



SEEK WISDOM, ELEVATE YOUR INTELLECT AND SERVE HUMANITY !



COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

SCHOOL OF LAW

GRADUATES PROGRAM

MASTER OF LAWS (LLM) IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC LAW

THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION OF IDENTITY

THE CASE OF WOLENE PEOPLE IN GURAGE ZONE OF SNNPRS

BY: BEREKET KEDIR

ADVISOR: GETACHEW ASSEFA (PhD)

(LLM, THESIS)

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM OF SCHOOL OF LAW ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF LAWS IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC LAW (LLM)

ADDIS ABABA: ETHIOPIA

JUNE: 2021

THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION OF IDENTITY:
THE CASE OF WOLENE PEOPLE IN GURAGE ZONE OF SNNPRS

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Program of School of Law Addis Ababa University in
Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Laws in Constitutional and Public Law from
Addis Ababa University School of Law

By: Bereket Kedir

Advisor: Getachew Assefa (PhD)

Addis Ababa: Ethiopia

June: 2021

Declaration

I, BEREKET KEDIR, hereby declare that this study contains no material previously published or written by another author, to the best of my knowledge and belief, except where the work itself is referenced according to proper reference rules. I also state that I have never before submitted this work to any university for a degree or diploma award.

Bereket Kedir

Signature _____

Date _____

Advisor:

Getachew Assefa (PhD)

Signature _____

Date _____

Addis Ababa University College of Law and Governance

School of Law, Graduate Programs

Thesis Approval Sheet

Bereket Kedir's thesis entitled as, ' THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION OF IDENTITY: THE CASE OF WOLENE PEOPLE IN GURAGE ZONE OF SNNPRS' is approved by the undersigned examiners (committee).

Board of Examiners

	Name	Signature	Date
Advisor	Getachew Assefa (PhD)		
Internal Examiner	Mesenbet Assefa (PhD)		
External Examiner	Jetu Edosa		

Abstract

Since the 1990s, the Wolene people in South Central Ethiopia have claimed the right to recognition of identity and as well as self-determination. However, by arguing that they are already assimilated and have lost the different characteristics that make them unique, they have not yet received a positive response from either the Federal or the Regional government. The bodies concerned see the quest for identity recognition and self-administration of the Wolene people as concocted by few elites who have some other objective apart from recognition of identity in light of the prevailing legal instruments.

The main purpose of this study is to assess, from the perspective of the regional and national legal frameworks, the trajectories of claims for the right to recognition by the Wolene. The researcher has used approach of qualitative research. To obtain research data, the researcher had utilized in-depth interview with key informant, and observation and documentary data collection method. The data collected was analysed employing descriptive research methods.

The study analysis showed that the quest for the right to have recognition as a distinct ethno-linguistic group and to have self-administration was supported by a significant number of Wolene members of society. The willingness of the Wolene people to preserve their distinct features showed more of their primordial attachments to their ethnic identity and historical lineage in relation to this. However, their commitment in the process of struggling to build up and maintain their language, culture and history is also consolidated with constructive and instrumentalist school of thought.

Finally the researcher provided that, since the Wolene people's existence is something factual, they should be granted the right to identity recognition and political representation at all levels of government, including local, regional, and federal government, in accordance with the regional and federal relevant constitutional provisions particularly of article 58(1) of the revised constitution of SNNPR and article 61(2) of FDRE Constitution respectively.

Key words: Identity, Recognition, Autonomy, Ethnicity, Wolene People

Acknowledgement

Words of thanks, warm appreciation and gratitude are owed to the following:-

Above all, Praise to Allah, who made it all possible. Next, I owe my supervisor, Getachew Assefa (PhD), a deep and special gratitude for his insightful scholarly comments and suggestions he has made to me on each part of the draft of this thesis and also for his willingness to be my supervisor. This study could not be complete without his careful reading and his vital comments.

My special gratitude also goes to my wife Mekiya Seid, my brother, Biruk Kedir, my close friend Yewulsew Yitbarek for giving me unreserved support in my life at all and this study. You are all a bad weather friend everyone wants you to have! Thank you dear all!

I would also like to extend my heartfelt commitment to Maruf Aliye, Beza Desalegn (PhD), Henok Kebede. Also, my parents, to whom the Lion's share of my accomplishments belongs, deserve more than what I say by words. Here, I confess to them my sincere gratitude.

Last but not least I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and indebtedness to all the informants of this case study for their willingness to provide the required information, especially Ato Muluye Wolelaw (House of Federation) and Ato Darsema Ansa (Council of Nationalities in SNNPR) deserves heartfelt gratitude for their willingness to provide all the hard copy materials and updated letters.

Acronyms

1. ANRS..... Amhara National Regional State
2. Art.Article
3. CONCouncil of Nationalities
4. EC.....Ethiopian Calendar
5. EPRDF.....Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
6. FDRE.....Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
7. HOF..... House of Federation
8. ICCPR.....International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
9. ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
10. SNNPRS South Nation, Nationalities and People Regional State
11. UDHR..... Universal Declarations of Human Rights
12. UN.....United Nation
13. WLSPP..... Wolene Language Speaking People Party
14. WPDP.....Wolene People Democratic Party

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	iv
Acknowledgement.....	v
Acronyms.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background and Justification of the Study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	3
1.3. Research Questions	6
1.4. Objectives of the Study	6
1.4.1. General Objective.....	6
1.4.2. Specific Objectives.....	6
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6. Research Methodology	7
1.7. Limitation of the Study.....	7
1.8. Ethical Considerations.....	8
1.9. Organization of the Paper	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND REVIEW OF REALATED LITERATURE	9
2. Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity: Definition, Features and Theories	9
2.1. Ethnic Identity : Definition and Features	9
2.2. Theoretical Perspectives of Ethnic Identity	9
2.2.1. The Primordialist Perspective	9
2.2.2. The Constructionist Theory	10
2.2.3. The Instrumentalist Theory.....	10
2.3. Federalism as a Mechanism of Managing Diversity and Securing Autonomy	11
2.3.1. Federalism.....	11
2.3.2. The Setting and Trends of Securing Autonomy in Ethiopia	11
2.3.2.1. The Politico-Legal Frameworks in Post 1991 Ethiopia	11
2.3.2.2. The Constitutional Setting for Claimants in Ethiopia : Basis of Identity Claim	13
2.3.2.3. Recognition of new identity in Ethiopia : Post 1991	14
1. The Siltie Case.....	14
2. The Qemant Case.....	15
3. Empirical Literature.....	16

CHAPTER THREE	18
THE WOLENE HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS	18
3.1. The People and Location	18
3.2. Short History of Wolene.....	19
3.2.1. ‘Wolene’ : Meaning of the Name	19
3.2.2. Early History	19
3.2.3. The 12 Wolene : Primary Direct descendant	20
3.3. Emperor Menelik II Rules and Afterwards	21
3.4. Language	21
3.5. Economic Activity of Wolene People	22
3.6. Social Organization of Wolene: Ye’Gordena Se’ra	22
3.7. Genesis and Development of Wolene People’s Quest to Identity Recognition	23
CHAPTER FOUR	26
ANALYSING THE IDENTITY CLAIM AND CURRENT SITUATION OF WOLENE	26
1. The Self-identification of Wolene People in the ambit of Ethnic Identity	26
2. Manifestation and Solidarity of the People’s Willingness to the Quest	29
3. The Legal and Practical Protection of the Rights of Wolene People	34
a. Recognition	34
i. Language.....	34
ii. Contiguousness.....	35
iii. Common Culture or Similar Customs.....	36
iv. Belief in Common or Related Identities	36
v. Common Psychological Make-Up.....	37
b. Requirements Combined.....	37
4. Reasons for Failure to Recognize Wolene People.....	38
a. Procedural Issues (Inadequacy of Laws).....	38
b. Lack of Political Willingness	39
5. Current Situation of Identity Recognition Claim of Wolene People	40
Chapter Five	42
Conclusion	42
Bibliography	46
Appendices.....	51

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Justification of the Study

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in Africa which is also described as a mosaic of people for its ethnic and cultural diversity. This assertion particularly holds true, following the state formation process of modern Ethiopia since the late 19th century which characterises the incorporation of multi ethnic groups in to the Ethiopian polity. Ethiopia has become a multi-ethnic state of much more than 80 various ethnic groups through this process. However, Ethiopia has been in a state of tension and political upheaval throughout much of the 20th century pertaining owing largely to state policy that titled towards moulding a common national identity and undermining diversity and heterogeneity.¹ The historical trajectory of the 20th century is defined by a controversy over the state and a fight for the re-making of Ethiopia in such a way that genuinely reflects its constituents.

Ethiopia could be taken as one of few counties who has ‘positive attitude’ towards giving accommodation of ethnic diversity.² Yet through the highly centralized and homogenized policies of the rulers for decades, the plurality that has existential reality in Ethiopia was denied and suffered the challenges. A protracted civil war and the overthrow of the centrist regime in 1991 contributed to all this.³

Unlike the former regimes feature of political and administrative framework, the regime after 1991 would like to construct the Ethiopian identity based on diversity of ethno-linguistic and cultural variables. The new constitutional regime which formed federal system after transitional government which lasted for five years (1991-1995) has tried to give emphasis to diversity. The new nomenclature of Ethiopia has become ‘Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) under article 1 of the constitution which entered in to force as of the 21st day of August, 1995.⁴ The FDRE Constitution aims at accommodating unity within diversity

¹ Zekarias Beshah , ‘Developmental State and Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia : Is leadership the Missing Link?’, Leadership and Developing Societies Vol 3 No1, (2019) p. 95

² Christopher Vander Beken, ‘Minority Protection in Ethiopia : Unravelling and Improving Ethnic Federalism’ (2010) , Addis Ababa University , 13 Recht in Afrika , p. 1

³ Assefa Fiseha , ‘ Intra-Unit Minorities in the Context of Ethno- National Federation in Ethiopia ,’ Utrecht Law Review, Volume 13 no 1 p 1

⁴ The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia , Federal Negarit Gazette, 1st year No.1, 21st August ,1995

and self-rule within a federal shared rule system.⁵ Besides holding a catalogue of universal human rights, the national and sub-national constitutions of Ethiopia enshrines extensive group rights to the ethnic groups of the country. It addresses the volatile ethnicity and self-determination concerns.⁶

In the post 1991 Ethiopian history a discourse of respecting group rights like the rights of nation nationalities and peoples brought in to the fore front of political agenda and constitutional issue. With an idea of promoting self-government in the federal setting, Article 39 of FDRE Constitution has ensured three basic group rights. Firstly it reads that *every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession*. Secondly it reads, it ensured the nationalities with *'the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture and to preserve its history'* and Thirdly it reads that nationalities also have *the right to full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in both the regional state and federal governments*.⁷

Based on the above notion, the existing political system of Ethiopia made federalism as a mechanism and instrument to restructure the state by making ethnicity as a foundation. States which form the federation are also formed ethno-linguistic parameters. Even though the Ethiopian federal system seems demarcated by ethnic territorial matrix it is difficult to find purely homogenous states because the fact on the ground shows that there are ethnic minorities in the ethno-national majorities.⁸

Today, the issue of minority rights in multi-national societies like Ethiopia has grown to be one of the most sensitive and challenging issue. Moreover, the challenge from the demands of different ethnic or cultural groups for political relevance can be mentioned as the most important noticeable point. Where there is diversity, the concern for accommodation of various interests certainly becomes the crucial political question. From among the basic concerns one is about the issue of protection of minority in the society. Asbjorn Eide asserts as "Minority

⁵ Elazar Daniel , 'Federalism as Grand Design : Political Philosophers and the Federal Principle ' , Lanham MD, (University Press of America 1987)

⁶ Adem Kassie Abebe , 'Human Rights under the Ethiopian Constitution: Descriptive Overview' (2011), 5 *Mizan Law Review* No. 41 P. 43

⁷ Assefa F, *Supra* note 3

⁸ Yonatan Tesfaye , ' Federalism and Intra-sub State Minorities: Constitutional Principles for Accommodating Intra- sub State Minorities,' University of the Western Cape, Mexico (2010) p.1 8

issues can only occur in pluralistic societies, defined as societies in which significant diversity and dissimilarities exist.”⁹

Ethiopia is indeed “a land of minorities and an ethnic mosaic”.¹⁰ Since in every group which could also be majority or minority in one or the other parameter belongs to one of the nation, nationality and people, it is plausible to take in implicit manner that minorities are considered in the federal setting as long as they are recognized as a nation, nationality or people along ethno territorial lines. But their groups still claiming constitutional rights who are waiting the responses of government in Ethiopian version of federalism. At this moment, for instance there are various communities in SNNPR, who are pushing for recognition for identity in addition to the already existing 56 native identities.¹¹

The constitutional rights to be recognized, to be represented and self-rule are not therefore enjoyed by some groups in equal terms as enshrined by the FDRE Constitution and SNNPR Constitution as well. The case of Wolene people which is the focus of this study, people who are living in Gurage Zone, SNNPR, in relation to this, might be taken as a good example.

1.2.Statement of the Problem

In most states of the world, the existence of minorities is an existential reality because of the fact in the presence of religious, ethnic, linguistic or cultural minority groups. However the respect for minority right is undermined in nation building project by making them subordinate to the culture, religion, language or identity of the one or few groups of others.¹² Despite this fact, states throughout history have promulgated to achieve the ideal of forming a homogeneous community or polity by endangering the physical existence of minority groups.¹³ Despite the existence of minorities, some states denied even their very existence; others assimilate or force them to adopt the religion, language or culture of the majority, or in some worst scenarios ethnic cleansing or genocide might be done to extinguish those groups.¹⁴

⁹ Asbjorn Eide, ‘Minority Situations: In Search of Peaceful and Constructive Solutions,’ 66 Notre Dame Law Rev. (1990), pp. 13-21

¹⁰ Daniel Behailu, ‘Medemer in a Land of Extremes-Ethiopia’ Book Review : Hawassa University Journal of Law Volume 3, (2019) p 218

¹¹ Beza Desalegn and Nigussie Afesha ,’The Quest for Identity and Self-Determination in the SNNP Region of Ethiopia’ Mizan Law Review Vol.13,No.1 (2019) p .64

¹² Will Kymlicka, ‘Multicultural Citizenship, A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights,’ (Oxford University Press, 1995) p.2

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Will Kymlicka Supra note 11, p.2

In multi-national states, even now days there are controversies in handling the language, identity, religion and culture rights of ethnic groups and this in turn is used as a source of multifaceted problems. Related to the issue of the effective accommodation of diversity, the claims of identity recognition, self-determination and political representation and participation are claimed by various ethnic groups particularly in the multi-nation states.¹⁵

Ethiopia is a country with enormous diversity; a home for different ethnic groups who are living in a regional states which constitute the federation.¹⁶ It is reported that the Ethiopian census write a lists of around 90 distinct ethnic groups.¹⁷ The South Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (herein after SNNPR) is a regional state with a visible heterogeneity, which is home to almost 56 ethno national groups.¹⁸

The rich ethnic diversity in the SNNP regional state is being managed by political, constitutional, and institutional mechanisms. However, these scenarios have not been able to contain emerging questions of the recognition of identity, as a distinct ethnic group, but also there appears a desire to establish an ethnic territorial administration.¹⁹ The ever increasing questions which inter alia include, the quest for identity, political participation and representation as well as the quest for self-rule requires adequate response by claimants in the region.

Amongst such claimants, Wolene people who have not been recognised on the grounds of the Constitution of the FDRE and SNNPR State, claims that they have not secured enforcement of the opportunity for self- determination in which the Ethiopian federalist system has provide for ‘nations, nationalities and people’, may indeed be taken as an example to demonstrate the region's peculiar situation. The Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda administration in the Gurage Zone has indeed been designed on the basis of the Wolenigna language since 1991.²⁰ Wolenes claim, however, that while they have the distinct identity markers given in

¹⁵ Kristin Henrard and Stefaan Smis, ‘Recent Experience in South Africa and Ethiopia to Accommodate Cultural Diversity: A Regained Interest in the Right of Self-determination.’ (Cambridge University Press 2019), p.17

¹⁶ Fasil Nahum, ‘ A Constitution for a Nation of Nations : The Ethiopian Perspective ‘(Red Sea Press , Inc. , Asmara , 1997)

¹⁷ Population Census Commission, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census, Addis Ababa, December 2008

¹⁸ Assefa Supra note 3. Currently Sidama has already decided the departure from the ethno-national groups who are forming SNNPR and it decided to form its own regional state. So, the ethno-national groups are 55.

¹⁹ Beza. D and Nigussie A. Supra note 10, p.1

²⁰ Abdulfetah Abdela, ‘Ye’-Gedebano, Gut’azer Wolene Hizb Bahil’ (Gedebano Gutazer Wolene people culture : (my English Version) Addis Ababa: Alem Printing P.L.C. (2009) , p.16

both the Federal Constitution and the SNNP Constitution, they are not explicitly recognized as distinct Wolene nationality.²¹

As a result, the application claiming identity and other supplementary rights to be entitled right as a minority group is pending before the SNNPR State's Council of Nationalities (CoN)²² and on appeal before the House of Federation for more than decades now.²³ Particularly since 1995 the peoples of Wolene ethnic group officially requested and struggle to protect their right to identity recognition, equitable political representation and self-administration on appeal to HoF, yet, till now neither the Regional government nor the Federal Government gives them a positive response to the persistent application of the people.

At the beginning, since the question is at hand concerned for SNNPR, because of the procedural requirement that self-determination questions are primarily to be considered by the regional states within which they reside before finally decided by HoF,²⁴ the regional government appears to present reasons not to give positive response to the question. The regional government haven't respond to the question for long time basically by considering it as the claim of few elites who have contrary standing with the current political system. The other is related with the objective characteristics of the people, because it is thought that the Wolene are culturally identical with the neighbouring Gurage.²⁵ As a result cultural and linguistic identities of Wolene are at the verge of extinction. Therefore this problem requires due attention.

In light of the claims of identity, the group right of recognition, equitable political participation and self-administration of the people, this study therefore would like to strive to provide academic insight based on scientific investigation. Essentially, it aims to bring to light the trajectories of the claim to identity to make reader see if it is justified or not.

²¹ Beza D. and Nigussie A. Supra note 10 , See also Welene People's Democratic Party Application to SNNPR Council of Nationalities, (Dec 04, 2008), on file with the registrar of the office of the Council: Hawassa and Application submitted by Welene people to the same office (10/11/2005), on file with the registrar. See also the application by the Welene People Democratic Party (WPDT), letter written to the Council on 26/02/2001, document on the file with the registrar of the Council: Hawassa

²² SNNPR Council of Nationalities is an institution similar to that of the HoF , which have a mandate of interpreting the regional constitution as per the Revised Constitution of SNNPRS article 59

²³ Application of Wolene community to the HoF since 10/07/99: document on file with the registrar of the SNNPR CoN, Hawassa.

²⁴ Article 20 cum article 19 of a Proclamation to Provide for Consolidation of the House of Federation and Definition of its Powers and Responsibilities Proclamation No. 251/2001,

²⁵ Supra note 24

1.3. Research Questions

The study essentially has a focus on investigating the empirical and theoretical foundations of the question for separate identity claim by the Wolene in SNNP regional state. In order to answer the main research question, the following auxiliary questions have to be resolved.

1. Does the Wolene People fulfil the defining elements of ‘nation, nationalities and people’ as per article 39(5) of FDRE Constitution? If so, how? If not, why not? Who determines or should have determined whether the objective or subjective elements are fulfilled or not? Is it the SNNP regional state, the Federal Government or the claimant, (the Wolene people) have the power to determine on the distinctive identity quest?
2. What is the current status of Wolene people in SNNP regional state?
3. What are the reason behind the struggle to identity recognition and the quest for self-administration?
4. To what extent the right of the Wolene is being recognized and protected in SNNP regional state both in practical and legal terms in compliance with the FDRE Constitution?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the self-identification quest of Wolene people and the justification of the claims for the right to recognition, equitable representation and political participation as well as self-determination from relevant legal instruments.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The following objectives could be taken as specific objectives of this study:-

1. To assess whether the claim for identity recognition of Wolene people is justified or not.
2. To examine Wolene people way of conceiving their identity and the fundamental requisite on the motive of the quest for recognition and enjoying supplementary rights.

3. To identify the current major question of Wolene people and validity of the question as per FDRE Constitution.
4. To examine hindering factors in the protection of the rights of Wolene people.

1.5. Significance of the Study

In its academic importance, the literature and findings of this research may help other researchers to examine the theoretical and conceptual frameworks as well as the objective and subjective elements of the research dealt in accordance with the relevant legal instruments.

On the basis of the study objective, the body concerned may use it as a means to analyse people's particular desire and opportunity to express linguistic, historical and cultural values by reducing misapprehensions of people's characteristic elements. In particular, the study will help advice the body responsible to implement appropriate legal and administrative approaches for the people both at regional and federal levels.

1.6. Research Methodology

The research has employed both doctrinal and empirical methods. By using qualitative research approach, the thesis has examined the bases of the claim for identity by the Wolene.

The Wolene are not recognized as nationality and they are not entitled with the right to self-administration. The reason could be legal or practical one. So, in order to assess the reason, fieldworks and legal analysis have been carried out. Concerning the conduct of interview, key informants from the Wolene people and from federal and regional concerned officials with the issue were interviewed by employing purposive sampling method. Interviewees were selected based on their social, cultural, political and occupational settings.

Review of literature to update the jurisprudence of minority rights and the right to self-determination have been assessed. Relevant legal literatures, articles, books, and journals were used to analyse and conceptualize the points associated with minority rights protection particularly of the identity recognition.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The absence of documented data and lack of relevant data that the researcher requires were the constraints in course of doing this study. Reluctance of few concerned interviewees has also been another limitation. Beside this, financial, time and necessary logistics constraint

also had its effect on the quality of the study. The raging pandemic was a cause to alter some useful methods in the course of collecting data.

1.8.Ethical Considerations

From the commencement of this research in selecting title up to conclusion of the overall task, the researcher as much as possible has tried to go in line with LLM Thesis Guide lines of Addis Ababa University School of Law. Hence, the researcher made swearing that informants who might contribute in giving information would be assessed based on their free consent and confidentially ethical principle in this regard would not be compromised.

Therefore, as it is essential to avoid unnecessary anxiety and wastage of time in data collection, the researcher pursued the concerned participants or respondents by informing them the objectives and significances of the research and their right to services timely. The researcher used his maximum effort to make the study free from his personal attitude and bias.

1.9.Organization of the Paper

The structure of this research work is sectioned into four consecutive chapters. As the study basically focused on the bases of identity claims of Wolene people, the first part in chapter one describes the background and justification of study. It will help readers to introduce some background information's about the topic at hand. Then , statement of the problem , research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study , research methodology , limitations of the study and ethical considerations have been dealt on chapter one.

Under chapter two literature reviews, theoretical and conceptual frameworks concerning claims of identity and the rights of nation , nationalities and people's in Ethiopian context have been discussed.

Chapter three have dealt about the Wolene historical and socio-economic backgrounds which comprise the describing elements of Wolene people in SNNPR. Under Chapter four Analyses of data have been made and finally, conclusion has closed the research work. So, under this chapter some suggestions have been forwarded based on the findings of the research work.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND REVIEW OF REALATED LITERATURE

2. Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity: Definition, Features and Theories

2.1.Ethnic Identity : Definition and Features

The term ethnicity can be considered as a transient concept. It is not as such easy to pin down agreeable, a conclusive and final meaning. Usually there appears the misuse of the terms ethnicity and ethnic identity interchangeably with the term race; yet they connote different notions. So, it would be appropriate to present the meaning they have in their own context.

The concept of ethnicity is interpreted by certain researchers in the field as the feeling of belonging to a specific ethnic community, and it indicates the appearance of an attitude in which members of the group feel bound together by a shared heritage, beliefs, and practices.²⁶ Ethnicity is commonly perceived to be a term that is more egalitarian and less objective; it reflects the continuously negotiated existence of ethnic group borders rather than the reductionism inherent in 'race' divisions.²⁷

Charles Taylor points out the risks of grouping being a practice of distorting and belittling effects: 'acceptance or absence of our identity is partly formed. In his depiction via the misrecognition of others sometimes, non-recognition or misrecognition may be a form of injustice that imprisons someone in a false skewed and decreased way of being harmed.'²⁸ Like several terminology in social science, 'ethnic identity' therefore is a broad and trans-disciplinary term used in conjunction with the concept of culture, validity, the demand for recognition, the concept of difference and inclusion.

2.2.Theoretical Perspectives of Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity theories have sought to address the basic questions regarding ethnicity. What is ethnicity in essence? Is ethnicity something inherited or built? What makes ethnic identification or ethnic affiliation determined? These are the fundamental questions to be answered by theorists in this area. There are three schools of thought that scholars have established. These are the theories of primordialism, construction theory, and instrumental theories.

2.2.1. The Primordialist Perspective

The primordialist school of thought is the oldest in anthropological and sociological literatures which depicts on the very determination of ethnicity as something we are given or as-

²⁶ Petkou Chamba Lawrence, 'the Development of Ethnic Minorities: A Case of West Africans in South Africa.' University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, (2005) p.69

²⁷ Stuart Hall , 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', in A. King (ed.), Culture Globalization and the World System, London: Macmillan, (1991) pp. 20

²⁸ Charles Taylor, 'Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition, Princeton, NJ: (Princeton University Press 1994) p. 37

cribed at birth, is derived from the clan and kinship arrangement of the society.²⁹ So, as they thought it seems like something permanent and fixed. The scholars of primordialist school of thought argue that 'ethnicity is something which is ascribed or assigned; something inherited from your forefathers or inheritors. They believe that ethnicity is closely linked to the primal bond of one's ancestral blood line. This school of thought is dominant until 1970's and even today there are people who still believe in this way of thinking.³⁰

2.2.2. The Constructionist Theory

In contrast to the primordialist school of thought, the constructionist theory emerged since 1970's in a very contrast to the ideal of correlating ethnicity with blood line. The theorists of this school have three main arguments. The first one is ethnicity is dynamic. The second one is ethnicity is something created or socially constructed. The last one is ethnic affiliation is a reaction to the social environment.³¹ According to these theorists, ethnic identity is dynamic, situationally defined, created and replicated in the course of social interactions and it can be constructed in relation to place, time and many others.

Therefore, this analysis implies that when individuals maximize connections with others within their ethnic group and reduce interactions with other ethnic groups, ethnic restrictions are established. The core concept that people do have several ethnic identities that could extracellularly change political and economic systems is most often agreed by constructivists, but this does not mean that the purpose of the change is solely just for sake of political and economic advantages.³²

2.2.3. The Instrumentalist Theory

This is the third theory which stands unlike that of both primordialist and constructionist theory because it views ethnicity as a strategic tool or an instrument for the sake of gaining resources.³³ Based on the fundamental notion of this thinking, people become ethnic and be part of the ethnic group or remain ethnic as far as their ethnicity brings them significant return and purpose to them. Daniel Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, who are the pioneers of this theory, believe that ethnicity like nationality and class is one approach of advancing group

²⁹ Wsevolod Isajiw, 'Definition and Dimensions of Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework.' University of Toronto, (Government Printing Office 1993) p.2

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Barth G, 'Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States', (Harvard university press, 1964) p.12

³³ Supra note 39 p.41

interest. So, what they argue is ‘the ethnic groups are those groups who aspire political mobilization and are also interest groups.’³⁴ Orlando Paterson depicts that ‘the viability, strength, base and scope of ethnicity and ethnic identity are used to serve and determined by the class and general economic interest of individuals.’³⁵ So, the instrumentalist theory, as the title indicates, considers ethnicity as a tool or strategic device to achieve control over resources, facilities and benefits that would not be possible if a clear ethnic identity were not asserted.

2.3.Federalism as a Mechanism of Managing Diversity and Securing Autonomy

2.3.1. Federalism

Although there is no popular assumption and precise definition of federalism, its purpose is to distribute state power/sovereignty between both the centre and regions as a form of government. This might be based on forms which are territorial or ethno-linguistic. In order to accommodate group differences, ethno-linguistic federalism is preferable to a territorial or centralised type of government. "Though international law does not have any mechanisms to protect minority rights, "the rights of federal units seem to be the most prominent example of internal self-determination" as well as the function of federalism is "a potentially less disruptive option to secession."³⁶

Thus, it has been embraced by several states identified with linguistic or cultural pluralism. While the federal government controls shared principles and desires, those that do not have national implications might be left to the member units to administer according to their particular requirements. In their territorial localities, they practice their own language, or culture.

2.3.2. The Setting and Trends of Securing Autonomy in Ethiopia

2.3.2.1.The Politico-Legal Frameworks in Post 1991 Ethiopia

Ethiopia, one of the most populous (around 117 million) and most diversified (around 80 ethno-linguistic groups) nations in Africa³⁷ in the early 1990s, experienced a considerable political-legal departure from previous regimes in offering a stunning way of 'nation-building'. EPRDF, when assumed power since May 1991 just after collapse of the Dergue regime introduced the ethnic federal system, embraced a constitutional structure by 1995 and established

³⁴ Supra note 39 p.42

³⁵ Orlando Patterson , ‘ Language, Ethncity and Change’ , (Harvard University 1978) p .63

³⁶ Michael Freeman, ‘Right to Self-Determination in International Politics: the Six Theories in Search of a Policy, Review of International Studies, (1999) p. 355

³⁷ Estimate of Worldometers , <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population-2020> last seen on 06/01/2021

the 'nation-building' rhetoric of multinational politics³⁸ and, eventually, engaged in 'ethnic identity politics' amid 'just citizenship politics' for nation building, social justice and democracy to triumph in Ethiopia in due time.

Federalism focused on ethnic lines and acceptances of socio-cultural and political pluralism have been configured by the new regime (EPRDF).³⁹ The regime has increased the political prominence of ethnic identities by declaring ethnicity a legitimate category of the federal system and territorial governance and a foundation for political entity.⁴⁰ Ethnic groups are often not political priorities, but also central for the architecture of federal politics,⁴¹ in fact nothing seem the prior administrations that saw ethnic politics as an obstacle to 'nation-building'.

The EPRDF, the rhetorical basis of its exchange, considers identity and autonomy as a cure for the long-standing "nationality question." It has the impact of perpetuating federal structures based on ethnicity. Politicians also reflected this discourse.

The former President of Ethiopia , Girma Woldegiorgis once said that 'Ethiopia is a mosaic of nations, nationalities and peoples' who are free to exercise and cultivate their own linguistic, cultural and religious identities, which was not the reality during the previous regimes.'⁴²

The government annually celebrates 'Nation, Nationalities and People's Day' in November to reflect and foster the heterogeneity of the country, accompanied by decorations regional and national flags, cultural events and broad nationally televised broadcasting of activities showing the importance of the day for members of the federal system in terms of the acceptance of similar status and reputation to all. Matter of fact, it is, at least, a de facto recognition of ethnic identities and a factual framework for more demands to be dragged.

According to the post 1991 constitutional setting, the Transitional Charter and the Constitution of 1995 are progressive political and legal documents towards the acknowledgment of the linguistic, cultural and religious diversity of Ethiopia. The 1995 FDRE Constitution connotes in its preamble clearly and acknowledges the heterogeneity of Ethiopia by saying 'We

³⁸ Merera Gudina , ' Ethiopia: Competing Ethic Nationalism and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000. ' The Netherlands: (Shaker pushing B.V, 2002) p.37

³⁹ EPRDF was a coalition ruling party name which ruled Ethiopia since 1991. The party originally formed by four member parties of TPLF (Tigray Liberation Front) , ANDM(Amhara National Democratic Movement, OPDO(Oromo People Democratic Origination) and SEPDM(South Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement)

⁴⁰ Merera Gudina, Supra note 55

⁴¹ Christophe Vander Beken , ' Unity in Diversity: Federalism as a Mechanism to Accommodate Ethnic Diversity: the case of Ethiopia.' Germany: LIT Verlag (2012) p.6

⁴² Look at ' Hibre' Biher' Magazine, (2011) p.3

Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ as its opening statement. It could be said that the Constitution offers ethnic groups the opportunity to define their position according to their own desires at its best. The fundamental principles laid down in the Constitution; affirm the protection of allowing significant rights to the representation and advancement of ethno linguistic and cultural identities of nations, nationalities and peoples.

Indeed, the FDRE Constitution acknowledges the inalienable right of ethnic groups to enjoy and the development of their languages (article 5), the right to equality irrespective of any requirements such as language, religion, etc. (article 25). And it provides equal protection and freedom of religion, belief, and opinion (article27). Constitutionally, the right to self-determination and parity of representation as per art 39 therefore provided. The unconditional right to self-determination up to secession is also provided for nation, nationalities and peoples (article 39). It also gives privileges in the House of Federation to all ‘the nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia in terms of vote and representation (article 61).

Therefore the aforementioned provisions which enshrine the rights are deemed as the constitutional basis for claims of ethnic identity recognition particularly and autonomy in general, and are also central to the governance of politics of the Federation. The constitutional structure, strengthened by the contemporary political discourse of the Nation, encourages various groups to use the notions of ethnicity and to believe that ethnic identity claims and desires will then be met by the Federal system.⁴³

2.3.2.2.The Current Constitutional Setting for Claimants in Ethiopia : Basis of Identity Claim

Article 39 of FDRE Constitution tried to define ‘nation, nationalities and people by providing some characteristic features or parameters. Article 39 which states about the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples totally read as that Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia have an unconditional right to self- determination, including the right to secession. (Article 39(1), Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own its own language; to develop , to express as well as to promote the cultural values ; and to preserve history (Article 39(2) , Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state Federal governments (Article 39)

⁴³ Yeshiwas Degu, ‘ Kemant (ness): The Quest for Identity and Autonomy in Ethiopian Polity’ Developing County Studies , Vol4 No.18 (2014) p. 157

Who are Nation, Nationalities and peoples in this sense? This seems debatable as precise definition of the terminologies does not be explicated in nowhere. But the FDRE Constitution has installed the elements to define the terminology. It reads that:-

A Nation , Nationality or People for the purpose of this Constitution , is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs , , belief in a common or related identities , mutual intelligibility of language, a common psychological make-up , and who inhabit an identifiable , predominantly contiguous territory. (Article 39(5))

This shows that article 39(5) lists five elements as common parameters to define ‘nation, nationality and people’. These are:-Language, Common Culture or Similar Customs, Belief in Common and Related Identities, Common Psychological Make Up and Contiguousness

From the aforementioned elements there has been a scholar’s debate which portrays that some criteria’s are objective criteria and some indeed seems subjective elements. For instance language, culture and contiguousness are objective criteria’s while a common psychological make-up and belief in common or related identity seems subjective in characteristics.

In addition, article 39(7) of the 2001 revised constitution of SNNPR shows the aforementioned elements in quite similar fashion. The Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of FDRE Constitution, under article 39 states the national rights of SNNP Regional State. Accordingly, the rights to preserve identity, and have it respected, promote and preserve heritage, artefact and history, use and develop language and culture, the right to self-rule within defined territory and effectively, impartially and justly participate in the activities of the Federal government and the right to establish governmental organizations pertinent to geographical settlement and get fair representation in the State and Federal administration are listed.

2.3.2.3. Recognition of new identity in Ethiopia : Post 1991

1. The Siltie Case

Following the changes in state politics in contemporary Ethiopia, the claim for recognition of identity of the Siltie people underwent profound changes.⁴⁴ In the struggle to secure sub regional autonomy which essentially dealt with identity recognition, the Siltie case was the first major case in Ethiopian history. The case usually considered as a ‘land mark case’ with re-

⁴⁴ Makoto Nishi, ‘Making and Unmaking of the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Modern Ethiopia: A Study on the History of the Siltie People’ Kyoto University African University Monographs, (2005) p. 157

spect to the quest for identity recognition in Ethiopian federation. The quest of Siltie people was the recognition of identity in accordance with the criteria set forth in the constitution.

From the outset, the Siltie community challenged both the federal and regional authorities and institutions based on the constitutional principles.⁴⁵ First, representatives of the community logged their claim of securing the recognition and protection of their language, culture, history and similar identity markers to be respected by law in the Gurage zonal administration since 1995. However the zonal administration refused to give positive response by denying that the community has distinct identity from Gurage. Then in the second resort the representatives of the community logged their claim to SNNPR State Council; yet the claim for identity recognition and self-determination of the people from the beginning was not welcomed by the SNNPR Government.⁴⁶ Then, in the middle of 2000, they brought their claim supported by evidence to House of Federation. The House of Federation, after a long consultation process with Council of Constitutional Inquiry and after investigating the case, it remanded to the SNNPR State Council to hold a referendum.⁴⁷ When the referendum was held based on the recommendation of HoF since March 2001, the National Electoral Board announced that 421,188 people votes. Out of these, 416, 481 people voted in favour of separate Siltie identity⁴⁸; that the Siltie is not part of Gurage ethnic group. So, the referendum resulted in the recognition of distinct identity of Siltie ethnic group from Gurage ethnic group and in addition it brought about the establishment of separate zonal administration for the Siltie since March 2001.⁴⁹

2. The Qemant Case

The question of ‘who are Qemants?’ has become contentious since 1991 though the Qemant was mentioned in the early 18th Century.⁵⁰ From recent times onward the Qemant community who reside in North Gondar Zone of Amhara Regional State were claiming recognition and self-determination right.⁵¹ If we look at only the claim for identity recognition and self-

⁴⁵ Wubshet Mulat, ‘Anqets’ 39: Ye; rasen edil be; ras mewesen’: Article 39: The Right to Self-determination. Addis Ababa , 2015 p. 97 (my own English translation)

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Lovise Aalen, ‘Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: the Ethiopian Experience, 1991-2000. Ch.r. Michelson Institute of Development studies and Human Rights (Conference Paper) (2002)

⁴⁸ See the Ethiopian Herald, 20 May 2001

⁴⁹ "Decision of the HoF in the Silte case," (2008), Journal of Constitutional Decisions, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁰ As it cited in Quirin , ‘ The Name ‘Qemant’ is found in 'Liberato da’ San Lorenzo, (28 May 17 I4)' , in Camillo Beccari (ed.),(1998) p. 203

⁵¹ Sisay Mengiste and Alemu Kassa , Ye’ Raya Hizb Ye’Maninent Tiyakena Ye’mengistat Milash ‘ 1448-2019 p (Raya People Claim for Identity and The Response of Government : 1448-2011. P. 32. The administrative

determination political movement of Qemant People, the struggle for autonomy in federalist system of Ethiopia is a recent significant development as a political movement; particularly of the post 1991. So, the very basic claim of Qemant community has been the demand for recognition of identity and self-administration.

To the claim of identity recognition and internal self-determination, the Regional State of Amhara in the first place has given them their own response to both claims. But they were not satisfied by the response of the region because they believe that the claim for additional kebeles was not secured. This caused conflict with the surrounding Amhara ethnic group.

The Qemant people demands a new administrative structure of Zonal or Woreda administration, within the Amhara region, with a much more similar notion of 'self-rule,' which gives them political autonomy to administer their own matters, which Mancini termed 'internal self-determination, "; the quest for autonomy and the desire of people to decide their own political, economic, and social development within the setting of an established regional state.⁵²

Meanwhile , instead of calling 'self-determination' as the 1995 constitution stipulates, the Qemant openly expressed the claim for 'self-rule' in order to foil attempts to mark them as 'radicalized' or 'secessionist' and to foster authentic widespread support.⁵³ The government apparatus have been using this request; Article 39 of the Federalist Constitution is provided as the cardinal basis for their inquiry. Although the Qemant quest for identity is resolved, yet, till this paper work, the demand for additional kebel is not resolved. Hence it couldn't be said that their requests are fully resolved.

3. Empirical Literature

There are abundant studies conducted on the very objectives of exploring identity recognition and self-determination rights in Ethiopia as per the laws of the land. I have come across different researches and articles written in an attempt to discuss the minority rights which holds the quest to recognition and enjoying constitutional rights as a result of having distinct identity in Ethiopian polity. For instance Addisalem Bayeh (2014) studied about the Qemant people in ANRS on the quest for identity recognition and self- administration in partial fulfilment

structure of North Gondar Zone now is restructured to North, West and Central Gondar Zone. Hence the area where Qemant people reside mainly is in the newly established West Gondar Zone.

⁵² Mancini Susana , 'Rethinking the Boundaries of Democratic Secession: Liberalism, Nationalism, and Right of Minorities to Self-Determination', (2008) pp. 553-584

⁵³ Yeshiwas Degu Supra note 62 p. 163

of Master of Arts in Human Rights.⁵⁴ He has explored the identity claims of the Qemant ethnic group by trying to identify and explain whether they have distinct identity markers from Amhara ethnic group. Moreover the works of Addisalem focused on the constitutional rights of recognition, self-administration and representation of Qemant people as Nation, Nationality and People. Guta Balcha (2016) on the other hand conducted study on the problem of the protection of the Zay people in the Oromia Regional State according to the Regions constitution and FDRE Constitution.⁵⁵ His study was conducted for the partial fulfilment of Masters in Human Rights. He gave more concentration on the justification for the minority rights of the Zay people as a nation, nationality and people. Beza Desalegn and Nigusie Afesha studied the quest for identity and self-determination in the SNNPR.⁵⁶ These researches had a scope of representation and self-administration as minority right; however the trajectories of identity claims of the people for and against has not been given due attention.

However, there are very few studies conducted with the protection of the rights of Wolene people. To the best of my knowledge, with some exceptions written on the socio-economic and historical backgrounds, there is no in depth studies on the rights of Wolene people. With the exception of some writers like Abdul feta Abdullah's works⁵⁷ on the Culture, Ethnographic Study and Customary Law studies, the study area has no sufficient empirical written information on the area at hand. Ronny Meyer in his part studies the descriptive grammar of Wolene's language.⁵⁸ These studies have given more attention to the discussion of the culture, language and other identity markers of the people. Sufficient coverage has not been given on the recognition rights of the people by discussing the identity claim of the people. In fact recognition is the mile stone and even precondition to safeguard the other rights. So my literature gap area is due to the absence of critical and sufficient inquiry on the identity recognition rights, hence to explore the problem in due attention. Other rights indeed might follow after enjoying the rights of identity recognition.

⁵⁴ Addisalem Bayeh, 'Self-Identification of Minorities and Quest for the Right to Identity Recognition and Self-Administration: The case of Kemant people in Ethiopia' AAU(Unpublished Thesis) (2014)

⁵⁵ Guta Balcha, ' Minority Rights Protection in Oromia National Regional State: A Case Study of the Zay People' AAU (Unpublished Thesis) , (2016)

⁵⁶ Beza. D and Nigusie .A supra note

⁵⁷ Abdulfetah Abdela, ' Yegordene Serea , Ye'Wolene Hizib Bahilawi Hig': Wolene People Traditional Law, Addis Ababa: Alem Printing P.L.C. (2012) and Abdulfetah Abdullah , 'Yegodena Sera : Be'meakelawi Debub Ethiopia YeWolene Hizb Ye'Behal Hig Sire'at' (Empress Printing Press 2018)

⁵⁸ Ronny Meyer, 'Wolane: A Descriptive Grammar of an East Gurage Language(Ethio-Semetic) ' , International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies , Aethiopica 11 (2008)

CHAPTER THREE

THE WOLENE HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS

3.1.The People and Location

Wolene people's principal geographical address in a country side is mainly within Gedebano Gut'azer Wolene woreda, South Central Ethiopia. The Woreda is amongst the closest woreda to the Capital Addis Ababa and one of the 87 woredas of SNNPRS.⁵⁹ The Wolene inhabit a central highland within the north-eastern part of the region in Gurage Zone. It's bordered within the north and north east by Oromia region within the south by Muherina' Aklil Woreda of Gurage Zone within the West by Qebena and within the south east by Meskan and within the east by Soddo woredas of Gurage zone. Geographically, they're adjacent to other speakers of Gurage and Cushitic-speaking people like Qebena and Oromo.⁶⁰

In fact Wolene is the name of one of the four localities in which the community of 'Wolene' language speakers' resides, the other localities being Gedebano, Gut'azer, and Abez'gey.⁶¹ With regard to having a common name to the four localities, most of the time people call the area and the people who are residing there as 'Wolene' that is because of the common language 'Wolenigna' (in Amharic), Ye'Wolene af' (in Wolene's language).⁶²

The total geographic area of the woreda is about 54,500 hectare/ 233.45 km². Climatically two major weather conditions of the area are 'Daga' and 'Woi'na Daga.' Of this area about 63% is Daga (2500-3600 meters above sea level) 37% is Woi'na Daga.⁶³

Based on 2007 census, the inhabitants of the woreda are estimated to be 250,000.⁶⁴ Outside of the woreda where they principally inhabit, Wolenes in a remarkable number are living in Addis Ababa, Diredawa, Adama, Jimma, and other major cities mostly by engaging them-

⁵⁹ SNNPRS Bureau of Finance and Economic Development Division of Statistics and Population, Regional Statistical Abstract (2007)

⁶⁰ Desalegn Asfawesen , 'The Inceptive Construction and Associated Topics in Amharic and Related Languages ' , Stockholm University, (Holmberg's print 2016) , p.17

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Abdulfetah Abdela, ' Yegordene Serea , Ye'Wolene Hizib Bahilawi Hig': Wolene People Traditional Law, Addis Ababa: (Alem Printing P.L.C. 2012) p. 7

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Abdulfetah Abdullah , 'Yegodena Sera : Be'meakelawi Debub Ethiopia YeWolene Hizb Ye'Behal Hig Sire'at' (Empress Printing Press 2018) p. 43

selves in trade activities.⁶⁵ Mehal' Amba, the main town of Gedebano, Gut'azer and Wolene woreda is 119 Km away from Addis Ababa.

3.2.Short History of Wolene

3.2.1. 'Wolene' : Meaning of the Name

The word 'Wolene' refers to a district residing in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda, Gurage Zone, within the area of South Central Ethiopia, as well as to the people who inhabit this area. There are two possible approaches of how the word 'Wolene' emerged into use.⁶⁶

The first version goes back to the time of the conquest of the area, by Zär'a Ya'qob. His ambitions included expanding the area's Christian presence. Among the Säbat Bet Gurage, Muher cooperated with him in particular. However, the Muslim Qäbena and other groups battled against the king and his Christian faith. At that time, the Wolene people were unable to determine whether to join the king's forces or fight against him with the Säbat Bet Gurage and Qäbena. "The King Zär'a Ya'qob is said to have said "Wäy läné bittihon" in this case, which means "if you were for me." Hence, in this version the root of the word 'Wolene' is said to be this expression.⁶⁷

The second version is said to have happened when Ahmed Gagn came to the area. At that time he fought with the invaders. So, every former settler had to leave the place at that time and said in sorrow: "Wäy agäre, wäy lane!" This in Amharic phrase in English version means "Sorrow for my country, sorrow for me." As a result, the last phrase should become the name of the people and the place. The two versions are conceivable because both individuals, Zär'a Ya'qob and Ahmed Gagn, or at least soldiers under their rule, entered the region.⁶⁸

3.2.2. Early History

The Wolene's early background is closely related to Ethiopia's other East Gurage and also Cushitic peoples, who embrace the Muslim religion.⁶⁹ In an investigation of the early history of Wolene, two different narrations as one story appear as point of reference. The first case is as they are the first Muslims to arrive in Ethiopia. The second case deals with the arrival of Muslim groups in Harar, Ethiopia. First, 99 Muslims are believed to have come from Mecca

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Abdulfetah Abdullah, supra note 68 p 42

⁶⁷ Rony Meyer, ' Short History of Wolene based on Oral Tradition ' Wolkite , (2001) p 458

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Spencer. Trimmingham 'Islam in Ethiopia ,' (Oxford University Press 1952) p. 205

to Northern Ethiopia. On their way to Ethiopia, they resided in Iraq for seven years and then decided to return to Yemen. They were only 44 when they left Yemen for Ethiopia.

If we look at Harar as a starting point, we might see the tradition that portrays several Muslims lived in Harar for some time and ended up to the interior of Ethiopia; others followed them scene by scene. Just 44 of the aforementioned 99 Muslims who left Mecca for Ethiopia were expected to arrive in Harar. It is often said that these people are called 'Hadiyya,' which should mean something like 'those people that have come for Allah's sake.' Three of them, Säyyid Kābir Hamid, Abéccho and Umär, are said to be the ancestors of the Wolane.⁷⁰ Säyyid Bärkällé, Hajji Ja'afär, Säyyid Näsrälla, and Gazo are also other immigrants who come from Harar to Wolene and beyond.⁷¹ While Säyyid Näsrälla moved to a place called "Binaaraa," maybe the Enarya-Limu kingdom, the remaining ones settled in the area of Wolene.⁷²

The forefathers of the Silt'e, Adare, and Wolene used to live together in Harar, according to some elders' testimony. While some of them stayed and became Adares, others emigrated. Silt'e and Wolane's forefathers went together towards Alaba-Kullito, where they dispersed.⁷³ Hajji Aliye became the leader of the later Silt'e and Säyyid Kābir Hamid would be the leader of the Wolene. The Wolene were led by Säyyid Kābir Hamid to the area they now reside.⁷⁴

3.2.3. The 12 Wolene : Primary Direct descendant

The Wolene says that their ancestors are recognized as the 12 Wolane, among them the fundamental 12 tribes. It is difficult, however, to be sure about their names. The following, without hesitation, Säyyid Kābir Hamid, Abéccho, Umär (Abéccho) , Chero, Tofik, Adamo, Zébad, Umwaj, Ayyänny, , Faris, Kunabber or Aybes Tanadi and Asafadin could be mentioned .⁷⁵ In general, 63 descendant lines are still within the Wolene today. 12 descendant groups are said to have gone to the area of Muher (Ch'äbo) and 12 other descendant groups are said to have gone to Kántwat.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Trimmingum , supra note 85, p 36

⁷¹ Abdulfetah Abdullah, supra note 68, p. 83

⁷² Ronny Meyer, Supra note 87. p.8

⁷³ Ronny Meyer, Supra note 87. p. 9

⁷⁴ Abdulfetah Abdullah, supra note 68 , p. 83

⁷⁵ Denbaru Alemu, et al , 'Gogot' Ye'Gurage Beherasab Tarik, Bahile'na Quanqua' , Wolkite ,(Artistic Press 1987) p. 63 (History , Culture and Language of Gurage Nationality) my English translation

⁷⁶ Ronny Meyer , Supra note 87 p.12

We can learn from these traditions that the Wolene do not believe in one single forefather from whom they were all descended. They agree that during the reign of Abadir in Harar, twelve individuals came to Wolene-Jimma⁷⁷ and landed there. These individuals interacted with the existing people, who are not identified in depth, and other entrants from Harar.⁷⁸ The previous twelve subdivisions became more than sixty subdivisions after residing there for many generations.

3.3.Emperor Menelik II Rules and Afterwards

At the end of the 19th century, the Gurage area was occupied by Menelik II forces. For more than eighteen years (1872-1890), as mentioned above, Hassän Enjamo successfully resisted the Showan resistance and his resistance prevented the early expansion of Showan forces to some regions of Southern Ethiopia.⁷⁹ Finally, he lost the conquest and Menelik II invaded his territory and other areas of today's southern Ethiopia. The law of Menelik was then enforced upon the Wolene. They had to pay taxes in kind and discharge the new governors with other duties. Some of them because of these taxes, fled to a place named Agamja. Wolene-Jimma had been the centre of the then new administration.

Basha Woshiso, Negatu, Fitawrari Wolde, Gulzärebär, Fitawrari Rädidi, Dejjazmacc Birru, Dejjazmacc Ayyäle Birru, Fitawrari Sahlä Giyorgis, Fitawrari Wolde for the second time, Azzazh Wosäne, Fitawrari Bäyyäne, the Italians, Imamu Zämil, Fitawrari Safo, Qennya-zmacc Amerga and Wolde Kere were the governors of the Wolene region since Menelik II rules to the downfall of Solomonic dynasty in chronological order.⁸⁰ The Derg regime led by colonel Mengistu Hailemariam then was came to power after Wolde Kere. Then the system of governance had been changed in due course.

3.4.Language

The language of Wolene people is named as 'Wolenigna' in Amharic and 'Ye'Wolene Af' in Wolene's language. The language category lies in the South Ethiopic or Ethio-Semitic languages category of Ethiopia. Ronny Meyer notes that Siltie and Wolene are mutually understandable, which would make them variants of the same language or dialect continuum on exclusively descriptive linguistic grounds, on socio-linguistic grounds, he tends to regard

⁷⁷ Jimma is a small town in Gedebno Gutazer Wolene Woreda , somewhere different from Jimma Town in Oromia Region, West Ethiopia

⁷⁸ Ronny Meyer, Supra note 87 p.13

⁷⁹ Rahmeto Hussein , supra note 102 p 44

⁸⁰ Ronny Meyer, Supra note 87 p. 17

them as two distinct languages, as the two classes of speakers themselves stress the cultural distinctions between them. It also resembles the languages of Harari and Zay.⁸¹

The language Wolenigna is amongst the Ethiopian languages which face danger of extinction. Various reasons may be presented to this danger. The preference of using other language by the speakers, the assimilation works and mobility of the society, the lack of opportunities to use the language in written and spoken formats can be taken as a cause to the danger.⁸² Speakers of the language are now aware of this situation, hence are doing the rehabilitation of the language. It seems that now things are changing. In 2020 a dictionary which translates Wolenigna to Amharic was published. This dictionary that has been published by Sadik Hassen is the first attempt to go through the rehabilitation of the language. It intended to make contribution to the development and transfer the language to the next generations. Other than the dictionary work there are also many literatures like books, poems, letters and other art works which are now being prepared by using the language.⁸³

3.5.Economic Activity of Wolene People

Wolene's are known by trade activities in their surrounding and elsewhere. Regarding the farm economy, agriculture is another means of livelihood for the community. The household economy of Wolene is mainly based on the production of Enset as major crop.

In addition to enset, some cash crops are maintained and livestock's particularly for consumption of milk and fertilizer are raised. Maize, potato, cabbage, barley, chat, coffee, are also known in the area. Beside farm economy, there are also off farm income activities within the community. They are also working other supplementary economic activities. Mainly they are selling crops like chat, coffee, bananas, and oranges. Trade, handicrafts and carpentry are also other off farm source of income for the community.

3.6.Social Organization of Wolene: Ye'Gordena Se'ra

Ye'gordena se'ra, which is also amongst one characteristic feature of Wolene local governance system is a social organization and cultural practice developed through over a long period of time. Ye'gordena se'ra is a comprehensive concept, hence it is difficult to pin down and see its single aspect. It is a social organisation. It is the cultural and local governance system.

⁸¹ Rony Meyer is the first Germany researcher who conducted professional survey on Wolene language since 2006.

⁸² Abdulfetah Abdullah, supra note 68 p. 83

⁸³ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassen , a poet, an author of book by Wolene language(an author of Wolene- Amharic Dictionary) on January 05/2021 at 11:00-12:00 pm Addis Ababa

It is also seen a comprehensive guidelines of rules and regulations of the society. Even some writers like Abdulfetah Abdelah call it the ‘Fundamental Laws / Constitution of society.’⁸⁴ Wolene people have developed their own indigenous system of governance that is used to govern their day to day internal affairs. Largely the members of the community experienced this system of local governance until the late 19th century.

The history of ye’gardene sera, it might take us to the time of 14th and 15th century. The rule of Ye’gardene sera as governance system was promulgated by Wolene and Soddo-Kistane forefathers that had intellect of justice and society administration since 14th century.⁸⁵

The other important social organization within this customary legal system is clans rule. The clan chiefs also known as ‘Gossa’ rules have common functions and responsibilities guided by the rule and regulation of ye’gardene sera.

3.7.Genesis and Development of Wolene People’s Quest to Identity Recognition

In the Ethiopian post 1991 period, the quest for Wolene People's identity claims that encompasses the demand for the protection and preservation of language, cultural and other related values has been raised in an organized manner. Some prominent personalities who wrote and conducted research works on the cultural values of Wolene people like Abdulfetah Abdullah argues that the EPRDF regime has not been positive to the Wolene’s. According to this assertion, Wolene people faced a great challenge of identity crisis in this regime which was not issue before EPRDF took power since 1991. Abdulfetah argues that there was not debate on the identity of Wolene before 1991.

When the EPRDF administration made an arrangement of the federal system largely based on language, the Wolene language speaking community have been formed with one administrative woreda in SNNPRS Gurage zone since 1992.⁸⁶ However the identity claim which was raised since then was not considered.⁸⁷ This brought an inception of the struggle to identity recognition as per the FDRE constitutional and legal frameworks since 1995 with a written letter.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Abdulfetah Abdelah , supra note 68 p.70

⁸⁵ Abdulfetah Abdulah supra note 68 p. 62

⁸⁶ Abdulfetah Abdelah , supra note 68 p. 43

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Application of the Wolene community to SNNPRS Council of Nationalities (1995), document on file with the registrar of the SNNPR CoN, Hawassa

One remarkable phenomenon in this stage is the formation of political parties beside the social organization by making the quest for identity of Wolene people as a central mission in its formation. The political party organization which was established by a collection of territorial groups and clans since August 1991, have started to claim a separate identity by autonomously organized manner. The political party organized as Wolene Language Speaking People Party (WLSPP), later named as Wolene People Democratic Party (WPDP) complained that their identity claim was established based on the pillars of the FDRE Constitution yet harassments, killing and arbitrary detention of leaders and members who support the movement to recognition of identity claim was rampant.⁸⁹

In a process of giving the proper response to the identity claim of the people there were consecutive public consultations in large and small public gatherings held mainly on the countryside where the community resides.⁹⁰ The public consultations were arranged by the Woreda, Zonal, and regional officials. The SNNP Regional State Council of Nationalities which is legally mandated to give constitutional response to identity claim⁹¹ has conducted public meeting in all 34 kebeles of Gedebano Gutazer Wolene woreda residents on May 07, 2017.⁹² It was authenticated that the public gathering in all kebeles demands the response to identity claim.⁹³ On the agenda set to discuss the public gathering was requested to present the rationale and the distinctive parameters to demand identity recognition.⁹⁴ The claim was hence, focused on the need to acquire recognition of identity among all.

The SNNPR Council of Nationalities professionals concerned with constitutional interpretation and identity affairs has made consecutive public discussions on the issue at hand since 2019. On the discussions the same stand with 2017 as aforementioned above was shown.⁹⁵ Beside the written application by the committee member's leaders, the elders, the community leaders and the youth who are organized mainly in Addis Ababa and in the country side

⁸⁹ Interview with Mr Feysel Abdul hafiz, Chairman of Wolene People Democratic Party, on 07, January 2021, at 4:30:5:30 Addis Ababa

⁹⁰ Interview made with Mr. Mifta Ahmed. A cabinet member in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda Administration, on January 06, 2021 at 4:00-4:30 am Mehal Amba and Mr Abdulkaf Ziyin, a committee member organized in a country side on the identity claim, on 19 February, 2020 at 3:00-4:00 (on Oromia media network a televised media outlet)

⁹¹ The Revised Constitution 2001 of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Regional State, article 59(3)

⁹² Interview made with Mr. Mekonen Mergia, a team leader in SNNPR Council of Nationalities who dealt with the residents in all 34 kebeles. (Interview and press release made with journalists on 19 February 2020)

⁹³ Interview made with Mr Nejaashi, a resident in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda, on Dec 18, 2020 at 2:00-3:00

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Mekonen Mergiya supra note 99

brought the claim and petitioned their quest to the House of Federation in different times. In its apparent manner the applicants cite the constitutional mandate of FDRE House of Federation and article 62(3) as the constitutional provision which provide the House to deal and decide on issues related to self –determination.⁹⁶

The House of Federation officials took the application of the representatives of Wolene community in the appeal form on 10/07/1999.⁹⁷ Applicants insist as the exhaustion of State level remedies as per article 20 (1) of proclamation number 251/2001(A proclamation to consolidate the House of Federation of FDRE and to Define its Power and Responsibilities) has been fulfilled.

So, this shows how the appellants may file their appeal and the appellant’s right. The officials in HoF respond as they are under investigation.⁹⁸ Yet, the time set for decision making for aforementioned legal provision obliged the House to give response in two years’ lapsed long ago. The applicants on their side accuse the House as it has no political willingness to give response by decision making time set and procedures⁹⁹ ; by supporting the argument on the provision which made the House to be expected to make decision in respect of the case submitted to it no later than two years from the date of the case reception.

The persistent and official request of identity recognition by the community has not got positive or negative response by federal or regional concerned authorities until the time of writing of this paper. The reason might be legal or practical one. Under this research work, the presentation as to the claim of identity in its respects would be analysed through scientific methods.

⁹⁶ Supra note 23 , Application of the Wolene community to the HoF (10/07/99) document on file with the registrar and an interview made with Mr Worku Adamu , A chairman of Constitution and Identity Affairs Committee in House of Federation

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Worku Adamu , Supra note 103

⁹⁹ Application of the community, Supra note 103

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSING THE IDENTITY CLAIM AND CURRENT SITUATION OF WOLENE

1. The Self-identification of Wolene People in the ambit of Ethnic Identity

Based on the raw data collected by the researcher, most of my interviewees insistently demonstrate the role they have for their connection with the quest for the right to recognition of identity and self-administration and their position for the right to identity and self-administration. The claimants tend to concentrate in this context on their primordial historical origins and lineage, which is something created, traced back at birth, arising from that group's centuries - long bloodline.

In one expressive statement my interviewees share their thought as:-

*Identity should not be ignored as other ordinary matters, because our creator created us as Wolene but we never acknowledge any other name as Gurage or others; so, we should call in our name rather than in any other.*¹⁰⁰

So that in accordance with their understanding, the feeling of concentration on their ethnic identity across history is unchanged and enduring, this cannot be changed by any content and normal circumstances. This leads them to establish Wolene's critical existential dichotomy that varies from the other one, — in other words through a process of mutual definition of their identity by other neighbouring peoples.

Nevertheless, — in contrast to the above statement, as per the informants, when the Wolene people ask a question of identity recognition and self-rule, it was perceived by some kebele, woreda, zonal and even regional council officials as the concern of few people trying to gain political status and economic advantages.¹⁰¹ Often they lowered the Wolene people's identity movement with the goals of political parties who are against the FDRE government.¹⁰² In addition, some defensive local political officials and individuals see Wolene's political activists pursuing the right to recognition and self-rule as narrow separatists who disregard the culture

¹⁰⁰ Interview with executive members of Wolene People Democratic Party , Interview with residents of Mehal Amba town (A main town of Gedebano, Gutazer Wolene Woreda) and Field observation on 17 January /2021 at 8:30-7:30 am (Mehal Amba Town)

¹⁰¹ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassen , supra note 87

¹⁰² Ibid

and tradition of fraternity and unity with neighbouring communities and blockers to the development agendas of government.¹⁰³

There are reportedly some people from the Wolene group committee; representatives who were imprisoned by members of certain other competitive political parties in consecutive Ethiopian elections, held both at the general and local level.¹⁰⁴ The present federal and regional elected officials oppose the concern of the people of Wolene and believe it to be distorted by certain entities. So they assume that the majority of individuals are activated and orchestrated by such individuals notwithstanding the Wolene people as a community, few people have the distinct features that cause such rights to be pursued.

However for several times the members of the Council of Nationalities of SNNPRS dealt with the agenda, yet they have not come to consensus mostly based on considering this issue as a question of few individuals who are against the ruling party and the Council has never give response in written form for the claimants.¹⁰⁵ The Council, the officials who held discussions with the community and committee members have a thought as the community is assimilated with the neighbouring Gurage people.¹⁰⁶ As this is the case in point, it has been thought that Wolene people have lost certain objective characteristics (language, culture, and contiguity of the territory) that make it unique from the other ethnic groups of the country, those concerned bodies insist that they also do not meet the subjective requirements such as self-identification of people (belief in a common and related identity/common psychological make-up). They therefore conclude that the problem arises only from such people who, under the pretext of the right to identity, need political status and economic incentives.

However, some of my key informants who are active in raising public awareness on the issue refute these allegations in the following manner.

‘‘We have established a political party only to struggle for the safeguard of fundamental and constitutional rights of our community. We demand recognition of our distinct identity. Our claim is basically equality and respect.’’¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Letter to the SNNPR Council of Nationalities on informing the situations of struggle with the local government, on August 18/2012 p 4

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mr. Mekonen Mergiya, supra note 99

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Mr Najashi, supra note 100

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mr Feysel Abdul hafiz , supra note 96

Therefore the key informants do not only insist on the view in light of maximizing economic and political orientations. Even the political party established in the name of the community made the claim its priority political agenda and as the party leader stated the agenda set essentially rests on the safeguard of the constitutional right of the people; hence he pinpointed it in the following manner:-

*We have no problem with the new political system, and we are not opposition political parties to the mere aim of gaining political power and our issue is not politics, rather we fight to safeguard our resources and distinct features from extinction and save people from prolonged dissatisfaction and recovery of our right to identity and self-rule.*¹⁰⁸

In addition one community elder give some reaction towards the allegations of the political and economic motive behind the identity claim in the following manner.

*'We have only one question. Our question is identity recognition. We are born Wolene and we are also now Wolene with all identity markers. The government reluctance to give response for the identity claim is improper if we take it in light of economic and political advantages.'*¹⁰⁹

From the aforementioned assertion we can comprehend that sense of attentiveness for the economic and political benefits couldn't be a primary agenda in a struggle to secure the claim raised by the community rather, the Wolene people are claiming the right to recognition of identity and self-rule as the last resort to overcome the discrimination against them and to be part of the economic, political and their own districts' social benefits.

The fulfilment of objective and subjective characteristics to this regard stands to the contrary perception of assimilation of the people, hence most of my key informants have similar assertion to the presence of distinct identity markers which are also unique characteristics like language, culture, and contiguity of the territory and the subjective requirements like belief in a common and related identity and common psychological make-up.¹¹⁰

As the interview, existing empirical reported incidents and secondary documents show that the subject of Wolene people's right to identity recognition and self-rule/autonomy is the pub-

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ms Zekiya Sani a member of Wolene People Democratic Party who advocate the Wolene identity claim on 10 ,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Mehal Amba

¹¹⁰ Interview with Mr Seman Jemal , a religious, community leader, activist of the Wolene identity claim and resident of Gedebrano, Gut;azer Woreda on 09,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Mehal Amba

lic matter of Wolene people. The political leaders, uneducated and educated ordinary citizens, women and men from the society are part of the quest for identity recognition, political representation and self-administration statements. But among certain classes of people, the degree of political participation and movement for such concerns display some differences and that could be evitable as each and every citizen may not engage in all sorts of socio-economic and political endeavours. But the movement in the proactive members of the community could be taken as the move towards acknowledging the interests of the general public. As Charles Taylor wrote that one metric of self-declared members of ethnic groups is proud of their distinct features and traditions.¹¹¹ Other writers like Sarah Vaughan asserts on this regard that primordial and instrumental ethnicity and collective action approaches integrate the contexts that form part of an ethnic profile with the collective decision to recognize a person as a member of a particular community.¹¹² So, in view of this, significant members of the Wolene people are proud of their distinct quality and identity and are interested in maintaining and developing it. In their self-identification, they make use of themselves as members of the people of Wolene.

Therefore, in a generalized context, as the researcher finds, there are empirical measures of people's willingness to declare themselves as a member of the Wolene ethnic community.

2. Manifestation and Solidarity of the People's Willingness to the Quest

a. The Resolve to Make the People Cognizant of Their Identity

The task to make the Wolene people cognizant of their ethnic identity is basically entrusted to the elites in the society. They usually discharge their mandate to do persuasion and teaching to have positive attitude towards their identity.

Occasionally it is seen that there are large gatherings of Wolene people living in towns like Diredawa, Harar, Jimma, and Addis Ababa etc. which aims to discuss on their cultural, social and economic matters of Wolene.¹¹³ Usually a development concern of the rural community is the cause to call and deal in those discussions. Moreover this gathering is used as a platform to know each other and make cognizant of their identity.

¹¹¹ Taylor Charles , supra note 28

¹¹² Sarah Vaughan , 'Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia's Southern Region', (Ohio University Press , Ohio Reprinted 2017)p 183

¹¹³ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassan , supra note 87

In the field observation the researcher has conducted, prominent personalities like musicians, authors, political party members, young elites, elders, women, the town dwellers and residents of the country side members within Wolene people are organized in the general concern of promoting their identity markers; hence giving due concern for the manifestations of their cultural values in all their discussions which is also set as priority issue.

b. The Need to Speak, Learn and Preserve Wolene Language

The Wolene language is grouped as a language at risk and on the brink of extinction by linguistics especially since 1990's. The speakers of the language were mainly the elderly. As a result, linguistics shows that if children and the young generation do not speak their parents' language, then it is impossible to expect the language to thrive in the immediate future.¹¹⁴ It also works for Wolene language. Whenever a community drops its language, at the very same time, it also loses a lot of its cultural identity. While language loss can be voluntary or involuntary, pressure of some sort is often involved, and it is often felt as a loss of social identity.

The language of Wolene now requires the urge to preserve. Nonetheless it could be said that the language may fall in a language category which are an endangered languages.¹¹⁵ Wolene language has not got platforms to use it in an official level either through medium in primary school or office activities.

The current reality of the Wolene language, however, tends to be somewhat different from that of the last decade. Now it appears that various voluntary initiatives from different individuals to preserve the language are being undertaken. For instance the preparation of dictionary to collect and translate the words of the language to Amharic (the Federal Working language of FDRE) currently has been undertaken and this work is organized especially by the rich merchants, diaspora and those living in different towns here in Ethiopia and abroad.¹¹⁶ The researcher has attended some of the book review sessions held in Addis Ababa in 2020/2021. Sadik Hassan published the book entitled Wolene- Amharic dictionary since 2020. Since 2011 and 2018 Abdulfeth Abdullah wrote books on Socio economic and historical backgrounds of Wolene people which also comprises of important words in Wolene language which are again translated to other Semitic and Cushitic languages like Amharic, Oromiffa, Siltigna, Guragigna. In the inaugurations and book review sessions poems, music

¹¹⁴ Anthony C. Woodbury, "what is an endangered language?" Linguistic society of America, Robins, Robert, and Eugenius Uhlenbeck (eds.) 1992

¹¹⁵ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassan , Supra note 87

¹¹⁶ Ibid

works, dramas which are usually artistic works prepared in various occasions are used as instruments and platforms to use, to learn and to preserve the language these days. Males and females in different age levels have been attending the events. Zahara sh/Abar Hussein, who is a 22 years young girl taught, made a full speech in organized events and have taken a voluntary initiative to perform various tasks in preserving the language.

Sometimes in 34 kebeles of Gedebano Gut'azer Wolene woreda and in different towns in Ethiopia where Wolene's are living, free Wolenigna language education by voluntary descendants who are good in writing and speaking the language is given. There are also published books which list important words in daily use; comprises of numbers, the name of days, weeks, the type of foods, name of plants and animals, name of different ranks for personalities who played special role in the society, name of boy and girl babies etc.

Accordingly, the solidarity indices within an ethno-linguistic community are their desire to conserve language, beliefs, and culture;¹¹⁷ the people of Wolene are also consistent in studying the language and engaged in preserving it from loss. To build the language and maintain it, the Wolene people used it as the key initiator, not only interested in defending it from losing, but also because the bodies concerned used it as an excuse to ignore their right to recognition and self-determination quests.¹¹⁸ So, there are rehabilitation works that are held to preserve the language. Of about 120, 000 speakers in a country side and more than 600,000 members of the community are estimated for the presence and increase of speakers, based on the survey of the Wolene nationality's quest for identity recognition and self-rule request letters in 223 pages report containing signatures of 5575 individuals from 34 Kebeles of Wolene residence.¹¹⁹ In fact, information on the current number of language speakers may or may not be exaggerated to the point that it is assessed solely by the applicants. But what is the inescapable truth is that there is a general trend to raise language speakers in the near future at least the majority of the Wolene people might have spoken the language.

Meanwhile these petitions which were filed to the HoF before 15 years hold three basic claims. The first one was about the 2007 housing and population census which claimed that census should be made in the name of Wolene language speakers. Count us as Wolene in the name of Wolene ethno- linguistic group was one of the written claims to HoF. The second

¹¹⁷ Abdulfetah Abdullah , supra note 68 p 71

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Application of the Wolene community to the House of Federation on 17/03/2007) document on file with the registrar of SNNPR Council of Nationalities

one was also related to the demand to preserve and development of the language. It was requested that Children in primary school would be learned by Wolene language as mother tongue language. The third one was the demand for recognition standing from the language, historical, cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the ethno- linguistic group.¹²⁰

To conclude, since they are willing to speak and develop the language, the numbers of speakers seem to be improving over time. One fact that revealed this truth is that both the young and the few children tried to speak the language of Wolene. This will assist in the language's existence and rehabilitation. In addition, their enthusiasm for learning, particularly among the younger age group, shows their solidarity and willingness, in particular, to preserve their unique identity and their cooperation in the field of the right to recognition and self-administration in general.

c. Participation and Contribution in Demands of the Community

In order to contribute towards alleviating socio-economic problems of the people there are many groups established to facilitate contribution and demands of the community. The Wolene Development Association initiated by diaspora , the Gedebano Gutazer Development Association , different village gatherings in club form are playing a great role on development agenda, yet not only in development agenda of the Wolene people but it has also helped them in facilitating the struggle for recognition claims. The Wolene people development association organized by diaspora members which is already composed of the self-declared Wolene ethno-linguistic group for instance has multiple tasks towards the development needs of the community.¹²¹

The contribution comes mainly from members of the Wolene people, particularly from government employees, traders, and private workers. There is also a cultural music band from Wolene that contributes by initiating the members of the community in different events in collecting money from the society. The Wolene people therefore willingly contribute and cooperate to the quest for recognition of identity which is also manifested by it. One respondent in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda pays 50 birr per year from the regular self-declared Wolene resident. He said, “I helped to fulfil our shared objective which is to defend our con-

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Interview with Mr. Mensur Abdulfetha , public relation affairs and coordinator of Wolene development association , on Feb 17 /2021 at 7:30:8:35 Jidda

stitutional right.’’¹²² Because their common and fundamental question is what they want to address, the question of the right to identity and self-rule they want to answer it voluntarily and add to it. This, in fact, means that the problem is not about a few people. Instead, the issue of significant Wolene people, who have no other interest in gaining either a political or economic advantage beside the agenda caused to contribute to it.

d. The Willingness to Participate in Meetings and Public Demonstrations

Different meetings, sessions, public consultations organized both by self-declared Wolene identity claimants and government officials are also taking part in the identity claim topic. The Wolene people are willing to take part, according to the researcher's observation during field study, and significant numbers of people actually participate in such events. In particular, the meetings organized by the Wolene People Democratic Party are held to discuss consolidating and legalizing their quest, such as how the claim should go and how to make people aware of the legal claim.¹²³

In addition to this, discussing on peaceful ways of compliant expression and demonstration other than formal request are causes for their recurrent meetings and dialogue. For example, various demonstrations were held in Mehal Amba town. Especially recently a large and peaceful rally have been held under the guise of supporting the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed leadership which was also used as a means to portray a message to demand recognition of identity.¹²⁴ The participants were estimated to be more than 300, 000 in one rally that posted their dissatisfaction with the government for their denial during the protests while acknowledging and defending other ethnic groups.¹²⁵ The local government officials testify the peacefulness of all the demonstrations but condemn the claim as unconstitutional; the zonal officials particularly do the same in a sense that if Wolene get response in favour of recognition they fear as it results the disintegration of Gurage ethno-linguistic group.¹²⁶

In real sense, some members of the Gurage people acknowledge that the Wolene people's claim to identity recognition and self-administration is never contrary to their political and economic interests. For instance, one informant for the researcher asserted that:-

¹²² Interview with Mrs Jemila Worake , a resident in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda , on Dec 19, 2020 at 2:00-3:00

¹²³ Interview with Haji Nejaashi , supra note 100

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Interview with Mr. Abdulkaf Ziyin supra note 97

¹²⁶ Interview with Mr Amir Munir, executive member of WPDP , on Dec 07, 2020 at 11:34-12:00

‘I never want to condemn the quest of the Wolene people, and I will be pleased if they regain their rights of recognition and self-administration. Our constitution should work for all. Everybody whether in individual or group level should be treated equally.’¹²⁷

This shows that the identity recognition and self-administration movement is becoming a more publicized problem than ever before with the backup of all sections of the Wolene society. The individuals actively participated in demonstrations and meetings without the forceful order of third parties. This, in particular, tells us that it first reveals the individual's sense of defining themselves as Wolene. This demonstrates their intention to declare themselves to be a part of that ethnic group. Secondly, it also tells us that the question of the right to recognition and self-administration is not just the issue of few elites, but also the concern of the other people of Wolene.

3. The Legal and Practical Protection of the Rights of Wolene People

a. Recognition

As Theodore McCombs and Jackie Shull González depict that the right to identity recognition is a foundation for all other basic rights of linguistic, religious and ethnic groups and noted that ‘the right to identity is an important first step towards establishing the basic tenets which, under international human rights law, should inform its application and enforceability.’¹²⁸ Denial of the right to recognition is denial of their very existence and it amounts to clear violation of international human rights. As we have seen in the literature review part the regional and national constitution of Ethiopia use the term ‘nation, nationality and people’ as a group name to the ethno-national or linguistic groups. Article 39 as a common article made an attempt as to which constitute ‘nation, nationalities and people.’

i. Language

Among the elements the group claiming identity, the intelligible language is mentioned. The Wolene have their own language widely spoken in all 34 kebeles of Gedabano Gut’azer Wolene woreda and in areas where Wolene’s live. Abdulfetah Abdullah who is a prominent writer in indigenous knowledge in Ethiopia wrote and published works on the culture of Wolene has observed the following:-

¹²⁷Interview with Mr Ahmed Hassan, an ordinary resident and public servant who self-identify his ethno linguistic background as Gurage, met in Gedebano Gut’azer Wolene Woreda , on 28/01/2021 , Wolkite Town

¹²⁸ Theodore McCombs and Jackie Shull González, ‘ Right to Identity’ , International Human Rights Law Clinic , University of California (2007) p 1

*‘I speak Wolene language; the language is rich in linguistics studies. It is not endangered. As far as the Wolene culture is concerned, one identifying factor is its language. Wolene people have language which is also an identity marker of the people’.*¹²⁹

The researcher posed specific questions to different key informants regarding the presence and use of the Wolene language. Sadik Hassan who wrote a dictionary which collect and translate Wolene language words to Amharic language observed this matter in the following way:-

*‘ I am fluent Wolene language speaker. In towns and country side the Wolene language is used largely. I am conducting research on the language. I have published dictionary work to make contribution and play part in transferring the language to the future generation.’*¹³⁰

So, it could be concluded that the Wolene language has mother and second tongue speaker and the speakers consider the language as one identity marker of the ethno-linguistic group.

ii. Contiguousness

The contiguousness of geographical area where the claimants reside is one element. The Wolene people live in an area where almost in uniformly populated manner in all the 34 kebeles (two town and 32 rural kebel) in contiguous settlement. In fact determination of the issue of contiguousness is an objective reality, the researcher observed the settlement pattern of the community in a field observation and made an interview with ordinary residents; among them, one respondent said the following statement.

*‘ The settlement of the identity claimant group is uniformly contiguous in rural area. With no exception Wolene language speakers are living in the 34 kebel in Gedebano, Gut’azer Wolene Woreda.’*¹³¹

Of course both the regional and FDRE constitution doesn’t require absolute contiguousness rather both in common says ‘predominantly’ contiguous. So, taking in to account the evidences and the above considerations the settlement of Wolene people fulfil the contiguousness element of the constitutional requirement.

¹²⁹ Interview with Mr Abdulfetah Abdullah, Author of 3 books in Wolene culture , who is also researcher in indigenouness knowledge’s, /01/2021 Addis Ababa

¹³⁰ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassan, supra note 87

¹³¹ Interview with Mrs Munaja Ahmedin , a resident and a women political activist in Gedebano, Gut’azer Wolene Woreda, on Dec, 28/2020 Mehal Amba

iii. Common Culture or Similar Customs

This is the third condition that the applicant must satisfy which is that the group ‘should have or share a significant measure of a popular culture or related customs.’ In short, culture is a different way of life for a group or a community from others. It includes dietary habits, manner of dressing, religious practices, beliefs, traditions, history and the like, among others.

According to my key informants assertion what prevented Wolene people from any sort of assimilation work is their commitment to cultivate their own distinctive cultural values. Munaja Ahmedin, Aman Busser, Adem Sultan, Abdulfetah Sabir, Abdulfetha Siraj who were among my key informants have the following assertion in common with regard to the culture of the people.

*“Wolene people have the culture which is distinctive characteristics and to some extent similar cultural values to other Ethiopians. We have our own culture. We have also shared value. Our dressing, women’s hair style, mourning and wedding styles, house making. etc. are our distinctive cultural values.”*¹³²

Accordingly, as per Abdulfetha Abdullah’s writing , the customary and local governance comprehensive system known as ‘Yegordene se’ra’ which governs the overall cultural, socio-economic, religious, judicial and even political matters is used as one cultural indicative of the Wolene people.¹³³

iv. Belief in Common or Related Identities

This is the fourth requirement. The group should have a common or related identity. As we have discussed in the previous chapter about socio- economic and historical description of the Wolene people, Wolene’s believe that they have common ancestor. The history goes to the pre historic tradition of 12 Wolene clan, mainly related its root to Harar origin. Among the key informants Abdulfeth Abdullah who is the author of books related to the history and culture of Wolene believe that Wolene’s have belief in common and related identities.¹³⁴

In this regard what has to be noticed is the name Gedebano, Gut’azer and Wolene seems three naming, yet the history of Gedebano, Gut’azer and Wolene is the history of Wolene it-

¹³² Interview with ordinary Wolene individuals on 31 January 2021 at 3:00 – 4:30 , Mehal Amba during field observation of rural parts of Gedebano Gut’azer Woreda

¹³³ Abdulfeth Abdullah , supra note 68 p. 62

¹³⁴ Interview with Mr Abdulfeth Abdullah, Supra note 135

self. So, it is one and the same. Language, Culture and history made them similar. Denbaru Alemu and colleagues have reached the same conclusion on that “the history of Gedebano, Gut’azer and Kokir are the history of Wolene. They are one and the same.”¹³⁵

So, it could be concluded that Wolene’s give more emphasis to their common identity based on their historic and ancestral and descent origin.

v. Common Psychological Make-Up

The fifth, and the last, requirement that the claimant group should meet according to the Ethiopian Constitution is that the group should possess 'a shared psychological configuration.' Such aspect is perhaps more subjective than that of the aforementioned four elements. It relates to people's feelings and wishes, their own desires, reflections on them and on each other. As we have seen in the previous chapter Wolene people have their own socio- economic and historical backgrounds. The great majority of the people follow Islam religion. The language they speak, the culture they exercise consider their desire to follow their identity markers make them to have something in common.

In addition, the Wolene claim that they have long been marginalized overlooked and stigmatized. They want to have this corrected as a result and want to promote their own culture, history, language, religion, and values. Sadik Hassan share this point and he said that

*“This means several things: their regret for the going extinct of both their culture and language, their continued concern for the loss of their Wolene identity and a sense of loyalty to their dying language and their religion to promote a feeling of some distinct identity”*¹³⁶

This demonstrates that the government's act not only deprives the promotion and recognition of identity, belief, culture, language and history, but also rejects Wolene's presence and discriminates against them from other ethnic groups.

b. Requirements Combined

It can be inferred from the above facts that the Wolene meets the requirements laid down in common article 39 of the Regional and Federal Constitutions for recognition as 'nation, nationality or people. The researcher has found that all the claimants, writers, relatively neutral personalities and even some concerned government officials don't deny the presence of dis-

¹³⁵ Denbaru Alemu et al, supra note 79

¹³⁶ Interview with Mr Sadik Hassan , Supra note 87

tinct identity markers of Wolene people. Many key informants believe that Wolene's are definitely entitled to such a status as other ethnic groups of the region and the country. Refusing to acknowledge such recognition, though they still exist, is denying their existence.

The fact that the State does not accept Wolene infringes not only the provisions of the Constitution, but also the international obligations of Ethiopia ¹³⁷with regard to the recognition of ethno-linguistic and religious communities.

4. Reasons for Failure to Recognize Wolene People

The researcher has tried under this sub title to examine the effectiveness of both national and regional constitutions and the reasons for the Wolene's failure to be recognized as the 'nation, nationality or people' of the country and region.

a. Procedural Issues (Inadequacy of Laws)

While the Federal Constitution did not accept all ethnic groups that existed as 'nations, nationalities and people' nor did the first Regional Constitution of 1995 and the 2001 Revised SNNPR Constitution identify the nationalities and peoples that existed in the region at the time of its adoption in the country.

Among these groups the case of the ethno-linguistic group of Wolene could be taken as one instance. Their de jure existence has been denied although they have already existed de facto. This doesn't really mean that they do not have the right to recognition; as long as the group meets the requirements of Article 39(5) of FDRE Constitution and Article 39(7) of SNNP Regional State; their respective constitution, both the federal and regional constitutions are recognized as 'nation, nationalities and peoples.'

Herein comes one important point: the regional constitution presumes that, as the federal constitution did, some ethnic groups are entitled to automatic recognition and the privileges that accompany it, while others are expected to prove their existence. Of the worst kind, those who are expected to prove their existence are within the existing state, which does not, argu-

¹³⁷ According to the ICCPR of 1966, the right to a distinct identity is the subject of international protection, as seen in the text document, article 27, article 13(2) of FDRE Constitution states that the fundamental rights and freedoms specified in Chapter Three of the Constitution to be interpreted in conformity with principles of UDHR and International Covenants on Human Rights and also those International human Right Instruments adopted by FDRE. For instance, Declaration on the Right of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992 declares that States shall protect the existence and the ethnic , religious, linguistic identity of minorities and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity (article 1)

ably, entertain ethnic identity claimants as easily as possible to exercise their right to self-determination in their different forms.

The FDRE Constitution lists the member states of the federation¹³⁸ and leaves other nation, nationalities and peoples in a country to establish their own states. In Ethiopia, there are 76 ethno national groups in 10 constituent units in the federation.¹³⁹ In the SNNPR, the local government is established by the major ethno- linguistic group. In the self- autonomous zonal/special administrations have relatively better autonomy to exercise the self-determination rights. Yet there is no legal and institutional mechanism to the claimants of recognition to participate in decision making which concerns their self- determination claims. This directly means the SNNPR Council of Nationalities which is an institution entrusted to look at and decide the claim of Wolene is undertaken in the absence of claimants.

There is also a procedural discrepancy and irregularity in giving responses for the quest for recognitions. As the researcher discussed it in the literature part, the Siltie case was decided by referendum while the Qemant case was decided by the State Council of ANRS. No referendum has been taken for Qemant case. Till this paper work 28 cases were brought to HoF since its establishment on appeal basis.¹⁴⁰ Other than the Siltie case, which was finally decided by referendum, the other cases that were brought to HoF have been either decided by the HoF itself; remand it to the regional councils or pending before HoF.¹⁴¹ This shows that HoF is not following similar and predictable procedure in resolving the cases brought to it.

b. Lack of Political Willingness

With regard to the practical problems, lack of political willingness by itself stands to withstand the enforcement of rights. The exercise of rights indeed requires the positive response from the one entrusted to safeguard it. In the enforcement of rights, the legal framework by itself is an important instrument, yet requires commitment of officials and vibrant society. So, apart from the law it would be important to discuss the practical problems.

¹³⁸ Look at article 47 of FDRE Constitution.

¹³⁹ Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Somali, Bensahngul Gumuz, SNNPRS, Gambella, Harari and now Sidama constitute the member states as per article 47 of the FDRE Constitution. As per article 47(2) nation, nationalities and people have the right to establish their own regional state. This works for the recognized one, unrecognized ones like Wolene are not in a position to enjoy constitutionally enshrined self-determination right.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mr Muluye Wolela: Director of Identity Affairs Directorate, FDRE House of Federation on 15 February 2021 at 2:00- 3:30 pm Addis Ababa.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

As the key informants said the government does not go in compliance with common Article 39 (of the Federal Constitution and SNNPR Constitution. In effect, the constitution is not respected by government bodies. In this regard, it should be noted that the Wolene Community claimed their identity and demanded recognition from the SNNP Regional Government. But, to date, there has not been a response, and the regional government particularly the SNNPR Council of Nationalities has not either grant or denied it.¹⁴²

Ever since the FDRE constitution was adopted, steps have been taken to claim and stand up for their rights of recognition and self-administration. However, such attempts were most frequently hampered because of the lack of government support, as was the case with other ethnic groups in the region.¹⁴³ In relation with the Wolene language and culture, the public media outlet that play a key role in promoting the cultures and histories of communities have done nothing.

5. Current Situation of Identity Recognition Claim of Wolene People

At this time, Wolene people's quest for identity recognition which was already filed both in SNNPR council and HoF registrar is presented in accordance with the existing procedural and legal frameworks awaiting due decision.¹⁴⁴ Mr Muluye Wolela who is Director of Identity Issues Directorate in FDRE HoF confirmed that Wolene's claim have been brought to HoF decades ago by fulfilling the cause and procedural conditions already articulated under article 19(1) of Proclamation number 251/2001.¹⁴⁵ The House accepted the case by its mandate of handling the case in its appellate resort and currently it has transferred the issues to FDRE Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission.¹⁴⁶ At the time of conducting this research, the Commission has commenced to undertake investigation on the Wolene claim

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Interview with Mr Darsema Ansa , Director of Nation Nationalities Rights Protection and Constitutional Awareness Creation Directorate , on 01 March 2021 at 9:00-4:00 am Hawassa

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Mr Muluye Wolela, supra note 147 , As per article 19(1) of Proclamation number 251/2001 Proclamation to Consolidation of the House of the Federation and the Definition of its Powers and Responsibilities

Proclamation *''Any nation, nationality, or people who believe that its self-identities are denied, its right of self-Administration is infringed, promotion of its culture, language and history are not respected, in general rights enshrined in the constitution are not respected or, violated for any reason, may present its application to the House through the proper channel.''*

¹⁴⁵ ibid

¹⁴⁶ FDRE Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission which is newly established institution by proclamation number 1101 /2019. As per article 4 of the proclamation the Commission is established with the objective of *''submitting recommendation to the Public, the House of Federation, the House Of People's Representatives and the Executive Organ through analysis of causes and conflicts arises in relation to Administrative Boundaries, self-government and identity issues in participatory, explicit, inclusive and scientific manner.''*

and related identity and administrative issues by its advisory role entrusted to it.¹⁴⁷ The Commission is expected to submit questions to the HoF if the issues found in the Commission's study relate to the identity question.¹⁴⁸

As a whole, for more than two decades now, the Wolene people ask a question of recognition and later the right to internal self-determination, but not obtained a meaningful answer to their claim. However, the SNNPR Regional State Council of Nationalities has received their claim which is also one procedurally fundamental step, but it has spent several years without acting on it. Subsequently, the SNNP regional government gives an oral response after the long delayed response by saying “we are investigating the case ”¹⁴⁹ But the above confounding answer cannot be said to respond to their persistent and lengthy quest for recognition, and it cannot be said that they are a recognized group.

Acknowledgement of identity of the Wolene provides the groundwork for their language, history and culture to be encouraged and preserved, at least, and will serve as a precondition for other rights, such as the right to political representation and the right to self-rule. The claimants in most scenarios raise identity recognition quest in equal expectation of being granted the self-determination rights.¹⁵⁰ But it doesn't necessarily indicate the right to recognition as full-fledged right to self-rule.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Mr Awel Hussen, Director of FDRE Administrative Boundaries and Identity Affairs Commission, on Feb 19/2021 at 10:00- 11:30 pm Addis Ababa

¹⁴⁸ Look at article 6 of FDRE Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission Establishment Proclamation number 1101 /2019

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Mr Feysel Abdulhafiz supra note 96

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Mr Awel Hussen, supra note 153 and Interview with Mr Darsema , supra note 149

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis work is to explore Wolene people's claim to the right to identity recognition from the perspective of legal frameworks. The research also seeks to analyse Wolene's quest to preserve and develop their identity, language, and culture, and to have the right to recognition and self-administration. In addition, the research also assessed theoretical and realistic viewpoints on ethnicity and ethnic identity to resolve the question of Wolene people as a separate ethnic group.

It is possible to draw the following statements as major findings, based on the data provided and evaluated in the study:-

At first, despite the fact in the long-standing delay of SNNP regional State's response to the presence of a separate group named Wolene, the study has showed that there are sufficient grounds to say the Wolene people have separate ethnic identity with their own language, culture, historic background, and ancestry. With the on-going and recurrent assimilation attempt against the Wolene language, culture, religion and identity by various and multiple political regimes, they have preserved and maintain the distinct features that make them distinct from the neighbouring peoples.

At present the Wolene ethnic community has neither recognition nor rights to representation in the political system. It doesn't have self-rule yet. The Wolene people are therefore persistently asking a question of recognition since the 1990s.

As shown in the paper the local and regional governments and some people have a position that the people of the Wolene are assimilated with the neighbouring people; particularly the Gurage and are not culturally different from their cultures. As a result, as long as the Wolene people lose those distinct features that make them distinctive from the neighbouring Gurage people since they lose those distinct characteristics; the claimants are seen as the one using the right to recognition and its appreciation as a strategic instrument for accessing economic and political benefits. So, those elites who drive the question as individuals are seen as the ones who have a contrarian view with the incumbent political system to discredit the question.

However, the study finds that the elites have been trying to gain the general public support in their quest since the 1990s and to retain and preserve their identity. Hence, ordinary people, educated youth and adult classes, even to the extent with the problem of having exception of a few persons, identify themselves as members of the identity group of Wolene and as part of the right to recognize identity and to pursue self-administration.

Accordingly, there are many factual indicators in such a claim that indicate the determination of the Wolene people to declare themselves as Wolene and their cohesion in order to maintain those distinct elements that make them distinctive from other ethnic groups in the country. This, in turn, demonstrates that the issue of recognition of identity and self-administration is not only the issue of few representatives, but of the broader Wolene people's concerns.

As argued in the paper the key indicative factors which show the people desire for recognition of their identity as a distinct ethno- linguistic group are:-

Firstly, the desire of the people to remedy the matter and their willingness to accept the delegates or organizing members by the majority of Wolene people who are expected to serve the Wolene people.

Secondly solidarity within Wolene people shows their explicit desire to be able to maintain their language, culture, religion, and practices and preserve those distinct characteristics. As a result, the Wolene language, grouped by some linguistics as an endangered language, is in the process of recovery and rehabilitation. This is because of their effort to conserve and use the language in literature and communication channels. As a consequence, the language used by old age groups that are now to be used by young and child age groups is recovering from its containment.

Thirdly, the desire of the people was also shown by their involvement in meetings, consultations and other organized events. As this is measurable and empirical, some observers testify on the issues of mass public content, including government officials and even neighbouring people that the topic is running peacefully and doesn't have economic and political motive of few rather issue of identity recognition and accommodation.

Fourthly, their commitment to engage in the movement and to contribute financially to help them run the program to satisfy the claim of recognition and self-administration could also be taken as one manifestation.

In the current situation of the Wolene people, although they struggle for recognition of their identity for more than 20 years, yet the SNNPR regional state doesn't recognize the presence of the Wolene ethnic community and both the regional and federal governments still never give a yes or no response to the quest. However now officials of the concerned organ (HoF) have reported that it is in the process of examining the question of the right of Wolene people to recognize identity and claim to self-administration.

So, in conclusion there have been historical distinct ethnic groups called 'Wolene' as many literatures, historical testimony, the factual distinct characteristics suggest. Consequently, refusing at least the right to identity recognition resulted in an unjust denial of their right to recognition that is contrary to at least in the domestic constitutional frameworks. Therefore, the SNNPR Council of Nationalities, which is in the process of investigating the case of Wolene, should react appropriately to their quest for identity recognition. The HoF which accepted the case on appeal basis should attentively manipulate its power and functions in bringing the case to appropriate decision.

Since it becomes evident that Wolene people have their own language, culture and distinctive features, it would be inappropriate to deny recognition; moreover make one category as inferior in a certain country and the other as superior in terms of protecting constitutional rights, it creates a feeling of one group as a citizen and the other as groups that never seem to be pursued by the government. The government must therefore adopt a remarkable similarity in the application of the constitutional obligation to the concerns of a country's ethnic groups. Therefore, both the SNNPR state and the HoF should protect the rights of the Wolene people based on the SNNPR and FDRE similar constitutional promises to encourage, uphold and protect the specific characteristics of those groups for all nations, nationalities and people.

The writer asserted that the common legal frameworks of SNNPR and FDRE Constitutions in administering the identity claim are defective. There is no other clause in the common articles on the rights of nations, nationalities and individuals there under the constitutions that can protect ethnic groups that have not yet obtained the status of nation, nationality or people; the only choice left to them is to be assimilated with the mainstream ethnic group. This approach really is against their rights and will affect their very existence. The other defective feature is the omission of the presence of claimants of identity in relevant sessions for defending their rights based on subjective and objective parameters. So, both SNNPR and FDRE Constitutions relevant provisions need to amend so as to administer the application of the claimants in

effective manner. As article 127 and 105 of SNNP Regional State and FDRE Constitutions respectively states, the very articles concerning self-determination and rights relating to nationality, however, involves a very stringent amendment process. This couldn't be viable option. The best thing therefore could be recognizing Wolene people and enable its right to self-determination as 'nation, nationality or people.'

Bibliography

Books and Journal Articles

1. Aalen Lovise, 'Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: Ethiopian experience, 1991-2000,' (Mi-Chelson Institute of Development Studies and Human Rights)
2. Abdulfetah Abdela, 'Ye'-Gedebano, Gut'azer Wolene Hizb Bahil' (Gedebano Gutazer Wolene people cul-ture : (my English Version) Addis Ababa: (Alem Printing P.L.C. 2009)
3. Abdulfetah Abdela, ' Yegordene Serea , Ye'Wolene Hizib Bahilawi Hig': Wolene People Traditional Law, Addis Ababa: (Alem Printing P.L.C. 2012)
4. Abdulfetah Abdullah , 'Yegodena Sera : Be'meakelawi Debub Ethiopia YeWolene Hizb Ye'Behal Hig Sire'at' (Empress Printing Press 2018)
5. Abdulfeh Huldar, Silties' Nationality Expressions and its Contribution to Ethiopia's Existence and Development ', Addis Ababa, (Pan Africa Centre 2009)
6. Adem Kassie Abebe , ' Human Rights Under the Ethiopian Constitution: A Descriptive Overview' (2011), 5 Mizan Law Review 41
7. Anthony C. Woodbury, "' what is an endangered language?'" Linguistic society of America, Robins, Robert, and Eugenius Uhlenbeck (eds.) 1992
8. Assefa Fiseha , ' Intra-Unit Minorities in the Context of Ethno- National Federation in Ethiopia ,' Utrecht Law Review , Volume 13 no 1
9. Asbjorn Eide, 'Minority Situations: In search of Peaceful and Constructive Solutions', 66 Notre Dame Law Review (1990)
10. Barth G, ' Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States', (Harvard university press, 1964)
11. Berghe V, 'Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective,' New York: (John Wiley 1967)
12. Beza Desalegn and Nigussie Afesha , 'The Quest for Identity and Self-Determination in the SNNP Region of Ethiopia' Mizan Law Review Vol.13,No.1 (2019)
13. Chamb P, 'the Development of Ethnic Minorities: A Case of West Africans in South Africa.' University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, (2005)
14. Cheung. A, Approaches to Ethnicity: clearing Road-blocks in the study of Ethnicity and Substance Abuse. International Journal of Addictions, (1993)
15. Christophe V. Beken , ' Unity in Diversity: Federalism as a Mechanism to Accommodate Ethnic Diversity: the case of Ethiopia.' Germany: LIT Verglar (2012)
16. Daniel Behailu, 'Medemer in a Land of Extremes-Ethiopia' Book Review : Hawassa University Journal of Law Volume 3, (2019)

17. Daniel E, *Federalism as Grand Design: Political Philosophers and the Federal Principle* Lanham MD University Press of America (1987)
18. Denbaru Alemu, et al , 'Gogot' Ye'Gurage Beherasab Tarik, Bahile'na Quanqua' , Wolkite , Artistic Press (1987) (History , Culture and Language of Gurage Nationality) my English translation
19. Desalegn Asfawesen , 'The Inceptive Construction and Associated Topics in Amharic and Related Languages ' , Stockholm University, (Holmberg's print 2016)
20. Eide A, 'Minority Situations: In Search of Peaceful and Constructive Solutions,' 66 *Notre Dame Law Rev.* (1990),
21. Fasil Nahum, ' A Constitution for a Nation of Nations : The Ethiopian Perspective '(Red Sea Press , Inc. , Asmara , 1997)
22. Freeman.M, 'The Right to Self Determination in International Politics: Six Theories in Search of a Policy, *Review of International Studies*, (1999)
23. Hall S, *Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity*', in A. King (ed.) (London: 1991)
24. Hailbronner K, ' The Legal Status of Population Groups in a Multinational State under Public International Law, in *The Protection of Minority Rights and Human Rights* (London:1992)
25. Henrard K and Smiss S, 'Recent Experience in South Africa and Ethiopia to Accommodate Cultural Diversity: A Regained Interest in the Right of Self-determination.' (Cambridge University Press 2019),
26. Isajiw W, 'Definition and Dimensions of Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework.' University of Toronto ,(Government Printing Office, 1993)
27. Kymilica. W, *Multi-Cultural Citizenship, a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*,' (Oxford University Press, 1995)
28. Meyer R, 'Wolane: A Descriptive Grammar of an East Gurage Language(Ethiop-Semitic) ' , *International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies* , (Aethiopica 11 2008)
29. Meyer R,' *Short History of Wolene based on Oral Tradition* ' Wolkite , (2001)
30. Merera Gudina , ' Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalism and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000. ' *The Netherlands: (Shaker publishing B.V, 2002)*
31. Mohammed toyib ibn Mohammed ibn Yusuf Al-Yusuf, 'Habesha and Islam', Addis Ababa , (Nejashi Publisher 1999) (my English translation)
32. Nishi M, 'Making and Unmaking of the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Modern Ethiopia: A Study on the History of the Siltie People' *Kyoto University African University Monographs*, (2005)
33. Patterson O, ' *Language, Ethnicity and Change* ' , (Harvard University , 1978)
34. Ryan S, 'Ethnic Conflict and International Relations', Hong Kong, Singapore & Sydney, (1995)
35. Sisay Mengiste and Alemu Kassa , *Ye' Raya Hizb Ye'Maninent Tiyakena Ye'mengistat Milash ' 1448-2019* (Raya People Claim for Identity and The Response of Government : 1448-2011. (My English translation)

36. Stavenhagen R , ‘ The Ethnic Question: Conflicts, Development, and Human Rights’ (United Nations University Press, 1990)
37. Susana. M, ‘Rethinking the Boundaries of Democratic Session, Liberalism, Nationalism, and the Right of Minorities to Self-Determination’, (2008)
38. Svante.C, ‘ Autonomy and Conflict: Ethno-Territoriality and Separitism in the South Caucasus cases in Georgia (Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2002)
39. Taylor.C, ‘ Multiculturalism, Examining the Politics of Recognition :Princeton (Princeton University Press. 1994)
40. Theodore McCombs and Jackie Shull González, ‘ Right to Identity’ , International Human Rights Law Clinic , (University of California 2007)
41. Trimmingham S, ‘Islam in Ethiopia ,’ (Oxford University Press 1952)
42. Worku Nida , ‘Ja’bdu: Ya’Gurage Bahilna Tarik’, Addis Ababa (Bole Printing Press, 1991) : ‘History and Culture of Gurage ‘ (my English translation)
43. Wubshet Mulat, ‘Anqets’ 39: Ye; rasen edil be; ras mewesen’: Article 39: The Right to Self-determination. Addis Ababa , 2015 (my own English translation)
44. Vaughan S , ‘Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia’s Southern Region’, (Ohio University Press , Ohio Reprinted 2017)
45. Yang Q , ‘ Major Issues in Ethnicity’ , (State University of New York Press, 2000)
46. Yeshiwas Degu,’ Kemant (ness): The Quest for Identity and Autonomy in Ethiopian Polity’ Developing County Studies , Vol4 No.18 (2014)
47. Yonatan Tesfaye ,’ Federalism and Intra-sub State Minorities: Constitutional Principles for Accommodating Intra- sub State Minorities,’ (University of the Western Cape, Mexico 2010)
48. Zekarias Beshah , ‘Developmental State and Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia : Is leadership the Missing Link?’, Leadership and Developing Societiesm Vol 3 No1, (2019)
49. Zerihun Abebe, ‘Ethnicity, Belonging and Identity among the Eastern Gurage of Ethiopia’ Arctic University, Norway, (Centre for Peace Studies. Vol. 17(3) 418–440 2017)

Laws

1. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia , Federal Negarit Gazette, 1st year No.1, 21st August ,1995
2. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
3. The Revised Constitution 2001 of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Regional State,
4. Consolidation of the House of the Federation and the Definition of its Powers and Responsibilities Proclamation, 2001, Proc. No. 251/2001, Federal Negarit Gazeta, 7th Year No.41
5. FDRE Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission Establishment Proclamation, 2019, Proc. No. Number 1101 /2019 , Federal Negarit Gazeta, 25th Year No.29,

6. Universal Declaration of Human Rights , UDHR 1948

Thesis works (Unpublished)

1. Addisalem Bayeh , ‘Self-Identification of Minorities and Quest for Right to Identity Recognition and Self Ad-ministration: The case of Kemant people in Ethiopia’ AAU(Unpublished Thesis) (2014)
2. Guta Balcha, ‘ Minority Rights Protection in Oromia National Regional State: A Case Study of the Zay People’ AAU (Unpublished Thesis) , (2016)
3. Nurye Melaku, ‘Welene Phonology.’ B.A. thesis, AAU (Unpublished) Addis Ababa University : (2000)
4. Rahmeto Hussein, ‘The History of Azernet Bebere Until the Expansion of Showa During Menlik ‘ , B.A Thesis (Unpublished) Addis Ababa University, (1984)

Other Sources

1. Application of the Wolene community to SNNPRS Council of Nationalities (1995), document on file with the reg-istrar of the SNNPR CoN, Hawassa
2. Application by the Welene People Democratic Party (WPDT), letter written to the Council on 26/02/2001 E.C., document on the file with the registrar of the Council: Hawassa
3. Application of the Wolene community to the HoF (10/07/99) document on file with the registrar of the SNNPR CoN, Hawassa
4. Application of the Wolene community to the House of Federation on 17/03/2007) document on file with the registrar of SNNPR Council of Nationalities
5. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia House of Federation "Decision of the HoF in the Silte case," (2008), Journal of Constitutional Decisions
6. SNNPRS Bureau of Finance and Economic Development Division of Statistics and Population, Regional Statistical Abstract (2007)
7. Population Census Commission, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census, Addis Ababa, December 2008
8. Welene People’s Democratic Party Application to SNNPR Council of Nationalities, (Tahsas 4, 2008), on file with the registrar of the office of the Council: Hawassa and
9. Application submitted by Welene people to the office of the council (10/11/2005 E.C), on file with the registrar.
10. Hibre’ Biher’ Magazine, (2011)
11. Letter to the SNNPR Council of Nationalities on informing the situations of struggle with the local government, on August 18/2012

Interviews

1. Interview with Mr Muluye Director of Identity Affairs Directorate , FDRE House of Federation, on 15 February , 2021 at 2:00- 3:30 pm Addis Ababa

2. Interview with Mr Darsema Ansa , Director of Nation Nationalities Rights Protection and Constitutional Awareness Creation Directorate , on 01 March 2021 at 9:00-4:00 am Hawassa
3. Interview with Mr Awel Hussen, Director of the FDRE Administrative Boundary and Identity Issues Commission, on 19 February , 2021 at 10:00- 11:30 pm Addis Ababa
4. Interview with Mr.Mustefa Nasir, Director of Dispute Resolution and Peace Values Building Directorate , FDRE House of Federation, on 15 February , 2021 at 2:00-3:30 pm Addis Ababa
5. Interview with Mr Feysel Abdul hafiz, Chairman of Wolene People Democratic Party, on 07,January 2021 , at 4:30:5:30 Addis Ababa
6. Interview with Mr Abdulfetah Abdullah, Author of 3 books in Wolene culture , who is also researcher in indigenousness knowledge's, /01/2021 Addis Ababa
7. Interview with Mr. Mifta Ahmed. A cabinet member in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda Administration, on January 06, 2021at 4:00-4:30 am Mehal Amba
8. Interview with Mr Abdulkaf Ziyin, a committee member organized in a country side on the identity claim , on 19 February , 2020 at 3:00-4:00 (on Oromia media network a televised media outlet)
9. Interview made with Mr.Mekonen Mergia , a team leader in SNNPR Council of Nationalities who dealt with the residents in all 34 kebeles. (Interview and press release wade with journalists on 19 February 2020
10. Interview with Mrs Jemila Worake , a resident in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda , on Dec 19, 2020 at 2:00-3:00
11. Interview made with Mr Nejaashi , a resident in Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda , on Dec 18, 2020 at 2:00-3:00 pm Mehal Amba
12. Interview made with Mr Worku Adamu , A chairman of Constitution and Identity Affairs Committee in House of Federation(on Oromia media network a televised media outlet)
13. Interview with Mr Sadik Hassen , a poet, an author of book by Wolene language(an author of Wolene- Amharic Dictionary) on January 05/2021 at 11:00-12:00 pm Addis Ababa
14. Interview with Ms Zekiya Sani a member of Wolene People Democratic Party who advocate the Wolene identity claim on 10 ,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Mehal Amba
15. Interview with Mr Seman Jemal , a religious, community leader, activist of the Wolene identity claim and res-ident of Gedebano, Gut;azer Woreda on 09,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Mehal Amba
16. Interview with Mrs Munaja Ahmedin , a resident and a women political activist in Gedebano, Gut'azer Wolene Woreda, on Dec, 28/2020 Mehal Amba
17. Interview with Mr. Mensur Abdulfetha , public relation affairs and coordinator of Wolene development association , on Feb 17 /2021 at 7:30:8:35 Jidda
18. Interview with Mr Amir Munir an executive member of Wolene People Democratic Party who advocate the Wolene identity claim on 11 ,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Addis Ababa

19. Interview with Mr Fetaha Nur Ahmed an executive member of Wolene People Democratic Party who advocate the Wolene identity claim on 12 ,January 2021 , at 5:30:6:30 Mehal Amba
20. Interview with Mr Abdulfetah Jema an executive member of Wolene People Democratic Party who advocate the Wolene identity claim on 11 ,January 2021 , at 11:30:12:30 Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda Tilamo Kebele
21. Interview with Mr. Mifta Hussien, political advisor of Gedebano Gutazer Wolene Woreda Administration , on Feb 21, 2021at 2:00-3:30 am Mehal Amba
22. Interview with Mr Ahmed Hassan, an ordinary resident and public servant who self – identify his ethno linguistic background as Gurage, met in Gedebano Gut’azer Wolene Woreda , on 28/01/2021 , Wolkite Town

Web sources

1. Estimate of Worldometers, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population> last seen on 17/06/2020
2. Summary and Statistical Report of FDRE Population and Housing Census: <https://agris.fao.org/agris-search/search.do?record> last seen on 17/06/ 2020
3. Source: <https://www.google.com/research-gate.net> last seen on 17/06/2020

Appendices

Appendices 1: Map of the Study Area



Source: <https://www.google.com/research-gate.net> last seen on 17/06/2020

Description: *This map is taken from web source. It shows the geographic location of the study area.*

Appendices 2: Wolene nationality cultural/group named ‘Enjima’



Source: The picture taken by the writer

Description:- This picture is posted on the Wolene cultural music band office. It reads that the culture team participated in the 14th nation, nationalities and people’s day since 2018 in Addis Ababa. The team unilaterally decided to participate wearing the cultural cloth with the music band.

Appendices 3: Wolene Cultural team members in Harar City (2017)



Source: office of WPDP (2021)

Description:- This picture shows that the participants of self-declared Wolene nationality members wearing cultural cloths in the nation, nationalities day celebration in Harar since 2017.

Appendices 4: Amharic – Wolene language Dictionary



Source: picture taken by the writer

Description:- This dictionary is Wolene- Amharic language dictionary published in 2020. It is authored by Sadik Hassen who is also key informant for the researcher in this study.