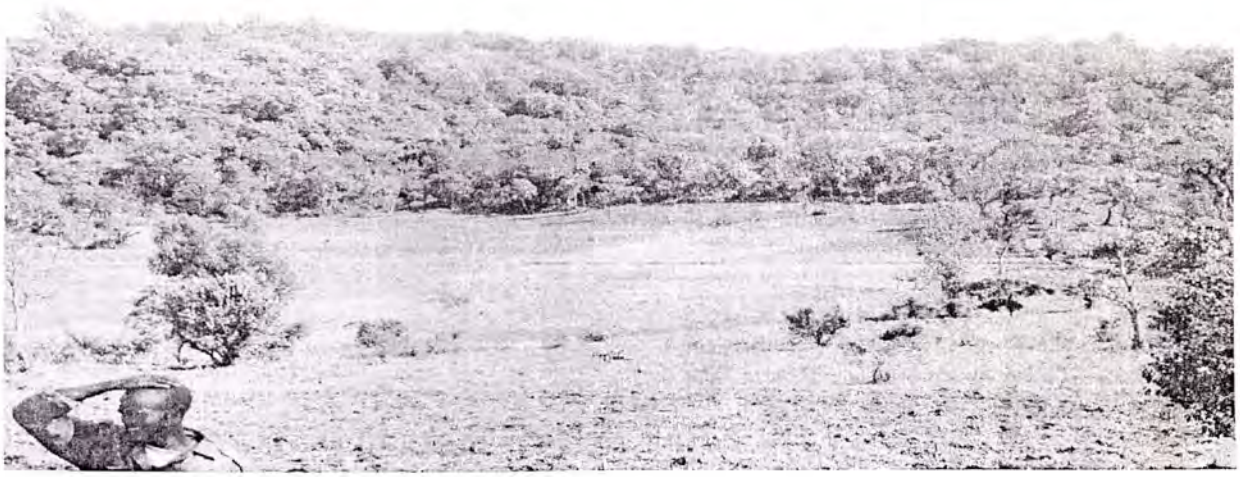
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

FOREST MANAGEMENT FROM LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, INSTITUTIONS AND LIVELIHOOD PERSPECTIVES: *A CASE OF BELETE -GERA FOREST IN SOUTHWESTERN OROMIA REGION, ETHIOPIA*

BY

DISASA MERGA LENJISA



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By
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ADVISOR: TADDESSE BERISSO (PhD)

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ARDO-Agricultural and Rural Development Office

BATO- Biiroo Aadaafi Turizimii Oromiyaa

EFAP-Ethiopia Forestry Action Plan

EPA-Environmental Protection Authority

ETC-Ethiopian Calendar

FAO-Food and Agriculture Organization

FMA-Forest Management Agreement

JFCEC-Japan Forest Civil Engineering Consultants

JFE-Jimma Forestry Enterprise

JICA- Japan International Cooperation Agency

OARDB- Oromiya Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau

P-FMA-Provisional Forest Management Agreement

PFMP- Participatory Forest Management Project

SNNPE-South Nations, Nationalities and People of Ethiopia

WaBuB- *Waldaa Bulchinsa Bosonaa*, meaning 'Forest Management Association'

WBISPP-Woody Biodiversity Inventory Scientific Plan Project

WFC- *WaBuB* Facilitation Committee

Glossaries of Some Local Terms

Aanaa -district administration

Abba lagaa -local institution referring to both the leader and the people living in the same village (territory)

Abbawarraa -household unit as well as household head

Baddaa -highland

Baddadaree -middle altitude areas

Bulchaa -administration

Gammoojjii -lowland

Gandaa -lowest administrative unit of the government

Garee -development teams formed by government in *Gandaa Administration*

Hora -salty mineral water preferred by cattle to drink

Leedii -trees used for burying the dead

Qe'ee - homestead

Qoroo -the highest rank under the regional governor (Mootii) before the conquest of Gibe region by Menelik II

Shanee -the smallest unit of customary institutions accountable to *abba lagaa*

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Abstract

This study deals with forest management from the perspectives of local knowledge and institutions in relation to the livelihood of local people with particular reference to ***Balate-Gera Forest Priority Area*** *of Jima Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia.*

By using material from Ganji-caalla of Gera district, the paper attempted to address the role of local knowledge and institutions in forest management in relation to livelihood of the local people. The study was based on the field research conducted in Gera district for two solid months ranging from 21 December 2009 to 21 February 2010. Different tools of data gathering mechanisms were employed: structured and unstructured interviews, focused group discussions, observation and survey were utilized in order to obtain relevant and reliable data. The data were analyzed qualitatively employing conceptual frameworks of political ecology and common property theories.

The qualitative analysis of the study revealed that knowledge of local people about the values of forest and forest management was incredible. They were well aware of ecological, economic and socio-cultural values of forest in the study area. The study also indicated that customary institutions of the local people have played a great role in forest management. In the study area, the experience of charcoal burning, cutting live trees for fire wood, and extraction of timber were very minimal. However, local people have been utilizing forest resources for subsistence domestic uses cautiously and selectively. Traditional leadership set ups such as abbaa lagaa and shanee were still active and played great role in resource management and other social affairs like conflict resolution. Above all, findings from this study implied the importance of considering existing customary institutions, respecting ownership rights of forest resources users and reducing the role of government to technical support and some aspects of administration for sustainable forest management. Future researches should be directed to how the existing customary institutions will be fostered into forest management institutions in collaborating with the local government institutions and non-governmental organizations that have interests to work with the local people respecting their customary institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Due to different socio-cultural, economic, political, and institutional processes, natural resources, particularly common-pool resources such as forests are subject to various dynamics at local, regional and national levels. The change could be either decline of forests in land coverage or quality which is already evident in some parts of Ethiopia especially the central highlands of the country. This trend, however, is gradually expanding towards the southwestern part of the country where relatively abundant forest resources still exist.

The status of forest condition in Ethiopia has been estimated at times with slight differences that emanates from different sources of information. Most of the estimates have been made by the Ethiopian Forestry Action Plan (EFAP 1994). According to EFAP, the coverage of natural forest in Ethiopia has been decreasing at an alarming rate, from 40 percent of the land area (50 million ha) just before the turn of this century to 3.6 percent by the early1980s. By 1988 it had declined to 2.7 percent (3.2 million ha) (EFAP, 1994).

The most up-to-date information, however, has been published by the Woody Inventory and Strategic Planning Project (WBISPP) in 2004. According to this source, about 4.07 million hectares, which constitutes about 3.56 percent of total land area of the country is under the cover of high forest area. The distribution is, however, uneven across the regional states. Almost 95 percent of total high forest area is found in three regional states of the country namely; Oromiya, SNNPR, and Gambella regional states. Oromiya regional state alone has about 63 percent of the total high forest area in the country (WBISPP 2004). Whatever information we have as a source, the reality is that forest condition of the country in general and Oromiya regional state in particular is alarmingly under great disturbance and approaching total disappearance.

Although clearing forests for the purpose of different uses is not uncommon in most parts of the country, EPA (2008) report on Environment for Development states that basic causes of deforestation are similar throughout the country. They emanate from the growing demand for agricultural land and forest products, and lack of sustainable resource management due to economic, social and institutional constraints. Taddesse (1995), however, argued that the real causes of deforestation and environmental degradation in the country are multifaceted and interwoven and usually rooted in history of the country and place-specific. He rightly states how faulty Ethiopian government policies, especially that of emperors and Derg regimes were environmentally unfriendly and became the major causes of deforestation, taking *Jam Jam*, southern Ethiopia as a case study.

Political instability is also another major reason for century-old lack of sustainable natural resources management in the country (Rubenson 1991). This can be manifested in the instability of successive governments, their rapidly changing political economy, and non-participatory top-down development programs. Others still put the blame on the poor local people as if they were irrational so as not to take care and feel responsibility about their environment. But the ecological knowledge of the local people needs to be scholarly understood rather than blaming the poor for deforestation and environmental deterioration. Besides, poverty and overpopulation are assumed to be factors for deforestation and degradation of the environment. However, both poverty and population explosion may not necessarily cause deforestation and environmental degradation for it has been controversial among scholars.

Recently, many social scientists relate the real problems of natural resource management in general and forest resource management in particular to the failure of institutional arrangement. For instance, institutions for forest governance in Africa designed by the colonial forest departments came under widespread criticisms in 1970s and 1980s (Rondinelli, 2006; Linda and Cappon, 2001; Hamilton, 1987). Customary institutional arrangements that produced management systems through learning-by-doing processes had largely been perceived as inefficient. However, more recent evidence suggested that they could more readily adapt resource management strategies to environmental feedbacks. The rigid forest-

management strategies imposed by central governments might reflect less the desires and needs of local populations, and restrict their ability to adapt to changing environmental and local contextual factors. This is due to the fact that local people were not part of the process for designing and implementing forest-management strategies (Ostrom, 1990; Wilson, 2002). Ethiopia is not different in this regard.

Understanding the problem of forest depletion, Ethiopian governments have had different political initiatives in reaction to deforestation, in which success has not yet been realistic. Mengistu's government program of afforestation, for instance, to combat deforestation at national level itself led to deforestation and poverty as the program adversely affects both the resources and local people who are dependent on the resources (Taddesse 1995). Similarly, the government on power now has also taken a number of policy initiatives realizing the negative effects of deforestation on national economy. Some of the institutions devised for this purpose include: Conservation Strategies of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Forestry Action Plan, the newly Issued Proclamation for Development, Conservation and Utilization of Forests, and National Action Plan to Combat Desertification that are assumed to promote the development and proper utilization of forest resources (EPA 2008).

Moreover, the government has identified 58 most important high forest areas as national Forest Priority Areas out of which most of them are found in Oromiya Regional State (EFAP 1994). In relation to this, the mandate to administer/govern Forest Priority Areas has been given to regional states under the umbrella of federal government. With this power delegation, participatory management system in which local people play vital role through joint forest management has gained acceptance at least in principle. Of course, this new approach is being tried by many other African countries as a result of external influences. Despite such attempts, the government believes that sustainable management of forest resources can be ensured through implementation of forest protection, development and utilization strategies developed on a well-built and efficient forestry administration (OARDB 2007). But, applying Forestry Science and administration alone cannot lead to sustainable forest management in the region. Considering local peoples' knowledge, traditions or cultures and livelihoods are equally important.

On the other hand, local communities in southwestern Ethiopia in general and peoples in the study area in particular are dependent upon forest resources for their livelihoods. As Bognetteau, Abebe Haile, and Wiersum (2007) assert, local people in this area have developed various mechanisms, rooted in traditional institutions, of utilizing and managing forests and forest resources to meet their needs for subsistence and income generations. Hence, it is apparent that deforestation and forest degradation in this area threaten not only ecological functions of forests but also affects the living conditions of local people residing in and/or near forests. This stimulates the urgent need of conservation and effective management of forest resources without compromising the livelihoods of local people both at present and the future.

Motivated by the aforesaid statements, the researcher of this study endeavors to carry out intensive holistic anthropological fieldwork research on how local knowledge, institutions and livelihoods affect forest resources management taking Balate-Gera Forest Priority Area as a case study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

"Traditional development strategies" have been directly or indirectly responsible for many of the major human and ecological problems of all times. As the failure of grand theories of development became apparent in the 1970s and 1980s, development practitioners began to re-evaluate the importance of local knowledge (Compton 1989; Howes and Champers 1980). Hence, indigenous knowledge that was once considered as "traditional", backward, and inefficient began to be viewed as rational response to local environmental conditions. Many researchers have argued that sustainable natural resource management cannot be realized without considering the perceptions and culture of local people living in or near the resources.

Furthermore, the environmental disturbances facing our planet have been the critical problem of the world nowadays. Since the problem has global dimension, great attention has given to it at national, international, and transnational levels, at least at the stage of discourses. Although such problem has global dimension, its outcome is from cumulative effects of problems created at local levels. Hence, if solution is to be found, pragmatic action has to be taken at

grassroots levels. This is partially possible through carrying out intensive empirical anthropological field research that contributes to provide relevant data on environmental issues in general and common-pool natural resources in particular that may have policy implications.

Many studies related to natural resources management revealed that there is no satisfactory data recorded that may help to solve problems caused due to conflict of interest and values among individuals, communities, institutions, and governance. Lack of scholarly studied sufficient information and knowledge record on nature, management, ownership rights, governance, role of institutions, and values (economic, socio-cultural, ecological) of common-pool resources like forests has made it partially cumbersome to come up with pragmatic solutions for the disturbance of our environment.

Scholars also pose different reasons for the environmental problems our current generations incur. It is believed that all these problems are feasible at local level although their threat is not limited to local but also extends to global dimension. It is underscored that free-market economy benefits the so called developed countries, and economically poor countries have lost their natural resource like dense tropical rainforests.

Similarly, the major threats to common-pool natural resources in third world countries like Ethiopia are deforestation and forest degradation. This is attributed to the fact that natural resources like forest are used for livelihoods. Expanding farm land, fuel, timber production and construction are some to mention. The other tremendous problem of natural resources is related to its management and ownership right. Historical evidences indicate that reason for century old lack of sustainable natural resource management in Ethiopia was the instability of successive government, their rapidly changing political economy and non-participatory top-down programs (Melaku 2008). Natural resources and environmental protection policies often reflect ideological preferences of those in power rather than considering and encouraging scholarly studied data.

On the other hand, for generations, local communities around the world have relied on forest resources not only for their livelihoods, but also as integral element in their cultural, spiritual and social system. Despite its importance to households, there is surprisingly little knowledge

on the actual level of household income and the roles such incomes play in maintaining livelihoods. Hence, a greater understanding of the local people-forest interaction from local knowledge, institutions and livelihood perspectives is indispensable for sustainable management of forest resources

1.3 Research Questions

- What is the perception of local people towards forest resources and forest resources management?
- Are local forest users aware of protecting forest resources for economic, socio-cultural and ecological values?
- What are the institutions (formal/informal) that have effects on forest resources management at local level?
- Who are the stakeholders that are responsible for forest resources management?
- How do the local people's livelihood concerns relate to forest resources management?
- What are the major problems of sustainable forest management?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The thesis has both general and specific objectives pertinent to the research questions given above.

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to document how local knowledge and institutions influence forest resources management in relation to livelihoods of local people.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To identify local perceptions of forest and forest resources management.
- To understand the views of local forest users on conserving forest resources for economic, socio-cultural, and ecological values.
- To understand institutions (formal/informal) that affect sustainable forest resources management at local level.
- To know stakeholders involved in the management of forest resources.
- To explore how livelihoods of local people affect forest resources management.
- To identify major threats to the sustainability of forest management.

1.5 Research Methods

In this study, both primary and secondary sources were employed. Findings are more related to primary data that were gathered by the researcher and assistants of the researcher during stay in the field. The researcher stayed in the field for two months ranging from 21 December 2009 to 21 February 2010.

1.5.1 Primary Sources

In this study, I have used techniques of primary data collecting methods such as interviews, focused group discussion, observation and survey depending on their relevance to the required information.

1.5.1.1 Interviews

Unstructured (intensive) interviews, structured interviews, and focus group discussions were used as methods to procure information on the interaction of local people and forest resources and forest management. It is believed that elders in the community know much about the relations of local people and forest resources. As a result, I selected elders to obtain

information about the history, culture and economic foundation of local people as they have had long life experience in the study area. Besides, women and other stakeholders (government institutions such as JFE, *Gandaa* administration, district ARDO) were used as sources of information. This was accompanied by tape recording in order to retain all relevant information without missing any.

Therefore, sixteen key informants were contacted frequently through either guided interviews or informal discussion at different places, usually at home and in the field. Using these tools, the researcher attempted to understand the general views, perceptions, experiences and knowledge of local peoples and/or forest users about forest resources in general and forest management in particular.

On the other hand, interviews were conducted with government officials who were stakeholders and directly or indirectly affected forest management and its conservation. In this case, Gera District Administrative Office, District Agricultural and Rural Development Office (Rural Land Administration and Environmental Protection, Natural Resource Management, and Extension Program departments), and Jimma Forest Enterprise offices both at district and zonal levels were consulted on the situation of Gera forest at present and its management practices.

Last but not least, interviews were carried out with Japan International Cooperation Agency offices both at district and zone levels. This office was also one of the stakeholders responsible for the sustainable management of the forest under consideration as it has launched Participatory Forest Management project in the study area since 2003 in collaboration with the regional government of Oromiya.

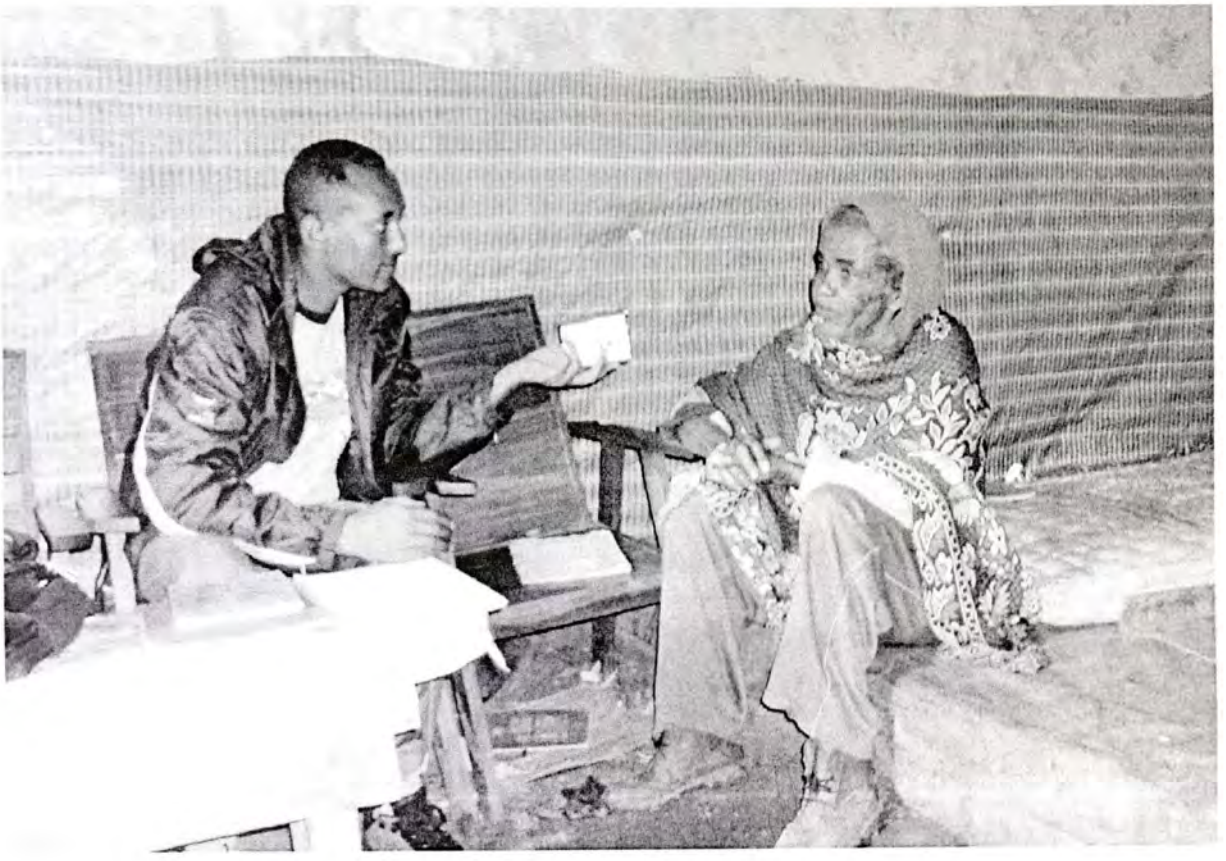

Fig. 1.1 Interview with local elder from Ganji-caallaa

1.5.1.2 Focus Group Discussions

Another equally important tool used in collecting relevant and reliable data for this study were focus group discussions. Eight participants who were from different social backgrounds took parts in the discussions. Elders, religious leaders, local institutions representatives (three *abba lagas),* Development agents, *Gandaa* officials and women were participated in focused group discussion at *Ganda* office. For facilitating the discussion, *Gandaa* officials and development agents in *Ganji-Caalla* helped me much. Through this method, it was possible to cross-check and evaluates the reliability of data obtained through other means.

Fig 1.2 Group discussion with community representatives at Ganji-Caalla Gandaa

1.5.1.3 Observation

Observation is also another qualitative method that was used to obtain information on the activities of local people and their interaction with forest resources. Since I have had a chance to stay in the study area for about two months, it was possible for me to observe the condition of forest management and its potential problems on the sustainability of the forest management. Through this method I was able to understand the current threats to forest resources and local forest users. On top of my observation, photographing the affected area and situation of some practices was used to collect tangible information.

Moreover, contacting different social groups frequently made me understand the views of local people towards forest resource management and conservation, place of forest in supporting their livelihood, and expansion of investment activities in Natural forest in the study area. Hence, this method too added values to this research by providing more relevant information.

1.5.1.4 Survey

Household survey was conducted from 2 January 2010 to 16 January 2010 in the selected research site, *Ganji-Caalla Gandaa Administration*, in Gera district. Ten percent of the total households in the site were selected as a sample, and the technique used in selecting was simple random sampling system. Hence, 44 households were surveyed out of the total 440 households in *Ganji-Caalla*. The researcher used the household survey not to assess quantitative materials of the local people rather to backup the information obtained through interviews and focus group discussion. Hence, perception of local people about forest protection, importance of forest from ecological, economic and socio-cultural points of views, sources of subsistence, sources of information about externals, and forest use rights of local people were obtained by employing survey method to supplement the data collected through interviews and focused group discussion. Three individuals, one degree (BSC) holder and two diploma holders (personnel of development agents) were employed as enumerators for fourteen solid days to collect intended data. This happened after the enumerators were given training on the subject matter of the survey for one day in *Ciraa town*, the current administrative center of Gera district. The researcher played the role of facilitation and supervision in the field while the enumerators were conducting survey at individual households in the selected research site.

1.5.2 Secondary Sources

Some information on the issues of forest management was obtained from secondary materials. Information related to management, institutions and policies are difficult to obtain from individuals at local level unless consulted from published or unpublished resource materials. Thus the researcher used this method to lay general background for the thesis. In addition, I used the method to back up information obtained from primary sources. Hence, different electronic and written materials like official documents, archives, journals, articles, etc were assessed.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Some research works related to natural resources management have been conducted with great emphasis on the impacts of local institutions. A few researches have been done by integrating local knowledge, institutions, nature of natural resources and local people's livelihoods. This research may give anthropological insights on how local people-natural resources interaction is understood from local perspective.

Moreover, this study is assumed to provide substantive evidences on the relevance of local experiential knowledge for resources management vis-à-vis livelihoods of the resources users. Hence, the outcome of this research may partially contribute to make clear certain misunderstandings about complex nature of forest resources management.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There were some constraints in writing this thesis. The first problem was related to lack of materials that have been done on similar subject in Ethiopia, particularly anthropological inquiry. Secondly, the study lacked thorough information on the impacts of investment activities in the study area as both owner of the business and other concerned bodies were unwilling to expose. This might be attributed to the fact that expansion of investment in that area has no legal ground and it was the function of few higher government officials. As consequence, local government officials, and even some individuals who had ample information were very reluctant on offering information they knew. Moreover, the guards of the projects did not allow me to enter into and observe the physical conditions of the forest in the investment area; hence, I took photos of it simply from onset.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into six major parts. The first chapter deals with introduction of the thesis. This part comprises background, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, research methods, significance and limitations of the study and organization of the thesis. The second chapter deals with literature reviews and theoretical and conceptual framework. This part lays foundation of the thesis by framing the analysis of the research. The third section contains the background of the study area. Under this part, physical background, research site, socio-economic background, and livelihood mechanisms of the study area are discussed. Chapter four deals with local perception, institution and forest management practices with two major subtitles: local perception and understandings of forest importance, and local institutions and forest management. Chapter five discusses major threats to Gera forest, especially related to expansion of investment, institutional instability from the government side and the rising interest of expanding farmland from farmers' side. The last chapter is concerned with brief summary and conclusion of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, two major issues are elaborated. Firstly, review of related literature, under which different scholarly documented and articulated resource materials are assessed related to natural resources management from the perspectives of local knowledge, institutions and livelihoods of local people. The second part deals with theoretical and conceptual framework that guides the thesis for analyzing the data obtained from field research.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Alleviating poverty and halting environmental degradation in fragile, agriculturally marginal areas requires environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable means of intensifying the use of renewable natural resources, including forests. Until the last quarter of 20th century conventional top-down approach to resource management has dominated the world's environmental policy.

Unfortunately, conventional "scientific" approaches to resource management in such areas often fail; they are based on faulty models, limited and socially inappropriate goals and incomplete information on basic parameters. They do not adequately address environmental complexity, heterogeneity, or the role of recurring disturbances (Finlayson and McCay 1998; Zimmerer and Young 1998).

Furthermore, conventional "scientific" approaches to natural resource management often fail to create the local social institutions needed to encourage environmentally appropriate social behavior. Institutions refer to the "systems of rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that give rise to social practices, and guide interactions among the occupants of relevant roles. Institutions, often described as commonly understood "rules of the game" (North, 1990), define actions that must, may, or must not be taken under particular

circumstances (Ostrom, 1990). Unlike organizations, which are material entities that typically figure as actors in social practices, institutions may be thought of as the rules of the game that determine the character of these practices(Young 2002). For Douglas (1986), institutions often have moral dimensions and can even indicate identity.

Scholars pose three reasons why institutions fail to achieve their intended goals. First, the locally derived institutions that are needed to coordinate the compliance of resource users are lacking. Centrally imposed regulations for monitoring compliance, meeting out sanctions, and distributing access are clumsy and poorly adapted to local conditions. Second, the institutions that may generate information on the state of the resources are lacking. Finally, the ability of centralized resource-use controls to adapt to changing social and environmental conditions is limited (Berkes, Folke, and Colding 1998). There is no exception for conventional scientific forestry. Scientific forestry is a body of knowledge and social practices, which Peluso (1992) called "a political- economic system for resource control". It requires a high level of social and spatial control; favors national interests over local ones; emphasizes industrial raw materials like pulp or sawmill timber over other forest uses; and discourages agricultural clearings, burning, woodcutting, and grazing. It often results in institutional failure and social injustice (Pincetl 1993; Guha 1989; Peluso 1992; Bryant 1994; Vandergeest 1996; Scott 1998).

In contrast, "traditional" resource-management systems, often derived over time through a process of cultural learning and adaptation, are frequently successful in generating appropriate local institutions (Ostrom 1990; Feeny, Berkes, McCay, and Acheson 1990). Increasingly, researchers are arguing for approaches that combine the strengths often observed in indigenous knowledge systems with the experimental method of scientists. In at least some cases, the agricultural and forest-use practices of forest-dwelling people reveals management strategies that better address environmental complexity and dynamics than do conventional approaches; they frequently foster the maintenance and expansion of forest cover (Alcorn 1981; Padoch and Peters 1993; Fairhead and Leach 1996).

Gibson and Koontz (1998) argue, on the other hand, that the importance of creating or changing the existing values of community into institutional rules if successful collective outcomes is required in natural resources management.

.... values alone within a community are insufficient to protect natural resources in most empirical settings. Even in the case where strongly-held beliefs about the importance of nature and community-based decision making exist, individuals do not always succeed in constructing institutions that provide incentives to use resources sustainably. In Maple and Oak, where members share a strong value for the non-consumptive use of forests, differences in outcomes reflect the dissimilar institutions they have constructed to govern themselves (Gibson &Koontz 1998:622).

The central argument is that achieving a successful collective outcome requires communities to do more than just having shared values; they also must possess institutions to translate their values into rules that members follow. Further, they assert that communities can actively "manage" these values to increase the likelihood of better collective outcomes. While many institutions may contribute to successful outcomes, they focus on institutions that identify, maintain, and defend members' values in ways that reinforce particular values and facilitate reaching desired social ends.

Many scholars and practitioners have viewed local communities as the destroyers of natural resources. According to this tradition, local communities are groups of people whose uncontrolled consumption of natural resources needs to be controlled by enlightened central governments. Some contemporary work still echoes this tradition, but recently scholars and policy analysts have seen the values and practices of local communities to be critical in conserving natural resources (Gibson and Koontz 1998).

The promise of community-based conservation is a mixture of facts, ambiguity, and hope. The facts include examples of communities that have managed their resources relatively well over long periods of time (Berkes, 1989; Bromley, 1992; McCay and Acheson, 1987; Ostrom, 1990; Peters, 1994). The ambiguity emanates from insufficient knowledge about why some communities appear to manage their resources well, while others do not. And the hope of many activists is that governments, after realizing that top-down conservation efforts have failed, will delegate power over natural resources management to local communities, where members will use their resources sustainably.

On the basis of this promise of community, advocates of locally-based conservation argue that communities are the best place to vest authority over the management of natural resources. International organizations such as the World Bank, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, The Nature Conservancy, the Ford Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development have "found" community and now pour significant resources into community-based conservation projects and research. Conservationists now realize that without the word "community" in their proposals, they are far less likely to receive funding for their projects (Gibson & Koontz 1998).

Furthermore, since the 1980s, there has been a radical shift in thinking about environmental and natural resource management as inseparable from issues of welfare and human rights of indigenous people. Indigenous people and conservation organizations came to be perceived as natural allies on the basis of the evidence that most of the remaining significant areas of high natural value on earth are inhabited by indigenous people.

In Ethiopia, insufficient attention has been given to the issue of natural resource management in general and the role of local institutions in resource management in particular and there is a lack of policy initiatives on the subject. In the past regimes, both under the imperial or Derg, the state claimed custodianship over such major natural resources as forests, pasture lands, and water points, which it brought under control and over which it established a form of management which was based on exclusion, and authoritarianism, the institutions that assumed responsible were bureaucratic, non-participatory and patronizing.

It is recognized that the state custodianship has been a miserable failure and has in many cases lead to mismanagement and loss of natural resources. Customary management system and institutions, which previously had served community relatively well, have been broken down under the pressure from political and administrative modernization and they have not been successfully replaced (Taddesse 1995).

There are a number of management options that have been attempted with differing degrees of success in a number of countries including Ethiopia: community management, individual

ownership, state and joint management. But the choice of management options should not be based on technical criteria, for imbedded in all systems and institutions of management are social and power relations, as well as memory and history. Yeraswork Admasie (2001) also states that the current situation of natural resources management is characterized by deficiency of 'traditional' management institutions, that have long been eroded, on the other hand, the failure of new ones to emerge.

On the other hand, the possibility of counter relationships between affirmations of partnership and the imposition of neo-liberal political and economic policies on poorer countries is an obvious case of donor-defined agenda (Harrison 2001). In an ideal manifestation, presumably nobody with a sense of justice would disagree with as much participation and consultation as possible. If development is about mitigating poverty and addressing justice in access to resources, it seems obvious that as broad a range of people as possible should participate in formulating development policy. Yet, as it is being documented, there is a big discrepancy between the ideals of participation and proliferation of a development orthodox (Stirrat 1997 cited in Harrison 2001:9)

2.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, I have used two theoretical frameworks that would guide me in the analysis of the data collected. These are political ecology, and common property and institutional analysis.

2.2.1 Political Ecology

Basically political issues of structural relations of power and domination over environmental resources have been seen by various scholars as critical to understand the relationships of social, political and environmental processes. In the early works of this field, the environment was seen as an additional structural feature of analysis, often portrayed as fixed, or subject to major, disruptive change due to the capitalist penetration of peasant societies (Scoones 1999).

As Peet and Watts (1996:5 cited in Scoones 1999) explain, by the late 1970_s, concern with "Market integration, commercialization and dislocation of customary forms of resources management, rather than adaptation and homeostasis become the code stores of critical alternative to older cultural or human ecology."

As a conceptual framework, political ecology attempts to link the understandings of micro level processes with broader structural political and ideological processes. The notion of resources as socially and politically constructed has been central to this discussion and has resulted in important work on how perspectives on environmental change must be obtained from the view points of different actors (Blaikie 1995 cited in Scoones 1999). This has been taken up by more recent formulation of political ecology, which attempt to move beyond stucturalists perspectives. Yet, although understandings of knowledge, power, and politics in relation to the environment have moved space, discussion has not taken on new understandings of ecology.

During the 1980s, actor-based decision making models used in processual ecology were combined with political economy approaches used in anthropology, which led to the emergence and consolidation of significant research program, newly termed **political ecology**. An early theoretical outline of political ecology was applied to the southern Para region of Brazilian Amazon, where a host of "contested frontiers" were uncovered involving dispute between multiple social actors over their definition of, access to, and control over natural resources (Shimink and Wood 1992 cited in Little 1999:255). In an ethnographic analysis of local struggles between farmers and ranchers over land and water in "peasant" commercial community in northwestern Mexico, Sheridan (1988) also develops a political ecology analysis that places this struggle within the context of intervention by regional economic interests, seasonal water shortages and the mediation of government bureaucrats at local, regional and national levels. Little (1999) further explains that "the journal of political ecology" was launched at the University of Arizona in 1994 with the aim of contributing critically and substantively to an increased understanding of interaction between political and environmental variables broadly conceived.

By considering the utility of adaptive management (Berkes, Folke, and Colding 1998; Walters 1986) for integrating local and scientific systems of knowledge and practice, recent calls for a

political ecology that is cognizant of non-equilibrium views of nature for conservation strategies amid "second nature," in which local inhabitants are continually modifying nature through grazing, agriculture, and forest extraction (Zimmerer 1994). Furthermore, it takes seriously social scientists' calls to analyze critically the role of both local and official environmental knowledge in the generation of management regimes (Robbins 2000), especially the increased value of local environmental knowledge that accompany non-equilibrium visions of nature (Zimmerer 1994). It also explores the nexus of knowledge and institutions in which environmentally sustainable economic production may be embedded.

Furthermore, research on deforestation and subsequent secondary sequential restoration in Amazonia has benefited from new techniques that combine planetary level information obtained from satellites with local-level knowledge derived from onsite interviews and observation (Moran and Brondizo 1998 cited in Little 1999).

In the same fashion, this theoretical framework was applied in the context of my case study on how the local knowledge, institutions (formal/informal), and forest resources interact and then affect forest resources management. Hence, understanding the relationships among these entities require the application of political ecology as theoretical framework whereas understanding different levels of institutions influencing forest resources management calls for the application of institutional analysis as conceptual framework which I presented in the subsequent.

2.2.2 Common Property Theory

The other important theoretical concept I use in this study is common property theory and institutional analysis. Literature on common property institutions is basically illustrating the variations in forms of property rights making difference in resource management outcomes. All similar concerns of common property theoreticians have been to demonstrate the market or private property arrangement and public ownership or state management do not exhaust the range of plausible institutional mechanism to govern natural resources use. Common property theoreticians have also identified community and communal ownership, and management rooted in the practices of millions of households around the world as alternatives (Agrawal

2003:244). At the time, it resonates with theoretical puzzles that concern scholars of social movement and revolutions, voting and other forms of political participation, collision and cheating, formations of institutions and their maintenance, cooperation and conflict. In all these situations, participants attempt to solve collective action problem. By focusing on the situations under which users of renewable resources in general and common-pool resources like forests in particular cooperate to achieve efficient management, the literature on common property have created the guideline by which its findings can resound with broader concerns in social science.

In investigating the impact of different institutional structures on resource management, common property theoreticians have also shown the importance of both formal and informal institutions as an influence on human behavior. They have drawn and built upon the works of other property rights' theorists and institutionalists (Bates 1989; Knight 1992; Libecap 1990; North1990 cited in Agrawal 2003) but have produced additional evidence on the role of informal institutions in influencing human actions. Because of common property theoreticians conceptualize institutions in abstract manner as sets of enforceable rules that facilitate and constrain human actions, their conclusion about property rights, a subset of institutions, are best seen as sets of rules that define access, use, exclusion, management, monitoring, sanctioning and arbitration behavior of users with respect to specific resources (Schlager & Ostrom 1992).

At the same time, as such rules are significant in governing patterns of use, they are also the principal mechanisms through which polices regarding resource management work (Alchian & Demsetz 1975; Furuboth & Pejonich 1974 cited in Agrawal 2003).

In their empirical research, scholars of the commons have focused primarily on producing case studies of successful community management of coastal fisheries, forests, pastures, irrigations and groundwater (Ascher 1995; Bromeley 1992; McCay & Asheson 1987; Peters 1999; Tong 1992 cited in Agrawal 2003:245). Agrawal explains that the works of these scholars in conjunction with other writings on participation, indigenous knowledge, and political ecology, has encouraged resource co-management programs by government.

Therefore, using this theoretical framework, the researcher analyzed how institutions affect forest resources management at local level focusing on *Balate-Gera Forest Priority Area* as a case study. Moreover, this model enabled the researcher to identify forms of property in the course of analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

3.1 Brief History of Gera

According to the oral history from local elders, in the last decade of 18th century and first two decades of 19th century, there was a battle fought in the area among different identity groups. At that time there were no modern arms, guns and rifle with which they fought each other in the battle field. Hence, the war was fought by locally produced spear called '*gerawo*', and the word Gera was said to be derived from this term.

Although there is no reliable evidence on the year of its establishment, the present administrative center of Gera district, *ciraa*, was founded during the reign of Abba Magaal I (1848-1870). There are different views about how the word '*ciraa*' was coined at the beginning. But the most convincing argument is related to *Afan Oromo* word '*Ciraa*' which means 'slashing' or 'cutting'. According to some elders who have been living near or inside *ciraa* town, the area was covered by natural forest at the beginning. That forest was cut and cleared by individuals who penetrated the forest first for cultivating crops. From this point of view, the word '*ciraa*' which means '*slashing*' or '*cutting*' was believed to be derived. In fact, this view seems reasonable as the '*ciraa town*' is still at the center of Gera Forest being surrounded almost by natural forests.

The historical foundation of Gera goes back to the history of the five Gibe states formation. Gera state was one of the five Gibe states which were flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century in Gibe region (now Jimma Zone of Oromiya State). As scholars depicted, the formation of Gibe states including Gera was the result of internal dynamism created among the *Maccaa* Oromo groups themselves. On the other hand, other scholars contended that the major causes for the development of monarchical institutions in Gibe region were external factors such as political pressure from *Omotic* Kingdoms, trade and Islam. More recently, however, agreement has been reached on the fact that the major causes for the development of monarchical kingdoms in Gibe region were found to be internal dynamic

processes rather than external factors (see Lewis 1964, Guluma 1984, and Mohamad 1994). Mohammad (1994) stressed the fact that in different parts of Oromo land, the transition from pastoralism to sedentary agriculture took longer or shorter period of time depending on the density of the sedentary population among which the Oromo settled and on the availability of resources in the area they settled in. In short, the fundamental reason for the formation of monarchical institutions among *maccaa* Oromo of the then Gibe region was the gradual change of their mode of production from pasturalism to sedentary agriculture.

Gera state was the last state to be formed among the states of Gibe region (Mohammad 1994). The kingdom of Gera was first created by Gunji, a wise and powerful king (mooti) of the day. He was soon succeeded by his son, Tullu Gunji (1835-1838), who led Gera for only three years. According to oral history, Tullu was an intelligent man, a clever politician, a warrior king and a good administrator who was popular within Gera and the Gibe region. Gera was said to have a complete structure of state during the reign of *mooti* (king) Abba Boso (1834-1842). Since then, that is from its emergence as state kingdom up to the invasion of Menelik, Gera had enjoyed different kings who had exercised their own leaderships.

Oromo kingdoms of Gibe region including Gera kingdom were divided into different administrative units. The largest units into which the kingdoms were divided were called *qoros*. The types of administrative structures established during the periods of those kings had taken the form of their hierarchy that had put the *Mootii* (king) at the top and domains of his councils, *Abbaa Qoroo*, *Abbaa Gandaas* etc. at its bottom. The kingdom of Gera was divided into 12 small provinces named *Qoros*. These *Qoros* were administered by the officials known as *Abbaa Qoroos*. The officials were recruited from the clans that predominated in the provinces (*qoroos*). However, the mooti(king) in consultation with his councilors could have appointed or dismissed the *abba qoroo* as he liked (Guluma 1984). Thus, *qoroos* were territorially well defined and they did not depend on the distribution of specific clan. Each *qoroo* was divided into smaller administrative units called *gandaa*(villages). The head of the *gandaa* was called *abbaa gandaa* and he was appointed by *abbaa qoroo*. The responsibility of *abbaa gandaa* was basically similar to that of *abbaa qoroos*. They assisted *abbaa qoroo* in maintaining laws and order, and collecting tributes in their respective villages. The

responsibility of the judicial and court affairs was given to the government officials called *Abbaa Mizan.*

3.2 Physical Background

Location and Climate: This study is concerned with the management of Belete Gera Forest Priority Area, 150,000ha in size (JFCEC 1998), found in Jimmaa zone of Oromia Regional State. The forest consists of two disjoint forests, namely Gera Forest and Belete Forest situated in *Gera* and *Seka-chkorsaa* districts respectively. For methodological reason, Belete Forest which covers about 35,434ha of Belete-Gera Forest is not included in this study. Hence, Gera Forest area is the focus of this thesis. Gera Forest is situated in Gera district, Jimma Zone of Oromiya Regional State, Ethiopia. It is about 430 km away from Addis Ababa, the capital of the country, and 93km far away from Jimma, the administrative center of Jimma Zone, in Southwestern direction (See *Fig. 3.1 and Fig.3.2* for the location of Gera and Jimma zone). Gera district has a total land area of 14430ha within which 29 rural *Ganda* administrations and one urban *Ganda* are situated.

Information regarding land use system indicates that 56 percent of the total area of land in Gera district has been covered by natural forests. The remaining 25.39 percent is farmland and 5 percent is grazing land, whereas uncultivable land, arable land but not cultivated yet, and land reserved for construction comprises 2.99, 4.87, and1.88 percents respectively and natural coffee covers about 3.89percent of the total land area in Gera district.

According to the data from Gera district Information Office, Gera district is bordered by Shabe Sombo district to the east, Gomma district to the north, Guma, Setema and Sigimo districts share borderlines to the west, and SNNPR demarcates to the south (see map of Jimma zone in fig. 3.3). The altitude of the district ranges from about 1400m to 3000m above sea level. It has three climatic zones that can be categorized as *Baddaa* (highland), *Badda-daree* (mid-altitude), and *Gammoojjii* (lowland) which constitute about 46.11, 50.19 and 3.7 percents respectively of total land area in the district. The area is characterized by humid

climate of heavy annual rainfall that ranges from 1800mm to 2084mm, and the mean annual temperature lies between 14^0c and 24^0c.

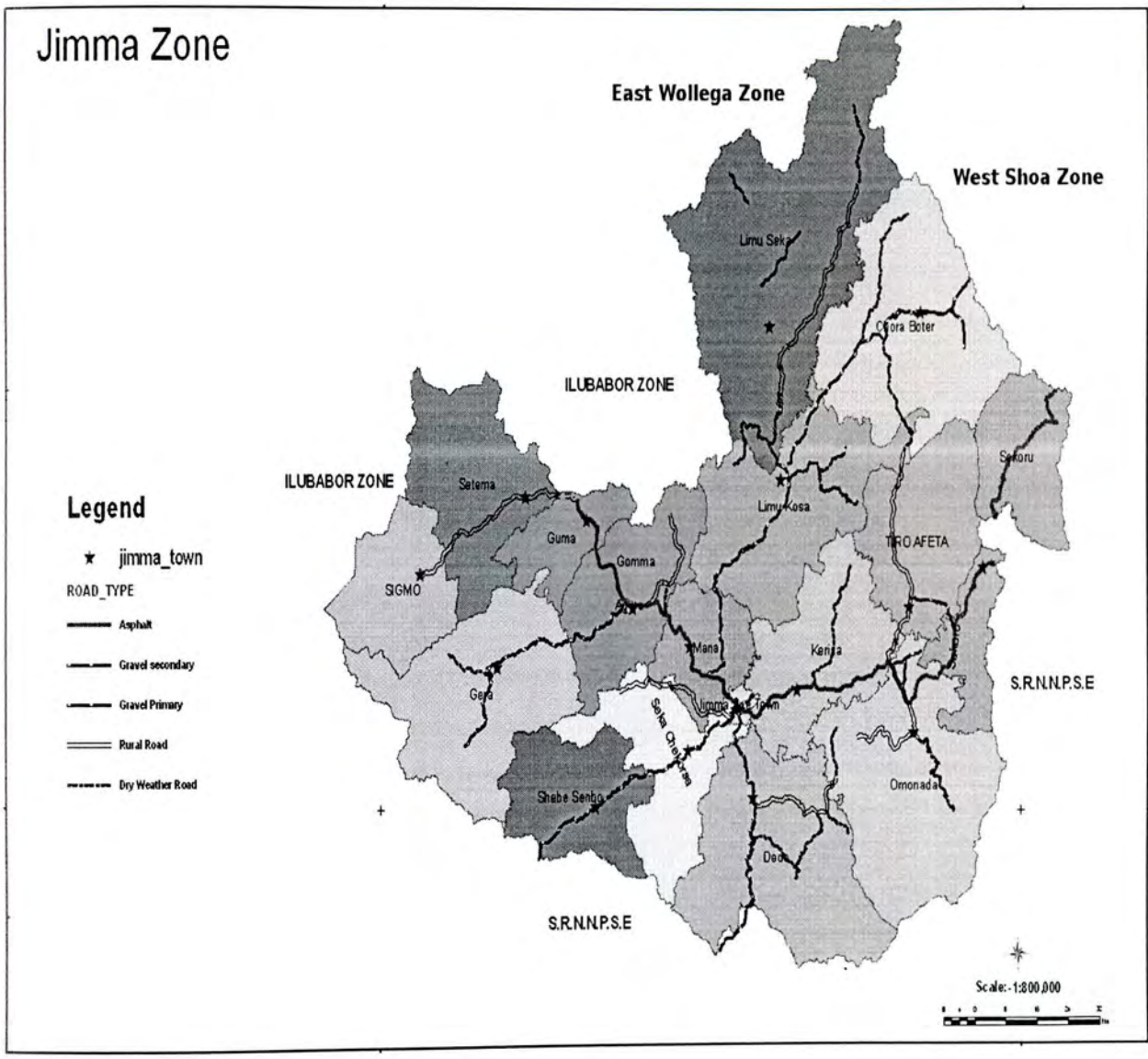

Fig. 3.1 Map of Jimma Administrative Zone

Source: Oromia Finance and Development

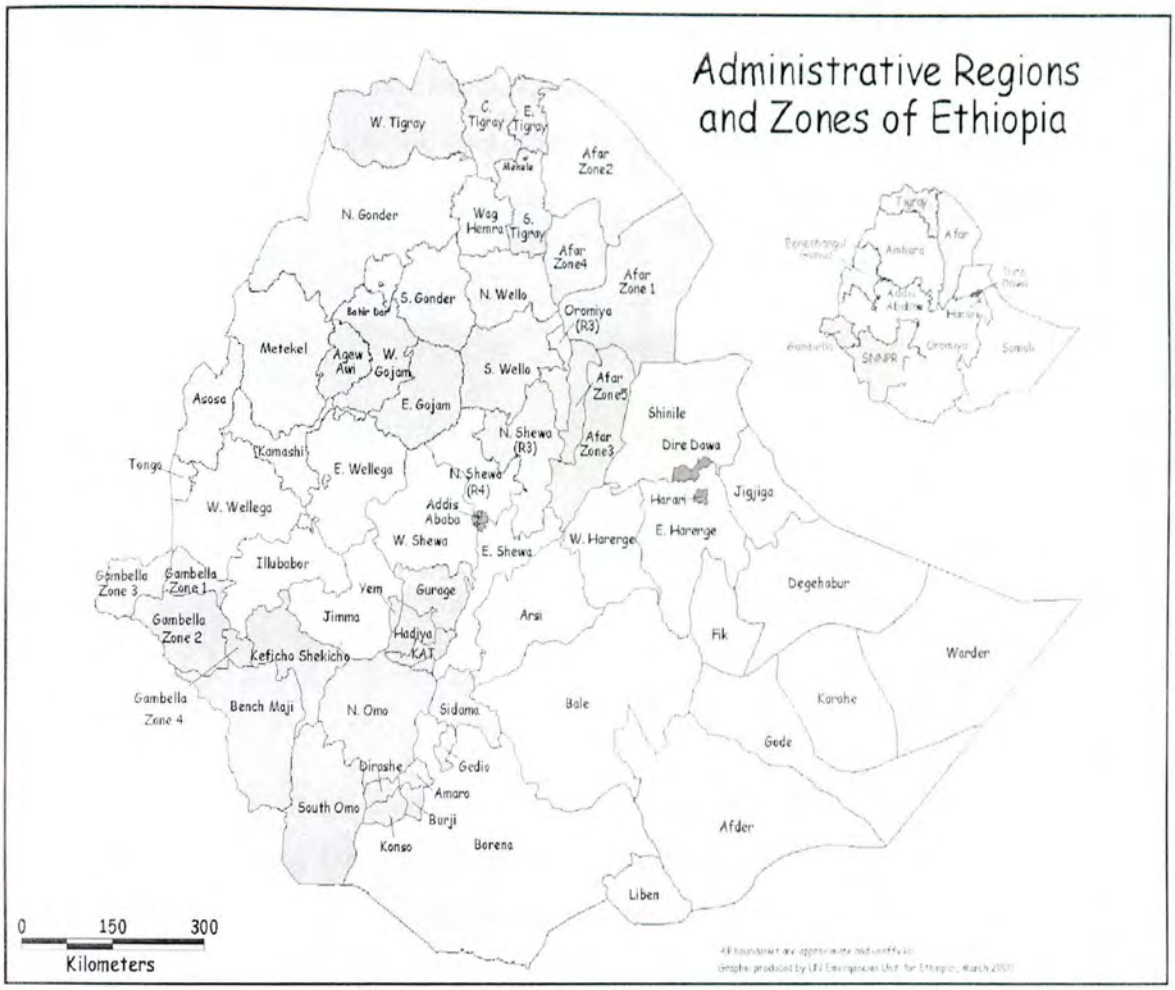

Fig.3.2 Map of current administrative divisions of Ethiopia

Source: http://www.reliefweb.int/mapc/afr_ne/cnt/eth/ethiopia_zones.html (accessed 15/07/2010

Soil Type: According to the study carried out in Belete-Gera forest priority area by (JFCEC 1998), the types of soils in the study area are generally fine textured. *Nitisols* and *Cambisols*, often more than 100cm deep, occur in areas with gentle slopes and forest cover. *Leptosols* are found on mountain peaks, steep slopes and stream banks where soil is shallow (less than 30cm deep). *Luvisols* dominate in depressions such as marshes and low lands along rivers.

Water Resources: Furthermore, the district is endowed with many streams of water fall which are situated in different *Gandaa Administrations* of the area. These waterfalls include; ketch kimo in Gaara Naso kebele which is found 15km away from *Chira*; *Deda I and Deda II* in *Ganji–Caalla Gandaa* located 2km away from Chira, *Naso Bodiya* found in *Sadiloya Gandaa*; *Asebo* in *Gure Daco Gandaa*, *Hono kilo*, *Hareri* and '*Loogaja*' in Timba Gandaa.

Fig.3.3 *Waterfall of Deda I in Ganji- caalla*

Gera district has also ample rivers that flow throughout the years without interruption. This might be attributed to the suitable climatic conditions prevailing in the district as a consequence of relatively dense natural forest resources found in the district. Some of the rivers in the district include; *Dacho*, *Naso*, *Cherico*, *Andaracha*, *Etta Naniya*, *Gicho* and *Bore*. Mountains like *Waara kimbibit* and *Timba* are also the other resources of the district. The district has also been endowed with natural caves such as *Biche Wara* caves, *Amushe* in Secha *Gandaa*, *Kol-kata* in Gara- Naso *Gandaa*, and *Choroto* in *Timba Gandaa*.

Vegetations and wildlife: Gera forest is one the remnants of broad leaf moist forest in Ethiopia. Vegetation like *Bakkanniisa*, *Kereyo (Polyscias ferruginea)*, *Kararo (Aningeria adolfi friedertel)*, *Baddeessaa (Acacia nubica)*, Ibicha (*Vernononia amygodolina)*, *Buttoo (Schefflera abyssinica)*, *Sonboo*, *Sesa*, *Omi/Omacheessaa (Pygeum africanum)*, *Birbirsa*, *Getema*, *heexoo*, *Waddeessaa (cordial africana) and Hambabeessa (Albizia gummifera)* are some of the most common species of trees found in the area.

Within the dense natural forest, there are some wild animals that are most probably under threat by different human activities carried out either in or near the forest of Gera district. The

major wild lives in the study area include: Lion (*Leenca)*, Buffalo(*gafarsa*), Colobus monkey (*Weennii*), Vervet monkey (*Qamalee*), leopard (*Qeerransa*), Warthogs (*karkarroo)*, Bush pigs (*booyyee*), Porcupine (*dhaddee*), Civet Cat (*xirinyii*), Fox(*sardida*), Antelopes (*kuruphee*), bush buck (*bosonuu*), hyena (*warabeessa*), anubus baboon (*jaldeessa*), and ant-eater (*awwaaldiiigessa*). Elephants have disappeared with the disturbance of the forest.

3.3 Research Site: *Ganji-Caalla KA*

Ganji-Caalla is one of the 29 rural Gandas in Gera district. This *Ganda* is situated adjacent to *Chira* town, the locus of district administration, and the administrative center of *Ganji-Caalla* is located to the east of *Chira* at not more than 1.5km distance. This ganda is named *Ganji-Chaalla* after combining two Gandas, *Ganji* and *Caalla* as one Ganda in 1999.

According to the information from Adminstration of Gandaa Office, *Ganji-Chaala* has a total inhabitant of 2945, out of which 1578 individuals are males and 1367 are females. The data from the office also confirmed that there are about 440 households, as the local people call it, *Abbawarraas*. Out of those *Abbawarraas* only 32 of them are female headed where as the remaining 408 are male headed households. This dominance of males implies the significance of gender differences and its contribution to the development of socio-economic activities of the area.

There are different ethnic groups residing in *Ganji-Caalla Ganda*. Oromo ethnic group constitute majority, which is 75 percent of the total inhabitants whereas *Amhara* is the second largest ethnic group comprising 22.5 percent. Concerning religious background, there are different religious groups of which Muslims are the dominant, encompassing 74.73 percent of the total population in *Ganji-Callaa Gandaa.* Christians come the second comprising 21.73 percent of *Ganji-Caalla*. The remaining are some other religion followers like protestant (*Ganji-Callaa Gandaa* Administration office).

The total area of land in *Ganji-Caalla Ganda* is estimated to be about 4010.75 hectares. In proportion, more than half of the land area in the *Ganda* is covered by natural forest *baddaa duudaa* (dense forest) and/or *bosona haphataa* (degraded forest). Hence, a dense and degraded

natural forest constitutes 728 and 1455 hectares of land areas respectively. The remaining 1827.75 hectares of land area is occupied by *qe'ee (*homestead) and *lafa qonnaa* (farmland).

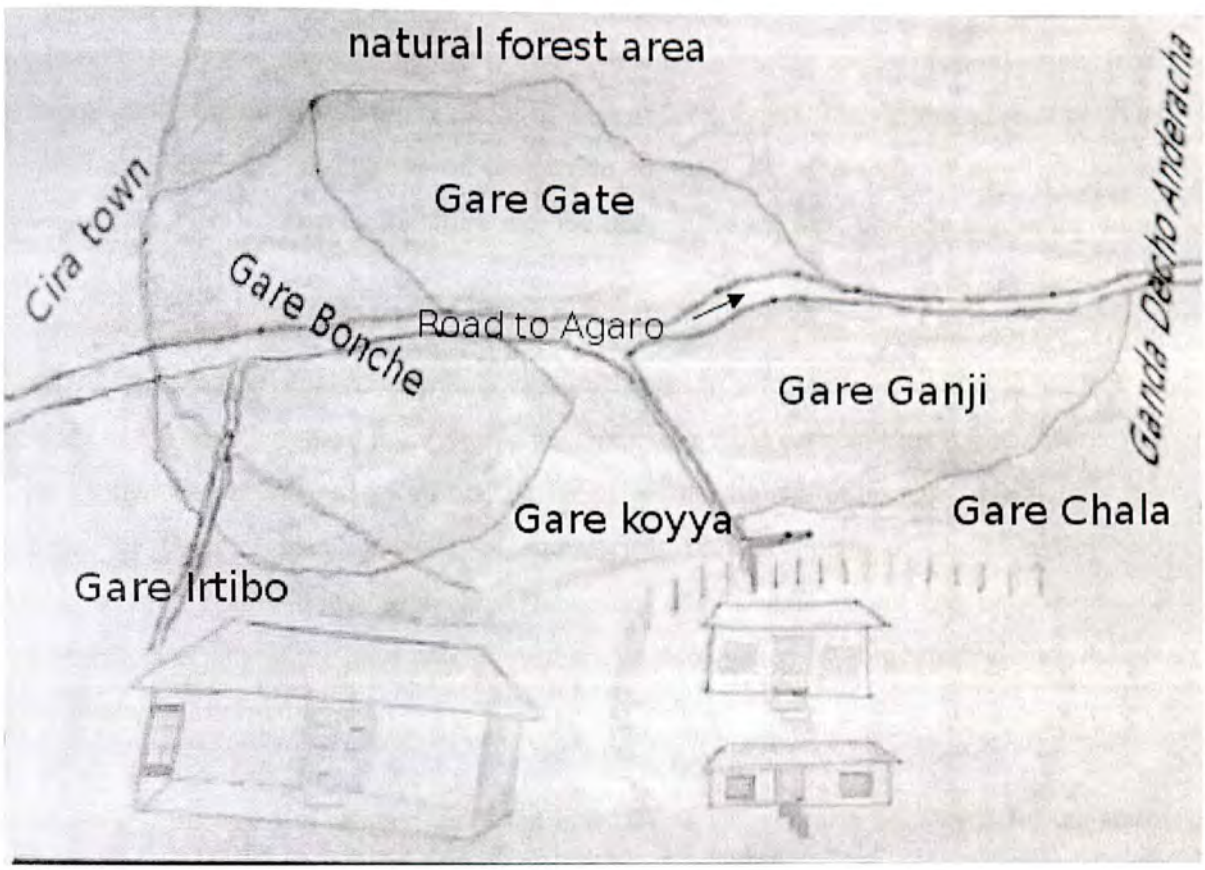

Fig.3.4 Sample Sketch of Ganji-caalla Ganda area and its Forest

The *Ganda* has been categorized in to three zones whereas each zone is also divided into Garees. Each Garee is again divided into homestead (*qe'ee)* then household (*Abbaawarraa*).

3.4 Socio-economic Background

The people: Although there are some other ethnic groups residing in the study area, Oromo are predominantly the permanent dwellers for a long period of time. *Ethnic group*, here, refers to category of human population that shares characteristics of common origin, history, culture, language, and territory (Smith 1995 cited in Hussein 2005). The historical foundation of Oromo in Gera district may be traced back to the Oromo occupation of Gibe region in the sixteenth century. The Oromo in this area belong to *maccaa* Oromo branch of *Maccaa-Tuulama* division who expanded originally from *Madda-waalabuu* to southwest and west

parts of what we call today 'Oromiya Regional State'. As Mohammad (1994) indicates, Oromo pastoralists first arrived in Gibe region in 1570s. When they arrived in the area for the first time, they were unable to take maximum advantage of economic potential of the new environment. It was mainly after the transformation of their mode of production from pasturalism to sedentary agriculture that they were able to do this. They changed their political institutions, ideology, and mode of production to meet the demands of new conditions (Mohammad 1994). Hence, agriculture was the material foundation of Gibe region including Gera.

Oromo of the study area share common cultural heritages and speak the same language. *Afan Oromo* (Oromo language) is a widely spoken language with little variation in dialect. It belongs to Cushitic language family, which extends over most parts of East Africa. Moreover, *Afan Oromo* has been used as an official language of administration since 1991, after the collapse of Derg regime. This is, of course, true in every parts of Oromiya Regional Administrative State. In the study area, however, *Afan Oromo* is not the only means of communication among the local people. Amharic is also spoken by some individuals who are either literate or non-educated.

Religion: With regard to religion, until the first half of 19th century, the Oromo in the study area was followers of Oromo indigenous belief system called *waaqeffanna*. Of course, the indigenous belief system of Oromo has been in practice in some parts of Oromiya Regional State. The Oromo in the Gibe region in general and of Gera in particular were practicing their *Qalluu* and *Gada institutions*. However, Oromo traditional belief system, including *Gadaa institution* had already been losing its strength by the 18th century as a result of the internal "stratification" and development in coping with the existing situations (Guluma 1984). Then, Islam gradually became the religion of Oromo in Gibe region including Gera. The spread of *Islam* in the study area was the phenomenon of the nineteenth century (Mohammad 1994).This does not mean, of course, that the other Oromo were not exposed to *Islamic* influence before that time. According to Mohammad (1994), contact between Islam and some Oromo groups may be traced back to six or seven century. Furthermore, Mohammad asserted that the spread of Islam among Oromo was a gradual process usually related to trade and state formation in the then Gibe region, now called Jimma Zone of Oromiya Regional State. Oromo

of Gera, the study area, accepted Islam religion in the late 1840s. Today, the religion of Oromo in the study area is predominantly *Islam.*

Kinship System: Every kinship system identifies blood relatives (biologically related or socially constructed) and relatives by marriage. In other words, except for married couples without children, all groups of relative residing together consists of "*consanguineal*" relatives, but married couples are usually regarded as "*affinal*" relatives since marriage relationship is socially the most important bond between them (Johnson 2007). Hence, kinship system is fundamental for the social organizations of Oromo in general and Oromo of Gera, in particular. Like other Oromo groups, Oromo group in the study area trace their descent through father's line. They distinguish their blood relatives through the principle known as the "rule" of descent. Johnson identifies three basic rules of descent: patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral. In *patrilineal descent*, each individual automatically becomes the member of any *cosanguineal* kin group to which his father belongs, but not of those to which his mother belongs. In matrilineal descent, an individual joins the *consanguineal* group kin group/groups of his mother but not of his/her father. In *bilateral descent*, a person inherits some but not all of his/her father *consanguineal* relatives, and also the corresponding *consanguineal* relatives of his/her mother.

Oromo of the study area become the member of certain clan through *patrilineal descent*. There are different clans (*gosaa*) in Gera. They include *Sayyoo*, *Sadachaa*, *Dagoyyee*, *Dooyyuu*, *Qoree*, *Hawaas*, *Agalo Algaa*, *Karrayyuu*, *Awulani* and others. For individuals who are born into these groups, knowing their kin groups in the line of their fatherhood is very important for various reasons. First and for most, property right is claimed through *patrilineal descent*. Inheritance of farmland or forest land, for example, is through father's line. Second, since intra-clan marriage is exclusively impermissible, they clearly identify their *cosanguineal* kin groups of their father. Hence, the marriage type of this society is exclusively exogamous. However, there are some exceptions. There are traditional social groups such as *Tumtu* (blacksmith) and *Faaqii (*tanners) who were culturally despised as a result of their daily activities. In these kin groups, endogamous marriage was common although this trend has been subject to change in recent time. Last but not least, persons to whom they relate by kinship system may normally look for emotional support and various kinds of help in case of

need. Thus, kinship system plays important role in rights of access to resources, formation of marriage and other social organization among the Oromo of the study area.

Marriage: The formation of new household (*abbawarraa*) is marked by marriage. Johnson (2007) defines marriage as "a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted, without loss of standing in the community, to have children." This definition is very narrow for it cannot be applied to a marriage that involves two or more spouses. Basically, there are two forms of marriage: monogamy and polygamy. *Monogamy* is the form in which a person is institutionally allowed to have only one spouse at a time. On contrary, *polygamy* is the form of marriage in which a person is institutionally permitted to have two or more spouse. Polygamy can be categorized into two: *polygny* (the institution of marriage that allows a man to have two or more wives at the same time) and *Polyandry* (the institution that permits a woman to have more than one husband at the same time).

In the context of the study area, *polygny* has been the most common form of marriage until recent time. As the elders indicate, *polygyny* was the dominant marriage type as they attached it with *shar'a* law in Islamic religion that permits man to have up to four wives. But, this trend has currently been discouraged by the government and by new generation. Moreover, the marriage relationship among the Oromo of the study area has been exclusively exogamous for intra-clan marriage is not allowed. For instance, a man from *Agalo* kin groups can get married to a girl from *Hawaas* kin groups, but he never gets married to a girl from *Agalo* groups.

Afoosha: *Afoosha* is the local social organization which is formed by the consent of local people residing in the same village or sub-village. There are three to five *afooshas* in a village usually based on the number of residents in that locality and social relations among those residents. Within a single *afoosha*, there are about 30 to 40 individual members. As any other social organizations, this local organization has fundamental roles for the execution of different social, cultural and economic activities in that specific area.

Although kinship system is not the criteria to be a member of an *afoosha*, individuals in the same *afoosha* are usually from the same kin groups either related by blood or social constructions. It is common for one kin group to be dominant in the organization, and the executive committee of the *afoosha* is chosen from this dominant group. Nevertheless,

although the social executors of *afoosha* are selected from the dominant groups of the members, individual merits of social capital and acceptance are the major criteria employed in opting them.

Each members of this local institution contributes money in cash as per agreement among the members. The contribution is usually carried out at the end of each month. Through these trends, they accumulate and save money that may be used in time of hardships. Moreover, *afoosha* institutions are important in controlling social misbehaving such as adultery and gossip, executing funeral ceremony in cooperation with *abbaa lagaa*, and preventing conflict among individual/group members.

3.5 Livelihood Strategy

Livelihood strategy refers to the way people generate their income for the purpose of subsistence. Different social groups may have different kinds of subsistence strategies that may be emanated from cultural, social, political, or environmental conditions. Ellis defines livelihood as comprising "the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household" (2000: 10).

Agriculture is the major economic activity of the local people from which they make their living. From the moment of settlement in the study area, agriculture has been the material foundation of the local Oromo. As most of them own farming land, they cultivate various crops such as *Teff*, *Maize*, *Sorghum*, twice a year. They sow maize, for instance, in February and harvest it in July, and they sow Teff in July/August and harvest it in November. This is made possible as rain prevails throughout the year at little intervals. Of course, the cultivators are not only those who have possessed their own land, but also those who cultivate by renting farmland from those groups who possess ample farmland.

There are also individuals who rely on both farming and coffee plantation as their major economic activities. These people plant coffee seedlings in their homestead, in addition to crop production, which serves them as cash crops. In the study area, these social groups are wealthier than those who rely only on cultivating crops. They do not buy anything related to

food crops as they have farmland, and the cash income obtained from coffee plantation is considered as extra income which they sometimes deposit in the nearby bank, *Agaro* town.

Livelihood of local people in the study area is also manifested in relation to Gera Forest. Some social groups are dependent upon forest and forest products directly or indirectly. Although they may plant coffee in their homestead, they also earn their income from coffee beans gathered from natural forest. Moreover, they hang traditional beehives on the trees and obtain honey produce in the natural forest. These social groups buy crops for food from the market by selling coffee or honey. They do not have farmland of their own because they are not permanent dwellers in the area. Rather, they have come to Gera for searching alternative life from different parts of the country. However, they also produce crops sometimes by renting farmland from those who have ample plots of farmland.

Livestock is another livelihood supporting economic activity in the study area. Animals like cattle, goats, sheep, donkey, mules and horse are indispensable for subsistence. In the study area, every *abbaawarra* (household) could have one or more cows in their homestead. Cows help by giving milk and milk by-products which can be sold in the nearby *ciraa* town, which is about 1.5km away from the villagers. This helps, especially women to get income with which they buy some household items. On the other hand, these animals are source of labor. Oxen, for instance, support the economy because local people use oxen for farming. Besides, oxen can be fatten and sold in the market for large amount of money. Making them fat is easy because grass is available throughout the year without interruption. This may be attributed to the availability of abundant rainfall in that locality. Sheep or goats are also means of generating income as they can be sold in the nearby market. Mules, donkeys and horses, support the livelihoods of the local people by providing transportation. They are important for the economic activities of the local community as it may be tiresome to bring agricultural products, honey, and coffee to the market center without the labor of these animals. Since labor is the most important means of production, these animals provide labor force for transporting their products from one place to another. In short, the livelihoods of people in the study area are so diverse in kind.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOCAL PERCEPTION, INSTITUTIONS AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

4.1 Local Perception and Understanding of Forest Importance

Sustainable natural resource management, particularly, forest management, partially if not all, depends upon clear understandings of local people's interaction with their immediate environment (forest). It also requires local people's perceptions and cognizant about the values of natural resources, in this case forest resources around them.

This kind of scrutiny is significant to inform policy makers the importance of local knowledge in sustainable forest management, and influence them, at least, to consider the essentiality of local knowledge in environmental policy making in general and forest management in particular. In this research context, *local knowledge* refers to knowledge generated through observation of local environment, and held by specific groups of people. Hence, the importance of forest resource for ecology, economy and socio-cultural aspects are discussed from the perspective of local people's perceptions.

4.1.1 Local Perception on Ecological Importance of Forest

It seems apparent that the role of local community in development activities in general and natural resource management in particular was completely neglected before 1970s. Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" misunderstood the role of local communities in governing their own common property. Hardin (1968) perceived local people as "irrational", irresponsible to conserve natural resources. It is this wrong conclusion that made local people's contributions in conserving their environment blurred, and led governments and other stakeholders to ignore local people from the responsibility of protecting their own natural resources, especially common pool resources like forest.

Thus, the response of government in many developing countries has been the creation of "Protected Area" Institutions (Johnsons and Nelson 2004). However, some scholars have started to understand the knowledge of local community, particularly indigenous community in all development activities including natural resources. Forest management is one of them. It is apparent that forest management was completely under the monopoly of state under "Protectionist Approach". The State usually considers itself as custodianship for the management of forest resources. The effectiveness of this protectionist model of forest conservation, however, has been also criticized in recent years. Advocates of protectionist approach perceive that humans and conservation of natural resources are incompatible with each other. As a result, local people are completely excluded from forest management and utilization of forest products from protected area. Hence, protectionist strategy disregards the human needs that they derive from resources and ignores the possibility that the protected resource may have adapted to human use.

There is, however, an understanding that natural resources and local (indigenous) people have been coevolved. "Current resource use is often the product of thousands of human history, and some natural systems may in fact have coevolved with social system" (Norgaard, 1994). This implies the long history of relations between humans and their surrounding natural resources like forests. The long historical relations of local people with their natural environment made them know more about the effects of forests in their area.

According to the perception of local people in the study area, forest (*baddaa daggala)* has great contribution in maintaining the stability of weather conditions. They know that the existence of forest made them enjoy abundant rain fall almost throughout the year. The sufficient availability of rain in turn provides the opportunity to harvest their crop at least twice a year. They underscore that in the absence of forest there is no rain fall, and when there is scarcity of rainfall, the possibility of cultivating crops ceases. Moreover, they know the fact that streams of waterfall are the direct and indirect consequences of existence of forest resources in their locality. Streams and rivers like Deda 1(see Fig. 3.3) and Deda 2 flow because of the existence of forest. Besides, key informants told me that "if we dig down the ground about 3-6 meters, with no doubt water comes out."On the other hand, this water is the

base for their livelihood because it is used by humans both for drinking and cleaning, as well as for domestic animal use.

Forest is habitat not only to wild life, but also it has been the place where local people keep their animals during dry season. Besides, historical and cultural experience, majority of households in the study area have some connection with the external world through different mechanisms such as listening to radios, visiting market, or local government officials, and they were well aware about the ecological values of forest. According to the household survey carried out in the study site, all the sampled households strongly agreed on the ecological values of the local forest. This survey also coincided with the perceptions of other local people interviewed. They required forest conditions to be improved more for its non-economic benefits such as cleaner air, soil conservation and water retention rather than improving forest for economic reason such as fodder, fuel wood and timber. In this case, 54 percent of households wanted the forest to be improved for non-economic reason, whereas only 45 percent of them wanted the forest condition to be improved for economic reason out of 44 sampled households surveyed in *Ganji-callaa Gandaa Administration.*

4.1.2 Local Perception on Economic Importance of Forest

Forest resources are important not only for ecological values they provide, but also they are imperative in supporting livelihoods of local people living in/near forest who depend on them either totally or partially. Hence, people-forest interactions that stemmed from the issue of livelihood captured the attention of many scholars and other political activists to integrate forest resources into the development of national economy. Generating income from forest resources at the expense of ecological disturbance is possible but this may end up in environmental disturbance as a result of deforestation. The economic motivation towards forest resource by local people is the direct influence from national and market economy.

Local people in the study area were well aware about the fact that forest provides money as the source of income by selling individual trees, fuel wood or timber production. Before *Amharas* settled in the area, the culture of Oromo people did not allow cutting tree for timber or for charcoal. Moreover, the perception of local people on economic imperative is related to

the belief that the existence of forest directly or indirectly affects their subsistence economy. For instance, in the absence of forest, they perceive that life is impossible or difficult because they have strong connection with the forest for their subsistence. One of the key informants stated the importance of forest conservation as follow;

> *First there was no forest in this area. Drought, famine and disease all together adversely affected people and made them evacuate from home land. It is in response to that problem that our ancestors planted trees by bringing them from other areas. That problem was controlled by planting trees. The same fate awaits us if forest is completely destroyed. That is why we value forest and have conserved Gera forest until now.*

This perception about the importance of forest was what almost all my informants reflected in the study area. Forest has been everything for them. One of my informants also explained the importance of forest for Gera people, metaphorically as, "*Like Fish never sustain without water, Geras never sustain without forest.*" This is clear manifestation of the relation of local people's livelihoods to the forest resources in the study area.

Of course, local people have substantial awareness about both the ecological and economic values, but the question lies on prioritization. According to the views of key informants, ecological benefit should be given priority as other benefits such as economic as well as socio-cultural are the consequence of friendly environment. Climate change, which is threatening the world today, is the direct consequence of environmental disturbance, usually deforestation and natural resources degradation. The global consequence of deforestation is even understood at local level as this case study reveals.

4.1.3 Local Perception on Socio-cultural Importance of Forest

Forest also provides cultural or social values. It is clear that forest is important for recreation, walking through, religious and other purposes. Many trees are perceived as sacred forest. Sacred trees are conserved for they provide scene for worships under their shades. Blessed trees are not only important for the place of worships but also they function as place where conflict resolution takes place by local elders (*jaarsa biyyaa*). In the study area, for instance,

qilxuu (Ficus vasta) is well known tree species under which mediation (*araara*) of two individuals or groups in conflict has been carried out. Others consider planted trees as their "*child*", especially if they could fail to get children in their life time. Out of the total 44 sampled households, 81.8 percent of them believed that forest is somewhat important for cultural values. They were also well aware about the importance of forest as a source of "traditional" medicine (*qoricha aadaa).* Workineh (2001) rightly argued that Ambo Oromo have a considerable knowledge of indigenous medicines usually extracted from different plants (forest) for the healings of both humans and animals. This view is equally true with the Oromo of the study area as I have confirmed through my field research.

Broadly speaking, the economic and ecological importance of forest is socially and culturally constructed, and, therefore, the perception of local people about the forest importance was holistic rather than isolated entities. This kind of perception made the local people more responsible on forest conservation than any other external agents.

4.2 Local Institutions and Forest Management

The concept of institution has been forwarded by some scholars depending on either formality of the rules or levels of operation. North (1990) is the most frequently cited author in this regard. According to North, institutions can be categorized into formal and informal relying on the idea of "formality of the rules". Recently, informal institutions can be used interchangeably with customary institutions, indigenous institutions, and 'traditional intuitions' with insignificant change in meaning unless it is politicized. North (1990) also classified institutions into local and beyond local depending upon the levels of organizational operations. Rules at local level are operational ones. Since the term 'local' is relative concept, in the context of this study it refers to institutions both at community level (customary institutions) and district (local government organizations) levels. Thus, in this section, the nature of customary institutions and formal institutions are discussed in relation to their contribution to sustainable forest management.

4.2.1 Customary Institutions and Forest Conservation

Considering customary institutions of local people who have had long time experience of living with natural resources has got little attention in forest conservation until recently. However, following the limited endeavors to impose practices, rules and values from other environmental and cultural contexts, some development agencies have turned their inclination to indigenous institutions of different kinds (Watson 2003). By definition, indigenous institutions include organizations, conventional knowledge, 'regularized practices', customary rules, and practices, and each of these has been heralded by policy-makers as valuable resource for development process. Development projects including forest management are searching for strengthening indigenous institutions where they exist, and for exploring the possibility of its potential in other situation for the achievement of development goal. As operational definition, Watson (2003) asserts that indigenous institutions can be discerned as institutions that have emerged in particular situation or that are practiced or constituted by people who had degree of continuity living in, and using the resource of an area.

Furthermore, institutions, in broader sense, include all the structures and practices that influence who has access to and control over what resources, and arbitrate contested resource claims'. That is why Leach(1999) cited in Watson 2003 conceptualizes institutions as regularized patterns of behavior that emerge from underlying structures of sets of 'rules' in use, where rules are shaped and reshaped through people's practices. Thus, in the context of this thesis, institutions are used in broader sense of the concept that encompass sets of enduring ideas, rules (informal and formal) practices(de jure and de facto) in addition to organizations and decision-making groups at local level.

Institutional analysis of this sort shows how different institutional arrangements associated with different networks of local and nonlocal actors lead to landscapes and ecological dynamics. Patterns of authority are therefore inscribed in landscapes and ecological patterns and process; physical spaces and biophysical features become socialized and institutionalized over time, and localities are produced through institutional and political interconnection across space and time (Scoones 1999). Through such analysis, it seems possible to understand the role of local institutions in natural resource conservation in general and forest management in

particular since institutions of resource management are deeply embedded in other social, cultural and economic institutions (Pankhrust 2001).

Gera district in Jimma Zone of Southwestern Oromia Regional State is one of the districts that have been endowed with abundant natural resources (forest) in Ethiopia. This relatively dense natural forest has existed until now as customary institutions have been functioning in some respects in spite of state interventions that are unfriendly to customary institutions. This does not mean that state and/or any development project interventions are not imperative in resources conservation, but considering the existing customary institutions which are socially and historically embedded in natural resources (forest) conservations is also crucial in sustainable forest management. The way in which these customary institutions are embedded in the 'shared memory of local people' (Uphoff, 1996 cited in Watson, 2003) is believed to make them relevant in sustainable forest management. Thus, in the study area, there are customary institutions that are under threats of government intervention and modernization but still powerful in addressing societal issues in general and conservations of natural resources including forest in particular. This statement corresponds to the argument of Watson (2003) in which she asserts that strong traditional institutions of Borana, which were very systematic in natural resource management and contributing to sustainable development, were being eroded and weakened by the intervention of government and "modernization". However, customary institutional setups such as *abbaa lagaa*, *shanee* and *jaarsummaa (mediation)* have still been serving the local people of the study area.

4.2.1.1 *Abbaa Lagaa, Shanee* and Forest Conservation

Natural resource management institutions exist throughout all Oromo areas including Gera, the study area. However, their development over time, organizational structure and functions is spatially and temporally subject to change. In this study I focus on customary institutions of Oromo people in Gera district based on the information obtained from key informants. They are known locally by variety of names; *Abbaa Jigaa*, *Abbaa Lagaa* and *shanee*. The name *Abba Laga* is the most frequently used in conjunction with local social and economic affairs including conservation of natural resources. In the past, *Abbaa Jigaa* also called *Abbaa Tuulii* was the higher authority to which complaints appealed if they were dissatisfied by the decision

made by *Abba Lagaa* and *jaarsa biyyaa(*mediators). At present *Abba Jigaa* is not functioning and hence it is not discussed in this thesis.

The extent (if any) to which *Abba Laga* had played a role in the traditional Oromo Gadaa system of administration prior to the Menelik conquest in the late 19th century remains unclear. The Gadaa system of public administration was itself brought to the then Gibe Region (now Jimma Zone) during the Oromo expansion to the area in 17th and 18th centuries although its form and application varied from place to place. It was essentially a traditional socio-political institution in which the male members of each community progressed through different life 'grades', each with its own associated rights and responsibilities.

Within the system, one grade ruled for 8 years, before being replaced by another and, within each 8-year period, an *Abba Gadaa* (father of power), *Abba Dula* (father of war) and *Abba Sera* (father of the law) were elected (Mohammed Hassan, 1994; Watson, 2003). Whilst there is no documented evidence on *Abba Laga* playing an essential role in the *Gadaa* administration, it is probable that *Abba Laga* was a title instituted when and where the need to coordinate land use occurred. In the present day Borana zone in southern Ethiopia, where remnants of the *Gadaa* system still exist, Watson (2003) reports that *Abba Konfi* (father of the well) regulates access to water, yet there is no indication that the title is intrinsically linked to the Gadaa life grades system.

Eventually, in western Ethiopia, the *Gadaa* system was gradually eroded as a result of internal socio-economic development and the emerging local warlords (Guluma 1984, Lewis 1964). Hence, the administrative system of *Gadaa* institution disappeared some years before Menelik's conquest of the then Gibe region. The origin of *Abba Laga* is, therefore, uncertain, and necessitates further investigation. What appears different to the traditional Gadaa administrative roles, however, is that the title *Abba Lagaa* is now used to describe both the institution itself that is made up of participating local people, and the appointed head of the institution, rather than just the latter as during the Gadaa era.

According to the perceived views of local people, *Abbaa Lagaa* has been the powerful customary institution accountable for the life situations of all local people grouped under the same '*laga*'. *Laga*, here, refers to both the specific spatial area and the people living in such territory. In other words, *Lagaa* means local people who belong to the same village in specific territory and share the same leader (*Abbaa Lagaa*). Literally, *Abbaa Lagaa* is the 'father' of all individuals in his territorial area (village), and therefore it is assumed that *Abbaa Lagaa* is respected among the villagers as the father of the family is respected among his family members. *Abbaa Lagaa* institution can be best comprehended in the same way "*abbaawarraa*" institution is perceived among the local people of the study area. In the study area, *abbaawarra* (household) refers to both household head and household unit (institution) itself.

Abbaa lagaa institution performs its duties and responsibility in collaborating with other lower structures called *Shane*. There are three to four *shanes* in a single *Abba Lagaa (village)* and three to four *Abbaa Lagaas* in *Gandaa* Administration. In the specific research site of this study, *Ganji-Caallaa gandaa*, there are three *Abbaa Lagaa* and each *abbaa lagaa* has three *shanes* with which they work. Thus, *shane* refers to smaller groups of *abbaawarraas* (households) organized as sub-unit of *Abbaa lagaa*. Each Shane has one representative with whom *Abba Lagaa* communicates about the social affairs of his village (*laga*).

Abbaa lagaa performs the following social functions that indirectly contribute to the forest management: executing the burial ceremony of the dead; mobilizing the local people for constructing home for a person whose home is destroyed by fire; constructing houses for poor powerless persons; and resolving conflicts among individual or groups. Because of his social capital and capacity to persuade people, local people respect any order that comes from the *abba lagaa*. Hence, in the practice of constructing houses, the role of *Abbaa lagaa* is great in deciding on the kind of house to be built, and what type of tree species is used for the construction. Tree species such as *Buttoo (Schefflera abyssinica)*, *ibicha (Vernonia amygodolina)*, *baddeessaa (Acacia nubica)*, *Omacheessaa (Pygeum africanum)*, *qararoo (Aningeria adolfi-friedera)* are very valuable because they are used for honey production. Therefore, they are not used for the purpose of house construction and other domestic uses.

This implies that these trees are preserved for their invaluable economic contribution to the livelihoods of the local people. According to my key informants, before Coffee was well known as income generating crop, honey was the basic income generating produce for Gera people. For this reason, some trees in the forest as well as in their homestead area have been valued among the local people. The respect (*safuu*) given by people to those trees makes them stay and expand by natural regeneration. *Safuu* is an important concept in the beliefs and practices of Oromo (Workineh 2001). The Oromo believe that *Safuu* involves avoiding embarrassment, bad conversation, lying, stealing and working on holidays. Hence, *Safuu* is respecting one another or giving respect to other things like river, mountain, and trees. for their valuable importance. That is why trees like *Buttoo (Schefflera abyssinica)*, *Bakkanniisa (Croton macrostachys)*, and *Qararoo (Aningeria adolfi-friedera)* are abundant and sustained until now in the study area.

Other species of trees such as *Qilxuu (Ficus vasta)* are valuable for they symbolize peace as local people sit down under their canopy and mediate people who are in conflict. The other equally important culturally adopted mechanism of tree conservation is that some trees are important for coffee shade. Those tree species have characteristic features of shadings leaves during heavy rainy season and growing leaves during the dry season when coffee plants need shade. Hence, trees species such as *Gaattiraa (juniperus procera)*, *Kombolcha (maytenus ovatus)* are used for the construction of houses and/or fences or other domestic materials.

Other equally interesting issue is that some trees are important for burial ceremony in the study area. According to the culture of local people, the dead body is put into the grave and covered with *leedii* to protect the soil from leaking into the grave. *Leedii* is thus trees prepared for burying the dead. Local people do not use other valuable tree species for the grave except *hambabeessa (Albizia gummifera)*. This indicates how customary institutions of the local people shape their behavior towards effective utilization of forest resource and thereby conserve the forest.

On the other hand, "permanent" Oromo residents in the study area do not extract timber from the forest. This is possible because they give priority to the other non- economic values of forest than of economic values. The other reason is they might not be aware of timber

production. One of my informant reported that 'timber' production is a recent phenomena to their locality after some individuals came from other places, especially the Northerners and the *Shewas*. The other important culture of Gera people that contributed to forest conservation is that they never chop down trees for charcoal burning. As it is well known, charcoal is the basic domestic fuel for the people of Ethiopia. However, charcoal burning practice was minimal in the study area.

Gera people, however, use either self fallen trees or dead woods as firewood for the purpose of domestic fuel. They also occasionally collect dead woods and sell them in the nearby town, *Chira,* as fuel wood although this happens seldom. This selective approach to the collection of fuel wood in the area also contributed positively to the conservation of forest. As women primarily engage in the practice of fuel wood gathering, they are well aware of not to cut down live trees for the purpose of fuel wood. Moreover, the practice of cutting trees for house construction and some other household furniture remain the duties of males. However, they were wise enough to choose among trees species appropriate for house construction. Some tree species were never cut down for the purpose of construction or households furniture as they have other more important functions in that specific area.

Fig.4.1 Women collecting dead wood for firewood from the natural forest

This cautious utilization and conservation of forest resources has been historically and culturally rooted in the traditional institutions developed over generations by the local people. The intimacy of human beings and natural resources is not new for African people in general and Oromo people in particular. Oromo views toward natural environment have been considered valuable. Their valuable local knowledge of resources like forest for sustainable development and management seems an exemplary to others. For its soundness, the relative

high forest area existing in Oromiya constituting 63% (WBIPP 2004) of the total forest area in the country, which made first out of total regional states, seems evidence. Currently, the remnants of forests in the country are found in areas where customary institutions and knowledge are relatively in practice although 'modern' economic oriented systems have been weakening those traditional natural resources management institutions.

Despite such constraints, local people have developed the tradition of natural resource management systems because they have close interaction with forest for a long period of time. Gera people too have traditional leadership setups such as *Abbaa Lagaas* that are responsible for regulating natural resources and other socio-economic concerns. Violations of the regulations of forest conservation existed for generation results in different social sanctions. Since such social sanctions alienate the violator from any social organization, local people obey the traditional systems of resource utilization.

On top of this, in traditional systems of natural resource conservation, local government authorities have been using the traditional leader's social capital for execution of state programs and policies. For instance, in my research site, *Ganji-Caallaa Gandaa* administration, there are three *abbaa Lagas* each at their respective three zones: *Caallaa*, *Guree Ganjii* and *Warwarii*. Each *abba Lagas* at their respective zone has dual purposes. First they represent traditional leadership system of the local people. Second, they have manipulative functions for the execution of state programs and policies. The government authorities at local level do this for they know the acceptability of this traditional leadership among the local communities.

Although cooperating with local government authorities on the conservation of natural resources (forest) seems encouraging, the strength and power of customary leadership is being eroded. The social sanction enforced by traditional institution, *Abbaa Lagaa*, on an individual who do not comply with it can be reversed by government authorities, but the reverse is impossible. So, this kind of power imbalance finally, with no doubt, leads to the collapse of traditional system, and replace totally by state institutions.

To sum up, the vitality of customary institutions in natural resource management (forest) was apparent as it is indicated in this paper. Local people were well aware about importance of

forest resources that have cultural, material and spiritual significance for them. Today, it seems clear that the relative abundant forest area in the country is found in areas where remnants of traditional institutions have still existed although they have been under the threats of "modern" intervention. Ninety five percent of high forest areas are found in Oromiya, SNNPE and Gambela regional states (WBISPP 2004) where cultural institutions are still relatively strong compared to other parts of the country. These regions have well developed traditional systems of natural resource management as the people of these regions have close interaction with their natural resources.

In the study area, traditional social obligations were more respected by the people than the institutions created and enforced by the government. But, modern protectionists in forest conservation poorly understand the valuable knowledge of local people about forest management. However, customary resource management systems often developed over time through a process of cultural learning and adaptation seems successful in generating appropriate local institutions for sustainable forest management.

4.2.2 Local Government as Stakeholder in Forest Management

Institutions of government are usually considered as formal institutions regardless of their levels of operations and organizations. In other words, whether government organizations are established at local, regional or federal (central) level, the rules created for natural resources management remain formal. Hence, under this topic I confine my discussion to local government institutions as stakeholders in forest management in Gera district. There is no doubt that thorough knowledge and analysis are needed about current and potential roles of forests, stakeholder perspectives and expectations, as well as other sectors' development strategies and their impact on forests. However, analysis of other sectors' development strategies is beyond the scope of this thesis. Prior to discussing local government stakeholders, it seem reasonable to highlight the definitions of Stakeholder, participation and partnership(based on FAO 2006) as it may make easier to understand forest management stakeholders for the readers.

Stakeholder: stakeholders in forestry are all those who depend on, or benefit from, the use of forest resources, or who decide on, control or regulate access to forest. Stakeholders may participate in forest management in various ways: either directly, or indirectly, actively or passively, in supporting or opposing roles. They may be involved in forest management either as laborers', as recognized users of defined forest products, as managers or as forest owners.

Participation: Participation is a process whereby stakeholders (concerned individuals, groups and organizations) are consulted about, and become actively involved, in a project or forest management program. The current concept of participation recognizes that forests are vital not only for their owners, professional foresters or public administrators in the forest sector, but also for a broad range of groups/individuals and for society as a whole. In short, participation helps guarantee that decisions are taken in a transparent manner and are carried frontward by all stakeholders. Competition between stakeholders can be rationalized through negotiation and consensus building.

Partnership: Partnership, in the National forestry program context, means bringing stakeholders together to implement multiparty (joint) activities. Partners may cooperate to develop strategies or projects, implement measures (e.g. forest management), or conduct monitoring and evaluation activities. Partnerships may exist at international level, national level (ministries, government agencies, donors, NGOs, private sector, lobby groups), the decentralized level (regional authorities, forest and other sector agencies, projects, NGOs, lobby groups, private sector) and the local level (local authorities, forest and other sector agencies, forest owners, traditional communities, NGOs, community-based organizations, the private sector, state enterprises).

4.2.2.1 Jimma Forest Enterprise (State Enterprise)

Oromiya Regional State Forest Enterprise Supervising Agency is one of the stakeholders responsible for forest resources management in Oromiya Regional State after it was launched in 2007 based on proclamation 84/1999 article 3(1). The organizational structure of the agency

starts from Oromiya Administrative Council, Board (chaired by Oromiya administrative council President), Agency, Enterprise, Area office (team or satellite office unit) and Guard in hierarchy from center to local level. For each of these structures, there are assigned roles and responsibility, and they have their own detail structural organizations and objectives to achieve. Under this administrative structure of forests, thirty eight (38) national priorities forest areas found in Oromiya Regional State (EFAP 1994) are clustered into eight state forest enterprises of concession areas being governed under Orimiya Forest and Wild life Agency based on the criteria of geographical proximity, available resources bases, and administrative boundaries. They include; *Finfinne*, *Arsi*, *Wollega*, *Jimma*, *Ilu Abba Boora*, *Borana and Guji*, *Bale*, and *Hararge* Forest Enterprises. Of these enterprises, JFE is the focus of this part as others are not in the scope of my study area. Hence, Concession area, here, refers to a forest land entrusted to the forest enterprise with the right to manage on sustainable base.

Jimma Forest Enterprise (state enterprise) is directly accountable to Oromiya Forest and Wild Life Agency which is in turn accountable to Oromiya President (Board). The enterprise is situated in Jimma City and has three main departments. They are forest development department, supportive services department and utilization and processing department that are accountable to Jimma Forest Enterprise manager. These departments are also divided into different sections. Forest development department can be sub-categorized into two: forest development and protection section and community outreach section; a supportive service has four sections: administrative services, planning and programming services, financial services and marketing, and sale services sections; and utilization and processing department has two sections: utilization and protection and maintenance workshop. Jimma Forest Enterprise has six forest areas offices. The forest names and their respective *Aanaa* (district) include: *Belete-Gera* in Gera and Shabe *Sombo*, *Babiyya Fola* in Kersa and Limmu Kosa, *Abbalti Gibe* in Sokorru, *Tiro Botor Bachoo* in Tiro, *Sisima Kedo* in Dedo, and *Sigmo Setama* in Sigimo,Setama and Gomma. These forest area offices are also accountable to Jimma Forest Enterprise manager.

Generally speaking, these three departments can be put into two major categories based on the duties and responsibilities assigned to them. They are operational department that

encompasses forest development department and utilization and processing departments; and supporting services that involve planning, audit, administration, finance and marketing and sales services.

The major objective of the enterprise is to ensure protection, development and sustainable use of natural resources in the forest lands governed under the enterprise. It also ensures sustainable conservation and administration of wildlife in the forest. Besides, making substantial contribution in the livelihood development of the local community around the forest is also one of the objectives of the enterprise.

The forest enterprise has the following authorities and responsibility according to proclamation 91/1999:

- It develops and protects the resource in the given forest area.
- Ensures the provision of forest products for construction, fuel wood, poles, timber etc.
- Preparation of forest administration plan by the help of agency and implements the plan after the agency approved.
- Provision of technical support for the farmers around the forest area so as to help to have their own forest.
- Facilitate conditions that enable the community to use non-timber forest products such as wild coffee, medicinal plants and apiculture to contribute to the improvement of their livelihood.
- Increasing revenues (income) that will be obtained from forest products through producing office and home furniture's, paper, etc.
- Utilization of income from sale of forest product for the development of socio-economic conditions of local people.

Considering Jimma Forest Enterprise from the point of view of authorities and responsibility given above, the administration approach is purely top-down approach when nowadays such approach to resource management has been proved ineffective. Satellite (area forest office) of

JFE at Gera district has no authority of decision making, and a forest expert at Gera district of Belete-Gera forest priority area reflects his feeling about the centrality of the enterprise as follow:

> *The forest is here. We are here to protect, develop and conserve the forest. But we have no authority to make decision on any problem created here. Decision-making is expected from and made at Jmma Forest Enterprise (zonal level). We even have no seal (chaappaa) to write legal letters to the concerned body. Even the manager at the Jimma himself awaits the agency (regional level) for decision making. So, this is the major problem we are facing. Now, our staying here is meaningless.*

Moreover, local people of the study area have been dependent on Gera forest for their livelihoods, and therefore they have strong historical and cultural attachment with Gera forest. However, cultural perceptions and understandings of local people about their forest were overlooked. All the institutions (rules) of forest management are created the way it addresses the national material need at the expense of the poor local people. This has created problems in forest management and provoked conflict between government and local forest users.

The role of local people in forest conservation is ignored as if guards alone protect the forest. But guards alone never protect the forest from encroachers without the help and contribution of local people. Besides, some of my key informants including district officials have the fear that state enterprise may rather lead to deforestation than sustainable conservation of forest. They explain that deforestation by local people has increased after the forest has been given to state enterprise (JFE) despite the increment of forest area in the last decade in the research site.

However, before the forest became under control of state enterprise (JFE), local people in the study area have deep rooted historical relations with their forest and forest resources. As I have mentioned it, no matter how different government regimes have declared forest to be the property of state, local people felt that they were the owners of the resources. For that matter, local people and local government body have co-operated with each other in protecting the forest until the recent time. According to the perception of key informants, the attempts of

government to protect the forest have been just for the benefit of the local people. They are well aware of the ecological value of forests for friendly and healthy environment. For this reason, they hardly bother about its ownership right as far as the intension of government was to conserve and protect natural forest on sustainable base. However, they do not want to lose any benefits they have been obtaining from the forest. Some informants suggest that "by the name it should be state property", but "in reality the property belongs to us who have conserved it until now".

In its management too, the local people want to manage the forest in cooperation with the government authorities at local level. They believe government alone can never keep the forest in sustainable manner. Consistent rule enforcement by members of a user group necessarily produce good out comes in forest management (Gibson, Williams, Ostrom, 2005).The guards of forest, for instance, never control all the forest for they cannot cover large areas of the forest. As key informants pinpointed, almost everyone, the permanent residents in the study area have got blocks of forest land. In these plots of natural forest land, however, they never cut down trees without the permission from local authorities. But they have use rights such as collection of natural coffee beans, keeping beehives in the forest and using dead trees as fire wood for domestic consumption. These activities support livelihoods of local people supplementing their agricultural products. These benefits of forest resources made Gera forest exists until now, and plots of forest in the hands of individuals have not been completely turned into farmland.

4.2.2.2 State Enterprise (JFE) and Forest Boundary Demarcation

Forest boundaries and access rights are of tremendous importance to the communities of the study area. Indeed, boundary issue is the great problem as it may provoke conflict between local government authorities and the local communities. Boundary demarcation of Gera forest has been carried out at least four times: two times during Derg regime and two times during current government as local officials and local forest users confirmed.

During Derg regime, the boundary was simply marked by the forest guards or forest guards and foresters. The voice of local people was far from being heard. I find an elder who was the

Gandaa chairman that time and now a sub-local community leader entitled "*Abba Laga*". He confirmed that local people did not participate in state forest boundary marking fully, but chairperson was with the foresters and forest guards during creation of the boundary. He said, "Since the *kebele* representative, chairperson, was involved in the demarcation, it is difficult to say that community did not participate totally".

Indeed the chairperson seems to represent the local people, but during such boundary issue discussion should have been carried out with the local people although the chairman represents them. The Derg regime demarcated the forest area without the knowledge of local communities.

Ignoring the voice of resource users led to another negative consequence which was observed during the collapse of military regime and throughout transitional period of EPRDF. As many literature of natural resource management in Ethiopia indicate, deforestation in the country took the highest rate in that moment. Gera forest is not an exception in this regard. Much of the forest area was cleared and turned into agricultural land by local people. Since the Derg government completely alienated the local people from the resource they were using, they felt that the coming government, too would follow the same principle. During that time, it was not only the residents of the area who attacked the forest resources, but also others who came from neighboring areas and settled in the forest. This depicts that exclusion of impoverished people from a potential means of survival, sometimes with a military force, is unjust and ineffective, and finally could backfire and provoke encroachment into protected boundaries and poaching of conserved resources. People destroyed the forest for cultivation of food crops and for the extraction of timber products. This is the adverse effect of protectionist approach where local resource users were completely excluded from the right of ownership, management and monitoring the forest resources.

Under the current government, however, attention has been given to both natural resource conservation and the right of local people to use the resource at least in the public discourses. With decentralization framework, the slogan of the 21st century administration in the world, Ethiopian government promoted community involvement in development activities including natural resource management. This approach is, however, not unique to Ethiopia. Almost all African countries, under the influence of powerful developed countries have adopted

community-based approach in promoting their development. The lessons learnt from the Derg regime and the external global influences combined together made the current Ethiopian government appreciate the participation of local communities in natural resource conservation. This is possible by empowering the local people to strengthen their capacity to decision making on the issue of natural resources management.

In the study area, recently, participatory forest management has been undergoing since 2003. This participatory management had been implemented by Agricultural and Rural Development Office (ARDO) at local level with the bilateral organization of Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA) until the forest was given to Jimma Forest Enterprise. In this approach, the problems related to boundary, access, use right, sanctions have been settled with complete involvement of local people. "*WaBuB*" Approach was launched in 2003 with complete participation of forest users in which each individual member feels accountable to conserve the forest. The details of this approach would be presented in 4.3 sub-title of this chapter.

More recently, however, Oromiya Regional State has come up with another approach to forest management with which both local communities and other stakeholders were not happy. The approach totally converted natural forest in the priority area into "State Forest Enterprise". Now, the forest in the study area is governed by "Jimma State Forest Enterprise" and Belete Gera forest is one of the forests in concession area of "Jimma forest enterprise". As soon as the forest was handed to "Jimma State Forest Enterprise", the Enterprise with its experts at Gera district, Gera District Land Administration and Environmental Protection, Policemen from the district, representative from the District Administration, respective *Gandaa Administrations* chairpersons and community representatives have created new boundary.

In the process of boundary demarcation, local people complained that the "State Enterprise" took over their farmland. They asserted that the government demarcated their land which was not the forest area into the forest territory. Local people perceive forest as "the area covered with dense trees that are never cut down, cleared and farmed." In the local term, they called forest as "*Baddaa Daggalaa*". So marking nom-forested area as the forest area doesn't give any sense for the local people. One of my informants who participated in boundary

demarcation complained about unfairness of those stakeholders participated in boundary demarcation process as the follows:

> *They simply categorized farmers' farmland as forest area, which is in fact not forest area. I told them that the area is already recognized by ARDO and JICA as farmland. But they intimidated me saying, "shut up, otherwise you will be put in jail". I kept quiet as they have gun and power to do whatever they want.*

According to the perception of local people, the intention of the government was to expand the forest area by planting trees on their own farm lands. This activity may adversely affect the local people in different ways. First, the "State Enterprise" prohibits farmers from using the forest area for grazing their cattle. Second, the Enterprise did not consider the perception of local people regarding the boundary between farmland and forestland. Finally, the latter demarcation of boundary created problem on the local farmers' farmland. These conditions have negatively affected the sustainability of forest management already started by the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency since 2003.

4.2.2.3 District Agriculture and Rural Development Office (ARDO)

Oromiya Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau has been vested with the responsibility of carrying out integrated watershed management and conservation measures, all promotion activities and studies related to agricultural development, disaster prevention activities, providing agricultural extension services, promoting the establishment of farmers' cooperatives and forestry and wildlife development and conservation.

Accordingly, Oromiya Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau has three technical main sub-sectors. They include; agricultural development, input supplies promotion and marketing development, and natural resources development and rural land administration sub-sectors. At the regional level, Forestry and wildlife Development and Conservation Department is one of the technical departments integrated into the Natural Resources Development and Rural Land Administration sub-sector of OBARD. The forest and wildlife development and conservation department can be divided into two teams; Forest Development and Conservation, and Wildlife Development and Conservation teams. This department with its two technical teams

has the responsibility for development and protection of forest and wildlife. The structural set ups of district ARDO is relatively similar to the organizational structures of Oromiya Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau. Hence, the same organizational structures appear at Zonal and District (*Aanaa*) levels.

Hence, district ARDO had been the authorized governmental organization to carry out the responsibility of forest management (forest protection activities, seedling production and planting, controlling illegal encroachment, etc.) in collaboration with other stakeholders like district administration, *Ganda*/village administration and local community until 2007 when Gera forest was totally transferred to JFE as responsible body representing the government. After the forest has been given to Jimma State Forest Enterprise, district ARDO has no responsibility to protect and contribute to state forest (Gera forest). However, Natural Resources Development and Conservation team still remains under Forestry and Wildlife Development and Conservation Department with the responsibility of giving forest extension services, regulatory role, park management and wildlife development outsides of the state forest such as farmers' farmland and farmers' homestead areas. Excluding district ARDO from the responsibility of managing state forest (Gera forest) has created power vacuum and deforestation has relatively increased since then according to the views of ARDO officials, development agents, and forest experts of JFE at Gera office and *Ganda*/village administrator of *Ganji-Caalla*.

As sustainable forest management cannot be achieved through the involvement of a single party, establishment of partnership with different stakeholders (local community, different government sectors, etc.) seems indispensable. The role of district ARDO is great as its personnel like development agents have day to day activities thereby having more advantage to work with local community than any other forest experts.

4.2.2.4 Local Government Administration

The administrative structures of Gera can be understood by classifying it into two major periods: before 1974 and after 1974 revolution. Before the down fall of the feudal system, the administrative structure of Gera was basically similar. The established organizational structure of administration during that period had taken the form of their hierarchy that put the *Mootii*

(king) at the top and domains of his councils *Abba Qoroo* and *Abba Gandas(Ciqaa)* at its lowest level. The kingdom of Gera was divided into 12 small districts named *Qoros*. These *Qoros* were administered by governors known as *Abbaa Qoroo*. The smaller social class of individuals who were government appointed officials responsible for the collection of taxes from the land owners and the peasants were called *Abbaa Gandas*. According to the information from elders of *Ganji-Caalla* administration, the role of government appointed administrator of that era was limited to tax collection and political issues that had defended the government rather than giving attention to natural resources (forest) conservation.

After 1974 revolution, the Derg government restructured the administration of Gera. The Derg also put Woreda administration at the top and Peasant Associations at the lowest administrative units for running government appointed activities at land level. The current administration does not have mjor difference in the structural organizations of district administration except replacing Peasant Associations with *Gandaa* Administrations. But the difference may be positioned on the ways of implementing government programs, strategies and policies in general. I do not want to go further into the discussion of these differences as it is beyond the scope of my thesis.

Currently, Gera Administration Council Office is the supreme government institution at district level under the present ruling party of Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) in Oromia Regional State. The district has 29 rural *Ganda* Administrations and one urban *Ganda* Administration (*Ciraa*), and each rural *gandaa* is divided into three zones (*abbaa lagaa*) and each zone again is divided into *garewwan misoomaa* (development teams) as it was described in Chapter three of this thesis. The mandate of district Administrator has been to regulate and supervise all the government sectors operating in the district. Hence, district ARDO, Educational Office, Health Office; *Gandaa* Administrations etc are all accountable to District Administration.

As a consequence, the role of local government administration in the study area for sustainable forest management is very important. When Gera forest management was the responsibility of district ARDO, District Administration was responsible for budget allocation and mobilizing local people by passing order to its lowest administration unit (*gandaa* level) whenever participation of local people was required in the issues of forest management. Besides, the

district administration was involving in conflict resolution when conflict happened among interested individuals or groups on boundary issues or forest product utilization by forming Conflict Resolution Committee.

Moreover, the importance of local administration (district and/or *gandaa*/village) in forest management and governance is valuable as the individuals (personnel) of these administrations are familiar with the customary knowledge, institutions and subsistence mechanisms of the local people because they are primarily from the culture of that specific area. During my field research, I witnessed, for instance, chairperson (*bulchaa*) of *Ganji-Caallaa* Administration is the elder son of *Abbaa lagaa* of Caallaa area of the same *Gandaa* Administration. Hence, local customary institutions of that specific area have places in *Ganji-Caallaa Gandaa* Administration, and they respect and co-operate with one another on the issues of natural resources conservation, conflict resolution and other social, political and economic problems. From this position, many key informants in the research site recommended the joint management of forest between government and local forest user groups. On the contrary, the Jimma State Forest Enterprise (JFE) has little relations with local government administrations as well as local customary institutions (*abbaa lagaa, shanee*) as the enterprise considers itself as an autonomous institution. The forest area office (satellite area) is directly accountable to JFE manger at Jimma, which is about 93 km away from Gera district. This contradicted not only with the Participatory Forest Management approach already launched in the study area by Japan International cooperation Agency (JICA) in partnership with district ARDO and Local Community (*WaBuB*) but also it placed the continuity of sustainable forest management in dilemma.

4.3 Local Community and Forest Management

Many scholars argue that governments are no longer viewed as the sole or even primary stewards of forest resource management. Increasingly policies and programs are crafted with the intent of enlisting local people as partners in forest land management. This reflects past failures of state management in addition to a growing sense that the local people can be both empowered and effective as resource stewards.

This is attributed to the fact that forest resources are crucial in supporting the life of the poor local people. As frequently articulated by many scholars, forests provide not only vital environmental or ecological services but also are crucial for rural livelihoods. Besides, forests serve as income generation from non-timber products, logging, and derivative processes. Usually "natural resource" is understood as nature constitutes a material or economic resource. However, given the notion of 'sustainable development' embraces more than simply economic growth, it is reasonable to allow the concept of 'natural resource' to cover more than the material and economic goods which nature supplies (Stenmark 2002). So, it seems reasonable to view "natural resource" as everything which human beings can make use of nature to satisfy their needs. This concept incorporates the fact that natural resource is not simply economic resource but also cultural and historical resource, an aesthetic resource and recreational resources. Forest resource which is part and parcel of natural resources can be discerned in similar way. In broader sense, environmental management goal needs to consider this view of resource use and satisfaction of needs. That is why some environmental policy documents are basically based on conservationist. Stenmark (2002:26) states that conservationists wish to demonstrate the value of the products nature as a human resource but stress that these resources have been exploited in a far too short-sighted and inefficient way. What is needed instead is well-considered and carefully planned management of nature so that the resource will last longer and be used more efficiently. From this points of view, forest management is concerned with extracting from the forest those resources needed by human beings without destroying or impoverishing them.

This sustainable utilization and conservation of forest resource, however, cannot be realized if local people residing near or in the forest are disregarded in its management. That is why community involvement in development activities in general and sustainable forest management in particular has been advocated since the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, appropriate strategies that help conserve forest on the one hand and fair and justice services on the other needs to be provided to the people living with the forest.

Forest has been perceived as the base of their life by local people. So, in such environment, excluding the people from the forest use means not only unfair but also makes sustainability of forest management impossible. Facilitating situations, the way these people live together with

the resource in sustainable manner, is not only an alternative but also a mandatory. As local people, who have been the beneficiaries of Belete-Gera forest, are well aware of forest values, the role of those communities in sustainable forest management is believed to be vital. Gera forest, part of Belete–Gera regional forest priority area in Jimma Zone of Oromiya National Regional State, is one of the last remaining areas of broad–leaf moist forest in the region. Local people have been culturally collecting coffee, and spices from the forest, with use rights held on individual plot basis. This practice has been continued until recent time under the customary system of forest land tenure regardless of changes in the legal status of the forest laws regarding its use. This long generational experience made the local people important to participate in forest management. As a consequence, Oromiya Regional Government requested Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for assistance in the establishment of participatory forest management in the study area, and the project was launched in 2003 using 'WaBuB' approach.

4.3.1 WaBuB Approach

WaBuB is an abbreviation for "*Waldaa Bulchiinsa Bosonaa* ", in the local language, *Afan Oromo*. This is literally translated as "Forest Management Association". The name was originally crafted by the community who established the first *WaBuB*. *WaBuB* has been used as an area Administrative Unit, which overlaps with the administrative boundary of village or sub-village or group of sub-villages. A *WaBuB* becomes effective once a Forest Management Agreement (FMA) is signed between chairperson of the *WaBuB* Executive Committee and the Oromiya Agriculture and Rural Development Bureau (OARDB). The members of the *WaBuB* were thereby granted an exclusive right to use forest products within the demarcated forest area, defined in the Forest Management Agreement. In this context, FMA is a legally binding contract between a defined community of forest users and government stakeholders. JICA's experts give technical and advisory assistance in this regard.

The contract explicitly states roles and responsibilities of both parties in promoting sustainable management of forest resources. Besides, the *WaBuB* members and the government representatives periodically review the status of forest and evaluate the effectiveness of FMA.

4.3.1.1 What is Unique about *WaBuB* Approach?

The project assumes that forest management agreement could not be practical and realized without bringing economic benefit to forest users from sustainable forest management. Channeling opportunities to generate income for the communities is crucial motivation to protect their forest resources assets. Considering its indispensability in sustainable forest management, Belete-Gera PFMP, therefore, has tried to achieve forest conservation not only by establishing *WaBuB* in the target area but also by providing opportunities to improve livelihoods. The combination of *WaBuB* establishment with livelihood improvement program is the *WaBuB* approach in this context.

As the project coordinator of Belete Gera PFMP states, the process of participatory forest management and conservation of forest resources is an endless effort. The role and capacity of Belete Gera PFMP as well as that of the governments are limited. That is why the project makes its vital center the *local communities*, who have culturally good experience of forest conservation, by the establishment of *WaBuB approach*. The project first focused on the creation of *WaBuB* as a basic foundation, and then has attempted to connect forest users to economic development by linking conservation of forest with the improvements in their livelihoods.

According to the projects coordinator, *WaBuB* approach has two phases: *WaBuB* establishment and harnessing *WaBuB* to economic development. The main purpose of the first phase was to institutionalize *WaBuB* and conclude Provisional Forest Management Agreement (P-FMA) with communities of forest users. It was assumed that *WaBuB* and PFMA served as the basic foundation of an organization which has agreed to share roles and responsibilities in working together with the government bodies towards sustainable participatory forest management. The project also divided the first phase into two parts: setting up *WaBuB* and making *WaBuB* at work. The process of setting up *WaBuB* started with consensus building among stakeholders including the local community. Once the target community (usually sub-village) agreed to establish a *WaBuB*, the sub-village formed a *WaBuB* Facilitation Committee (WFC). After series of meetings, negotiations and agreements on the principles of

participatory forest management, the forest users represented by the *WaBuB* Facilitation Committee (WFC) and Regional Government agreed on a draft PFMA.

At the first *WaBuB* assembly, where all registered members were supposed to attend, the contents of the draft were discussed. Depending upon the approval of the draft PFMA at the assembly, the WFC would be dissolved and the community members elected a *WaBuB* Executive Committee. Then the executive committee and the government represented by district Agricultural and Rural Development Office (now Jimma Forest Enterprise) concluded the PFMA. Once the PFMA was concluded, the registered forest users were legally recognized by the Regional Government. Part two of phase one deals with the activities of preparing *WaBuB* map which show indicated land use system of all registered members, management plan and a subsidiary by-law detailing roles and responsibilities of the *WaBuB* members.

The second phase of WaBuB approach was concerned with harnessing *WaBuB* to economic development. Once the P-FMA was signed, and *WaBuB* was founded in a community of forest users, the *WaBuB* would be promoted to become an economic entity by engaging in value adding activities of forest products. It was also envisaged that *WaBuB* would be converted into cooperatives and a strategic business partnership with the private sector and civilian society. The project believed that sustainable participatory forest management and forest conservation would be strengthened with the acquisition of international organic coffee certificates and fair trade certificates. These would be to obtain incentives against unsustainable forest management. Furthermore, activities to improve agricultural out puts had been carried out at each *WaBuB* by testing out several options. Setting rules of grazing/fattening livestock and Farmers' Field Training on techniques of improving agricultural production were also under consideration.

To sum up, *WaBuB* approach launched by Balate-Gera PFMP had been built on three equally important and interdependent elements. They are:

1. Development of self-regulatory framework to promote sustainable forest management.
2. Enhancement of income generation and livelihoods.
3. Development of local organizational capacity.

These three pillars were to be considered and pursued together in the Belete-Gera PFMP. Considering these three elements together might make the project implementation complex, but a narrow perspective of the establishment of *WaBuB* seems insufficient in bringing about sustainable forest management. To be successful, the *WaBuB* approach demands a multi-sectoral approach that takes into account not only building policy and institutional frame work for the conservation of the forest, but also enhancing the livelihoods and organizational capacity of people who use the Belete-Gera Forest.

4.3.1.2 Membership and Organizational Structure of WaBuB

As common property theoreticians such as Ostrom(1990) suggests, clearly defined boundary both in terms of members of users and the resources is very crucial in sustainable forest management. Membership is, therefore, one of the criteria required in the management of forest resources. To become the members of *WaBuB*, the forest users should have complete willingness to be registered to continue to live in and/or utilize forest products as per agreement; the members consisted of the heads of households (*abbaawarraas*) that have had customary use right of plots of forest land. Membership of the forest user group was at homestead level, and could be transferred by inheritance provided that the member completely stopped being member of the *WaBuB* and two thirds of the *WaBuB* members approved the membership. Concerning its organization, *WaBuB* has executive committee comprised of at least nine core members namely head, deputy head, secretary, cashier and five executive members that were selected from among members themselves. *WaBuB* executive committee has the following roles to play.

- Issue permission for its members for tree cutting in the forest.
- Report on the forest use including the status of tree cutting in natural forest to district ARDO (but now to Jimma Forest Enterprise) at least annually and upon request.
- Conduct annual monitoring in conjunction with district ARDO, now with Jimma Forest Enterprise
- Manage the conflict among the members over the use of forest land.
- Convene *WaBuB* assembly when need arises.

Replacement of the leadership as well as changes in membership was immediately communicated to district Agriculture and Rural Development Office (ARDO) before two years (but currently to Jimma Forest Enterprise) at district level. After a *WaBuB* came into agreement with the government, it received legal recognition as responsible institution. Just as any association, for instance, *WaBuB Caallaa* can sue and be sued.

4.3.1.3 Rights and Responsibilities of WaBuB

The local forest users organized under *WaBuB* had different rights as per agreement with district ARDO, now with Jimma Forest Enterprise (JFE). For example, the *WaBuB* members had the right to let its members and their dependents stay in the existing sub-village. Every household (*abbaawarraa*) was allowed to possess farm plots existing at the time of the agreement without future expansion of it. Collection and use of forest products such as coffee, honey, spice, and medicinal plants were recognized rights of *WaBuB* members based on the existing customary institutional system. However, collection of old and self-fallen trees, cutting of all kinds of trees need for domestic construction by the residents were allowed upon the permission of *WaBuB* executive committee. Hanging of traditional beehives, replacement of old and broken beehives with new ones were allowed without restriction for the members. They had also the right to collect farm equipments such as handle of hoe and axe and from the forest land for their own subsistence.

Moreover, *WaBuB* members were allowed to continue existing customary coffee management practices such as cutting climbers, stumping old coffee and encouraging natural regeneration. However, thinning for shade control was permitted on controlled basis and was done upon the permission of *WaBuB* forest patrolling committee. They had also exclusive right to sell their coffee and honey on free market without any interference.

WaBuB members, on the other hand, had other duties and responsibilities to be carried out. They were responsible to restrict the expansion of settlements. This is to mean that *WaBuB* members restricted the expansion of homestead into the forest, forest coffee and farm land. It was forbidden to expand homestead exceeding the existing homestead areas. Similarly, expanding farm land into forest land was also not allowed.

WaBuB members were also responsible to maintain forest condition and encourage natural forest regeneration. The forest land under the guardianship of *WaBuB* was supposed to be maintained at its initial condition, and regeneration of preferred species had to be encouraged by the group members. Besides, *WaBuB* members were collectively responsible for improper forest use, for example, destructive slashing of preferred species by disobedient members and their dependents. They have also the mandate to prevent practices that hinder tree growth such as debarking, burning out of trunks, forest fire, girdling and indiscriminate tree felling. Whenever they wanted to make beehive from *Olea Welwitschii* (Beya), *Croton Macrostachyus* (makkanniisa) and *polyscias ferruginea* (kariyoo), they could fell and use it. Selling of woody forest products such as timber, construction materials and firewood were not allowed. They had the responsibility to conduct jointly periodic monitoring of forest condition and sustainable forest use with district ARDO/JFE.

4.3.1.4 Monitoring and Conflict Resolution

Monitoring of some indicators has been carried out by district ARDO together with the representatives of the *WaBuB* to examine the impacts of the forest conservation activities in forest land of *Caallaa*, a sub-village of *Ganji-Caallaa Gandaa* Adminstration. The following indicators were used for monitoring the impacts of forest conservation.

a. The number of homestead that was registered prior to concluding the agreement.
b. . The size of farm land was monitored every year.
c. Inspection and observation of debarked trees in forest land and forest coffee has been carried out annually.
d. Inspection and observation of new tree stump and girdled tree has been carried out in order to monitor tree felling and girdling done without permission of executive committee or forest patrolling committee of *WaBuB*.
e. The border between natural forest and coffee forest area were registered and monitored.

Depending on the monitoring indicators illustrated above, violation of the agreement by the member might be seen either at district court or fine penalty be imposed depending on the

intensity of the case. For example, increase in size of farm land, increase in the homestead area, debarking could be brought the court case. Besides, destructive practices such as burning out trunks, forest fire, girdling and indiscriminate tree felling shall not be carried out and doing this result in court case regardless of the number of incidents

4.4. Ownership Right, Land Tenure and Forest Management

Having a clear sense of ownership right on a given resource matters much in careful utilization and sustainable management of natural resources, particularly forests. Among other things, ownership rights and land tenure has provoked a lot of arguments on resource allocation, utilization and management especially after the publication of Hardin's article on "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968). As many scholars have frequently pinpointed, the misinterpretation of complex and dynamic tenure rights for "open access" and perceiving individuals and local communities as 'resource degraders' led Hardin to the advocacy for private and/or state property rights in land and natural resource conservation (Lund, 1994). Influenced by this dogma, African governments including Ethiopia with their policy makers and policy advisors have accepted it as theoretical support for land privatization and statization (Tarekeng 2001:51).

On the other hand, the dominant view of alarming deforestation in which local communities were seen as destroyer has been challenged by academicians. Through careful diachronic research, particularly in West Africa, Fairhead and Leach (1996) have shown evidence of appropriate management of natural resource by farmers, and afforestation rather than deforestation. In the same fashion, Oromo communities have developed various landholding systems which evolved over generations. The permanent landholding system in the earliest time, "*qabiyyee*" (*abbaa lafaa*) was documented by (Tessema 1980, 1986: Tekaleng 1985). As Tessema(1980) states, the Oromo had developed *qabiyye* institutions to manage the speed of their great expansion to minimize rival claims on newly occupied territory and to avoid conflict that might arise among different clans. By employing this institution, they have practiced the recognition of ownership right for the first occupier of the land resource. This is true for the people in the study area, Gera district of Jimma zone. As key informants indicate, Oromo were the first permanent dwellers of Gera since the second half of sixteenth century

when they settled and started living in the area. Hence, each permanent Oromo residents in the study area have had blocks (plots) of forest lands inherited from their ancestors. Others who did not get chance to occupy first would get the land upon the willingness of the first occupier.

They also clearly identify their boundary and as a result conflict on the boundary in the forest among the forest users was very minimal. Moreover, although each of them owns plots of land in the forest, they perceived the forest to belong to all of them as a whole (communal). Each individual in the community was responsible to regulate encroachers who illegally destroy the forest. It seems that cultural ownership systems of the local communities made the forest occupy better position in the status of abundance.

Moreover, people in the study area believed that Gera forest is not natural forest rather it was planted first by their ancestors in response to drought, famine that once attacked the area. The seedlings of those trees were brought from other places such as *Limmu*, etc in reaction to such problems. This view made the local people develop strong perception of ownership rights on the forest. The perceptions of property right, in turn, made the local people feel responsible to conserve forest resources.

On the other hand, the tradition of landholding systems had been distracted at different times. It seems clear that after the subjugation of Oromo land by northerners, the practices of these institutions have been weakened or completely ceased in some areas. The adverse effect of Menelik's force imposed forms of tenure system represented by dominant–subordinate relationship between political authorities and the indigenous institutions (Hirpha 2006). Under this system, the emperor in power granted landholding rights to individuals often the ruling elites who provide services for the emperor. This tenure system was called *gult system* which was in practice during the emperors' era. Those who were endowed with *gult right* had the authority to collect taxes, tributes and undertook administrative roles. According to one of my informants who had given services to the local governor during Haile Sillassie era, Gera forest was in the hands of three individuals who were landlords. Of course, although it was in their hand as *gult right*, the first occupier pays taxes for using the forest land. In this case, they were considered as tenants on their own land.

The *gult system* of land tenure ended in 1975 when a revolutionary socialist regime took power. The new regime put land with its natural resource under state control. The event created a new management approach in the ownership and management of natural resources. The military government drew ambitious rural development programs in which it envisaged to bring a revolutionary transformation to old agrarian setting. In reflection of ideological propensity, the 1980 forestry proclamation fixed the forest property regimes at two: state and kebele forests (Melaku 2008). This system completely excluded the role of local people who perceive themselves as the owner of property.

In the post Derg period too, although there was a contrasting policy shift in economic, administrative and rural development direction, no meaningful change has been made in the property relation of land and natural resources. The 1995 constitution of the federal government (article 40) declared that the ownership of rural and urban land and all natural resources as being "exclusively vested in the state and in the peoples of Ethiopia" and "land is a common property of the nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange" (Melaku 2008).

The past Ethiopian governments including the present, therefore, made land and natural resource under the monopoly of state control. This in turn, affected the local people's perception towards its conservation and management, especially forests.

It seems that state property has not been considered as their own property by local people because they were excluded from the resource not only for ownership right but also they missed the use right fully the way they needed. This was observed during the transitional period of Ethiopian governments when the power vacuum created and deforestation took the highest rate. Gera forest, for instance, was affected by local people highly and much of the forest land turned into farmland during transitional periods in the early 1990s. This is due to the fact that there was no one around who felt ownership and protected it from any damage.

More important, although the local people in the study area have plots of lands in the forest, they have been denied exclusive ownership right and they have only use right or '*usufruct right*'. Until recently, the local people were positive about the use right they were granted by the government for various reasons. First, they believed that the government conserves forest

just for the sake of keeping ecological balance, and this benefits local people more than anyone else. Second, they perceived that if the forest is assumed to be the property of the government, illegal encroachments would be reduced. Moreover, they assumed that being the property of the state doesn't prohibit them from using the forest as far as conservation is for healthy environment. They also believed the government never excludes them from the forest resources as they had never been exclusively alienated from using the forest resources even during the emperors and military regimes. However, at present after the mandate of forest management has given to Jimma State Forest Enterprise (JFE), problems are being created as I discussed in 4.2.2.2 sub-section of this Chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAJOR THREATS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GERA FOREST

Nowadays, environmental problems are multifaceted and complex that require appropriate responses from all concerned bodies that may range from the local household levels of communities to the international communities. As it is apparent in public discourses of media all over the world, the consequences of environmental deterioration has been explicitly observed when natural phenomena are losing their natural state. Many scholars blame the rapid expansion of industrialization as a cause for it releases unlimited amount of gases that are unfriendly to the environment. This is usually the problem created by the developed countries who have unreserved intension in the conversion of natural resources into readymade human consumption products. Although it seems reasonable to make use of natural resources by human beings, it should not go beyond the capacity of nature to accommodate this function. Some Westerners usually give priority to the production of economic values of natural resources like forest disregarding its socio-cultural and ecological values. That is why they act upon nature and converted it into material products by which they seem enjoy when in fact not. For the mistakes occurred by the westerners, today, everybody on the world becomes the victims of the problem.

On the other hand, the traditions of western approach to natural resources management has been extending its domain into other countries especially African countries who values their natural resources not only for their economic benefits but also for the purpose that goes beyond that. This does not mean, however, that developing countries live always in harmony with natural resources like forests. The blame on local resource users for depletion of forest resources, for instance, may be partially true for they could destroy the forest for the purpose of agricultural land expansion. This action is, however, not without reason. This in turn, has been triggered by the external market demand in addition to supporting the livelihoods of those local people. Hence, in the attempt to endless development desires, expansion of farmland to increase agricultural yields by local residents and/or expanding industry in both developed and developing countries are inevitable in the course of global free market

economy. In this situation, how can one imagine economic development and sustainable natural resources go side by side without affecting one another? Although global market systems and its impact on the sustainability of common pool resources is not the central focus of this study, its impact on sustainable management of natural resources is explicitly observable both at national and local levels.

It is clear that many African countries were under the colony of European imperialism until the first half of 19th century with the exception of few countries. However, many of them got independent in the 1960s and started to govern their country by themselves. Despite their independence, few of African countries have stopped their dependence on foreign countries for economic support. Ethiopia is not exceptional in this context. Those who have economic power can impose everything they desire to benefit their nation more than anything else. That is why many development activities in African countries like Ethiopia depend on the Westerners as they donate money to carry out the projects. This all need to be understood how they affect all development activities including forest conservation at different levels, but this is very complex and difficult as well as beyond the scope of this research to discuss. In the following parts I discussed the current problems and major threats to Gera forest in the study area of this research.

5.1 Expansion of Investment and Road Construction

In the context of the study area, forest condition has been in a remarkable state and relatively abundant until recent time. The deforested and degraded forest condition has been reviving by the joint effort of local people and government development agents. I observed in the field, forests are regenerating and expanding toward the farmland and homestead of local people. Local people themselves also confirmed the improvement of forest density in the last decade. All the 44 household heads randomly selected for surveying in *Ganji-Caallaa Gandaa* have also the same perception. The main reasons for the improvement of the forest from local people's perception are; empowerment and awareness raising of the local people on the environmental values of forest given by development agents and other stakeholders, who helped the forest users, feel responsible to protect the forest. Besides, the forest is near to the administrative locus which makes supervision relatively easier. Since there have been

collaborative efforts between local governments and local community, the forest is in a better condition in the study area compared to other areas. Moreover, the characteristics of the forest itself contributed to its conservation as it has been endowed with natural coffee, spices and sweet flowering trees that attract honey bees. This feature in turn made the local forest users protect the forest for its sustainability in the future.

However, in more recent time, a great challenge for the forest resources users and forest condition has emerged in Gera district, particularly *Ganji-Caalla gandaa*. Plots of forest lands that had been in the hands of local residents were given to investors for coffee plantation. This investment activity in the area created not only the problem of biodiversity conservation of the forest, but also it evicted the local people from the plots of forest land which they have considered as their own property. The people perceived the land as their own property because they have got it from their ancestors who occupied that area before anyone else. They call it "*qabiyyee*" as I have mentioned it in Chapter four. One of the victims, who lost plots of forest land with more than 200 traditional beehives, and the *Abbaa Lagaa* of *Caallaa* area, expressed his feelings as follows;

> *We have protected and preserved this forest until now because we believe it is our property. By protecting the forest, we obtain many values. We keep our cattle in the forest during drought. Mineral water like Hora, preferable water by cattle, exists because we have forest. We obtain construction materials for fences and houses. Hidda(climber) for tying fences or houses are also available because we have forest. Above the forest tree we hung beehives and obtain honey. In the market we sell the honey and buy clothes, pay government tax, and buy other household utensils. On top of that, we also obtain firewood for household consumption. Coffee and spices are also found in our forest. We harvest twice a year based on rain fed agriculture when even one is difficult in other areas where there is no forest resources. Moreover, we obtain cultural medicines by which we heal ourselves from diseases. We know all these are the outcome of forest existence in our area. We lose all these advantage if we lose forest. So, how do we live in the future if the haves come and confiscate our property, what would be our fate? Why does the government do this? Why is it that the government takes our property and gives it to the investors?*

Since investment activities were very new to the local people, they bitterly opposed the expansion of investment in natural forest. Other informants too echoed the same feelings and they complained and begged for stopping the investment activities. Other stakeholders of forest management both at district and zonal levels expressed the illegality of the permission for investors in Gera natural forest. Currently, the forest has been under the authority of JFE representing the regional government. Experts at district level and JFE with JICA did not know how the natural forest was handed to investors. These stakeholders again complained about the situation but they couldn't reverse as they have no power to do so. Hence, only the district administrator knew the case, and he also suggested that the order has come from above, Federal (Regional) government. The *Aanaa* administration accepted it simply because it was the government order from Federal and/or Oromiya regional government.

It is clear that investment activity in proper sense is important in Gera as well as in the country as a whole. All the informants and other stakeholders shared this view of investment activity. But they assert that there were degraded lands that may be free of peasants and useful for coffee plantation for private investors rather than offering dense natural forest to them. Natural forest supports not only livelihoods of local people but also it is important for keeping ecological balance in the area.

Therefore, alienating local people from their plots of land resources for the purpose of investment needs considerations of people's relations to the forest based on research rather on political decision. However, it does not mean politics is not important in resource management. But, if political decision or any development issues need to be carried out in a sustainable way, research output should be consulted.

The situation contradicted with the notion of participatory forest management approach already established in the study area. In *WaBuB* approach, the use right of local people on forest resources has already been legalized at local level. It is, however, observed that both local forest users and government authorities have no power to reverse the decision imposed from above, the center. Had the local government organization and locally organized community have exclusive right on their resources, they would have changed the situation about which they are complaining. This clearly indicates that Ethiopian government still decides at the center and power delegation does not mean that the communities at local levels

are decision makers. The intervention of federal and regional government in the affairs of local community negatively affects the resource management.

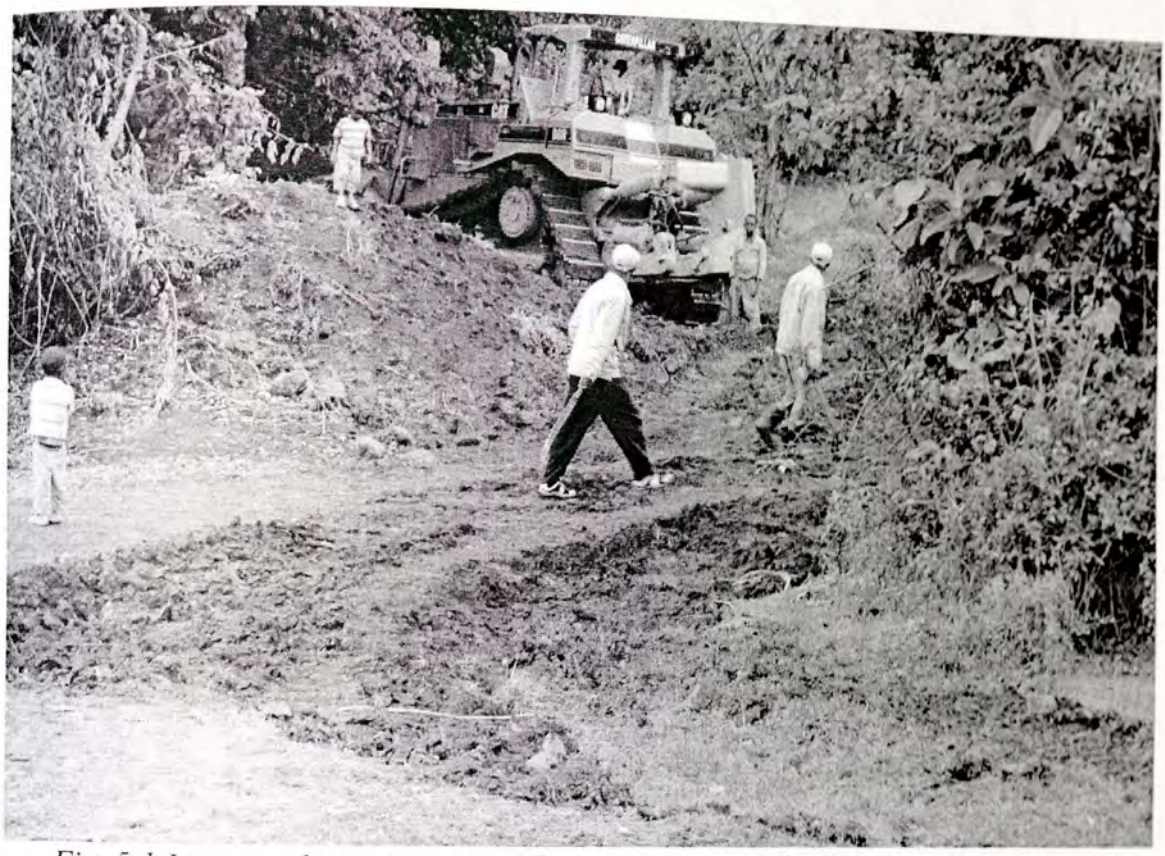

Fig. 5.1 Investors destroying natural forest with Dozer in Caallaa area

The other equally important problem of Gera forest was related to expansion of infrastructures like roads. It is clear that expanding development activities like construction of roads could cause deforestation if handled improperly. Currently, the road connecting the South Nation Nationalities and People of Ethiopia regional state (kafa Zone) to the center of Gera district has been under construction. This road has been constructed by Oromia regional government in the direction of southwest from Ciraa town to Charico, one of the *Gandas* in Gera district at the border with SNNPE, penetrating through the dense forest. This seems to affect both forest resources and the local forest users as the project does not consider its consequence. Moreover, it creates great opportunity to destroy the forest as individuals may start to settle along the road.

Fig.5.2 Road construction from Chira Town to Charico Ganda in Gera district

5.2 Institutional Instability of Forest Management

As many literature indicate, institutional instability also affects the reliability and effectiveness of forest management. After the Federal Government of Ethiopia decentralizes authority to Oromia Regional government to govern forest priority areas in Oromiya, many institutional changes have occurred to search for best alternative in forest management. Although flexibility is somehow important, instable rules, laws and management that are frequently created over the same resources like forests make the management of forest difficult. Government stakeholders such as Oromiya Land and Natural Resources Administration Authority, Oromiya Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau, and Oromiya Institutions of Forest and Wildlife Agency have been responsible at different times in the last decade for the management and conservation of forest priority areas in Oromiya Regional State. These sectors just delegate their authority to their representatives both at Zonal and *Aanaa* levels.

This implies how much the institutions of forest resource management are inconsistence and thereby affect its management. In the study area, there is mandate overlap among JFE, district Land Administration and Environmental Protection, and Natural Resource Management in forest governance.

Jimma Forest Enterprise, for instance, is considered to be the owner of Gera forest representing the government at present time. Activities of forest protection and management however have been carried out by the employees of district Agriculture and Rural Development Office, especially development agents with their supervisors. The same is true for land administration and environmental protection. So, roles and responsibilities of each of these stakeholders are not clearly defined/or not well known. The district administrator himself said that it was difficult to identify clearly the roles and duties of these stakeholders. Forest experts of Gera district also reflected similar opinion on the problem of mandate overlap among these institutions. This condition has created challenges for sustainable management of the forest in the study area.

On the other hand, both local communities (forest users) and other stakeholders were not happy with the currently established state enterprise. Even, the experts, who are the employees of JFE and working at district level, are very skeptical about the effectiveness and sustainability of the enterprise in management and conservation of Gera forest. Local people too have the fear of being evicted from the resource they have been using for ages, and the enterprise focus on extraction of timber for the market.

To sum up, the forest under consideration of this study has been facing great challenges on its sustainable management from external pressure. Expansion of investment activities in the natural forest, institutional instability of forest governance and the rising prices of crops in the market which provoke the increments of agricultural yields by clearing forests for farmland affect negatively both the forest resource users and forest management.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

Traditional (conventional) approach to natural resource management in general and common pool resources like forests in particular has been subject to criticism as it failed to alleviate resource degradations and deforestation. Many scholars from the different disciplines of social sciences have tried to demonstrate the limitations of top-down approach which totally disregards traditional local knowledge and indigenous rights of local people who have had historical connection with their resources. Top-down approach to resource management dominated the world, especially developing countries until 1980s. The paradigm shift involved in the reconceptualization of "development" as individual and community fulfillment requires not only greater devolution of power and authority to the local community level but also greater validation of traditional or popular knowledge. It has been noted that when local or popular knowledge and modern (scientific knowledge systems) meet, the latter tends to suppress the former, either by denying its existence or validity or by incorporating it without any acknowledgment (Howes and Chambers, 1980). Hence, in the last decade of 20th century, political ecologists and common property theoreticians strongly challenged the conventional approach and influenced the minds of many stakeholders towards the advocacy of community-based management approach to resources as an alternative. Ignoring the knowledge, institutions and livelihoods of the local people has been found to be the major problem that has hindered the implementation of effective common pool resources management (see Ostrom 1990).

In Ethiopia too, natural resource management like forests has been under the monopoly of the government, and as a result, the state has been accounted as stewardship in forest management and its conservation. This has posed a problem in forest management from the emperors' era up to the present government. This has never stopped the depletion of forest resources and the forest has increasingly been deteriorating. Besides, local forest users have been alienated from

the resource use. The protectionist approach of forest management has adverse effect on both the resources and the people who depend on the forest for their domestic subsistence.

Understanding the problem of protectionist approach, management approach to resources like forests has been undergoing paradigm shift towards the ends of 20th and in the beginning of 21st century in developing countries. Decentralizations of power, participatory management approach, considering indigenous institutions, rights and perceptions are some to mention. Ethiopia is not unique in this regard at least at discourse level although its realization has been questioned.

This study, therefore, endeavored to explore the significance of local knowledge and institutions in forest management in relation to subsistence mechanisms of local people. The focus of the study is Balate-Gera Forest Priority Area, Jimma zone of Oromiya regional state. The study was based on the field research conducted in Gera district for two solid months ranging from 21 December 2009 to 21 February 2010. Different tools of data gathering mechanisms were employed; structured and unstructured interviews, focused group discussions, observation and survey were utilized in order to obtain relevant and reliable data. The data were analyzed qualitatively under the conceptual frameworks of political ecology and common property theories.

The qualitative analysis of the study revealed that the knowledge of local people about the values of forest and forest management was remarkable. They were well aware of the importance of forest to their livelihoods. For the forest users, forest meant "rain, shade, food, water, home" and therefore, "forest is life" from their perception. They were well aware of ecological, economic and socio-cultural values of forest in the study area. The local people have strong relations both materially and spiritually to the Gera forest. That is why they have been very selective in its utilization and they have encouraged regenerations of natural forest. This made the forest remain relatively in better condition in terms of abundance and coverage. Hence, the utility values of the forest contributed positively to the conservation of the forest.

The study also indicated that customary institutions of the local people have played a vital role in forest management. In the study area, the experience of charcoal burning, cutting live trees for fire wood, and extraction of timber was very minimal. They used forest resources,

however, for subsistence domestic uses cautiously and selectively. Traditional leadership set ups such as *abba lagaa* and *shanee* are still active and play a great role in resource management and other social affairs like conflict resolution. Currently, *abba laga* has dual purpose; representing the local community from customary institution point of view and the manipulative role for execution of government programs.

The findings of this study also emphasized that institutions such as boundary issues, ownership rights, and access to forest resources were major factors that affected the sustainability of forest management. Boundary may refer to both spatial area and members who have use right of forest resources. Forest user groups were well identified based on customary land tenure system which they had inherited from their ancestors in the line with their *patrilineal descent*. So, who has the right to use and where to use was well known by the users themselves and, therefore, conflict among the user groups was insignificant. Besides, the user groups have perceived the forest as common property for all despite the fact that each of the forest users has had plots of forest land. Hence, every member who had use right of the forest resources was responsible in monitoring illegal encroachers.

However, more recently there were some problems related to boundary issues as *Jimma Forest Enterprise* started marking boundary following the footsteps of the demarcation during the Derg regime. This has come up with giving forest management and conservation to state enterprise in which local people were very skeptical. In this case, local people had bad feelings toward the newly emerging management way of Balate- Gera forest priority area. On the other hand, investors were alienating the local people from the resource they were using for centuries. As a result, they had a fear of losing the forest which they have reserved until today. This is believed to be affecting forest management negatively which puts the sustainability of the forest under question.

Finally, three major potential problems were observed in sustainable forest management of the study area: instability of forest management institutions, the rising interests of expanding farmland to increase agricultural yields by farmers which has been in turn exacerbated by the rising prices of crops in the market, and the expansion of coffee plantation investment by clearing natural forest and expanding infrastructures like roads.

6.2 Conclusion

Based on the data presentation and interpretation given in the preceding chapters, it seems possible to draw some conclusion and show its policy implications.

This study explicitly indicated that the role of local perception of forest resources values and its management contributed positively to the conservation of Belete-Gera forest. The local people in the study area were well aware of the fact that forest was the integral part of their life. Besides, indigenous institutions and cultural understandings of the forest land tenure system was still feasible in playing vital role in forest conservation despite the current attempts to alienate the local people from the forest resources by investment.

The study also portrayed the significance of access right to resources and ownership right to forest management and its conservation. Although natural resources like forests belong to state by government proclamation, the local people perceived Gera forest as their own common property. They perceived as their own property because the forest had never been completely detached from their hand, and above all they had the strong belief that the forest had been founded by their ancestors.

The recent participatory management of Balate-Gera forest priority area project considered the cultural institutions of local people on forest management, and the local people themselves were happy with it. However, the more recent problem has emerged when forest resources were given to State Enterprise. In this case, local people were very skeptical about the access, use and property right they had been enjoying. Furthermore, expanding investment activities in the forest had negatively affected the forest resources and the poor forest users.

Therefore, this study strongly stressed the importance of considering local knowledge, customary institutions, and subsistence mechanisms of local people in sustainable development of forest management. According to FAO (2006) sustainable forest management refers to "a dynamic and evolving concept that aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests for the benefit of present and future generations". Moreover, the dependence of local people on forest resources as their livelihood should never be overlooked during policy making. Besides, granting exclusive ownership rights to resource users, the role of government institutions should be restricted to providing

technical support and some aspects of administration for its sustainable management. The forthcoming research should be emphasized on how the existing customary institutions will be fostered into forest management institutions in collaborating with the local government institutions.

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Some Illustrative pictures of resources and activities in the Research Site

Gandaa officials in Ganji-Callaa

Inside the home of religious leader

women with whom discussion carried out

Women gathered at Ganji-Callaa by women's affair of the district

Group discussion with *ganji-callaa* dwellers

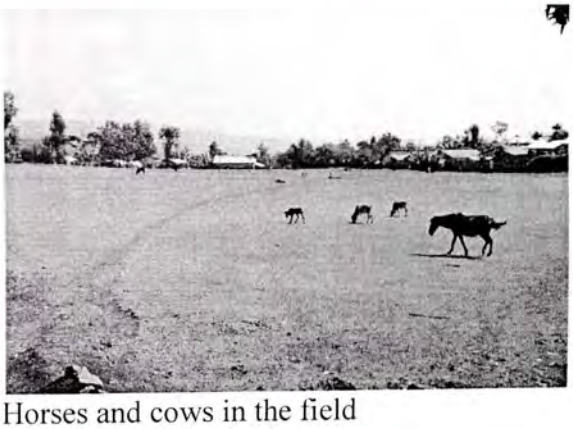
Farmland adjacent to the forest

Forestland and traditional beehives

Homesteads in *Ganji-Callaa Gandaa*

Investment activity in natural forest

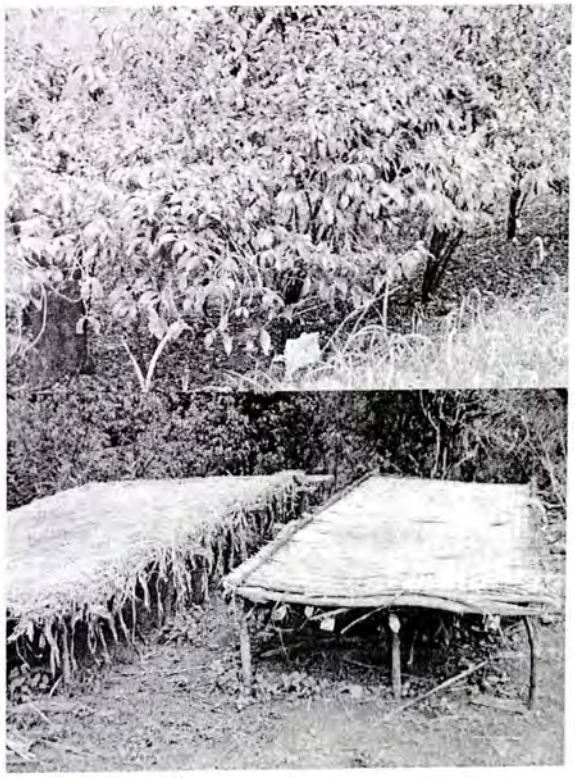
Waterfalls



Horses and cows in the field

Forest regeneration toward homestead

Ficus vasta



Coffee plantation

women and fuel wood

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Disasa Merga		July 19, 2010
Name	Signature	Date
Tadesse Berisso		July 19, 2010
Advisor	Signature	Date