arsi land proper, different scholars directly or indirectly touched upon the Arsi Oromo at large under which Dodola Arsi Oromo is classified. But research with particular reference to any aspect of this community has hardly been undertaken. Therefore, I believe that my ethnographic account will pave the way for further anthropological research and will ameliorate the scarce literature in this field.

1.3.1.2 Specific Objectives

Status, as a socio-cultural reflection, is one of the societal dimension, that establishes socio-economic relations between females and males. The gender relations established and status are characterized and generated by differential assignment to labour tasks, control over decision making, and differential access to and control over the allocation of resources (Davidson 1988; Elson, 1995). Gender constructed status combined together with other factors, structure the

position of women and men in the social arrangements of the society. Moreover, gender division of labour assigns and prescribes tasks to be performed by men and women within limited or cross cut domains. Thus, as its specific objectives, this study seeks to:

- 1 Explore aspects of marginality across the roles women and men play in Dodola Arsi Oromo.
- 2 Assess the relative status of Arsi women in relation to their differential access and control of resources.
- 3 Investigate the role and impact of social dimensions such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc, that affects the status of Arsi women.
- 4 Investigate the level and extent of gender inequalities and its continued impact on the status and development of Arsi women.

1.4 Research Methods

I conducted an indepth interview with key informants (11 women and 11 men 2 *Gada* officials and 4 *Saddeetaa* women) and learned the overall cultural practices and the social position women have from their cultural perspective. I also interviewed adults of all age groups (married and unmarried) of both sexes to check whether the cultural practices and norms are effectively guiding the day-to-day lives of all age members. I made careful observation of inter and intra sex interaction to see the status of women grouping as aged, married, unmarried, wealthy, widow and poors. I have made an indepth interview with four Arsi Oromo civil workers (2 male teachers, 2 female teachers and chairperson of Dodolaa Woreda women association). I have also held focus group discussions to learn the extent and dynamics of change in the women's day-to-day life in the community in general and in family in particular.

Disaggregating into women categories was purposive, while the selection of individual respondents was random. Both structured and semi-structured questionnaires have been prepared and used for the survey. I also employed two enumerators (1 men and 1 women) for fifteen days.

For the purpose of examining individual lives through the mirror of the community's social and cultural fact, a number of individual's life histories and cases were collected and analyzed. Thus, my research combines both qualitative and quantitative methods with a major emphasis on the former one.

1.5 Field Experience

When I first decided to study the status of Arsi Oromo women in Dodola both from continuity and change, I was confident that I could build up the field data by staying only few weeks among the community. My assumption was that since I happen to be an Oromo by birth and have some five years of contact with the community as a social worker, few weeks of observation and interview with key informants would suffice to add upon the knowledge I already have.

With this assumption, I arrived in Dodola (a center for Dodola district) in August 2001. After making a careful assessment, I decided to limit my study to two adjacent peasant associations: Seroftaa and Nagelle Meexama. Three main reasons were behind the selection of these sites. Firstly, unlike other peasant associations of the district, Arsi Oromo predominantly inhabit these peasant associations. The peasant association's rosters show that over 90 percent of the inhabitants belong to Arsi Oromo of *Sammu* group. Secondly, the community sustains itself on plough cultivation in addition to livestock raising. And finally, the community is the most

potential area in the district where the Oromo culture and tradition is in practice along with social changes induced. Until I assessed and arrived at my selected and specified research site, my assumption of "I know much about the culture and few weeks field work will suffice" was in full life. But my "easy-going work" conclusion began relinquishing gradually as I was probing in. As I held light interviews with the first round key informants, I began learning quite interesting cultural practice and realized that my initial assumption was definitely wrong. This realization gave me an opportunity to reconsider my slightly formulated research methods. With this awareness, I reformulated my data collection methods in a manner that would enable me record and learn the cultural practices of the community in general and women's overall status and roles in the family in particular.

During the second round field work, using the refined methods, I started studying about the community just from the scratch.

1.6 Limitation of the study

Inspite of the intensive efforts made to fill every gap, the study has got its own limitations. Time constraint during both data collection and analysis was the major limitation that is worth mentioning. Three months of field work is inadequate for the qualitative and quantitative collection of data on such sensitive issue. For analytical purpose, too, it was not easy for me to identify and also to have easy access to relevant materials on such newly developing concepts and issues. Lack of relevant works on Arsi Oromo was also worth mentioning in this regard. I believe that the existence of previous relevant works would have been useful, had they existed, not only for providing me with the primary picture of the community, but also for making comparative analysis.

Chapter Two

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA AND THE PEOPLE

2.1 Geographical Setting and Social -Physical Environment

Bale is located in Southeastern Ethiopia nearly bounded by the rivers of Wabe Shebele to the north and east, and Ganale to the south and west. Latitudinally, it is found between 5⁰ 22' and 8⁰ 08'N, and longitudinally between 38⁰ 52' and 42⁰ 14' E (Source: Oromiya Regional State Statistical Abstract 1994). The Somali Regional State borders Bale in the South. Bale is divided into three major altitudinal zones. These are *badda* (highland), *badda dare* (intermediate) and *Gammojji* (lowland). The *badda* zone which is conducive for agriculture activity includes Dodola.

The topography of most of these woredas is largely plain 68.3% between 500- 1500m high above mean sea-level (*Ibid*). In some areas, the land as high as Mount Batu which is 4300m. This climatic zone has a mean annual rainfall of 800 to 1000 millimeters. The rest of the woredas of the region are in the intermediate and lowland zone, with their population clinging to animal husbandry (*Ibid*).

Bale is endowed with considerable amount of water resources. Natural spring water emanates from the high plateau. While the rivers of Wabe Shebele and Genale are the major ones, Manna, Wayb and Walmal are also notable rivers in the zone. Besides, one of the national parks, the Bale Mountain National Park is also found in the province. The Park has varieties of mammals and birds which are endemic to Ethiopia. The Mountain Nyala and Menelik's Bush Buck are the

major attractions (Source: Bale Department of Information and Culture's unpublished report 1996).

The latitudinal and climatic variations largely determined the pattern of settlement and occupation of the people of Bale. Out of the 1,271,864 inhabitants (According to 1994 census), the overwhelming majority live in the highland areas with a population density of about 20 persons per square kilometer. Hence, Dodola is one of the highland areas where the highest percentage of density is observed. In these areas, various crops like barely and wheat is widely produced. Nonetheless, the main economic activity of the area is livestock keeping.

As stated above, animal husbandry is practiced along with agriculture. The latter is practiced in small homestead farms. But, prior to the conquest of Menelik II, land was communal property. And therefore there was no private ownership and inheritance of it. What practically had existed was use right which could be obtained by customary agreement.

2.2 Population

Currently Bale (See Map II) is one of the 12 zones of Oromiya Regional State administrating in turn 17 districts. It has an area of 67,280km² covering 18.3% of the total area of the country. Among the total population of 1,217,864, the rural and rural town population proportion makes 1,087,557 (83%) and 130,307(10.7%) respectively (Housing and Population Census of Ethiopia 1994). Out of these,613,969 are said to be females.

According to 1995 'Oromiya regions administrative restructuring, Dodola has a total of 38 PA's (See Map IV and for lists in the appendix). The district has a total population of 126,495 out of which 65,370 are females (CSO,1994.Vol 1, Part I, P.212) .

Table 1: Population Distribution of Dodola District
By Sex

Ser No.	Description	Both Sex	M	F
1	Rural Population	109,519	52,903	56,617
2	Urban Population	16,976	8,222	8,754
3	Total Population	126,495	61,125	66,370

Source: House and Population Census of Ethiopia 1994.

As Can be seen from Table 1, both in rural and rural town population, the number of female exceeds the number of males by 5245. Thus, the total female population of the district is 52.46% of the total population.

Dodola was named after one of the Arsi Oromo clans who was the early settlers of the town, and the town is located at 320 kms south of Addis Ababa. The town hosts a total population of 13,847 living in two Kebeles. The town also hosts almost all district level governments line ministers. My study site is located on northeastern side of Dodola town falling within the approximate range of 15-25kms from the town.

The study site consists of two Kebeles named Seroftaa and Nagellee Meexama. The two Kebeles are a combination of the previous eighteen

It was the 1995 administrative restructuring that merged these PAs together. The two PAs comprise a total population of 48,022 and a total rural household of 9321 (Source :CSO,1994).

Eventhough Oromo of the two PAs predominantly belong to Sammu ,one of the Mando Arsi cluster groups, it consist the following sub-clans: Abiyu Doda, Futale Baboo Hebana and Geneta which in turn have subsumed about 25 lineages in total. Thus, my thesis in this context represents largely the people of Serofta and Nagelle Meexama Kebeles who infact are part of the Oromo Society at large.

2.2.1 Historical Background

It seems unswerving truth that the Oromos are single ethnic group both in Ethiopia and the horn. So, despite statistical difference, a substantial number of historians, anthropologists and other authorities agree that the Oromo people are numerous in Africa (Bartel,1983:12-13, Aguliar 1995:1; Tesemma 1987:7). Patrilineality and patrilocality define the basic social pattern of the society. Supporting the idea, Hirut (2001:48) (Citing Mirgisa) put that the Oromos are distinct peoples who have common ancestry, common language and territory.

As regards the original home of the Oromo people, recent literature says that it is some-where in Arsi and Bale. On the other hand, extending the conclusion reached by Haberland, (1963), Mohammad (1990:4) specifically tells that the original home of the Oromos was in the cool highlands of Bale (in the zone under research) around Madda Walabu.

There are conflicting traditions why the Oromo left their original home at Madda Walabu. According to Arsi Oromo tradition, there had been an animal known as “Hammawayi”. This animal which eats people and is said to have enforced the evacuation and the dispersal of Galanticha (Galan), Machicha (Macca),and Arsicha (Arsi) in different directions. This idea is

shared by Abas (1982:23). However, Lews (1974:79-80) emphasizes that the movement of Arsi is part and parcel of Oromo expansion which was dictated by ritual and military expedition against enemies and a search for fresh land which accommodates swiftly growing population.

In what ever direction, for what so ever reasons the Oromos might have left their Original home, the first Arsi Oromo settlement was the present day Bale. Be this as it may, there is a controversy about the early inhabitants of Bale and Arsi. Relying on his sources of informants, Abbas (1983: 25) argues that the early occupants of Bale and Arsi were the Dawaros who later were kicked out by the Hadyas whom the Arsi Oromo confronted during the Great Oromo migration of 16th century.

On the other hand, Trimingham (1952:18) considers that the Dawaro were the Sidama people. However, the Arsi tradition does not accept this premise. Because, the Arsi elders argue that the Sidams had never been in the place and that the Hadyas' are early Proto Oromos who later have been submerged into proper Arsi Oromo clan.

2.2.2 Economic Life

According to Arsi Oromo oral tradition, before they left Madda Walaabu, the main food of the Arsi's was milk, meat and butter. And, their cloth was well-dressed skin. There is, therefore, a justification that they were semi-pastoralists dependent mostly on their animals and their products for survival. However, Bahirey, Ethiopian monk of the 16th Century-recorded that it was during this time that agriculture became supplementary and barely the holiest crop to the degree unknown before (Bahrey 1954:114-117). But this deviates from the oral belief that the

Oromos were not only pastoralist but also cultivator. Probably what might have been true is that they had small farming with extensive animal husbandry.

Nevertheless, craftsmanship and trade are said to have not been encouraged by the Arsi people because it is taken for granted that it is the occupation of non-Arsi or the castes (Abas 1982:6).

It is less probable that before Menlik's II conquest, social distinction and differentiation based on wealth began to emerge and the gap between rich and poor became observable. The parameter of differences seems to have been the number of cattle an individual possessed (Ibid., P.52).

Undoubtedly, Bale has got agro-pastoral economy. For the Arsi Oromo of Bale, animal husbandry plays an important role and the province is among the richest in south eastern Ethiopia, in this regard. The Bale Arsi Oromo like other Oromo groups are cattle breeders and that makes them part of the dairy complex which extends from east Africa down southward to the continent (Hirut citing Lexander).

So for the Arsi Oromo of Bale, the main source of economy is not dominantly agricultural product but cattle and sheep. However, as Haberland explicitly argues, the Arsi Oromo are not exclusively pastoralists (1963:773). Thus, in the area under study, the main feature of activity is mixed farming. Though, there are substantial areas where enset is intensively cultivated, it is Garbu (barely) and Qamadii (wheat) that are used as a cash crop. Infact, Garbu and Qamadii are both source of cash and item of consumption in this part of the highland Bale. So, it is not surprising that Bale is one of the most suppliers of barely in Ethiopia. Hirut citing Haberland (2001, 01) explicitly emphasizes the importance of Garbu (barely) in the life of Arsi people. And, still today, this is an unswerving fact. Barely is also considered as the holiest crop. And

both cattle and barely have ritual value and butter with barely makes the most delicious food of the Arsi Oromo. Among the qualities required of Arsi women is possession of the skill to combine them and prepare different kinds of delicious food for husbands and their family.

Animals are highly valued in the area under study. The most common type of animals include horses, sheep, goat and cattle. The Arsi attach greater social and economic value to their animals. As Hirut (2001) and Haberland (1963) put it, the life of an Arsi Oromo particularly that of women is highly attached to the possession of animals' product. Because, in the past and even at present, the only source of income for Arsi women is butter. On the other hand, cattle and sheep are suitable animals for sacrifice. So, in Arsi, animals are both sources of income and prestige in the society in general, and are object of scarifies in particular.

2.3.0. Social Organization

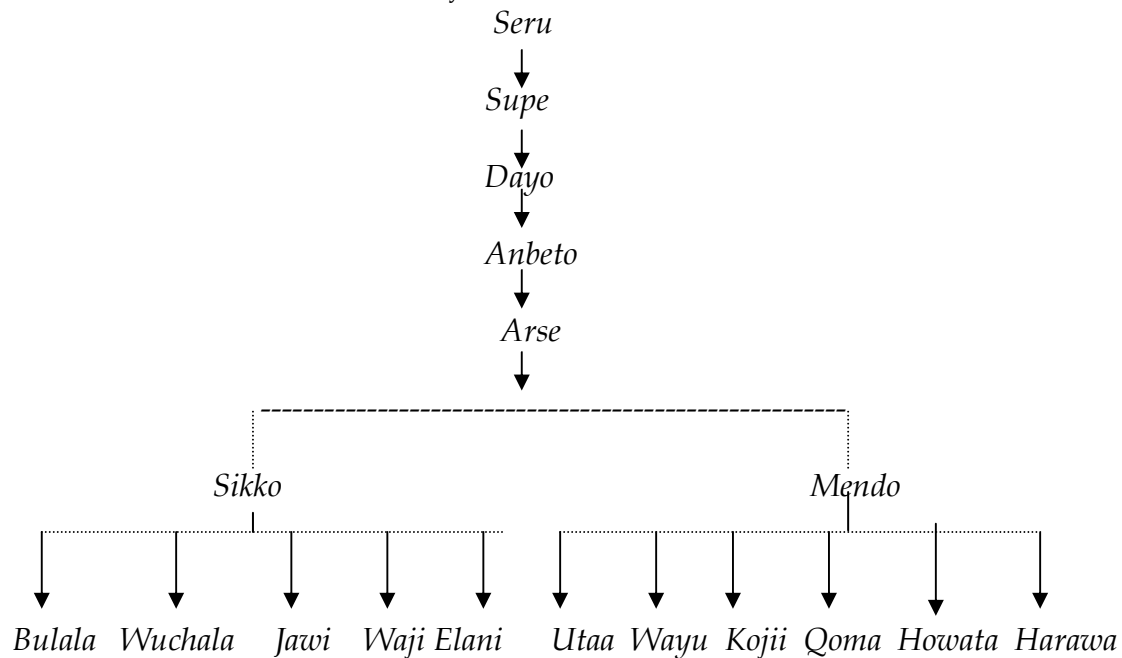
2.3.1. Lineage, Clan and Kinship Among Dodola Arsi Oromo

According to Mardock (1949), a group constitutes a clan if the following three specifications are met. First, it must be based explicitly on a unilineal rule of descent which unites its central core of members. Second, a group must have residential unity. Third, a group must exhibit actual social integration (1949:68). The Mendo Arsi Oromo do fulfil these specifications. In the first place, their rule of descent is patrilineal. Second, they have strong residential unity though not in a delimited boundary. They are found in an interaction and integrated manner. And finally, they exhibit a strong and first rank interclan member social organization. Another condition by which a group forms a clan is if it composes a number of lineages (Firth,1951:53). Mando Arsi Oromo fulfil this criteria, too. They consist of a number of lineages and they trace descent from

common ancestor without any difficulty. Each clan member easily specifies his own lineage that belongs to that particular clan. Some even specify lineages in other than their own clan. This is because the rule of marriage strictly requires this knowledge. The Arsi Oromo heavily practice transhumance even today. Interclan relationship and cohesion among Arsi is very strong. 'Arisoma' being an Arsi is a welcoming feature and a cohesive force as well. At a larger structure, the Arsi clans living in research site have not been separated from one another. All stories and myths refer to the Sammu clans at a time.

Figure 1. Genealogy of Arsi Oromo Patrilineage

Source: Abas Haji (1982)



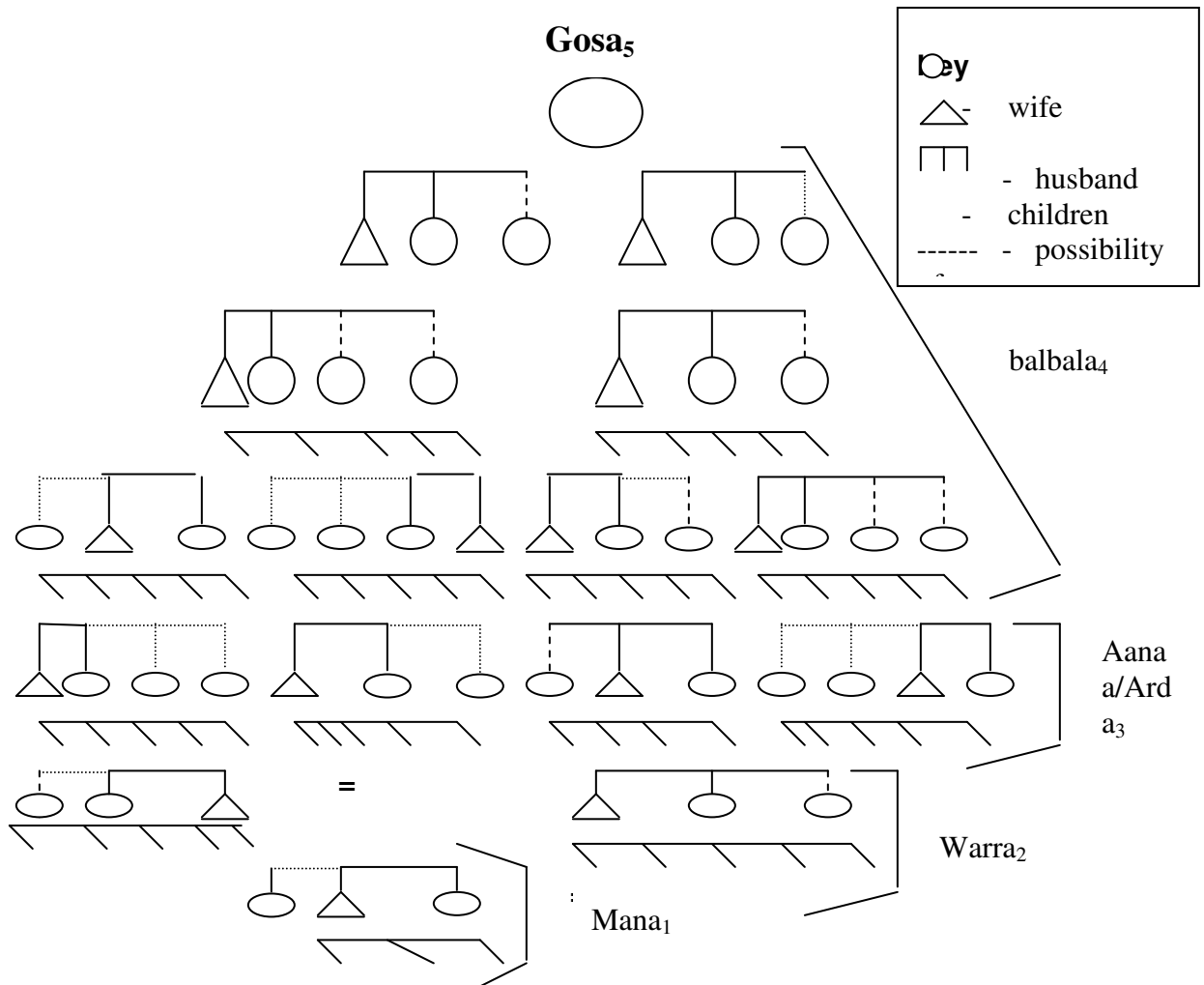
Abas Haji explicitly tells us that the Arsi" stretches to Tullama and Ania in the north, to the Somali inhabited Ogaden areas in the east, to Borena in the South, Sidama and Darasa in the West" (1982:1). According to the Arsi oral tradition, a man called Arse had begotten two sons; Sikko and Mendo. And they in turn had 12 sons of which Mendo had 7. These twelve sons are

“fathers of all arsi living in Arsi and Bale. When Sikko lineage group left for present Arsi territory, sons of Mendo remained behind in Bale. So, it is believed traditionally that all Arsi are descendents of the two brothers. The fact that these people in Bale and Arsi manifest similar cultural setup, religion and socio political organization ascertains the common descent of the lineage. The oral tradition unanimously agrees that the Arsi belong to Barentu group of the Oromo division.

Kinship Structure

Doddola Arsi Oromo Kinship Structure is analogous to Oromo tradition. It has five stages extending from the level of particular individual to that of the people or nation (Gemetchu cited in Hirut 2001:52, Informants). The Dodola Arsi Oromo community is patrilineal, patrilineal and patriarchal. So, they organize themselves on the basis of blood relationship. However, the kinship structure does not only depend on blood relationship. My informants say that the Arsi Oromo of Dodola incorporates non kins into its descent line through adoption, *guddifachaa* via the process of *moggaafacha* which rightly concedes with Ethnographic description of Hirut (2001:63). Whether born in and/or incorporated into the descent line, Dodola Arsi Oromo organize its kinship structure into five levels: *Mana, Warra, Aanaa (Ardaa), balbala, and Gosa*. (see the figure below)

Figure 2 Kinship Structure of Dodola Arsi Oromo



Mana (1) is the lowest form of kin organization. Husband, wife and children form the set. However, as Arsi Oromo is polygamous, a husband may have more than one Mana and as Hirut (2001:63) and Gemmachuu (1994:139) explained and as I have observed, all wives with exception of the first wife are seen as the second wife or Maandhaas. And the first son and the first wife are known as the hangafas (the first's).

On the other hand, Warra (2) is the second level in Arsi Oromo kinship frame. This level consists of two or more manas. Father's household all his married sons households are the members of the set. Hirut (2001:63) argues that it is analogous to family organization or minimal lineage. Though the member of Warra live independently in different geographical settlements, they are part of the family. But my argument is that the absence of long contact between Waaras living in different localities may violate the rule.

Aanaa (Ardaa (3) contains several Warras living at different places. Such kingroups are akko (grandmother), akakkayyu (father's father), and in case of plural marriage, married and unmarried sons and daughters, Abbera, father's brother from the father side.

Next to Ardaa is balbala (4) Balbala is descent identification. It can be a minor lineage (Hirut 2001:64; Gammachuu 1994:147 and my field notes). So, balbala (door) (4) is inclusive interms of lineage, while warra refers to the particular families in the lineage.

Gosa (5), on the other hand, is the highest form of kin organization in Oromo in general and in Arsi Oromo in particular as it is usually reflected in the concept of Arsooma. These five levels are social constructs based on blood relationship. Among the Arsi, gosa plays a very significant

and cohesive role. In marriage, in defending the people from external attack, in solving financial problems like payment of bride wealth and payment of guma, it is Arsooma (being an Arsi) which is called upon. On the other hand, the member should abide by the traditional law of the gosa, which is there for him/her when faced with any kinds of troubles.

In Arsi gosa system, each gosa must marry outside its own gosa to form affinal kinship. My observation has shown significant social activities tied with lineage system –a regulative factor in social structure and a mechanism by which balance in different lives of kin structure is maintained. An important point worth noting is that, the Arsi kinship structure has a room for continued adjustment within its social organization without jeopardizing its continuity. This is common for Oromo society as a whole.

2.3.2 Gada

Gada is the guiding rule and central to the socio-political system of Dodola Arsi Oromo. Different scholars who studied Oromo society and its culture, described *gada* as the most important institution in the society. For Haberland (1963:777) *Gada* is a peculiar age grade system and is a central institution for the social life of the Oromo. On the other hand, Trimmingham (1963:191) taking the explanation further asserts that *gada* is prevalent in all Oromo tribes consisting only males. So, *gada* is strict age set organization dominated by males.

Asmarom's (1973:8) explanation is more useful in the sense that it recognizes the wider role of the system. He vividly put that *Gada* is a system of class/(*luba*) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic political and ritual responsibilities. Asmarom and the other four Scholars' observation of *gada* system among the Oromo agrees with my own observation. Perhaps, the Arsi Oromo of Dodola are among few Oromos who are still practicing

gada, next to Borana. My informants unanimously agree that there are five *Gada* classes among the Arsi Oromo: *Birmaji*, *Bultuma*, *Horata*, *Bahara* and *Robale*. Accordingly *Birmaji* symbolizes *birmadu*, the first wife; *Bultuma*, long life for cattle and people; *Horata* is named wishing successful reproduction; *Bahara* is named after wishing peace and healthy years; and *Robale* is named after quest for rain. As one can vividly comprehend from the symbols of these *gada* classes, *Birmaji* and *Horata* classes have direct relation with the matters of women, although the rest of the classes are not absolutely irrelevant.

Most of my informants concede that women have no place in age set grades of *gada*. However, they are important in most ceremonial practices like power transfer which is considered incomplete in their absence. They are particularly needed for preparation of food and drink and conducting relevant ritual practices. That is why from the outset I refrained to admit the assumption that *gada* is minus female in absolute terms. However, one undeniable fact is that, women do not take part in the political arena of the Gada system which would have given them public status.

In sum, the *Gada* class includes exclusively male members. Though women are important actors in the *gada* rituals, they do not have roles in *gada* classes. In Dodola Arsi Oromo, *gada* class is an all male enterprise. But my Arsi informants insist that though Arsi women do not have part in *Gada* class, they have social institutions. These institutions are like *Qanafaa*, *Ateete*, *Siinqqee* and *rako* by which they defend their interest inter and intra-family. These institutions are also part of the *Gada* law though they are exclusive to women.

2.3.3 Ateete and Qanafa

2.3.3.1 Ateete

According to my informants, *Ateete* and *Qanafaa* are among important institutions of women next to *siinqee* . "Ateete is deity or divinity which women worship in the belief that it makes them fecund, happy, wealthy and prosperous, etc." (Tilahun Gamta, Oromo English Dictionary, 1989).

Though the meaning given is basic and inclusive of women's main tenet of life, my Dodola Arsi Oromo female woman informants say that it is also the social mechanism by which they defend the violation of their right caused by nature and/or men. And informants unanimously say that this is done within the provision of *Gada* principle. Thus, accordingly, under the auspices of *Kora bokku* (Bokku committee) women in the neighbor come together and elect their *Shanacha/Saddeeta* (Women Committees) from among themselves. The election is based on their best knowledge of the tradition and the ritual. Since then, the elected *Shanacha* has become one to whom women's problem is related. Being with the body of women in the neighborhood, they are the one who give final decision on the issue. Ateete gatherings and its success are celebrated by singing, praying and blessing and receiving gifts which concedes with the explanation of Baxter (1975:120) in his study of Arsi Ateete on the other side of Wabe.

As regards the importance of attete, my informants of both sex give many plausible reasons. Some of the informants emphasize the mal-adjusted behavior of male husbands who are, if not often, sometimes the causes of ateete rebellion. This offence may be beating of wife with *Qanafaa* and/or husband who absented his wife from women gatherings. Thus an offended wife calls *ateete* outside her house ululating "illi-illi-illi" until neighbours come and join her. If they consider she has a cause, they join in until all the women of the neighbourhood have assembled. Then, the offended wife would declare her grievance and the women either directly proceed to ateete or more usually take an appointment for another time. The offender is made to be present

on the occasion and asked if he has committed the offence. The husband who admits his guilt will apologize for his act and scarify sheep for the gatherings. Then reconciled with his wife, he gets back to his home. The other reason given by women informants is that, Dodola Arsi women go for *ateete* when they pray for fecundity. They go to an area of suitable grass and water (*Hora*) because symbolically these areas are regarded as the source of life. So, *ateete* is a public gathering of women and it serves religious, familial and social function in inter and intra Dodola Arsi community.

2.3.3.2 Qanafa

Qanafa is a wooden curved in diabolic shape worn by women on their forehead during the first six month after delivery. It is prepared by the father in-law and given to his daughter in-law. My informants are not sure of when and how wearing *Qanafa* started. But they recall that *Qanafa* was customarily legitimized by certain *bokku* since time immemorial. They say that since then, *Qanafa* has certain provision in *Bokkuu* rules and it is among the sacreds (*wayyus*) with a ritual significance.

...the earth is wayyuu, the father is wayyuu. The mother-inlaw, the Qanafaa, the pregnant women,the first room of the house (gulanta), the second room of the house (guloo) is wayyu... that means I can enter the house with permission of the owner of the house.... Siinqee is wayyu, the women who carries siinqee is wayyu...(Inter. Dodola, 20/10/2001).

Ascertaining this assumption, Harberland (1963:476) insists that the sacredness of the things derive from their ritual importance, not the place of private property they possess but 'the holy character of the entrance door.' Therefore, if someone beats his wife with *Qanafa*, grabbing her *siinqee*, she screams and walkout ululating "*illi-illi-illi*" and the women in the neighbourhood join her and go out for *ateete*. The offender is called by the *ateete* gathering and then made to pay the necessary fines and/or give a horse to his wife and buy her a cloth. Then, for

reconciliation, he slaughters an animal for the *ateetes* whereby he apologizes for his wrong doings. However, Qanafa right is paradoxical. If the infant identified with the *Qanafa* is male, the woman has to wear *Qanafa* for five months. But if found to be female, she (the mother) could only wear the *Qanafaa* for four months. The rights also elongate that much only. Therefore, gender bias is observable. Nevertheless, though it is for short time, sacredness of *Qanafaa* has important contribution in safeguarding the right and status of Arsi women.

2.3.4 Siinqqee and Rights Symbolized with It

What is *siinqee*? What rights are symbolized it? What is its importance for the status of Dodola Arsi Women? The Dictornary meaning of *Siinqqe* is short but inexpressive. Tilahun (in Oromo-English Dictionary 1983) defines *Siinqqee* as "decorated stick" carried by married women. but, this meaning does not tell why it is decorated and how it happens to be central to the status of women.

To fully comprehend the meaning of *Siinqqee*, we have to resort to its generic name *ulee* (stick) for it falls under this category of Oromo material culture. My Dodola Arsi informants define *Siinqqee* as those sticks that are purposely cut and fashioned for married women, the purpose of which is to safeguard their rights, to bless and/or curse those who infringe their rights. And *Siinqqee* is used by women when they go out for *ateete* or other rituals. In other words, *Siinqqee* has specific social, cultural and religious functions. The same informants say that, there are two types of ulees cut and fashioned to serve as the marriage sticks. These are *Siinqqee* and *Waddeessa* . Accordingly, *Siinqqe* is given to the bride and *Waddeessa* to the bridegroom on the wedding day. Most of my informants assert that both types of ulee are made out of the tree called *haroressaa*. My informants of both sex unanimously say that the rights of women symbolized in

Siinqqee is provisioned and handed down by the early Gada system. It is a weapon by which Oromo women fight for their rights and function side by side with Gada system.

My informants, however, are divided as to who hands the *Siinqqee* to the girl on the wedding. Some say it is the father, and others say it is the mother and still others insist that they both do it together. But according to Gammachuu (1999: 67) the mother gives it to her daughter during the blessing ceremony. As she bless her daughter in her turn, the mother holds one end of the *Siinqqee* and the daughter the other symbolizing the tie between the mother and the daughter on one hand and the tie among all women, on the other. And Gammachu asserts that Oromo society honours these female ties and sanctions them (*Ibid.*).

On the otherhand, my female informants say that they will keep their *Siinqqee* at their *boro* (backyard in the sleeping room) and when their rights are infringed, taking their *Siinqqee* from their *boro*, they go out for *ateete* rebellion. They take it with them to all *jila* (ceremonial occasions) as the symbol of their honour and as an indication that they are married. They touch the property designated for them with the tip of their *Siinqqee* signifying that they owned it. Furthermore, informants of both sex insist that Dodola Arsi women use their *Siinqqee* to mobilize *jiga* (collective labour) during seasons of hard work. They also note that when women form their solidarity ritual, they dip the tip of *Siinqqee* in the blood of the animal slaughtered for sacrifice and touch each other's forehead as a sign of taking oath to support each other till they die. In religious ceremonies when they pray to *rabbi* and/or *Ateete*, the female deity, they hold their *Siinqqee*, as informants note. It is said that the Dodola Arsi women, by raising their *Siinqqee*, pray for women who are sterile. To beg for a child, *Siinqqee* sisters go to the family of the child, raise their *Siinqqee* collectively, and calling the name of the child, they present their

appeal. Upon the sight of the raised *siinqqee* informants hold, no mother or family would deny the women their demand. Moreover, according to the same informants, during the *Gada* power transfer ceremonies, the newly elected officers will pass under two avertedly held (\ /) *Siinqqee* and get their blessings from the women. Women raise their *siinqqee* both when they bless and curse. Because women are considered innocent and peace loving, informants say, they use their *siinqqee* to perform *araara* (reconciliation). But it is only on funeral and mourning that *siinqqee* is not used. And even when the owner of *Siinqqee* dies, the *siinqqee* will be broken and placed on the burial. This signifies the end of *siinqqee*'s function, the owner and his activities.

If not most, many of my informants say that Dodola Arsi women use their *siinqqee* for rather political purpose. Accordingly, *Siinqqee* is used as a weapon to fight against violation of women's right which is regarded as a loss of *wayyuu* (sacreds). So, in case their *wayyuu* (sacredness) is violated, a woman grabs her *siinqqee* and runs out of her house, screaming. This is known as *Iyya Siinqqee* (*siinqqee* scream). This concedes with Gammachu's (Ibid) explanation about the rights symbolized in *siinqqee*.

Another important right symbolized by *siinqqee* is that married women have the right to get organized and form the *siinqqee* sisterhood of solidarity. According to most informants, women as a group are considered *halaga* (not a kin) and excluded from the *Gada* grades and they stick together and count on one another through the *siinqqee* which they all have in common. Gammachu (opcit, P 71) asserts this explanation by saying that "in strange gosa where women live as strangers, *siinqqee* represents the mother and they even address each other as "daughters of the mother." So, according to informants, women have the right of assembly for regular prayer as well for other important matters of individual and communities. If someone tries to

stop women from going to these meetings, it is considered against *wayyu* (sacred) and this invites *siinqee* riots.

Also, my informants say that people respect and revere a woman because *waaqaa/rabbii* made her to be respected and revered. So, interference in a woman's sacred authority is regarded as violating *seera waaqaa* and *wayyu*. These rights are also represented by *siinqee* the violation of which is a cause for trouble. This rightly concedes with Kelly's observation (1993:102) that women in general are symbolically and politically liminal and correspondingly enjoy a special sacred power as a class."

One may ask if there is at all any mechanism by which *siinqee* rights are enforced. My informants unanimously say that Gada had the "Law of *Muka Laaftuu* (Law of soft wood) which protects the softer and the weaker segment of the population. The protection covers women because they fall under the category of the liminal. Thus, if the woman complains, additional witnesses are not required in order to punish the offender. Her words are trusted and taken at fact value.

According to the same informants, there is also what is known as "*Abaarsa siinqee*" (*siinqee* curse). Women collectively or individually raise their *siinqee* and curse whoever infringes their right as an individual and/or collectively. The more liminal an Oromo woman is, the more her curse is feared and the weaker they grow physically, the more powerful they be spiritually. Endorsing this fact, one of my informants told me the following traditional saying "*Galaani taruuf gette Sinyaatin; jaartiin duuf gette sinabaarin*", let not the sea to recess swallow you and let not the woman to die curse you. However, it is believed that the collective act of raising *Siinqee* is more powerful and effective than that is done by an individual.

According to my informants, another deterrent action is "*iyya siinqqee*", *Siinqqee* scream. So, *Iyya siinqqee* is the mode of communication between Oromo women. It is a way of telling one another that *seera rabbi* (law of God) is disturbed and *wayyu* lost. Women consider it their sacred duty to restore peace and order of *rabbi*. Thus, when her rights are violated, a woman fights a battle with no machine gun but *Siinqqee*, to mobilize support. As soon as *iyyaa siinqqee* is heard, women must give up whatever they are doing. Even those who are breast feeding at the time of scream should let the babies cry and leave the house to join in the scream. Violation of women's right is like breaking her *siinqqee* and this is regarded as killing the woman. Hence "daughter's of the mother" should immediately respond to the situation or the call.

Another important action by which *siinqqee* right is sanctioned as my informants say is "*siinqqee adeemsa*". This is the last action taken if the women find the case a serious violation. They abandon their children and homes and set on "*siinqqee adeemsa*" (*Siinqqee* Going). This is equivalent to "*Godaansa siinqqee*" which Gaamachu (*opcit.*) asserted in his study of Oromo woman institution of other areas. They leave the village and assemble under a *qilxu* (Sycamore) tree. *Qilxuu* is considered a female tree. Once assembled there, *hayyuu* (elite) women recite the law of *rabbi* and the law of *nama*. They reiterate the whole philosophy behind *siinqqee* rights where sort of a conscious- raising takes place. Events of old time violations and punishment are recited at the assembly by elderly women who may have seen or heard about them. They say, "during the gadaa of so and so, this and that happened and so and so was punished by such and such rules". And they vow to cross the river and the water, which according to my informants, is the source of life in the Oromo creation story. They vow never to come back until the person who committed the violation is punished, justice done and *wayyuu* restored. Back in the village

hell breaks loose. Men say "*ibiddi biyyaa dhaame*", the fire of the whole country has gone out. The going out of fire signifies the collapse of society and the perishing of life. However, this is said to be rare as men quickly get together and elect a *maanguddo* or *jaarsa* (an elder) to make peace with the woman in rebellion, but if the women suspect the reputation of the *jaarsa* sent, they officially reject, but if the women agree among themselves that the *jaarsa* is reputable enough to mediate, after they accepted their greetings '*iltee dhiinnaa!*', they unanimously reply "*Hofkala, obbaya!*". They spread leaves on the ground and invite him to sit among them under the female *qilxuu* tree. Women then, begin to do the *himata* (complaint). The wisest, most revered and respected elderly women whose breast are wrinkled and crumpled and whose faces are filled with furrows get up one by one and make a talk about the *wayyuu* (sacredness) of *waaqa*. Each of the elderly women pulls down her *Kate* (homemade leather skirt) exposing her wrinkled and crumpled breasts as a sign of supreme moral authority, dignity and wisdom. They do the *himata* for *waaqa fi lafaa* (heaven and earth), *Margaa fi bishan* (grass and water), *ifaa fi dukkana* (for light and darkness), *aadaafi seera* (for custom and Law). They do the *himata* to restore *wayyu*. And as a gesture of *araara* (reconciliation), the women announce their verdicts on the person and the punishment it entails. The *jaarsa* listens with quite reverence and takes the message back to the village. Society honours the verdict of women by coming to the *qilxu* and taking part in the process of punishment and reconciliation. Together, the community celebrates the restoration of *waaqa's* law and order. The guilty man, besides paying fine to the sisterhood, is made to slaughter a sacrificial animal as a gesture of pledge to mend his way. However, the sanction does not end her. According to Gammachu (opcit.), a man who has record of *siinqqee* violation is considered *namaagadi* (below human) and is not elected in any of the *Gada* offices. And violation of woman's right disqualifies his merits as *Gada* elections are meritocratic.

Therefore, men are deterred from infringing upon woman's right, boundaries are respected and these kinds of extreme cases are incidents that take place rarely.

2.3.5 Rakoo Institution

Rakoo is one of the institutions laid down by Gada law during time immemorial by the abba bokku whose name is not identifiably known. My informants are neither aware of its meaning nor its origin. However, if not all, a large number of my informants of both sexes explain it as "a vow in blood" between inter married clans in general, and martial partners in particular. Their explanation, therefore, emphasizes its objectives. They say that rakoo is a customary law and practice which binds the marriage together making it indissoluble among Dodola Arsi Oromo. And some of my informants emphasize that rakoo will help assimilate the bride into the clan she is married to. A wife who has rakoo, is a legal wife and daughter of siinqqee with all its rights.

According to most of my informants, the objective of slaughtering rakoo is not only to legalize the marriage, but also to legalize the retribution quest in case she is murdered. It is only the gosa she is affiliated in by marriage which could directly claim retribution. However, if the retribution pay is 50 cows, 1/3 goes to the family she was born in. Similarly, if a woman who has rakoo kills someone, the gosa she has got affiliated in by marriage will pay the total retribution. The family she was born in could assist hirpha (support) only if they were asked by their counterparts. Rakoo also helps both spouses to be vigilant and sensitive about the continuity of their marriage. A rakoo wife can fully claim right over her husband and vice versa. Apart from the reciprocal right on one another, both have equal right in owning and

using of joint property. The husband has no exclusive right to dispose joint property without her knowledge and/or her approval. If the husband does not agree to his wife's will, she can ask her parents or neighbors for help to change his mind.

In Arsi Oromo tradition, if the husband wants to have another wife, he should get first the consens and approval of the rakoo wife. The rakoo wife is known as niitii hangafa_(eldest wife) and kallacha (forehead). And hence, she is known as "ta barree_ (of large gourd), ta siinqee (of decorated stick), ta waddeessa (male's marriage stick), ta umamaa (of nature)". Therefore, it is only if he is donated cows from his rakoo wife that he can marry the others. However, she would not refuse his marrying additional wives as she will get helper both in feeding the husband and manpower who look after livestock. And the law of siinqee does not forbid this. In addition it provides for the wife to have a lover to satisfy her interest. In a nutshell, her will reigns. All the later incoming wives, the maandhaas' respect and even address her as "aayaa" mother. On the way, in food and drink service and seat, she will be given priority and this will be encouraged by the husband. Whenever the husband goes either for feast or for ritual purpose, the rakoo wife escorts him. Also, she is known as bantitti (the top).

Bantitti has also personal right. No one is allowed to remarry the rakoo wife unless the rakoo status is eroded. If found done, the doer has to pay 7 cows as compensation for the husband and return.

According to traditionally sanctioned gada law, rakoo right presides only in one. Hence, Arsi says "rakoon rakoorratti qalamuu hindandettu'. There can never be two rakoo wives. But

one important idea which my informants seem to insist on is that rakoo ritual can be performed in any types of marriage with the exception of rare forms of marriage practices like fuudha Gursumma , Dhala, Milbeltoo and Nika . However, in Buti, Hawwi and Addabaanaa rakoo ritual can take place only after negotiation and the necessary payment is made.

On the other hand, according to the same source, children born from rakoo women (whose rakoo is not eroded), would belong to the rakoo husband. Even if she had no children by the rakoo husband, upon her return to him, her first born child outside rakoo, will be hangafa (the eldest) in the house of the rakoo husband even if the husband has children by the other wives or got new from the returnee. As a promogniture, he has inheritance right. The rakoo husband will solemnly take an oath to equally treat the children of his rakoo wife with that of his sons. The bokku and the hokkaa advise and supervise the implementation, saying: “niitiin tantee bantittiin, ta badaa galgala; ta rakoo ganama; ka dhama taate tu siif dhalee, guddisi! handhuurii! itti fuudhi! heerumsisi!” Which literally means “ your first wife, who had been of hot hearth of the evening (blessed with Coffee) , whose rakoo had been performed at its morrow, who had become the member of our clan gave birth to these children. Own them! get them wife and/or husband". All these remind him the contact and the fantasies he had with his wife on the very day of the marriage. Thus, the children born by the next man are known by the gosa of the rakoo husband. They are not looked as outsiders. They have incumbent rights and duties in the clan. If killed in someone’s hand, their guma (retribution) is sought by the clan. If they murder someone, they clan help pay the retribution.

Let us turn to the procedures in the ceremony. On the eve of the marriage, a ceremony known as badaafachuu (blessing) is performed. After the bride and the bridegroom arrive at idayya's home (bridegroom's resident), they will get off their horse. Then, hide is spread on the ground. Coffee bean and barely bean are thrown on the hide. Then her female jaala sits with the bride on the hide. She holds the bride against her shoulder and spray with milk from her mouth chanting the following blessings: "Buli! Buli! hori! hori! Which means live! live! reproduce! Reproduce!"

Next, both the bride and the bridegroom are escorted to the diinqa (sleeping room). Subsequently, the gurbaa jaalaa (Sweetheart of the bride), niitii jaalaa (The wife of his sweetheart), haadha sabbata (mother of gridle), and abbaa sabbata (father of belt) with their hands hold cicoo (milk container), and container of daddhii. Then, the bridegroom smears blood around the neck of the bride and bless her, saying the following:

<i>Buli! Buli!</i>	<i>Live! Live!</i>
<i>Hori! Hori!</i>	<i>Reproduce! Reproduce!</i>
<i>Teettu ta'i!</i>	<i>Do not go!</i>
<i>Deettu ta'i!</i>	<i>Give birth/ be fecund!</i>
<i>Ta maqaa tokkichaan bultu ta'i!</i>	<i>Live with one husband!</i>
<i>Ta mataa tokkichaan bultu ta'i!</i>	<i>Live with one man!</i>
<i>Araddon ta'i!</i>	<i>Be the holder!</i>
<i>Dhiira tee bulfadhu!</i>	<i>Maintain your husband!</i>
<i>Hori! Ilma hori!</i>	<i>Giver birth to male child!</i>
<i>Hori! Intala hori!</i>	<i>Give birth to female child!.</i>

Three important points can be deduced from the above blessings: for one thing, pray for martial durability and reproduction, second, the maintenance of the husband; and the third is in traditional Oromo society, there is no gender bias at least in principle. So, the participant on the occasion spraying daadhii bless the bride and the bridegroom. This will transcend the ceremony to the event known as Dhofsisaa (show).

Just before the performance of rakoo, the bridegroom and the bride, the latter having siinqqee in her hand, both escorted by relatives like paternal and maternal uncle of the bridegroom will go to the foona (kraal) to identify cattle given for the bride by bridegroom's father and mother. Then, both father -and -mother -inlaws start showing cows they had pledged her last night. And she touches the cattle with her siinqqee, which means that she owned them and this is her first exposure to personal property since she departed from her natal family.

After their return from the visit of the foona, while roasted coffee smeared with butter is being eaten by the Idayyas, the close relatives of the bridegroom continue blessing. The blessing content is almost the same as those on page 43, but two phrases are added to it: "Waliin bulaa! Waliin oolaa! stay the night together, pass the day together!" respectively.

After the badaa ceremony is over, the rakoo ceremony will commence. The bridegroom will slaughter leanship (not meant for eating). And then, the idayya touching the forehead of the bride with blood by finger on his left hand says:

Rakoo rakkadhu	Rakoo be in difficulty
Baatu hinhofkalin	If you go, be in danger

Hindeeminii taa'i	<i>Do not go, live here</i>
Hinta'inii da'i	<i>Do not simply live here, give birth.</i>

This blessing again focuses on successful marriage and fertility. There is controversy among my informants as to how the blood is stained on the forehead of the bride. Some say that the bridegroom will dip the second finger on the left hand in the blood and touch it with the forehead of his would-be wife. Still others argue that the husband will touch her forehead with blood stained Waddeessaa. However, this cannot be the subject of debate. Because once her forehead is touched with the "blood of vow", she becomes the legal wife and he, the legal husband by customary law.

On the other hand, most informants underline the symbolic meaning of the blood used in rakoo. The blood stained on the forehead of the bride marks two social objectives. Firstly, it ascertains that she has become part of the blood of the clan she came to, by marriage. Secondly, the touching of her forehead by the left hand of the husband implies that she rejoined the left side of the ribs of the male she had evolved from.

My Arsi informants of both sexes confirm that there is no as such divorce in Arsi Oromo tradition. At times of disagreement between husband and wife, both respective natal families negotiate between the two to avoid the difference. So, if an Arsi man who took a wife by rakoo tramples any of the rights of his wife, he will be advised to normalize the strain. In the meantime, the natal parent of the wife also does the same. But if the matter is feared to placate clans in feud, certain mechanisms have to be devised to address it. Scholars like Baxter argue that "..... Arsi marriage is indissoluble once the final sacrificial ceremony called rakoo qalu

has been performed" (Baxter 1974:810). But what I have attested on my fieldwork is that, though this is theoretically true, practically it will have different courses of action. It is here that rakoo dhiquu (rakoo eroding) intercepts. Thus, the natal father prepares cidha (ceremony). Drinks and food are prepared. All kinsmen of both parties are made to attend the occasion. The bokku and hokka of the clans are present, too. And then, after what is prepared is eaten and drunk, the natal father of the wife kindly requests, her husband to erode the rakoo of his daughter. Then, as is usual in the custom, the husband wipes her brows with bough of his cloth and extirpates a strand of hair from her head which is traditionally known as 'qaajjisa buqqifachuu'. He also grabs hanfala (sash/which he exchanged with cows on the night of the marriage). One may ask the symbolic meaning of qaajjisa buqqifachaa (extirpating hair) and grabbing hanfala. When a husband dies as usual an Arsi woman expresses her deep sorrow by cutting her gufufa (mop of hair) and loosening her hanfala (sash). Shortly, after her husband's burial, she will visit and dispose of both the gufufa and hanfala on his graveyards. Fastening her belt with rope, she returns home. The reason why he extirpates qaajjisaa and grab hanfala is therefore, because he considers her as if she is dead.

Then, the divorcee ignoring the taboo, calls the proper name of her husband and in-laws which indicates that the prestige owed to them by rakoo right is annulled. A woman whose rakoo is eroded can go anywhere and marry anyone she wants to. The abbaa bokku and hokka will be given one bullukko (woven blanket), each for facilitating the divorce in a peaceful way. Thus, rakoo institution is one aspect of gada customary law by which the couples exercise reciprocal rights over one another in martial and reproduction life.

In sum, Ateete, Qanafaa, Siinqqee and Rakoo institution are important social mechanism in Gada customary law by which the Dodola Arsi women defend their rights.

2.3.6 Religion

Mahammad (1991:52), Mirgisa (1993:35), and Gemachu (1999:220) and others studies confirm that prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity to Oromo land, Oromo had its own indigenous religion – *Waaqeffata* (the warship of *waaqa*/God). And the Oromo world view is heavily dominated by resultant concepts. Hence, the concept of *waaqa* occupies a central position (Ibid.).

My Dodola Arsi informants say that Arsi Oromo have similar world view alike other Oromo groups. So, in Dodola Arsi Oromo, pre Islamic and pre Christian religion is said to be known as *Waaqeffata* and the followers are locally known as *Awwamas* (pagan), the term in use no more. These people do not go to churches or mosques. My Informants told me that the Oromo *waaqa* is omnipotent, and omni-present. It is a kindly figure. It is the source of life and *uma* (creator). He knows all thing, in and out, the most highly, a unique one who has no equal. It is referred to as *Waaqa Gurrachaa* (black God). *Waaqa's* nature as summarized by Gammachuu (opcit, 19) seem to ascertain this fact. “God is black, *guracha*, an expression that essentially summarizes notions of uninterferdness, originality and lack of distinction. Everything flows out of this undifferentiated state in the form of *Ayyaana*.” Accordingly, then, *Waaqa's* creative activity and its role as guardian is manifested through *ayyaanaa*, which is feared, personalized and invoked. The multi character of *ayyana* is manifested through personalities and/or collective prayers and rituals. Gammachu (Ibid.,) argues that *ayyana* is abstract, immaterial but has material manifestation in this world. It is untouchable and undetectable with our senses. It has been there and is there and will remain there. Being the worldly manifestation of *waaqa*, it is basic to the

order of things and everyday life whether they are characteristically tied to particular Calendar days, human personalities and tasks in life, or the collective fates of specific group of people, they can be experienced by human senses, even if the *ayyaana* are immaterial themselves. *Ayyaana* of a phenomena represents its basic essence.

The above premises seem to be strengthened by Dahl (1990:167) that the Oromo religion encompasses both real world and the world of ideas. And that every thing that exist in material world as well as in the form of abstract values has its correspondence in the form of an immaterial principle *ayyaana* which is decisive for the character and fate for that entity. A social group can exemplify this. A lineage is thought to have its own *ayyaana*, which defines its demographic and material success. A day in the calendars is believed to have its own particular character due to the influence of particular *ayyaana*. All this essence or principle can be seen as a fractional part of the divinity.

Bartels (1990:14) has summarized the nature and qualities of *Oromo Waaqa* as follows. It rightly concedes with that of the Dodola Arsi Oromos. *To the Oromo, the traditional divinity is both one, and at the same time also many. The supreme being who they call waaqa, Sky(God) is a creator of all things and the source of all life. Starting with water and rocks, going on through the vegetation and animal world to man (Ibid.)*

My Dodola Arsi informants told that *Waaqa* which manifests its power through *Ayyaanaa* makes use of personalities like old men or/and women or *Qaallu* (priest in Gada system). Dodola Arsi Oromo go to this people and get relieved from their problems. And particularly, they frequent the *Qaallus*. Accordingly, all Arsi Oromo groups make annual pilgrimage to *abbaa Muudaa* of Dollo whose name is *wayyuu Godaa*. There they pray for the prosperity of Oromo land.

Accordingly, the *abba Muuda* anoints and blesses the *jiilas* and advises to keep peace among themselves, the idea which rightly confirms with the explanation given by Huntingford (1955:84). However, there were neither female *abba Muudas* nor any tradition that tells women would go for *jiilaa* (pilgrimage). But undeniably, there are local *mudas* in which female participate in ritual practices and prayers. Nevertheless, although women actively participate in the ritual practices at the local *muda*, this does not imply or reflect equality of Dodola Arsi women in the social cosmos.

When both men and women go out to rivers for prayers either for socio-economic crises in the community or acute problem in the lineage or in the family; what they present for Oromo *waaqa* is grass. For thanks giving, praying and blessing, grass is one of the important links between *waaqa* and the people. Thus, the rites, prayers and blessings are replete with symbolic use of grass, water and earth. And Arsi *ateete* is in accord with overall Oromo ethos (Baxter, 1975).

One very important point raised during my discussion with key informants is on the sex status of the Oromo *waaqa* in general, and Arsi Oromo in particular. When I asked them whether Oromo *Waaqa* is male or female, I was ridiculed. They asked me similar question if my Christian God is male or female. I couldn't answer. Then one of the informants told me “*Waaqni Oromo hindhalu; hindhalchu*”, the *Oromo Waaqa* does not give birth and/ or does not have male sex. In other words, it does not have sex identification. They told me that it is not gender biased as human beings.

In sum, the *Oromo waaqa* is highly respectful, sacred, omnipotent, omnipresent, kind and its divinity is revered by both male and female in Dodola Arsi Oromo. And the traditional religion known as Waaqeffataa is still central to the life of the people.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADITION AND STATUS AMONG ARSI OROMO OF DODOLA

3.1 Socialization and Status as Concept and Practice.

Socialization is the process by which an individual learns to adjust to a group by acquiring appropriate social behaviors Newcomb (1950:51). The term is primarily used by social psychologists and sociologists. *All infants whose capacities.....are not severely limited take part in social interaction and, in so doing, acquire social behaviors. The process...known as socialization... is essentially one of the learnings (Ibid.,)*

This definition of Newcomb equates individual socialization with all social learnings. However, from another perspective, socialization refers to learning which meets the group's approval (Ogburn and Nimkoff 1958:168). The difference in conception extends into the mechanisms by which it is achieved. After noting the central focus of the process of socialization, Talcot Parsons and R.F.Bales (1955:17) advocated that internalization of value of the society is a major theme in the process of socialization. Parsons and Bales also believe that socialization entails alternating differentiation and integration of roles.

From the Freudian¹ perspective which Parsons and Bales have adopted to their theory of social action and social system, socialization is the process whereby the child internalizes paternal norms. This is said to occur through cathetic evaluative and cognitive mechanisms. The former

¹ Frudian - Adherants of S.Freud's view.

includes reinforcement extinction, based upon reward and punishment. The latter involves imitation and identification based on feelings or love (Hinkle cited in Boskooff, 1957:16).

However, the symbolic interactionists emphasize the role of speech in the process of socialization. Thus, the child becomes socialized when he has acquired the ability to communicate with others and to influence and be influenced by them through the use of speech. This implies socially acceptable behavior toward named object (Lindasmith & Strause 1956:124). But the term socialization is generally used in relation to children. Being a life long process, it is also applicable to adults.

The term status, on the other hand, is a popularly employed word for prestige, but in its sociological and anthropological perspective, it can also mean a position in a social structure (Seymoure 1986:267). According to Max Weber's classic definition, although class, status and power are the three interrelated factors, class and status are different in that status refers to social honour or privilege, while class is defined by economic position (Weber 1960:105-106). By the same token, if the two concepts-class and status are interrelated, class, position, prestige or power one possesses in a society is indivisible, because an individual occupies a particular position, and has certain distinct rights, obligations and functions to perform as the member of this status. So, the relationship between socialization and status is undetachable in that one's role or behavioral pattern is dictated by status. And that, it is through this process that a person acquires socially expected roles, norms value system and attitudes. This in turn

influences manners, appearances and the way people carry themselves (Nazumo, 1993:35). In Arsi Oromo, this could be explained with the cultural values and attitudes, traditions and customary practices that are exacerbated by sex preference.

3.2 Preference for Male Born Child

Children are the most valued among the Arsi Oromo of Dodola. Infact, this is true in Sub Saharan Africa where the pattern of polygamy is preferred (Vidrvitch 1997:212). A man who has no children is considered dead while living, *nama jiraatti tare* because no one will carry his name after his death. Likewise, a woman with many children has a special respect in her clan and community. Above all, according to my informants, a woman is liked because of the following reasons: she connects or binds the gosa she was born in with the other gosa through marriage, and as she is *haadha gootaa*, mother of a brave if not preferred, she is not hated. However, most of my informants of both sex agree that a male child is highly valued among the community. This is particularly strong when the baby is the first child to his mother. When a baby boy is born the whole village and close relatives rejoice. This is because a boy is not only a symbol of pride for his immediate parents, but also for his close relatives and the lineage as a whole. They say: “*Ilmoon dhiiraa gaachana warra ofii ta’uu bira taree gaachana gosaati.*” A male child is a shield not only for his parents but also for his lineage.

On the birth of the first son, a father takes the child’s name preceded by *abba* (father) and hence addressed as *abbaa eebalu* (father of so and so). It is only the birth of a male child that would change addressing of the father. The birth of female child hardly makes it, even if she is the first child (*hangafa*) to her parents. A father would take only the name of his son whether he begets

second, third or fourth child. Addressing a person after the name of his daughter is an insult. It is something like degrading him. From this view point, Huntinford (1969:40) is right when he argues that the Oromo are averse from using a man's name. Even when a man has no son, he takes the name of a horse preceded by *abba*. Hence, the Arsi Oromo of Dodola say "*dhiiratu abbaa maqaa waamsisa; guyyaa du'aa nama dhaala*". This means it is a male who causes to call the name of father and inherit when his father dies. And they believe that a woman belongs to *nyaaphaa* (unrelateds) or belong to the other gosa. According to most informants there are so many overt and covert traditions that depict that women are not preferred. For instance, when a female child is born, attendant women ululate three times, but if it is a male, four times. When neighbors visit the *deettuu* (deliverer) after blessing, they will ask her "*maal deette?*" what have you begot? Then, if the reply is female, the visitors say "*Haa ta'u garuma durbaatu gurbaa illee fida*" "let it be the same female will/would bring male," This is to console the wife and the husband. But if what she gave birth to is a male they bless saying "*Kan biyya bulfatu haa ta'u*" let it be one who governs the community. They also give *gumaata* (congratulatory gift either in cash or in kind) magnifying the preference. There are also other instances. If someone comes to the family where there is silence, as he enters the house, he asks "*maaliif akka mana durbi itti dhalaltee gad qabbanooftan?*" why do you keep quite as if a family to which a female is born? It is deducible from this that, families who begot a female child often are unhappy. Mothers who begot female take bath (*wabaxa*²) on the fifth day while those who give birth to male take bath on the seventh day. My female informants say that traditionally it is believed the labor for male is heavier than that of the female's. Whatsoever reasons are given, this also implies the preference given for a male child. On the other hand, it is said that the porridge prepaid for *Wabaxa* of female infant would not be eaten by males. Informants believe that if a male boy eats *Wabaxa*

² Wabaxa - ceremony of taking bath by the delivered mother upon which porridge is eaten.

prepared for female, after grown up and married, he might not produce a male child. Furthermore, even pregnant women are not allowed to eat female *Wabaxa* for it is believed that she may not give birth to male.

According to the Arsi tradition any women after delivery would wear *Qanafaa* on their forehead. They will wear it for four months for female infant and 6 months for male infants. *Qanafaa* is prepared by the father in-laws for the prestige of the wife of his son. It is tied on the forehead by *tephaa* (leather strap). As has been mentioned in previous chapter, *Qanafaa* is one of the *Wayyus* (sacred) next to *Siinqee* and *Boraati*. A woman with *Qanafaa* has a great prestige. She should not be insulted and/or beaten. During the matrimonial period, she should not be intercoursed. *Qanafaa* frees her from all previous laborious work. The staying of *qanafaa* on her forehead for a long time, symbolically, has a power to elongate the duration of her prestige. So, mothers who bear male children have more and durable respect. When the mother who begot a female child is nursed for four months, the nursing for the mother of the male child extends to six months.

On the other hand, in Arsi Oromo tradition women carrying a child attempt to quiten the infant, by crooning. Among the song in the crooning is:

Haadha garoo³ ta Sinaanaa⁴ gamaa

Sabbanni kee ta hidhannaa lamaa

Sitti hinfuru sitti duudha malee

Singurguru sitti fuudha malee.

³ Haadha garoo - a name of certain old women whom she linked to her daughter.

⁴ Sinaanaa - one of the clans of Mando Arsi who live adjacent to Dodola. Now it is one of the district in Bale zone.

which lit- means

The mother of Garoo, living beyond the Sinaanaa
your sash is double fasten
your sash would not be loosen, but will be strengthened
I would not sell you, but bring you a wife.

This implies a mother who has begotten a female child attempts to console herself and boost her own moral. Though it is untraditional that women may take wife, her lyric song "*singurguru sitti fuudha malee*" would not sell you, bring you a wife, indicates that the mother hopes that female infant would supersede the expected male. And she promises her female child that she will give her what she owes to the absentee male child.

According to another tradition, some women express their resentment to have born female child by different songs:

*Ilaali abbaa Garoo*⁵
Fincaaniin kutte raro
haa citu raroon harsamuma
Intaltillee namuma
badduun dhabuma

Which means:

Look the father of Garoo
her urine cut off hide
Let the hide be cut off
Female child is also human being
lack is the worst.

⁵ Abbaa Garoo - a name of certain old man whose son is Garoo

The above song explicitly depicts that begetting a female child is worthier than none. This implies the need for a male child. All the above instances illustrate that the Arsi Oromo of Dodola prefer male child to female. There is a proverb frequented by these women who prefer boys to girls:

anu ima bade kan intala ta'e

badii lamuun kan intala da'e

means: I am victimized to have been born female

The second wrong is to give birth to a female

This strong attachment of value to male child also determines the status of a mother in the community. A boy's mother *haadha ilmaa* has more respect than *haadha durbaa* (daughters' mother). Addressing her as *haadha ilmaa* is the norm particularly when this is done by a man or a woman who does not know her. Failure to bear male child, in most cases, is the cause for a woman to divorce or to have co-wives (*masaanu*) and some times may befall the woman to hatred from husbands, relatives and clan. The life history of Xuubaa Ganamoo is the case in point.

Although Xuubaa and her husband had great desire to get a male child, Xuubaa got a female child after seven years of her marriage. She was very sad. Again after two years, she gave birth to the second female. Since then, the husband, the family and the clan of the husband hated her. And they covertly advised him to take another wife. She too, fearing for her life allowed him. So, the second wife gave birth to three males consecutively in two years time. From that moment, all love from the husband and his parent went to her house. She was forlorn. He deserted her. Then, as she says, through the help of her parents and kin relatives, the *Nika* she

had with him was annulled. She is now living with her parent by selling firewood in the nearby Dodola rural Town.

Xuubaa's life history clearly indicates how male child preference is widely noticeable among the community. I have got several cases of this kind. I learned from all the cases that the community gives more value to male than female at birth hence the women have, low social status.

3.3. Male and Female Socialization

As part of the Gada system, Oromo has a well-structured system of boys socialization. Boys' socialization is managed as per the specific age grade to which children belong. Each age grade roughly has an eight year time span and children's transition from the first to the second grade is marked by an initiation ritual (Trimingham 1965:191, Huntingford 1969:44, Asmarom 1973:51). These scholars share a common argument that the first age grade named *dabballee* consists only of male children. However, there is a debate among these on whether *dabballee* has a role or not. Except Asmarom, the rest of the scholars argue that *dabballe* remains under the protection of mother. It is hardly expected to assume any role. However, Asmarom (1973) elaborated not only the socialization process of *Dabballee*, but also that of the next age grade known as *gamme didikko* (Junior Gamme) and that the transition into *gamme didikko* is marked by a ceremony. The immediate initiations are both linguistic and behavioral. At the same time, their fathers and mothers acquire new forms of address as father or mother of so and so. *Gamme didikko* now experiences a shift from the domain of the hut into the domain of the kraal and begin such tasks as herding, and assisting their parents in kral building and maintaining.

Among the Arsi Oromo of Dodola, however, such age grade based culture of boys socialization seems forgotten. My informants say that until the age of 5, both male and female children have no defined gender roles. But they will remain under the protection of mothers drinking *anburro* (hot milk) and getting informal education on how to be fed, walk, talk call names and become familiar with their surroundings. At this stage, both girls and boys are equally treated and they play together. They say that the gender role begins as soon as they start talking and walking. Accordingly, gender role begins after age 5, though, not strictly. Sometimes girls and boys together start herding calves, sheep or goats. And both are sent to an errand within the house and/or in the neighborhood. Gradually, girls would add roles like fetching water and helping mother in the house. They are told to beautify themselves, wash and groom their hair. This is said to have been between 10 and 13 ages. Girls start imitating their mothers in all their manners. Girls learn how to cook and serve future husband. When they start frequenting domestic work, boys begin to assume outdoor roles. After age 8, male and female fully assume their own roles, the former in the public and the latter in the domestic. Male children start herding cattle, moving with cattle for long, searching for pasture, hunting, farming, etc. On the other hand, females start milking and churning milk and other domestic tasks. I observed that females' roles are more than that of the male ones in quantitative terms. Directing them into different tasks continues during their teenage years, too. Daughters are advised to speak slowly, walk slowly, avoid boys (even their brother) and at large are encouraged to remain clam and timid. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to attend meetings with elders, ride mule, go for transhumance, manage proper herding and learn farm skills. The next table illustrates the roles of boys and girls among the Arsi Oromo of Dodola.

**Table 2. Teenagers Gender Role Division among
Arsi Oromo of Dodola**

Female Role	Male Role
• Food preparation (<i>nyaata qopheessu</i>)	• Herding (<i>horii tiksuu</i>)
• Fuel-wood collecting (<i>qoraan cabsuu</i>)	• Chasing beasts (<i>bineensa ari'uu</i>)
• Clearing house and corral (<i>Manaafi Moonaa haxaawu</i>)	• Constructing cattle enclosure (<i>moonaa ijaaruu</i>)
• Water fetching (<i>bishaan Waraabu</i>)	• House contracting (mana ijaaru)
• Milking (<i>Sa'a elmuu</i>)	• Tilling the land (<i>qonna</i>)
• Basket making (<i>hodhaa hodhuu</i>)	
• Churning Milk (<i>aanan raasuu</i>)	
• Fumigating milk container (<i>okolee qoraasuu</i>)	
• Pounding of grain needed for food (<i>tuma tumu</i>)	
• Washing clothes for children and husband (<i>hoccuu miicuu</i>) etc.	

Source: My field note.

In the table above, only a few roles of the teenagers among the community are presented. Gender role reversal is unthinkable since it is guarded by cultural norms. It is shame for girls and boys to exchange roles. They are ridiculed and teased. Girls who embark on boys' task will not get married because they are all brought up not to have domestic training. On the other hand, if boys take up the role of girls, the community says that "*yoo fuudhe beekke niitii hinbulchatu; itti quxxisa'*" "if married, he cannot treat his wife: because he envies her". One of the decisive parameters to judge a good girl is by her domestic skill. Socialization of girls for the domestic task is more intensive than that of the boys for the public. Mother or close relatives instruct their girl how to stand, walk, look to the people, greet, talk and work, live with the husband's family neighbors (*olla*), co-wives etc. However, my informants underscore the importance of the father in the socialization of his females. If the girl becomes physically strong and does not listen to the advice of her mother, the mother may advise the husband so that he would be watchful about the manner of his daughter saying "*hintalli kun harma koon ol taate jirti hindagatin*" the girl has become over my breast, do not forget her. Thus, Hirut's (2001:79) ethnographic description of the Arsi Oromo living on the other side of Wabe has clearly expounded the nature of socialization of Arsi boys and girls as follows:

*To a large degree, childhood socialization is the social orientation of the child and his enculturation; first within the small social world of family and neighbourhood (**ollaa**) and then in relation to the larger society and culture. Arsi early socialization of male and female, that psychological orientation of female to the domestic sphere and male to the public domain arises and is reproduced largely through the culturally guided efforts of male (Ibid.,).*

So, a proverb from my informants runs "*dubartiif daaimti karraa olitti*" "place for women and children is beyond the livingroom". These instances illustrate how the Arsi Oromo tradition limits women to domestic activities. The wife is responsible for *karraa oli* - which includes

caring for children, milking cows, cooking food for the family and making ready necessary utensils used in the household. Though the Arsi tradition limits women to the domestic sphere, they also participate in such farm work as smoothing of the land before sowing, harvesting, herding young calves and giving them grass, water and protecting them from danger in the absence of children to effectuate the task.

For Arsi boys, the orientation differs from that of girls. A boy is told to be courageous and helpful to his father in protecting/grazing the cattle; he is told that one day he will become the head of the family and so has to be a good farmer like his father. He is told to play a leading role in the lineage groups. In some cases, since boys are considered as assets of the family, they are sent to school to be educated and professional to help their parents.

Gender construction of Arsi Oromo of Dodola does not end at teenage. It extends to the post martial status as well. Once they get married, a man's and his wife's expected roles are evaluated continuously as per normative cultural parameter. This time, cultural evaluation is made in a manner that retrospectively measures the way they have passed through gender construction, and the extent to which they have grasped gender role expectation in marriage.

A married woman is either described, as the best wife *miftuu/koomo* and spoiled *shamtuu/bosuu*. The measurement in both cases has to do with a good command of domestic tasks and the ability to entertain guests. Guest entertaining ability has a multiple effect in the sense that it furthers her prestige. A wife is said to be *miftuu* if she does well the following.

- Proper churning of milk
- a regular fumigation of milk container
- ability to prepare different kinds of traditional

meals prepared from barely and butter.

- Proper melting of butter
- Providing a guest with good quality milk and food etc.

On the contrary, *Shamtuu/bosuu* cannot manage these activities in this manner. Either she might have no knowledge about them at all or have the knowledge, but she might be lazy to regularly carryout the tasks. Women's diligency is particularly measured by their capacity to manage milk and milk related items. A proverb goes: *Kormi loonii wallole duudee waldura qabe; kaamoon lamaan wal lole buudaa waldura qabe; bosoon lamaan wallole dandii wal dura qabe*. Bulls that grapple with each other use horn; excellent home-maker quarreled braggart with *buuda* (gourd in which well melted butter kept), the sluttis quarreled bragart with *dandi* (fire burned leg due to laziness).

On the other hand, informants say that there are three major socio-cultural parameters which qualify the prestige or status of the husband. That is, he must be wealthy (*duressa*), clever (*gamnaa*), and a hero (*gootaa*). A person with such qualities deserves astounding honour and status not only in the family but also in the community at large. His social status is determined by the level of his achievements in these regards.

Despite the fact that women's right embodied in *Siinqqee* degenerated and exclusion of Dodola Arsi women from the *Gada* class the *Sinqqee* tradition is alive and has positive implication on the status of Arsi women, compared to that of the Oromo women of other areas. Still holding their *Sinqqee*, the Dodola Arsi women contest for their rights.

3.4 The Social Position of Arsi Oromo Women in Dodola.

As has been discussed in the preceding chapter, unquestionably, males are the most preferred ones in this community. The social position of women is not equal to men among Dodola Arsi Oromo for different interrelated reasons. My informants say that "*dubartiin lafa hindhaaltu*" women cannot inherit land. Land is inherited by the male brother only. The only income producing property a wife can possess is both *horii handhuuraa* (given by her kin parents on different stages of life cycle like circumcision) and *horii arguggaa* (cattle given by her in laws on marriage and/or birth of male child). Anyway, she can broaden her possession of cattle by selling dairy products. But the husband always takes cows from the younger wife to marry the next wife. So let alone extending their cattle possession and accumulating wealth of prestige, women could not maintain meaningful life. This rightly concedes with the ethnographic description by Hirut about the Arsi of the other side. This is still in practice (2001:77).

A man, on the other hand, is a pillar of strength for his family as well as his lineage. He remains attached to his family's homestead. He marries a woman and brings to his family. The children he begets expand and consolidate his kin group. Particularly, males are considered as the potentials for the future generation of the family and the lineage. Hence, informants say, sons are considered central to the continuity of the family while daughters are not. They say "*durba naaphaaf dhalchu; ilma ofiif dhalchu*" it means one begets female for another clan and male for one self.

Women are also less valued than men for another important reason. Women would never take part in the Gada class. They are not included in Gada through which they could have obtained public recognition. Gada class is entirely closed to females and is an all male enterprise. I was told by elderly people the myth justifying the exclusion of women from Gada class as follows:

Dubartiin Gadaa hinbaatu

Yoo dubartiin Gadaa baate

- *Dhalli namaafi hinguddattu*
- *Namni lafarraa dhuma*
- *Horiin lafarraa dhumti.*

Women do not take part in Gada class

If they do:

- Children do not grow
- People are doomed
- Cattle are doomed

Among Arsi Oromo of Dodola, men participate in the Gada process and rituals and have the right to directly attend all discussions and decisions made on the day to day life of the community. These decisions reach women (if at all), in the form of hearsay. Moreover, decision is made by men, including customary law (*seera caffee*). Therefore, having a son who has the right to participate in the Gada class and its *Qixxee* (assembly) is a pride to the father. Consequently, he prefers a son to a daughter who can not be a member of a Gada class and who would never take part in the Gada assembly. On the other hand, the Sharia law that is replacing the traditional Gada practice excludes women by prohibiting their participation in the public and even to mask their faces when they are out for their work. So, earlier gadaa and now, the *Wahabi* Muslim sect, systematically excluded women from taking part in political and decision making life of their societies. However, one cannot put the impact of Gada and Wahabi Muslim sect on equal footing. Because in the former, though women are excluded from the *Gada* class, they have certain social mechanisms like *ateetee*, *siinqqee*, *Qanafaa* and other institutions through which they demand solutions for their social problem (see ch.2), unlike Islam which does not allow having such separate institution and even opposes such provision. My informants covertly say that the decline of these social institutions have contributed a lot for the liminality of the status of Arsi Oromo women of Dodola. Hence, the social position of women among Dodola Arsi

Oromo is generally low. Women's category in terms of age, economic and marriage status, etc does not change the social position of women against their men counterparts. Instead, these variables make sense in making status differentiation among women themselves. Women's status varies from one another depending on these variables. And they are deemed lower than men regardless of their age, economic and/or social status. I was told by a woman that: *xiqqaatus quddatus ilmoon dhiiraa kabaja quddaa qaba*. Whether small or big, a male child has great respect.

This shows how Dodola Arsi Oromo gender construction places the social position of women lower than that of men. However, if the social position of Dodola Arsi women looks like this, what about marriages and its impact on their status? The next chapter presents this in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

4.1 Dodola Arsi Oromo Marriage And Its Impacts On The Status Of Women

Among the Arsi Oromo of the upper Wabe region, marriage makes the prominent culture and communal occasion in the life of the individual couples and marriage history of the clan. One of the interesting features of Oromo marriage of the study area is the prolonged wish of an individual in the community to build up his own family and extend his *gosa*. And a girl is

considered not only a daughter of her father but also of the clan. Therefore, it is the community and the parents who decide the engagement and wedding of the girls or the boys.

Mamo's (1992:22) study of the Oromo of Kokosa, and my informants unswervingly confirm, marriage is one of the three naturally inevitable things known as *Sadan umaa xabbo* (the three naturally inevitable creation of xabbo) which includes *dhalota* (birth), *fuudhaafi heeruma* → (marriage), and *du'a* (death). Whatsoever, one has to pass or experience these three occurrences. The worst of all fortune is therefore, dying without marrying and having children. The desire to have children is deep rooted in the hearts of the couples and is the first and foremost sacred duty as they enter matrimonial union. Thus, as the social position and dignity of a married man and woman is primarily based on having children, in Arsi Oromo of Dodola, failure to do so is a great loss of prestige. That is why the Ateete and marriage rituals are surrounded with blessings related primarily with fertility and marital stability. However, childlessness among the society under investigation has a social mechanism by which it is narrowed. One such practice is known as *muka cabsachuu/ Guddifacha* (adoption). Among the Arsi Oromo of the area, it is a childless family that resorts to adopt a child from relatives. Though inheritance right is only preserved for male, female is also adopted for her labour and as a way and means to form ties with other through marriage. One major and common feature of the marriage in the Oromo society is its of polygamous nature. The practice of polygamy is part of the responses to avert childlessness and adoption. If not most, many informants have similar view as to why polygamy is preferred. Accordingly, some Arsi Oromo resort to extra marriage, not to be left alone in an event of death of their first wives. Still, others resort to second marriage as some sort of asylum when they quarrel with their first wives. Others are said to have been obliged when the first wife appears to be barren. And still many resort to such kind of marriage when the

first wife is considered in-active in house management and is thought as a source of bad fortune, which is the cause for poor life. And above all, the interview I had with informants confirmed that a man with small family size, small scale lineage and limited line of ancestry suffers from lack of social respect. Hence, for these and other reasons, polygamy is preferred in the marriage system of Arsi Oromo.

However, informants of both sexes say that the Arsi Oromo wives do not want to be cowives. This is so as the standard of life of wives will not be improved by the existing economic source which usually is obtained through the husband. On the other hand, the husband may not treat them equally financially and sexually. Thus, to express their hatred for being polygamous and cowives, they composed the following lyric verse in songs:

*Soddaatiin nama goddaati
masaanuun nama gorraati
kuraaziin mana addaatti; biti kuraazii.*

This literally means: Living with a mother of the husband is problematic; living with other cowives might lead to unnecessary loss of life, the best is having self husband and buying that is therefore advisable.

In song above, three important points explain their hatred for polygamy. Firstly, their fear to live with-in-law. Secondly, they fear that cowives might kill out of jealousy and thirdly, therefore, having self husband is an unconditional solution (kuraaz-idiomatic word for husband). On the other hand, this song also implies how women view their husband: he is linked to "light giving" krosene in the family. This is the impact of the socialization practice based on patriarchal thinking that husband should be revered and considered as such. This gave the ideological

supremacy of the husband (man), over the woman. In a nutshell, in Doodola Arsi Oromo polygamy is still in practice. And the complaints of the co-wives are still active. The section beneath present the different type of marriage and their implication to the status of women.

4.1.1 Types of Marriage And Their Implication On The Status of Women

Most of my informants say that Dodola Arsi marriage can be divided into categories and types. So, categorically, it is divided into two: culturally approved and/or socially sanctioned and rare marriage practices. The former category contain six types of marriage and the latter five types. The culturally and socially sanctioned marriage contains *Gbbara* (payment of bride wealth) which is facilitated by *Kadhata* (begging process) ; *Walgara* (sister exchange) , *Buta* (abduction) , *Hawwata* (persuasion) *Dhaala* (levirate) , *Milbettoo* (sororate).

4.1.1.1 Culturally Approved and/or Socially Sanctioned Marriage

4.1.1.1.1 *Gabbara* (payment of bride wealth)

It would be better to conceptualize *Kadhata* (begging) and identify whether it is a process or typology before dealing with *Gabbara* proper. Researchers like Mamo (1995), Gache(1998) and others viewed *Kadhata* as a type of marriage . But as I have observed during my fieldwork, though the Arsi's perceive *Kadhata* as a type, their explanation of *Kadhata* is more attached to process. The *keticha* (the go between) via the process of *Kadhata* facilitates the marriage which could be accomplished either by *Gabbara* or *Walgara*. Both *Gabbara* and *Walgara* require *Kadhata* as a precondition and involve ceremonies and procedures which include sending of the "go between". Therefore, I preferred to view *Kadhata* as a way or process rather than as typology.

Gabbara (bride wealth) is preceded by the most dominant and prevalent process of negotiation known as *Kadhata* (begging). The "go between" for the two parents are known as *Ketticha/halangicha* .

Then, what is the etymological definition of *Gabbara*? Some informants argue that it is adopted from Amharic and is seal of colonial legacy. On his conquest of Bale at the end of nineteenth century, Menlik had been forcing the people to pay *gabbara* as seal of continued submission and loyalty to his rule. Since then, the word *Gabbara* has become familiar and, later, it was extended and adopted to marriage. Still, a substantial number of informants say that although the word *Gabbara* is not of an Oromo genesis , it has been practically in use for a long time and could be probably a proto-Oromo word. Nevertheless, from whatever linguistics meaning and background it may have come, it is the most dominant type of marriage among the Arsi Oromo.

Gabbara is facilitated by prevalent, intense and procedures known as *Kadhata* (begging). The most important feature of *kadhata* among the society of the study area is the way it is practiced. It follows several steps. For the success of marriage and social position of women in the community, every step should be followed as determined by marriage customs. According to an oral source, the preliminaries in the process of *Kadhata* are as follows: Mate selection, the sending of *Ketticha* to the girls parents, the *miju'u* ceremony, *Qube* (betrothal) , *Kitani* (circumcision) and wedding.

In the process of mate selection, particularly in the first marriage, the decisive figure is the father. Though the son has the right to suggest his mate, the father may reject or approve on the ground that the girl and/or the parents belongs to a despised descent or low socio-economic class. In

selecting a marriage partner, the first criterion for consideration is the identification of the group to which the girl belongs. In this regard, marriage among the Arsi Oromo of Dodola is exogamous as is common with all Oromo society with few exceptions where Islamic principles are firmly established and traditional Oromo practices were overlooked. Marriage among close descendants is strictly forbidden. No one can select his marital partner from his father's *gosa* irrespective of the degree of relationship. Similarly, no one can select his marital partner from his mother's *gosa* at least up to the fourth generation. This is because it is believed that if done *haranmu* (incest) occurs. The lineage will be barren and even may develop leprosy.

The second step in mate selection is to make sure that the girl is not from an outcast group. The Oromo do not intermarry with caste groups. Caste groups in Dodola are Waata (pottery), *Faqii* (tanners) and *tumtu* (blacksmiths). Besides, both the girl and her parent should be free from communicable diseases like leprosy. The last stage, but, one that is a very important process in mate selection is the investigation of economic and social background of the parents of the girl. The proverb runs "*haadha laali intala fuudhi*". This literally means, see the mother first and then marry the daughter. This indicates the importance given to her social background. This is mainly because people believe that a girl's attributes are determined by those of the family. Among the desirable attributes the girl's parents should possess are hardwork, honesty and hospitability. Most of the time, however, it is considered preferable if both families are of equal economic status. On the other hand, although both parents (of boy and girl) firmly stick to the criteria above the boy's parent are of much concern. Moreover, the status of the girl is measured by that of her mother.

After proper selection is made in this way, the second process is the sending of *Ketticha* to the parent girl's. The mission of the *Ketticha* should be consolidated by *Milkii* (Omen) and *Miju'uu*

ceremony. *Milki* (Omen) is believed to be not only an indicator of the success or failure of marriage at initial stage, but also throughout the life of the partners. The boy, his father, and the *Ketticha* start going to see *milki* (Omen) all the way through, from his parents home to that of the girl's parents. According to my informants, there are signs believed to be indicators of good or bad *milki*. Some of the signs of good *milki* are, coming across a person carrying a container full of water or milk, a pregnant women, a women carrying a young baby, two men walking together and people driving cattle. On the other hand, coming across a person carrying empty container, a widow and being crossed by a fox and one man walking on the road etc. are considered bad luck. Upon their arrival at the would-be wife's house, if they found the girl milking cows, churning milk or carrying a container full of water or milk, the *milki* (Omen) is said to be good. But, if she is found carrying empty container, it is bad. If all signs they come across are found to be bad, the matter has to be abandoned. If it goes well, there is a bright prospect for the marriage to take place. Therefore, goodness or badness of omen will also determine the possibility of getting married by the girl, which is critically observed by the boy and his parents.

The other important thing is the *Miju'uu* ceremony which takes place at the would be wife's parent house. It would be attended by the *Kettichaa*, the would be husband and father, one important person from the boy's gosa and *ilmamora* (the sons of one of the boy's brother). Totally five people from the boy's side would attend the ceremony. And from the girl's side, her kin relatives are all attendants.

A *Qorii* (material in which porridge is served) of porridge and two *Sabare* (milk container) of milk are served. The *Marqaa* (porridge) is called *daraaraa* (flower) and *annan* (milk) is called *mijju'u*. Each of the items will be first tasted by the boy and the girl and then, they are eaten and drunk by all attendants. No discussion about the marriage will take place on this occasion. The

platform is used as a means of introducing families from both parties to each other. In the *Qorii* ceremony the preference given for the boy in tasting the *miju* implies the continuity of gender constructed privileges and priorities.

Nevertheless, after the *Miju'u* ceremony, the next process is to decide the amount of the *Gabbara* (birde wealth) to be paid, and the course of a deal between the *Ketticha* and the parents of the girl. The amount of bridewealth ranges from as small as five cattle and two *wayya* (women cloth) to as large as 20 cattle and two *wayya* (women cloth). Infact, my informants say that the exact amount depends on the physical maturity of the girl and her family's socio-economic background. Besides, a given amount of honey and money is also paid to the girl's parents. In her discussion of the amount of the bride price in Arsi Oromo living on the other side, Hirut has underlined that the amount of bride price is increasingly getting high when compared to that of other groups of Oromo and others communities in Ethiopia (2001:105). The same is also true of the people under study. Thus, payment of escalating bride price has a paradoxical effect on the status of Arsi women in general and one of the causes for the rise of different types of marriages in Doddla in particular.

Though there is no service giving for the bridegroom's family by the bride, the escalating bride price is one of the outstanding features of Ethiopian marriage in general and Dodola Arsi Oromo in particular. So, in this case, the husband considers his wife as purchased talking object and he expects from her to be loyal to him unconditionally. This implies that as she is made not to posses personal status it is unthinkable that she could demand her rights in the household. Moreover, those who could not cope with

escalating bride price will resort to forceful means of taking wife. This relegates the prestige and dignity of women.

4.1.1.2 *Walgara* (Sister Exchange)

Walgara is marriage by exchange. There will be no much discussion as long as the girls are equal in physical maturity. Both girls are compared on the bases of their physical maturity. But according to the same informants, the usual practice is that the family of the smaller girl has to pay or give a number of cattle. This practice is called *Irra kaya*, literally to add upon so as to equalize the girls. The amount of *Irra kaya* is determined by the difference observed between the two girls. When the rituals and wedding of one who fitted for exchange takes place soon, the one who is promised to receive the youngest in the due time will perform the wedding and the rituals including *rakoo* (animal sacrifice) when she is mature enough for the marriage.

However, there was a hot debate between informants as to whether *walgara* is inherent in Arsi Oromo tradition. Many informants say that it was devised some hundred years ago by a man called Datu Takako, as a social mechanism to cope with escalating bride price. They say, there is an evidence of traditional saying which is still popular in the region, indicating how this man introduced *walgara*.

Warqe Itaya caase – I moved my cattle around Mount Itaya¹

Walgara Fantu baase – I created exchange marriage by giving out
My daughter Fantu.

Ka Takakkaan uummate – I the son of Takakkaa

Ka jiddoon lafa kaase – who brought on end (of bride wealth practice)

¹ Mount Itaya - It is mountain found some thirty kilometers from Sssella town on the way to Sddis.

On the town of Jiddoo²

Kofaleef amuummate – will do the same to Kofale³.

The above traditional saying explicitly explains that a certain Arsi man by the name Datu, who lived around Mt Itaya (near present Assela) created *walgara* as some sort of coping mechanism. According to these informants, he was concerned with two things. One was aimed at minimizing the burden of *gabbara* (amount of cattle to be given), and the other was to make the relation between the two parties enduring in face of the departure of one of the martial partners by death.

On the contrary, some informants insist that it was introduced with Islam. But rather, it seems that Islam adopted *walgara* as one of its mechanisms to accommodate itself with Arsi Oromo tradition. Even so, two points are worth noting about *walgara*: firstly, it does not take into consideration the interest of the girls and therefore sometimes they are forced to marry men of unequal age and even who equal their father. Secondly, being immature they may not be able to claim their right's in the home. Nevertheless, currently, this type of marriage is widely practiced in Dodola.

Then, after the amount of bridewealth to be paid is agreed upon in the case of *Gabbara*, and the amount of *Irra kaya*, in the case of *walgara*, two consecutive ceremonies will take place before the wedding. These are *Qubee* (betrothal) and *Kitani* (circumcision). The former ceremony will take place in the house of the girl's parent in the presence of close relatives from both parties of the would-be-bride and the would-be-bridegroom. The bride sits on the right side of the bridegroom. Then, while blessing ceremonies are being performed, the bride puts necklace

² Jiddoo - A certain village around Mount Itayya.

³ Kofale - One of the district of Arsi zonal administrations found south-east of Assalla.

known locally as *Qubee* around the bride's neck. *Qubee*, according to these informants, is a sign of full engagement and notification that no one could ask her for marriage.

The next event is the *kitani* (circumcision). The circumcision of the girl by the *ogetti* (skilled woman) will be performed after the following pre-conditions are met. The girl will be circumcised either by the request of prospective husband and/or by her parents. *Kitani* next to *Qubee* is believed to be among the essentials that qualifies her for womanhood. Among important figures who attend the ceremony are the prospective husband and her intimate male friend known as *Goshicha*. The prospective husband brings: *damma* (honey), *wayya* (women cloth), and *hoola* (sheep). The sheep is slaughtered and eaten by the girl, and *wayya* is to be worn by the girl while in bed, recovering from her wound. The latter, *Goshicha* is usually from the girl's *gosa* and hence is fully known and recognized as a girl's guard and companion by the family.

At least two months after the *Kitani* ceremony, the marriage day will be fixed by both families. Big preparation will be made by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom at their respective homes for the wedding. But before the wedding day is fixed, the bridegroom consults the *ayyantu* (Deity) for fortunate date. The favorable months for marriage among the Dodola Arsi Oromo are *Birra* (September) and *Caamsa* (April) because during these months, there is abundant supply of milk and butter. Both parties invite their respective relatives and friends to take part in the wedding ceremony. The groom invites his peers and other relatives of his age of both sexes to escort him as *hamamota* (courtiers) whose number is determined by the economic resource of the host. On the eve of the wedding day, one person from the groom's *gosa* called *abba badaa* (fathers of the hearth) goes to forest to cut a wood about a meter long from a tree called *Ansha* (*Shefflera Volkeusi*). This piece of wood is termed as *Waddeessa* and it is one of

the important things to be carried by a groom next to *wayyaa*, *eeboo* (spear), *halange* (whip) on the wedding day. *Halange* has a double role. Firstly, it helps to drive horse with. Secondly, it is carried to frighten the bride with, if she attempts to refuse when he deflowers her.

One important ceremony related to the well-being of the women on the day of the wedding is the *gunguma* or *dhamata*. It is the platform upon which the parents of the bride and her relatives convey message to the bridegroom. The first person to speak is the bride's father. He starts the message saying:

Intala tiyya ija sitti hingurguree

Intala tiyya ilkkaan sitti hingurgurre

Intala tiyya gurra sitti hingurgurre

Intala tiyya nyaara sitti hingurgurre

Which means “ I have given my daughter in marriage to you, but not her eyes, not her teeth, not her ears nor her eyebrows.” Then, the bride's uncle conveys a message saying “Do not mistreat our daughter, do not insult her relatives and visit your affinals”. By the *gunguma* ceremony, therefore, the groom is warned not to hurt any part of her body and maintain good relationship with his affinals. However, if found violating the substance of the *gunguma* counsel, he will pay blood price, *guma* on the damage he caused her, though the pay is not equal to damage caused on males. Anyway, if the harm done is not as such serious, it could be ended with reconciliation. More or less, this resembles the ethnographic discussion made by Hirut on the issue (2001:109). In fact this implies the concern of her parents for the well being of their daughter.

When the *gunguma* ceremony is over, the father of the bride publicizes the number of cattle he is going to give as a *gegayoo* (dowry). The cattle are counted by selected men from the *hamamota*

(courtiers of the bridegroom) and would be driven to the groom's home place. My informants say it is the first *handhura* (personal wealth) since she ever comes to this world. And this seems to be a source of prestige in the new social environment she joined. She is given as some sort of payment of service she had rendered for her parents.

Then, two important events that traditionally establish her legal status as a wife are subsequently performed. These are the *rakoo* ceremony and a process known as *Dhofsisaa*. Both are performed in the groom's home. In the *rakoo* ceremony, her legality of wifehood will be sanctioned by ritual i.e. blood of slaughtered sheep by the husband. (see Rakoo Institution). In the latter process i.e. *Dhofsisaa*, the next morning at the groom's home, the bride touches with her *siinqee* each cattle she is given by the groom's father and mother. This act symbolizes that she owned them. These are what constitute the newly married couples joint property.

After the *Dhofsisaa* process, the defloweration ceremony takes place on the morrow after *cidha* is dispersed. It is a closed one. If she is found disvirgined, it is considered a great shame and the husband counsels his formal visit to affinals. Hence, the social position of the bride in the community will remain degraded. But if she is found virgin, the husband commences a formal visit after a week and she will have also a great respect from the community.

Although *Gabara* and *walgara* are prevalent types of marriage among the Arsi Oromo of Dodola, they are not the only types. Though less common and less favoured, there are other informal types of marriage.

4.1.1.1.3. *Buttaa* (Abduction)

It is an informal and illegal measure of acquiring a wife which Arsi Oromo adopted through time. My informants unanimously assert the conditions that provoke *butta*. The first condition again revolves around escalating bride price. A poor who does not have dependable and strong *gosa* to pay for *Gabbara* resorts to forceful abduction. Secondly, the parents of the girl may turn down the request of the boy because of descent choice and low socio-economic status of the parents of the boy. Then, the boy will decide to get the girl by forceful means. He secretly and carefully plans the action. The secret plan includes the selection of the place where the girl frequents, conducive time, and the preparation of sufficient and powerful gangs to execute the abduction. One important point worth noting is that it is done without slight knowledge of the affair by the girl.

Informants say that the usual and convenient place for abduction is on the way to market or, while she is fetching water or firewood, and on the way to school and sometimes when parents are not at home. As it is executed by forceful means, such kind of marriage does not have peaceful courses and ends. Sometimes, it ends up with a big fight between the abductors and the family and relatives of the girl. This may lead to a great physical destruction such as the loss of eyes, ears and even the loss of life from both parties. If the abducted girl is *raabitti* (uncircumcized), she is taken to a strange and far place from her relatives for circumcision. However, with all its messes, *butta* is given traditional provision for its settlement through local payment called *Yakka*. *Yakka* can be verbal excuse and/or payment in cash or kind. *Yakkaa* for *raabitti* is 7 cows and has nothing to do with the payment of formal marriage, that will be decided after the *yakka* is paid and conflict resolved. It would not be difficult to imagine what kind of status abduction may entail for women. Moreover, marriage without reciprocal love or incompatibility of age and without any psychological and physiological preparedness may end up

with dissolution. Nevertheless, nowadays, the practice is spreading like a “Prairy Fire” in the area understudy.

According to evidence from Dodola Woreda Court (File No. I) case on Abduction, Unpublished Court File 2002), 30 cases are presented to the court, out of which 24 are waiting for court decision. Furthermore, these documents envisage the physical damage caused to Dodola Arsi women. Therefore, many Dodola Arsi girls are refrained from going to school for fear of this forceful and illegal act. And parents are forced to limit their girls to domestic environ. As many of the cases are not appealed to the court but traditionally settled, there are so many *butaa* crimes which are settled behind the court with interference of elders and Naiba courts⁴.

4.1.1.1.4 *Hawwata* (persuasion)

It is a type of marriage which is motivated by mutual interests of marital partners. It disregards the primary consent of the parents. According to my informants, sometimes, girls can be persuaded by a third party to appreciate their partners and indulge in such kind of marriage, or both the partners may execute it with reciprocated love and, without telling or consulting their respective parents. Places for market, *Sirba* (traditional dance), wedding and *Kitani* are where pre arrangement is made and executed. Informants flatteringly tell that it resembles “modern democracy”. However, they stressed that though such kind of marriage does not entail *yakka*, (punishment) because it goes against traditional norm, the doer should negotiate with the parents as some sort of reconciliation (*fixata*). And he should legalize the marriage either through payment of *Gabbara* or *Walgara* by doing what is in his capacity. According to most informants, in such kind of marriages both spouses have equal consideration and love for one another though

⁴ Naiba - is a sharia court to which such case are referred.

the impact of socialization and lack of sufficient *geggyoo* may contribute for lowness of prestige in the family and community.

4.1.1.1.5 *Dhaala* (Levirate)

It is a type of marriage in which the wife of a deceased husband is inherited by one of his brothers. This practice is mainly intended to maintain the deceased man's lineage. However, in case the deceased husband does not have brother, the chance goes to classificatory brothers. If this also become impossible either because of lack of classificatory brothers or for other reasons, the final alternative left is to select one man from his lineage after confirming his genealogical proximity. To effectuate this, informants say that there is a special ceremony called *miiloo kennuu*, by which a woman from widowhood is transferred to a married status. Here, a feast is prepared by the family and relatives of the deceased man. In this ceremony, the heir publicizes taking responsibility of handling the family of the deceased brother. Then, *Korma* (bull), *eeboo* (spear) *miiloo* (chair), *wayya* (woven cloth), *sa'a a* (a milk cow), *hoolaa* (a sheep) and *farda sangaa* (a horse) are given to the heir from the property of the deceased brother. Ofcourse, this is determined by the economic power of the family of the deceased. If found poor, *wayyaa* and *eeboo miiloo* will be enough. As a reciprocity, the *miiltichaa* (heir) blesses the widow and the orphans. Then, the attendants of the ceremony do the same, wishing them peaceful and successful marriage life.

This kind of marriage disregards the interest of the widow. Moreover, the *miiltichaa* (the heir) may not be her equal in age, being either old or young. There is no love in it but it is culturally loaded on the widow. However, one interesting point about this marriage is that, if the widow does not want, as long as she can live with her children by deceased husband, and as long as she

does not effectuate marriage outside the clan of her former husband, she can leave out the remarriage. However, taking such decision is rare because of the need for satisfaction of sexual desire and defense.

4.1.1.1.6 *Milbettoo/Hirpha* (Sororate)

This type of marriage is a change brought about by death crises in the family. It is a custom whereby, upon the death of a wife, her kin gives the sister of the deceased wife to a widower. Brown (1980) explicitly state that Sororate is a marriage with a sister of a deceased wife and adds that the widower has the right to ask his affinal for substitution. As the term *hirphaa* implies, it is replacing sister of a deceased wife for no payment, *Gabbara* or *Walgara*. According to my Arsi informants, after the burial both clans (that of a widower and deceased wife) come together and discuss the future of husband and social problems the death of the wife may entail. Amidst the discussion, one strong man from the clan of the widower ask the clan of the deceased wife saying “*Imimaan abbaa manaa ishii nu haxaya; itillee du’a intalaatiin waliti dachaafamte nuuf diriirsa*”. Wipe the tear of her husband, sprawl or stretch the hide⁵ folded by the death of wife. Though, it is not a must that the girl’s parent provide a replacement, parents do not usually reject the request because they want to retain and continue affinal relation of the two parties. Moreover, they want the children survived by the deceased mother with mother, usually the sister of the deceased. However, the initiative to arrange *hirphaa* usually comes from the widower. But, such kind of arrangement depends on the already existing relationship between the two parties. Thus, some forty days after the bural, the parent of the deceased wife, smear the head of her another daughter with butter and bring for the widower as replacement. Along with her, she

⁵ hide - is what Arsi family frequently sleep on. It is prepared from skin.

brings food known as *buraatoo* (usually prepared from barley and butter). On the other hand, the widower and the clan who got the replacement will give the mother in-law presents prestigious cloth and slaughter sheep for her honour. The girl will be made a legal wife to inherit all the property of her deceased sister. Even if the widower can have more than one wife in the future, her sister's property will remain in her hand.

However, such kind of marriage has a negative impact on the status of an incoming sister as a wife. For one, there is no reciprocated love. For another, the widower may not be man of her age, being either old or young.

In sum, these culturally approved and/or socially sanctioned types of marriage have, their own paradoxical implication on the status of women. For one, they carry the culture of the people forward. For another, if not most, many of them disregard women's interest which produces corollary role. Nevertheless, there are also rare forms of marriage practices which are presented below.

4.1.1.2 Rare Forms of Marriage Practices

According to informants, there are also other rare forms of marriage practices among the Dodola Arsi Oromo which are neither culturally approved and/or socially sanctioned but are taking place. Such types of marriage emerge as a reaction to certain odd problems which may encounter both male and female individually. They include: *Adda baana*, *Fuudha Gursummeetti* (Remarriage of divorce), *Biidhaa*, and *Matadibaa* (headsmearing).

4.1.1.2.1 Adda baana

In this type of marriage, informant say, the girl abandons her family and joins a man on her own will. As its name indicates it shows some kind of separation between the girl and the family. Among Maccaa Oromo, this is known as *asseennaa*. Primarily, the girl may be advised to do so by her near relatives. But the sole initiative is taken by herself. So, Without the knowledge of the man and his family, she goes to the house of the man she wants. Just in the evening between six and seven, following the calves that are being brought back from the meadow, she hurriedly gets into the house unnoticed saying: *adda baana shifa; xabboo mana citaa; warra afaan golaa; na jalaa goraa*". When paraphrased it means "you man' in the grass built house' Let us unite with our flower (*shifa*), be off those standing on my way to sleeping room (she is demanding to let her enter the house). Thus, she will hung herself to the pillar until she is given a reply.

According to these informants, girls usually take such actions for many reasons. When the girl looks forward to a hardworking husband or when she is impressed with the descent and family status of the man she wants, she will throw herself in such kind of marriage. Sometimes when a girls remains unmarried for so long, she may go for *adda baana*. Nevertheless, one way a girl realizes her desire is by going for *adda baana*. Then, the family of the man she went to asks her the name of the man she wants. Subsequently, they ask her *gosa/clan* for two reasons: firstly to avoid the *haraamu* (taboo) to ascertain exogamic nature of the marriage. Secondly, to be sure whether she belongs to marriageable clan. Because, there are certain clans identified as *Waata* (clay workers), *Faaqii* (tanner), *tumtu*(Weavers) with whom marriage by any means is impossible. This idea seems to resemble the *walaba* girl that was mentioned by Hirut (2001:115).

However, such marriage may not be acceptable immediately by the man. He will be advised not to reject. But if his parents, too, are against the girl for different reasons, after anointing her head

with butter, she will be taken back to her parents, the next day. But if accepted, the next day after her entry, two *jasrsas* would go to her parents for negotiation. The *jaarsas* say “*raadi keessan jabbii waliin galte na bira jirti; hagicha kaaheen dhufheetii bakka biraa hinsoqinaa.*” “Your heifer happened to enter my house with male calf; I have already had her in sleeping room; do not search for her.” Then, both the mediators and the girls parents and relatives discuss on the issue and formalize the marriage. This type of marriage is less prestigious for women. It is also less costly. Besides, the bridegroom does not pay any *yakka* for the bride’s parent. However, it rarely happens.

4.1.1.2.2 *Fuudha Gursumma* (Remarriage of Divorcee)

This is also rare form of marriage which evolved through time. It is a type of marriage whereby a man takes a woman who has fled her husband. No ceremony is needed. Such form of marriage usually starts with cohabitation and gradually develops to marriage as a result of procreation of children and the climaxing of love between the partners. It is often culturally disapproved. This is because Arsi Orom culture for one, does not allow the divorce. For another, the culture does not permit a person to marry a woman whose *rakoo dhiquu* has not been performed by a former husband. Besides, according to informants, all her children by the new husband would belong to the former because of the initial *rakoo* ceremony. And even at a time, she might be forced to get back to her former husband with the newly born children. Furthermore, if one of her begotten children by the former husband and/or herself died while she is with the new husband, a new husband and his *gosa* are accused of murder. And again if her former husband dies while she is away with a new husband, the latter and his *gosa* are considered murderous. Therefore, this kind of problem is necessarily solved by the payment of *gumaa* (blood price). Also society disapproves such kind of marriage. However, most of the time such marriage is not durable.

4.1.1.2.3 *Biidhaa*

This is a form of marriage which incidentally happens. In such kind of marriage, the betrothed girl would turn down her besieger and, just on the day of marriage, would flee with someone she loved most. According to Arsi Oromo tradition of Dodola, unless the man himself dies, that man should get a wife on that very day. Hence, even if he lost his betrothal, on the same day, having *kallacha* (symbol worn by men on the forehead considered deity) and being escorted by his *hamaamotas* (courtiers) the man goes to the other family and clan to request for a wife. As it is customarily said “*kallacha bahe hindidan*” refusal is impossible when *kallachaa* is out. On the same day after smearing their daughter with butter and receiving some amount of bride price, the parents give away their daughter without her knowledge and her interest. According to my informants, such form of marriage is now abandoned as it would not take love and age into consideration.

4.1.1.2.4 *Mata dibaa*

This kind of marriage is arranged between two families of equal socio-economic status under two overlapping constraints. For one, the man may not be able to pay the *Gabbara* (bride price) required, but there is an urgent need for his marriage. For another, the family of the girl may not be able to prepare *Cidhas* (Wedding) and are unable to give necessary *gegeyoo* (dowry) for their daughter. As one informant humorously said “*cabaa lamaantu walitii fayye*”, “two broken are mended together.” So, by mutual agreement, without substantial payment of *Gabbara*, with less festive and no dowry, the daughter is given away after being smeared her heads with butter. Again such kind of marriage does not have prestigious status for the daughter in her marital life.

4.1.1.2.5 Nika (Marriage by Sharia)

This type of marriage is universal among Muslims. It is an outgrowth of change from traditional religion. It is generally governed by Sharia law. Informants say that *Nika* is legally validated by a mutual agreement of the partners or their representatives orally or in written statement. The contract ceremony is not subject to strict formalities. The informants say that the following four conditions however, are necessary: declaration of an offer by one party, acceptance of this by the other, sufficient and qualified witness, and the presence of the Qadi. The presence of Imam or *Qadi* in *Nika* is essential for the confirmation of the marriage and effecting of divorce at times of problem. By asking the two partners, the *Qadi* assures whether the partners have interest in each other. A sound girl who attained puberty has the right to contract such kind of marriage. In *Nika* the lower age limit is 9 for girls and 12 for boys. It is at this juncture where a problem is created as the Oromo tradition allows for women lower age limit to be 20. So, in most cases this has been impractical because of its failure to accommodate itself in the customary set practices. However, recently the wahibis (Muslim sect), began to introduce a rigid way by which bride is taken to the bridegroom home carried on the back of a close relative of the would-be husband, her face and all bodies covered with cloth. It would not be difficult to imagine what kind of status such marriage practices may entail for women. This is also the violation of traditional practice and the denial of interests of women.

However, whether the ceremony is small or large it involves certain amount of money in the form of bride price. This money will be given to the would-be bride or her representative or usually to her parents. *Nika* means the union of sex whose sole purpose is to legalize the marriage and make it acceptable by the society and religion. *Mahari* is a kind of gift given by the husband to the bride on the very day of the wedding. It is limited to 4 cows. In case divorce happens, the

Sharia law permits that she has the right of taking the Mahari with herself. But if she is the initiator of the divorce, she will abandon the Mahari gift for the husband. This again infringes her right on her property and so she is left empty hand. This worsens her condition of living and devalues her status. And this kinds of marriage is being resented even by some Muslim communities for it violates the traditional Oromo marriage practices in many of its practices and in many of its facets.

As mentioned above, these forms of marriage practices do have their own causes and objectives. They are some sort of reaction to certain odd problems in the society. However, in-case of *biindhaa* and *matadibaa* as they totally disregard the interests of girls, imagining what kind of status it may entail would not be difficult. On the other hand, in *Fuudha gursommeetti* (Remarriage of divorcee), the marriage may not be long lasting as it sometimes emanates from temporary cohabitation. In fact, although *addabaana* seems a democratic move, it may not accrue favorable status or prestige for the girl as it does not have cultural approval.

4.2 Sex Related Crimes Perpetrated on Dodola Arsi Women

In preceding section 4.1 we have seen that there are wider and broader ways in which one could take wife. One may take up culturally approved and socially sanctioned ways or may make use of rare forms. But without recourse to these ways, some males are resorting to harassing women sexually. In 2001/2002, eleven rape cases have been presented to Dodola district court. Out of these, nine cases have not been given decision. In the same year, out of nine crimes on disvirgining girls appealed to the court, only three cases have got final decision. And out of seven cases related to polygany presented to the Dodola court, none has been given final decision. (Dodola District Court, File No;3 DH/Dub/2001). These cases do not include those that

appeared to the Sharia court and those settled by elders without the knowledge of regular court. When all these are seen, the impending danger on the status of Dodola Arsi women is being transcended to the catastrophic AIDS which jeopardizes the very existence of the people.

4.3 Modern Education And Its Impact on the status

of Dodola Arsi Women

During Pre Menelik period, men and women's education in Dodola is characterized by both patriarchal and religious objective emphasizing the former. Nazamo (1993:3) under lines that in patriarchal countries like Ethiopia, male and female children are taught separately to fit into society and adopt pre determined roles in both family and society. From childhood to adulthood, the way they came along in socialization consolidated women's inferior position.

The socialization process has brought about their subordination. Women do not complain thinking it is normal to accept male dominance. Therefore, one can say that the main objective of socialization was to prepare women for exclusively domestic roles like child bearing, rearing , feeding, clothing and preparing food. Even so, Muslim school of Madrasa around Dodola without affecting patriarchal socializing ideology started to exist side by side with the traditional one. Contrary to his at present, if not exclusively, by and large, it was only boys who had the opportunity to attend Madrasa school. It is at this juncture that, modern education was introduced by colonial government and missionaries. Infact, the first type of colonial school in Dodola was Ortodox church school where children were taught ethics and moral. Indeed, the

objectives of this colonial school was for the pacification of the subject, people. Even the education targeted male only who are targeted to be potential problem to the state. Therefore women had no opportunity of obtaining such kind of education.

On the other hand, the school of Madrasa¹ which also focuses on religion and on males never cared about the education of females. One of my woman informants told me the episode as follows:

Abban kiyyaa dubara sadiif ilmo dhiira lama qaba ture. Iioollee obboolaa teenaa worra dhiiraa lamaanuu mana Qaraatii Madraasaatti yeroo ergu nu warra dubara Akka deemne qaraanuu nu eeyyamuu dide. Kanaafiyyu, Aniiif obboleettin koo tokko dhoksaadhaan obboolaa keenya Warraa dhiiraa baratnn akka nu barsisian goone kunoo aniiif obboleettonni koo dandeenyee qaraana .

father has five children, two sons and 3 daughters. He sent his two sons to Madras school but refused our going. Therefore, I and my two sisters, by begging our brothers, in the absence of our parents, have learned the alphabet of qoran and now we can read it. One important conclusion we can draw from this episode is the extent of discrimination between boys and girls by the community is general, and the family in particular. However, following the establishment of modern schools in Dodola, Seroftaa and Nagllee Meexamaa rural towns, people started to send their boys and girls to the nearby school. But, girls were sent reluctantly. According to most of my informants, the aim of sending girls to school was not for a just cause. Because, intermittently girls are forced to drop-out of their school and get married assuming their incumbent duty of child bearing, rearing and domestic work. Thus the desire of girls to stay in school has

¹ Madrasa- Primary qoran teaching school for children. It is where Islam is taught primary level for children.

adversely been affected. This rightly coincides with Genet's (1991:89) assertion that cultural values on the education of women are influenced by a society's view of gender roles.

So, schooling is also male children's privilege. More male are sent to school compared to female. Despite this, however, girl's enrollment at least up to grade eight is increasing. This is due to the enlightening role of schools. They say “ *barachuun misha, ija bana*” “learning is good; it opens eyes, will enable to read”. So the increase in the number of girls in school is in the belief that it enhance their skill in the domestic tasks. For whatever reason it is, the participation of girls in school is increasingly encouraging in the site under study.

In 1999/2000, out of 1024 student in Seroftaa, 268 were females. In the same year, in Nagellee Mexamaa, out of 931 student 169 were females. In 2000/2001, in both Junior secondary schools, out of 2536 student 685 were females and subsequently in 2001/2002, out of 2655 total student population, 859 are female (Dodolaa District Education Office Unpublished source 2001).

One important point deducible from this figure is that, although the number of female student population seems to increase when compared to that of male student, it is still very low. In 1999, in both junior secondary schools, the ratios of female to male in percentage were 27 and 73 respectively.

In both junior High schools and Dodola senior secondary school the number of female dropouts is also significant. 563 female students dropped out of school (*Ibid*). This is attributed to the following factors. Many girls become academically weak as they do not have a culture of studying with smart boys in the class . Also, as they are culturally burdened with heavy domestic

works, they lack time to study. Similarly, some of the girls could not continue with their education because of the distance of their family's residence from the school site. Still, others drop out fear of abduction. Because, at present, abduction is becoming very common and routine phenomenon. Some girls are forced to drop out because of low family income. In event of financial shortage, priority is given for the male to continue with his education. Last but not least, lack of interest by the family to educate females is also among the reasons. "*dubartin barattee eessa geetti, erumtee dhaltee daima guddisuu dha*", "a woman even if educated gets nowhere, she has to get married and raise her children is what they frequently say.

On the other hand, in 2001/2002, in the three schools out of 69 teachers, 6 are females (*Ibid*). All these indicate the participation of female women is low in education and in civil services. Needless to say, these is a good start. But what needs further study is to find ways and means to enhance women education and their equal participation in job opportunities like their male counterparts.

In sum, though change in the female education is encouraging, a number of obstacles mentioned earlier and undetected, are responsible for the low status of Dodola Arsi women.

4.4 Gender Constructed Status Change of Dodolla Arsi women

Among Arsi oromo of Dadola, gender constructed status takes place at social and cultural level. Culture prescribes gender role and the social position of women and men in the community. In its gender construction the culture values men over women.

Fathers and mothers in this community would like their first child to be a boy. A boy is not only a pride for his family but also for its lineage. As they say, a son is a pillar of strength to his family and a shield to his lineage. A daughter, however, does not qualify for this. If she were born as the first child, her father would not be addressed after her name, as this holds true, if he begets a boy. Becoming a father of a daughter (*Abbaa durbaa*), is less desired compared to becoming a father of a son (*abbaa ilmaa*) since the latter consistently invokes, a sense of pride. Daughters are taught to be timid, avoid boys, and manage domestic tasks. On the contrary, boys are encouraged to go out, to brave, hero, clever and control public tasks at large. Construction of gender in this manner will have implication for overall differential status of men and women. By this observation, I agree with Rosaldo's explanation (1974:17), that women relative to men of their age and social status may lack generally recognized and culturally valued status and authority. Rosaldo also forwarded theoretical explanations of why women are subordinated to men. For her, women are subordinated to men because women's domain is in the domestic, while that of men is in the public. The domestic sphere is a minimal institution and mode of activity organized around mothers. But the public one refers to activities and institute organized outside the domestic itself (Ibid., 23). So for Rosaldo, the structural placement of women and men in this asymmetrical domestic sphere has resulted in the universal subordination of women to men.

Rosaldo is right in the sense that women in Arsi oromo do the bulk of domestic tasks. In spite of inculcating tasks of women in the public domain, like in agricultural activity, the community culture prescribes women's tasks to predominantly be within the house. Their proverb goes, *dubarlin manatti, dhierra alatti*, "A woman is in the house as the man is outside it". But, this differential domain prescription for women and men is not the underlying factor for the lower status of women in the community. Indeed, Rosaldo does not elaborate specific tasks of men in

the public and institution. Her general classification does not show details of activities and Institutions (social, political or economic) that are monopolized by men while encompassing women's domestic tasks. Nevertheless, whatever tasks are separately performed by men and women in distinct domain among Dodola Arsi Oromo, domain and task distinction are not explanation for men domination over women. I rather observed, the differential tasks of women and men are much integrated for the sustainability of the households well-being.

Tiger's (1969:64,86) explanation of male arranged aggression does not agree with the realities of Arsi Oromo. Tiger contends that since male are physically stronger than females, they do more crucial, tiresome and dangerous works. In doing these, more force-entailing activities tend to form a uni-sexual organization of what he calls male-bonding. Unisexual male-bonding finally result in the exchange grabbing of power by men, in turn ending in the subordination of women to men. Despite his logical explanation, Tiger's contention emphasizes the biological difference between sex categories. *Inborn biological paradigm* makes the core of this observation. In the final analysis, Tiger (Ibid.86) concluded that women's and men's difference in physical strength will result in differential socialization and the assignment of different roles.

My observation among Dodola Arsi Oromo agrees with that of Tiger on issues pertaining to differential socialization and differential enactment of the roles between women and men. Men and women's tasks are strictly separated. And assuming the opposite sex tasks is shame (*Qaani*). But, the physical strength of men does not justify the differential socialization and the differential role enactments. Above all, I do not agree with Tiger's, biological overtonned subordination of

women to men. Of course, Dodola Arsi Oromo tell about the differential creation myth of women and men. *Dhiirri mirga uumame, dubartiin bitaa uumamte*, that men were created from the right side while women from left. But their left or right sidedness does not tell the physical strength of one over the other. Furthermore, Tiger's *male-bonding* argument little explains the Gada class of the community and its seclusion from membership. Tiger sees male-bonding as completely formed and organized for power (excluding women). Nonetheless, this is not the case in Gada class. Gada class among Dadola Arsi Oromo is an institution for multiple purpose. It is social, cultural, economic and political. Despite its exclusion of women, its customary laws equally have words of respect and well-being for woman. It recognize women's role for child-bearing (kinship expansion) and highly values them for such noble natural tasks. Hence, *Gada* class does not mean male bonding for a sole purpose of political domination over females in the community. Even *Gada* law respects important women institution like *Qanafaa* and *singqee as wayyuu* (sacreds) and men are loyal and submissive to the punishment of the violation of them may entail. Therefore, Tiger's contention that male-bonding is the cause for men's superiority is controversial in the case of Dodola Arsi women. The work of Ortner (1974:73) better explains the Gada class of Dadola Arsi Oromo by emphasizing men's superiority. In her nature-culture dichotomy, she argued that culture is an operation of human consciousness and its products (knowledge) which transcend the perishable nature (human being) into relatively eternal being (society). Culture does so by its superior role or socializing and acculturating nature. She places women is nature and men in culture and if culture is superior to nature by implication men are superior to women. *Gada* class and its institutions, among Dodola Arsi Oromo are fountain of knowledge. Male members of all *Gada* class have access to knowledge disseminated from the insinuations regarding to day-to -day life of the community. Men rather than women tell about the history, social and economic and cultural practice of the community. And as I was told by my

women informants “ *tana dhiiratu beeka, nuti hinbeeknu,*” “ that is what men know about, we do not know,” reflects this reality. Seclusion from *Gada* class roughly means seclusion from knowledge institution which illuminates women’s inferior status. Hence, my observation partially agrees with Ortner's assertion. Partially because, unlike her observation, I did not observe women's inferiority due to their natural child bearing and rearing tasks. Instead women in this community are valued for their child bearing function.

Indeed, as discussed so far, the theoretical explanation of these scholars is not irrelevant when contrasted with realities in Dodola Arsi Oromo. They, in one or other ways agree with, but not in some other ways. I learned, however, that a combination of the above set of arguments among other things, explains women’s inferiority among this community.

4.5 Status Change of Dodola Arsi Women Economy

Determinist View.

Ester Boserup (1970) in her work in plough cultivation regions argued that women’s role in agriculture production is minimal. Men in these region do the bulk of field work agricultural tasks assisted by draught animals. For her, women’s farming is correlated to the cultivation, while men’s farming to the introduction of plough culture. In other words, female farming of hoe cultivation exceeds male farming, and as men began farming by the use of plough technology, women are almost relieved from all agricultural tasks including weeding except from harvesting (Ibid:25).

Despite its location in Africa, a continent which Boserup classified as a female farming region, Dodola Arsi oromo is a plough cultivating community as it holds true for most parts of Ethiopia

(Goody 1971). Boserup (1970) and Goody (1976) are correct in that in Dodola Arsi Oromo area where plough culture predominates, a woman as a category, do not involve themselves much in the fields work of agriculture task and prescribe it to be men's monopoly. Men are encouraged to feed their families without much help from women in the household.

However, contrary to Boserup's view Dodola Arsi Oromo women were not relieved from the agriculture production that they were previously undertaking. In their history, women in Dodola Arsi have never engaged in farming as their sole tasks. So, as argued by Ester Boserup, women in Dodola Arsi area have not been freed from the farming that they were dominantly undertaking.

Boserup is also wrong in generalizing that all women in plough culture areas do little agricultural tasks. As is the case in Dodola area, differential social and economic status leads to differential participation of women categories. Among Dodola Arsi Oromo, owing to their bread-winning obligation, widows and women from the poor household extensively participate in the agricultural field activities. Moreover, quite is opposite to Boserup's contention, weeding is the most common agricultural duties of women in Dodola. The existence of plough technology hardly avoids weeding tasks in this community. However, what seems contributive to their low status is not their absence from agriculture duties but that their lack of control of agriculture production and were refused access to modern agricultural inputs like improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, etc, and these inputs, have been channeled through men. This is a living reality in Dodola which concedes with theoretical view of Elson (1995). In Dolola, since men are the household heads ,land, agriculture, labor, and agriculture inputs are controlled and managed by men. Except the widows , I did not see a wife "owning" agriculture land, ordering household or hired labor for agricultural production and receiving any one of agricultural inputs either from agricultural office or from business agencies. In this regard observation of Elson (1995) quite matches with

realities in Dodola. However, as Sachs (1996), Elson (1995), Davison (1998), Staudt (1995) have observed correctly, not all women every where have been denied access to these key factors of production. As is true in Dodola Arsi Oromo widows as household heads have equal access and control and these key factors of production. So have better status when compared with household wives but have low status when contrasted with men.

From this point of view, I do not agree with those scholar who generalize women's lack of access, as a category. But one thing that is safe to say, though there are difference in access to key factor of economy between women, generally when compared with men, women have low status. Furthermore, as have been seen among the Dodola Arsi Oromo ,it is not the accessibility but control over agricultural production that promotes the social status of women. Davison (1988) and other scholars in Africa on the other hand, have concluded that the introduction of cash crop has a lion share in reshaping gender relations in Africa as a result of which the benefit of cash crops as exchange value and the producing technology remained men's monopoly [accrueing high status for men].

Davison is quite write in generalizing this. As the case in Dodola area shows, lands suitable for agricultural has fallen under the state farm. Wheat and Barely has become items for exchange value and major source of male income. Instance in Seroftaa can a certain this fact. Here men who are employed in the state farms adopted this to their plots eventually monopolizing family income. Similarly, the introduction of state farm and wheat and barely as cash crop has paradox effect on the income of women. One of my informants told me the magnitude of the problem as follows:

“ ... there was no farmland like this. So no body is going to farm or plough land. Since the farming has been started women have got a lot of Problem [...] that means they are getting poorer and poorer. In the former time, Arsi

women were not poor because they have got a lot of cattle. The cattle eat the grass, so women will get enough milk to bring up the children with... women formerly used butter for their heads and they looked very nice. These days, because poverty that came to us, [we] women are going to the forest to bring firewood for sale... we have lost butter as our main source of income"

So, first the change of communal land to private ownership [brought it under men's monopoly] and the introduction of extensive field cultivation encouraged by the tightening financial grip of state control and police created sever problem for the existing animal husbandry system. Accordingly, the ploughing of land used for grazing before, led to a decrease in the number of cattle and a decline of livestock product mainly butter from which women get independent income. The selling of milk and butter which gives them a certain degree of economic autonomy which accrue women better status both in the family and community declined.

On the other hand, among the proponents of conflict frame, Karl Marx (1941) who is the vangard has advanced economic contradiction as a basic cause for social change [status change] and that it would come about by radical or revolutionary means implies use of force. In light of my studies of Dodloa Arsi oromo, I particularly agree with this assertion. When household economy comes under the sole authority of male, usually there are contradiction between wife and husband. But there was no time when that resulted in family dissolution. Of course, one may argue that this was made possible by patriarchal way of handling the contradiction. On the other hand, such assertion may exclude the role of external pull and push force. For instance, study in Dodola Arsi has shown, culture contact between the Arsi and the Harar Oromo living adjacent to the Somali coast had a role in islamazing the Arsi Oromos. The introduction of modern administration and so called modernity after the conquest of Mnilik II in the proper Bale Arsi land, has great impact in changing the cultural life of the people. The contact through trade also has facilitated and paved the way for change. Therefore, impacts of such exogenous factors

should not be ignored in the status change and be given due attention in the explanation of status change in Dodola Arsi Oromo.

Similarly, Leacock (1972) who based her argument on Karl Marx's historical analysis have concluded that the emergence of class society which abolished the previous structure of communal living and communal ownership (where women's produce and labor is essential for survival) has transformed women's socially necessary labor into a private service of the family. Leacock's explanation is real in the case of Dodola Arsi Oromo. In Arsi Oromo of Dodola after the decline of Gada system to the clan level and the separation of the family and the land from the communal ownership, women being undermined in the family, became economically dependent but responsible for the maintenance of their member and rearing of children. So, as Leacock asserted which is also true in the case of Dodale Arsi Oromo, the development of private property [male headed household] brought out in the confinement of women to a single family and removed their earlier decision making power which has resulted in their subordination.

But unlike Marx and Leacock, Talcot Parson (as cited in Mcleish 1969) asserted that there is no predetermined causal sequence in the sense that some single factor is responsible for initiating social change. So says that social change is the result of interaction in both internal and external factors related to the system. Accordingly , several things can happen to stress and strains created during the interaction. Then with the organization of role, adjustment in the system is made. This reorganization may take several form involving the disappearance or the creation to the modification of role. Thus, Parson's conclusion concedes with my study of the Dodola Arsi Oromo. In the two study areas, Seroftaa and Nagellee Meamaa, unlike the old days, women have started to play a great role in agriculture activities. Their role extended starting from land preparation to collection of harvested crop. Girls in the area have started practicing

oxen ploughing as a new activity, to help their fathers. Both women and girls have a role during plantation/seedling. They transport seeds after clearing the field with men/young boys. During hand weeding, women/girls work with men/boys. Women and girls again help by harvesting pulse crops and collecting the harvested cereal crops, while harvesting is the responsibility of men and young boys. During threshing the role of women and girls is moving the threshing oxen, winnowing the crop on air to clean, collecting and transporting the out put.

This ascertains the conclusion reached by Lorber and Susan (1991) that gender role is something that is being produced with in a given social and historical period consisting potentials for change. However, this does not mean that in Dodola Arsi Oromo, gender role is totally reversed. Still domestic works like preparing food, fetching water, rearing children etc. all are accomplished by females. This hinders them from taking part in the production sphere. These reflect the continuity aspect of the tradition.

By the same token, the conclusion reached by Rosaldo (1974) that women's economic and public activities are constrained by the responsibility of child care and domestic chores reflects the reality for Dodola Arsi Oromo. When Dodola Arsi women are asked about the economic activity of the household they say that " isa dhiiratu beeka", "that, males know it better."

Amending the conclusion reached by Rosaldo,Sach(1974) also asserted that production for exchange eclipsed production for use carried out by women which changed the nature of the household and the significance of women's position. I partially agree with this conclusion when the reality existing in Dodola is viewed. The western concept of the household does not hold true for the Dodola Arsi Oromo, because the society is polyganous. Therefore it is not the production for exchange that changed the nature of the household, but practice of polygany. However, I

agree with conclusion reached by Rosaldou that production for exchange which was the monopoly of men has a role in relegating the status of Dodola Arsi women.

On the other hand, Sunday's (1974) conclusion that female power could develop in society where women produce market valued goods is also worth considering. The income generating activities for women under the study area are sell of firewood and charcoal kaatikaala (local alcohol), farsoo (local beer) which is usually brewed by Christian women. Some medium income women resell goods in small quantity, crops from already stored seed, butter and livestock which is sold only by widows. Income generating activities for men, however, are selling of crop mainly after harvest in large quantity, livestock and forest product. The means of income for young boys and girls is temporary employment during peak agricultural periods, in addition to selling of firewood and charcoal to cover their cost of school and clothing. Therefore, as women do not have control over the production of income generating goods, the prestige and position they accrue from such trival work is minimal and even low.

In sum, Dodola Arsi women do not have control of agricultural produce (except the widows) though they have access to the use of the resource without taking part in exchange which would have accrued them high status and high income. The limnalities of women work (in domestic area), their lack of decision making power in [household] economy, their inaccessibility to agricultural inputs which are fully controlled by men, the introduction of cash crop economy and state farm which minimized livestock income of the women, males' control of household economy, all contributed for the relegation of the status of Dodola Arsi women.

CHAPTER FIVE **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

R.Linton (1936) defined status as the place of an individual in a society possessing rights, duties and roles defined. On the other hand, Max Weber (1960) emphasized the class basis of status and concluded that status is determined by class of oneself. Among other definitions, status is the reflection of rights, duties and roles an individual or a group possesses in given class of society.

Related to social change which encompasses status what has been intensive debate among scholars was not on the meaning of the term. But it was rather on the causative factor to social change which divided the scholars into various theoretical bases. Economy determinists view propounded by Karl Marx (1941),and Boserup (1970) and relevant theories are in one category. According to Karl Marx (1941) the main force of social change is contradiction in economic base of the society. This is of internal origin. His argument is based on historical analysis. According to this model, the process of social change (status) is dynamic and ever changing. This view was severely criticized by the functionalists. The proponent of the theory Malinowski (1945) denied the Marxian view saying that no change takes place in the system except the satisfaction of new needs. So, for functionalists units of transformation are not traits [status], but organized system of institution. Parsons (cited in Mcleish 1969) has argued that there is no predetermined causal sequence in the sense that some single overriding factor is responsible for initiating change. For Parsons, the crux of the matter lies in the system as a whole and with no specified loci unlike Marx's assertion. For Parsons, both exogenous cultural contact and endogenous presence of strain factors account for social change

which results in adjustment in the system. Nevertheless, when summed, the cause for social change is complex but interrelated. It cannot be attributed to a certain causal factor.

On the other hand, since 1970s, the issue of women has increasingly become the theme of intensive academic debates. The work of Ester Bosenp (1970) is worth mentioning in this regard. However, her work is not the first of its kind in discussing the issue of women. Margaret Mead (1935) can be noted here in discussing gender construction relation in detailed manner. Mead stressed maleness and femaleness as a cultural construct rather than as being biological.

Related to the feminist movement, it has been since the last three decades that the gender received due attention of social Science Scholars. And with that, academic work gender issues has continued and come up with various conclusions. But all seem to agree on the universal sexual asymmetries although the degree varies from culture to culture.

For Tiger (1969) biology determinist view, women's subordination to men is the result of physical difference that presupposes the superiority of men. This physical difference gave rise to differential socialization and role enactment, which resulted in turn in differential status between men and women. Rasaldo (1974), however, does not agree with this assertion. She sees men's subordination as resulting from differential domains and tasks. For her, women are meant for the domestic affairs while men for the public

[which gave women low status in the community]. According to Rosaldo, women are prevented from public sphere from which social and political status is accrued. Thus, they failed under subordination and low prestige.

Ortrrer (1974), in slightly different way, has observed the asymmetry from nature/culture dichotomy. She found women's place in nature with [unchangeable] status. Leacock (1972) however, argues that it is the development of private property, transforming the social production value of women into the use and abuse of the family, which has ensued in the women's subordination to men.

Elson (1995) , however , views the position of male and female members in the socially and culturally arranged structures. Her conclusion is most important for it touches upon gender construction not merely as a division of labour between sex, but also as gender favoured rights, access to, and control of resources [which are the source of prescribed status]. Different scholars agree that in Africa household, women have little access to key factors of production despite their active involvement in the production process (Davsion 1988, Elson 1995, to mention only a few). Segregation of women from key factors of production and resources is deep rooted in the colonial policy and has remained unchanged up until this day African development policy as well (Koopman 1945, Staudt 1995).

Dodola Oromo belong to Mando, one of the tribal clusters of Arsi (Tringham 1965, Knutsson 1969). They are located in the Dodola District, Bale zone of Oromia Regional State. Specially Sammu, a sub cluster under Mando inhabit two *qebeleles* named seroftaa and Nagellee Meexamaa. These people belong to Abiyuu, Doda, Futalle, Hebana, Ganata of Sammu's sub-sub clans. The people are mixed farmers where plough cultivation is a prevailing practice.

Gada is the indigenous political system of the community. All men have membership status to one or the other *Gada* classes. There are five *Gada* classes in this community, namely, *Birmajji*, *Bultuma*, *Horata*, *Bahara*, and *Robale*. Though women are not members of the *Gada* class, *Birmaji* and *Horata* have direct relation with their matters. Each *Gada* class stays in power for eight consecutive years, and reassumes its leadership in a forty year cycle. The *Gad* class includes exclusively male members.

However, in *Gada* customary law, there are other institutions, which are exclusive to women. Through these institutions, they defend their rights both in the family and in the community. These are : *Ateete*, *Qanafaa*, *Siinqqee* and *rakoo*. Particularly the right embodied in *Siinqqee* encompasses the others. Though the rights and role of these institutions are on decline, still they are important in the life of Dodola Arsi Women.

Pre Islam and pre Christian Arsi of Dodola are said to be known as *Waaqeffata* and the followers are locally known as *Awvamas* (pagan), the term no more in use. They neither

go to Church nor Mosques. The Oromo Waaqa is omni potent and Omnipresent and is mediated through *ayyaana* . Its divinity is revered by both males and females of Dodola Arsi Oromo. Nevertheless, although post Islam and Christianity Dodola Arsi have embraced Islam and Christianity, still a substantial part of the people are *Waaqyeffata*.

In the community, more values are attached to men than women. This is reflected by their male child preference right from its birth. Gender construction begins from early childhood. Male children are encouraged to go out of their home and commence their role. Thus, they are encouraged to develop indomitable courage in every aspect herding, horse riding, fighting, tilling, public administration and so on. They are also allowed to attend meetings of elders and are taught of skills of articulate speech. On the contrary, female children are taught to speak slowly, walk slowly, and remain timid. Moreover, they are also expected to be good in domestic task management and skill.

After the construction of gender in this manner, it is straightforward that the social position of women is not equal to men. Among reasons cited for the subordinate social position of women are the creation of myth that women were created from the left side, while men from the right; that women consolidate affinal family's kinship, while men natal family's kinship. Furthermore, women do not have access to *Gada* class membership while men having the cultural right of access to it. Also there was the decline of institutions of Dodola Arsi women; *Siinqee, Ateete and Qanafaa and rakoo* as a

result of multiple factors. The introduction of religions like Christianity and Islam have a lion-share in relegating the status of Dodola Arsi women.

Dodola Arsi Oromo largely practice polygamy. The ideal reason for the extensive practice of polygamy is the need for more children. Children in general and male children in particular are most valued in this community. Moreover, levirate and Sororate marriage (*dhaala*) are other factors for polygamy. A widow, in principle, is inherited by the brother in-laws. In this sense, *dhaala* in Dodola Arsi Oromo is a potentially reserved remarriage practice for everybody. In both levirate and Sororate marriages, the relegation of the status of women is eminent and overt.

Next to cultural model, the economy determinist approach has direct relevance to the relegation of the status of Dodola Arsi women. Thus, contrary to Boserup's (1970) view, Dodola Arsi women are not excluded from agricultural activities. Rather, they do not have the right of controlling the production. And they are denied access to modern agricultural inputs. These are instead channeled through men. This makes men superior to women in economy, which is a source of prestige and better living condition. However, not women everywhere have been denied control of the key factors of production. But, unlike household wives, widows have control over production. So they have better socioeconomic status than the rest household wives.

On the otherhand, the introduction of wheat and barely as cash crops, and the appearance of state farm has had a negative impact on the income (from butter) of

Dodola Arsi women. With the deterioration of livestock economy, therefore, women are forced to sell firewood and charcoal to support their family. The fact is that some girls in the area have started practicing oxen ploughing as a new role to help their fathers. But as they do not possess decision making power in the household, they have no income. This in turn has lowered their prestige. They say "*dhirsi niitii horii qabdu filata*" "a husband prefers a women who has cows and money".

In sum, one can argue that gender construction among Doddola Arsi Oromo favors males more than it does for females as a result of which the latter are relegated to lower positions. The gender role place women in house and men outside it.

In Dodola Arsi Oromo, there are two categories of marriage. These are culturally approved / socially sanctioned on one hand, and rare forms of marriage practices, on the other, which have been developed as reaction to the problems created in the first category. There are six types of marriage in the first category: *Gabbara, Walgara, Buta, Melbetto, Hawwi* and *Dhaala*. In fact, *Wagara* and *Buta* were adopted by the community as a reaction to escalating bride price. Most of these culturally adopted types of marriage disregard age and interest of women. On the otherhand, there are five types in the rare forms of marriage practices. These are: *Addabaana, Biidhaa, Mata dibaa, Fuudha Gursumma* and *Nika*. These rare forms emanated from social problem in the society. However, among the Muslims in the area, *Nika* is frequented though many people

including the Muslims do resent some of its practices. Hence, they undoubtedly have negative implication on the status of Dodola Arsi women.

There are also sex related crimes perpetrated on Dodola Arsi women. There are recorded cases on rape, disvirging of girls and problems related to polyganous marriage and joint economy of a husband and a wife. Undoubtedly, all these mal practices devalue Dodola Arsi women socially and have a potential of exposing them to catastrophic diseases such as AIDS.

Nonetheless the number of female student is increasingly encouraging. But still the ratio of girls to boys in the schools is minimal. Hence, there are a few number of Arsi women in the government and non-government civil offices. Because most of them drop out before completing junior secondary school and are given their hands to marriage.

The proverb "*Dubartiin manatti, dhiiri alatti*" the women to house as the men outside it confirms this. But this is not a justification for the a symmetrical gender relation of the community. Instead, the justification mainly has to do for one, with procreation and kinship expansion role of women and men in different families, the cultural prescription of access and in access to the Gada class, and the declines of right embodied in *Siiqqee*, *Ateete*, *Qanafaa* and *rakoo* institution of Dodola Arsi women. For another, lack of control over agricultural produce except the widows; denial of decision making power in the household economy, their inaccessibility to agricultural inputs, the appearance of state farms and introduction of wheat and barely as a cash crop that minimized the livestock

income of the women, lack of education which could have promoted women's technology, are factors that contributed to the relegation of the status of Dodola Arsi Oromo Women