

BELIEFS IN THREE AMHARIC PROSE FICTIONS:

A STRUCTURALIST POINT OF VIEW

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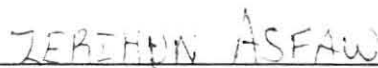
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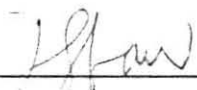

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis "Beliefs in three Amharic Prose Fictions: A Structuralist Point of View" is to examine the sociological and literary values of Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungun. So, it deals with some of the culture bound terms which reflect these social and literary values. The study is based on literary analysis and field work.

The research revealed that social relations and psychological constitutions of a society are interrelated. 1) There are times when culture contradicts religion, 2) religion is secondary to personal interests and also people become against their religion when they need immediate solutions for problems encountered, 3) masculinity (bravery) is reflected vis-a-vis femininity. Therefore, the culture of the people which is portrayed in the texts seems to exhibit a dual nature which contradicts one another.

This study has four chapters. The introduction is about the methodology the researcher used in analysing the texts and, the difficulties she faced during the field works.

The second chapter is the literature review of related works. In addition to this, some key terms which are important for the literary analysis are defined.

The third chapter is about perception of key terms which make the books so reflective of cultural phenomena. The fourth chapter deals with the literary contribution of the key words analysed in the preceding chapter. In the conclusion, the findings of the research are presented briefly. Finally, the interviews held with the authors and other informants are in appended in the order of the interviews conducted.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The social lives of the Ethiopians are governed by different kinds of relationships - family, neighbourhood and locality ties.

The features of these social lives are reflected in traditional customs, religious beliefs, rituals and other normative conditions. Of these, loyalty to the family and a sense of personal honour are prominent features. And they have found their way into Amharic fiction. It is of some interest, therefore, to examine some Amharic fictional works in order to discover which of these cultural elements are present in the works and the role they play in the plot and story of each fictional work.

This research paper is the result of work done on three prose Amharic fictions. These are: Sidetegnaw (1978), Tikur Dem (1980), and Gungun (1982), all of the years are in Eth.C.

1.1 Rationale

This study has its own characteristics that make it different from preceding researches. The first is that it tries to apply a structuralist point of view which is not widely used in Amharic literary criticism. Secondly, it is new because the analysis is supported by field work findings. Field work is usually used in linguistic or folkloric research,

not in the analysis of literary or fictional works.

The question, "why are these works selected?" could be raised. The researcher has the following four reasons.

- a) They were published in the years between 1977-1983 (Eth. Calendar), a period considered to be the time when Amharic fictional and translated works flourished. Therefore, these works could be taken as representatives of those fictional works published during that period. More importantly, these novels focus on similar social values in different parts of Ethiopia.
- b) The books, selected for the study, attempt to show the consequences of the social values on the life of the community. Topics such as discrimination of women, adultery, vendetta and religion are treated in all of them for similar purpose. One may ask whether this is accidental or deliberate, or if it was dictated by the spirit of the times.
- c) The texts depict a feudal society and show its connection with the present society. The word "Present" indicates the time in which the stories were published.
- d) The stories depict mostly the Amhara communities in different regions; namely, North Shoa, Gojjam and Gondar. So, they have common elements which can be useful to sociologists or anthropologists to make deeper study of these communities and for a student of literature.

Therefore, questions like what are the cultural elements in the stories? Do these contemporary authors' works indicate the style of the period? Do the authors use beliefs as technical devices? Or do they use them for ideological purposes? The research attempts to explore some of the possible answers to such questions.

It is obvious that every literary work has a sociological aspect to some extent. However the main goal of this study is to find out what is beneath the surface, and the implied content of the stories. For instance, we find duality in every aspect of life. The word "river" appears recurrently in the stories. It has dual meanings. On the one hand, it is a symbol of nationality, country and independence, free spirit, and source of life. On the other hand, it has a negative aspect because people believe that it is a place where the devil lives. As it can be seen from this it connotes two contradicting ideas: good and evil. Throughout the stories and the construction of the plots, we find this type of paradox in life. Life does not have a single line but a dual one and one is balanced by the other.

Why is a structuralist way of critical approach selected? It is believed that structuralism is concerned with the examination of connotative meanings of words which embody cultural concepts. The researcher aimed at the study of the underlying meanings of these culture bound words such as rifle(Temenja) , trouser (suri), dress (Kemis), neck-cord (mateb) and river(Wonz). These words reccur throughout the

stories and the central theme of each story revolves around them.

1.2 Research Methods

The method used for the research involves both library and field work. Since the authors of the stories claim that they have used real names of places in their settings and actual ritual practices, the researcher has visited the major places mentioned in the works. Besides, interviews with the novelists and the representatives of the people whose cultures and beliefs are reflected in the stories are also used as a cross checking device to evaluate the authenticity of the stories. But the questions which were prepared for the interviewees were not identical. The other advantage of the field work was it enabled the researcher to understand meanings of some words denoting some traditional concepts and to compare them with that of the authors'.

The researcher did not visit the place which is mentioned in Sidetegnaw because the author says, though Kilimitu is a real place, the action which is portrayed is not particular to that place (App. A, P.110, No.8). Therefore, it was not found necessary to travel to the place mentioned.

The interviews also helped the researcher to clearly understand with some controversial points. For instance, Haile Melekot's Gungun contains theme about the 1974 revolution. This is revealed when the story shifts from the countryside to Addis Ababa. Some people say that the author did this because

he had to pass censorship and get finance to have his book published. But the author says, he did it not for the sake of publication but because he was in favour of the socialist ideology (App. C, pp. 145-146, No.14).

1.3 Problems Encountered

It has not been easy to write this thesis. The first difficulty was that there was no work (which concentrate on structuralist literary analysis method) to be taken as a model.

It was also difficult to translate the interviews fully; and some concepts in the books were difficult to express in English; because they were so culture bound. Some words were untranslatable. So, most of the Amharic words are translated into English phrases. Those which are untranslatable are written as they are used in Amharic and the explanatory meanings are given in parenthesis.

The other main problem was the reluctance of the elders to answer questions when asked about some aspects of the culture. They felt that such things should not be revealed to an outsider; for instance about vengeance. They do not admit it as a social norm to an outsider. They even had accusatory attitudes towards the authors who wrote about this subject. Therefore, an investigative approach was required. For instance, when the old man whom the researcher asked to tell her whether or not adultery was a cause for starting vendetta, he denied. But, the researcher had to go in a round about way to get the truth. Finally, he confessed that adultery is one

of the causes that initiates a vendetta that will cost people's lives on two sides(App. E, p.168., NO. 36).

1.4 Organization

The thesis contains four chapters including the introduction. In the second chapter, the theoretical background and review of the literature is given. In the third chapter, key terms which have connotative meanings are discussed. In the fourth chapter an endeavour is made to show how the authors use these terms for the development of their stories. In other words, the contribution of these key words in relation to techniques is examined.

After the concluding part, the bibliography, and appendices are attached. The appendices are arranged in the order of the interviews conducted with the authors, a religious father and elders.

The types and numbers of questions presented to each interviewee are different. The questions for each interviewee are numbered consequentially and the answer given by the interviewee is indicated by the letter "A" which is to mean "Answer". The researcher believes that this approach helps the reader to pick or to find the opinion of interviewee stated as a reference in the main body of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Beliefs in three Amharic prose fictions: a structuralist point of view. This topic contains broad social and traditional concepts. To deal with this topic and in order to decipher the literary qualities and to examine ritualistic contents in the selected fictional works, it is important to acquaint oneself with concepts by attempting to answer two seemingly simple, but basic questions. What is belief? What is structuralism?

Reidulf Knut Molvaer's Ph.D theses "Tradition and Change in Ethiopia" advises the examining of Amharic literary works vis a vis the culture of the society. Molvaer in his work analysed and magnified the social conditions and norms portrayed in 12 Amharic novels written by prominent Amharic writers. In his introduction, he writes:

Ethiopian authors of fiction are strongly concerned with the social and cultural life of their time, and it would not do Amharic literature full justice to evaluate it only on aesthetic grounds. This literature is not purely art for art's sake, or for entertainment, proper appreciation of the modern Ethiopian literary scene can be gained if one relates fictional writings to society.¹

Molvaer's intention is to display the cultural elements of especially the Amharas through those fictional works. True, the authors portray social behaviors of the people from the

¹Reidulf Knut Molvaer, "Tradition and Change in Ethiopia: Social and Cultural Life as Reflected in Amharic Fictional Literature", Netherlands: E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1980, p. 1.

perspectives of their (the authors) point of view. The authors criticize some aspects of the culture they consider as backward and negative, and encourage those which they consider as positive and useful social values.

Molvaer also discusses that fictional works do reflect always factual aspects of life. He argues that the intellectual discussion of the authors gives an exaggerated picture of the society. But despite this exaggerated image, fictional works can give a true picture of the social system of the society to some extent.

From Molvaer's conclusion, the following three generalized points can be identified. In the selected 12 novels;

- 1) characters are depicted from small and big towns.
- 2) the main characters are educated abroad and when they return to their homeland they find it difficult to cope with the old local culture.
- 3) most of the authors, he says were officials.

But when we come to Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungun, which were published after the revolution we find changes, that is, Molvaer's conclusion is not applicable to the texts under study. For instance, Gebeyehu Ayele, Andarge Mesfin and Haile Melekot Mewael are not government officials. The first two were simple civil servants. They portrayed (in their respective works) characters from the rural areas. However, these authors share some of the ideas of Molvaer; that is,

fictional works have to be based on the real life of a society (Appendices A,B,C.). That is why, these works are considered as true reflections of the social life of the people at a given period of time.

Bearing in mind the importance of examining the cultural elements in literary works, a general overview of what have been written on belief, ritual and symbol is briefly considered, here for they are related to the culture of the people.

2.1 Belief

Belief is a very broad concept to define briefly. Many scholars and philosophers have discoursed about it. Some writers limit its nature to Christianity. Klukhohn writes, for instance, ".... The term 'believer' was almost synonymous with christian".² This sentence implies that for a long time it has been believed that belief meant christianity. Later, it was discovered that the concept has more meanings and a complicated nature.

In the analysis given in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, it is stated that the term contains three conceptual

²Clyde Kluehohn, "Myths and Rituals: A general Theory" in Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966, p.37.

elements. These are superstitions, traditions and prejudices.³ In short, it is put as "... in which the emotional life expresses itself".⁴

Harry also defines belief as "Acceptance of, or assent to, that what which is offered as true; a state of mind in which confidence, trust and reliance are placed in some idea, person or thing."⁵

Let us take "idea, person or thing" as key terms from the above quotation.

Belief means having personal idea or opinion, in which an individual view point is reflected. Martin Jarreffe-Kerr in his Studies in Literature and Belief states that this type of belief emerges from personal attitude towards life and one's point of view. He gives the clue that the authors' or writers' belief itself shapes the style and content of their works whether their writing is in verse or prose. One of the points Jarreffe-Kerr raises is that there are authors who represent or reflect their own ideas through the speeches of the characters they portray. This is evident in Gungun (App. C.P.143, No. 9).

³James Hastings, ed.; Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol.2 New York: Charles Siribners Sons. No. p.462.

⁴Loc. Cit.

⁵Shaw Harry, Dictionary of Literary Terms. (Rev.ed.) England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972, p.47.

Belief means to accept or be convinced that an object, be it a tree (Adbar for instance in the Ethiopians context) or a river has supernatural power and needs to be worshiped. It also includes acceptance of the existence of good or evil spirits and trust in their power to do good or evil to one.

Belief further means accepting some people and considering them to have extraordinary power. These members of a society are known as "Teib", "Budda" (evil eyes) or "Tenquwai" (fortune teller).

Belief includes the term religion too. Religion, as Taylor defines it, is "the belief in supernatural beings".⁶ From this point it is understandable that belief means to have religion whether it is Islam, Christianity or Buddhism or any other type. Here the centre of the belief is God.

Tokarev in his History of Religion presents the historical development of religion. He explores the fundamentals of religion and also tries to deal with the background of human beliefs. His analysis is from a Marxist point of view. Starting from paganism he elaborates the limitations and the nature of the three main religions of the world, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. His analysis shows that Christianity is considered as a complicated religion. Its complication comes from the fact that the followers of this religion are also practicing other traditional beliefs.

⁶Hastings, vol.10, p.663.

All the ritualistic practices of the religion are related to those which were being practiced during the pre-christian era.

Edward Ullendorff in his book *The Ethiopians* writes that Ethiopians practice paganism and pantheism and at the same time they believe in God. According to Ullendorff, this has a historical background. He states:

The religious situation in Abyssinia, before the middle of the fourth century A.D. must have been very complex. There existed a great deal of worship of spirits and genni (zar), good or evil, who were associated with trees or mountains, animate or inanimate objects.⁷

Another writer who dealt with Ethiopian religion is Richard Pankhurst. He discusses the historical and sociological role of Christianity in very general terms. He also mentions the rituals and religious customs such as weddings and funerals, circumcision, baptism. He also shares some of the ideas of Ullendorff.

Dr. Habtemariam Assefa has a philosophical attitude towards religion similar to that of Tokarev. In his book, የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ጥያቄዎችና ባህሎች he explains all about the customs that he knows around his place, Tigrai. He discusses the rituals of marriage, betrothal and other traditional customs

⁷Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*, 3rd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp.93-94.

and social relations of the society. Most of the points he raises are reflected in the three books which are discussed in this study. But he asks why people are worried about their religion. Surprisingly he leaves the question unanswered.

Erku Yimer seems to have a justification for this. In his unpublished, mimeographed study on "Zar", he says:

Every society has its own beliefs and social values. Superstitious beliefs usually are greater especially when the people are backward and ignorant of certain factors that affect their lives. If they cannot control or know causes and effects of these factors, it is most likely that they associate them with supernatural powers.⁸

Erku says that the zar abides only in women and children. But this generalization has a fallacy in it. In real life any member of society, irrespective of sex, it is claimed can be possessed by the 'zar'. Zar is not limited to women. Despite this mistaken generalization, he emphasizes the influence the function of zar on personality. People use it as a means for two things. Its first effect is ambivalence. The second effect is "the fatalistic attitude of people and submissiveness to authorities."⁹

Why do people believe in supernatural beings? Or why do they have superstitious faith? In an attempt to find answers

⁸Erku Yimer. "The Zar cult as an Outlet to Express Suppressed Feelings and Its Impact on Ethiopian Personality". p.1.

⁹Ibid, p.4.

or explanations to such questions, Feibleman says that believing in something invisible is a result of finding a reason for the existence of something visible. For instance, the existence of God was inferred from the existence of the universe.¹⁰ People try to find the reason or background for a certain phenomenon; when it became beyond their capacity to know about its nature, they simply accept the proposition of the existence of a creator.

The major reason for this is that people wish to get their problems solved. Clyde says, "... myth and ritual ... provide cultural solutions to problems which all human beings face."¹¹

The argument of Erku can be relevant here. He says that when people are backward, they hold in superstitions (beliefs). The problem is not this. The problem is they believe in both visible and invisible things. This makes life so mysterious. Those who say they are christians try to accomplish their duties which emanate from two contradictory sides. For instance, as christians they try to lead their life on the basis of Biblical words or the tenets of Christianity, and as pagans, they do evil things that go against christian principles because as Erku puts in his explanation about the zar cult, that is, "... honesty is

¹⁰James K. Feibleman, "On Beliefs and Believing", in Metaphysics and Belief Tulane Studies in Philosophy, vol XV. New Orleans" Tulane University, p.11 ["clude Kluethon, p.14].

¹¹Clyde Kluckhohn, p.41.

expected but at the same time it suggests means and techniques of stealing, murdering and all sorts of mischief...".¹² It is, I believe, because of this that vendetta come to be an accepted social norm in some societies.

In most Amharic fictions, christianity is the religion which is given more attention by authors. This can be seen in the following research works.

Mossie Fanta in his BA thesis ሃይማኖት በፍቅር እስከ መቃብርና በአደፍርስ ውስጥ "Religion in Fikir Iske Mekabir and Adefris" (1978, Eth.C.) examines the application of religion in literature. When he says religion, he is referring to christianity. By taking some characters from the novels he tried to show that religion is used to explore psychological, physical, economic and other social conditions. At the end of his analysis, he makes the concluding statements that people turn to religion when they fail to solve problems by themselves, that religion has not only class character but also political impact. He also states that religion stifles the struggle of the masses against their oppressors. The last point which he states is that religion is against other beliefs.

Mossie's observation sounds logically true. But he does not explore why and how the authors use religion. Do they criticize it? Do they encourage others to be religious? What is the literary contribution (if any) of using religion in

¹²Erku Yimer, pp.3-4.

fictional works? Perhaps, it might not be necessary to answer these questions here for they are discussed in chapter four in this study.

The other work which is related to this subject is Mesfin Abates' BA thesis entitled "ማህበራዊ ልማድ በፍቅር እስከ መቃብርና በአደፍርስ ልቦለዶች ውስጥ" Social Customs in Fikir Iske Mekabir and Adefris (1978 Eth.C.). Mesfin endeavoured to explore the contribution of these social customs to the technical development of the stories, for instance, to make the conflict more complex and serious. In his conclusion, Mesfin states that some of these customs are rejected by the younger generation while they are accepted by the older generation as normal. For example bowing to a cross, believing in paganism and magical practices for good and for bad are no longer the norms of the young generation.

Besides, Mekonnen Bekele's "በአማርኛ የሚነገሩ አመልኮታዊ እምነቶች"

"Common Superstitions in Amharic" (1978, Eth.C.) is one of the works related to this subject. In his BA thesis he deals with the superstitious sayings. He divides these into four categories: bad, good, common and modern superstitions.

Though these superstitions are accepted by both the literate and the illiterate, Mekonnen considered them as unscientific. He focuses on their function and the effects they create on people. For instance, there is the belief that if brothers cross a river together, both will be drowned.

Because of this, if brothers going together come to a river, they need to cross the river turn by turn. It is also believed that if a man seats near a river alone, he will be pulled by a devil into it. If one washes his feet while crossing a river, he would adapt himself to the new area easily. If one tries to cross a river at noon, he will be attacked or pulled by a devil. All these superstitious sayings reflect how much influence the river has on the life of the people.

Another research is that of Dinku Belachew's በአማርኛ የሚነገሩ እምነታዊ አባባሎች "superstitious sayings in Amharic" (1981 Eth. C.). Like Mekonnen, he collected sayings which are related to beliefs. But the main point which makes him different is that he distinguishes the contents of these beliefs from that of religion.

Nonetheless, Dinku doesn't examine the relationship between some superstitions and the doctrine of christianity but the problem of defining religion is clearly reflected in his essay. For instance, people believe that Wednesday is a bad day. But this fear of Wednesday has its origin in the Bible because the Jewish decided to arrest Christ on Wednesday evening. This requires, knowledge of its historical background. Some superstitions have got their basis in the old testament and also in the new testament. Levine also mentions about "Wednesday" in his Wax and Gold. But he does not mention clearly this basic point. Rather, he tries to rationalize that Wednesday and Friday are fasting days, therefore, people fear

to go far on these days. In fact, Levine's approach can also be one aspect of the belief.

Levine, in relation to this, explores the social life of Gondar and Menze people. During his seven months stay in Menz area, Levine discovers all the good and evil aspects of the living style and the norms of the people.

He also tries to indicate why the people believe in God and other objects such as river, tree and zar at the same time. But, except analysing the real nature (aspect) of their belief, he doesn't point out the reason for this dual nature of their faith.

When people practice these religious beliefs, they follow ritualistic practices for every thing and in the rituals there are some symbolic objects. So, what is ritual? This is the subject of our next discussion.

2.2 Rituals and Symbols

Rituals are the cultural mirrors of human beings in which traditions, norms and other social values are reflected. They are mainly related to beliefs and religions which possess ceremonial traditions. Scott states:

Rites, rituals and ceremonies are all standardized forms of social behaviours which are often closely integrated. They are frequently associated with symbolism and each

may be product of or related to an elaborate mythology.¹³

Whenever the concept ritual is raised as an issue, Arnold Van Gennep who has studied human rites comes into our mind. His book, The Rites of Passage (1908) translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee from French to English in 1960, discusses about human rites.

Van Gennep divides rites into three: rites of separation, transition and incorporation.¹⁴ All human rites could be classified under these categories. From birth to death a man passes through these rites. Marriage, death, pregnancy, vengeance, and other experiences are instances of rites.

Bryony Orme, in his work, Anthropology for Archaeologists also has another approach to the definition of rituals. In his analysis, Orme divides rituals into two major categories, the individual and community rituals. The first one includes, for instance, death¹⁵ while the second one comprises hunting agriculture, crafts, power, coronation, healing, witchcraft, sorcery and justice.¹⁶ Feasts and funerals and symbolic dualities (for instance the difference between right and left) are also considered as rituals.¹⁷

¹³Walter Dill Scott, et al. (eds.), The American Peoples Encyclopedia, vol. 16, Chicago: Spencer Press Inc., 1957, pp.801-802.

¹⁴Van Gennep, Arnold, The Rites of Passage, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p.11.

¹⁵Bryony Orme, Anthropology for Archaeologists, Great Britain Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1981, p.222.

¹⁶Ibid, pp.224-225.

¹⁷Lov.cit. pp.232-236.

Mary Douglas too, in her Natural Symbols mentions that some tribes are more ritualistic than others and that rituals are symbolic acts. This point makes her argument similar to other critics whose essays appeared in Myth and Literature. This book contains 34 essays which are directly and indirectly related to rituals. In this collection, Clyde Kluckhohn's essay describes that rituals are the means for the preservation of culture and the relationship of the society. According to his analysis, the distinctive feature of ritual is its dependency on actions. He puts these two as inseparable ones. He says:

... the myth is a system of word symbols, where as ritual is a system of object and act symbols. Both are symbolic processes for dealing with the same type of situation in the same effective mode.¹⁸

The examination of rituals is introducing us to the essence of symbols. Abundant use of symbols indicates that the user has rich cultural values.

Symbolism as Cudden defines it, "... is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or 'stands' for something else."¹⁹ The symbol can be public or private, universal or local.²⁰ Therefore, the appearance of words with special usage, the meanings they convey or the object they stand for might only be perceived, if the perceiver knows the cultural contexts.

¹⁸Clyde Kluckhohn, p.39.

¹⁹John A. Cudden, A Dictionary of Literary Terms, 1st ed., New York: Doubleday, 1972, p.671.

²⁰Loc. cit.

Symbolism is not only limited to that which is expressed in words. It is also enlarged through objects as it is shown in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Symbolism is connected with the idea of imitation:

Ideas of imitation and identification signs, symbols, and tatu-marks can be used, like names, to indicate relationship, claim, or possession, and they are effective provided they have an appropriate meaning and call up the required feelings and ideas. The symbol which stands for the totem, spirit, or god may be covered upon weapons, boundary-stones, utensils, etc. to signify the presence of a protective being, to warn off the evil-doer, and so forth ... (Vol.10, p.674).

We have seen that rituals and symbols are the main conceptual terms through which historical, cultural and religious aspects of human beings are reflected.

An attempt has been done to explore if there are researches done before on these types of cultural elements. I found out that some researchers have dealt with them to some extent.

Balkew Cherinet's "የመንዝ የለቅሶ ግጥሞች ጥናት" (The study of Dirges in Menz, 1974 Eth. C.), is one of the research works done. In this B.A thesis, Balkew presents a general analysis of the culture and religion of the people of Menz. According to Balkew's investigation, the society believes in the existence of other supernatural beings. So, the funeral ceremonies take place with the consideration of these supernatural beings.

Meaza Tesfa in her BA thesis, "የለቅሶ ሥርዓት በአጋሜ የለቅሶ ግጥሞች ትንተና" (Rites of funeral in Agame: an analysis of Dirge, 1982 Eth. C.) tried to analyse the ritualistic elements of funerals. She writes how the funeral ceremonies of those who have relatives and are of the highest social status, take place. From her work, it is understandable that rituals sometimes are not the same when they take place among the rich and the poor.

Yisehak Beyene, "ሰለባ እና ደም መመላለስ በይፋትና ጥሙጋ አውራጃ" (Casteration and vendetta in Yifatna Timuga Awraja, 1986 Eth. C.) in his B.A thesis has dealt with the culture of castration and vengeance among three ethnic groups. These groups are known as Afar, Oromo and Amhara who live in Yifatina Timuga district. Castration is claimed to be the result of vengeance.

The researcher tries to give the historical background of vengeance and castration. According to his finding, it started during the 11th century. To prove this he based findings on oral sources. He had interviewed some elder persons and they told him that the custom of vengeance came as a result of: 1) religious conflicts between christians and muslims. (Since these are the main religions in the area), 2) the feudal system itself forced the tenants (non possessors of land) to rebel against the landlords.

I have found his methodology to be one-sided and the result not free of bias because he had interviewed individuals whose names suggest that they are Muslims. So, it is difficult to consider his statement as a credible evidence. But on the

other hand, the increment in taxation and the shortage of pastoral land sounds reasonable to urge people to fight. This is also what happens in Sidetegnaw.

Fighting is connected with the concept of masculinity. In the Ethiopians' tradition, masculinity and vengeance are norms which are given great attention to and are respected. So, masculinity is measured by the ability to defend oneself, his land and his wife from his rivals or opponents.

Donald N. Levine has an article on masculinity in Ethiopia.²¹ The concept of masculinity, according to Levine's presentation concerns the Amhara group. The article tells about the bravery, psychological and physical strength of the male.

The concept of masculinity is expressed vis-a-vis femininity. Boys are brought up in such a way that they learn how to defend themselves, how to develop aggressiveness how to shoot, throw spears, and how to use shields. He explains why women are kept at home while men are supposed and expected to be strong both at home and in public. Levine mentions why women are prohibited from behaving like men. He writes:

A common justification for keeping women at home nearly all the time is that if they are left to go outside they will stir up all

²¹Donald N. Levine, "The Concept of Masculinity in Ethiopian Culture", presented at the fourth annual symposium of the Committee on Human Development, The University of Chicago, on 11th May, 1963.

manner of trouble for by nature they are gossipers and deceivers.²²

Therefore, this view point is expected to develop in every individual person. This implies that male members of the society are encouraged to develop the habit of vengeance. If a man fails to fulfil these requirements, he is referred to as woman who "wears" a woman's dress. In this context, dress is a reflection of femininity and there is a belief that if a man is said "he wears dress", it has a meaning of cowardness. However, there is a time when a dress has different meaning as opposed to this meaning.

Sometimes, "dress" means pride and vanity. This shows the dual and contradicting meanings of dress. We find this duality in the texts which this study deals with.

1. **ለወንድነቱማ ሱሪ መቸ አነሰው
ቀኛዝማች በላይነህ ቀሚሱን ለበሰው**

Trouser is not inadequate for his masculinity
But Kegnazmatch Belaine has wore the dress. (Gungun, p. 207)

2. **ኮስትጥ በገደላት ሚዳቋ የወነድነት ቀሚስ ስለለበሰሁ
አንድ ግዳይ ላልጥል ወደቤት ላልመስ ምያለሁ**

Because I wore the dress of masculinity because of Coster (the name of the dog), I promised not to go back home without killing one rival. (Tikur Dem, p.46).

Aleka Ayalew Tamiru explains the background for this (App. D, pp 157-158, No. 12). He says, dress is the original cloth

²²Ibid, p. 19.

for people. But after civilization, men start to wear trousers because it is convenient to field works. Based on this background, trousers (suri) is a symbol of masculinity in the Ethiopian's context.

The other symbolic object is "river". In these works under study, river means many things at once as Robert Brittain's Rivers and Man, published in 1958, gives a good account of the word. The relationship between man and river has historical, economic and spiritual background. Historically, man was curious to know about the nature of the river, the power it has, and its source, where it begins from.

To find the answers for his questions, man has to cross and to explore it. The more he explores it, the more he is drawn to it and continues investigation of this "mysterious" water. River is also used as demarcation, separating tribes, clans and countries.

In Rivers and Man, it has been pointed out that men worshiped rivers as their gods for a long period of time, because they considered it as a possessor of supernatural power, when they failed to discover or get a satisfactory answer to questions they raised regarding its nature and source.

Magic and ritual superstitious reverence and worship all are so intermingled that the various elements cannot be isolated. But wherever rivers have followed post early

communities, men have approached their banks with awe and the memory of ancient longings clings about them still Into the mouth of countless rivers fisher men have thrown one of their comrades to be drowned, that the grateful stream might fill their nets.²³

This idea is common among the Ethiopian societies. People identify their clans by saying "Son/daughter of my river" (App. D, Pp 149-151, Nos. 2,3). A river's role as a site of demarcation is also reflected in Gungun when Mindaye is obliged not to cross Jarra river after the reconciliation with his opponents has taken place.

The other word which is used in Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungun is tree. It is also a symbol of different notions. It is worshipped by people like that of river and it is a symbol of unity.²⁴ People gather under its shade when they have something to discuss about. Tree is a symbol of forefathers. As a result of this, people start to worship it (App. D, P.151 No.4).

Another symbolic term is neck-cord (mateb). A man who does not have a cord made of thread on his neck is not considered a christian in Orthodox Ethiopian context. Molvaer and Levine mention that christians use it as a sign of christianity. But these writers did not give any further clarification about this matter, except stating that it is

²³Rober Brittain, Rivers and Man, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1968, p.121.

²⁴Fekade Azeze, "ትወፊት በስነልቦና ውስጥ" In Journal of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, No.3, AAU: Institute of Language Studies, p.14.

common among christians, they did not give its historical background and where it comes from, and its significance. In this study, an attempt is made to find out this background.

Two justifications are given. According to the first it is found that neck-cord is a symbol which reminds us the sufferings of Jesus christ. The second says that the use of neck-cord is connected with the history of St. Jacob. In his time, Jacob ordered his students to wear a "mateb" on their neck that enables him to differentiate his opponents from his followers (App. D, P.171, N0.14).

2.3 Structuralism

The first philosopher who laid the basis for structuralism was Jean Piaget. In his book entitled, Structuralism, he introduces the essential characteristics of this term. According to him, structuralist's theory deals with the elements and wholeness of a given object, the interrelatedness of form and object.

Piaget admitted the challenging nature of structuralism to define. But, in spite of its difficulty, he tried to give a clear image of the concept. He states that the notion of structure consists of three key ideas: "the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation and the idea of selfregulation."²⁵

²⁵Sunday O. Anozie, Structural Models and African Poetics: Towards a Pragmatic Theory of Literature, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.127.

From Piaget's theory of analysis one can understand that on the one hand, succession of elements brings or leads to their wholeness, and on the other hand that those individual elements can also be considered independently as complete unit.

Following piaget's theory of structuralism, the other scholar who laid the basis for structuralists is Ferdinand de Saussure. Rice and Waugh say:

Indeed, Saussure's suggestions are taken up in structuralism , where his theory of language is the basis for the critical model which investigates a devise range of cultural phenomenon.²⁶

From Saussure's theory of semiotics, Roland Barthes has taken the general idea and applied it to analyse the structure of literary works for the first time. Since then, European literary critics began to use structural analysis of literary texts.

The role of structuralism is to identify the role of actions or the contributions of the action for the development of a story.²⁷

²⁶Philip Rice and Patricca Waugh, Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 2nd ed., London: Edward Arnold: A Member of the Hodden Headline Group, 1989,1992, p.22.

²⁷Roger, Fowler, ed., Style and Structure in Literature Essays in New Stylistics, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975, p.177.

The other prominent scholar who gave a deep analysis and good definition of structuralism is Janathan Culler. In his Structuralist Poetics, (on which the analysis of this research relies) he dealt with the major characteristics of structural analysis. He examines the works of other structuralists, such as Roland Barthes. The main point he raises is that a critic, when he tries to analyse the structure of a given text, should exert an effort to decipher the connotative meanings and the literary value of those meanings as well.

Culler says a reader expects somethings from the text he reads. This expectation is to get another meaning or another "world" which lies beyond the writers' words.

Culler's analysis gives sufficient clues as to how to interpret the connotative meanings the text contains such as the codes, the plot and the character. It is true that a critic needs some kind of methodology as well as reason to designate items as words in order to carry out his critical analysis.

Culler provides five sub-divisions of codes as: The prouretic code", which govern's the reader's construction of plot, "The hermeneutic code", which involves a logic of question and answer, enigma and solution, suspense and peripetia, "the semic code" which provides models to enable the reader to collect semantic features that relate to persons and to develop characters and "The symbolic code" which guides

extrapolation from text to symbolic and thematic readings, and finally, "The referential code" which is identified as least satisfactory of all codes.²⁸

The other point Culler raises is about the plot of the fictional work. Thus, he identifies that the two component parts of a plot are roles and functions. He writes:

A function cannot be defined apart from its place in the process of narration, because identical actions can have very different roles in two different stories and thus must be subsumed under different functions.²⁹

He states that it is a sequential succession of events to build up the story and that the structuralist analyst deals with the structures of the plot and that each event must contribute to the development of the story.

Steven Connor has similar idea about the structures of plot. He says:

A literary text, like any other conceptual or material structure is made up of different, cooperating parts, including such things as rhythm, imagery, figures of speech, plot, etc, and the business of all criticism is in a sense, to separate and identify these functioning parts.³⁰

²⁸Janathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism Linguistics and the Study of Literature, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975, p.203.

²⁹Ibid, p. 208.

³⁰Steven Connor, "Structuralism and Post Structuralism: From the Centre to the Margin" in p.737.

structural discussion is about these hidden meanings and message of the language.

The researcher of this study would also like to bring out these types of hidden meanings from the selected texts and in this sense the analysis adheres to the structuralist model.

CHAPTER THREE

PERCEPTION OF BELIEFS:

A STUDY OF SOME LEXICAL ITEMS

This chapter deals with the aspects of beliefs portrayed in Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungun.

The term belief includes religious and non-religious practices. Religion is a term which expresses the people's belief in supernatural beings. As it is stated, this aspect of religion is expressed through communal practices. On the other hand, non-religious beliefs are characterized by personal attitudes towards life and philosophical view points of individuals. Here, people do not recognize the existence of supernatural beings or any kind of spirit. In other words, in the works under study, individual view points refer to the attitudes of the authors while the other aspects of belief (the religious ones, for instance) refer to the beliefs of the communities. Both features of beliefs are reflected through the characters in the stories.

The researcher preferred to make this distinction for two reasons. First, it helps to prove how far authors use their influence in the stories they write. In the interviews, the authors asserted that they use some of the characters and narrators in the stories as their agents. In other words, the

authors state that there are characters who reflect their ideas. For instance, in Sidetegnaw Ato Walelign and Demelash, in Tikur Dem Ato Mehary and in Gungun Mindaye are believed to be the voices of the authors.

At this point, the researcher does not want to commit herself to taking the stand that ideas reflected in any story can be taken as the ideas of the authors or that authors always reflect the opinions of the society. But, as observed in the books under study, the researcher would like to find out whether or not writers use good writing techniques when they impose their personal stands on the narratives.

The other point worth mentioning here is language use. Most of the time authors use the "standard" language when they write stories. "Standard" in this context means, the common language which is free from the dialects of specific areas. But when a writer is trying to portray the culture of a given society in their own idioms, it is said that he uses the real language of that particular society.

This helps to make a clear distinction between the language of the omniscient narrator who is considered as a representative of the author and the language of the characters which represents the character himself in his social and regional setting.

Sometimes a writer fails to use the real language of characters. In Sidetegnaw, there are characters depicted from

countryside. At the beginning of the narration for instance, Demelash and Ato Walelign speak language free from any dialect. Their dialogue doesn't indicate their social or regional background.

When the personality of a character is in harmony with his/her language, it can be easier to describe his/her psychology and behavior because culture can be perceived from the words characters utter. For instance, in Sidetegnaw, Yusuf mentions the name of "Allah" whenever he speaks. This shows that Yusuf is a muslim and hence, adheres to muslims norms.

In Tikur Dem the monk mentions the word "ባለደሞቼ" recurrently. The frequent use of the word suggests that there is a culture of vengeance. In Gungun "rifle", "trouser" and "neck-cord" are used. These words suggest that Christianity, masculinity and vengeance are the main social norms. These are accepted and respected values. These concepts are connected with beliefs and rites. Beliefs in supernatural beings and personal beliefs are classified as individual and community view points which are further sub-divided into sub-topics as presented below.

3.1 Individual View Point

One may raise a question that how it could be possible to examine whether or not there is an imposition of the author in his/her literary work. One may find the point of view which is chosen by the author playing a significant role. It is this

point of view which helps the critic or any critical reader to identify the voice of the narrator and the voice of the characters. Sometimes there might be a difficulty in differentiating the voice of the omniscient narrator and the voice of the author.

Here, in the works under study, names of characters and their conversations or dialogues are discussed as indicators of individual view points.

3.1.1 Names

The authors named the main characters in each story in a way that these names convey the central themes of their stories. For instance, the central theme of Sidetegnaw is revolving around the life of Demelash. The name Demelash has a meaning which is connected to the resolution of the story. It means "avenger". His father Anteneh was suffering from the oppression of the feudal system. So, his son Demelash is the one who revenges the enemies of Anteneh.

The end of the story shows that Demelash becomes a winner over his opponents. He comes back home after spending a complicated life which is full of disasters. The revolution enables him to get back his own land. His name Demelash, "avenger" symbolises the gains of the revolution. This is the implication.

The name Mindaye in Gungun has also similar function that is related to the outcome of the story. The meaning of the name is 'my wage'.

This character is the only child for his poor mother whose husband is dead. Therefore, the name has an implication that "you are the only wage, (wealth) I have earned", and that is why she encourages him to marry. In spite of his loneliness, he is the key factor for the social struggle in Majete. At the end of the story Mindaye and those who are on his side emerge triumphant. Through him the author transmits his desire that the revolution is the guarantee for the economic right for the masses.

Simegnew and Mehary in Tikur Dem are also the names which reflect the psychology of the author. Simegnew means "my wish" and Mehary means "merciful". It seems important to show how both names have relationship.

At the beginning of the story the reader finds Simegnew with his grandmother. She likes him, and she names him Simegnew because she is wishing to have a grandson. Not only this but also she is interested in the monastery known as Akale Christos. This is her second dream or wish. But she dies before she goes there.

At the end of the story, we find Abba Mehary. Having killed many people before he became a monk, we find him punishing himself and preaching the public about the negative

consequence of vengeance. The theme is about mercifulness which is important in social life. This is also the message of the author.

3.1.2 Conversations

The second element which reflects the personal view point is conveyed through the conversations of the characters in the stories. These conversations are taken from the characters who are with their own philosophy of ideology. These are characters who are neither governed by religion nor by traditional beliefs. Yet, they strive to bring social changes because they are dissatisfied with some aspects of the social structure.

These characters reflect two things. In the first place, they can be perceived as agents of the authors. In the second place they help to perceive the ideological and the cultural conflict prevalent at time. The political and philosophical arguments are presented through the argument of the characters. Among these types of characters, the winner always reflects the views of the authors. Through these characters the authors criticize the social structure and 'backward' traditions.

The characters are strong and determined. Demelash goes against the traditional belief. He disrespects Abba Gurratch and kills Balabat Wako who has strong relationship with the idol Abba Gurratch. But, no supernatural power or spirit has

taken violent reaction in him as people often think. Demelash remains alive though people thought he would die instantly. There is no power which exposes him to the police or to the relatives of the dead landlord. This is the irony in the story.

Ato Walelign in Sidetegnaw, is not educated. But he is different from other ordinary people. Of course, this may be due to the authors intention. He has a character which is not natural to his personality. He is a simple peasant who embraces a socialist ideology and acts as a philosopher. Examine the following statements of his:

በዓለም ላይ ከዘመናት ውቅያኖስ ውስጥ ብቅ እያሉ ሕይወታቸውን ለሰው ልጆች በኃ ነገር ያዋሉ የለኮሱትን ችቦ በጨለማው ዓለም ውስጥ እያበሩ የራሳቸውን ድርሻ ከሮጡ በኋላ ያለፉትን የዓለም ቤዘአዎች የመቅሰፍት ዝናማቸውን እያወረዱ ምድርን የስቃይ ሥፍራ አድርገዋት የነበሩትን የጥፋት ፊታውራሪዎች አሰቡዋቸው። እነዚህ ሁሉ በሕያዋን ዘንድ በሥፍራቸውና በታሪክ ይታሰቡ እንጂ ሞት እንደከላቸው ጀግናው፣ ፈሪው፣ ምሐሩ፣ ማሐይሙ፣ ደጉ፣ ክፉ ሁሉ ፅጥ እንዳሉ።

In the world, appearing from the ocean of time sacrificed their lives for the welfare of human beings, those who passed away by lighting the candle in this dark world and those ransoms who accomplished their responsibilities and died on the one hand; and on the other hand those who have made the earth a place of torture, those Fitawararies of ruin, he (Ato Walelign) thought about all these. Eventhough they are remembered by all living people, all the heros, cowards, the elites, and illiterates, the kind and the cruel, all are in their graves. (Sidetegnaw, p.4).

This is an idea reported by the narrator as if it is in the mind of Ato Walelign. He is a character who is a close friend of Anteneh. He is also an old and a mature person. In spite of his old age and maturity, he is portrayed as a

character who can adopt himself to any condition. For instance, when his friend Anteneh remains static, Walelign accepts Abba Gurratch as his God and Balabat Wako as his land lord. This is also a character who presents philosophical issues which are thought to be beyond his level. Such philosophical issues in a sense develop from vast reading and education.

Similarly, Sidetegnaw has other characters who believe in the objective reality. Bekery Hassen, Ephrem and some of the other characters are those whom the reader encounters when the setting of the story shifts to Sudan. Most of the time these issues about objective reality are also discussed by anonymous characters of the American Gibbi (in Addis Ababa).

~አጭበርባሪ ቄስ! ዝም በል ሰው እንደልቡ ሆኖ የሚኖርበት ቦታ በጭራሽ የለም! የትም ቦታ ቢሆን አታድርግ አድርግ የሚሉት ትዕዛዛት አሉ። አዳምን ከገነት ያስወጡት እነዚህ ትዕዛዛት ናቸው። አትብላ የተባለውን በመብላቱ እነዚህ ማንኛውም ገዢ የሚጠቀምባቸው ቁልፍ ትዕዛዛት ናቸው።

You deceiver priest! shut up! There is no place where men can live freely! Everywhere there are commands, the dos and donts. These commands led Adam to be thrown out of heaven. He ate what he was forbidden.... These are the key commands any ruler uses. (Sidetegnaw, p.125)

Demelash gradually starts to accept this idea. His father had also this principle. According to their principle, any person shouldn't accept any distressing thing. He must struggle for his peace and for his pride.

“ጥቃት የሞት ታላቅ ወንድም ነው። ለጥቃት አሜን ብሎ የሚኖር ሰው እንደሰው አንዲ ሳይሆን በየዕለቱ ነው የሚሞተው። ሰው ሰውነቱን የሚያስከብረው እራሱ ነው...” ይል ነበር አንተነህ።

"Oppression is an elder brother of death. A man who is submissive to any oppression dies not only once but everyday. A man is respected not by others but by himself" says Anteneh. (Ibid, p.3)

Demelash has a personality which is very similar to his father, Anteneh. He has also friends like Getahun and Bekery who have ideas which interest him (Ibid, pp.70-72). On the other hand, Getahun is more civilized than Demelash. But still he is different from those who are educated. Through the characterization of Getahun and Bekery, the author shows this difference. Their difference is seen from the justification they give to the so called criminals who live in the American Gibi.

Getahun considers the people of American Gibi as mad, murderers and thieves (Ibid, p.72). But Bekery takes this as great social problem. For him, people become cruel when they couldn't get a means to live on (pp.107-109). He discusses the reasons why people develop bad habits.

In Gungun too the cultural life of the people of Majete is reflected. In this story, characters like Mindaye and Hidru are portrayed as the agents of social change. Here, we don't have non-believers except the revolutionaries. In fact, it is not clear whether Mindaye and Hidru reject Christianity or not.

Here too, religion is the dominating aspect of the story. There are characters who identify their landlords with angles.

But this belief is shaken when Mindaye fights against Kegnazmach, who was respected by the public.

ዛሬ ታቦት ቢያሸክሟቸው ሚካኤልን ይመስሉ ነበር።

Today if he was given the Ark to carry he would look like St. Michael (Gungun, p.202).

This speech shows the speaker's naivety and is in a way satirical. This satirical expression also indicates that the ordinary people don't have clear image of the angles.

3.2 Communal View Points

In the fictions under study, the characters seem to worry about three major subjects: Health, Property and Sex. Their belief, their culture, their history are very closely related to these three points. One's identity and pride are measured by how she/he adheres to and observes these social norms. Therefore, the characters are very much concerned with these things and they fight or pay any sacrifice to live upto the expectation of the society.

For instance, if a person gets sick, it is true that he wants to regain his health. So, to be cured from illness, he tries the traditional means. If he gets it difficult to regain his strength, he relies on his God or god. In Sidetegnaw for example, people were advising Anteneh to pray to 'Gurratch', god of river and obtain his pardon. Because they believe that the wellbeing of the members of that particular community is in the hands of this god, Gurratch.

አንተነህ እሳቸውን ሲነቅ ሲሳደብ ለዚህ በቃ። ያኔ እንደነገርነው ነጭ
ኮርማ በሩ ላይ ቢያርድ ኖሮ ክፉው ነገር ሁሉ ያልፋለት ነበር፤
በደሙ።...

"Anteneh was insulting and despising Aba Gurratch. His rebel brought his death. If he had accepted our advice and sacrificed a "white bull he would have been cleared from all evils, through its blood....(Sidetegnaw, P.10).

Anteneh died. His colleagues admit that his death is the consequence of his protest against the will of Gurratch. There is, therefore, a contradiction between the traditional belief and personal stand from the beginning.

Economic reason is another factor which urges people to fight against their dispossessors. The story of Gungun has this nature. Mindaye killed his opponent because the man ploughed the farm land of Mindaye's fore fathers. Another example, W/o Dejyitnu gets her means of survival from Kegnazmach. Thus, she is always worried about the day to day life of her concubine. She goes to churches and at the same time to other places to get help from these supernatural beings in order not to loose his support and she competes with W/o Ilfyikendu, Kegnazmatch's wife.

The third factor is related to the sexual life of people. Through out the stories adultery causes a conflict between different families. In Tikur Dem Mehary's brother is killed by the cousins of his rival and in Sidetegnaw, Getahun kills the policeman who abducted the wife of his brother. In both cases, however, the murderers do not lead a peaceful life.

W/o Ilfyikendu, Kegnazmatch's wife, in Gungun, is a victim of this aspect of culture. Her husband loves another woman. The public also knows this fact. Therefore, she wants her husband not to see w/o Dejyitnu, but she couldn't. Though she doesn't get a satisfactory solution to this state of affairs, the means she employs to stop her husband from seeing this woman is using the advice of a witchcraft (Gungun, pp.81 and 85). In general, therefore, the stories are constructed around health, wealth and sex and these are the basic elements that generate conflict. How can these human concerns be seen from the perspective of religion?

3.2.1 Religion

In the texts, characters do not tell directly what their religion is. Words, phrases, actions and symbolic expressions enable the reader to guess whether or not a given character believes in supernatural beings or what his major religion is from the description given by whoever relates the story. For instance:

...ሸማግሌው በስመአብ ወወልድ ብለው ቢላዋው ከፍየሉ አንገት ላይ ሲያሳርፉት ስቅጥጥ አለኝ።

... when the old man puts the knife on the neck of the goat while saying in the name of God, the father, the son and ... I was shocked (Tikur Dem, p.23)

The quotation, definitely shows that the old man is a Christian. It is a common practice that Christians do not eat

the meat of dead animals. If an animal is sick and if the Christian fellow is sure of its death he slaughters it. That is why Mehary slaughtered the antelope.

እኔ ተወደቀኝው ድኩላ ስደርስ ትነፈራገጣለች። የወገቤን ካራ ላጥ አድርጌ አንገቷን ባረኳት።

When I arrived at the fallen antelope, it was not dead. I immediately took out my knife and cut off its neck... (TikurDem: p.54)

These two descriptions are good examples to examine that how actions reflect the belief of characters.

In Tikur Dem the significance of the story itself is to enlarge the values of Christianity. His religion, christianity, helps Abba Mehary to realize the extent of his crime and repent at last. He confesses his crime and preaches every body not to do evil things. He regrets and he is striving to be forgiven by God. Here there is an agreement between the beliefs of the narrator and that of the characters.

Aba Mehary during his adulthood kills a number of people. But at the end, he becomes a completely changed man. He expresses his kindness through his actions. He makes the monastery of Akale Christos his home. But he goes there because of the dream of Gennet. He has confidence in Akale Christos as a mediator between him and God. Akale Christos is a pious who reconciles the guilty persons with their God as the old woman states in the beginning of the story(p.5).

Abba Mehary is dedicated to his religion. He is punishing himself and making an effort, to do good things to redress his wrong doings by leading a miserable life. We see him refusing to remove the louse from his body.

በጥዱ ዛፍ እያለፈ የፀሐይ ጨረር ዘባተሏቸውን ሲነካው ቅማሉ ይርመሰመስ ገባ። ...እጄን ላክ አድርጌ ቅማል ላነሳ ስል "ተው" አሉኝ በቁጣ እጄን ቀብ እያደረጉ በድነጋጤ ሽምቅቅ አልኩኝ። መደንገጤን ሲያዩ መልሰው ፈገግ አሉና "እነዚህም ፍጡሮች ናቸው" አሉኝ።

When the sun's rays filtered through the branches of the cedar and rests on his old cloth, the lice started to move abundantly on his cloth. The big one, the smaller one, one over the other. When I stretched my hand to pick one, "stop" he said angrily. I was shocked. When he realizes what I felt, he smiled and then said "these are also created by God. (Tikur Dem, p.36)

The monk's motive to teach the public is clear. Living things should not be killed whether they are harmful or not. This has an implication that human beings also should not be killed.

In Gungun, people are more concerned with their Christianity. Three important words are the main indicators of their religion. Amhara, cord and Islam. Amhara represents Christian people while Islam refers to those who are not Christians. Christianity is symbolized by a thread worn around the neck. If this cord is not found, the person is considered to be unkind, dishonest. We can examine one incident which reflects the seriousness of the members of the community in their faith.

"ይህ ሰው እስላም ይሆን? አማራ?" አሉ ተረተኛው ሽማግሌ። "ማጠየቀው ብለው ነው? ብሎ አንዱ ሳቀ። "ይህን ቀልዳችሁን ተው። በሞተ ሰው አይቀለድም። ...ጡር ነው" አሉ በቁጣ። "ይቻት ክሩ በደም ተለውሳ ነወይ ይቻት!" ብሎ ሁለት ሦስትዩ በስንጥሩ ወደላይ አነሳና "አማራ ነው! በሉ እንግዲህ ለቀኛዝማይ እንንገራቸው..."

"Would this man be an Islam or an Amhara?" said the old man.

"Who did ask him?" said the other while he is laughing.

"Stop joking! It is unfair to make fun of a dead person. It is a sin" said the old man angrily... "Here is his cord! It is soaked in his blood" said the former by bringing it out with a splinter from the swollen neck of the corpse. "He is an Amara". "Ok, let us inform Kegnazmach." (*Gungun*, pp.187-188).

The fact that the dead man is a Christian urges them to continue their investigation. Even though Kegnazmach Belaineh is not willing to accept their request, they insist on burying the body of the unknown person in a manner appropriate to a christian and Christian tradition. They believe that there is not any difference between poor and rich, between cruel and kind after death.

What does the cord, soaked with the blood indicate? It symbolizes his (the dead man's) cruelty. The expression has this meanings as a symbol.

The following dialogue further magnifies the meaning of neck cord.

"አይ ያንቺ ነገር፥ ቤት በመለስ፥ ጓዳ በኅረስ አደራህን ያሉኝ ሰው አጥተው መሰለሽ? እንዲያው ውቃሊ አምላካቸው ቢወደኝ ክሬን አይተው ነውይ! ...

"Do you think that he gave me all properties because he has no body to carry this responsibility? No. He entrusted the responsibility to me just by looking at my cord and also his guardian spirit likes me. (Gungun, p.41).

In this dialogue, the character is talking about his loyalty to his boss, Kegnazmatch. The neck cord is stressed here because as a symbol, shows his honesty, fairness, kindness and other qualities. My informant Aleka Ayalew Tamiru has given me background stories of neck cord. According to him, there are two sources (App. D.158-159, N.14)

Sidetegnaw's religious aspect is similar to that of Gungun. In the story, the reader can see how the ruling class uses religion as a means of controlling the ruled. The story mainly contains two religions which contributed to the suppression of the ordinary people. The first religion is Christianity. The major characters are devout christians. This is revealed in the conversation of characters. For instance the hero Demelash says:

... ሻንጣ ተሸከሜ ዘው ዘው ስል ልጋለጥ ነበር። የዲማው ጊዮርጊስ ነው ያወጣኝ ሁለት ጊዜ አመለጥኳቸው በሶስተኛው እንጃልኝ።

... I was to be exposed while I was carrying a bag. It is St. George of Dima who protected me. I managed to escape twice. I doubt if I could for a third time (Sidetegnaw, p.111).

The dialogue expresses his belief in St. George. Like him, most of the characters attribute every co-incidence to the work of God. Their faith in God and other angles can be perceived from their language. They mention the names of God and angles repeatedly. For every good thing that happens to them the characters state that it is because of His blessing and for every bad, that happens to them, they think that God is angry and He is punishing men.

ዝናብ ካጣን ይኸው ሁለት አመታችን የእግዚአብሔር ቁጣ ነው፥ የሱ ቅጣት።

Just two years passed since we had rain.
It is God's curse. His punishment (*Sidetegnaw*,
p.184).

When they lack something important for their life, they say God has done it to give them lessons. This is the common justification members of the community give.

At another time, when some persons are harassed by others, the victims beg them pardon in the name of God or in the name of angles. For instance, when the deceived countryside man gets into American Ghibbi, specially to the room where Demelash lives, the reader sees the action of the criminals. At that time the man beseeches them to stop their wrong doing in the name of Christ and in the name of His mother, St. Mary.

ከሴት አልተፈጠራችሁም? እናት፥ እህት፥ ልጅ የላችሁም?
"ስለእመብርሃን ብላችሁ አትግደሉዋት። ነፍሰጡር ነች በማርያም እጅ
የተያዘች" አለ አባትዋ ዙሪያውን እየቡዋጠጠ።
"የእጣኑ ጨርቆስ ያለህ እግዚአ መሀረኑ ክርስቶስ!" አባ ጨርቆስ
ድምጹን ዝቅ አድርጎ ፀለየ። የሰሙት ሁሉ ሳቁ።

"Are not all of you born of woman? Don't you have mothers, sisters or daughters. Please, for the sake of the Mother of Christ, don't kill her. She is pregnant, who is in the hands of St. Mary" said the father by scratching his surrounding.

"Oh, you St. Kirkos! we beg your "pardon" said Abba Cherkosie. He prays in a very low voice. Those who listened to this laughed at him (*Sidetegnaw*, p.130).

When the man realizes that no body comes to defend his daughter, he keeps quiet. Then again in a very desperate mood he says:

**ምን ላድርግ ሰሚ አጣሁት! ልቅሶየ የገሀነም ልቅሶ፥ ፌኸቴ የሲኦል
ፌኸት ሆነ።**

What can I do? I couldn't get any one who helps me (*Ibid*, p.134).

When we compare, the Christian elements of this book, we see paganism permeating the plot of the story. The conflict of the story specially that of the main character Demelash with the landlords develops from this paganism. This contradiction gradually forces Demelash to leave his birth place and to lead a miserable life in American Ghibbi and the Sudan till he comes back after eight years of experience. For example, he is accused by one of the characters because he disrespects Gurratch.

**"እኔ ልናገረው አልችልም እንዴት ደፍራ ካፌስ እንዴት ይወጣል?
አበስኩ ገበርኩ ጌታዬ ይሳደባል "ማንን?"
"እሳቸውን አባ ጉራችን የአባይ ዳሩን ቆሌ" እያለ መዳፎቹን ወደላይ
ገልብጦ አንጋጦ "በክፉ አነሳኸኝ አይበሉኝ። ጌታዬ" አለ ከበላዩ ላለ ነገር
እነደሚናገር ድምፁን ለስለስ አድርጎ**

"I cannot tell about it! How could it can come out of my mouth because I am not audacious . Oh, my lord! He is insulting.

"Whom" "him Abba Gurrach, the guardian spirit of the river (Abbay)" says the young man by stretching his hands over his head and "pardon me my guardian spirit" said as if addressing to some one who is over him (Sidetegnaw, pp.9-10).

The dialogue here is used as an evidence to show their faith. Demelash is accused of being against the superstition of the people. As a result of this, according to the people's belief, he killed the agent of the spirit of Abbay (river) and he is exiled because he will have to be punished for his fault. As the consequence of his action, his family members were whipped and imprisoned until the revolution creates a convenient time for them to be released.

In Tikur Dem, on the other hand, a river is considered as a place where Satan or Devil lives. People are afraid of Satan. The following can be cited as an example:

እንዲያው ተዚያ ተወንዝ ዳር እንደጋኔል አትቀመጡም፡፡

"You will never live as Devil in that deserted area of the river. (Tikur Dem, p.110).

Astatke's father utters this. The government declares a statement of pardon for all criminals (shiftas) and allows them to live peacefully with other community members. The old man advises the criminals to leave that dreadful area. Another example from Gungun,

...እንዲያው መቼም የመሄጃ እጦት ነውይ ከዚህ ከርም አይቀሬ የሚሉ ከይሲ የጃራ ሴጣን ይሻላል፡፡ ከገደለም ግልግል ነው፡፡ ከማረም ምን ጣጣ አለ?

It is only lack of place If we had, it would have been better for us. The satan of Jarra is more kind than this wicked person who is known as Irm Aykere (the nick name of the person who is cruel. The name is given to him to say that he leaves nothing for them when he takes their farming products, (Gungun, p.55).

Jarra is a river. They believe that the Satan or the Devil lives there. This Satan is better than the person because, he has some qualities: his decision is very instant. Whether it is to kill or to forbid a person from doing good things, the Satan of Jarra is said to be quick in making decisions. Satan is evil doer. The Shiftas are the same. They alliniate themselves and join Satan. so, the criminals are also fast in decision making.

The second example from Tikur Dem explains the fear of Mehary after he becomes a monk. In his expression, he also talks about Satan.

ሌሊት ደግሞ መቃብር ጠባቂ ሰይጣን ፈራሁ።

During the night, I feared the satan who guards graves ... (Tikur Dem, p.73)

And in general, from the above examples, we can deduce that people believe that the devil lives where people do not live such as river and burial places. Here we see a contradiction between the belief of the people and the analysis given by Alaka Ayalew Tamiru (App. D, p.149.N.2). In Aleka Ayalew's analysis river is a source of life.

The reader can also observe other spiritual beliefs which contradict Christianity. For instance, immediately after going to churches, they also go to Wujibs and witchcraft. In other words, people despite their being Christian, practice different unchristian religious rituals. For example, w/o Ilfyikendu is Christian. Yet, when she is in trouble, she wants to find a solution to her problem. Hence she goes to witchcraft and justifies her action by saying:

**ምናባቴ ላርግ? ቢቸግረኝ አደል ባንቱው መጀን ብዬ መምጣቴ?
አሉ እንባቸው እየመጣና ድምፃቸው እየሰለለ።**

"What can I do? I came here because I am in trouble" says in a strained voice, wiping her tears. (*Gungun*, p.85).

The other character who represents people who believe in two religions is W/o Dejyitnu. She is described as follows:

የመቃብሩን አካባቢ ጢሻ ሲመለከቱ "ነይ አንቺም ነራ በይ ይባሉ ይመስል ከእግራቸው ነጠቅ ነጠቅ እያሉ ባንቱ ከራማ፥ ባንቱ መጀን አባቴ የኔ አድባር የለት ጉርሴን ያመት ልብሴን አይንፈጉኝ" ይሉና ቅጥልጥል ወፍራም የግመል አንገት የሚመስለውን ግዙፍ ዋርካ "አደራህን" በሚል ስሜት ይማፀኑታል።

When she saw the bush around the grave yard as if she is summoned to that place, she walks fast and says, "For your holiness my father, my god, don't stint my daily meal and my clothe", and she prays to that big Oak tree which looks like a heap of camle's neck." (*Ibid*, p.12).

This is her habit when she returns from the church. The fact that she believes in tree reflects also a paganistic element. Spiritual beliefs are not only reflected by these types of institutions. There are concepts of witchcraft and Adbar which manifest people's superstitious beliefs. For

example, Mehary misses the priest when he fires his gun. Astatke does the same. They never missed their marks before. Because they are such excellent shooters. Mehary tells this story as follows:

... ቄስ ምረቴ ተተባሉት ጋር መጡ በርከኩት ለብሰው እረኹም ጥምጥማቸው በሩቅ ይታያል። አናገፍ ለመግደል ወደነሱ ስሄድ መምሬ ደሱ ፈትለክ አሉ። ቄስ ምረቴም ወደኋላ ተመልሰው ሽቅብ እሮጡ። በርከክ ብዬ ስተኩስ ሳትኳቸው።
"ሳትኳቸው?" አለ አስታጥቄ ሞገስ ተዱሩ ውስጥ እየወጣ ተቋንጃው ሸብረክ ብሎ ተኮሰ" እሱም ሳታቸው። "እንዲህ ነችና ይህ አስማታም ቄስ ብሎ ቀለሁን አፈናጥሮ ሌላ ሲያቀባብል መነገዱን ሰብረው ተዱር ውስጥ ሲገቡ ጥምጥማቸውን ያጋም እሾህ ያዘባቸውና ለማስለቀቅ ቆም ሲሉ በብብታቸው መታጓቸው።

... The Priest [Memire Dessu] comes with Memire Mirete. He puts on his "burnous" (a traditional coat made from sheep's fur) and his turban is seen from Afar... I was resolved to kill him. Priest Mirete run away by turning back. When I shot at him by kneeling on my knees (a little bit), I missed him.

"Did you miss him?" said Astatke coming out from the jungle. He knelt on one of his knees and shot. He missed. "Gee! What a black magician priest he is" said he. Then the priest tried to flee till Astatke loaded his gun by throwing the cartridge case. The turban of the priest was seized by thorns. When he stopped to free his turban, I shot him under his armpit. (*Tikur Dem*, pp.102-203).

In this narration, the phrase "what a magician priest," has superstitious element. Some priests are believed to be practitioners of black magic. This has a psychological impact on the confidence of the shiftas because it is unbelievable for them to miss their marks. So, according to Astatke's view point, unless the priest has some kind of magical knowledge, they wouldn't miss him.

Furthermore, there are some sayings which express the fear of people regarding superstition. For instance, Wednesday has a significant place in social activities. It is considered as a bad day, people refrain from doing some tasks on Wednesday day. For instance, they will not travel far. If they do, they fear that some kind of danger will happen to them. Tikur Dem seems to reflect such superstitious beliefs. It is reflected through the actions and the words of Aba Mehary and his colleagues.

It is not clear whether the author did it deliberately or not but Gennet died on Wednesday. (Tikur Dem, p.143). There is no other convincing reason why this day is preferred. But we can say that it is the reflection of the traditional belief.

The presentation of all these analyses is to show that Christianity in these areas is intermingled with other religions.

3.2.2 Costume

Dresses and Trousers:

Costume includes the dressing culture of people. The way men and women dress is different. Dressing varies on the basis of the occasions. When they are working, when they are going to some ceremonial places and occasions such as church, mosque, market, wedding, they wear clothes which are different from the regular days. In the texts, social status and profession of people are reflected through costumes. These costumes have

symbolic implication beyond marking these places and purposes. For instance, men are supposed to wear trousers while women wear dresses. These have other meanings. "Dress" is used as an expression of femininity. Trousers is used to reflect masculinity. (This will be critically analysed in the next chapter).

Besides, the style of hair, and other styles of wearing also indicate the social beliefs of members of the communities. In Gungun, uncombed and disordered hair for men is a symbol of either heroism, banditry, aggression, psychological disturbance or poverty.

እስረኞች ሁሉ ከወገባቸው በላይ እራቁታቸውን ሆነው ልገራቸው ተንጨባሮ፣ ሰውነታቸው በላብ ተነክሮ ሲታዩ ለማስፈራራያ የተዘጋጁ ፍጡራን ይመስላሉ። ለረጅም ጊዜ ውሃ ካልነካው ገላቸው የሚወጣው ጠረን ያቀለሸልሻል።

All the prisoners are naked above their waist.

Their hair is disordered and their body is sweating.

When they are seen in this physical appearance they seem who are created to frighten others. (Sidetegnaw, p.154)

ስምንት የአባይ በረሃ ሽፍታዎች ጠመንጃዎቻቸውን ዘቅዝቀው እንደያዙ ተከታትለው ብቅ አሉ። አካባቢውን በጥርጣሬ እየገረመሙ ቶሎ ቶሎ ይራመዳሉ። ሰው ገለል እያለ መንገድ ለቀቀላቸው። እንደደረቀ ችፍርን ከተንጨፈረረው ጎፈሬያቸው፣ በላብ ከጠቆረው እጆ ጠባብና ቁምጣቸው፣ ከትከሻቸው ቁልቁል ከወረደውና በወገባቸው ዙሪያ ከታጠቁት ዝናቸው ጋር ሲታዩ ያስፈራሉ።

Eight bandits come from the Abbay desert. They hold their guns by turning them up side down. They walk very fast by observing the areas suspiciously. The public evaluates from their way. When they are seen with their disordered hair, with their dirty clothes and their guns, their appearance is terrifying (Ibid, p.51).

This attitude towards hair of men differs when it comes to women. When it is kept orderly and neatly, the hair shows the beauty of the woman. When it is not kept properly, it shows her ugliness.

1 ... ሴትየዋ አጭር ናት። ያሰረችው ቀይ ሻሽ አልፎ አልፎ የተበጨቀ በመሆኑ ጭብጥ ጭብጥ ፀጉር በየቀዳዳው ብቅ ብሎ ይታያል። ፊትዋ ያረረ ቂጣ ይመስላል። ...

1 The woman is short. Her red Shash is old and has holes. Through those holes her hair appears. Her face seems a toasted bread. (Ibid, p.96)

2 ... ቤቱ ሊዘጋ አቅራቢያ አንዱ አልጋ ተከራይ ሁለት እንግዳ ሰዎች አስከትሎ መጣ። አንድ ወንድና አንዲት ልጅ እግር ሴት ሴትየዋ ሹርባ ተሠርታ ትልቅ የብር መስቀል በሰማያዊ ማተብ አንገትዋ ላይ አንጠልጥላለች። ...

2 When the time getting dark, one of the members comes with two guests. The guests are a man and young lady. The lady gets her hair braided and has necklace made of silver. She puts it on her neck with blue neck-cord. (Ibid, p.126)

The first lady is from American Gibbi. She is a prostitute. When Bekry and Demelash enter her hut, she misbehaves. They go out. But the second lady has an attractive figure. The braided hair and the necklace add to her beauty. Her beauty invites the 'Criminals' to rape her. Hair is put here to make a comparison between ugliness and beauty.

Priests are identified by their "Shash" they put on their head. It is ritualistic because it has something to mean. According to the legend, they use it because it shows their degree of qualification. It is a symbol that St. Mary gives her Mekenet (a Shemma tied on waist like belt) to Thomas as an evidence of their meeting.

Gungun also reflects the tradition of clothing of both women and men to make cultural comparison. Characters are amazed, when they see clothes which are not common to their area.

Kegnazmach Belayneh, after he wins the parliamentary election, he dresses in a way he can be similar with his future colleagues members of the parliament. But this becomes strange to his people; so, some criticize it and some are excited by it.

እዝሊዩ ያንተ ሥራ! አሁን ይኸ የለበሱት ጥንዚዛ የመሰለ ነገር ምን ያህል ያወጣ ይሆን? በማለት እርስ በርሳቸው ሲጠያየቁ ከመካከላቸው አንዱ "እረ ስንትና ስንት መቶ ሽልንግ ነው ሲሉ ነበር እቴ የጥማድ ይሁን የሁለት ጥማድ በሬ ዋጋ ያወጣል ሲሉ ሰምቻለሁ" ብላ መለሰች።

አንዳንድ ደግሞ "እስቲ ታልጠፋ ልብስ አሙካ የጠገበ ያገሬን ባና የመሰለ ይልበሱ?" በማለት ታናንቃለች።

.. Oh God, your work! How much does this black cloth he puts on cost?", While they were discussing, they ask this question each other. One of the women said, "I heard, it costs a lot of Shillings. I am not sure whether this is equal to the price of two or four oxen. Any way I have heard about it." The other woman said "Why does he wear this ugly cloth while he has many options here in our area?. (Gungun, p.202).

The cloth can be taken as a symbol of alienation of Kegnazmach from his people. On the other hand, we see Mindaye, his serf, following him. He buys his wife and his children clothes from the city. This is also an indication of the will to bring cultural change or civilization.

When we come to realize women's clothing and decoration or make up, it has close connection with Prostitution. W/o Dejyitnu and Shewarkabish are good examples. W/o Dejyitnu in order to attract Kegnazmach and others, she takes care of herself by dressing, as far as possible, like the city women.

Shewarkabish, when she is living with W/o Ilfyikendu in Addis Ababa, she gets life difficult. When she compares herself with other women, she feels inferior and decides to be employed as a maid in another place. She uses her salary to buy artificials and gradually she becomes a prostitute.

Therefore, costume has different roles and interpretations on the basis of social values and norms. For Shewarkabish and W/o Dejyitnu clothing is an indication of civilization and competition. For Kegnazmach it a sign of "respect" that matches his new role as a member of parliament.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LITERARY USE OF BELIEFS IN THE TEXTS

In chapter three, we have seen some symbolic elements found in the works under study. For instance, "Kemis" (dress), "Suri" (trousers), "Mateb" (neck-cord) are used and their significance is shown. What we are going to do here is to consider the contribution of these terms to the literary works. For this purpose, three words "Wonz" (river), "Tebmenja" (rifle) and "Suri" (trousers) respectively are chosen. These are the words which have great role in each of the stories because of their extended meanings. Their role in the construction of plot and in characterization is examined.

4.1 Plot

The story of Sidetegnaw begins by informing the reader about the frightening situation of Demelash's father when the neighbours were discussing about his health. The origin of Demelash (the main character), the major conflicts he faces, and all important background for the story are given in the first part of the narration. Then, the consequences come. His life goes through different situations. This flow of life can be seen in four phases. For the division of these phases, the symbolic word river plays an important role.

The first part of it covers the narration from Goha Zion to Addis Ababa (pp.1-54). This is the very important part of the story. The reader is given all basic information about the plot. This is where the characters are influenced by their beliefs. They worship Abbay river because they consider that there is a god which lives in it. It is the phase where the ruling class uses this belief as a means to exploit the farmers, and where the conflict takes firm ground.

The farmers are afraid of Balabat Wako (ironically "Wako" in Oromo is "God" which implies wisdom and greatness) because they associate him with Abba Gurratch (the god of Abbay). Abba Guratch, as the farmers are told during the ritual ceremony, the spirit is with him. The following is related in this context.

"ዋቆ ያገር አባት (ባለ አገር) ካንተ ጋር ነን። እንጠብቅሃለን ጠላቶችህ እግርህ ሥር ይወድቃሉ ተባረክ" የሚለውን ይህን ምርቃት የሚሰማው ሰው ሁሉ በአንድ ድምጽ "አሜን" እያለና እንደሸማ እየተነጠፈ ይሰማል።
በሆታው፥ በእልልታውና በጭፈራው ስሜታቸውን መግለጡ አልጠቅም ያላቸው ወይም ለባላባታቸው ያላቸውን ፍቅርና አክብሮት በደንብ ያላሳዩ የመሰላቸው ሰዎች በየተራ እየቀረቡ ዋቆን እጅ ይነሱታል። ጫማውን ይሰማሉ።

when the people hear "Wako, father of the people, we are on your side. We will protect you! Your enemies will be defeated. We bless you!" ... the voice which comes out from an invisible man, they say loudly "Amen!" and they bow.

Those who are not satisfied by their ululation and dances or those who think they don't express their gratitude to him, they kiss his shoes (Sidetegnaw, p.47).

They believe that Abba Gurratch of Abbay river has power on every body and they are dedicated to him.

Demelash like his father doesn't respect the idolatry. The reason is it is assumed he realizes that this god itself is on the side of the governors. He protests against this god and subsequently against Abba Gurratch. He refuses to give share of his agricultural products to the landlord. Finally, he kills Balabat Wako, the landlord the spirit, god of Abbay river. Thus, he has to run away so as to save his life. This is the point when the setting shifts to American Gibbi.

The second part of the story takes place here in Addis. Demelash comes and starts to live in American Gibbi, which is a totally different world. The reader is shown another aspect of life of the wretched people. The reader looks at the whole scene through the description given by the omniscient narrator. It is different from the previous setting.

In the first phase, we see that Abbay symbolically represents their belief. They worship it as if it has the power of controlling their existence. It is given animals, food and sometimes liquor. Here in American Gibbi the words "river" and "liquor" are also used repeatedly. The river is called Gordome and the alcohol which people usually drink is "araki" home made(mead) sometimes Tej.

Here, people drink so as to resist the lice and other parasites and to escape from the world of reality. They

deliberately use liquor as a means to cover their external problems and to forget themselves.

Earlier, we have seen that Abbay river is worshipped, but here Gordome is a river where people hide their crime. They throw into it the corpse of people whom they have killed.

... እወንዙ አጠገብ ሲደርሱ እሬሃውን እመሬት ላይ እንዲያጋድሙት ዘበኛው ምልክት አሳያቸው። ከዚያም እሬሃው ለብሶት የነበረውን ልብስ በሙሉ ካወላለቀው በሁዋላ ከሙዋቹ ሚስት በገፈፈው ነጠላ ጠቅልሎ ወደጎን አደረገውና "በሉ አንሱት" አለ የሬሃውን እግር ይዞ።
 "እ ... እ ... ምን ለማድረግ? እ ... ደመላሽ ግራ አጋብቶ ጠየቀ።
 "ምነው? ገረመህ እንዴ? ያዙት እኮ ነው የምለው!" ዘበኛው ተቆጣ፣ ጌታሁን ቀልጠፍ አለና የሬሃውን ሁለት እጆች ያዘበት እንደሹዋሹዋ ያስት ጊዜ አወዛወዙትና እወንዙ መኻል ወረወሩት፣ ሶምሶማ የሚዘለው የጎርዶሜ ጎርፍ ከላይ ከመጣው ቆሻሻ ጋር ይዞት ጋለበ።

When they reached at the river, the guard ordered them by using a sign to put the corpse on the ground. After taking off all clothes from the dead body, he covered it by the Shemma which he took from the wife of the dead man. Then he held the legs of the body and he said "help me"

"Ah! ... Ah! What to do with it? said Demelash. He is perplexed.

"What is the matter? Are you surprised? I said hold it" said the guard. Getahun held the two hands of the corpse promptly. They swung it three times and threw it into the river. The galloping river Gordome took it with the dirt which it brought from another place. (Ibid, p.116)

Here is a river where human being is thrown into like dirt where as there in the first setting Abbay was worshipped as a saviour of life. In the first setting, people are loyal to their culture. But in the second phase, the people are wild and they do not have norm and religion. They do not care about

their lives and the lives of others.

Demelash goes through these experiences. He is looking at different miseries in which the poor people live. The author satirizes the social values. American Gibbi is better for those who are victims of the negative side of the social structure. They have freedom to speak whatever they want to. This brings us to the third part of the story.

The third part of the narrative shifts again from this awful place, American Gibbi to another hell, the Sudan (pp.144-260), where the life of the Ethiopian refugees is described in detail. In this section too, the word "river" appears for the third time but for another purpose. During the rainy season Tekezzie river frightens the refugees. They talk about Tekezzie how people are drowned into it. Here river is a symbol of separation and exile.

River is mentioned for similar purpose in Gungun. There Mindaye is obliged not to cross river Jarra when the reconciliation between him and his opponents take place. River is a demarcation here. In Tikur Dem, again we find a similar function of river. Mehary lives near Zoga river after killing people.

In Sidetegnaw, when the story shifts to Sudan, the word "liquor" appears with drugs. Here people, like those who live in the American Gibbi, need a means to escape from reality. They are dissatisfied with their life. So they become addicted

to drugs and liquor. When they take these, they become calm. Drug is added to show that the society is not only different from the Ethiopians but also the problem is taking another (added) dimension.

In the Sudan, people came from a civilized society. That society is the American people. America is somehow equated with with American Gibbi. The reader examines the routine life of the black Americans and Ethiopian refugees through the narration of Ephrem. He mentions his sister as an example. The narrator is intended to associate the negative side of civilization with America. Going far from one's home is unpleasant just like life beyond Tekezzie is not good for Ethiopians.

The last part of the narrative contains the resolution of the conflicts. The story ends "happily". The narrative turns back to Ethiopia. Within 18 pages (Ibid, pp.260-278) the reader travels from the Sudan to Addis Ababa and then from Addis Ababa to Kilimtu. Here the river Abbay is described from another perspective. This description is different from the previous one. Demelash starts to like it very much, it reminds him of his country. Now the word "river" becomes a source of independence.

ሰው ያለወንዙ ብዙ ነው መዘዙ ይባላል። እንዴት ለመሆኑ ምን
አይነት መላክት ነው ይህን ህዝብ ከሀገሩ የሚነዳው?

A man with out his river [to mean out of his country] faces many difficulties. Anyway! What a horrible situation pushes these society members to move out of their own country? (Ibid, p.194).

When Demelash tells this to Bekry, he is contrasting the difference between the life led in exile as compared to living in one's own country. This figure of speech reflects this concept of identity.

The four phases of Sidetegnaw are connected through terms which express on reflect the culture of vendetta. We find words which reflect this concept. For instance, in the book, which is 278 pages of pocket size, "blood" recurs 32 times; "male", "trousers", "bandit" (these are used interchangeably for similar idea), recur 49 times and the word "rifle" 72 times. In each phase, except the last one, there is the dissatisfaction of people. To change this unpleasant situation, people are fighting. For this purpose, rifle has a significant place in people's life. Rifle is also the main term in Tikur Dem.

When we come to analyse Tikur Dem, we find the main cause of the conflict to be adultery. Mehary becomes a shifta because he has to revenge those who killed his brother. The cause of the conflict is a woman. In the attempt to revenge, rifle plays a role.

The story of the monk, Abba Mehary, reflects two contradictory aspects of life. These are the past and present life of Abba Mehary which shows, the true nature of man. Man is evil and virtuous at the same time. The story is presented in chronological order. Abba Mehary tells his story from the beginning to the end. He starts from the first fight, how and why he killed his rivals.

In his narration, Abba Mehary states some incidents which have changed the course of his life. Astatke Moges, Gennet Teferra and "Afitibachew" (Retta) are the major ones. The first person whom he meets is Afritibachew.

Mehary is taken to this known shifta by a relative. Afritibachew contributes to Mehary's heroic deeds.

The shiftas envy Mehary for two reasons. First, they realize that their foreman appreciates him. Secondly, Mehary has a very good gun. So they decide to slay him. Gun (rifle) and heroism go side by side. His gun becomes a cause for another conflict.

Here a question can be raised. Where did Mehary learn hunting or shooting? We see him going to the jungle carrying his rifle. Unless a person is trained from his childhood he can't be a sharp shooter. Even though Mehary's father is a well known shooter, [As Afritibachew proves this on p.48] we don't see Mehary with his father and teaching him the skill. It is not a convincing description. Any way, through the speech of Abba Mehary, the words "rifle" and "rivals" "ባለደግቼ" appear now and then.

Mehary kills one of the shiftas and he runs away. Since then, Mehary and Afritibachew become enemies. This incident brings another consequence. Afritibachew and the cousins of

Bezza became friends and Mehary's situation is getting more serious.

Another time, we see when a person who doesn't have rifle on his hand becomes a victim (and is also considered womanish).. The strongest man Mehary is subdued. This is seen when Gennet, his lover forces him to go to her families.

... ገነት መሸም ነጋም ውጥር አድርጋ ስትይዝኝ ጊዜ አስታጥቄ ሞገስ "አየህ! ተገነት አባት ጋር መታረቁ ትልቅ ጥቅም አለው። በመንግሥት በኩል ያለውን ጣጣ እሳቸው ሊጨርሱት ይችላሉ። ወዲያውምኮ ልጃውቸን አገባህ እንጂ አልገደልህም" በማለት አደፋፈረኝ።

... Gennet daily asks me to go to her family. Astatke Moges said to me "you see! Reconciling with Gennet's father, has many advantages. He could help you to settle everything with government officials. You have not killed his daughter you married her" and encouraged me. (Ibid, p.107).

But her father subdues Mehary by cheating. Here, personal interest for promotion dominates the interest to be governed by social norms. Grazmatch wants promotion from the officials by handing over Mehary. Mehary is put into jail. Gennet's hand is given to another man.

Mehary manages to escape from the policemen when the car brakes down. It is obvious that the car is merely functional for the story. The condition enables Mehary to escape and at the same time to regain a rifle. Rifle means masculinity. After that, he kills his father in law and Gennet's husband. In turn, he looses Gennet. Then, he regrets and goes to the Monastery to repent.

The way the story ends seems to convey a moralistic message. It emphasizes that people should forgive each other. But, when we examine the tradition of the people of Meskech, we see another important cultural aspect.

They believe that though the feud is stopped by reconciliation, vengeance may continue again. This will happen when the opponents get chance to revenge. Culturally, the feud stops and the rivals reconcile only when the following two conditions are fulfilled:

1. the number of the people who are killed by the rivals both sides ~~are~~ equal, (App.F, PP 178-179, No.9).
2. when one of the families doesn't have a grown up man who is strong enough to revenge the opponent.

So, will Kassa Mehary or his step son start again the cycle of vengeance to continue? No one knows. This will take place if Abba Mehary has a relative. But since it is not accepted by the society to kill a monk, an old man and a priest, for the time being, the relationships of Abba Mehary and Kassa will not be disturbed.

In Tikur Dem, Zoga river appears recurrently. It has different function from Abbay and Tekezzie or Gordome. It is a means of people's life. They grow their food from its water. They are dependent on it. But, also it seems to be considered by people as a place of devil. We also find similar approach in Hale Melekot's Gungun.

The story of Gungun isn't flowing in a chronological order. It starts from the middle of the story. This stage is where the main character Mindaye's life starts to follow new line.

The story moves from one setting to another. On the basis of these settings, the story can be divided into four phases like Sidetegnaw. The first one is about Mindaye's place of birth zone Amba. The second one covers the majority of the story in Sar Amba and Majete. The third is where the fight between the farmers and the landlords' takes place. The last part is about the victory of Mendaye and his colleagues over the landlords.

The election by itself is a historical evidence which shows the process of democratization during Haile Selassie's regime. But does it have any significance for the story? The election process in the story enables the author to bring the story from the countryside to the town. The election also increases the fame of Kegnazmatch. His power and greatness are reflected in this political process. His social status interests his concubine W/o Dejyitnu.

His serf Mindaye brings and takes message from one to the other. On the other hand, W/o Ilfyikendu is urged to be against Mindaye because she considers him as her enemy, who helps her husband to have love affairs with W/o Dejyitnu. She can't revenge her husband. So she attacks Mindaye secretly.

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In order to achieve her plan she brings Afessa an opponent of Mindaye.

Even though, there is sufficient reason for the friendship of Afessa and this lady, he collaborates with her to slay Mindaye. Their relationship brings another effect which helps the plot to move forward.

Mindaye leaves for Majete when his boss sends him to take a message to the latter's concubine. But immediately Kegnazmach goes to W/o Dejjitnu following Demelash. This is because she comes into his mind, and he wants to meet her physically. This might be taken as an attempt to show the love Kegnazmach has for his concubine. When this action is examined in relation to Mindaye's suffering, it doesn't have any contribution for the development of the plot. He has an access to know everything while he is at his home.

Kegnazmach loses his reputation when he comes to Addis Ababa. There are many people who have greater positions than him. This change of place causes him to develop psychological conflict.

የቀዝማች በላይነህ ታፈሰ ሕይወት ወደ አዲስ የኑሮ ክልል በመግባቱ የማያውቁት ጉዳይ እየበዛ፥ ከራሳቸው ጋር የሚያወዳድሯቸው ሰዎች በልዩ በልዩ ሁኔታዎች እየበለጧቸው፥ አንዱን ሲያጤኑና ሌላውን ሲከተሉ ኑሮ ዐይን ዐዋጅ ሆነባቸው።
...ሆኖም ትክክለኛ ችሎታቸውን ለመገምገም ብዙ ጊዜ አልፈጀባቸውም። "አዳሜ እናቱ ሆድ አልተማረው፥ እኔ አብዛኛው እድገቴ በግብርና ነው። ነገር ሳደራና ስሸምን አልኖርኩ።" ብለው ብልሃት አበጁ። ይኸውም ልዩ ልዩ ሐሳቦችንና ጉዳዮችን ለመረዳት አንዳንድ እንደራሴዎች ጋር መተዋወቅንና አብሮ መዘዋወርን አዘወተሩ። በዚህ ምክንያትም ከሚስትና ከቅምጣቸው ጋር የሚያሳልፉት ጊዜ እያደር ተጣበበ።

Kegnazmache's life starts to follow a new direction. Things which he doesn't know become plenty. He realizes that people whom he competes with exceed him and when he examines everything he becomes confused. Though, it does not take him long time to realize his status.

"Everyone is not born with what he is. I am brought up in the countryside. I am not used to these kinds of intrigues" he said and he designed his own plan. This plan is to talk with some officials about the matters which he doesn't know. He wants also to pass his time with such people. Because of this he becomes busy. Gradually he fails to have enough time for his wife and concubine. (Gungun, P.241)

As a result of this, w/o Dejjitnu starts to arrange her plan which is against the interest of Kegnazmach Belineh. That is, she wants to have her own income generating job and she succeeds, by opening a bar.

Another aspect of the story is its theme which focuses on the relationship of state and church. This unity is reflected through many descriptive presentations. For instance, the sculpture and the painting (p.221) are symbols which reflect the relationship of the two.

ከምክር ቤቱ ሕንፃ ዋና ደቡባዊ በር አናት ላይ ሰማዕቱ ቅዱስ ጊዮርጊስና ከግራ ቀኙ ደግሞ ዘውድ ጭነው አንዱ በግራ ሌላው በቀኝ አንዳንድ የፊት እግራቸው የኢትዮጵያን ሰንደቅ ዓላማ የያዙ አናብስት ሥዕል አሉ።
በዚያው ትይዩ ከግዙፉ ባለሁለት ተካፋች የብረት በር ግራና ቀኝ ባራት ማዕዘን ቅርፅ የብረት ድንጋይ ዓምድ አናት ላይ ፊታቸውን ወደ ምሥራቅና ምዕራብ አዙረው የተገለጠ መጽሐፍ የያዙ የሁለት ባለክንፍ አናብስት ሐውልት ይገኛል። ከግርጌያቸው በጠባብ መቆሚያ ውስጥ ቁመተ መለሎና አቋቋመ መልካም ትጥቅ ሽንቅጥ ቆፍጣና ወታደሮች ይቆማሉ።

On the southern side of the top of the chamber, there are two pictures. One is St. George's and it is located on the left side. On the right side there are pictures of two lions which have on their head crowns and hold the Ethiopian Flags.

In front of this there is a big door. On the right and left side of it, there are sculptures of two lions each has on its feet two open books. Under these, there are two soldiers whose physical appearances are attractive (Ibid, p.221).

The Ethiopian Kingdom was symbolized by a lion. This symbolization comes from the Bible. The story is connected with the victory of Judha.

In the story, unnecessary events are inserted with out function. For instance, when Kegnazmach discovers the basket which was found in the jungle his wife is scared because, she sent it to the shifta whom she employees to kill Mindaye with the help of Afessa. Then, she goes to Afessa during evening to tell him about the situation. She believes, he must run away. At this time Shewarkabish follows her. The lady doesn't know that she is followed by Shewarkabish. There is no reason why this maid follows her. It is stated simply to make Shewarkabish aware of the fact that Ilfyikendu in order to cover her crime, she accuses her. The maid listens to what they are talking about and then she comes back. This is not plausible because Shewarkabish doesn't have any motive to go. It does not alter whether this maid knows the cruelty of Ilfyikendu or not.

The story as a whole flows very fast after it is made to shift to Addis Ababa. Mindaye and Kegnazmach become opponents. Mindaye shows radical change after he comes to Addis.

4.2 Characterization

Characters are classified into two categories, male and female. The content and theme of the works are the basic reasons to make this distinction. Femininity and masculinity play an important role in the ritualistic and religious aspects of the stories. On the basis of this, we will examine characterization in the portrayal of religious fathers and heroes in relation to females.

4.2.1 Religious Fathers

Priests are the officials who lead the Cristians and who are practitioners of rituals for Cristianity.

In christianity, of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, there are priests, Debtaras, monks and nuns. It is interesting to see the roles of these religious fathers in the selected novels. They are portrayed to accomplish four functions, to resolve conflicts between other characters, to practice religious functions, such as preaching the public; to intermingle the state and the church and the last one is to practice other spiritual practices such as enchantment.

Abba Mehary in Tikur Dem, is a monk whose function is to show the positive values of Cristianity. Before he became a

monk, he was a criminal who killed about five persons. He is portrayed as a person whose experiences passed through two different phases.

Unlike a monk, he doesn't talk much about Cristianity in his narration. He is a character who reflects the culture of vengeance. Even he doesn't know the history of the monastery. When the young boy asks him how and by whom the monastery was built, he answers;

እሱን ተወው! የኛ ሥራ አይደለም።

Leave it, it is non of our business. (Tikur Dem, p.34).

If he knew about it, he could give a very short answer in order not to divert the direction of the story.

The main objective of Abba Mehary is to teach people that vengeance is not good. He criticizes that vengeance is unnecessary and a ckward culture. He is teaching and moralizing the public by showing the negative aspects of vengeance. Here, religion plays a role by bringing peace to the society and to the minds of individuals. Abba Mehary feels guilty conscious. But by becoming a monk he tries to bring peace to his mind.

In this same book, there are two priests who are portrayed as minor characters. The first one is the one who is killed by Mehary. This has taken place when he was a Shifta. The second

is one who is taken to be hanged by the government officials because this priest kills a monk because of food. Their characterization reflects two things. From the first one it is implied that vengeance victimizes the religious fathers. While the second suggests that selfishness even among religious fathers brings catastrophe. This helps to point out the weakness of priests.

In Sidetegnaw, the reader gets a priest who lives with the so called criminals in American Gibbi. His presence is functional. He is there to show the weaknesses of priests. Through him, the author exposes their fault. He uses this character, to indicate that there are among religious fathers who misbehave just like other common people. American Gibbi is a place where criminals live. This priest Abba Cherkosie lives where religion is given least respect.

Abba Cherkosie helps the author to express about enchantment. Debtaras are claimed to have of this enchantment. Let us take some examples from the text which reflects the kind of questions Aba Cherkosie is asked:

"ንገረኝ እስቲ ከአሥርቱ ትእዛዛት የትኛውን ጣሰኩ?" ይለዋል እንደኛው ሰውዬ ጆሮውን እየጎተተው።

"የትኛውንም ብትጥስ ከሃጢአት አይቆጠርብህም! ክርስቶስ እንደ አንተ ያለውን ሃጢአተኛ ሊያድን ነው የመጣው! ምን አለፋህ ሐብታም ወደ መንግሥተ ሰማያት ከሚገባ ግመል በመርፌ ቀዳዳ ቢሾልክ ይቀላል ተብሎ የል? በምድር የሚራቡ ብፁአን ናቸው ብልዋል ቃለወንጌል።" አባ ጨርቆሴ ጆሮውን ለማስለቀቅ እየታገለ ይናገራል።

"ውሸታም ቄስ! ደሀ መንግሥተ ሰማያት ከሚገባ ነው መባል ያለበት መንግሥተ ምድር መግባት ያልሆነለት ችጋራም እንዴት አድርጎ ነው

መንግሥተ ሰማያት የሚገባው? መንግሥተ ሰማያትና መንግሥተ ምድር አንድ ናቸው። የመንግሥተ ሰማያት ቁልፍ በእጃችን ነው የሚሉት ቄሶች የመንግሥተ ምድር ሥልጣን የካፋዮች አይደሉምን?

"Please tell me! which one of the Ten commandments am I against?" says the one by pulling his [the priest's] ear.

"you are not a sinner! which ever the commandments you are against, Jesus Christ has come to save a sinner like you... Those who suffer in this world will be the heir of paradise says the Bible" says Abba Cherkosie.

"You liar priest! ... how could the poor who is not able to live peacefully in this world heir paradise? Both world and heaven are the same. Those who are claimed to have the key of heaven in their hands, aren't they also the governors of this world? ..." (*Sidetegnaw*, p.101-102).

This dialogue shows the argument of the criminals and the priest. The second example shows their dialogue about enchantment. Priest Cherkossie tries to explain to them the point which they raise and he promises them to give final answers to their questions. Their dialogue is satirical. They are mocking at the priest's explanation.

ፍቅር ይዞኛል፥ የምወዳትም ሴትዮ በፍቅር ድብን እንድትል ምን ላድርግ?" ሌላው እንደመዝፈን እያለ ይጠይቀዋል።

"ቀላል ነው ቀላል፥ እሱ ቀላል ነው እንደምንም በልና ከውስጥ ልብሷ ጫፍ በጥሰህ አምጣልኝ። ከመድኃኒት ጋር ቀምሜ መስተፋቅር አደርግልሃለሁ። ከዚያ በኋላ ክንፍ አውጥታ መብረር ነው።

"ሳይሰሙኝ እንድሠርቅ፥ ሲሰሙኝ እንዳመልጥ የሚረዳኝ መድኃኒት ምንድነው?" ይለዋል ሌላው ዒሙን እየጎተተው።

የመቃብር አረት! ከትኩስ መቃብር ላይ አንድ እፍኝ አፈር አፍሰህ እፈለክበት ቤት ጣራ ላይ ሽው አድርገው። ቤተሰቡ በሙሉ በድን እሬሃ ይሆናል። ያን ጊዜ ነፍሳቸው እጣራው ላይ ወጥታ ትቆያለች የሚነቁት አንተ ከሄድህ፥ ከራቅህ በኋላ ነው። በዚያን ጊዜማ እንኳን እቃቸውን እነርሱንም ተሽክመሃቸው ብትሄድ አይሰሙህም። ኢሂሂሂ!

"I fell in love with a woman! What shall I do in order to attract her?" one asks him (the priest).

"It is very simple. It is simple. Try to get a piece from her underwear and bring it to me. I will do magic and then she will fall in love with you!"

"What is the means which enables me to steal without being heard and to flee from them if they hear?"

"A soil from a new grave! Take a handful of earth from a newly dug grave and disperse it on the roof of the house you want to steal from. Then the family will sleep. Their souls will stay on that roof till you finish your task. They wake up after you have left ... (Ibid, pp.102-103).

Though the reader is not given any background information about Abba Cherkosie, his presence in the story is functional. Without him, the discussion about enchantment might be implausible.

Gungun has also religious content. Priests are portrayed to magnify this aspect and also to exalt the interrelatedness of the state and the church. These priests try to convince the public by teaching how the ruled should be loyal to the ruling class.

We have two priests in the story, in addition to those anonymous priests who preach in churches during the revolution. The two main priests are Memire Tekle Giorgis and his colleague Abba Wolde Giorgis. These priests have contributed to the development of the plot. They interfere

within the lives of individuals. For instance, when Kegnazmach refuses to take his wife Ilfyikendu with him to Addis Ababa, the wife uses the priest as a mediator. She knows that the priest has power to force her husband. Then the misunderstanding created between the husband and the wife is resolved.

Memire Tekle Girgis also plays an important role in solving Mindaye's conflict. When he is exiled out of his place, it is the priest who brings him to Kegnazmach. At another time, when Kegnazmach decides to postpone the celebration of the yearly Saint Michael's day, Memire Tekle and his colleague influence him (Kegnazmach) not to do .

Memire Tekle Giorgis is portrayed as a layman. Kegnazmach gives reason why he has Memire Tekle Giorgis as his father confessor:

... ቄሱ ቅን የዋህና ብዙ የማይናገሩ፤ በሃይማኖታዊ ተግሳፅና ቁጣም እጅግም ሰው የማይጫኑ፤ በተለይም ቀኛዝማችን እምብዛም የማይደፍሩ ናቸው። በተጨማሪም የሰውየው ውለታ ሃይማኖታዊ ሥልጣናቸውን እየተጋፉ አንደበታቸውን ያላላዋል። ቢሆንም ቀኛዝማች በጣም ያከብሯቸዋል። ስንት ስንት የተራቀቁ ሊቃውንትና ካህናት እያሉ የገዛ ፀሎታቸውን እንኳን በወጉ እማያደርሱ የንስሐ አባት ምን ሊያደርጉላቸው ነው? የሚለውን አሚታ የሰሙለት እንኳ "እኔ እኮ ትምህርቴም፤ መጽሀፍቴም አሉኝ። ለሥርአቱ ያህል ይበቁኛል ይኸ ያባቶቻችንም አደራ ጭምር ነው። ዕውቀቴም ቢሆን ይበቃቸዋል። ዕድቅም ሆነ ኩነኔ ባለም እያሉ በተሠራ በጎ ሥራ እንጂ በንስሐ አባት አይነት አይደለም። ሌሎቹም እኮ የመንግሥተ ሰማይን በር አስከፍተው አያስገቡም።" በማለት መልሰዋል።

"The priest is meek, sincere and he doesn't talk much. He is not a man who forces his religious authority on people, specially on

Kegnazmach. In addition to this, the favour that Kegnazmach does for him hinders him from influencing Kegnazmach. Nevertheless, Kegnazmach respects him. People say "There are many clergymen who have deep knowledge about religion and wonder why he [Kegnazmach] has this priest, who is not capable of praying for himself, as a father confessor. When Kegnazmach hears this backbites, he replies "I myself have the religious books and the knowledge. He is qualified for the formality. This is the tradition of our forefathers. He also has adequate knowledge. All righteousness and damnation are measured by the work done during life time in this world and not by the type of father confessors we have. Even the others who are claimed to be elites don't have the key to heaven. (Gungun, p.72).

In this description, Memire Tekle Giorgis is characterized as a person who is not serious. That is why Memire Wolde Giorgis, the stronger priest comes with him as a supporter. Memire Tekle is an obsequious person. Because of this, he makes mistakes. This personality of his exposes him to be criticized by Likelesh. She expresses her resentment because he gives her his hand to kiss it instead of his cross. It is true, sometimes priests do like this. But this must take place when they come out from the Mass (App.D.P.159,N.16). At this time, their body is considered venerable. This comes from the Mosaic law or Pentateuch. But during other times, they must use their cross not their hands. According to this point, Likelesh is correct. He has a bias in favour of the upper classes. When he enters their hut, he doesn't splash the holy water properly and he doesn't let her kiss his cross. (Gungun, p.79).

However, most of the time Memire Tekle Giorgis doesn't fail to accomplish his role. He speaks about the necessity of

honesty. When he reconciles W/o Ilfyikendu and her husband he says:

ይቺ ለምንድነው መታሰሩ?

What is the purpose of this neck cord?
(Ibid, p.76)

When we compare the characterization of priests in the three works especially in Gungun and Sidetegnaw, they are objects of criticism. Their function is to preach the public about Christianity and to lead religious rituals. There are priests who commit crime. All these priests have one common character, taking alcohol.

Except Abba Mehary, in Tikur Dem, the rest live with the common people. So, they commit mistakes like the ordinary people in that particular society. They even kill persons.

4.2.2 Feminity vis a vis Masculinity

This subtopic reveals almost all social norms of the societies because mostly the social values and rules develop from gender variation. Different aspects of beliefs reflect the distinction between men and women. Feminity is expressed in comparison with masculinity and vice ver sa. In Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungun, this situation can be perceived or examined from different perspectives.

The type of women characters portrayed in Gungun include prostitutes, concubines, honest wives, women from the lower class and from the upper class. But none of them are independent from men. Through their characterization, we

understand their parasitic nature. But is that true? We will see this later.

The first general point which is widely reflected in the stories is that women are inferior to men. Women cannot make decisions by themselves. They are, sometimes fraudulent. W/o Ilfyikendu, in Gungun can be a good example for this.

As it is stated, they are dependent on men throughout the stories. Even when they talk to their husbands, they address them "Antu" (Plural form of second person pronoun and they use it as an expression showing respect and politeness). For instance, Ilfyikendu addresses her husband in this form.

From the beginning when the reader is introduced to these wife and husband characters, he notices that they are getting into conflict, and the reason for their conflict is adultery. Kegnazmach is an adulterer. He says to her:

እኔ ካገር የተለየ ምን በድየሻለሁ?

What special thing did I do to you? (Gungun, p.7).

His speech implies that adultery is common in the society. A man can have a concubine in addition to his wife. The conversation indicates that Kegnazmach acts in the same way as other members of his society do.

Here is the satire. Being from the upper class, he should have been a model for his people by doing good things. But instead of acting politely, and being sincere, he commits adultery. This point shows that rich men are allowed to have concubines.

According to the accepted social values, a male child is preferred. For instance we see that Ilfyikendu gains the sympathy of her husband's sister, when she gives birth to male children.

... የቀኛዝማች ታናሽ እህት ወ/ሮ ጌጤነሽና ወ/ሮ እልፍ ይከንዱ ሲጀምር ጀምሮ እጅግም አይግባቡ። ሁለቱም ቢጠየቁ ለወቀሳም ይሁን ለጥላቻ የሚበቃ ጉልህ ምክንያት አያቀርቡም። ከአያሌ አመታት በፊት ግን ወ/ሮ እልፍ ይከንዱ በተከታታይ ሴቶች በመውለዳቸው የተነሳ "ወንድሜን የስም ማስጠሪያ ወንድ ልጅ አሳጣቸው" ብለዋል ብለው ወሬ ስላደረሱላቸው ተቀይመዋቸው ኖረዋል።...

The younger sister of Kegnazmatch, W/o Getenesh and W/o, Ilfyikendu do not like each other from the beginning. If both are asked, they don't have a sounding reason either for accusation or for hatred. But some years ago, people told to W/o Ilfyikendu that Getenesh has accused her for being a mother of females, by saying that, "she (Ilfyikendu) couldn't enable my brother to get a boy through whom his Kegnazmach's name can be carried on." (Gungun p.314).

In Gungun, we find not only this but also other characters who have more male children than female. For instance, Likeyelesh has three sons. In Sidetegnaw, Bizunesh gives birth to a male child. In Tikur Dem, Gennet also has the same. This coincidence has something to do with vendetta, which is the central theme of the stories.

In the societies, as reflected in the stories, men are supposed to revenge their opponents. Men are responsible for the wellbeing of their families. They have to defend themselves, their land (rist), their pride and also their wives. So, it is only being a man that enables one to react violently, if something wrong happens. This is clearly shown through the characterization of women. For instance, Gennet in Tikur Dem, says:

... አሥር ጊዜ ወይኔ ሴት መሆኔ...

So, many times, she says "I wish, I were not a woman (Tikur Dem, p.136).

She is offended by Mehary. She lost her father, and her husband. In addition to this, she is abducted by Mehary who killed her husband and her father.

The implication of this is obvious. It implies that both her nature and the society do not allow her to fight and resist the actions which are committed on her against her will.

Women are considered like other properties. Men have the power to control their wives. If a wife is suspected of having an affair with another man, she will be a reason for great conflict.

In Sidetegnaw, we see that a woman brings a great conflict among families and as a result of this, many people lost their lives. Getaneh's life is changed because he killed the rival

of his brother who raped the wife. The rival is a police. For this, Getaneh knows that he will be killed in retaliation. So, in order to save his life, he fled to Addis Ababa. Therefore, a woman is not only a "property" of man. She is also a symbol of dignity (App. D.P.154,N.8,9). That is why Getaneh killed his brother-in-law's concubine.

A woman is not only a cause for men's conflict, but also she is the one who encourages them to fight. When Gemtessa's serfs come to take his farm product, Demelash has to defend his property. But his aunt and the other neighbours were trying to stop him from confronting the guests because they know, he would be endangered. In the mean time, Demelash feels afraid when he looks at Bizunesh (Sidetegnaw, p.25).

This is because it has to do with masculinity. In this society a man who is defeated, especially in front of a woman whom he loves, could not win any respect. Therefore, Demelash runs into his house and comes out holding an axe. Women are happy if a man is a hero and aggressive. That is also what happened in Tikur Dem.

Andarge Mesfin in the interview says that a woman doesn't like a man who is a coward (App. B,pp:26-28,N.22). Andarge reflects this in his book Tikur Dem to some extent through the characterization of Gennet. She elopes with Mehary when he was a bandit. She loves him because he was a hero. She knows that he joined the shiftas after a revenge. We don't see her advising him to stop his action. This shows her interest in

vengeance or heroism. This backfires on her life when she loses her husband and her father. Mehary, as stated earlier, kills them because her father doesn't allow Mehary to marry his daughter. Instead, he gives her hand to another man. This provokes Mehary. Then he reacts violently. Gennet is a victim of this. She is kidnapped by Mehary and his friend Astatke for the second time. The difference between the first and the second is that she eloped with Mehary voluntarily, for the first. But, when she is taken for the second time it is beyond her control. She is taken by force. This brings her death. She is a good example to show that a woman is always under man's control. She has a lower place in the society when compared with a man.

In Gungun, whether characters are minor or major, women are discriminated. Whether they are from the upper class or from the lower, they are considered inferiors. Sometimes, they are even believed to be betrayers,

ሴት የሰማው ወሬ ደግ አይደለም ብዬ ነው። እንግዲህ እህ ብለህ ስማኝ በሽማግሌ ተሞክሮ እምቢ ካለ ሌላ መዴ አለችኝ።...

It is not good when a women listens to a secret. All right, listen to me attentively. I have another means if he refuses the conciliatory moves (Gungun, p.239).

Women also cannot make decisions about their own property. When we say their property, we mean the property which she and her husband possess. The head of the family is the husband. So, he is the one who is supposed to control all the wealth

they have. W/o Ilfyikendu is a wife of a noble man, but she does not have the right on their property. So, she "steals" from her husband and keeps them with Afessa (Gungun, p.87). Her struggle is, to be seen with her husband and to make sure that Kegnazmach is her own. But she finds it impossible. Her opponent, W/o Dejjitnu is also portrayed as a widow and she becomes a concubine of kegnazmach. She does not have her own land too. She is dependable because she is deprived from having a property. But on the other hand her husband has a concubine by giving money from her share to Dejjitnu. Ilfyikendu is in trouble because she has a rival. So, the two ladies develop hatred between them not because of the man but because of the wealth. Dejjitnu loves kegnazmach because of his money. This is revealed when the story shifts to Addis Ababa.

Dejjitnu betrays Kegnazmach when she gets her own means of living, although in this her relative has a role. He advises her how to get money from Kegnazmach and helps her to open a bar. From all these, we understand that property makes a woman rise against a woman, for instance, Dejjitnu and Ilfyikendu, and a man against a man, for instance kegnazmach and Dejjitnu's relative.

Women themselves accept the norm that a woman should be ruled by her husband. W/o Menbere's statement attests this:

ባሏ እንዳላት ሆና የምታድር አንገተ ሰባራ ያገር ቤት ልጅ። . . .

A countryside shy girl who lives according to what her husband tells her to do (Gungun, p.253).

The role of a woman is therefore, limited to house keeping. For instance, when kegnazmach goes to Addis Ababa, he undermines the question of his wife. When she asks him, whether she is going with him or not; he says,

ንብረቴን ለማን ጥለሽው?

For whom will you leave my property? (Gungun, P.6)

This shows that the wife is a guard of a man's house. The other character Likeyelesh is also supposed to serve her husband. Though she knows all good and evil social norms, she does not have any power to react against them. Her activity (role) is limited to giving birth to children, feeding her husband, helping W/o Ilfyikendu as a maid servant and so on.

We find some events which express her intelligence. She is a good observer. For instance, she is the one who criticizes Memire Mirete.

ለዚያውስ በምን ምክኛት? እኔ እኮ ትዝብ ያልኳቸውና አንጀቴ ቁልፍ ያለው ከመስቀል አቅምንኳ ሰው ይመርጡበታል። ያንተን አላእሟ ለኔ ለኔ ጊዜም መስቀልም አያወጡ። ባዶ እጃቸውን ያስሙኛል። ያነዩ ታዲያ እየፈራሁ ነውይ! ንከሻቸው ንከሻቸው ይለኛል። እዚች እኛ ጎጆ እግር ጥሏቸው የገቡ እንደሆነማ ተርብ እንዳበረረው ውሻ ነው መጭ እሙሉት። ከውሃ አቅምንኳ ረጭተው አያሉም።

... He selects people to let them kiss his hand cross. I do not know yours. But me, he does not allow me to bow for his cross. He lets me kiss his bare hand. At that moment, if I were not afraid, I wanted to bite him.

When he enters this small hut, of ours, he goes out fast like a chased dog. He never splashes Holly water here (*Gungun*, p.79).

Likeyelesh is also intelligent. She teaches her children good morals by using examples.

ውሽቴን አይደለም አሻጋሪ! የሄደበት መኪና ወደዚህ አልተመለሰም። አባታችሁ እሚመለሰው በሔደበት መኪና ነው ነግሮኛል።

"አቤት ይቺ እማምይ! ስታሞኝ ምነው በያ ሰሞን አብዬ ቸርነት ልብስ ሊገዛልን የወሰደን ለታ ቆሞ አይቼው" አለ ትልቁ። "እሱ እቴ አይ የልጅ ነገር! አምሳያውን አይተህ ነው እኔም መስሎኝ ነበር። ሁሉም ቅጠልያ ናቸው። "አይ እማምይ! ምሁኔ ነው እምሳሳተው? በደንብ እየዞርኩ አይቼዋለሁ።" አለ ኮስተር ብሎ።

"ምነው ያንተና የወንድምህ ጫጮቶች ይመሳሰላሉ። በጫጩት አቅም እንኳን እየተሳሳታችሁ ትጣሉ የለ? ያውም ከጫጩት አቅም... መኪናውም የዚያ ቢጤ ሆኖብህ ነውይ! አባታችሁ የሄደበት ተመልሶ ቢመጣማ!...

I am not joking, the bus which he went by did not come back. Your father will come back by that bus, he told me.

'Mamma is fooling us ! last time when father Chernet took us to buy new clothes for us I saw it there' said the elder son.

'No! you children! you saw similar bus! I thought also it was that bus. The colour of all buses is green.

'Ai, Mamma, how could I be mistaken? I saw it carefully' said he seriously.

'Why do yours and your brother's chicken are similar? Didn't you quarrel with each other by the chicken saying, "this one is mine, that one is not yours? If the bus which took your father could come back ... (*Gungun*, p.345).

The above two dialogues show the intelligence of Likeyelesh. She is poor but she is not poor in intelligence. The way she explains things to her children is exciting. She uses simple analogy. When she criticises the priest, she starts from the

difference he makes between the poor and the rich ones, although, she doesn't know which one is the correct way of blessing people. It depends on the job the priest works (App. D.P. 153, N.16). There is a time when they let their followers kiss their bare hands.

If a man works a woman's job, he is said to be a woman. The role of a man in a day to day life is distinguished from woman's chores.

የሚበላውማ እንደእናቱ ቂጣ እየጠፈጠፈ ነው።

He bakes bread like his mother and eats.
(Gungun, p.166).

But on the other hand, if a woman works a man's work, she becomes a heroine. In Sidetegnaw, we find strong women. For instance, Bizunesh, Demelash's fiance, fights against the landlords. She is injured on one of her legs. But, in relation to this one point should be mentioned. Because she acts like a man, she wears a trouser. Trouser is a symbol of heroism and aggressiveness. It reveals this meaning beyond masculinity. (App. D.p. 157, N.12). Aleka says men start to wear trousers because it is convenient for work, running, and so on. Therefore, we can conclude that masculinity develops from hard work, not from nature. And gradually it becomes a norm that trouser is a cloth for men only because they work very hard works.

The way how women and men are punished is different. A man is punished by bullet while a woman is punished by slapping her face. It is not only the instrument with which

they are punished but also the reason why each of them is punished differs. A woman, for example, is punished also when she speaks freely.

For instance, the aunt of Mehary lost her teeth like Ephrem's sister in Tikur Dem (p.209), when Fitawrary ordered his serfs to slap in her face and then she lost her teeth. When such things happen to her, the lady doesn't react. She simply says:

ተላይ ቤት አገኘዋለሁ።

I will get the reward from heaven. (Tikur Dem, p.108)

A woman cannot kill a person in retaliation. She is not involved in vendetta. We see this through the characterization of Gennet in Tikure Dem. Her femininity forces her to remain passive (p.137) because she is not able to kill the rival of her husband and of her father. The culture ties her.

In the same book, Tikur Dem a woman who committed adultery is also punished severely. She dies as the consequence of the punishment. For example, they burned (her husband's brothers) her body by using a hot iron. Here is another point which indicates a woman's place in a society. She is not even considered as a human being let alone a man. If she could have been considered, the number of people who died because of the

vendetta will increase, because her relatives would retaliate those who burned her. But this doesn't happen. Basically she is similar to Dejyitnu in Gungun. The difference is that this lady is married while the second is a widow. From this one understands that a woman who is living with her husband is under the control of her husband. But, if she is living alone, she is free. That is why the concubine of the first is killed.

Women are the reason for the death of men. This is common feature of the three stories. Where do we see adultery a dominating the common feature in the stories? What is the motivation for this?

When women are in financial problem, they are exposed to prostitution. Unless and otherwise they are married, they have no permanent financial source.

Dejyitnu is a good example in Gungun. Her economic problem makes her dependent on other's husbands. To attract those men, she takes care of herself. She gives attention to her beauty. Her characterization reminds the reader of women who anointed Jesus's feet.

There was a woman, determined, comely, from whom nothing was lacking from tooth, from eye, from lips, from speech, from finger from toe, the matter of whose wealth was abundant from whom gold, silver, clothing, was not lacking, who purchased all that by fornication. Always she was adorned and salved her eyes. She should not spend a single day without being adorned, if you ask "Why?" (it was) in order that she led (men) astray.

This is taken from a translation of "An Old Amharic Tract about Mary who anointed Jesus's feet." This lady is taken as sin maker as Dejyitnu.

We have another example from Gungun. Shewarkabish was living in kegnazmach's house. During that time, she had no affair with Mindaye. But when she becomes a prostitute, Mindaye becomes attracted by her outfit. As a result of this he commits adultery.

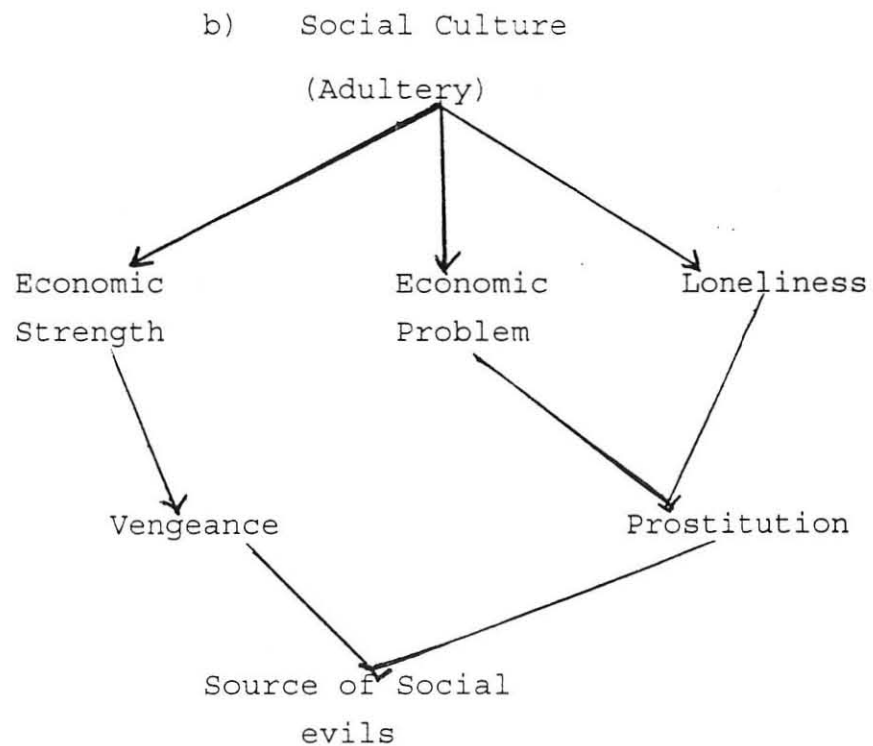
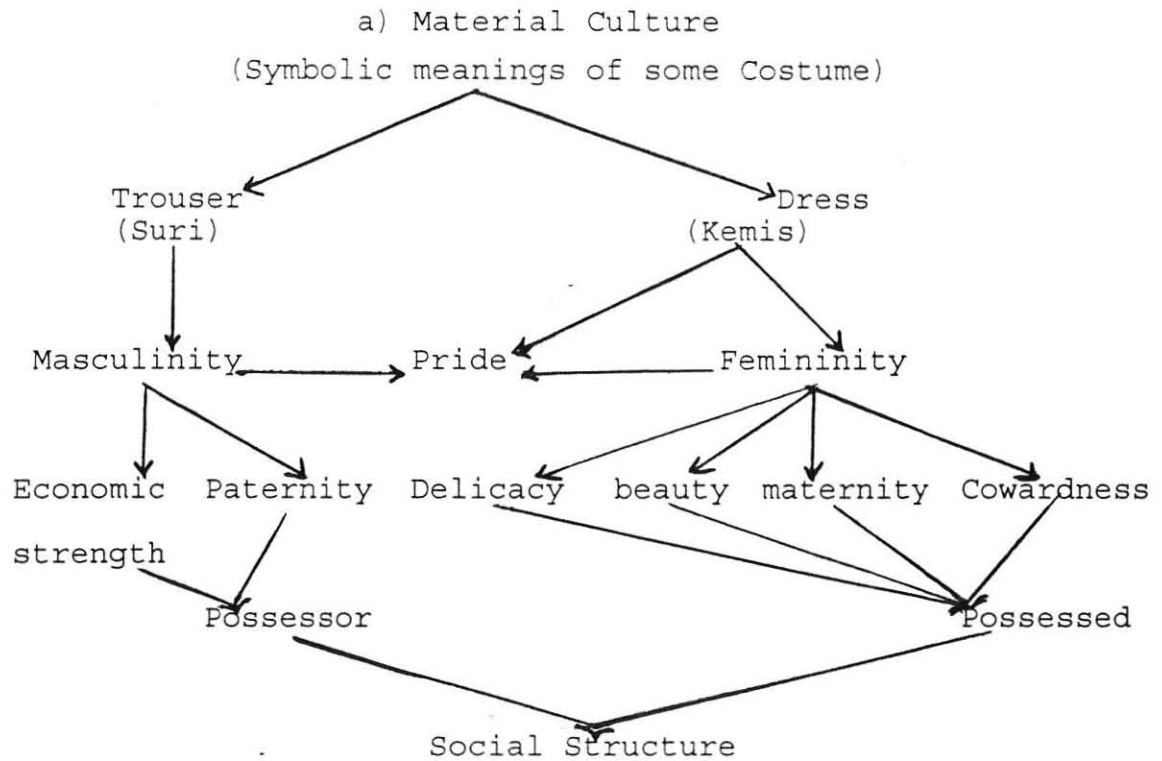
The characterization of women is a typical reflection of the psychology and traditional costumes of the societies. Religious rites, profession and all social experiences are directly or indirectly related to the perception the public has about women and their social status.

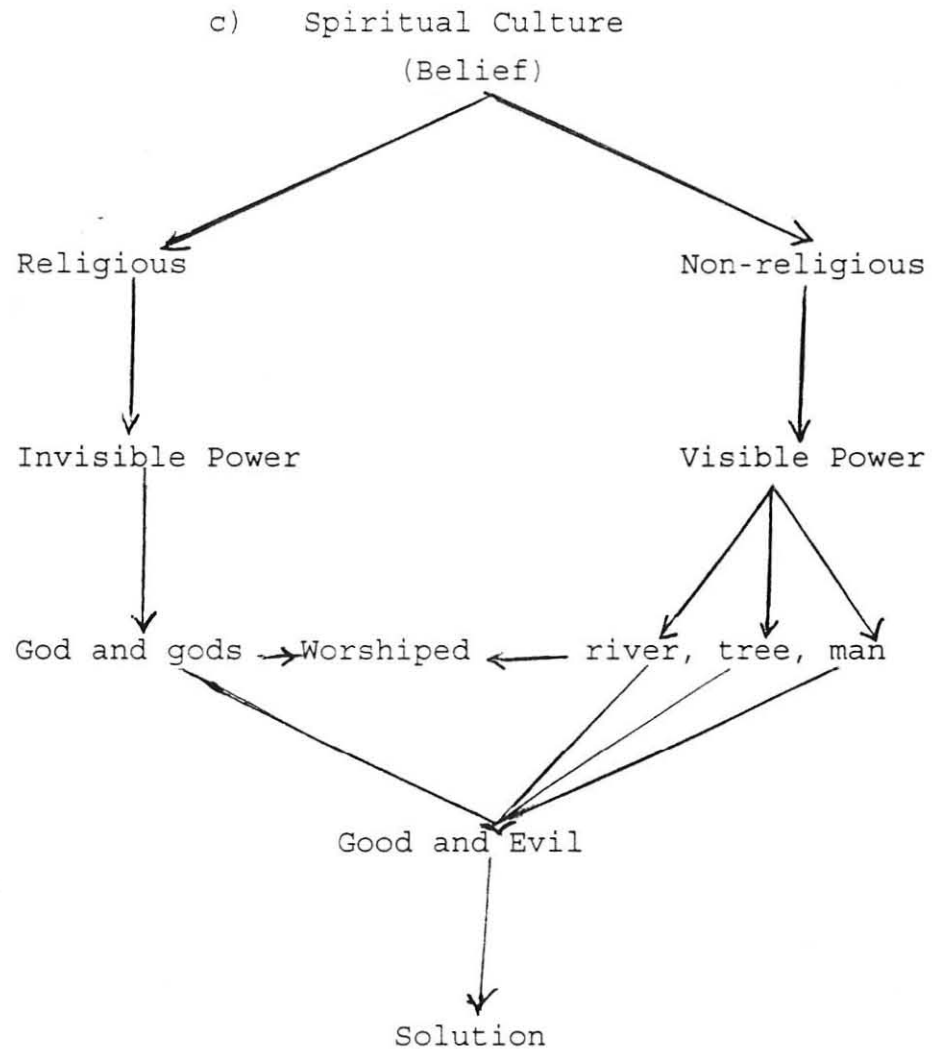
CONCLUSION

From the preceeding four chapters, it can be concluded that the research has revealed the underlying meanings of some lexical terms such as rifle, trousers, river and neck-cord in Sidetegnaw, Tikur Dem and Gungu. These underlying meanings reflect the psychological and cultural aspects of the societies. In addition to these, an attempt has been made to examine how the authors apply these aspects of life, the material, social and spiritual, to construct their stories. They use for instance the culture of vengeance which is accepted in the societies and they use it to create conflict between characters. As shown in the analysis, the stories have culture bound elements.

First, in all the works examined, Christianity is the common major religion. Yet, Christianity goes with non-Christian religions side by side. Second, vengeance is an accepted common social norm. The causes of vengeance are many but the major ones are sex, and economy (rist).

The analysis reveals that the authors used these thematic aspects as a manifestation of their belief. Three of them (Gebeyehu, Andarge and Haile Melekot) seem to criticize this, they unmarked how intricate social relations and psychological constitutions of a society are as the structures shown below suggest.





The diagrams show that life is governed by their material and spiritual culture and these material and spiritual cultures are interrelated with the social culture. Therefore, we see when people are rich in their material culture, they commit adultery. Adultery in turn leads people to vengeance. Vengeance creates bloodshade, so to stop this bloodshade, solution is sought. The solution for this is often found in the spiritual culture or belief.

Culture dominates religion, but most of the time both elements contradict each other. For instance, killing human beings is against the religion. But we see people do this in Sidetegnaw and Tikur Dem and Gungun. Where does this contradiction come from? Religion creates a loopwhole for people to commit sin. For instance, it is supported by some religious sources which are largely mythical which express that people who committed crime are excused by God. The word "God" is merciful for those who repent" is a key to this. Culture also contradicts itself. For instance, killing a woman, a child and a priest or an old man is not accepted by the communities represented in the works. But, we find people violating this accepted norm.

Religion is secondary when personal interest is affected by the social norms and when people want immediate solutions for the problems encountered which leads us to the conclusion that every aspect of life has dual nature. For instance femininity seems to be given a great respect. But when it comes to practicality, they are abused and condemned. In fact, it is noticeable that a male child is more respected than a female child.

In the works studied, it is observed that beliefs are expressed through actions, conversations of characters, costumes and names. The last one is related to the authors individual ideology, i.e. the characters as the whole act and behave as their names suggest. This helped the authors to influence the words and actions of some of the characters and, consequently the readers, to impose their ideology.

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APPENDICES

A. Interview with Gebeyehu Ayele

Gebeyehu Ayele who had been a second Lieutenant in the Police Force is known by his three novels. These are: Sidetegnaw (The Emigrant), Embana Sak (Tears and Laughter), and Tamra Tor (Double Headed Spear). Other than these novels, Gebeyehu has written short stories. He has also co-authored a historical novel entitled Remet (Cinder). This novel was written with Regnazmatch Tadesse Zewede, a writer of historical events and personalities.

As a military man, Gebeyehu participated in Ethio-Somali war (1967-70 Eth. C.). His novel Tamra Tor has been written concerning and about the events of this war.

The following interview with this author was held on the morning of October 9, 1994 in his office.

1. When and under what circumstances did you write Sidetegnaw?
- A. Sidetegnaw is my second novel. I wrote it in 1977 (E.C.) and it was published in 1978, a year later. It was written due to an unexpected incident that I encountered.
2. What was that incident?
- A. The story contained in Sidetegnaw was written in a few pages by a certain person who came to my office to consult me about it. He said he has such and such a

story and wants it to be published. There were only 18 pages of it in all. But when I read that script, I told him that the story is neither a short story nor a novel. So I asked him, "What are you going to do with it?" The man was not educated. He knows only how to read and write. So, he didn't have any idea how to produce a literary work. But when I realized his strong desire, I talked to him privately. I advised him something, say, if you do this and that it might be better. And he answered that he cannot do what I told him. Then I took the script and I decided to produce something out of it. We passed much time together and I also interviewed him in the mean time. Then, when I asked him whether he is willing to let me use his script and construct a story, he said, "My main interest is to see my story published, so you can use it as source,". And he persistently reminded me to keep my word. And we proceeded discussing the story for about six months. At last, I wrote the novel and it appeared in its present form.

3. Who is this man? Is his name not mentioned in the book?
- A. He is called Jima Ararsa. He was a day labourer. and he used to come to my office when I was at Kuraz Publishing Agency. I think, he doesn't know where I am working now. I couldn't find him. More than a year has already passed, since I met him last.
4. Which part of the story is true?
- A. 60% of the story is a true story. Eh ... Yes! The setting is factual (true). Except some of them are

elaborated, the conditions, all happenings which take place in the novel are almost actual. The description of American Ghibbi is true. Experiences of characters in Humera are true. Experiences in Sudan are more or less true. The man himself has passed through all or has experienced them.

5. The ending of the novel shows the influence of the feudal system over the masses and also indicates how the main character returns to revolutionary society and becomes a revolutionary hero. Did you do this deliberately? I ask you this question, because some people say: for instance when one sees the ending of Gungun, one might ask why does the story end in this form? But raising this type of question seems not fair because the author must use such technique in order to get his book published. The technique is to view situations from the perspective of socialist ideology. Is your book constructed in such a way?

- A. In fact, I cannot consider this as an influence. The revolution has left one great thing which I still believe in. Specially, I consider land reform as an achievement of the revolution. It enabled the tenants to be free from exploitation. This is what I believe. Others can say whatever they like. Even the man (Jima Ararsa) has told me that this was the reason why he returned to his country. It was because of the farm land he had to migrate. He comes back because he heard that his father became the owner of his own piece of land. This leads

him to say "Hurray, my country becomes surely mine." He told me this. I wrote the reality, not what is said about the revolution.

When he gets ready to come back to his home country, the character meets a friend in Sudan. When he asks him to come back together the friend answers, "first you go and then I will see what will happen to you. Let me hear all about it from you." You see, at the end of the book, one of the characters says "some talk about the good qualities of the Dergue regime, others on the other hand talk about the opposite. What could be done if the Dergue regime turns out to be Satan (evil) once it consolidates its power? The one who has the power in his hand could not be trusted." The character is striving against all these confusions. I wrote the novel from this basic point of view. So we cannot generalize it as an influence of socialist ideology. In fact this can be taken as one element. But it cannot be taken as the main issue.

6. In the story we find Abba Gurratch. It is called "Ye-Abay daru Kolle." Does the man who gave you the story know about this god? Is it real - or did you insert it as a technical device to construct the plot?
- A. Ah ... look! Beliefs are reflections of the psychology of members of some societies. Ideas, beliefs are categorized under this concept belief. And in general it has the power to govern all aspects of life. And from

this generalization the description of Abay is a result of my imagination.

7. Does this mean that the man didn't face this part of the story?
 - A. He didn't. But, there are such kinds of incidents in day to day life, though we couldn't realize them. There is the influence. These types of beliefs or idolatries have influence on the psychology of the society. But on the other hand, the ruling classes use such beliefs as means of oppression of the psychology of the members of society and as means of influence. So, ... these types of beliefs; I don't mean it is wrong to have these types of spiritual beliefs, but what I tried to show is that they are weapons for the upper class and the reason for this refugee the main character to flee away and to rebel against the feudal social system and again to show that he rebels against the belief. And to reveal how much the society was deceived.
8. Most of the time, especially here in Ethiopia both christianity and Islam are mixed with such kinds of idolatry particularly in the countryside. So, why did you portray or reflect the belief in isolation? For instance couldn't you bring it out in relation to either of the two religions?
 - A. Look! As far as the man has told me, this is the major belief that influences the area. What is connected with

the Abay Gorge - because the area is deserted - the public belief in the spirit which inhabits the gorge is not inhabited by humans.

9. Who are the people who live in that area? Are they Oromos?

A. They are both Oromos and Amharas mixed. On both sides of the gorge - across the river on the Gojjam side is Dejen and on this side is Selale. There is intermarriage between the inhabitants. The people of both areas marry each other.

10. Let me take your attention to another point. How did you develop your literary knowledge? Have you done any courses or did you develop it through experience?

A. Yes! There was a radio programme known as christian literary organization. I acquired the basic and necessary literary knowledge from there. I studied there for about a year. After than, when I got the opportunity, I started writing.

11. Did you know Ato Siyoun Wolde there?

A. Yes!

12. What are you doing now?

A. I have written Embana Sak and other collections of short stories after Sidetegnaw.

13. Are these stories also based on factual material or are they fully invented works?

A. Tamra Tor is based on true story as I told you. It is about the Ethio-Somali War. I know all the conditions and the areas very well. But Embana Sak is fiction.

14. So, I perceive two different points from your experiences. The first one is constructing a story from factual materials and the other is producing completely imaginative work. According to your point of view, which way is better or easier for the author?
- A. For me, it is better to write fiction. When a historical novel is written, great care must be taken so as not to make distortions. Names of places, must be known in relation with historical events. There must be a condition to know the time and the situation. For instance it can be possible to see American Gibi. Today this place is not there. You are not free when you write a historical novel, you may have to visit the historical site. Those who were not present read it. Therefore, things should not be distorted in order to give the real picture of the setting. When you come to fiction, you are completely free. You can control the movement of character as you wish.
15. According to your opinion, can we consider Sidetegnaw as a historical novel?
- A. Of course, it is. It tells an experience in which all Ethiopians have passed through. Migration was an identification of Ethiopian. Sidetegnaw is a book which tries to reflect this general reality through the life of few individuals. Migration has left its scar on the country and the freedom of its people.

B. Interview with Andarge Mesfin

Former second Lieutenant Andarge Mesfin is the author of Tikur Dem (literarily, it means "black blood"), which is one of the primary sources of this thesis. Other than this, he has also written two fictional and one non-fiction works, entitled - Dar Iskedar (from end to end), Tiliflif (Entanglement), and Killet (indiscretion) respectively. The following interview was held just before the author went to prison. It was on the afternoon of February 8, 1995. He was taken to prison because of an article he had written when he was editor of his own private newspaper known as Tenager (speak out). He was imprisoned a month after this interview took place.

1. When did you start to write Tikur Dem?
- A. Okay! I wrote it around 1978 (Eth.C.)
2. Was the script completed at that time?
- A. Yes! It was published immediately after it was written. It didn't take long. And ...
3. It is said that the story of the book is a true story!
- A. Yes! We can say it is a true story. Actions are connected with murder. In fact, I have covered up some of the realities with imaginary descriptions. This means some changes in location and time are made. I have changed names. So, instead of calling it directly a true story, it is better to say it is a story based on some factual events.

4. When you say it is based on actual events, do you mean that is it based on your own experience or is it what you have heard from others, or is it what you actually witnessed?
- A. Yes! My father was involved in the vendetta. So, he used to tell me this story when I was a child. He himself lived with his relatives for seven years. And he was telling me about "black blood" as the source of the vengeance. So, the idea Tikur Dem, was ringing in my head since my childhood. For that matter, let me elaborate what Tikur Dem means.

"Tikur Dem" doesn't mean that the blood is black. Rather, it is the practice of people identifying the relatives of someone who has killed one's relative up to the 7th generation. There are some who were involved in this type of vengeance killing among my own relatives. Since this used to bother me after I grew up, I reflected on it and wrote Tikur Dem.

5. When Your father stayed for seven years with his relatives peacefully, in what way was the retaliation stopped?
- A. Look! It doesn't mean the retaliation stayed up to seven years. But, it means, it will go on up to the seven generations. When the avenger is unable to get his enemy, or his enemy's father or his brother or his cousin, he kills the relative of this so called enemy. He kills and pursues to kill any one related to the

'enemy'. This blood relation goes up to seven blood lines.

6. I mean, when your father was living with his relatives what was the situation? And again on which blood line was your father?
- A. As far as my father has told me, the assassination started when the Ethio-Italy war was on the way to its end. And, when the retaliation number of persons killed on both sides are equal or "Teemed", the vendetta could stop of itself without any reconciliation. "Teem" means when the number of people killed from the opposing sides becomes equal.

My father was on the third bloodline. The main cause was his mother. She has had a man killed. So, my father was wanted because of his mother. My father was on the second blood line from his mother's side. On the other side he is on the third line, because it was his mother's younger sister who was the cause for the conflict. I don't know whether I could elaborate on it or not. She was "caught with a man" (i.e. committing adultery). The vendetta started from that incident. That is why I made the germ of story of the vendetta start with a woman as a cause.

7. Was he the man "caught with" her sister that your grandmother caused to be killed?
- A. No! it isn't! Here the affair is complicated, as to the cause of it...

8. Adultery is one theme?
- A. Yes! Look! There is a big problem here. Wars take place always. So, to begin with the husband of my grandmother's sister had to go to Miachew. When he left for the war, he assigned a person to look after his house. I don't know the exact closeness of the relation of this person to the husband. He is said to be his nephew. Even though he is claimed to be a nephew, I think his relation might be a bit far. Thus there was a rumour that he raped this lady. When her husband returned from the war, he found his wife pregnant. When the baby was born, he looked like the man who was suspected. People were saying, "oh! he looks like his uncle". At last, the man feeling he has been found out runs away and joined the shiftas (bandits).

In relation to that, the husband creates many problems. He also knew that the suspected man has joined the "outlaws". He starts beating his wife. Because of this, my grandmother becomes annoyed and says "why should my sister be beaten?" Things become aggravated and the adulterer fired their house. Again to retaliate his action, the husband accompanied by some of his colleagues went to kill the man. On their way they meet the brother of the adulterer and unfortunately this innocent man is killed. Then the elder brother of the adulterer starts to move here and there. Here, there was a rumour as if there was a role of sorcery and so on. "She is the elder

sister who ruin you" said a witchcraft to the husband. On the other hand, it is said that this same witchcraft tells my grandmother, "unless your sister divorces this man, he will kill you". So, one evening, she pressures her sister to betray her husband. So the man remains alone.

At last, there were two sons who reached at adolescent age. They were the children of the sisters of my grandmother. The man who joined the outlaws; killed these two sons so as to revenge their father. He killed them because he says "I have to retaliate my brothers blood." And all betray each other. My grandmother gets very angry. Any way, my grandmother got her sister's husband killed. For that reason, the detail is so much. Things continued. Now the reason why my father migrated was because of his mother's fault. So, as far as he told me his relatives took him (my father) and hid him for about seven years.

It was to protect him from being killed. Then, because the dead relatives on both sides became equal and because the generation who are on the same bloodline were finished, the conflict ended by itself without any reconciliation.

9. Was not there anyone who pursued your father, after that?

- A. There was no one. Then, he returned to his birth place and married and I was born. He used to tell me all these. I wrote, Tikur Dem based on this story.
10. Here, you have also mentioned about sorcery! So, in that area, is there such a thing known as sorcery and idolatry?
- A. Though it is different in its form, still it is there. What do I mean when I say it is different formally? it is called sooth saying or prophecy. For instance, they say "He will kill "him", eh ...", "don't get out of your home on Wednesdays! If you do, you will face difficulties" etc ... they forecast by anticipating the future. Sometimes it coincides and sometimes it doesn't. For instance, I remember that when I got older, my grandmother was moving from place to place freely. Then, when she was asked "why do you go out freely while your enemies are still alive? They might kill you?", she answers, "Ai! I have a prophecy, from the beginning. I will die only by the will of God. They will never kill me". And she never worried. And really she got sick and died in 1964 (Eth. C.).
11. I think a woman is not killed in the vendetta. Don't you think this is the reason?
- A. Right! This is one point. Unless the killing and counter killing reaches at an ugly climax, it is not customary to kill a woman. Or except that she interferes when two men who are shooting at each other or unless it is very

necessary, a woman should not be killed. But the son of that man who was killed (whom I mentioned) died before my grandmother died. And my grandmother had been saying that he himself would die before she did. However, he used to say "she is the one who had my father killed." Of course many people advised him. "She is old. In addition to this, she is a woman. So, you wouldn't be respected if you kill her."

In fact, as you have said, my grandmother's confidence might have developed from her gender. She might feel in her mind "I am a woman, so he wouldn't kill me." But, she, herself was saying that "I am told by a sorcerer that I will die from an illness."

12. What could be said if a woman is killed?

A. Aha ha ... This is an important point. I also used it in Tikur Dem. If a man kills a woman and an old man, there will be no one who would give him bread or even a drop of water. Such a person is regarded as a common murderer. He is not considered a man. It is to say "This does not earn prestige." I don't know why? There are many women who are heroines in battle. Even my grandmother was a fighter during Miachew. Many miserable things have happened to her; her property was confiscated by collaborators. I mean, she was a heroine. I know her in person. I don't understand why killing a woman is considered coward. It might be because of their being compassionate or motherhood, or because of the influence

or culture; "one who kills a woman is regarded as a woman himself." So it seems to me the influence of culture. It is also the same for old people. The man who kills one who is too weak to run and escape or who cannot hit back by shooting, is not a man. Sometimes there are special events. Let me got to Tikur Dem before you ask me. A priest is killed. That priest (in the book) is a portrayal of a real priest.

The man, because he couldn't get another member of the family to kill, he decided to kill this priest. He had also additional reason. He says, "when my father died, he didn't (the priest) allow the funeral ceremony to take place in the proper manner because he considered my father as guilty by counting up to fourth bloodline. Moreover, the priest is my enemy since he is a relative of my opponent." He thought like this. Thus, that has to be criticized, when we look at it from the perspective of the culture. There is no humanity. Even when we see it from the perspective of the area, to kill a priest means to kill a "Tabot." They believe in this.

13. We have come to a religious issue. It is also the area of my interest. In Tikur Dem, religion is given great emphasis. Whether it is due to the tradition of reconciliation or something else, it plays a decisive role through Abba Mehary. Did you do this because of the influence of the religion on you or is it the psychology of the society?

A. Yes! It is good! unconsciously it might have an influence on me. I started learning in traditional church school. But, this doesn't seem to me the main point. When I wrote Tikur Dem the main issue which was clear to me was the culture. When we say the culture, it includes the religion, the eating ritual or manner, the costume. And, religion has great social value in that region. They respect it. They invoke it to reconcile individuals, who have quarrelled with one another. When there is an argument, when they kill each other, and so on. It may interest you to know that there was once a conflict in which 88 people were killed.

14. 88?

A. Yes! 88 lives were lost. I have written about it in a book entitled "Dem Bedem" (soaked in blood). In fact, it is not published.

15. Is it a factual account?

A. Yes! What differentiates this from Tikur Dem is that it is factual while Tikur Dem is painted by imaginative characterization. There is situation what I created from my mind and inserted in the story. But, this (the unpublished one), I took the fact as it is. When those 88 lives were isolated the priests ended the conflict on the families. They did this by bringing the "Tabot" with them and came between the worrying parties. Thus, the honour and importance of religion to the people of the region can be seen from this.

16. Just as in Fikir Iskemekabir?

A. Just like in Fikir Iskemekabir. Thus, that is the culture of the area. It is their tradition showing respect for God. It is considered that the word they speak (the priests) is the word of God. If they anathematize a person is in spiritual bondage. If they release, he is released. So, in Tikur Dem the reason that pressures Mehary to do penance is because he had killed a priest. He repents. This is common in that area. There is a thing known as asceticism, monasticism, etc. This is Common. You will find it when you go there. There are many who become monks at a tender age. There are monasteries in abundance. I know Akale Chiristos since my early childhood. It was monastery which had two parts one from women and the other for men. I am sorry. Now, there is no such kind of division. the wines and sugar cane were so attractive. The monastery is at the bottom of a big cliff. And that has an influence, since christianity has more value in that area.

17. What is meant by religion?

A. Look! it is belief for that area. It means the word of God.

18. Let me ask you one question in relation to this. There is a thing (concept) known as prophecy (sooth saying). There is a social habit which is condemned by priests. This habitual action is said to be against the Bible or which is out of the Bible. Whereas, most of the time, we

see christianity practised side by side with other beliefs. On the basis of this, where does the relationship between religion and prophecy lie?

- A. Yes! It is better if I interrelate this prophecy with ... Ah, the origin of the word the priests themselves use as "sooth saying;" is the word of the prophetess in the Bible. As far as I know, they use it to mean, to tell about events in advance, before they take place. There are practices in sorcery, witchcraft, or believing in 'Adbar' and in other things.

There are 'debteras' on the other hand those who read 'Awde Negest' (Astrology). Instead of using the words in this book directly, they call it prophecy. And sometimes, it amuses me. These 'Debteras', by reading the 'Awde Negest', tell the future fate of persons, by saying "you will be like this or that ... so on." There are many who read this "Awde Negest". There are also sorcerers. There are those who move from place to place beating drums and putting glass rings on their necks. So, I heard the priests condemning all these, publicly. They say "don't believe in 'Baid Amliko' (idolatry)." In spite of all these still there is a tradition of slaughtering white goat on the top of a mountain, specially in September and June. So, it goes side by side with christianity.

Those who are natives believe in sorcery. But on the other hand, those who are strict and conservative in monkhood and church practices don't believe in such kinds.

What differentiates sorcerers from Debteras is that the second ones use Awde Negest and they deceive "this is the word of God, the fate of every body is determined since the time of his birth." But when I get older, I found this Awde Negest to be a cheating material.

- Eh... And those who are claimed to have a spirit (Zar) also cheat the public by saying "the word of God rests on us." But I see it is being minimised when the religion (christianity) gets more attention. I don't know why and it is very tough - both contradictory spirits go together. The psychology itself is difficult.
19. Let us turn our attention to Tikur Dem, you wrote it in 1978 (Eth. C.) and the story is about what you knew during your childhood?
- A. Yes! Look! Firstly, I wrote it while I was living here in Addis Ababa. After I wrote it, I gave it to the publisher for editing. They accepted it. Incidentally my father came here to visit me. When he came I showed it to him: I found some distortions in language use but the rest was very good. I understood that I was mistaken in the use of certain words and dialects. When I realized the difference after my father told me, I

realized that I had changed the flavour of the language in the book. I didn't use the right dialect. For instance, he says "Mikgnatu" to say "Mikniatu" (the reason), "Hezia" to say "kezia" (then); "Zadia"; "Tadia" (so). My father and I were separated in 1964. Of course he had come as a guest and visited me when I was in Harrar. But since it was war time, I didn't get the chance to talk to him at length. Therefore, when we talked to each other in a settled situation, I found great difference between my and his language.

When I was confronted with this situation I understood that I was mistaken. So, here in Addis, I told the Agency to stop publishing the script. I went to the area and I started studying the language by dividing into three phases the language of the youth, of the adults and of priests and monks. I took down their words; I stayed there for ten days. I came back and I made some improvements in my composition. But the rest is written on the bias of what I knew since my childhood.

20. When you made some improvements, is it only in the "sound of the dialects or also, for instance, we know about figures of speech, sayings, proverbs connected with the culture... Did you try to study and to include them?

A. I tried to include them. But I couldn't do much. But I put the tone of the speech of the area as it is and what the people say. It was the toughest task that I faced. I didn't go further than that. I didn't have time.

21. Do you think that vendetta is a culture in Ethiopia? Is it even possible to call it a "culture"?

A. I don't know ...

22. Why did you write about it?

A. Well! when a book is written, there will be some belief behind it. Still I believe that this vendetta has positive aspect on the one hand. This may sound amazing. But on the other side it has weaknesses. Mainly it is very ugly.

Let me start from its positive sides. It creates a strong bond between the persons concerned. It creates the feeling of "how dare someone kill my kin?" How dare he kill my brother? It has no other meaning. It only indicates the degree of concern of individuals for their relatives. Therefore, I believe, this is the strength or quality of vendetta. Nowadays, it might not be there. Instead of this, there may be a type of generation that says, "Hurray?" if his brother is killed and runs to inherit the wealth. Vendetta is a must in the northern part of the country even today especially in the rural areas.

Because there is a saying that when kins quarrel one of them would say, "why do you fight with me, I am the one who may be target on your account". So, from this point, we see the positive side of vendetta.

When we come to its weaknesses, to kill people by identifying their blood line is very unpleasant. People could kill each other accidentally. Instead of solving the problem, they massacre simply seeking for the other person's relatives. The pressure for this is the tradition. I don't know when it might be changed. The tradition is very backward. It is not better than savagery. Even if the one whose relative is killed by the opponent decides to ignore the situation, the people around him never allow him to do so. If he gets into a minor conflict with someone the other would say to him, "Is it me the one who killed your brother? Do you think so? He, who has killed your brother is over there. Holding you in contempt he has built his house and is living in it. For instance, in Tikur Dem what initiates Mehary to kill is the insult directed at him by the shepherds and what he hears when the name of those who died before and during Maichew is mentioned in dirges. His brother is also mentioned in such events. For instance, they say:

Weretaw Tebeje doesn't have any brother because, his corpse was left unattended like that of an ass.

Mehary, though he couldn't find anyone who would go with him, he goes "to the bush" with his dog to waylay his prey because of this song. He did this because the

people around couldn't give him mental peace. So, it is possible to say that vendetta is the culture. The culture itself has an influence. Even his wife would say "unless you revenge your brother's blood I will not sleep with you." The mother herself doesn't give him rest.

The great enemy of Mehary was his father. He says to him "the killer of your brother moves about freely." At last, Mehary is obliged to kill. Both families killed each other in great numbers.

The other question, you asked me is that whether this is the culture for Ethiopians or not. I don't know about the other countries. I have lived for a long time in the Ogaden among the Somali. What I observed there is some what different from ours. There is what is known as "Guma" in that area. What is it? It is giving a great amount of compensation for those whose relative is killed. The reconciliation takes place by receiving a limited number of camels and the retaliation stops there. I have seen this. I don't know in other areas.

23. Is there such type of practice in your area?

A. In our area, if this takes place, it will aggravate the conflict. It is amazing; if he receives compensations, the man will be said to have "drank" his brother's blood and "eaten" his brother's blood. Accepting compensation is despicable. The reconciliation will be there. But probably if he receives the compensation it will broaden

the blood conflict. This is the culture. It would be said "how could he eat his brother's "er'm" (eating the inedible human flesh"?

Although, I myself didn't see it, what happens sometimes is that an old man and old lady if they don't have a relative who can retaliate against their enemy, they will take the compensation and will live on it. They don't care about whether they are insulted or not. However, if they take the compensation they might not be free from the insult. It is said, they are the ones who have eaten their son's blood. So, some will reject the compensation by saying, "even though, I fail to revenge my brother's or my son's blood. I will not "eat" his "erm."

24. But, formally, is there a concept, known as compensation or indemnity?"

A. There is.

25. What about the payer? Doesn't he feel proud?

A. In fact, he might feel like that. He might say "I solved my problem with my money," or even he might be ashamed of what he has done.

26. Why?

A. He is ashamed because he may feel that he should have paid nothing and should have remained as a challenger. "If I win, I will be the hero, otherwise, if they could kill me this is ever better. It is my fright that forced me to pay the indemnity", he would think.

Yes! people will also insult him saying "you a cowardly person! you agreed with your enemy by giving money. "Though, it is not like those who received the indemnity, his shame is inevitable. And, there is this type of thing.

27. Could you please tell me the reasons which pressure people to be involved in the vendetta? As you have mentioned above, adultery is the one reason. What are the others?

A. The main reason is what you have just said. When one reaches at the age of adolescence, it is common for one to adult another's wife, or three or four men taking one woman as a concubine. That is why the crime is more severe.

The second reason is that before 1967 (Eth.C.) in northern part of Ethiopia, the land was "Atsme Rist" (inherited) and people killed each other over "rights" .

28. What is "atsme rist"?

A. It is land that comes from one's forefathers. Therefore, two relatives get into conflict over the right to farm the same plot of land "Rist".

29. Wait a minute! They are christian people!

A. Yes!

30. Don't take other's property is one of the commandments which are written on the Decalogue?

A. Yes!

31. So, being christian and good people, why do they rob other's wealth?

A. Look! You are raising a big point. What is amazing, that the first word mentioned on the first line of the Decalogue is "Don't take somebody else's wife". Despite this rule, we find a man or a priest who goes to his mistress (another man's wife) after he returns from the churches, having attended the church ceremony on Sundays! I don't know what kind of answer I can give to your question. It is all the same with the robbery. They consider this tradition as heroism. Waiting for a passer by near a road and snatching his rifle is common. Specially, it is common to kill traders. In fact, it is an area where christian people live. "Don't look at another's wealth, "Don't steal", "Don't kill", all these are being said. But still all these are not practised. They ignore them even though they hear these through their ears.

32. What reaction did you get from the people of the area when you published the book? I myself, am amazed by what you told me before because, after I have read the book, I said, it says, "vengeance is not good." But, now, you are forcing me to reconsider my idea.

A. Ah ... you could be amazed. I got (the feedback) more than what I expected. I wrote it carelessly. Accidentally, I was wounded and I was nervous when I was in the hospital.

33. Why?

A. Because I lost my fingers!

34. Were you a soldier?

A. Yes! After I left the hospital, I was in the rehabilitation camp, and wrote it carelessly. I had a reason (starting point) for this. Thus, there was a conflict with the censor on what I wrote before. There were problems which I didn't expect, so I was very cautious.

35. What were they?

A. Ah ... now the controversial points are corrected. It is published with some omissions. It was on one character known as Tsedale, on whom we didn't agree. The publishing Agency itself was in trouble. I remember. Now, I don't remember, whether it was for three or four times that they forced me to change. Those things annoyed me. So, I wrote Tikur Dem by saying "why don't I write a story which doesn't put me into conflict with the state or which is far from the society here and the state?"

36. Are you talking about another book?

A. Yes! It was another book which initiated me to write this Tikur Dem! This book is Dar Iskedar. I was upset by it. But, I wrote Tikur Dem simply because it is free from any political controversy and doesn't create any conflict between me and the censorship. It didn't take me more than 20 days to write it. But, the opinions I got from the public made me to reassess my own work. I said to

myself, "what does the story contain?" and I was obliged to appreciate my work. In fact, the very important thing that I found is that I have employed effectively the local cultural manifestations. But only two persons reacted negatively. They rebuked me, let me call it, a rebuke. They are old men who now live in Addis. They said, "why did you call our people murderers and expose them to others?"

I couldn't explain to them convincingly. They interpreted the book as saying that "our people are murderers." So, I tried to explain to them that it was not like that. They mocked at me. Except these, whether from the areas or from here in Addis, all comments were very favourable. "Why did you shorten it?" was the comments I was given.

37. When you wrote this book, had you studied literature?

A. I didn't learn, I worked by experience. I wrote the book without learning literature. But what may surprise you ... I have published Dar Iskedar before, as I have told you.

So, as I have told you, I don't know what shall I call it. Let me say it a "prophecy", when I was a student people were anticipating that "you will be a journalist or an author", in fact many of them said, "you might be an author." My teachers were also encouraging me. I don't know what they saw in me. I was interested

in writing what I see. And I like reading I always read. I can say, I read more than my means allowed me to read? And I don't know whether I have the talent or any other thing. Since, I was reading works of fiction and historical books, I wrote my first book without any difficulty. I wrote it while I was in prison. It was published after I was released.

38. Why were you imprisoned?

A. The Dergue imprisoned me without any reason. They told me it had a political case.

39. Was it before you went to the war front?

A. No, it was during the war. I was on duty there in Harrar. I was imprisoned about four years. And, not to become idle, I started writing. And I wasn't in trouble. I wrote. It was published. And, so then, it was the same when I wrote, Tikur Dem. I didn't have any course in literature.

40. Were you also reading foreign literary works?

A. It was also foreign literary works that I was reading. I don't recall the earlier ones. I can tell you what I have read very recently, Irving Wallace is the one. But I have read many others before.

41. I am not quite sure, but I think you joined the university and you have graduated from the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature. So, why did you join there?

A. I haven't graduated. I have withdrawn. I was interrupted three times. Unfortunately, situations

didn't favour me, while I was studying there. I think, it was after I entered the university, I started writing my third work. It is after I have entered the university I started to know myself.

42. When did you join and when did you withdraw from the university?

A. I think, it was in 1982 (Eth.C.)

43. Haven't you tried to continue again?

A. Ah! I started to know certain literary terminologies (concepts) after I joined there. I remember, I can say that it came into my mind now I was crazy at that time because, I didn't realize how I dared and managed to write books before. When I saw some questions, I was very excited. And also, it was after all these, that I started examining my own works, eh ... about a thing known as talent, I began to examine it after that. It was after I joined the faculty that I realized that I was interested in what I read and what I write. And I can say, my third book is better than the previous ones technically. Though it is not perfect, Tiliflif is better than the rest, for me. Others say Tikur Dem is better. I don't know, it might be because that I knew the cultural setting and also I like that culture. Tikur Dem doesn't give me sense like the rest of my books. (It is not new for me). But the book which is technically good is Tiliflif. I can say, I have implemented what I have learned.

44. Do you think Tiliflif's quality comes from your literary study?

A. Yes! I managed to use technical devices and to express concisely what I wanted to say. I got all these knowledge of cause and effect. For instance, when I wrote Dar Iske Dar I was going around the bush to describe a point. But, later, I was able to say concisely. Eh... and all the terminologies known as logic, cause and effect, ... I have used properly all such things. This is not seen in Dar Iskedar. In Tikur Dem, it goes directly to the story. It is not indicated in the story what will happen in the future.

45. Do you have unpublished works?

A. Yes! I have around three unpublished books. Thus, unfortunately a manuscript that I believe could have double the size of Tikur Dem is no longer with me now. The comments given to me on Tikur Dem show that the story is very compressed. Even, one foreigner had also said the same thing. So, to compensate this, I wrote another story under the title of Dem Bedem. Incidentally, I was put in jail during the transition period, for about a year. They took me from my house. And when they seized me, they also took all those that I wrote.

46. Do you think that a writer must begin from what he knows?
- A. When I see it from my experience, I don't think that one without having any thing he knows, it is possible for him to write. For instance, I read a book known as Yebihon Alem. It doesn't give me any sense. So, I think, it is advantageous to see life. Let me tell one interesting point before we depart.

Tikur Dem is changed into a film script by the Ethiopian Film Corporation. Those characters whom Abba Mehary called as "my blood enemies" are given names. I am very surprised and happy.

C. Interview with Haile Melekot Mewael

Haile Melekot Mewael has written a novel entitled Yewdianesh, prior to Gungun. He was born in 1943 (E.C) in Majete town. His father is an Eritrean priest and his mother is a Majete woman. At the age of ten he went to Kombolcha with his father. Later, they proceeded to Asmara. He lived for ten years in a rural village far from Asmara.

His father, being a farming priest, his son Haile Melekot had shared his father's farming life. It was in 1958 (Eth.C.) that he returned to Ephrata, the district of his birth place. Apart from his writing activities, he had served as an elementary school teacher for 22 years.

Currently, having run for and won a seat at the Addis Ababa Regional (Killil 14) Council, he is head of the Social Affairs Department.

The interview presented here was conducted on the 3rd Feb., 1995, in the afternoon. It was a year before he was appointed in the regional council.

1. Is Gungun based on a true story?
- A. It is not wholly based on a true story. For instance, I have studied some documents on the parliamentary election of 1957 Eth.C. in order not to make mistakes on historical facts. In the book Mindaye learns how to read and write. This has a historical link to what was known

as "Yefidel Serawit". During that period literacy training was being given at the commercial school. All these are related to historical events. But on the other hand, I created "Kegnazmatch", by examining the culture and manner of the community in the area.

2. When did you write it?
- A. It was in December (Tahsas) 1979 (1986). although I don't remember the exact date, I started it at that time. I finished the first draft in June of that same year. I was living in Addis at that time. My residence was in a quiet area. So, I wrote in the nights when everything became quiet.

I revised the draft and edited it in 1981 (1989). In the middle of 1982 (i.e. 1990) I submitted it to the censor. It was given back to me after three months. I decided to publish it at my own expense; and I gave it to the Bole Printing Press.

3. Three months is a short time. From experience, it is known that department of censor used to take a long period of time for a given manuscript to be given back to the author. How could you manage to get back yours so soon?
- A. It was with the help of some people. I gave it to the printing press, paying 14,000 birr. I didn't go to Kuraz Publishing Agency. So, some persons, who were working in this Agency heard that my manuscript was at the printers because, my first novel was published by them. They

asked me through Gashe Sibhat who was working with them, because they know our closeness. I said okay if they 'improved' on royalty rate. 13% was agreed upon to be paid to me.

4. What is the message you wanted to convey through this novel?

A. I want to transmit different messages or themes. The first is to show the landlords' ill-treatment of the tenants. It was to portray characters such as Irm Aykere. He was the "hammer" of Kegnazmatch. I have seen the life.

The second theme is the abuse of women. I am against this abuse. Women are victims of many types of illtreatment. For instance, what Kegnazmatch does can be mentioned. He is an adulterer. He keeps another woman(Concubine) besides his wife.

5. Here I want to raise another question. When we examine the portrayal of women characters, we find that W/o Dejyitnu is presented as a woman no better than a prostitute. I cannot see clearly your sympathy towards her. You have made W/o Ilfyikendu think of wickedness and commit mischief. It appears that she is mischievous simply because she is a woman. There is no victory for the women characters in the end either. Where does your partisanship lie?

A. I made all things from the perspective of the culture of the area. If I have made it to reflect my own stand, it

could have been distorted. W/o Ilfyikendu is a simple woman. But if I made her the winner, the story would be ruined. She does evil things not because of her nature, but because of social factors. So, she reacts in such a way in order to defend herself or to win against those who wrong her. This is common in that area. Even though I say I am against what men do. As to W/o Dejyitnu, there are many women who lead life similar to hers. They become concubines. What I am saying is that if Dejyitnu refused Kegnazmatch, she wouldn't have other means of living; or, if I portray her outside this situation, it will be inconsistent with both the objective reality of the area and the life of concubines. Even, at the end of the story, women characters are not freed from these circumstances. This is to indicate that the struggle for women's rights is still going on. The system is yet to be rectified.

6. Could you tell me what your religion is?

A. I am a follower of Orthodox Christian Church. My father was a defrocked clergyman. I was born because of this situation.

7. Did you accept socialism?

A. I used to strongly believe in socialism. But it set me against my religion. I was a teacher in an elementary public school. I saw how teachers were oppressed and exploited. All aspects of abuse annoyed me. So, towards the end of 1964 (Eth.C.), because of an intimate friend's pressure I joined the Ethiopian Workers Trade Union. I

didn't expect, this might happen. When instructions on the labour conditions were given I found it quite related to my life. During elections, I did not know, whether it is from my nature or from my readings, I like to talk. Because of this, I became deputy chairperson of the Trade Union. Then I completely ignored literature. I became agitator for the workers rights. Fortunately, the public's interest in the social change (revolution) became real. When I was 22, I had already started reading materials on Socialism. I found it interesting. I remember the first book I read was Quotations of Mao-Tsetung. I like it. Gradually, when the revolution erupted, I continued reading on socialism. I began to acquire some knowledge on socialism. Those who wanted to disseminate socialism were spreading different small publications. When I read all these, I got them reflecting my life I believed that this was the only solution for problems of the exploited people. At this time, I was negotiating on behalf of worker's unions.

8. Did this mean, you rejected your christianity?
- A. Socialism placed me at odds with my religion, because of its denial of the existence of God. I had gone as far as saying "there is no God" 'I snipped my neckcord', which I used to put on since my childhood. In fact, when we see it seriously, the belief which we held since childhood cannot be derooted easily. You cannot be free, completely.

9. It means I guessed right. You could tell me, if I did not. When I read Gungun, I noted that christianity is highly criticized - for instance, even Likelesh the innocent naive lady, doesn't like St. Michael, because she considers that Kegnazmatch believes in Him. Was this the result of your acquaintance with socialism?
- A. I was completely free fro all these confusions when I wrote Gungun as I wrote it in 1979 (Eth.C.) I wrote in that way in order to show that there are people who are not serious in their religion. Sometimes there is such a condition. For instance, the monologue of Likelesh about the bias of the clergyman shows this lack of strictness. For instance, if the clergyman is invited by poor and rich persons at the same time, he might give priority to the rich person. This must be criticized.
10. This refers to the clergymen. But when we see Kegnazmatch, he goes to church only when it suits him or when it is convenient. Otherwise, he is not ruled by his religion or by the social norm. He goes only for his advantage.
- A. You are correct. Some people are not serious in their belief as I said. On the other hand, there are those who are very serious, and strict in their observance. I wrote this not under any influence, but I was trying to portray the reality as it is; I did this deliberately. I read much on these matters when I was out of the prison.

11. When were you imprisoned?
- A. In 1969 (Eth. C.) I was imprisoned because I was a leader in the Trade Union. I and my colleagues were imprisoned because we were considered as members of the EPRP. For many years, I was confused and unable to choose which way was the right way. Thenafter, much reading helped me to realize and turn back.
12. If this is so, why did you turn the typical peasant Mindaye, into revolutionary Cadre? People say, if the story had ended there in the countryside, it could have been interesting. It shouldn't have extended to the city. When the setting shifts from the countryside to Addis, the story moves in great haste. The plot is not tight as before. Why did you construct the story in this way, if you reject socialism?
- A. Mindaye and Kegnazmatch are not only serf and lord. they are also friends. They show respect to each other. Mindaye, while he was living in the countryside, was not happy due to different reasons. The first reason is that there was conflict between him and the wife of Kegnazmatch. In addition to this, he was forced to live within an area prescribed for him in accordance with customary law of society because of his crime. (He has killed a man.) So, he was leading a miserable life. Therefore, he wants to come to Addis with Kegnazmatch. This helps him to be far from his enemies. But the story moves very fast when they come to Addis. This is because

Mindaye is a new comer for the area. Even Kegnazmatch doesn't know the area.

Mindaye led a fairly stable life before 1966(Eth.C.), except his mental disturbance. But when he comes to Addis, he faces difficulties. So, the story moves very fast because of Mindaye's unsettled life. Here, one point should be clear. When he comes to Addis my personal experience is reflected on his characterization. My concern for the proletariat revives. I pushed him to follow my foot steps. So, the influence on Mindaye could be evident. I took his freedom.

13. Was it not possible for the story to end there, in the country side?
 - A. Impossible. If it was completed there, Kegnazmatch couldn't bring Mindaye with him. He brings him here, because he wants to make him serve in two places, i.e. at home and at his concubine's home. He brings W/o Dejyitnu here, so he expects Mindaye to serve just like before; at Sar Amba.
14. At one point when I was pointing out this as one of the weaknesses of the plot, some people disagreed with me on the ground that the author should conclude the story in such a way, otherwise his book couldn't be published. In order to publish his book he was supposed to add some revolutionary elements into the fiction. Are they correct?

- A. I did not attempt to interrelate Mindaye's story to socialism. I did not portray him for this purpose. Indeed I believe that socialism was not implemented in Ethiopia in a proper manner. I believed the Dergue regime distorted it. When Mindaye and Kegnazmatch come to Addis, their friendship couldn't continue. This is because, firstly, Kegnazmatch knows many people. His ambition is to get into the higher social status. He uses and forgets Mindaye.
15. Mindaye is no longer needed as a bodyguard as before; is it not?
- A. No~ In addition to this there is no obstacle to get to the concubine. The rifle carrying Mindaye doesn't need to follow Kegnazmatch. The line of their life differs. Even though, Kegnazmatch likes Mindaye as a human being, he doesn't need him like before.
16. What is the religion of Majete people around whom the story is constructed?
- A. The Majete people have two religions, christianity and Islam. When the muslim passes near a church, he shows due respect because either his brother or his sister may be a christian. Unconsciously, they are afraid of the spirit. Sometimes, those christians who are critically ill become converted to Islam. Then, co-incidentally they might be cured. The muslims also do the same. I myself, when I pass near Wujib, I experience some undefinable feeling. There is also another belief known as Adbar. Both muslims and christians, tie votive

threads on a tree. The clergymen might forbid these types of practices. I do not think that they themselves are free from it.

17. Do they believe only in Adbar other than christianity and Islam?

A. It was long ago. Both the christians and Muslims used to go to Shekies when they need a solution for their problems. It could be for reconciliation. There was a man whom I would like to mention as an example; he was a Shekie. He had his own seal. He lived during Haile Selassie regime in Mesal. He did not practice witchcraft. But he served as a judge. The public gave him presents. The Shekie was reconciling even those who were enemies due to blood spilt during a conflict. He pacified such people and ordered the offender to pay the necessary Wojo.

18. What is Wojo?

A. Wojo means Guma. Say, if I killed a person, I would be brought before the elders. Then I have to pay money as a seal of reconciliation. Then there wouldn't be any vendetta at all. But, there are some who break this rule and revenge.

19. What would happen to them?

A. What could be done to them? Monks and elders might try again to settle the problem.

20. So, that is the use of that Wojo?

A. Most of the time it is advantageous. The above situation (the breach of faith) appears rarely. The majority

accept the tradition. We can say it is a regulation of the rural area.

21. What is your educational background?

A. Secondary (high) school level ... I translated Othello into Tigrigna. I have the script.

22. But Yewedianesh is your first Amharic novel?

A. Yes. It is my first work. I have about three drama scripts in Tigrigna. They are neither performed nor published. After a long period of time, in 1979 (Eth.C.) I started writing Gungun.

23. What are you doing now?

A. I am trying to write. For the last three or four years since I did not settle down I could not write. From now on, however, I am sure I will write. My mind is pulling me in that direction.

24. Will it be in Amharic?

A. Yes.

25. A novel?

A. Yes! It is the novel that I like. If it can be managed it is this (that I want to do). If things are good, I will write a novel.

D. Interview with Aleka Ayalew Tamiru

1. The first question which I would like to ask you is about the word 'river'. Sometimes it means a country; river indicates abundance; river might also be a place of purification. Because, it is taken as a place of purification, people worship it. What is the religious background for this?
 - A. Basically, river is a place through which natural water flows. Those water are which God has created to help mankind. People get their food from there. The water appears from the earth and passes through it by splitting the earth. Because of that people live near them. They cultivate their plants. They eat, eh... they wash themselves, they drink it. What they get from water is found in river. The power of the river is determined by the amount of the water it contains. It can be said big river, small river, medium river.
2. The word river, does it indicate the place (channels) or the water?
 - A. It means the channel; even when there is no water in it, it is still called river. If there is water in it, it is all the same. Water flows throughout during the rainy season and it is empty during "Begna" (summer). And, some travellers by its mere sight from a far, might be tempted to prepare their food and to have rest. In the early days people travelled long distances on foot. So, whenever they reached a river, they drank and washed their feet. Sometimes, they might find it dry. It is

called dry river. The name, river indicates both the dry and the one which contains water.

Secondly, it represents a country. People say "The boy (daughter) of my country, the boy (girl) of my river." the river is taken as a country because people live near it, because they assemble and build their dwellings near it. Eh... what makes to have a sense of countryless is that, it is a place where people's life is based on.

But, I don't understand, the point you mentioned that river indicate plentyness. I don't know how the authors used it. It doesn't convey to me that meaning. For me, it doesn't express ampleness.

The fourth point is that mentioned about idolatry. Well! Idolatry is based on little (insignificant) idea and then it becomes habitual. But basically the culture of worshipping doesn't develop from such situations. For instance, you may have heard about Eyob of the Bible. He was cured from his illness by washing himself in a river. Eh... a man called Mieman from Syrial told Elza to go to Jordan river and wash himself. By doing this Elza was cured. There were rivers where these types of incidents took place and the power of God has been demonstrated. From these incidents, people become attracted (interested) in rivers. On the other hand, there is

behaviour which comes from tradition. For instance, Egypt has no river inside its own territory. They get water from the Abay river. So, they consider it as ruler of their lives and even more than that. They took it as their creator as if they were created from it. So, it started from this type of habit. It is said that they sacrificed animals, even human lives.

3. Why?

A. They thought that their God would be happy by that It is sheer ignorance.

4. My next question is regarding the symbolic nature of a tree. A tree represents an important person. Even, when a person dreams about the felling of a tree, the dream is interpreted as an important person is going to die. A tree is worshipped as an adbar. What is all this?

A. A tree has different functions. Eh in the older times, there was no place where people can take a rest like these days. So, when the sun becomes too hot, a tree served men as a shelter; even, animals take shelter by gathering under its shadow.

A traveller, when he gets tired, takes rest under a tree which he finds on his way and refreshes himself. Then he continues his journey. Eh... because of these, a tree is useful to man.

Eh... again, in earlier times, there were no halls. There was no tent. Therefore, the right place for people

to meet, to discuss was a tree. This tree is called "dildil" in every village. It also serves elder people to convene together. They go to their homes after dealing with the matters on hand under such biggest tree.

They discuss their issues under those trees safely. (Eh... they also use them as "fired shingo". The tree is a better place for these purposes. Eh... so, whether it is in the morning or in the evenings, whether they go or they return from field work people seat under the trees. Why? Tree provides fresh air. Because trees provide air, villages are constructed around them. So, it is one place where elders come and go. When they return from their field work, they put their tools at home and they go to that tree. They discuss about state affairs with their neighbours. Eh.. if there is anything unresolved concerning the case of the conflict and to solve it, to reconcile those who quarrelled each other to visit the sick, they discuss all such matters by seating under trees.

So, because such elder are found there, the tree is called an Adbar. Adbar means mountain. So, they call those trees Adbar to indicate their high status. It is to augment the respect for the elders.

The tree is just a tree. At other times they make it a place of festivals. For instance, like Christmas,

Easter, New Year, Meskel (Cross) during rituals, they slaughter an animal and they share the meat of the "frida". So "frida" means, it is common property. ("Ferede-judge) means "separated". So it means like that. Thus elders by gathering at that place to celebrate their festival, each family presents whatever it has be it a goat or sheep; one cannot afford any, they make it by turns and they do it by drawing a lot.

They also celebrate "Meskel" (the finding of the true cross) in the same place. The Demera is prepared under the tree. A seat is arranged for the elders. And mothers bake what they have brought from their houses. Their light is the fire. They fire the bigger wood, and they light a "chibo" (torch) and by using that light, they eat, they drink. They also spend the evening there. They may even spend the whole night there. When the elders enter the house, children pass the night there. Therefore, because of this or that reason it becomes normal to use it as a meeting place. It is because of that, that people start idolatry. In case, the villagers have to abandon the village for any reason. The tree remains there. Then, any traveller when he reaches there, takes rest, eats his food, he leaves the remaining of his food.

Idolatry develops from such kinds of habit. Because he throws what remained after taking his meal. It is

because of this and that idolatry becomes a tradition, not because the tree is created for this purpose.

5. Does it mean that people believe in trees on this basis?

A. ~~It is on this basis.~~

6. Why do people put butter on a tree?

A. All this is because of their custom. They consider that a big tree represents the elders. They take it as if it is their relative. Because, their forefathers had lived and died there, so they pay homage to it. And they do it to express their respect for their forefathers. Basically, there is no such kind of doctrine in religion.

7. But still there is such type of practice widely. Does it mean that religious education is not disseminated widely?

A. It is not because the religious education is not widely disseminated. Eh.. culture influences religion. Culture is very powerful. Local tradition ties more than any thing. Eh... for instance, love we have in our families, the tradition of giving respect for the elders, all these are what we inherited, if we acquire it from religion we couldn't reach at this stage. It is a tradition of living together what makes this. Living together can bind people more. Even, it has many characteristics what, bind men with wild animals. And, because of that, tradition, whenever religion. It really wins.

8. Let me raise one question in relation to this point. You said that tradition makes men and animal analogically alike. Many men have concubines. Thus is against religion. Is this part of culture?

- A. No, It refers to what you new generation say economy. Eh... for instance you know the amount of money you need for tomorrow by dividing it into parts. That is called "kimit" (saving). It means what is saved for you and what you say: I have. It is the same for women. A husband might be fed up with whom, he is living at home. He puts another women whom he loves. He leaves his wife aside. In this context kimit means, a women, whom a man reserves.
9. But the exact point is that the legal wife, whether she knows about the case or not, she remains silent. The society knows it is immoral (unfair). But it accepts it as a normal and it ignores it as if it is not happening. How is this from religious and other perspectives? For instance, in one of the books, the father confessor (a Priest) knows that the man has a concubine, and the legal wife who lives at home tells her complaint for this priest. This priest doesn't take any action except telling the man his action is not fair. He doesn't enforce him to discontinue his behaviour.
- A. No. There is no such thing in christianity. Basically this thing was created during earlier times. As I told you before, they are prisoner of culture, otherwise, in christianity, it is not allowed to have partner more than one. But before the regulations were designed, before a norm was drafted for marriage, on the one hand, on the other hand when human kind were less in number it was important to multiple one self and it was also common to

have two or three wives at the same time. Number is important because having more relatives was needed. It was not preferable to be alone. If one is alone, he will be victimised. There was no protective law which says man needs only one women. But in Christianity when people asked Juses Christ whether divorce is good or not, he said it is not. Basically, God has created one woman and one man. It is not good to go against this regulation. A wife and husband are one person, so it is not also necessary to be separated after they become one. It is also impossible to add on it. So this what you said is done against the regulation of christianity. So the father confessor should not have accepted the man from the beginning. It is not fare. He should educate and convince the adulterer.

10. What is the historical background for ritual of death? Why do people burry a corpse immediately?
- A. When a man dies the word "you are a soil, you will go into this soil when you die" is a decision of God. Therefore, when a man dies, the corpse should be buried. If it is left as it is it might be changed after a few days. Its smell may bring a danger. Second, if the corpse is left over the land always, the earth will be full of corpse. Thirdly, "soil" is soil so it should be mixed. So it is a decision of God. But, when "he" goes, the dead body, the relatives, wash and kiss him and see off him.

11. Doesn't this washing and fastening of hands have any other meaning?
- A. All is a farewell. For instance, you don't put a given material a precious one in the old container. You have to wish it. So, the dead body should be covered by a new cloth. If the old (dirty) cloth is with him, it might not be good. It means to say, "you were honoured, you will go by reverence. You are free from sin. You will never be again sinful."
12. In our culture dress is a reflection of femininity. Trousers is a reflection of manhood. But, having accepted all these meanings, I found that dress has another meaning. When a person is promoted or given rank the cloth he wears is called dress. What is dress?
- A. Dress is a sign of honour. It is a cloth of mans respect. It covers the body fully. Trouser is a result of civilization while dress is the main cloth of both man and woman. Eh! trousers is convenient for work. As I said, men's first cloth was a dress ... Eh, trouser came later. So, because, it is a cloth of honour, a woman wears it. A woman is pride for her husband, for the family and for the world. So, because honour is for woman than man, she wears dress. She is the head of the family. Even though it is said the man is the head of family, she is the eye of the family. A body is guided by the eye. The eye has its fence, it has eye lash. So, like the eye, the woman has also protector. Because of all these, she wears dress and the main cloth of man

remains with women. But man can improve his clothing as he wish. He can make it short or long, anything, tanned sheep skin. But for women, dress is their right cloth.

On this basis, people on their ritual of coronation and canonization what they wear is called dress.

13. So, why we hear in our culture that "He who wears trousers, to mean he is a hero"?
- A. I have told you! trouser is necessary for the purpose of climbing at stairs, or for simplicity for a work. Eh for farming, for military services, for running, trouser is an appropriate cloth for this type of work. And it is because of this the difference emerges, otherwise from the perspective of honour dress exceeds.
14. If I am asked what is neckcord, I don't know its internal meaning. Can you explain to me from where does it come?
- A. Yes! neckcord is inherited from christianity. When Lord Christ was captured during the night, there was a rope what Juda put around his neck. And when those who pull him forward by using the rope, those who were at his back were pushing him backward. Then he falls to his front. One of the instruments which made christ's suffering so harmful was the rope. So this rope, as Saint Peter's message says "to follow his foot print, he has left us the cross". He used the word "Mateb". So, Mateb means a sign (code). The christians are identified by this symbol which we put on our neck.

Christians used different symbols for this up to the middle of 5th century. They made cross on their body or by manufacturing the cross from different things, they put on their necks. But during the 5th century when christianity was splinted into Orthodox and Catholicism, the Orthodox christians made the cord symbolic. And it is called Mateb. It differentiates them from the rest. Generally, because it is a symbol of religion and honesty in our country, it is to mean beyond this spiritual life it indicates the honesty between friends, and between husband and wife. They use it as a reflection of their intimacy. When they say "neck cordless", they mean to say dishonest.

15. The "mateb" what normally is used might have black or any other colour. But it will be changed into white when a relative dies. What is the reason for this?
 - A. People do this because they think it as an obligation, but it doesn't have any meaning. They think this will express their grief if they do the opposite. Many people, in their homes turn up side down photographs which are hung up on the walls. This is nothing but illiteracy.
16. Religious fathers keep crosses with them always. They let the believers kiss this cross when they meet them. But sometimes, even I myself have seen it, the believers kiss their hands instead of the cross. What is the reason for hand to substitute the cross? In a book a character says, when the priest goes to the house of

Dejazmatch, he splash the "Tsebel." (holly water). But when he enters into the house of an ordinary farmer, neither he puts out his cross, nor he splashes the water. Instead, he lets her, the character, kiss his hands. She criticizes him for this. I wanted to know about this point.

- A. Thus in fact anything which is done in spiritual life has to be done with great care. Basically cross is instrument of sanctification. It is on which the blood of christ flows during curcification. We don't have that cross at our hand today, but its symbol. In that symbol we think all suffers what God has received. (It is a reminder). Basically, priests bless by their hands. It is permitted since the time of exodus. It is eternal (unchanged). Becausee it is their body which is venerable.

And priests who lived during exodus used to bless (sanctify) people by their hands. Because there was no cross. But priest of new testaments use both their hands and cross for same purpose. Even for instance, you can see a priest who says the mass, blesses by his hand. So, it has no change whether he does it by his hand or by cross. It is also the same whether he prays in his home or in churches. Unless it is to be show whether he prays long or short it has no change.

17. So, we can say, what the character says is meaningless?
- A. yes!

18. I have another question. For instance, when a person sleeps because of sickness, there is a tradition of "Tila". When a fox crosses them on their way, people relate this with bad fate. Countrymen never go out or travel long journey on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- A. Satan always challenges man since Adam was pulled out of heaven because of the snake's provocation. So, this was associated with idolatry. That penetrates with the culture of the people and becomes a norm. The reason is this. Otherwise there is no difference between Wednesday and Tuesday, and Thursday, or Friday and Tuesday. They are all the same days. Men die on Wednesdays, and on Fridays too. Saturdays too. Eh... they might be born on Wednesdays, Thursdays, too. They might be appointed on Wednesdays, Fridays too. So, this is according to the situations. Days are created by the will of God for the purpose of work. Man does not want to go out without having his breakfast on Wednesdays and Fridays because they are fasting days. It is preferable if he goes out after having his breakfast. They relate with this.
19. Why do not the dabteras say the mass? And again they use sorcery both for good and for evil. What is the mystery or this?
- A. Any thing might take its name either from evil or from good. Eh... basically evil has no the base. It challenges people arising from good. So, Debtera is a word of Geez, meaning Tent. In Amharic Debtera reminds a tent what Musie has prepared for the first time. There

in that place, there were people who served as singers. After then they were passed over to David and the name "Chant of David" was given to them. They sung in that. They were serving weekly, turn by turn. But, their service is not in the Mekdes. It is outside of it. It is called "Kinie Mahlet." It is one the side of the West of the Mekdes. They are called debteras because of this not because they do not say the Mass. Of course, there are those who do not say the Mass in spite of their Debteraness. Some of them can serve as a priest and as debteras at the same time. But the majority serve as that of the old tradition, that is, staying outside the Mekdes and singing. Those who serve in this are called debteras.

Sometimes, the role of Debteras is connected with sorcery. There is a regulation which was written by Mussie. He ordered all the believers to read 5th chapter of Orit Zedagim. So, he said, let it be there in front of you like a mirror and let it be there on your finger like a ring. Let it not be far from your mouth where ever you sleep, you get up, you walk. There are some orders which say "write it on your heart". On that basis, people were used to have it on their hand. Even they were selling it. So, on that tradition some people start to use it wrongly. The earlier were the servants

of God. It is the practice of those who appeared latter, that is the modern debteras who exposed hose the previous ones.

20. You mean the priest do not do like that?

A. They do not.

21. But, the debteras also rapped their head with a scarf (shash) like the priests?

A. It came from the forefathers. It is related with their profession. They do it for the proud of God (As a costume).

22. What does it symbolize?

A. It is what God has permitted for them. When they enter into church, they wrap their head.

E. Interview with Ato Ayele Beyene

Ato Ayele Beyene is a farmer at Majete. At the beginning the researcher found it difficult to talk to him about vendetta, because the interviewee didnot accept it as a social value in his society. But, by making him to talk persistently, she was able to get Ayele's opinion on the issue. The interview with the farmer reveals how a countryside man sees a woman.

1. How old are you?

A. I assume, I am about 50.

2. What is your means of living?

A. I weave gabbi (a traditional cloth like a shall for adults) when the owners give me the wool. Other wise, I am doing my farming.

3. Have you been in Adiss Ababa?

A. No! I know only Kara Kore and Majete.

4. Where do your children live?

A. They are kids yet.

5. How! Why did you stay long without having children?

A. My wife couldn't give birth a child. But it is now, recently I start to have children. It is about 17 and 18 years.

6. Is it from your previous wife or from another woman?

A. No! It is from the second one.

7. Where did the previous one go?

A. She was a childless.

8. Did you divorce her?

- A. Yes!
9. Where is she living now?
- A. She is at Kara Kore.
-
10. What is she doing?
- A. She brews a traditional beer, (Tella) and sales.
11. Oh! Did you divorce her because she is not able to bear child?
- A. You see! My colleagues have grown children. So, I also decided to have my own children and I succeeded.
12. Aha! can't you have a child without divorcing her?
- A. Ai! Who knows this system before?
13. For instance, if one of them, a wife and husband, is not able to have biological child, is it not possible to have a child from outside?
- A. How! What is wrong with it! It is good to have an illegitimate child.
14. Is it not uncultured to have a concubine?
- A. What is wrong with it! What is wrong with having an illegitimate child? If he has got, a man can bring up the child by giving some amount of money or food, if the mother asked him.
15. Even if, you have got a legitimate child from your wife?
- A. Yes!
16. For instance, what would you do, if your wife is impregnated by another man?
- A. Aha! me?.

17. Yes! if your wife did it?

A. My wife, if she is impregnated by another man?

18. Yes!

A. Me ... this is discontenting.

19. What will you do?

A. Ohohohoy! (An exclamation remark).

20. You said a few minutes ago that "it is nothing wrong, if I have got an illegitimate child", so what is wrong if your wife did the same?

A. How? Me Any woman doesn't do like this over her husband.

21. Isn't the man who is married does over his wife?

A. Yes! He does it over his wife. Any way, if he loves her, he gives her a compensation, and by making an agreement they will bring up that illegitimate child.

22. All right, say, if she did have an illegitimate child, what will happen?

A. If the woman did?

23. Yes!

A. No! I never heard about such issue!

24. If it happened what will really happen? You said it is a discontenting? What will you do?

A. Yes! It is discontenting.

25. What would you do?

A. If a woman had an illegitimate child over her husband?

26. Eh!

A. How on earth!

27. What will happen?

- A. Ahenehe ... (an exclamation remark)
28. Tell me, please, what will happen?
- A. How! May be, she will disappear by leaving behind all her property.
29. She?
- A. Yes! but she never acts heedlessly. Never! She might not be a brat.
30. Wait a moment. I don't understand why she can't do like the man. You are saying, she accepts her husband's illegitimate child while she is not allowed to do the same as her husband? What is wrong if she did the same?
- A. Ahe-he-he!
31. Isn't there any individual who did like this?
- A. I never heard!
32. All right, let us assume, it happened! What will happen if she remains at home with her illegitimate child?
- A. How? do you mean, that the husband let the child be brought up at home?
33. Yes!
- A. Yes! There might be a man who accepts such thing, he might have a patience. Yes! He might bring up the child as if she/he is his own child.
34. Doesn't he start to attack the man who impregnated his wife? Don't people sing and tease at him?
- A. He does nothing!

35. What about his wife? Doesn't he try to punish her.
A. How! If he comes across the fact, if people tell him.
"This is not your biological child", he needs to kill
the man.
36. Does he kill?
A. Of course!
37. Whom!
A. His rival, the man who impregnated his wife!
38. Does he continue living in his house after killing a
man?
A. How! He can't!
39. Where does he go?
A. If the man (his rival) is known, he kills and then he
disappears.
40. Is he considered as a hero?
A. How, he is not, because his rivals stayed long teasing
over him.
41. He retaliates. So, why is he not considered as a
hero?
A. This is not heroism! People and his friends were
laughing at him. So, he is not a hero.

F. Interview with Ato Guangul Zegeye

I met this old man in his house located in Mefas Mewcha, a capital of Gaint, where the story of Tikur Dem is depicted. Near his house there is one side of edge of the cliff which surrounds Zoga desert. So, it is possible to see the church Akale Christos. I saw the roof sparkling, surrounded by trees.

Ato Guangul is one of the people who treated me during my stay for 10 days in Gaint. He also helped me to get some other people whom I talk to them about the culture of the area.

The interview was conducted on April 4.

1. I am working my research on Tikur Dem. What does mean by Tikur Dem?
 - A. Tikur Dem means, when a man kills another man. When it is said, "He has tikur dem (black blood) it is to mean this vendetta.
2. Why is a man insulted if he didn't retaliate?
 - A. If either of his father or his brother is killed, and then he remained silent, people tease at him by saying "he, who didn't pay back (retaliate) his enemies". Therefore, in order to escape from this insult, he kills one of the relatives of the one who killed his father.

3. Does it mean any one who has blood relation with the rival should be killed?
- A. Yes! He kills by identifying upto seventh blood line.
-
4. Who are included in this seventh blood line?
- A. Grandfather, father, and then the man himself. But the main victims (targets) are the father, the brother and the uncle.
5. What is the reason for all these conflicts?
- A. There are some reasons. It can be a woman or a farm land (rist) or any other incident.
6. Is there any condition that an insult causes two people to kill each other?
- A. Yes! If one insults the other, because of this unexpected incident, he might be initiated to kill and then he flees. If he run away the relative of the dead person starts to persuade the killer. Then he kills to retaliate.
7. Is this happening now a days?
- A. Yes!
8. What type of people can solve this type of problem?
- A. There might not be a solution, even if the rivals are reconciled, the retaliation doesn't stop. Once up on a time it will revive.
9. So, is it a must to kill to retaliate?
- A. Yes! If the number of people killed from both sides is equal, then the retaliation stops by itself. In our area, about 80 people have died because of a woman.

In this retaliation even, a child, two women and a monk were killed.

10. I think, these types of people are not included in a vendetta. Why were they killed?

A. But they killed them.

11. How?

A. The conflict was created in earlier times. Any way, when a father was coming from a court, they killed him. His relatives took the corpse to their house and stayed a while. The killers have already escaped. But, their child and sisters were at home. Those whose father is killed, when they missed the right persons, they killed the women and the child. In fact, this was against the tradition. But they couldn't control their emotion".

12. A man who kills a child, an old man and a woman, is he a hero?

A. No! They did it aggressively (emotionally).

13. What did the public say?

A. They grieved over the action.

14. How could the number of the dead person came out to be 80?

A. They continued killing each other by identifying members who have blood relationship. Even a monk was killed.

15. How did the vendetta stop?
- A. Because, the number of people killed from both side became equal, and in addition to this, there was no one to continue the vendetta. All died.
16. When did this happen?
- A. It was during the Italo-Ethiopia war.
17. How many years did take, to kill about 80 persons?
- A. It took about four and five years.
18. Why is not a woman included in vendetta?
- A. A man who kills a woman is not a man no more. Those, whom I mentioned in this story did it aggressively. But it is not common. A man who kills a woman is not a hero.
19. But, if men kill each other, are they taken as heros? Why?
- A. If a man kills a man, yes, he is obviously a hero. It is said "he killed, the man who killed his father/brother."
20. Doesn't this contradict religious practices?
- A. It is against religion.
21. So, why the people are not governed by their religion?
- A. It is wrong. Otherwise religion doesn't allow this to happen. A man who kills other's life is not good. Even God could not excuse him.
22. What about confession?
- A. If they confesse to God, they will get excuse. God has promised to give his mercy for those who repent for their guilt. Let alone our people, in legend we

hear that a man known as Simion who killed 78 people was excused. St. Mary is the reason for the mercy. He called her name. So, having eaten flesh of people including his wife's and his children's, he is excused.

23. Do you know any similar case that happened in your life?

A. No! I don't remember.

24. During these times, I hear, individuals effort is to have their own rifle. What about our forefathers? What was the instrument they fight to get? How could they show their masculinity or aggressiveness.?

A. They use spears, sticks, swords. Even they were killing each other using stones. Let alone this, our fathers fought against Italian during Adwa battle by spears and swords. It was at that time they subdued some modern armaments.

25. let me take your attention to another direction. In your area, is there any thing known as concubine *Yechin Gered = literary meaning maid of hips)?

A. It is getting reduced nowadays. But in earlier times, it was common. Even there was a culture to have "wife of flour.". This means, a man gives a woman a lot of flour and he has love affair with her. This happens between a farmer in a countryside and a woman who lives in town. He feeds her by giving her the flour from his home. For this, she spines a wool and gives him a Gabi (A traditional cloth) and she

becomes his concubine, or "Kimit". [compare this with Appendix D. p]. It is a noble or wealthy man who does this. It is not only flour but also gives her cattles.

26. Don't people insult her?

A. It is not much. She lives peacefully. But sometimes, if she quarrels with some people, they might say to her, "you are sharing a man with another woman (referring to the wife). Otherwise, she doesn't have any problem.

27. What about women? Can they do the same as men do?

A. What do you mean?

28. Men can have concubines. Do women also have concubines?

A. Never! women never do like this. It is a taboo. It is not good to do like this in our country. But men do. Even today, there are some men from countrysides who have concubines here in this town.

29. Doesn't this contradict the religion?

A. It does. This is the work of Satan. It is being against God's order.

30. Why are not women able to do like men? Is it because they give respect to their tradition and their culture, or is it because they don't have wealth to give men? Why don't they have concubines?

A. It is because of financial problem.

31. If they had the money, do you mean, they can have concubines?

A. No! I am not sure of that!

32. How do women in your area address their husbands? Do they say "Ante - you second person singular" or "Antu - polite form of second person")

A. They say "Antu". They never say "Ante". Whether he is a farmer or a landlord, whether they are equal (age wise) or not, women address their husbands "Antu". In fact, this is also becoming less and less.

33. Does the traditions allow to have an illegitimate child?

A. Yes! Some people have illegitimate children. In fact, a man, going over his wife is not good for their marriage. Any way, if his wife can't give birth to a child, if the other lady, is said to be from well to do family and said to have wealth, the man can make her his concubine. [Compare this point, with Appendix E. p.].

34. Are these illegitimate children accepted by the society?

A. They are cursed or insulted.

35. When are people happy - is it when male child is born or is it when female child is born?

A. The most wanted is the male child. If it is a female child they feel dissatisfaction. It gives sense (for mouth) when it is said "male".

36. What is the reason for this? Is it because Adam was created first?

A. Don't you think so? It is Adam, whom God created first. Therefore, since Adam is the first, male is more respected than female.

37. Can a women heir from her father's wealth?

A. In our area yes! When the father dies, a woman can get (take) her own share and mixes it with her husband's.

38. Is sorcery practised here?

A. It was common during earlier times. Even today, there are some who ask consultation from "Tenquais" and "Debteras".

39. What is the meaning of a Debtera?

A. It means, a man who reads "Awde Negest" [compare this with Appendix B, p.]. It means, a man who calls for an evil spirit.

40. Why do people go to a Debtera?

A. Say, a man has a rival. Then he goes to the Debtera and asks for a medicine which protects him from being injured. The Debtera whether he knows or not, he simply gives something. He uses this job as a means of living.

41. I am asking you about some ritualistic practices which are common among christians. Why people plant a tree on a new grave?

A. It is a mark. It helps them to identify the grave easily from other graves.

42. What about the neck cord (Mateb)? What is it for?

A. It is also a sign of christianity. It is worn during baptism. Since then, it remains with the person

through out his life. When a person is said to be "dishonest" it means he is pagan, the one who is dishonest.

43. Is paganism known among the people?

A. Yes! people slaughter a white goat every September on the top of a mountain called 'Shit'. It is a tradition. People contribute money to buy a white bull and they scarify it for the mountain. They eat together.

44. Why should it be the white one?

A. I don't know, they say the god doesn't accept the offer unless it is white.

45. Does it have any relationship with christianity?

A. No! It is not connected. The priests never go there, and never attend the ritual. But, the people, after having eaten the beef, they take the skin of the bull to a church and they give it to the priests.

Not only on the top of the mountain, but also in every village, people slaughter goats and celebrate.

46. Lastely, I would like to know your opinion about vengeance. Do you think it is good?

A. It is not good. If a man once got into trouble, he has to accept it as an expected incident, and he should leave it for God. Otherwise, I don't see any positive aspect of vendetta.

DECLARATION

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

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