

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INTEGRATION IN GANTA (GAMO) OF  
SOUTH WESTERN ETHIOPIA: A STUDY OF DESCENT BASED SLAVES**

**BOSHA BOMBE**



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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF  
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN  
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

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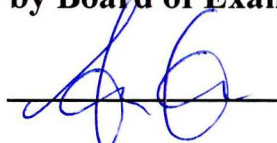
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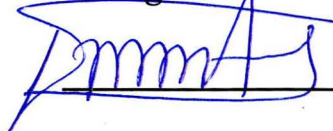
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## **Acknowledgments**

From the beginning to completion of this Thesis many helped me: institutions, individuals, friends and relatives. Without their support and sympathetic cooperation finishing of this Thesis would not have been possible.

I want to thank School of Graduate Program of Addis Ababa University for letting me to pursue my graduate program in the department of social anthropology. I have really enjoyed the various courses offered, and the unreserved commitment of instructors in the department. I am indebted to School of Graduate Program for providing me with financial support to accomplish the Thesis. I am also grateful to the Synods of South Western Ethiopia for their financial support.

My deepest appreciation goes to my advisor Dr. Susanne Epple. She is uncomplaining, open, concerned and dependable advisor. This Thesis would not have taken its final shape without her immeasurable effort. She visited me in the field and discussed with me the research context, participants approach and the progress of the field work. She read tolerantly every part of the Thesis and critically and constructively commented, the language, formatting and contents. She also reshaped the research topic, reorganized the structure of the Thesis and gave it final shape.

I am also thankful to many individuals and friends whose names I could not list all here. I am especially thankful to Ato Ketema Kelile. He gave me a first orientation of the community context before I entered the field and recommended many knowledgeable key informants I am also grateful to my friend Zerihun Haliso who gave me his own digital camera which helped me in taking photos and videos throughout the field work.

My thanks also go to my host-family in Ganta that is Ato Bekele Basa, his wife and children. Bekele is a redeemed and fully integrated slave descendant. His wife Demekech Tina is a generous woman. Bekele helped me in selecting key informants, identifying redeemed and unredeemed slave descendants. I stayed with them more than three months, and enjoyed their care and generous support.

My last but not least appreciation goes to my wife Almaze Saguye. Her moral, spiritual and psychological support has been an engine to successfully accomplish my graduate study.

## Selected Glossary of Ganta(Gamo) Terms

<i>Ayle</i>	slave/ slave descendant
<i>Bacha</i>	sickle uses to cut grasses and weed
<i>bacha ayle</i>	slave descendants whose ancestors had been bought from a market
<i>Chancha</i>	food and drink presented to slave descendants' home at death of their relative
<i>Chancha ayle</i>	are <i>mala</i> , i.e. non slaves, who turned into slaves by eating <i>chancha</i> at slave descendants' home at death of their relative
<i>Dere</i>	community
<i>Gome</i>	serious sin
<i>Idir</i>	community based association, burial association, which serves at funeral
<i>Iqub</i>	community based association, reciprocal saving association
<i>Kati</i>	highest politico-religious leader of Ganta. He is responsible for finalizing the rituals related to slave redemption
<i>La'a</i>	emancipate/ emancipation of slave descendants when they get redeemed or cleanness from temporary impurity when they give birth/ someone die
<i>lataa ayle:</i>	slave descendants whose ancestors were turned into slave through marriage, famine and war
<i>Lathi</i>	master of slaves, more specifically descendants of slave holders
<i>lazantha</i>	elder who accompanies slave descendants during redemption or who acts as go-between in marriage negotiation
<i>Maga</i>	politico-religious leader positioned below the <i>kati</i> . Together with the <i>kati</i> he is involved in the rituals related to slave redemption
<i>Mala</i>	the dominant section / free born of the Ganta(Gamo) society
<i>Mana</i>	craft workers (includes potters, blacksmiths, tanners)
<i>Oge maga/ Ogathi</i>	mediator in slave redemption and conflict resolution on case of conflict between two or more communities
<i>Qabale</i>	derived from Amharic, <i>kebele</i> , the lowest political hierarchy of the country
<i>Soffee,</i>	celebration/ public announcement of new status of slave descendants
<i>Tuna</i>	dangerous pollutant
<i>Uma</i>	clan/ social origin
<i>Woreda</i>	district
<i>Wozzo</i>	name of slave redemption ritual, implies redeeming /ransoming of lost freedom of the <i>mala</i>
<i>wude</i>	reciprocal cattle shepherding group

## **Abstract**

*This Thesis is about descent based social exclusion and integration of slave descendants in Ganta (Gamo) of southwest Ethiopia. It looks at local explanations for exclusion of slave descendants, the areas of their exclusion from the mainstream society, different integration mechanisms and a description of how the situation of slave descendants has changed during successive political regimes of the country.*

*The data used for this study is based on three months of fieldwork during which 40 key informants from different categories (including slave descendants and descendants of slave owners with different educational and religious backgrounds) were interviewed.*

*The finding of the study shows that exclusion of slave descendants is deeply embedded in the local ideology of slavery. In Ganta slave descendants do not only belong to the lowest social class, they are also considered as impure. Their impurity is hereditary through the mother's and the father's line and transferable to non kin through close social contact during rites of passage (marriage, funeral and child delivery). The ideology of impurity is rooted in the local mythological justification that slave descendants inherited the dehumanized attributes of their ancestors. In the past slave ancestors were treated below human beings; they were exchanged like animals and commodities; they were sold, bought and given as gifts. Today slave descendants are considered as "impure" and "inferior creatures" because they are believed to share the dehumanized traits of their ancestors. Therefore, the ultimate assumption behind excluding slave descendants during rites of passages (in marriage, mourning and funeral, and child delivery) is that close intimacy with them during these situations automatically turns a free born into a slave.*

*To escape exclusion slave descendants have been integrating into the mainstream society through the indigenous mechanism called wozzo ritual. The wozzo ritual fully integrates slave descendants who can then freely intermarry with the free born and experience no exclusion in the above mentioned rites of passage. The high cost of the ritual leaves slave descendants economically broken. In addition to the indigenous mechanism, the Synods of south western Ethiopian have introduced a new approach to eliminate the situation of the slave descendants in recent time. They convinced ritual experts to publically renounce the practice of slavery. The study has shown that the community does not have full trust and still wavers to closely participate with unredeemed slave descendants, so that the exclusion which has existed during the last twenty century and survived different regimes continues to exist until today.*

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

## 1.1. Background of the Study

In many parts of the world millions of people are excluded from the mainstream society because of their ethnic identity, history or occupation. Literature indicates that there are an estimated 260 million people throughout the world suffering from descent and occupation based exclusion (Pinto 2001:2817, 2002:3988).

In the African context, according to Gore (1995) an intensive literature review on social exclusion shows that numerous individuals and groups are excluded from the mainstream society in the dimension of goods, services, rights and activities which form the major bases for citizenship in any given society. In his article entitled "Globalization and Social Exclusion in Cities: Framing the Debate with Lessons from Africa and Asia", Beal claims that social exclusion in African and Asian context reflects on identity base i.e. in these areas in most cases many people are excluded from the mainstream society for what they are (2002:10).

Anthropological studies as well as other sources on various African regions and countries show social exclusion in Africa is quite different to the one in the European context. While in Europe the origin and growing dimension of the concept social exclusion is related to differences in property and wealth, in Africa social exclusion means in most cases to speak about discrimination based on descent and occupational specialization. In many parts of Africa there exists social exclusion of groups formed based on occupational specialization. Membership in such groups is determined by birth, and relationships between their members and other individuals or groups are regulated by the dogma of pollutedness and unpollutedness<sup>1</sup>. In West African countries and in the sub-Saharan region many people are despised because of their descent line. Members of lineages who are believed to be descendents of slaves are ostracized and denied access to employment and political power. In Eastern Africa descendents of hunter-gatherer groups are subjected to similar discrimination. For example, the Wata community of Kenya and

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<sup>1</sup> . [www.dalitfreedom.org](http://www.dalitfreedom.org). Discrimination based on descent in Africa. The International Dalit Solidarity Network ("*Working globally against discrimination by work and descent*"). accessed on 02/09/2012

southern Ethiopia lives among the Borana and have traditionally been descendents of hunter-gatherers. The dominant Borana are generally herders and have traditionally segregated the Wata as redundant low caste, worthless and downtrodden (<sup>2</sup>, Pinto 2001, 2002, and Todd 1977).

Descent and occupation based exclusion in Ethiopia has existed for long and it is still a common phenomenon today (Freeman and Pankhurst 2001). In the Gamo high-lands of south western Ethiopia, descent and occupation based exclusion has been a persistent condition in the past and still in the present. The Gamo society has placed craft workers (potters, blacksmiths and leatherworkers/ tanners) at the bottom of the mainstream society (Freeman 2001). At the very bottom of the Gamo society is the category of descent based slaves, *ayle*.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Gamo society has been studied by several anthropologists (Olmstead 1972, 1973, 1975, Sperber 1973, 1978, Arthur 2003, 2008, Weedman 2006, Freeman 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004), but the sensitive issue of the *ayle* has not yet been addressed by any researcher even though their exclusion has existed for long.

In the Gamo high-lands exclusion of descendants of former slaves, *ayle* is a serious problem. In Gamo society there are many people perceived as *ayle* not because they have achieved the status in their life time but it is ascribed to them due to their family lineage. It is an inherited status for which many people are gravely excluded from the mainstream society after slavery has formally been abolished in 1940s. In the high lands of especially three communities, *dere*: Ganta, Bonke and Kamba the people are generally classified into three strata: free born/noble people (*mala*) at the top, the occupational castes *mana/degela* at the middle and the slaves, *ayle* at the very bottom level. Though both occupational groups and *ayle* are to some extent excluded from the mainstream society, the exclusion of the latter is more extreme. The *ayle* are detested and not perceived as 'real human' because of their descent line i.e. the belief that they are descendents of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

former slaves. While eating and drinking with all two groups i.e. the *mana/ degela*<sup>3</sup> and the *ayle* is perceived as polluting, the pollution of the *ayle* is considered as infectious<sup>4</sup>: in case a non-*ayle* participate by eating in the events of mourning in a *ayle* home, this will turn him/her also into a *ayle* as if being slave could be transmitted from one person to another like diseases. As close interaction with *ayle* during such events results in automatic exclusion of the free born, they avoid close interaction with them in situations (during mourning and funeral and child birth) that believed to allow transmission of the impurity of *ayle* to other people.

As a way out from exclusion the *ayle* have been integrating into the mainstream community through ritual purification called *wozzo*. The *wozzo* ritual purification is the most trusted mechanism through which many slave descendants have been integrating into their kin groups and the mainstream society, however, it is exploitative method that create opportunity for slave redeemers, descendants of former slave masters, *lathi* and ritual experts (*maga* and *kati*) to build their economy and leave the redeemed slave descendants economically damaged.

Recently, the Synods of South Western Ethiopia (The Mekane Yesus) based at Arbaminch started a project work in Ganta (the study community) to eliminate the exclusion of slave descendants. They carried out intensive community conversations and persuaded the ritual leaders to end slavery. In October 2012 slavery was officially condemned and abolished; nevertheless, the community members still vacillate to closely associate with slave descendants until today.

This study intends to address the following research questions:

- What are local explanations for exclusions of descent based slaves?
- What are the areas of exclusion of descent based slaves?

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<sup>3</sup> . The situations of *mana/degela* have been changed since recent time. In the past they were severely excluded in everyday life, they did not enter *mala* home and eat and drink with them because that was believed to pollute the *mala*. It was also believed to cause serious plague, *gome*, to *mala*. The polluted *mala* could be cleaned ritually through sacrificial leader of his clan (*uma angus*). However, today the majority *mala* freely eat with the *mana* but some *mala* still less prone to be closely associating them. The exclusion of *ayle* is situational; in daily life they live peacefully with the rest mainstream society.

<sup>4</sup> . Once he/she became polluted (became *ayle*) by closely participating with *ayle* then he/she is considered as polluting agent. Pollution of *ayle* is considered as communicable.

- How the *ayle* are integrated into the mainstream society and how far does the integration go and has sustained?
- How has the situation of the *ayle* changed during the successive political regimes of Ethiopia and why does the phenomenon continue to exist?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to investigate social exclusion and integration of descent based *ayle*, a descent based caste of former slave descendants, among the Gamo of south western Ethiopia.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Look into indigenous, historical, mythical and socio-cultural explanations for exclusion of descent based slaves
- Describe dimensions of exclusion of descent based slaves and portray the scope and sustainability of their integration mechanisms into the mainstream society.
- Evaluate the changing circumstances of descent based slaves over time and space in relation to successive political regimes of Ethiopia.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research fills a gap in the ethnography of the Gamo society by providing ethnographic evidence of social exclusion of descent based slaves, a part of the Gamo culture previously ignored by researchers. The finding of the study also provides ethnographic material on slave descendants' situation in Ethiopia which is rarely researched before. In addition, the findings of study contribute to the discourse on social exclusion and integration in the African context and other developing countries which is different to European situation. Finally, the finding provides important information to concerned bodies to work on existing policies to improve the situation of excluded social categories.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

Exclusion of descent based *ayle* is practiced in all over the Gamo high-lands. An intensive study of the exclusion of *ayle* in all over the Gamo high-lands was impossible as I had only three months time for the field work. Therefore, this study was conducted in the region of Ganta only. Personal communications with some public officials and key informants had indicated that in this area the problem is rampant and deep-rooted. Therefore, I believe that the findings of this study in this particular *dere* show the general characteristics of the issue under investigation.

I had planned to observe marriage ceremonies, mourning and funerals of slave descendants in order to get deep insights of their situations. However, in my field duration I never came across such incidents. So that my findings are mainly based on in-depth key informant interviews, case studies and other tools.

This study is both diachronic and synchronic approach. It deals with historical aspect of slavery and the contemporary situation of slave descendants.

## **1.6 Research Methods**

### **1.6.1 Research Interest and its Methodology**

My research interest in exclusion and integration of descent based *ayle* among the Gamo of south western Ethiopia began before I got admission to the graduate program at Addis Ababa University, department of social anthropology. While I was staff member of Arbaminch Health Science College, I worked as a secretary for the Christian Fellowship of Arbaminch town and for the Gamo and the surrounding region. In that time I was confronted with the phenomenon of the *ayle*. I came across the Mekane Yesus church of Arbaminch sub city (Shecha: upper town) whose members were distinguished into 'free born' and '*ayle*' and actually have two church buildings. Some of the church leaders told me that in 2004 twelve *mala* Protestants of the church who came from Ganta consciously ate food at slave descendants' home at death of their relative. This turned them immediately into slave and led to severe exclusion by their kin groups, and by the community members. Unable to bear the situation all except one got redeemed. When in

2008 the one who refused to be redeemed faced a death of his child, all Ganta people living in upper town including his colleagues who got redeemed did not participate in the funeral. After the mourning the church leaders discussed over the issue and decided that its members should closely participate with the slave descendants during the time of death. Then, all Ganta *mala* Protestants; leaders, preachers, singers and members seceded from the church and setup their own by claiming that they were pure and close participation with slave descendants would transmit their assumed impurity to them. Witnessing this I feel to understand the phenomenon in broader context.

Fieldwork is central in modern anthropological research. For anthropologists it is the “laboratory” through which data regarding mythical, historical, social, biological, cultural and indigenous explanation of a given cultural context can be understood. Hence, this study mainly depended on fieldwork and focused on qualitative research method. The qualitative methods are important to uncover data regarding people’s feelings, opinions, experiences, personal accounts and also observations of everyday behavior which help understand people’s motivation to uphold their views and practices. Such kind of data cannot be obtained through quantitative design.

### **1.6.2 Data Sources**

Two data sources were used in this study. First, secondary sources such as books, published journals and articles were used at both preliminary stage and during the research process. Before the research I reviewed various articles, journals, and books to get insight into the topic, concept and theoretical framework, and empirical findings related to my research topic. Second, primary sources were the main source of this study. By using various data collecting methods primary data were elucidated from participants, key informants and field observation.

### 1.6.3 Data Collecting Instruments

#### 1.6.4 Field Experience and Informant Selection

Before entering to the field (Ganta) I stayed two weeks in Arbaminch while communicating key informants from different sectors as I had planned to get them and processing official letters from zonal government and Arbaminch Zuria *woreda*.

During the two weeks stay in Arbaminch Ketema, a foreign educated and native of Ganta oriented me the entire picture of the community. He was former project coordinator of Synods in the community of Ganta on slave descendants' situation. He introduced me to *qabale* officials and recommended some key informants from slave descendants and free born. He also indicated to me the nature and intensity of slavery in each *qabales*. In addition, Ketema introduced me with another man, Terefe whose contribution was by far most important.

Terefe lives in upper town of Arbaminch. He is the former chairman of Ganta-Kanchama-Ochole *qabale*. He is the son of *maga* and ruled the *qabale* three times from 1980s to 2011. Terefe turned into slave by eating *chancha* at funeral of a slave descendant and was experienced severe exclusion both by his family, his wife's family and the *mala* until he got redeemed. Having experience of free born and son of noble *maga* family, being slave, got redeemed and chairman of the *qabale* for long time, Terefe knew the situations of slave descendants and *mala* turned slaves more than anyone in the *qabale*. He recommended many key informants from redeemed and unredeemed slave descendants, *mala* and *mala* turned slaves.

I entered Ganta on Tuesday 15/01/ 2013. First I landed at Meyche but for some official reasons the head of Meyche *qabale* was in Arbaminch. Failing to meet him, I moved to Kanchama-Ochole located in the immediate south west of Meyche.

It was Market day in Ochole and the people were coming to the market from various directions. In the road down to the market I met four men among whom two were young. They welcomed me and I took some time with them to talk my research topic. In no

difference<sup>5</sup> they told me that the social difference between *mala* and *ayle* was eliminated last year (October 2012) by mass conference organized by the Synods.

One of them, Ashenafi, joined me to the market. After departing his friends, he said “what we said is not true. The difference still exists. We said so because at these days it is “illegal” to speak *ayle* this and that. We were banned not to discriminate the *ayle* since the mass conference. Of course, following the conference many of we Protestant believers eat and drink at *ayle* home in the event of mourning. However, for that reason we have been scorned by some of our *mala* friends”.

Then Ashenafi introduced me to another man in the market. I discussed with the man over my research topic at the *qabale* health post near the market. In the midst of our discussion the man told me interesting issues. He said “This market, Shoshane, is the ancient and historic market first in Ganta where *ayle* were traded. It is the market where *ayle* descendants after being ritually purified announce their new status through *soffe*. It is the market where the last mass Conference to end discrimination against *ayle* was held. So, with this market you can study the situation of *ayle* well”. He recommended eight key informants to me three of whom were *ayle*, four were *mala* and one was a *maga*.

I had planned to stay with Mathewos a friend of mine working as a nurse at Ganta until I got host-family from slave descendants. By this time I could not find him. Fortunately, I came across elementary school teachers whom I taught in summer in-service program as partner of Arbaminch Teachers College in 2012. I stayed with them the first two weeks.

The remaining time of my field work I stayed with Bekele, a redeemed slave descendant. I was introduced with him at an election post when he came to register for the last April *woreda* and zonal council election. Bekele was married to Demekech Tina. She is a woman of noble character, generous and kind. They have four children of whom two are females. Baysase, their elder daughter was married to Maguja, a free born, after they were redeemed. In my stay with them, Bekele helped me a lot in identifying redeemed

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<sup>5</sup>. In the initial phase of my field work the people were less cooperative hesitating that as if I was sent by the Synod to spy the ongoing situation of slave descendants after the October mass conference. After a month and two weeks stay with them I was able to communicate with their own language because my vernacular language is dialectically very close to theirs. Then after I established rapport with them and they became freely cooperative in my study

and unredeemed slave descendants. I found that his personal account was good illustration to study the concept and nature of slavery, exclusion, redemption and integration of slave descendants. Bekele appears throughout in the text in association with different illustrations.

Selections of many key informants were based on recommendation with above mentioned people and during the research I identified some.

Different key informants from diverse category were selected to be interviewed. Key males and females aged 25 and above were selected from the *ayle* to be interviewed in depth because exclusion is an affair of both sexes and it affects all age levels. I decided to limit the interviewees age above twenty five assuming that they coherently express their feelings, opinions, experiences and personal accounts. Other key informants of both sexes were selected from community based organizations (*Iqub* and *Idir*), religious institutions (Protestant and Orthodox Church members) and excluders: *mala* and *mana*. Selections of these people were based on age, knowledge of the study community and topic under investigation and social status. In addition, ritual leaders from customary politico-religious structure (*magas*, *oge maga*, *kati* and slave masters, *lathies*, were selected as key informants. The *maga* and *kati* were final authorities who approve when a *mala* turn into slave or when the slave descendants get redeemed. Furthermore, educated people from the study area working at public and private offices at Arbaminch town were selected. Generally, 40 key informants (out of which 33 are male and 7 are females) were selected to be interviewed in detail in this study.

During the interview video recording was used not to miss data produced by interviewee, and photographs were also taken to illustrate the situation. The interview was conducted both in Ganta and Amharic language. I used Amharic language because some key informants speak the language well. The Ganta language is dialectically different from the Gamo, but in many aspects it closely relates to my own vernacular Omotic language, Gezzo, and consequently I did not take long time to learn it. I conducted the interview with many people in that language.

**1.6.5. In-Depth Interview:** I used in-depth interview as main instrument because it was important to uncover various explanations, historical, cultural, biological and mythical, for exclusion of slave descendants. It was also important to deeply understand the

situation of slave descendants: their personal experiences, feelings and opinions of their relationship with the rest community members. Finally, in-depth interview was important to deal with sensitive social issues because it involves a verbal interactional process with a minimum control over the respondents' responses where people are encouraged to open up and air their views in their own terms about the topic under investigation. I conducted in-depth interview with forty key informants in different places (see appendix II: profile of key informants).

**1.6.6. Informal Conversation** I used informal conversation to deal with people of different backgrounds from various places especially at Shoshane market. This market is symbol and central of the people of Ganta. It was also the sacrificial center of the *kati* of Ganta. The market usually held on Tuesday and all the five Gantas<sup>6</sup>, people from various other Gamo *dere* including Arbamich town come to the market. I visited the market five times and held many various conversations with different people about the situation of slave descendants at neighboring Gamo *dere*, the relation between slave descendants and *mana*, historical origin of slavery and the role of Shashane market in slave trade, marriage between slave descendants and other social groups and others. I also used this method to uncover varieties of information with different people at different places: streets, individual's home, drinking houses, work place and the like.

**1.6.7. Case Study:** The case studies were conducted to illustrate the general findings of the study. They were focused on individuals' life stories to demonstrate the intensity of exclusion of slave descendants during mourning and funerals and child delivery, the situation of *mala* turned slaves through marriage and eating at funeral at death of slave descendants and the scope of social integration on redeemed slave descendants.

**1.6.8. Collection of Genealogies:** I used this technique mainly to understand the persistent nature of unmixed marriage (marriage between slave descendants and the free born). I collected the genealogies of marriage of slave descendants since the origin of slavery in the study community and it enabled me to analyze the strict endogamous marriage practices between the three social classes in the community of Ganta. The

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<sup>6</sup>. See five Ganta *qabales* in chapter four.

Genealogical method was also employed to understand the life stories of the slave ancestors, how slavery originated in the descent line of slave descendants and how that affected them. This method was also used to identify ancient slave markets and origin of places of some slave descendants.

**1.6.9. Observation:** The observation method was used to see and understand the daily life interaction, cooperation and participation between the different categories of people in Ganta. I observed the peaceful coexistence and integrated manner of life in various everyday life situations: in community based organization, worship places, participation in local level government structures, friendship and neighborhood life, work places, meal sharing (eating and drinking) and equal benefiting from social service infrastructures. I never came across exclusion of *ayle* and *mana* in everyday life except some times when *mala* got drunk they ridicule and scorn *ayle* in their presence or absence in drinking houses and at market places.

## **1.7. Data Documentation and Analysis**

Data documentation started in the field. Data collected through key informant interview was carefully transcribed and translated. Field-notes taken during observation, informal conversations, video records and photos taken for illustration purposes were organized thematically and coherently. Genealogical accounts were also arranged thematically to understand the persistent nature of slavery through various generations, unmixed marriage, early slave trade routes and slave selling markets. Living ethnographic evidences of case studies were documented logically and thematically to understand the intensity and magnitude of exclusion of slave descendants, in marriage, mourning and funerals and child delivery; the situation of *mala* turned slaves in similar contexts; and the scope and sustainability of social integration of slave descendants. Finally, the ethnographic data was analyzed and interpreted in the context of the theoretical framework and cross-cultural ethnographic material (in the African context). Then, the reports of the research findings were written up by following logical order, follow of ideas and arguments.

## 1.8. Organization of the Thesis

The Thesis has been organized into eight chapters. Chapter one has discussed about the background of the research problem, statement of the problem, basic research questions, objectives of the study, and scope and limitation of the study. It has also described the research methods: the research interest and its approach, data source, selection of informants, data collecting methods and data documentation and analysis.

In chapter two related literature on social exclusion and integration is reviewed. Although the concepts social exclusion and integration have been recent origin, the terms quickly developed into different dimensions, and hence today they bear very contested and ambiguous notions and interpretations. A great deal of literature has been developed on them. In this chapter attempts have been made to understand conceptual and theoretical framework of social exclusion and integration especially in African and other developing countries context. The chapter also focuses on reviewing empirical literature on descent based exclusion and integration of former slave descendants in Africa.

Chapter three is about description of the study area. In this section the geographical and socio-political settings of the Gamo society in general and Ganta; the study community in particular has been outlined. The chapter also discusses the demographic feature, livelihood strategies, infrastructure and social organization of the study community.

Chapter four is concerned with the historical origin of slavery and discusses various fundamental causes for the introduction of slavery in Gamo area. It also shows how the concepts of purity and impurity were developed to regulate the relationships between the three social classes (the *mala*, *ayle* and *mana*) in the study communities. Finally, the local perspective and definition of the concept of slavery is provided and different categories of slave descendants described.

Chapter five is about coexistence and exclusion of slave descendants. It describes the everyday peaceful life of slave descendants with the mainstream society, and portrays exclusion of slave descendants during rites of passage: in marriage, time of death and child delivery.

Chapter six is about integration of slave descendants. Here two basic mechanisms of integration of slave descendants have been portrayed: the indigenous mechanism, *wozzo* ritual and the Synods project. The chapter also comparatively analyzes the indigenous mechanism and the Synods strategy in terms of community's perception and scope of integration.

Chapter seven is concerned with changing circumstances of slave descendants in relation to the successive political regimes of the country.

The last chapter is conclusion and recommendation. Here the research findings have been discussed in the context of theoretical frameworks and cross-cultural ethnographic material. The chapter closes after offering some recommendations to concerned bodies to alleviate the existing situation of slave descendants.

## CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Social exclusion and social integration (inclusion) are linked concepts. The two terms have been widely used and popularized among academics and public policy analysts in recent years. Since the evolution of the notions in the political philosophy of French Republican thought, great deals of literature have been developed on them, and the two notions got great attention among social policy and development discourses in Europe in response to crises of welfare states and failure of development theories in poverty minimization (Pradhan 2006:1 ). In Africa and other developing countries the notion of exclusion has nowadays become conventional to describe people discriminated because of their history, ethnic origin, descent or occupation. An intensive look into literature reveals that exclusion is a rather contested and ambiguous term, while the term integration has been used alternatively to cohesion and inclusion (ibid).

This chapter discusses the concepts of social exclusion and integration and some related theories. It is organized into three sections. The first part of the chapter discusses the historical origin and the growing dimensions of the concepts social exclusion and integration. The second section deals with the conceptual and theoretical framework of exclusion and integration. The last section of the chapter is concerned with reviewing empirical literature on exclusion and integration of descent based slaves in Africa.

### **2.1. Historical Origin and Growing Dimension of the Terms Exclusion and Integration**

The contemporary concept of social exclusion and integration emerged in countries of European Union in 1970s as the result of social welfare crises and fracture of social relationship caused by technological and economic reorganization (Pradhan 2006, Silver 1994-6). The two terms are of recent origin and widely used by the modern political analysts, social scientists and public policy analysts to scrutinize different dimension of a society (Sonowa 2008:123, Louri 2008:225, Rodgers *et al*, 1995:2).

The historical roots of the concept “social exclusion” trace as far back as Aristotle (Sen 2000, Mathieson *et al* 2008), however, the contemporary popularization of the notion

originated in France (Silver 1994-6). Rene` Lenoir` who published an article entitled:- *Les Exclus: Un Francais sur dix*(1974) regarding socially unprotected social categories in French society has been mentioned by many social scientists for having coined the concept “social exclusion” (Silver 1994-6, Sen 2000, Rodgers *et al*, 1995, de Haan 2001). The term was used to describe categories of people who were unprotected by any social insurance i.e. people having no family, income and the like. According to Lenoir, then Secretary of State for Social Action in a French Gaullist government, the socially excluded French population included “the mentally and the physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged, invalids, abused children, drug addicts, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and ‘social misfits’ which made up of one-tenth of the France population”(Silver1994-6:532).

The intellectual origin of the idea “social integration” trace as far as the late nineteen century French sociologist Emile Durkheim. According to Durkheim people's norms, beliefs, and values make up a collective consciousness, or a shared way of understanding and behaving in the world. The collective consciousness binds individuals together and creates social integration. He also expresses that integration is conformity to common values and beliefs and functional interdependence: “mechanical solidarity” as integration through common values and beliefs which is supposed to enable persons and groups to cooperate and “organic solidarity”, integration through interdependence by the need to reciprocate services(Mathieson *et al* 2008, Damtew 2003).

The contemporary notion of “social integration” was introduced in 1970s as a policy measure against the problem of social exclusion in France and the emphasis on integration as an appropriate measure to solve exclusion continued in the 1980s. During these years France designed various policies to combat exclusion. The integration policy largely drew upon French tradition of Republican discourse, “solidarity, cohesion, social bond and new social contract” (Silver 1994-6: 533-4).

From France the notion of social exclusion and social integration spread to the whole of Europe. In the 1990s Europe dealing with social exclusion means focusing on poverty issue, i.e. addressing the high unemployment rate and increasing inequality. In the years under discussion, social exclusion got comprehensive and multi-dimensional meaning

addressing limited access for individuals sharing in economic, social, cultural and political dimension; hence in this sense social exclusion implies cumulative disadvantage and limiting of social rights (Bohnik 2004:2, Gordon 2007: 194, Room 1999).

In 1999 under the patronage of the International Institute of Labor Studies (IILS) of the International Labor Organization (ILO) based at Geneva, the notion of social exclusion officially launched into development studies in developing countries, and produced an international review of social exclusion and antipoverty strategies (Gordon 2007 :204, Fischer 2008: 5).

Social integration was a dominant policy discourse of Eastern Europe in 1990s. However, unlike in Western Europe where integration focused on solving poverty, in the Eastern Europe the application of the term adapted to inclusion of ethnic minorities. In Eastern Europe to foster integration of ethnic minorities various declarations and enactments like international conventions and treaties were ratified. In such policy documents social integration indicated principles by which individuals and groups are bound to each other in social space and it refers to relation between the social actors (Berenevičienė 2003: 96-7).

The concept of social exclusion has increasingly been prominent in Western Europe since the popularization of the notion, and in the early 1990s it diffused from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere (Mathieson *et al* 2008), but in the south: south East Asia, Africa and Latin America, social exclusion has different implications than in Europe. In these regions in most cases exclusion connotes people's history, identity, descent and occupation rather than inequality in property and wealth (Pankhurst 1999; Pinto 2001, 2002; Natrajan 2005; Hooker 2005, Sen 2000).

## **2.2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of Social Exclusion and Integration**

### **2.2.1. Social Exclusion**

A great deal of literature has been produced concerning exclusion of various people ranging from local context to global situation. The different perspectives and paradigms of exclusion are embedded in various thematic areas; while in European context most of

the theories focused on poverty, relative deprivation, disadvantage and unequal access to basic necessities and social services (Levitas 2005, Bhalla and Laperyre 1997, Sen 2000, Silver 1994-6), in Africa and other developing regions there is lack of comprehensive approaches on the issue. The existing literature indicate that perspectives of social exclusion is embedded in inherent group formation in a society, caste and social stratification, social, cultural and ideological justification and structural hierarchy(De Haan 2001, Fischer 2008, Pankhurst 2001, Sonowal 2008). The perspectives and paradigms which are relevant and applicable to this study are those that are developed on African and other developing countries. In this section I will briefly discuss the conceptual framework of exclusion; however, much emphasis shall be give to literature on thematic areas of social and cultural dimension, ideological justification, caste and internal social differentiation and structural exclusion.

Silver explains that the concept of social exclusion is embedded in various philosophical thoughts. She has developed a “three typology” approach of social exclusion and claims that each perspective characterizes exclusion as based on different causes and is rooted in different political thoughts of schools: *Republicanism*, *Liberalism* and *Social Democracy* (Silver 1994-6: 539).

The “solidarity paradigm” explains exclusion as a rupture of social bonds between the individual and society. It stresses that exclusion is inherent in the solidarity of a nation, race, ethnicity, locality and other cultural or primordial ties that delimit group boundaries. This model underpins the Republican State and relates to the French experience where the notion of exclusion originated (Silver 194-6: 541-2).

The “specialization paradigm” which is dominant in the US and contested in UK is determined by individual liberalism. According to liberal individualistic theories, individuals are able to move across boundaries of social differentiation and economic divisions of labor, and emphasize the contractual exchange of rights and obligations. In this paradigm, exclusion reflects discrimination, the drawing of group distinctions that denies individuals full access to or participation in exchange or interaction (Silver 1994-6 542-3).

The “monopoly paradigm” reflects societies with hierarchical structures that enforce restriction to access to goods and services for non-members of the dominant groups. This approach heavily draws up on the writings of Max Weber, and to some extent of Karl Marx. It puts emphasis on social order being coercive and imposed through hierarchical power relations. According to this paradigm, social exclusion is a consequence of the formation of social stratification by class, status and political power that serve the interest of the dominant one. The approach stresses that exclusion results from “social closures” when institutions monopolize scarce resources, create boundaries and perpetuate inequality (Silver 1994-6: 543).

Silver’s approach works more in western industrial world where societies are stratified based on power relation and material possession. However, the manifestation of exclusion due to inherent group formation in the society relates to what exclusion mean in Africa and other developing countries.

Social exclusion can be understood in terms of intentional and unintentional practice. For Sen exclusion is both “active” and “passive”. The active exclusion implies direct and planned result of policy or discriminatory action including, for example, withholding political, economic and social rights from migrant groups or deliberate discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, social origin or age. The passive exclusion arises indirectly through social process in which there is no intentional attempt to exclude (Sen 2000). In the words of Fischer exclusion is “structural, institutional or agentive processes of repulsion or obstruction” (Fischer 2008: 3). He clarifies:

*Structural and institutional processes allow for exclusions that are non-intentional as well as intentional. In other words, structural or institutional disjuncture that repel or obstruct people from certain sectors of an economy or society might be unintended, or else they might be purposely discriminatory, whether for purposes of ethnic segregation (as in the case of Apartheid South Africa), of developmental objectives (as in the case of restricting the legal residential status of rural migrants in Chinese urban areas), or for political purposes (as in the case of linguistic requirements for government employment). Agentive processes refer to direct discriminatory actions by one actor against another (2008: 19).*

DeHaan articulates social exclusion in terms of relation and process. Looking from the dimension of relation and process, he argues that social exclusion denotes rejection of individuals and groups as the result of inherent social stratification in a society. He claims that group formation is the fundamental element of human society and this is followed by exclusion of others from one's own group. People can be excluded based on identity, occupation, history, descent, caste, labour and the like. For example, landlords exclude people from access to land or housing; elite political groups exclude others from legal rights; priests in India may exclude scheduled castes from access to temples; minorities may be excluded from expressing their identity; labor markets, and also some trade unions exclude people -non-members from getting jobs; and so on (De Haan 2001: 26).

Sonowal essentially shares the perspective of De Haan but he developed four thematic areas to understand exclusion. The identity based exclusion reflects the cultural devaluation of groups and categories of people in a society. The identities which form and define the distinct characteristics of the people may include: caste, ethnicity, religion, social origin and descent. In regard to these social characteristics of the groups dominant sections of society construct negative values, beliefs and attitudes towards them and hence stigmatize, stereotype and discriminate them. Economic based exclusion is manifested in lack of resources and limited access to basic necessities and services. The spatial dimension of exclusion may lie in the remoteness and isolation of a location which makes it physically difficult for its inhabitants to participate in broader socio-economic processes. Exclusion on social dimension can be seen as an institutionalized form of inequality, the failure of a society to extend to all sections of its members, the economic resources and social recognition which they need in order to participate fully in the collective life of the community (2008: 124). From these thematic based approaches exclusion due to identity of individuals and groups conforms to the Gamo context. In Gamo slave descendants are excluded because of their social origin/ what they are.

Much similar to Sonowal's underpinnings is the perspectives of Pankhurst. To analyze the situation of minorities (craft workers) in south western Ethiopia Pankhurst indicates five dimensions: spatial, economical, political, social, and cultural. The spatial dimensions of exclusion are manifested in settlement pattern and discrimination in times

of social situation. Concerning the settlement pattern, while some minorities live in an integrated manner with the mainstream society, the most discriminated settled in the outskirts of the communities. In social situations such as streets, markets and weddings the minorities are to respect the dominant section of the communities by expressing different behaviors like walking in the lower side, bowing down and in some cases even kneeling. Economical marginalization is displayed in constraint on production and exchange. The minorities have limited access to public land and they were subject to corvée labor to their master. Regarding political marginalization the minorities were excluded from local indigenous and formal political settings. Socially, exclusions of minorities were characterized by non-reciprocal interactions. In this regard exclusion can be explained in terms of restricted social interaction, commensality, and joint labor, membership of association, burial practices and most profoundly, intermarriage. Cultural dimension of exclusion is characterized by mythological justification and negative stereotyping for the low status of minorities (Pankhurst 2001: 2-6). The underpinnings of Pankhurst could show the general features of craft workers in south western Ethiopia but in the context of Ganta (Gamo) today the situation of craft workers is changed. They freely participate with the mainstream society in everyday life except avoidance of intermarriage between them. The social and cultural dimensions of exclusion, however, help understand the circumstances of the slave descendants.

The paradigms and perspectives I have discussed in one or another way help see the situation in Gamo. They indicate that exclusion is the result of various factors in a society: planned (intentional), structural (institutional), inherent social stratification, identity based, social and cultural justifications. The most important approach, however, to analyze the context of the study community is ideological justification of exclusion. Ideological justification of exclusion is embedded in religious doctrines and belief systems. Accordingly the concept “purity and impurity” regulates contact and avoidance by supernatural sanction or in scientific theories of human nature, natural instinct theory of segregation (Damtew 2003:15). Schlee also explains that the concept “purity” is connected to “power” both in the “traditional belief systems and in the branches of Christianity which have come to compete with them”. He points out that in such belief

system the ideology of purity and power regulates the relationship of social members in a society. Members in the society keep standards of purity to preserve their status in their respective groups. Exclusion of “impure” can be manifested through avoidance of commensality and inter-marriage (2003: 1ff).

### **2.2.2. Social Integration**

Unlike social exclusion, social integration has short of theoretical and empirical basis. Beresnevièiûtë argues that “the perspective of social integration lacking a comprehensive theoretical and empirical basis” (2003: 97). In his view Beresnevièiûtë defines social integration as “principles by which individuals (actors, agents, or subjects) are bound to each other in the social space and it refers to relations among the actors, i.e. how the actors (agents) accept social rules. (2003:97).

In the functionalist school, the concept integration had a broadest sense; it indicates a pattern of system that determines relations of interconnected diverse elements into the social whole. It means a mode of associations of the units of a system by asset of which, on one hand, they act to avoid disrupting the system and on the other hand, they collaborate to support its functioning as a unit (Beresnevièiûtë 2003:97, EFMS<sup>7</sup> 2006: 8).

Blanc (1998) argues that integration accounts to normal society and exclusion to outcast and marginalized at the edge of the mainstream society, however, he cautions us that fully accepting such definition might mislead us because, he argues, mainstream groups do not constitute society as a whole and excluded are not unavoidably at the margin of the social order, though they may practice various forms of social integration. Blanc further argues that a human being totally ‘excluded’ from ‘society’ makes no sense, while a person perfectly ‘integrated’ would probably suffer from over conformity’. Integration and exclusion at individual, group or global society levels, are the opposite poles of a single complex process” (Blanc 1998:782).

Blanc further indicates four thematic dimensions to analyze social integration. The micro and macro (individual and group) process of integration refers to cooperation and a

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<sup>7</sup> . European Forum for Migration Studies

redefinition of a social common identity. The reciprocal process of integration indicates that the mainstream society and the outsiders forge new forms of social relationships. The political process shows individuals and groups learn to agree on compromises and in doing so they learn to become social actors. The collective action implies individuals and groups learn to determine collectively and democratically their common good (Blanc 1998: 783). Similarly, Xiberras (1993) defines integration as “solidarity that is the ability to re-establish mutual recognition by all parties in society” (in Silver (1994-6:534).

Blanc’s paradigm explains that individuals and groups can be functional system of a society yet experiencing some kind of exclusion. In the context of Gamo while the slave descendants live peacefully with the mainstream society and reciprocate everyday social life, they experience severe exclusion during rites of passage. Craft workers play an important role in the society (their products are vital role for livelihood of the society) yet their occupation is considered as impure and they have low social status. Integration of slave descendants shows redefinition of social common identity and forging of new relationships between them and the mainstream society.

Social integration is removing impediment against access to commensality and mutual social life. In line with this perspective Baron (1967) explains that integration is an extension of the areas and degree of the flow of dealings between members of marginal and dominant groups by reducing “categorical” barriers against access to mainstream social life. He further explains that integration is circumstance in which members of a society in spite of their race, religion, ethnic or social origin, move freely among one another, sharing the same opportunities and the same privileges and facilitate on an equal basis. In the context of study community the “categorical barriers” that slave descendants remove to get integrated into the mainstream society is their impure status.

In the view of Shlee social integration can be achieved through identity change. He explains that people can change their identity by renouncing one and claiming the other through agentive process. He notes:

*People disclaim one identity and claim another or an identity change over time. Both processes can occur independently of one another, such as when people move in and out of a category (e.g. 'immigrant' or 'lower middle class' or a situational adopted ethnic category) without producing a substantial change in the definition and content of that category (it merely changes its composition in terms of people). Alternatively the two processes can be interrelated, for example when the content of an identity under threat of being abandoned is adjusted to popular demand. Identities evolve under the influence of the discourses about them. They are ideologically re-directed and make use of different kinds of historical material (Shlee 2005: 82).*

This is the most practical aspect in the discourse of slave descendants in the community of Ganta. They deny their social origin (attachment to their slave ancestors) and claim the status of the dominant section of the society, *mala*. *Mala* turned slaves can also change their identity.

### **2.3. Social Exclusion and Integration of Slave Descendants In Africa**

#### **2.3.1. Exclusion of Slave Descendants**

Exclusion of slave descendants is a serious problem in Sub-Saharan Africa. The dimension of their exclusion includes political, spatial, social, cultural and economic. In some places albeit they practice some degree of cohesion with mainstream society, they are excluded in the areas of marriage and political position. In many parts they are considered as inferior people and impeded from upward social mobility.

Hahonou & Pelckmans indicate that heritages of slavery matter in West African societies. They assert that in addition to contemporary forms of slavery such as sexual servitude, human trafficking, child labor and forced labor; various kinds of slavery such as 'benign slavery' and 'chattel slavery' are still practiced in sub Sahara Africa, especially in West African countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Benin, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Serra Leone and Burkina Faso. In these countries slave descendants have been marginalized and impeded from upward social mobility. The exclusion of slave descendants has not been banished with colonialism as well as the post colonial policies (Hahonou & Pelckmans 2011: 141-142).

Agreeing with Lovejoy (1981) Hahonou & Pelckmans define slavery as “a cultural system which justifies and legitimizes a social order. This cultural system is characterized by a set of values and ideals that consider slaves and their descendants as inferior human beings. People of slave origin are labeled and stigmatized on the bases of their social status. Slave status is associated with pejorative connotations about physical, moral and behavioral attributes”. Because of their family lineage, slave descendents are excluded from the mainstream society in various dimensions: no access to high political position, no access to religious function and no access to marriage with free born (Hahonou & Pelckmans 2011:144).

In the Late- Colonial Niger Bend (Mali) slave descendants are attributed with derogative social status. In the article ‘Bellah Histories of Decolonization, Iklan Paths to Freedom: The Meanings of Race and Slavery in the Late-Colonial Niger Bend (Mali), 1944–1960’, Hall asserts that slave descendants have been given ‘erotic color-coded terminology’ to show their social inferiority as “black” people in ethno-linguistic groups in Niger Bend. This kind of cultural practice is also found among the Songhay people whom the colonial state labeled as “black”. Among Songhay-speakers freed slaves have historically been labeled as “blacks” (Hall 2011: 63-65).

Hall further explains that the most important racial label that marked social inferiority in the Colonial Niger Bend was the term “Bellah”. This local term was used by the French administration to indicate slaves and former slaves among the Tuareg. The term Bellah is of Songhay origin, and it was not commonly used in Tamashek, the spoken language of the Tuareg. It indicates that slave descendants have no right to hand over their property to their children at their death; it was inherited by their master. Because the colonial state sided with the slave masters in cases of inheritance from slaves, it represented one of the biggest grievances against the colonial regime by the slave descendants (Hall 2011: 63-65).

The persistent discrimination of slave descendants in Madagascar was viewed as “unchanging ideology”. Regnier in his recent completed PhD dissertation work entitled “Why not marry them? History, Essentialism and the Condition of Slave Descendants among the southern Betsileo (Madagascar)” indicates that because of cultural belief in

ancestral wrath and social sanction, the Beparasy (free born) did not live out mutual marriage union with the Berosaina (slave descendents) over the last four or five generations. He points out that the ban on marriage with slave descendents and social sanction that enforce the rule are cultural heritages handed on from the pre-abolition, where the powerful ideology stratified the Betsileo society into three endogamous status groups (nobles' commoners and slaves). This powerful social hierarchy did not end with abolition of slavery and it has tremendous consequence on social relationships and marriage practices in the present day Betsileo society. Regnier called the practice "persistent of ideology thesis" (Regnier 2012: 149-151).

Legacies of slavery have also been continual social problem in the Guinea Coast of West Africa (Susu society). Slavery for Susu people is social and biological concept. Biologically, slavery is transferable through male line. A slave man who marries free woman has slave children while a free man who marries a slave woman has free children. Socially, slaves and their descendants are thought to be inferior both physically and mentally because they are slave. In addition the slave descendants are not allowed to participate in chieftom election (indigenous politics), living in "free towns" and owning houses there<sup>8</sup>.

Sudan has been known for long history of human bondage. Ancient Kush, medieval Nubia, and numerous periods of foreign rule bear witness to widespread slavery and slave trading in Sudan. After the independence, the practice of slavery continued in Sudan particularly in southern Sudan to a great extent in the area of Abyei. In this area the Humr Misseriya has regularly been raiding the Ngok Dinka. The maltreatment of slaves and their descendants shows that they are almost constantly in transit between capture, sale, release, redemption, escape, dumping, and capture again (Fegley 2008, Jok 2001).

In Ethiopia, according to Uhlig an attempt to eliminate slavery started in 1923 when Emperor Haile Selassie was asked to abolish slavery as precondition to admit into the

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<sup>8</sup> . James, S. Thayer. 'The Persistence of Slavery on the Guinea Coast'. "[www.webcote.net/bibliotheque](http://www.webcote.net/bibliotheque)" accessed on 10/04/2013.

League of the Nations. Following the Italian occupation in 1942 a new proclamation was issued by the emperor abolishing any form of slave trade and the legal institution of slave itself. However, despite such effort slaves and their descendants have continually been marginalized in the country, especially in the peripheral parts (south western) until 1990s.

He writes as follows:

*Many slaves then became servants. Self-relationship between dominating and marginalizing groups, however, continued especially in peripheral regions well into 1970s, in south west until 1990s. The special status of the former slaves in diverse Ethiopian societies plays a role often until today e.g. former slaves “barya” (2010: 680-681).*

### **2.3.2. Integration of Slave Descendants**

In West African countries such as Niger, Benin, Mauritania, Mali where the legacies of slavery highly matters, the slave descendents have engaged in antislavery social movements and identity political struggle to eliminate the discriminatory practices(Hahonou & Pelckmans 2011: 145-146).

The antislavery movements basically have involved in two spheres to include the former slaves into the mainstream society: the resilience of slavery practices and identity politics. In the first case the antislavery movements are engaged in emancipating the enslaved people from their master, lobby for legal criminalization of slavery, organize demonstration for slavery practice, support slaves in court cases against their masters and assisting victims morally and financially. In the case of identity politics, they concerned with transforming both self and societal attitude of people with despised status of slave descendents. Their focus was to eliminate the ideology of slavery which claims that slaves are lower human beings. To achieve integration of slaves into the mainstream society, antislavery activists actively worked in political dimensions i.e. integrating slave descendents in political parties or helping them to form their own political parties, emphasizing modern education and literacy campaign among adult of slave status in rural areas where the government is less working, demanding reforms ranging from land tenure to religious and legal. By doing so the antislavery movements achieved their goal

in three main dimensions: better access to political representation, more social inclusion and influence in legal reforms (Hahonou & Pelckmans 2011: 152-55).

Literature disputes over integration of slaves and their descendants into mainstream society in southern Sudan. In one edited volume Arrowsmith and Minitier indicate contrasting ideas of slave integration into the mainstream Sudanese society. Arrowsmith argues that in many communities where there is ineffective antislavery legislation and corrupt law enforcement to emancipate slaves, redemption is the only way to help victims escape bondage. In line with this argument he shows that in southern Sudan a Western charity pays \$50 per person to free Dinka people who were enslaved after their villages had been invaded by militia of northern Sudan. He argues that paying debate bondage to free slaves practice everywhere in the world. Today, with 27 million slaves in the world, redemption (making a payment to free a slave) can and does happen anywhere (Arrowsmith 2004: 45). On the other hand, Minitier claims that the purchase of freedom of slaves increases the market value of slaves and encourages slave raiders to abduct more people to sell to slave redeemers. Eliminating the economic incentive for trading slaves rather than increasing it would be a more effective way to reduce slavery in Sudan(Minitier 2004: 49).

Apart from the West African countries and the Sudanese case there is shortage of literature on attempts of integration of former slaves and their descendants into the mainstream society. In Ethiopian context despite repeated effort I could not find empirical findings regarding integration of former slave descendants. The role of ant-slavery movements in Western Africa is formidable example to find remedy for discrimination of slave descendents throughout in the continent. Redemption of slave descendants in the context of Sudan shares some elements with what has been practicing in Gamo society, however, in Gamo the redemption process is accompanied by ritual purification.

## CHAPTER THREE: Description of the Study Area

### 3.1. Physical Setting

The Gamo high-lands are located in the south western part of Ethiopia, on  $5^{\circ}38'$  up to  $6^{\circ}42'$  North latitude and  $37^{\circ}$  up to  $37^{\circ} 45'$  East longitude<sup>9</sup>. The Gamo lies in the Gofa zone, which is one of the administrative Zones of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State/SNNPRS/. The Gamo high-lands are the southernmost extension of the north- western block of Ethiopian highlands. It rises from 1300 m above sea level to 3250 m above sea level (Belete 2006)

The Gamo people live North East of South Omo, North of the Amaro and the Derashe, East of the Basketo, South East of the Dawro and the Wolyeta and West of the Sidama and the Gedeo (see map 1). Geographically, the Gamo high-lands lie west of the Great Rift Valley lakes, Abaya and Chamo.

The high-lands receive an average of 500-1800 ml rain fall yearly. Characterized by high-lands the area gets relief rainfall caused by south western winds (from Atlantic Ocean) and Eastern winds from Indian Ocean. The annual temperature of the area ranges between  $24^{\circ}\text{c}$  and  $10^{\circ}\text{c}$ . Three traditional climatic zones of the country *Qola* (hot), *Woyna-Dega* (cool) and *Dega* (cold) are being characterized by the high-lands. The Gamo high-lands are also known for their varieties of plants and animals typical for its climatic zones<sup>10</sup>.

The area of the Ganta people, who belong to the wider group of the Gamo people, belongs administratively to the Arbaminch zuria *woreda* (see map 2) and is located at hill top some 14 km North West of Arbaminch town. Its altitude range 1010 up to 2257m sea level. The low land lies mainly in Kanchama-Ochole, and the rest consists of high-land areas. The majority (90%) of climatic condition of Ganta come under *woyna-dega* zone.

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<sup>9</sup> . The History of Gamo Gofa People Up to 1974 published in 2004 by Information and Culture P.2-3

<sup>10</sup> . Ibid.

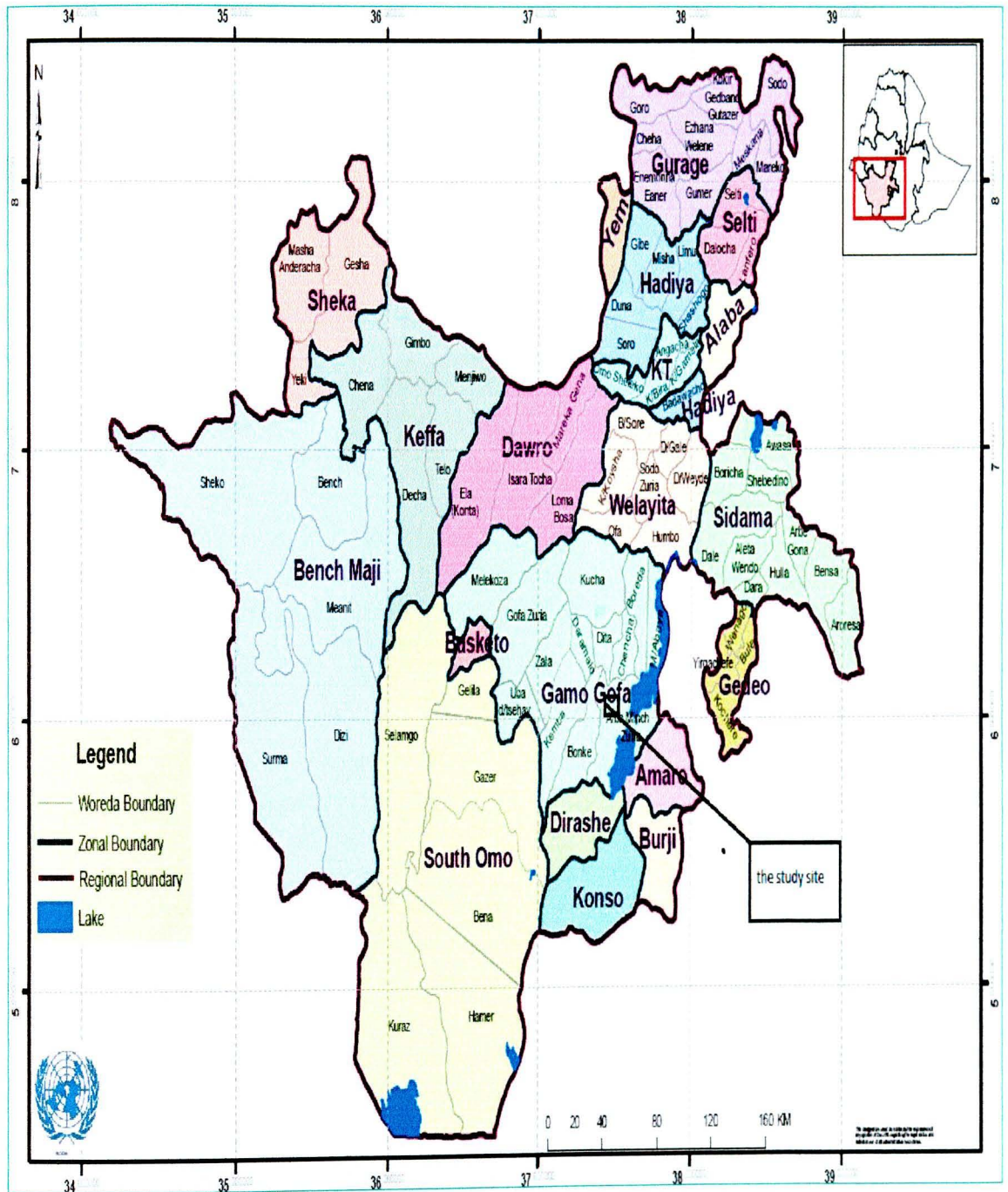


Fig. 1. Map showing the relative location of study area in SNNP

Source: Ethiopian Demography and Health By: Dr. Aynalem Adugna  
 At: [aynaledadugna@aol.com](mailto:aynaledadugna@aol.com)

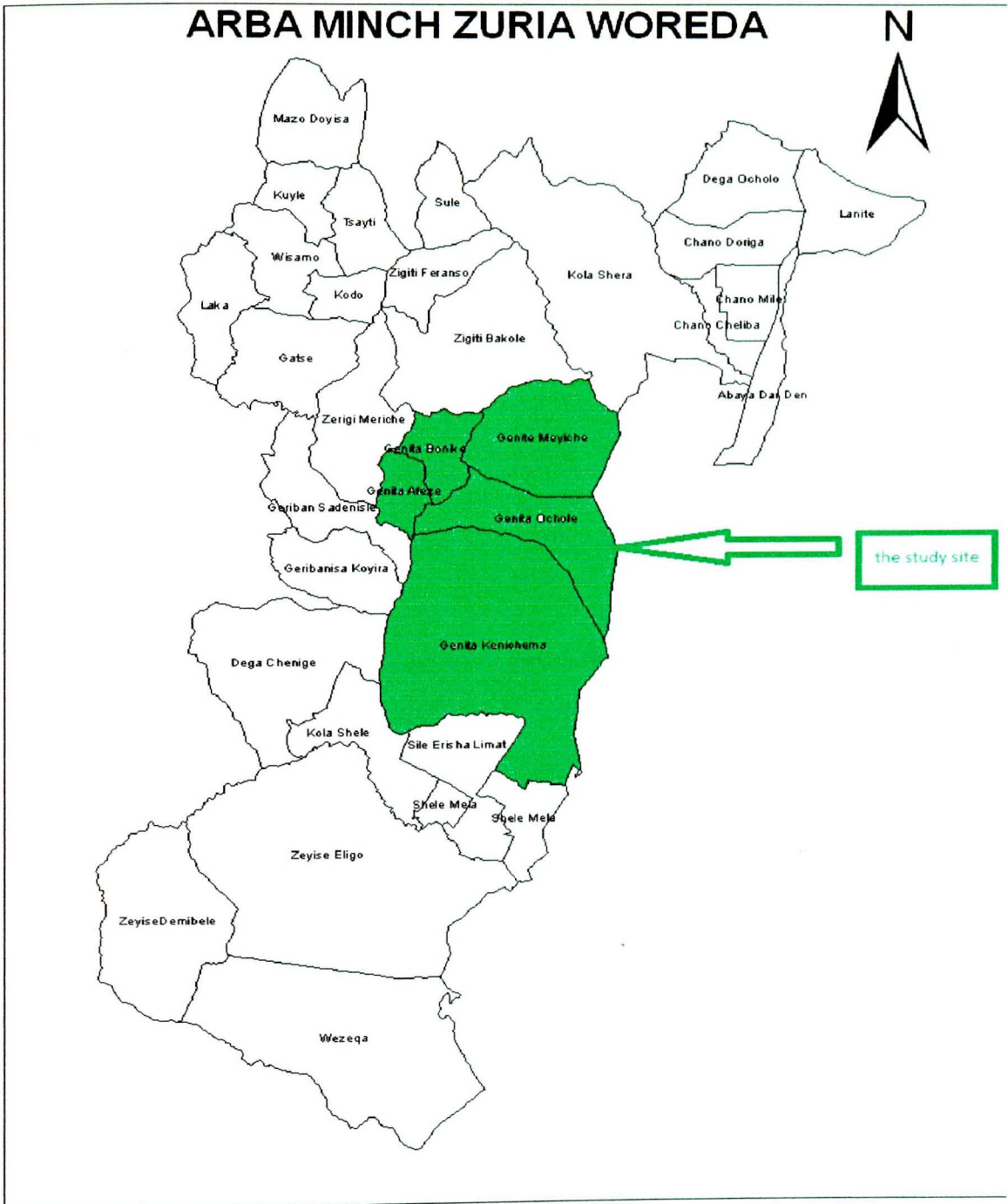


Fig 2: Map showing the study area location in Arbaminch Zuria woreda.

Source: Gamo Gofa Zone Finance and Economic Development Dep't.

### 3.2. Socio-Political Setting

The Gamo people are one of the Omotic speaking groups of Southwestern Ethiopia. They speak a language that closely relates to Gofa, Wolyeta and Dawro. During the nineteenth century the Gamo high-lands were politically autonomous and divided into small territorially discrete political units locally called *dere*, each of which had its own hereditary king (*kawo*). Today Gamo is still divided into nearly forty *dere* who occupy areas ranging in size from five to fifty square miles (Olmstead, 1975). According to Sperber (1973), neighboring *dere* have similar institutions and also define themselves each as the constituency of a particular *kawo*. The political power of the *kawo* was moderated by the *dere* assembly called *dulata*. After the Gamo high-lands had been brought under the central Ethiopian government in 1894 the traditional government structure had been preserved and the *dere kawos* became *balabat*<sup>11</sup> through whom the *dere* were governed. When the agricultural serfs or *gabbar*<sup>12</sup> system introduced, the *balabats* played significant role in organizing land tax payment to the central government.

According to the present zonal government structure, Gamo is divided into nine *woredas* (districts) out of the total fifteen *woredas* in Gamo Gofa zone. The *woredas* under the Gamo territory are Kucha, Boreda, Mirab Abaya, Chench, Dita, Daramalo, Kamba, Bonka and Arbaminch Zuria<sup>13</sup>. Established near the southern shores of Lake Abaya in the late 1960s, the town Arbaminch is the administrative center of the zone and connecting area between the other parties of the country and the Gamo and surrounding areas. Today Arbaminch is emerging town with total population of 74 879, (2007 Population and Housing Census 2010:9) (e.g. Freeman 2004:22).

Ganta has been one among nearly forty Gamo *dere* ruled by hereditary *kati*<sup>14</sup> since probably the beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Among the various Gamo clans (*uma*)

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<sup>11</sup> Administrative position in the imperial government; intermediary between the state and local communities; position given to *kawo* in the Gamo Highlands ( e.g. Freeman 2004: X).

<sup>12</sup> . tenant farmer who had to provide food and labour for Amhara settlers during the Imperial period (Ibid)

<sup>13</sup> . The history of Gamo Gofa People up to 1974

<sup>14</sup> . The language of Ganta is dialectically differing from the Gamo. It is called Ganta or 'Gantigna'. The king is referred to as *kati* while in other Gamo *dere* the king is called *kawo*

the *kati* of Ganta originated from *zulesa uma*<sup>15</sup>. Currently, Ganta is under administrative structure of Arbaminch Zuria *woreda* and it is divided into four *qabales*<sup>16</sup> (villages) and each *qabale* is divided into small unites called *guta*: The four *qabales* are Meyche, Bonke, Kanchama-Ochole<sup>17</sup> and Afeze<sup>18</sup>. Despite the modern governing political structure, the customary political setting is still influential especially in areas of slave redemption. According to the customary political setting, the *kati* (king) ruled over the whole Ganta and under him there have been three descending hierarchical position. The *magas* (refers leaders immediately below of *kati*)<sup>19</sup> have been ruling over each individual *dere qabales* and below them were *nasse/demutha* (leaders below *maga*) who were responsible for leading *guta* (sub units of each *qabale*). The last position in the hierarchical structure of customary politics were the clan leaders (*uma angus*). The *uma angus* is also sacrificial leader of the clan<sup>20</sup>. Each leader of hierarchy were nominated and appointed by the *kati*; but once the person had taken his respective position it became hereditary. *Uma*<sup>21</sup> *angus* is not appointed position; it is held by seniority i.e. the senior most of a clan take the position automatically.

<sup>15</sup> . Tradition indicates that the origin of clan *zulesa* is associated with divine power.

<sup>16</sup> . *Kebele* in Ganta community is called *qabale* that has been in usage since the *Derg* time.

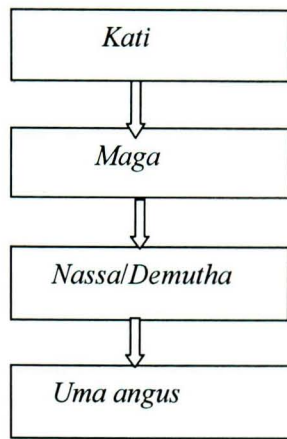
<sup>17</sup> . In the past Kanchama-Ochole were two separate *qabale*: *Ochole* and *Kanchama*. They were merged in 2007. See the community of Ganta in map two 2 in Arbaminch zuria *woreda*.

<sup>18</sup> . This research is conducted in three *qabales*: in Meyche, Bonke and Kanchama-Ochole.

<sup>19</sup> In each *qabale* of Ganta there is one main *maga* whose accountability is to *kati*. Nevertheless, under the authority of the main *maga* there are different *magas* in each *qabale* of the community who have different roles: *Gade maga* works on the issues of earth, production of crops and cattle rearing. *Tora maga* is concerned about war. '*Oge* maga acts as diplomat, the problem of one *qabale* is solved through him. He has complete right to discuss and protect external problems. The king's and community's idea is transferred through him to surrounding communities. *Ira maga* prays for rain. In addition I was told that the *manas* have their own *maga* (*in* this sense leader or representative). For example Borko is *maga* of *mana* at Meyche. Duing slave redemption the ritual expert is the main *maga* of a *qabale*.

<sup>20</sup> . *Uma angus* is a genealogical seniority extended over the members of his clan who live in his *dere*. The sacrificial role of the *uma angus* is that he acts as a link between his living clan members and dead ancestors/the spirit world. He slaughters cattle and purifies clan members when they get polluted. I was told that it was *gome* (serious sin) for clan members if they eat without offering the first fruit from whatever production to their *uma angus*. In other Gamo *dere uma angus* is called *omo bairia*( e.g. Sperber 1973:212)

<sup>21</sup> . *Uma* is contested term; it implies race, clan, and social origin. In this study I used it to denote race or/and clan.



The customary political structure of the Ganta

Some informants elucidated that in the past also the settlement pattern was based on customary structure, i.e. lineage and clanship. The members of the various clans settled on their own separate territory. This enabled community members to know each other, and whenever strangers came to the area, the community knew immediately that they were outsiders. Today, however, the settlement pattern is changed; the clan members live scattered throughout in the entire Ganta community. Nonetheless, they know the outsiders and cautious to make any relationship with them before confirming the pureness of their *uma*.

Informants also indicated to me that in the past clan based political structure and settlement pattern had significant role in leveling slaves as outsider of the Ganta community. According to them the native clans (*mala*) were considered as citizen (insider) and the slaves were perceived as alien or noncitizen (outsider). However, it seems that this perspective is applicable for slaves brought from outside Gamo. Many slave descendants elucidated that their ancestors were originally Gamo, and they were considered non-citizens because of their slave status. In addition, the status 'non-citizen' was also ascribed to the craft workers (*mana*) who were native to the land of Gamo. Therefore, the question of "insider" and "outsider" or "citizen" and "non-citizen" was much connected to the ideology of purity and impurity rather than native and non-native to Ganta community.

### 3.3. Demography

According to population and housing censuses the total population of Ganta was 13, 392 in the year 2007, out of these 6498 were males and 6894 were female (CSA of 2007). The total households registered were 2934. During my field stay I identified nearly seventy one households of “slaves” both in Ganta and upper town of Arbaminch with total population 300 individuals. However, this number may be far exceeded. Several informants indicated to me that the number could be thrice as much.

Among the four Ganta *qbales* Bonke is densely populated followed by Ochole and Afeze (CSA 2010: 409). According to my own observation the settlement pattern of the three social classes (*mala mana* and *ayle*) differ. While the *mana* spatially segregated in every *qabale*, the *ayle* settle and mix together with the *mala*.

### 3.4. Livelihood Strategy

The people of Ganta have a mixed economy which is related to the agro-ecological zone of the area. In the high lands the main food crops produced include: barley, wheat, *teff*, sorghum, beans, horse beans, sweet potatoes and *enset* (false banana). *Enset* can be harvested the whole year and is found in the garden of every individual. In the low land areas the main crops being produced are maize, cotton and bananas. Recently banana has become the main cash crop and; many people engaged in its product. The study community is also known for rearing varieties of animals such as sheep, goats, cattle and horses.

Majority of informants indicated to me that today the slave descendants are economically more advanced than the *mala*. I also witnessed that some of the slave descendants who were engaged in banana production in the low land areas (Sirra) were actually wealthier than many *mala*. This economic superiority of at least some of the former slaves seems to have its own implications on the relationships between the members of the three social strata, and I heard *mala* joking about the economic progression of slave descendants, who, from *mala* perspective, were trying to compensate for their lower social status by engaging in cash crop.

### 3.5. Infrastructure and Basic Services

Ganta is connected to Arbaminch city by all-weather roads. Out of the four *qabales*, two have been connected to electricity, namely Meyche and Bonke. While in each *qabale* there are primary schools, only in Meyche and Bonke the grade level is up to eight. Health service is given to the community through health extension agents; recently a new health center has been established at Bonke. The community is expecting the inauguration of newly established health center service. In addition, in Ochole and Bonke, there are private lower clinics giving service to the community. Although not giving sufficient service, there is piped water service installed by Catholic Mission and Synods project in each *qabales*.

### 3.6. Social Stratification

In the existing literature on Gamo, there is a controversy over the subject of social stratification. In her article entitled “Agricultural Land and Social Stratification in the Gamo Highlands of Southern Ethiopia”, Olmstead claims that the Gamo social strata are categorized into “citizens” and “non-citizens”. According to Olmstead the citizens (*mala*) have the right to own and cultivate land, while the non-citizens (*tsoma*) can build only houses on public land granted to them for that purpose. The noncitizens include potters, tanners, blacksmith and slaves acquired through trade from outside the high-lands (Olmstead 1975: 224).

Freeman redefined Olmstead’s classification arguing that the Gamo communities were made up of three different categories: citizens (*mala*), artisans (*tsoma*) and slaves (*ayle*), with the *ayle* at very bottom of the society. Only *mala* could own land and enjoy social and economic privilege. The *tsoma* she further specified consisted of two kinds of craft workers, i.e. the *mana* (potters), and *degala* (tanners)<sup>22</sup>. The *ayle* were at the bottom of

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<sup>22</sup>. Arthur’s classification of the Gamo society is also similar to the Freeman but in some points he differs from her. According to him the Gamo society were stratified into two: *mala* (farmers, smiths, weavers) and *tsoma* (hide workers, smiths, potters and ground stone-makers). He further classifies the *tsoma* into *tsoma mana* (potters) and *tso’ma degela* (hide workers, ground stone-makers and smiths). Arthur, also, justify that hierarchically the Gamo stratify their society into; *mala*, *tsoma mana* (potters and smiths), and *tsoma degala* (hide workers, ground stone makers and smiths). The *mala* are considered the highest strata followed by the *mana* and *degala* in terms of prestige, purity, and power (Arthur 2008: 71-72).

the hierarchy and spent most of their time working for their *mala* masters (Freeman 2004: 29).

In the book 'The history of Gamo Gofa People up to 1974' published by Information and Culture Department of Gamo Gofa Zone (2004:27-28), the Gamo society is seen as stratified into three strata *mala*, *dogala* and *tsoma*, and the various Gamo clans categorized under two dominant clan heads: *mala* and *dogala*. The *tsoma* were here identified as craft workers, and people of low economic status. The *mala* were said to be warriors and members of the highest social class, while the *dogala* were considered to be clan heads from which the Gamo traditional spiritual leaders emanated. The difference to Freeman's classification is the ignorance of the *ayle* (*slave*) class, and the introduction of *dogala* as an independent social class.

According to my own findings which are based on depth interview with *kati* (king of Ganta) *magas* (leaders under *kati*), elders and Gamo elites (educated Gamos) the society of Gamo was originally divided into two classes: *mala* and *mana/degela*. This categorization is mainly based on occupation: while *mana/degela* are craft workers, the *mala* are engaged in mixed economy (agriculture and animal husbandry). The *mana/degela* constitutes a wider category under which sub classes (potters, tanners, blacksmith, and traditional musicians) are subsumed. Whether this category is called *mana* or *degela* varies in the different Gamo, communities, *dere*. In *Ganta* they are called *mana* and these people live separate from the mainstream community. Informants elucidated that the origin of the two social classes trace as far as the history of division of labor in an ancient past. Despite their occupational differences, the two social categories have the same clans (*uma*). For example, *gawomalla*, *qogomalla*, *mastii*, *zulesa*, *kashtii*, *bukkamalla*, *gannii*, *amarrii*, are some of clans found among *mala* and *mana* which seems to indicate they have same origin or ancestors.

According to my informants the social class of the *tsoma*, consisting of the *ayle* (slaves) arrived later. The status *tsoma* does not indicate clan, it is an ascribed position attributed to slaves acquired from outside Gamo land or/and *mala* turned slaves due to different factors in the time when slavery emerged in Gamo high-lands. Today all slave descendants in high-lands including the study area are denoted by this derogative term

(*ayle*). The slave descendants also have the same clans as the two social classes (*mana* and *mala*) but are considered as different on the ideology of purity and impurity.

The terms *baria* (also slave in Amharic) and *chewa* (clean, respectable in Amharic) today are also used to refer *ayle* and *mala* respectively. Many people I interviewed indicated that the status name change of the two social groups might be connected with two events. First, the subjugation of high-lands into the Ethiopian Empire transformed many aspects of the indigenous cultural practices. In connection to this language change was one among others. For example, after incorporating the Gamo high-lands into the central government in 1894, the title of *dere* leaders', *kawos*, changed into *balabats*. Thus, informants indicated that in like manner the status names of the two social classes were transformed. Second, the introduction of Christianity had its own role. Protestant slave descendants explained that many *mala* Protestants use the derogative term *baria* to ridicule them because they have well been acquainted with this term from the Amharic Bible where slaves are referred as *baria* and free born as *chewa* (see Amharic Bible 1954 E.C version Galatia3v26-28).

During my field stay I learned that often the *mala* use the term *baria* to refer the slave descendants; and the slave descendants themselves also frequently use the term *chewa* to call the *mala*. In this paper I decided to use local terms *ayle* and *mala* to refer slave descendants and freeborn respectively because they are Ganta terms.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Slavery in Gamo Area

### 4.1. Origin and History of Slavery in Ganta

The historical origin of slavery in Gamo high-lands is associated with many factors by the people I interviewed. According to several informants including the *kati*, *maga*, *lathi*, *ayle* and elder *mala*, there had been frequent famines (*gaffe*) in the beginning of the nineteenth century. During that time people were forced to subjugate themselves to those few who still had ample resources. The impoverished had to beg for food from the few rich. This later turned them into slave as they were unable to give back what they had been given to sustain their lives. Informants even revealed that *gaffe* stricken people had ‘bartered’ their children for survival needs i.e. they gave a child in exchange for food<sup>23</sup>. Descendants of slave holders asserted that their fathers and grandfathers bought slaves with only small amounts of grain and flour. Slave descendants confirmed that their ancestors had turned into slave during the time of famine.

Informants further elucidated that through famine people from within their ethnic groups and even the same social classes were turned into slaves. This means Gamo turned their own people into slaves, and similarly the *mala* clan engaged in changing *mala* into slaves. These practices were more widespread in the communities of Ganta, Bonke and Kamba than in other Gamo regions. However, during the famine non-Gamo were also turned into slaves. In the field I encountered some slave descendants whose ancestors were from outside Ganta (Wortsiso) and turned into slave due to famine

Second, the nineteenth century slave trade in the country had a paramount role in developing slavery in Gamo high-lands. Oral traditions elucidated from informants proved that the Gamo high-lands in general and Ganta in particular had been connected to the long distance caravan trade routes of 19<sup>th</sup> century in south western Ethiopia, mentioning that the Shoshane market had been a historic slave market then. Numerous informal conversations with different categories of people at Shoshane market, polling

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<sup>23</sup>. Some redeemed slave descendants whose ancestors’ case related to this issue indicated that the intention of parents when bartering their children with some food was not let them become slaves but rather to let them as adopted children by “new parents”. However, with passage of time the children were claimed as slave by their caring ‘parents’.

center and sacrificial place of the all Ganta revealed that slaves were formally traded at the market in the past. Informants from Ochole where the market is situated asserted that there was an *ayle do'o* (slave selling part) in the market. They said that slaves had been traded like animals; bargaining over the price after the age, sex and healthiness of slaves were common. The price of young and healthy slaves was higher than that for old ones.

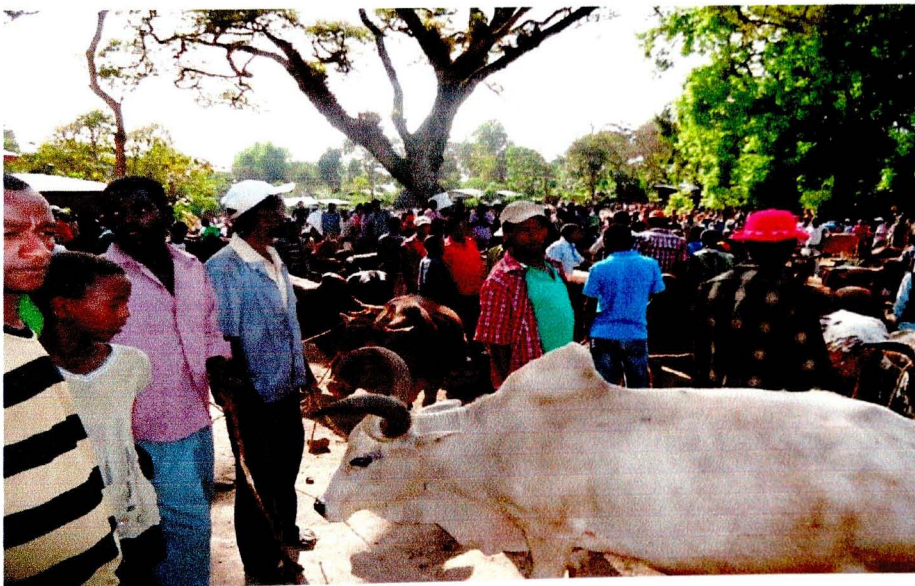
In the south west the Shoshane had been connected to Wortsiso (now Amaro-kelle) a leading slave trading market. Slave raiders had traded in these two markets. The genealogical data of origin of slave descendants' ancestors indicate that some came to Ganta from Wortsiso. The case of the family of Belay, his sister Bazute, Teshome and his brothers are worthy of mentioning here. However, whether the ancestors of these families were turned into slave after their arrival to Ganta or before is a matter of argument between them and descendants of their ancestors' masters.

Tamene the descendant of a well known slave holder in Kanchama-Ochole claimed that Dojje, the grandfather of Belay and his sister Bazute, had been bought by his ancestor from Wortsiso market when he was child. Tamene further argued that Dojje was given a slave girl of his ancestor to marry and in that marriage Basha was born. Basha married a woman of another slave origin and gave birth to Belay and Bazute. Therefore, Tamene maintained that the ancestor of Belay and his sister Bazute was originally bought from Wortsiso market. On the other hand, though Bazute agreed that originally their ancestor was from Wortsiso (Amaro-Kelle), however, she rejected Tamene's argument that their ancestor was bought from Wortsiso market. Instead she claimed that Basha at his childhood was given to Tel'ea, the ancestor of Tamene, at the death of his father to be grown as adopted son. And, later Tel'ea declared to the *maga* and *kati* that Basha was his slave.

When coming to Teshome and his brothers, there is same strong argument between them and their so called master. Teshome indicated to me that their grandfather Sade was originally from Amaro-Kelle (Wortsiso). He was diviner and came to Ganta to work on that "profession". After he had arrived he was welcomed by a man called Karatse. Karatse gave Sade plots of land for construction of house and he stayed with Karatse for long. Nevertheless, the other day Karatse claimed that Sade was his slave for he had

cared him for long. Karatse persuaded the community and as the result Sade could not marry from the free born. He married a woman of slave origin and through that marriage slavery emanated in their descent line. Thus, Teshome claimed that their ancestor turned into slave after he had come to Ganta through marriage. Conversely, the descendant of Karatse, Sumale argued that Sade was originally bought from Wortsiso market in the beginning of the slave trade following the famine.

From these cases we can understand that the genealogical origin of place of the family of Belay and Teshome was Wortsiso. In my field duration often I realized that slave descendants whose ancestors were bought did not reveal that fact instead they associated the origin of slavery in their descent line through other factors such as war, famine, marriage and the like. This was because slave descendants whose ancestors were bought had lower position than slaves whose ancestors turned into slave through other mechanisms (see slave category below in this chapter). Therefore, it seems that since Wortsiso was the leading slave market connected to Shoshane in the west, the ancestors of Belay and Teshome could have been bought from that market though they claimed that their ancestors turned into slave after they came to Ganta through other mechanism.



Shoshane market in January 2013

Informants also elucidated that the historic Shoshane marked had been linked to Wolayta, Dawro, Keffa and Jimma. Alito Kayt (about 80 years old and descendant of slave holders) explained that the Gamo high-lands had been connected to the nineteenth century other Omotic states, Kaffa and Konta. Referring to his father, Alito recalled that there had been a frequent exchange of goods and services between these states during 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main trading items were slaves, ivory, civet and incense. Historical evidence also assures this oral tradition. Following Abeles (1981) and Olmstead (1973), Freeman (2004:29) notes:

*Laying just a little way off one of the major trade routes, the Gamo Highlands were involved in this slave trade. Unfortunately there are no data about the local organization of slave trading at this time, although Marc Abeles notes how a slave trader in late-nineteenth-century Ochollo was a very influential man (Abeles 1981:63). Oral histories collected by himself and Judith Olmstead show clearly that slaves, known as ayle, were an important part of Gamo life in the nineteenth century.*

According to elder informants chronologically ‘invention’ of slavery through great famine preceded that one through trade. They elucidated that in developing slavery through famine the rich men took the leading role. During the famine they had to turn impoverished people into slave when the people were unable to give back what they were given to sustain their life. Slavery in the high-lands escalated with the increase of international slave trade. In this case the important figures involved in slavery in the high-lands were slave raiders, however, slave holders also played significant role in that. Often long distance traders got slaves from slave raiders and slave holders (who already had slaves due to famine and had bought from slave raiders). In either situations, slavery through famine or trade, the victims were children and impoverished people.

The third factor that contributed to the development of slavery in the Gamo high-lands was the frequent conflict among the Gamo themselves. Numerous discussions with various people pointed out that in the past the different Gamo *dere* had been involved in frequent war. The creation of nearly forty Gamo *dere* was related to these conflicts. Mostly the fight was between the hereditary *kawos* (kings).

The fundamental causes of the skirmish arose from economic base. According to Olmstead war could occur among various *dere* because of conflict over stolen livestock, a runaway wife, or ownership of a pasture lying between the *dere* (1973:226). Freeman also indicates that the desire to capture slaves was fundamental reason. By then slaves already played a significant role in Gamo economy (2004: 29-30).

During the conquest and skirmishes the war captives (*de'oo*) were taken as slaves by the victorious group. Besides turning individual captives into slave, the victorious *dere* brought the vanquished under their subjection. They became the vassal of the triumphant<sup>24</sup>. Traditionally, this period of war in Gamo history were known as: Gamo *Tora woode* 'Gamo spear time' and it was occurred at the dawn of nineteen century<sup>25</sup>.

To summarize one can say that famine had first place in inventing slavery in Gamo highlands. The situation became more aggravated with frequent war between various Gamo *dere* and at the same time the connection of the high-lands with the nineteen century international slave trade.

#### **4.2. Conceptualizing Purity and Impurity: Drawing the Social Boundary**

The concept of purity and impurity are central to the underling ideology that regulates the daily life as well as situational relationships between the three social classes in the community of Ganta. It is through this perspective that some social classes have been undermined and excluded while others are respected and privileged. The ideology of purity and impurity regulates one's continual ties with lineage and clanship. Between the three social classes the *mala* are considered as pure while the *ayle* and the *mana* are impure. This perspective is not the view of some sections of the community; it is the general outlook of the entire Ganta society.

Various interviews I conducted with different people indicated that the three social classes (the *mala*, *mana* and *ayle*) have the same clans but no sense of common kinship.

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<sup>24</sup>. Olmstead explains that vassal *dere* were of two kinds. Those called children (*yelo*, in Ganta also called *shato*) owed the dominant *dere* support in future wares. Those called wives (*macho*) owed agricultural labor ; living at home during much of the year, their citizen had to work for specific individuals in the dominant *dere* as well (1973:227). some of my informants indicated to me that vassals were also called *dere ayle*.

<sup>25</sup>. The history of Gamo Gofa people up to 1974. P. 78.

There are about one hundred fifteen different clans, *uma*, groups in Gamo society<sup>26</sup>. Out of these clans the dominant ones in Ganta I identified are: *Gawo-mala*, *Qogo-mala*, *Masti*, *Zulesa*, *Amari*, *Buka-mala*, *Buzante*, *Ganii*, *Kashti*, *Masri*, *Kalli*, *Ajje*, *Selli*, *Darii* and *Butsa*. These clans are generally considered as *mala* or they come under *mala*<sup>27</sup> category. The *mana* and the *ayle* have same clans. In my field duration I came across *mana* whose clans are *Zulesa*, *Buzante*, *Kalli* in Meyche and Ochole. I also noticed that *Zulesa* is the clan from that the *Kati* of Ganta originated, and *Buzante* and *kalli* are clans of some *mala* and *lathies*. There are also *ayle* who have the same clans with that of *mala*, *lathies* and *mana*. Commonly, in terms of clans category there is no difference between the *mala*, *mana* and *ayle*. Also, there are no divisions of pure and impure clans. Generally, clans are considered as pure. Therefore, one could ask why the *mana* and the *ayle* are considered as impure.

According to numerous discussions with various informants the term *mala* stands for a clan, i.e. a descent group, whereas the term *mana* refers to an occupation (craftwork). The main difference between *mala* and *mana* is therefore their occupation: while the latter are engaged in craftwork, the former are involved in a mixed economy. Today, however, many *mana* have changed their economic life: many of them are also involved in mixed economy (farming and animal husbandry) and some of them are getting wealthy. Nonetheless, because of original basic occupational difference the *mana* are still considered as impure whereas the *mala* are pure. The ‘professions’ of *mana* are considered as sources of pollutants<sup>28</sup>. Until very recently, the *mana* have been seriously discriminated in their daily life in relationship with *mala*<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> . Communication with office of culture and tourism of Gamo Gofa zone

<sup>27</sup> . The various Gamo clans are categorized under two apical clan heads: *mala* and *dogala* (e.g. The History of Gamo Gofa People up to 1974). In Ganta various clans are considered as under category of the *mala*.

<sup>28</sup> At Meyche, the *mana maga* (leader) Borko claimed that their being source of impurity is due to their minority. He argued that *mala* cannot live without *mana*. He said that all *mala* household tools are products of *mana*. He asks: “if *mana* products are not considered as impure how then their profession is believed as impure?” He argued that if the *mana* were majority they would not be discriminated.

<sup>29</sup> Nowadays, the discrimination against *mana* has become less. I was told that in the past *mana* were not even allowed to enter a *mala* home, or eat together with them, because that was believed to be *gome* ‘serious plague’ for the *mala*. The *mana* were even not supposed to see milk and milk products at a *mala* home because it was believed that this would cause the spread of disease among the cattle and

The impurity of the *ayle* emanates from their inherited status. The ancestors of slave descendants I identified in the field had all originally been members of *mala* clans, which mean one can find “slaves” and “non-slaves” in the same clan or family. Those who had turned into “slaves” due to historical circumstance were then considered impure, while their home relatives who had remained “non-slaves” are pure. Other than the impurity of the *ayle*’s impurity is infectious, which is the reason why slaves and their descendants have gravely been excluded since the invention of slavery in the high-lands.

Whose impurity more dangerous is a matter of controversy between the *mala*, and the *mana* informants<sup>30</sup>. The majority of the *mala* informants argued that the *ayle* are higher in the social hierarchy than the *mana* when it comes to status and purity. The argument was that being an *ayle* is not an inherent attribute of an individual; but rather an ascribed status caused by unpaid ancestors’ debts. As the *ayle* have the possibility to pay back their ancestors’ debt and thereby be redeemed, their polluted identity can be restored. They can be completely integrated into the mainstream society, intermarry with them and enjoy full social unity and cooperation. On the other hand, they argued that being *mana* is an inherent condition that cannot be cleaned and as there is no *mana* redemption there can never be fully integrated with the *mala*. The *mana* informants on the other hand did not agree to this idea; they claimed that they were free born and that there was no need of redeeming themselves. They also argued that their exclusion was due to their small number.<sup>31</sup>

There were some *mala* informants who claimed that the *mana* must be pure than the *ayle*. They referred to the dehumanization and brutal exclusion of the *ayle* during the times of mourning and funerals. They argued that mourning and funeral are very important social events for the community of Ganta, as comfort comes from neighbors, kin groups, church members and other near and distance people. While the *mala* and *mana* enjoy such social cooperation during events of mourning, the *ayle* are dehumanized, discriminated and isolated during events.

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lead to their extinction. However, at time of my field work I never came across the serious discrimination of the *mana*.

<sup>30</sup>. Both *mala* and *mana* discriminate *ayle* and as the result the *ayle* are less prone to argue their position.

<sup>31</sup>. See the argument of Borko under foot note 25.

In the field I observed that the *mala* fear more to have a close relationship with the *ayle* than with the *mana*. While in principal the majority of the *mala* claimed that the *ayle* were above the *mana* both in status and purity, the daily practice was very different, as they kept distance from them. When I asked for the reason, they elucidated that it was the ‘infectious’ nature of slavery, that can contaminate the whole clan (*uma*)<sup>32</sup>. Once someone has become a slave through closely cooperating with slave descendants, he or she continues to contaminate the whole descent line unless they get redeemed. Therefore, it can be said that in theory the *ayle* are seen as the *mana* in status and purity, but in practice they are at the bottom of Ganta society because of the ideology of transferability of slavery.

### 4.3. Heritability and Social Transmission of Slavery

In the perspective of Ganta community slavery is a complex concept. According to numerous formal and informal discussions I conducted with different groups of people (*mala*, *ayle* and *mana*) slavery is both heritable and socially contagion. The heritability of slavery, although the Ganta are patrilineal, slavery is believed to be heritable through both parents line. That is a child shall be slave by descent where both or either of his parents is slave. For Ganta the cleanness of both patrilineal and matrilineal descent line is important to continue keep one in connection to kinship ties. Blood line and descent is the major factor for demarcating differences among the people. This ideology has existed for long and it has been unchanged after abolition of slavery throughout twenty one century.

Socially, slavery is believed to be transferable through social participation with slave descendants. According to this assumption slavery is considered as ‘communicable disease’, transferring from *ayle* to non-*ayle* through social participation during time of death and funeral, and child delivery. Slave descendants are excluded during these events because closer partaking with them in those episodes turns him/her into slave. The detail will be dealt in the next chapter.

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<sup>32</sup>. Here it does not mean contamination of clan of a person but corruption of the person and generation after him unless he gets redeemed. E.g. A person whose clan is *zulesa* can be contaminated by closely associating with slaves but that does not mean *zulesa* as clan is corrupted but the person his descendants .....

Additionally, slavery is viewed as an innate debt i.e. the money or good that was given in exchange for slave ancestors, the amount for which they were bought. Miers (2000) explains the debt slavery in terms of persistent poverty. According to Miers the impoverished men may require a loan to pay for various social services or to get survival needs. Associated with high interest the loan could not be repaid and it kept in rise. Then the debt often inherited by successive generations because the poor have no way to get money. Nevertheless, in Ganta the situation is completely different, i.e. the slave descendants are not required to repay any of their ancestors' loans, but rather to pay back the sum for which they were bought but often in high interest. The amount of money paid and the procedures are not fixed. It depends on the nature of slavery, sex and economy power of the slave descendant. The detail will be discussed in chapter seven under the theme integration of slave descendants.

In the context of the debt ideology, slave descendants are considered as a kind of inferior creatures when compared to non-slave descendants. This inferiority is not materialized in any physical, mental or economical difference, but rather associated with their ancestors' dehumanization in the moment they became slaves. *Mala* informants asserted to me that in the past slaves had been treated no better than any other commodity or animal traded in the market. Some of them even claim that they had been an eye witness when *lathies* (slave holders) gave slave as gift to their children when they got married.

Thus, they claimed that slave descendants share their ancestors' sub humanity. Only through redemption when slave descendants repay what had been given for their ancestors can they retrieve their humanity. This idea of slaves being not fully human is shared by the members of all three social classes in Ganta. The *mana* I talked expressed similar ideas, claiming to be free born while slave descendants were bonded and therefore inferior to them. Even the slave descendants share the community's view. They believe that their blood attachment to their ancestors put them below of any in Ganta. Consequently many agree to undergo the *wazzo* ritual to get rid of impurity attached to them and restore their lost social position.

This idea of debt and a linked loss of humanity are connected to both heritable and social concept of slavery. Inheritably, one gets the debt by birth whereas socially a man acquires

it automatically when he/she participates with slave descendants during time of death, funeral and child delivery.

Even though being a slave is a status that is inherited as much as being a slave holder, since abolition of slavery during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1942 there is no master-slave relationship between slave descendants and descendants of slave holders. However, the redemption process is directly connected to descendants of their masters.

#### **4.4. Different Categories of Slaves**

Slave descendants in Ganta are broadly categorized into two: *bacha ayle* and *chancha ayle*. In the phrase '*bacha ayle*' the suffix *bacha* means sickle, cutting tool used for cutting grass and weed. The term *bacha ayle* implies that the ancestors of that *ayle* had been bought from a market and had served their master by cutting grass for his mules and cattle. Such *ayle* also had to do farming, keeping cattle, washing the feet of their master, collecting fire wood, and leading them when their master had to go somewhere. Informants indicated that *bacha ayle* had the lowest position because of their duties as serving someone by cutting grass for cattle is considered the lowest and defiled task. Associating slaves with this task also means to hint to their dehumanized position, as they were bought like cattle from the market.

The masters gave plots of lands for their slaves to construct a house and to grow their own food there. They also arranged marriage for them. However, the children of the slaves were considered as the property of their masters. While the slaves were serving their masters they also worked for themselves. That means they produced their own food and reared their own cattle. After the abolition of the slavery during the emperor Haile Selassie regime in 1942 the slave-master relationship was dissolved and the former slaves and their descendants continued to live and produce on the lands given to them by their masters. Descendants of these slaves today are called *bacha ayle* because they inherited their ancestors' status.

Another category of slaves contains those became slave through other mechanisms, during time of famine, during time of Gamo war (as war captive) and through marriage. Descendants of such slaves are called slaves by descent (*lataa ayle*: inherited slavery).

However, some informants argued that slaves by descent can also be called *bacha ayle* if they are fourth and fifth generations of their ancestors. The logic behind for this explanation is that one of the essential features of *bacha ayle* is that it is hereditary and *lataa ayle* share this attribute. Adama, the *maga* (customary political leader positioned below the *kati*) of Ganta Bonke indicated that according to the customary norm the slave descendants could be categorized under *bacha ayle* if they were at least third or more generation below their ancestors. During the redemption process it becomes obvious that there is quite difference between the two; they do not give up their land and property to descendants of their master to acquire a new status.

Many *mala* informants (especially descendants of slave holders) claimed that *bacha ayle* cannot easily be redeemed. They argued that if *bacha ayle* want to be redeemed, they should give-up whatever property they have produced and whatever they have attained in their life time, including their houses and farms. All should be given to their *lathi* (master), or, more specifically, the descendants of their master. They reason out that the ancestors of these categories of *ayle* had been devoid of any property when they were bought. They had put off their clothes, shaved their hair, cut their nail and were naked when they came to their master's home. After that whatever property they produced and resources they attained were produced on the lands given to them by their masters. Thus, if they want to be redeemed, they should give up their lands, houses and property produced to the descendants of their master and leave him the way they had come: naked and without property. Then they should start a new life in another area.

The third slave category is called *chancha ayle*. The *chancha ayle* are *mala*, i.e. non slaves, who turned into slaves by participating in funerals of slave descendants or in child delivery. The term *chancha* stands for the food and drink offered to the grieving slave descendants in their home when a relative has died, to comfort them. The same custom exists at *mala* homes. Here the equivalent food and drink is called *bochocha* (clean food)<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>. I was told that when people do not eat at *mala* home during the time of the death, the grieving family accuses them by saying: this is not *chancha*! Why don't you eat? In other words, *chancha* means polluted food.

When *mala* ignorantly or knowingly participate in eating *chancha*, the food offered during a funeral at a slave descendant's house, they automatically turn into slaves. This new kind of slaves has appeared only recently as it seems, in connection with the intensification of slave redemption. Most informants (both redeemed and unredeemed slave descendants and *mala* turned slaves) elucidated that from the beginning of the 1990s onwards many slave descendants got redeemed through the elaborate and costly *wozzo* ritual (see chapter seven). In relation to this, the *lathies*, *maga* and *kati* were concerned that the original slave descendants eventually would be redeemed and there could be no sources of income any more. Then they introduced slavery through *chancha* hoping to get new slaves from the *mala*. I was told that in 2002 alone, twelve households were turned into *ayle* by eating *chancha*.

Discussions with *mana* informants indicate that they did not eat *chancha* at funeral of slave descendants. Borko, *mana maga*, explained that *mana* is free born and participating with slave descendants during time of death 'pollutes' them. However, I did not come across *mana* that turned into *ayle* by eating *chancha*.

In this chapter I have shown that ancestors of the majority slave descendants were originally Gamo and were free born. They turned into slave due to famine, frequent war within Gamo *dere* and through slave trade. I have also indicated that the concept purity and impurity is the determining principle that regulates relationship between the three social classes in the community of Ganta. Between the three social strata the impurity of *ayle* are considered as dangerous because it transmits from *ayle* to non-*ayle* through inheritance and contagion. Finally, I have shown that 'slaves' in Ganta are broadly categorized into *bacha ayle* (*lataa ayle*) and *chancha ayle*, and this classification of 'slave' determines the procedures of *wozzo* ritual during slave redemption.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Coexistence and Exclusion of Slave Descendants

### 5.1. Everyday Coexistence of Slave Descendants with the Rest Community

Daily life in Ganta at first glance can be characterized as peaceful coexistence of slave descendants, members of *mala* and craft workers. It is only in specific situations that the exclusion of slave descendants can be observed and is of far amount importance to all.

Informants from all three sections i.e. (*ayle, mala and mana*) indicated that most of the time they live in an integrated manner. In church they worship and serve together. Informants from religious organizations<sup>34</sup> explained that there are *ayle* church leaders, deacons, evangelists, singers, Sunday school teachers and worship-leaders. In community based organizations such as *idir* and *iqub* the *ayle* have equal rights with the other members. Some of them serve in those organizations in leadership position and equally benefit as the other members. In the neighborhood they entertain friendly relations, help each other out, work together and visit each other.

The *mana* also lives peacefully with the slave descendants and the other section of the society. In the village of Meyche, a *mana* man called Borko<sup>35</sup> indicated to me that today the *mana* live in an integrated manner with the rest of the community<sup>36</sup>. They live in good neighborhood, eat and drink with the *mala* and slave descendants freely. They also worship and serve together with all in the same church. Regarding his own situation Borko explained that that he is the leader in the local *idir* (church and community based association). He is also the chairman of the *qabale* social justice court. His elder son is the director of Meyche first and second cycle primary school. In Ochole, (another village/district) I met a *mana* serving as *qabale* policeman. As both *mana* and *mala* informants asserted to me, the *manas* have equal rights with other members of the

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<sup>34</sup> . Protestant churches

<sup>35</sup> . He is *mana* and most respected man in the community. I observed that everybody calls him "doctor". I was told that he knows more than thirty six different traditional medicines and serves the community with that knowledge. He is also *maga* of the *mana*

<sup>36</sup> . I was told that in the past the *manas* were excluded in daily life in relation to the *mala*. The *mana* does not enter to the *mala* home, and do not eat with them. Especially milk and milk products are not disclose to *mana* because the community believe that it will cause plague on their cattle. Also the *manas* were excluded in churches and community based organizations.

community in using local infrastructure. Their children go to school with the other children of community. In my field stay I did not encounter any isolation of *mana* from the mainstream society.

The *ayle* equally benefit from the infrastructure of the community. Their children go to school with the other children; they equally use the piped water set-up in each *qabale*. At local level government structure they equally participate with the rest of the community. I met one *ayle* who coordinates the last April 2013 local constituency election in Ochole and there are also *ayle* police men who serve in the local government structure. As informants emphasized to me, in times of peace<sup>37</sup> no one talks about the social difference between *ayle* and other members of the society. They said that they were living in unity, cooperatively, interactively; and hence it seems there is no social barrier between the *ayle* and the rest of the community. I never came across any exclusion of *ayle* during my fieldstay, neither by *mala* nor by the *mana*.



Dhele *Idir* association including: *mala*, *lathi* and *ayle*, constructing a house for *mala* widow in April 2013

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<sup>37</sup>. When there is no death...



The *Idir* association at meal after constructing the house April 2013

All this shows that the slave descendants have a position very different to that of the original slaves. Today the *ayle* work for themselves and do not serve their masters, *lathi*, anymore. They are independent economically, socially, and many of them are now richer than the *mala*. Nevertheless, the past relationship to their masters, *lathi*, is not forgotten, and the same rather derogatory term *ayle* is still used when people speak about them.

The separation between the *mala* and the *ayle* can sometimes be observed when conflicts arise or when a *mala* gets drunk. Then, the *mala* will scorn, mock and ridicule the *ayle* publically, for example by saying 'I smell bad odor' when together in drinking house. While such insults are generally tolerated, both my *ayle* and *mala* informants explained that there are other situations when slave descendants are more severely discriminated. Their exclusion differs from that of the *mana*, as it becomes severe only in the situations when interaction with slave descendants is believed to be transmittable, i.e. during marriage<sup>38</sup>, mourning and funeral and child delivery.

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<sup>38</sup> The *manas* are also excluded in marriage, i.e. inter,arriage between *mana* and *mala* is not allowed. However their impurity is not considered to be transmitted to other

Of these the exclusion during mourning or funeral is considered most serious, as eating together during a funeral leads to the immediate pollution of a *mala* who turns into an *ayle* - with dramatic consequences for the person and his or her family as will be shown below. I have observed that *ayle* informants who experienced this kind of exclusion could not control their emotion while recalling their experience.

While the daily life of slave descendants with the rest of the community is relatively peaceful, the situation of *mala* who turned slaves through participation in marriage, mourning, funeral and child delivery is quite different. They are discriminated, insulted and ridiculed continuously. The reason is, as my *mala* informants explained, that turning into slave by closely associating with slave descendants is considered as more shameful than being a slave by descent. While being a slave by descent is considered as a part of a person's identity, i.e. an inborn inferior attribute, turning into a slave is considered as falling from grace i.e. losing one's honored identity. Thus, usually *mala* who turned into slaves are seriously excluded, and even more by their own relatives than by the rest community, because the relatives consider that the change from *mala* into *ayle* is not only shame for the person himself but also for them. During my research I met some *ayle* who had turned into slaves by marrying slave descendants. They were severely discriminated by their own kin, evicted them from their land, banished them from their residence and completely cut off their kin ties. Such *ayle* were therefore forced to migrate to another area.

In the following section I will be dealing with exclusion of slave descendants during the rites of passage: in marriage, in time of death and child delivery.

## **5.2. Exclusion of Slave Descendants During Rites of Passage**

### **5.2.1. Exclusion of Slave Descendants in Marriage**

*Besheti lo'okoshani asisome qomozi itama 'she is nice to marry but her 'origin' is not pure' mala boys saying when looking at beautiful ayle girl.*

*Inga'a ne zerera ta zerera buata'a 'No! Your clan and mine cannot mix', parents' saying when refusing the request of ayle to marry their children.*

*Ayle athi besho ekkoda worgoko, ayletethi woziti geje ekkoda danda'akos*  
*'If a slave wants to marry a mala daughter, he should be redeemed,*  
*cleaned and retrieve his humanity ...'*<sup>39</sup>

As my informants pointed out that arranging marriage was both in past and in present the responsibility of the parents. In the past parents selected the spouse for their children, sent elders, a go-between, *lazantha*, to family of potential spouse of their child, decided on the schedule, organized ceremony, and provided all necessary resource needed. Today children can select their spouses but their selection still has to be approved by the parents. Most important until today is to make sure that the background of potential spouse is clean. The main criterion is *uma* cleanness i.e. the partner should be descendants of free born. To be sure that the prospective spouse of their child is not of slave descendant, parents usually engage in intensive genealogical counting. Many discussions with informants indicated that parents usually go as far as seventh generation back to ensure the clean origin of the would-be partner of their child. In such investigation when they detect slave origin either paternal or maternal ancestral roots, then they avoid the contract.

*Uma* cleanness matters if one wants to continue live in close relation with his/her kin. Because of the strict parental involvement in investigating clean origin of the potential partner of their children, informants asserted that mixed marriage alliance i.e. marriage between slave descendants and non-slaves has been uncommon since the introduction of slavery in the study community.

During my research I tried to crosscheck this argument by identifying slave descendants and then collecting genealogies of marriage from them. To identify slave descendants was not difficult. Due to the fact that participation in mourning and funeral, marriage and child delivery can turn one into a slave, everyone in the community is aware of them. With the help of some key informants I identified many slave descendants in each *qabale*. In line with the key informants in Meyche and in Bonke the contributions of Tsena and Kome were very important. In Meyche together with Tsena, I indentified

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<sup>39</sup>. The first and second sayings are the general perspective of the *mala*. I was repeatedly told them by the slave descendants and the *mala*. The second saying I quoted from the *maga* of Ganta Bonke *qabale*.

eighteen households of slave descendants with total population 80. In Bonke with the help of Kome I documented twenty households of slave descendants with total population 100. In Dhele alone, sub unit, *guta*, of Kanchama-Ochole, backed by Bekele (my host family) and Belete, evangelist of Dhele Mekane Yesus church I listed ten households with total population 40.

In addition, in identifying slave descendants the contribution of Terefe, the former chairman of Kanchama-Ochole, is worthy of mentioning here. He is free born and son of *maga* but at one time turned into slave by closely participating with slave descendants during mourning and later got redeemed. Having experience of ruling the *qabale* as chairman three times from 2004 up to 2011 and experience of being slave, Terefe knows almost all slave descendants and *mala* turned slaves in Kanchama-Ochole. Therefore, with the help of him I documented majority of slave descendants in Kanchama-Ochole.

Regarding collection of marriage genealogy of slave descendants, initially I assumed that this task would be difficult; however, later on I found it easy. I was told that during slave redemption slave descendants start their redemption from their apical ancestor from whom slavery commenced in their descent line. Unless they redeem ancestral origin, redemption of slave descendants is considered to be incomplete. Thus, redeemed slave descendants clearly know how slavery started in their ancestral line, how the first marriage alliance was arranged, and how that affected the whole descent line. Therefore, in order to crosscheck the strict unmixed marriage contract I collected marriage genealogies from many redeemed and some unredeemed slave descendants and it reveals that slave ancestors started marrying slaves and that continued to practice for more than four generations in the study community. During my research almost all slave descendants whom I identified contracted their marriage with slave descendants.

Teshome got incomplete redemption and as the first born of his parents knows well about the history of his family line. He has three married brothers and a married sister. Teshome described that the origin of slavery in their family line goes back to their grandfather, Sade. Sade was young when he came to Ganta from Amaro-Kelle. He was claimed to be slave of Karatse for he was given land for building residence at his arrival in Dhele. Teshome elucidated that because Karatse persuaded the community that his

grandfather was slave, Sade could not marry from free born. Instead he married a woman of slave descendant from Shube and gave birth to Salife. Salife contracted marriage with slave woman from Meyche and gave birth to him, Teshome, and his brothers and a sister. Teshome described that he married a slave girl in 1995; however, before that he asked many times from free born to get spouse. Nevertheless, he indicated that many times he was scorned, mocked and ridiculed in streets and in churches by parents of free born girls whom he asked to marry. They mocked him by saying “there is a man who knows not himself” when they are together with him in streets or in worship places. Teshome described that his attempt to marry free born was not because he was ignorant of his origin, but he wished to get married from them.

Teshome indicated that his younger brothers and a sister also married slave descendants. Unlike him they did not attempt to marry from *mala* because they discovered the reaction of *mala* on their brother. In addition, Teshome pointed out that with the initiative of their blind father; they have been redeemed with the cost of more than 30,000 *ETB*. However, they did not finish the redemption process; they did not pay to *maga*, *kati* and processed *soffe* ‘celebration, public announcement’ because the Synods started a project work and taught the people not to spend their asset for slave redemption. Furthermore, their wives and children were not redeemed. Thus, regarding the future fate of his children Teshome said that they have no option but marrying slave descendant because they did not processed complete redemption.

This case indicates that unless slave descendants process complete redemption they cannot intermarry with the *mala*. During slave redemption incomplete redemption implies partial processing and it can be seen from two directions. First, it occurs when a slave descendant does not process all required levels. There are four basic levels to undergo complete redemption starting with *lathi* of slave descendant and then with *maga* and *kati* and finally ends with *soffe* ‘celebration’ at Shoshane market. Second, it happens when whole families of the slave descendant are not redeemed. Teshome’s account is connected with both factors. His father processed level one redemption i.e. with his *lathi*, and thus it was partial redemption. Teshome was included in this partial redemption through his father but both his wife and children were not. Therefore, unfinished

redemption is equivalent to unredeemed. This is the reason why Teshome explained that the future fate of his children is marrying slave descendants.

The other lesson we can learn from this case is that both slave descendants and non-slaves are aware of each others. In this context not only marrying but attempt to marry from free born has serious consequences on slave descendants. Teshome was subjected to down looking and derided for he tried to get spouse from *mala*.

Aged 56, Kanko Kasita, unredeemed slave descendant and ardent activist of slave descendants' rights, also justifies the persistent nature of unmixed marriage. He is gifted informant and knows well the marriage genealogy of his family line as well as other slave descendants. Kanko indicated that there are more than 60 slave descendants in their family line but no one attempted to marry from free born. He explained that they did not ask marriage alliance from free born not because they did not want them but they know their status and the free born reject them.

This story also gives the impression that slave descendants know very well that they are slaves and cannot marry the others. It also shows the *mala* ignores slave descendants for marriage.

My host-parent Bekele explained that his slave roots can be traced back to his fourth ancestor, Orta. He elucidated that Orta who was free born slept with his brother's slave girl and gave birth to Orqa. Orqa became very rich, but because of his mother's slave origin, he was denied access to marry any girl from free born. Instead he married to a woman of slave descendant and gave birth to Basa. Basa married Gontore, another woman of slave origin and from this marriage he, Bekele was born. Bekele recounted that he lost his parents while he was child and brought up by his step-mother. He explained that he had not known as he was slave descendant for long. He discovered his slave origin when he was repeatedly rejected by *mala* girls when he asked them for marriage. After denying access to marry from any *mala* girl, Bekele wedded Demekech, a slave descendant and they gave birth to five children of who three are daughters. Bekele explained that the chain of slavery in his family line has only been removed when he get

redeemed. His families were redeemed in 2011<sup>40</sup>, and subsequent to that his elder daughter was married to a free born.

From this case we can understand that a free born can continue to maintain his descent line clean only when he contracts marriage with free born. The apical ancestor of Bekele was free born; however, the descent line after him became contaminated because of his turned status. We can also learn that marriage of Bekele's daughter to free born after his redemption proves that redemption is the only option through which slave descendants can purify themselves and get equal status with the *mala*. Finally, it seems that Bekele's explanation that he discovered his slave origin after long time is not convincing for at least two reasons, first slavery is very sensitive issue for the study community and slaves and non-slaves are aware of themselves, second, his step-mother was slave descendant as he told me and she could have told him about his parents' origin.

#### **5.2.1.1. The Role of Church in Intermarriage**

Numerous communications with different informants indicated that Christianity, both Orthodox and Protestant were introduced in the community of Ganta in the beginning of 1950s. In their arrival especially Protestants preached that all men are created after the image of God, and all human beings are equal regardless of sex, status, economy, ethnic background, education and the like. They also condemned slavery, local practices and traditional belief system. Therefore, on the set of this new faith many slave descendants embraced it hoping that the ideology of the new faith would override the deep rooted cultural ideology of inequality in the community. However, informants asserted that the initial *mala* converts who became the first evangelists of the new faith maintained the differential treatment of slave descendants in the churches i.e. excluding them in areas of marriage, mourning and funeral and child delivery, and the practice continued to this days.

Thus, during my field work various informants claimed that religion has done nothing regarding exclusion of slave descendants. They argued that the partial treatments of the

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<sup>40</sup>. The redemption account of Bekele is much illustrative and it will be presented in chapter seven under heading slave redemption.

slave descendants are the same both inside and outside of the churches. Church members exclude slave descendants in the areas the community excludes them. The dominant religion in the study area is Protestant faith. I noticed about thirty Protestant, and three Orthodox churches in the community. The majority of slave descendants are followers of the Protestant faith. Many of Protestant slave descendants I communicated elucidated that apart from gaining repentance for their sin in Christ they benefited least in social life when they converted to Christianity. They claimed that the Biblical teaching that 'all are equal in Christ and love your neighbor as you love yourself' is impractical between Christian friends i.e. slave descendants and non-slave. They asserted that the *mala* do not accept this doctrine. *Mala* informants also claimed that they believed to save themselves not to be contaminated by slaves. Therefore, the social rift in mourning, child delivery and marriage in churches and outside churches continued similar since the introduction of Christianity. Regarding marriage informants claimed that protestant *ayle* marries protestant *ayle*, and *mala* protestant marries *mala* protestant.

Some redeemed slave descendants from church shared me that their main intention to undergo the redemption was to get spouse from *mala*. I have discussed the issue with Belete, an evangelist of Dhele Mekene Yesus church and some educated protestant members that why the strict marriage ban exist within the churches. They told me that there is scriptural confusion in the Bible and the *mala* Protestants quote that verses to justify their discrimination against slave descendants. They often quote Deuteronomy 15v12 and Colossians 3v21-25. In the book of Deuteronomy the text reads "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold to you, and serve you six years; then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you". Thus, based on this scripture the *mala* argue that slave descendants should be redeemed if they want to be equal with them. In the book of Colossians the text is written:

*Servants, obey in all things those who are your masters according to the flesh, not just when they are looking, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will receive again for the wrong that he has done, and there is no partiality*

Regarding this passage the free born argued that slave is not only looked as slave in the Bible but also is commanded to serve their master in whole heart even as he serves Lord his God.

Therefore, Belete explained that by quoting this passage the *mala* claimed that slave descendants should no more be seen as equal as they unless they get redeemed. They do not accept the teaching that slave descendants are as equal as they are. In addition, Belete explained that the churches cannot eliminate the social boundary because from the beginning the founders did not react on the situation and the tradition continued to exist throughout more than half a century.

Consequently, it seems that Christianity which preaches the equality of human beings, however, could not override inequality and exclusion of slave descendants deep rooted in the cultural ideology of the community of Ganta. The power of tradition has dominated the religious ideology of equality.

#### **5.2.1.2. The Impact of Intermarriage**

I have described the uncommon marriage practices between the slave descendants and the *mala*. I have portrayed that ancestors of slave descendants started marrying slaves and that continued to practice for more than four generations in the study community. The differential treatment of slave descendants in marriage also continued in churches after the introduction of Christianity. Nevertheless, despite this uncommon practice of marriage there are some cases that slave descendants attempted to marry from *mala*. Also, there are examples of mixed marriages i.e. free born married slave descendants. However, such action brought forth conflict, verbal assault and discrimination of either on slave descendants and/or the *mala*.

In Murche, Asimera, a slave descendant asked Kalech a free born for marriage. She liked him and promised to marry; however, her parents detected the slave origin of her potential partner and warned her to stop the contract. She accepted their advice and told him to discontinue the marriage process. In the mean time a free born asked her and she agreed to marry. Consequently, angered by the situation Asimera helped by his slave friends attempted to abduct Kalech in 2002. Asimera and his friends were found to be

guilty and convicted to be imprisoned. Asimera was put in prison for eight years and his friends for six years in jail.

Now, Asimera has been released from jail after finishing his terms of imprisonment; he married a *mala* girl from Bonke *woreda* and lives in upper town of Arbaminch. He explained to me that he tried to abduct Kalech because her family derided and ridiculed him as if he was non-human being for his slave origin. He also explained that his marriage with a free born girl is due to lack of strict categorization of *ayle* and free born in Bonke *woreda*; the two classes are freely intermarried each other.

The account of Asimera gives impression that exclusions of slave descendants are yielding violent conflicts. On the other hand the idea those in Bonke *woreda* slave descendants are not discriminated or they are freely marrying with free born is less convincing. I was repeatedly told that out of various Gamo *dere* exclusion of slave descendants are more manifest in Ganta, Bonke *woreda* and Kamba. Therefore, the spouse of Asimera married him ignorantly or she could have slave background.

Tesfaye Gameda and Lemma Choka from Kanchama are free born but married slave descendants. Since their marriage they have been isolated from their kinsmen and *mala*. As they indicated to me they were treated as if they lost their real humanity: mocked, undermined and scorned. Because of the serious exclusion they faced from their kin groups and the community members they migrated to Arbaminch. Now, they are living in upper town of Arbaminch. I have discussed with them the circumstances they faced and below are their cases.

Aged 34, Tesfaye was brought up by fanatic *mala* family. He is relative of the *maga* of Knachma. Tefaye is follower of Protestant faith and is member of Mekane Yesus church. He told me that when he embraced Christianity he was taught that all human beings are created in the likeness of God and there is no distinction between human beings. Having been taught of this Biblical doctrine Tesfaye began to oppose especially the serious discrimination extended to slave descendants. He was married to a slave descendant and ended up in alienation by his kinsmen and the *mala*. He described his account as follows:

*I was brought up by fanatic mala family as my parents, brothers and sisters had died. I was raised by my uncle, Lanche Lato. He strictly opposes eating and drinking at ayle home at event of death. I was always told to be cautious, not to eat and to drink. He often said the only way for ayle to become real human is not by becoming a Christian but to get rid of his/her 'dirty' (refers to cleansing ritual). Herewith, he undermines the Christians thought that all human beings are equal and created after the image of God. While I was strictly socialized in this environment, I was preached by many of my Christian friends. I consulted Lanche whether he would allow me to embrace Christianity. He warned me to be careful not to share my life too closely with the ayle if I accept Christianity.*

*After becoming a Christian I discovered different thing in the Bible. In Galatia chapter 3v26-28 it is written "For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus".*

*After thinking about this scripture and internalizing it I said to my uncle that there is no difference between human beings, and the social difference demarcated between ayle and mala was not biblical, and should therefore be eliminated. He said to me provokingly "you only started believing in Christianity yesterday and how could you claim equality of ayle and mala today? Or have you become ayle?" He further even indicated that true Christians at the Synods were not preaching the equality of mala and ayle. In fact preachers and evangelists really do not strongly teach the equality of ayle and mala in their churches. They compromise the message of the Bible fearing the reaction of the people. I often criticized their partiality but many of them advised me to give up such position by saying that you cannot overthrow a century old powerful tradition overnight. However, I continued opposing the partiality.*

*Meanwhile, I was given the chance to study in the certificate theology program at Arbminch. After attending the courses for three months, I moved back home for the semester break. Deep exposure to the bible further enhanced my opposition against the dehumanization of ayle. During the break time I challenged the church leaders (all of whom are mala) by saying that believers should eat and drink with the ayle in their homes, also at event of death. Also, I strongly confronted my uncle saying that he should view ayle as equal with him. Because of this Lanche evicted me from my father land, and the church stopped me from continuing the theology program.*

*In the meantime a slave descendant died. I went to the deceased person's family and ate at their house. As a result the church and all my relatives isolated me. Some of my relatives conspired and tried to kill me. The fact that I had eaten and drunk with ayle was a great shameful for all them who are not only fanatic mala but also from a noble maga family.*

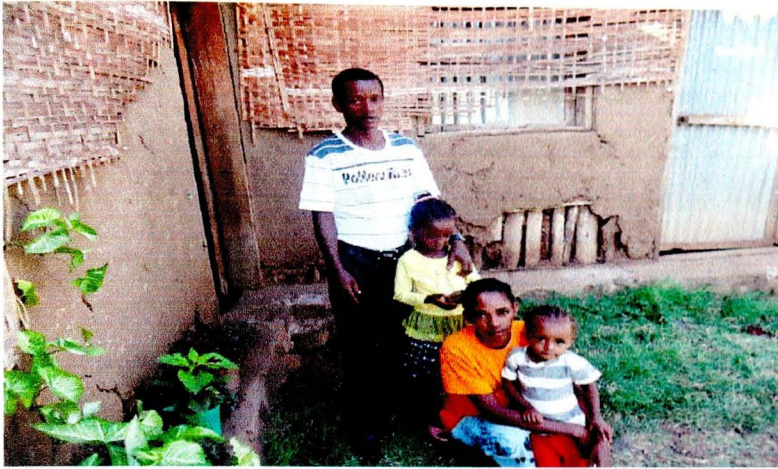
*Unable to resist the pressure from the church and my kinsmen, I repented and promised not to attach myself to the ayle anymore. Lanche returned my father's land to me and he together with other relatives constructed house for me there. Birtukan Lego, my cousin's daughter was told to stay there with me. Not long, without my knowledge she got married to Abraham Gojame, a slave descendant. I was suspected of having arranged the alliance and was banished from my house for more than three months. Her relatives wept for my cousin as if she died and buried. She was completely cut off from our kinsmen.*

*After a year, Birtukan arranged Tamench Gorade, the daughter of her husband cousin to marry me. For two reasons I decided to marry her; first Tamenech was beautiful, and second like Birtukan I wanted to breach the social sanction placed on the ayle. I married her December 2003. Since then to this day for ten years I have been isolated and excluded from my family. As we could not bear the continued brutal exclusion there, we came to Arbaminch in 2006 to live in town.*

This case indicates that the conscious decision to associate with the slaves seems to be a much greater shame than to be born as a slave. The turning of Tesfaye and his cousin's daughter by marrying slave descendants was considered as great failure for their family. Their family considered them as if they had died. They were completely cut off from their relatives. This aspect is quite different from the situations that the slave descendants face. As noted in the beginning of this chapter slaves and non slaves live peacefully in everyday life unless the slaves face situations which are considered to transmit their impurity to other. However, this case indicates that, *mala* turned slaves are excluded in everyday life than slave descendants. Tesfaye was evicted from his father's land, banished from his residence, interrupted education, forced to migrate, faced verbal assaults and the like. This all happened to him because of his deliberate closeness with the slave descendants.

The other thing we can learn from this case is that the Protestant Christianity that preaches equality of all human beings is non effective in solving the situation of slave descendants. I came across many times when Protestant Christians say 'a century old tradition cannot be overthrown' i.e. inequality between slaves and non-slaves. I crosschecked the argument of Tesfaye that preachers and evangelist were not teaching the equality of slaves and non-slaves. Some Synods members and evangelists from Ganta claimed that they were not openly condemning slavery and teaching equality of slaves and non-slaves because they feared that it would result in segregation of church members.

Finally, one could ask that how could Tesfaye be integrated after having eaten with slaves? He elucidated to me that he was unredeemed. After he had repented and promised not to attach himself to the *ayle* anymore, his relatives began planning to redeem him. However, not long he married a slave girl and then completely detached from them.



Tesfaye and his family taken at his residence in 2013

Lemma and Kuyba had been living in Kanchama-Ochole. They are 40 and 34 respectively. Lemma is free born but Kuyba has slave background. Lemma elucidated to me that his family and the family of Kuyba were neighbors and the two (Lemma and Kuyba) grew up together. He pointed out that as neighbor he had long relation with Kuyba, and through time he loved her and asked for marriage. Having discovered the deep relation Lemma had with Kuyba, his friends began mocking on him by saying: 'you are getting to smile bad odor' when together in work places, market and drinking houses. The parents of Lemma also discovered his intimate relationship with the slave girl and they cautioned him not to be isolated from them by cleaving to impure girl. However, Lemma asserted that he loved her, and convinced himself to marry Kuyba. After their marriage he was completely isolated from his family and finally forced to migrate. Kuyba noted their account as follows:

*We had been living in Kachama-Ochole. Our coming to Arbaminch was the result of our marriage. My families were considered as bacha ayle and they were undermined and looked below human being. In this context Lemma started close relation with me. He asked me to marry.*

*After discovering our relation his friends started mocking on him as if he had turned into slave. He was telling me the situation that how far he was discouraged by filthy talk of his friends. He was angered by repeated discouragement, and down-looking by his friends and family members.*

*Finally one day he said to me 'I am already slave in the eyes of my friends and my family, so I decided to marry you to become a real slave'. Lemma had married me; consequently he was cut off from his family. His father publically said that his son died and he had no more relation with them. His father told to Lemma that he could not take part at his death and funeral and he had no right to inherit his property. In all aspect Lemma was disowned not only by his immediate parents, brothers and sisters but also by his clan members.*

*After all these they continued discouraging and ridiculing him. I was also subjected to serious insults by his family. Whenever they got me they said "you contaminated our son, you brought shameful to us". We could not bear the situation. Finally, as a way out from the circumstance he consulted me to leave Kanchama to Arbaminch. I agreed and we came to the town to live.*

*After many years in Arbaminch, my father Belay, after paying huge amount of money ritually purified himself and the rest of our family members. He lost all his property for buying status. Now he is impoverished. Following their purification, my family decided to avoid close intimacy with us for that potentially turn them to their previous status. In the intervening time our child died and all my family, his family and people from Ganta living in Arbaminch excluded us in our grievance time. They avoided eating, drinking and appearing on funeral.*

*After burying our dead we thought our place in our kin groups and community. When changing our residence from Ganta to Arbaminch, our intention was to escape the exclusion from his kin and the community as well. But now we understood that we could not flee the discrimination unless we got redeemed. So, we decided to redeem ourselves but we had no enough money to process. We had 4000 birr only. Lemma sold out our banana farm land for 19000. We were backed by my family. Totally with more than 25000 birr, in year 2008 we redeemed ourselves and integrated to the mainstream society.*

This story also gives us the idea that turning into slave is great shameful than being born as slave. It substantiates that the *mala* turned slaves experience serious exclusion and isolation in their daily life than slave descendants. For *mala* turned slaves often the brutal exclusion comes from their family and kin groups because their turned status is considered as disgraceful for their family members.

The story also indicates that slave redemption has role in integrating slaves with their family and community. Lemma and Kuyba were integrated into their family, kin groups and community although the redemption the process had seriously damaged their economy.

Apart from these cases I was told that women of free born descendants have married to rich slave descendants. Their motto I was told: *uma ala othai, santemewa!* 'What is importance of clan? Importance is money'; *Athi meyoda hedes ayleko gele* 'if you want to have extraordinary marry slave'. Nevertheless, I could not find many cases that *mala* women married slave descendants for the sake of having privileged life. Only in Kanchama I was reported the story of very rich slave descendant family, Belay Basha and his son Agre Belay. They married *mala* women but their wives have been isolated by their original families. The women families argued that: *tsegara durora alawa bu'asi* 'goat and sheep cannot mix' meaning slave descendants cannot mix with free born.

From the noted description we can understand that the strict marriage ban between free born and slave descendants is deeply rooted in the powerful ideology of slavery. For people of Ganta slavery does not only designate derogative social status, it is an 'agent' which contaminates one's descent line. As *mala* informants indicated the reason they do not choose to marry from slave descendants is that it has both immediate and long term consequences on their life and their generations as well. The immediate effect is discrimination, persecution, verbal assault and cutting off from kinship ties which is the life blood of the society. The long term consequence of marrying slave descendants is contamination of *uma*, once one marry slave descendant, it continues to pollute the coming posterity.

It also seems that the failure of Protestant Christianity teaching that all human beings are equal is embedded in this powerful ideology of slavery. As noted above, members, evangelists, preachers and some Synods members from Ganta feared to deal with the situation of slave descendants. Many of them used Biblical myths to justify their discrimination against slave descendants. Some of them reasoned out church segregation if they would deal with the situation of slaves. However, the overall situations show that they all feared the deep entrenched and powerful ideology of slavery either because they thought it would contaminate their *uma* or they thought it would endanger their social position in the community. I discovered that Belete, the evangelist of Dhele Mekane Yeus church excluded his own sister for she married slave descendant after the Synods project work.

In addition, in my view the strict exclusion of slave descendants in marriage is entrenched in strict social stratification of the society. As discussion made in chapter three, the society of Ganta strictly stratified into three: *mala*, *mana* and *ayle*. This rigid caste like classification of the society both in the pre and post abolition of slavery categorized the society into three endogamous groups.

In Meyche I was told that the alliance between *mala* and *ayle* results in private condemnation and exclusion of both, however, the unity between *mala* and *mana* is considered to be *tuna*, 'refers the contamination of the entire community' i.e. the marriage between *mala* and *mana* not only pollutes the former but also the whole community. In such a case the couple is not only privately excluded, but they are actually to be 'excommunicated' from the *kati bitta* 'king territory'<sup>41</sup>. This means that they have to leave the entire community, Ganta, to other Gamo *dere* or beyond that. Informants explained that if they would stay it is believed that it would cause crop failure, plague on cattle, disaster, drought and diseases on the entire community.

In the past a man named Demissie Desalgn married a *mana* woman, and as the result after being cursed by *kati* he was forced to leave his land. Demissie went to Arbaminch

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<sup>41</sup> . The territory or geographical limit of the *kati* of Ganta

and there he died. Borko, *mana*, at Meyche told me that the only problem of the *mana* is that they cannot intermarry with the *mala*.

Nevertheless, in Meyche and Bonke I encountered rich *mana* who married *mala*. However, their wives were seriously isolated by their original families. I was also told that they were excluded from *idir*, community based burial association. Nonetheless, they were not excommunicated from the king territory. I discussed the issue with the *kati* of Ganta and he indicated that the couple would stay in his territory because the traditional practice is getting weak and the new generation does not pay attention to the local tradition. He also explained that today the people are more aware of their constitutional rights; they observe more modern legal practice than giving consideration to the tradition. Thus, he underlines, in this context it is impossible to effectively practice tradition. Therefore, it seems that these cases show some improvement on the situation of the *mana*; however, still it illustrates the endogamous practices because the breaching of social boundary by *mala* women brought forth isolation by their family.

Concerning the intermarriage between *mana* and *ayle*, it can be said that the former excludes the latter. In Meyche I was reported that a daughter of Yelima Yegezu, a slave descendant, married to Bezabeh Butarka, *mana*. Regarding the alliance *mana* informants argued that Bezabeh had turned into slave. They argued that the slave descendants are inferior to them. The *mala* informants also claimed that they would not closely associate with Bezabeh for he turned into slave by marrying slave descendant. Therefore, it seems that the slave descendants are excluded by both *mala* and *mana* in marriage.

Generally in this chapter we have seen that in daily life the slave descendants and the *mana* live peacefully and an integrated manner with the rest community members. The slave descendants are excluded only in situations when their assumed impurity is considered to be transmitted to the others during marriage, mourning, and child delivery. These daily life characteristics of slave descendants are being so, nonetheless, the situation of *mala* turned slaves are quite distinct. They are severely excluded and discouraged in daily life especially by their kin groups and family members.

Regarding the marriage practice we have noted that the communities of Ganta are categorized into three endogamous groups. The ancestors of slaves started marrying slaves and that continued to practice for more than four generations. Today almost all slave descendants were married to their equals. Marriages between *mala* and slave descendants are uncommon. Some *mala* who married to slave descendants were subjected to severe discrimination, ridicule, forced migration and complete isolation from their kin groups. The alliance between *mana* and *mala* were also unusual. In the past the alliance between the two was believed to cause the impurity of the entire community and as the result they were banished from the whole community, however, today there is improvement on the situation of the *mana*. The marriages between the slave descendants and the *mana* are also rare.

In a Nutshell, it can be said that these endogamous practices of marriages in the community of Ganta are based on two factors. First, the powerful of ideology of slavery created inequality between the community members. Second, the caste based social strata that classified the community member into *mala*, *mana* and *ayle* before and after abolition of slavery has existed unchanged throughout twenty one century.

### **5.2.2. Exclusion of Slave Descendants on time of Death**

Exclusion during death is the most serious of all the slave descendants have been facing in the study community. Close interaction with them at event of death automatically turn he/she into slave. It is also during an event of death, mourning and funeral that people still recognize the previously existing slave-master relationships though today there are no real slave-master relationships anymore. The *lathi* initiates all activities from giving postmortem care to dead to funeral at the death of the slaves who were owned by them in the past, and pioneering him in those activities immediately turn one into slave of him, an incident with impressive consequences as will be revealed below.

Numerous discussions conducted with informants (slave descendants, *mala* and *mana*) revealed that isolation of former slaves at event of death started right from the beginning of origin of slavery in the study community. By then there were two areas of exclusion

manifested by avoidance of food and drink and overnight stay before *la'a*<sup>42</sup>. The prevention was aimed to keep oneself away from being contaminated by slavery because the strong traditional doctrine established that lack of deterrence on such areas during death automatically turn participants into the status of slave, and the pollution continues to contaminate the family line of the participant otherwise he/she get redeemed. Therefore, when death occur at slaves home, the rest people weep and mourn with them but they do not share food and drink and stay overnight. They present food and drink to the deceased slave's family, but their own food is believed to turn *chancha* (polluted and uneaten) as soon as it is handed over to the deceased slave's family<sup>43</sup>.

It is allowed for *mala* to eat at their own slave descendants funeral i.e. slave masters are free to eat and drink at the death of the slaves who were owned by them in the past; it is only polluting to eat at unrelated slaves' home.

On the death of descendants of one's owns slaves, the master and his kin group support the deceased slave family in every aspect; they stay overnight, comfort them, eat and drink with them and help burying the dead body. They freely do that because, people say, the slaves are considered to be their kinsmen since the time they became slaves of their masters. At that time the slaves were cut off from their kin group and established new ties with their masters. I was told that the cooperation of slaves master at the slaves' death is obligatory, and without him no one approaches the deceased slave's family. This is the case even though today there exist no real slave-master relationships anymore, but people still recognize the previously existing relations of their forefathers.

On the other hand, when a *mala* dies the *ayle* freely eat and drink at the deceased person's home and participate in all aspects of the mourning.

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<sup>42</sup>. *La'a* is complex concept having various connotations. In this study it denotes two issues. First, it implies emancipation /redemption of slave descendant. In this case it denotes complete and permanent cleanness of slave descendant. When a slave descendant is redeemed, it is called *la'atis* meaning emancipated. Second, it indicates cleanness from temporary impurity. When a slave descendant dies or gives birth, the first six days are considered as the period of pollutnness. The seventh day is called *la'a* meaning the end of period of impurity. There is no ritual required of the slave descendant to get cleaned. According to the customary law the seventh day is considered pure. Some of my informants especially descendants of slave holders associated *la'a* with Moses law of the Old Testament.

<sup>43</sup>. I was repeatedly told that if one does not eat at death event at *mala* home, then the deceased's family complain by saying this is not *chancha*! Why don't you eat?

I have noted that in the past exclusion of former slaves were manifested in two basic areas: avoiding food and drink and staying overnight at deceased person's family before *la'a*. Informants, however, indicated that since recent time other avoidance rules that believed to turn him/her into slave were introduced. They are not sure the exact time when these customs were introduced but they asserted that it became rampant with the "commercialization" of slave redemption.

The first newly introduced custom is that the free born should not present at slave descendant's home when he/she dies. This newly introduced norm caused more fear to *mala* regarding the situation of slave descendants than ever before. A redeemed *mala* wife explained that she fears slavery more than a wild beast. Informants pointed out that when a slave descendant get seriously sick, the *mala* do not go to visit him/her because they fear that he/she could die at his/ her presence, and that potentially turn them into slave of the dying person's master. Thus, instead of asking and comforting the seriously sick slave descendant, the *mala* runs away especially if they are neighborhood of the sick person.

The second is avoiding postmortem care to the dead. Informants elucidated that this is the obligatory task of the slave master. They explained that no one can perform this task pioneering him but only the deceased person's family. If anyone gives postmortem care before the *lathi*, he immediately declares that a person became his slave. Therefore, during such time the slave descendants can be helped only by their master or they carry the burden by themselves. In other words, the situation is worse for the slave descendants; a father gives postmortem care for his dead son and vice versa; a husband gives such care for his lost wife... etc. If death occurs at woman headed household, the situation becomes worse; she could be helped by her relatives or she could be isolated until her master comes.

The third avoidance consists of various issues. I was told that when a slave descendant dies, the first six days are believed to be the period of impurity. The *mala* informants explained to me that when a person dies, *suba* (liquid?) discharges in his/her mouth and/or nose. Therefore, when a slave dies it is believed that a drop of *suba* further pollutes the whole deceased person's compound and his family, and they get cleaned at

the seventh day, *la'a*. In this context in previous time what was avoided was food and drink but now newly added avoiding practices include: wash hand, brush teeth, seat on wet grass, initiate tent erecting, and smoke cigarette. I was told that anyone who is found doing one of these lists automatically turn into slave of the deceased slave master. In addition to avoiding these informants indicated that before *la'a* exchange of any tool with deceased slave descendant's family is strictly prohibited; for example, the *mala* can present food to deceased person's family but they cannot return the tool by which they presented food to the grieving home prior to *la'a*.

The period of impurity is cautious time. I was told that during this time two groups; the deceased slave descendant's master and his *ogathi* 'communicator' and the rest people watch carefully each other. For the master it is time of getting slaves. Ignorant people are caught in the snare<sup>44</sup> by participating in one of the noted lists. In the situation the role of *ogathi* is invaluable for the master. The *ogathi* is working as broker. He carefully attends who participates in the situation and then reports the participants to the master. Then, the master publicizes his slaves at drink house or any other place especially when he got drunken by *gayro* (singing): *ta gaydi lagoko yelide!* 'My cows are duplicated' meaning my slaves are increased.

For the rest people it is time of keeping oneself safe. According to informants the rest people keep themselves safe by two methods. First, by abstaining themselves from the noted behaviors; and second, by cautioning their kin groups so that they refrain themselves from those areas. I was told that if the *mala* found that their kin take part in those areas, they automatically distance themselves from them. Then, when death occurs at their polluted kin home, they do not closely participate with them.

The fourth avoidance is participation in the process of corpse burying. The process of burying the dead body starts by preparing a new grave. Preparing the tomb can only be started when the master of the deceased slave first initiates the digging, *chare*. If the grave is started in his absence by anyone, the master asks: *Odewa bosasi chare?* 'Who initiated the tomb?' meaning he is claiming to make the initiator his slave. Informants

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<sup>44</sup>. I was told that slave masters are deliberately looking out for new slaves. The advantage is that they will get profit if the turned slaves want to be redeemed.

indicated that carrying the corpse to the tomb do not contaminate and turn one into slave but initiating it from home to outdoor pollutes. During corpse burying, participation in filling up the pit does not impure one but initiating it is danger.

The last exclusion of slave descendants in relation to death is manifested by prohibiting *mogo*, resources to help bury the dead. I was told that in Ganta presenting *mogo* is culturally honored activity. Often *mogo* is presented in kind such as clothes, cattle and money in cash. The *mogo* is given by first born in a deceased's family and husbands of their daughters. If their daughters marry slave descendants or if their eldest son marry slave descendant, they cannot present *mogo* at event of funeral. Unable to do that is shameful, and hence it is serious exclusion in the context of Ganta community.

I have described that the strict ideology of slavery and caste based social stratification has created different endogamous groups within Ganta society.

The marriages of slaves within their own groups have potential consequences on their life. Informants indicated to me that when a slave who was owned by a master married to a slave of another master, then it would create serious problem for the slave if his/her partner dies. During the event of death only deceased's master shall initiate the postmortem care of the dead and tomb digging<sup>45</sup>. If the master of the dead is in distance i.e. if his/her master lives outside Ganta community, everything waits for him until he comes. Informants elucidated to me that in this circumstance other slaves cannot help the deceased person's family because the local tradition forbids them doing so. They could eat and drink with grieving family but they cannot initiate tomb digging or give postmortem care to the dead. Also, they cannot initiate tent erecting at outdoor of the deceased's family. Therefore, in such condition the deceased's families suffer a lot. If the *lathi* does not come, such activity could be done by deceased's family by themselves.

On the other hand the coupled slaves who have same *lathi* could have but less problems. Their *lathi* initiates all activities at death of either spouse. Nonetheless, if the *lathi* lives in outside Ganta society, similar problem could be occurred i.e. they would be isolated until the *lathi* comes.

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<sup>45</sup> . The master of the wife does not initiate tomb digging or give postpartum care when her husband dies and vice versa because associating with unrelated slaves pollutes him.

This perplexing ethnographic evidence could be seemed unreal for any outsider; however, it is factual situation of the slave descendants. Almost all slave descendants whom I communicated in the field experienced lose of his/her relative by death at least once in their life time. Some of them do not want to recall the circumstance they passed. Whenever I asked them to share me their account, they said to me: *tseqesa ci'iddii anne othome?* 'It is bad odor, what do you get from it?' I also encountered many *mala* who turned into slave by sharing food and drink at deceased slave descendant's home before *la'a*. To write down all cases I identified is impossible; I will be dealing with only few examples from both category (slave descendants and *mala* turned slaves) to illustrate the situation of slave descendants during mourning and funeral.

Daniel is an unredeemed slave descendant whom I met in Dhele, *guta*, in Kanchama-Ochole. He is thirty six and remarried after the death of his first wife. He indicated that he faced severe exclusion during the death of his sister, father and his wife. He described his situations as follows:

*Our descent line was contaminated when Wogaro, our grandfather turned into slave. My father, Mella, told me that Wogaro was changed into slave while he was young. His father Wora gave him to Haho, a rich man during a great famine for exchange of food. And that is the way how slavery introduced in our family line. Wogaro was given a slave descendant to marry and his wife gave birth to Mella my father, and hence me being a slave is unquestionable.*

*My sister died in the beginning of 2000s. In that event we were left alone. People came to weep and then ran away. They presented food and drink but they did not eat from it. No preparation of grave. Everybody was looking us from distance. It was very odd time for us. We passed that grievance time in dark.*

*In 2006 very worse episode came again in my life. My father died at Thursday 1:00 PM. Friday up to 6:00 PM no one approached me. The people came but left soon. No one looked after the dead body. Our so called master, the descendant of Haho, Girma was living in Arbaminch.*

*The people claimed that they were looking for him because they said that unless he came and initiate the grave, it is taboo for them pioneering him. If they did, they would turn into his slave they claimed. I got angered and said to them do not help me I alone bury my father. However, they sent messenger to Girma and he came Friday evening. After his arrival he initiated the tomb digging and then the people involved. The next day he initiated the soil at outdoor and the people involved to erect tent. However, there was no eating, drinking and everybody was cautiously keeping him/her self.*

*After five years, Girma accused me before elders so that I gave up my father's land to him. He claimed that Wogaro and Mella had been given his ancestors' land for they were their slaves. Now, he claimed, they died and he wanted to get back the land in which I am settled. The elders voted for him and advised me to leave the land to him and start new life in new area as it is accepted norm. Nonetheless, I refused, and accused Girma at woreda court. Finally, the court allowed me to continue live on the land.*

*In 2012, I lost my wife. The non-slaves again excluded me. At this time the danger was that the master of my wife was not alive. The situation became so worse. No one ate and drunk. Other slave descendants refused to give postpartum care to dead and initiate tomb digging because they feared that they would be accused. The mala said that: "qare qare nu addafe ye'adese wogasoko nuna musares; nune mudesa maquko nune ayle maqonne" 'this tradition is descended to us from our ancestors and if we violate that we would turn into slave of your wife's master'. I was severely discriminated. My kin groups prepared a tomb and we buried my wife.*

This account tells us different things. First, it indicates that exclusions of the slave descendants are very severe at the death of their relatives especially when their *lathies* are not nearby or when they died. In this context the only option the slave descendants have during the death of their relatives is bearing the burden by themselves. They are to give postpartum care to dead, prepare grave and bury the corpse. This is what happened to

Daniel during the death of his father and his wife. Second, the story also indicates that other slave descendants do not help slaves whose relatives die in initiating grave digging and giving postpartum care to dead. These tasks are rights and duties of the masters. Third, coupled slave descendants who have different *lathies* face severe situation at death of either partner. In the case Daniel reported that he and his wife had distinct *lathies*. His *lathi* was alive but he did not help him for that contaminates him. Fourth, the case sheds light that slave descendants can defend their right. I was told that giving up land is requirement during slave redemption if the slave descendant is *bacha ayle*. Here, however, Daniel was challenged to give up his land to his master without redemption but he defended his possession. Finally, the overall story tells us tradition has strong power to regulate the social system.

Teshome lives in Sirra<sup>46</sup>. He was married and has five children. I described Teshome in the preceding chapter. He has four married brothers and a sister. Teshome and his brothers and sister got partial redemption under their parents Salife and Shuqare. Their redemption process was interrupted by arrival of the Synod project. Teshome indicated to me that after his parents processed incomplete redemption his child died. He said to me that in the event he was not only excluded by the non-slaves but also by his parents. He indicated his situation as follows:

*Our father started redemption after selling his banana farm land. He spent more than 30000 birr, to process redemption with our lathies. In the redemption we, my brothers and sister were included. However, our wives and children were not because our wives have different lathies and it requires distinct process. Our children were not included because there was financial shortage.*

*Our father urged us to start redeeming our wives and children but we had no enough money. He recommended us to sellout our banana farm land. In the main time my wife refused the redemption process. She reasoned out that her families were poor and cannot redeem them. Thus, she*

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<sup>46</sup> . The lowland area where many people of Ganta engaged in banana production

*claimed that she did not want to be alienation from her family after being redeemed. She also refused selling of our land and rejected the redemption.*

*Meanwhile our child died. The community discriminated us. We were not surprised with that because we knew our level in the society. Our greatest discouragement came from our parents. They excluded us. They reasoned that the processed redemption would be disqualified if they closely participated with us.*

*My wife got angered with the situation. After the mourning she said to me that she decided to depart me or we should migrate to other area. I agreed to migrate and we came to Sirra two years ago.*

This case gives us a notion that slave descendants are not only excluded by non-slaves but also by their family members. Exclusion between families members arise when redemption is incomplete or when only half of a family members get redeemed. It also shows that discrimination between family members can lead to fragmentation. Teshome indicated to me that since they migrated to Sirra, they did not contact with his family. He also pointed out that his wife wishes not to have relationship with his family anymore.

Aged forty four, Kabo Kafane has been living in upper town of Arbaminch since 2005. He was married to Trunesh Ibida, slave descendant, and they have five children. Kabo indicated to me that originally his grandfather, Chuwa, had been living in Hachenso, Amaro-kelle. He came to Ganta during the famine in the mid nineteen century. Kabo pointed out that Chuwa was bartered for food during the famine and that was the way how slavery originated in their descent line. Chuwa was given a slave girl to marry and she gave birth to Kafane. Kafane married another woman of slave origin and in that marriage he, Kabo and his brothers and sisters were born. Kabo indicated that before he moved to Arbamich, he experienced severe exclusion three times. He described his account as follows:

*We had been living in Munche, part of Kancham-Ochole qabale. My ancestor, Chuwa, turned into slave during the great famine. Start from him all our family members including me were married to people of slave origin. This was because on the one hand we knew our origin and on the other hand the free born seriously undermines slave descendants and we did not want to be scorned and ridiculed by them.*

*Our daily lives with the rest community members were manifested in peaceful way. We worked together, ate and drank together, worshiped together, had common idir and iqub, had good friendships and neighborhoods. However, these daily lives were turned into dark when our relatives died.*

*We experienced severe exclusion three times during the death of my father, my uncle son, and our child. My father died in 1988. During that event the community despised us as if we were below human beings. They were looking us from distance. Only our master helped us in burying the dead. Again, not long my uncle son died. We faced similar situation. No one ate and drink with us. Before la'a we suspected ourselves that we were not human being because we were treated as if we were below that level. In 1997 my child died. In this incident we were also seriously excluded and isolated.*

*After these experiences we (my wife and I) discussed over the issues that how we continue to live in such circumstances. First we thought to redeem ourselves and got integrated into the mainstream society. Nevertheless, we recognized that this action was biblically unaccepted for we were protestant believers. Then we came up with other option: to leave Munche for Arbamich. We came to the town ten years ago and since then we have been living here.*

This account indicates that slave descendants live peacefully with the rest community members unless they face situations that distance them from the mainstream society. It also illustrates that maltreatment of slave descendants during funeral have role in leading them to migrate to other areas.

### 5.2.2.1. The Role of the Church in Burial Rites of Slave Descendants

Like in the context of marriage, the churches have also been discriminating slave descendants during the time of death. Slave descendants are excluded inside the church and outside within the community in their grievance time. Church members either in protestant or Orthodox hold the assumption that embracing Christianity could not change the impure status of slave descendants and participation with them in those cultural sanctioned time inevitably turn them into the polluted status of slave descendants. A *mala* protestant claimed that: *ta shempose amanebama galathi meshe meyoda ba'a ta amanes 'I believed to save my life not to eat polluted food'*

Nevertheless, some protestant Christians I talked to (individuals) hold different biblical view basing their premise on Galatia chapter 3: 26-28:

*For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

After discussing and internalizing this scripture part from the bible some *mala* Protestants went as far as consciously associating themselves with slave descendants during death of their relatives. They decided to closely associate slave descendants in area where they are severely excluded.

Not long after their decision, a devoted Christian slave descendant named Belete Bada died in the upper town of Arbaminch in 2002. Based on their decision they went to the funeral and ate the *chancha*. Soon after that they were condemned and people said that they had turned into slaves of Belete's master. This had dramatic consequences for all. The wives of many ran away. They (husband and children) were cut off from their kinsmen and the rest of the community. The situation turned out to be very different from what they had thought and all except one could not bear the isolation and finally

renounced their decision and got redeemed and restored to their former status. The following two cases shall illustrate their situation:

### **Terefe**

*I am son of Kanchama maga. I received protestant belief when I was at puberty. Exposures to biblical teaching about equality of all human beings before God put me always in question about the brutal exclusion of slave descendants. I have ruled Kanchama-Ochole qabale three times since 1980s as chairman and I knew the circumstances of slave descendants well. Since the beginning of 2000s I deeply began to think that what would be happen if we were to eat chancha? If Christianity could not break this strong harmful tradition, then what could shatter it? Then I organized the twelve men and we talked over the issue and finally decided to eat the chancha.*

*Not long, our devoted friend Belete Bada died. We summoned and determined to implement our decision. After the funeral ceremony we came to kare, outdoor, and ate the chancha. When I came home my wife and my mother had left the home hearing from people. My mother had abandoned whatever thing I bought her claiming as if I was not her son. My children and I were cut off from our kinsmen (both from my wife family and my kin groups). I comforted myself and advised my friends not to be won by the situation because they all faced similar circumstance. My wife stayed twelve months out side with her family. Conditions become worse and worse. I consulted Dhele Mekane Yesus and Sille Kalehewet church to push them to follow our footstep. They all refused. Finally, I fail to withstand the situation. I dissolved my decision and redeemed myself. I paid only 1000 birr to Katilo, master of Belete Bada for two reasons; first the master is kinsmen of my wife, and second I am the son of maga( political position below kati) and hence no payment for maga and kati( king). I could not have paid to the master. But it was obligatory and redemption could not be complete without payment.*

This case gives us impression that *mala* turned slaves are severely isolated by their family as well as the rest community members. Their situation is different from the slave descendants. It shows that consciously associating with slave descendants results in family breakdown.

Almu Sham'a was one among the twelve who participated in eating *chancha* at the death of Belete Bade. Aged 38, Almu was married and has been living in upper town of Arbaminch. He explained that after eating the *chancha* he faced exclusion from his family as well as from his wife's family especially when his wife gave birth to a child. His wife did not depart him like the others. However, Almu pointed out that there were frequent conflicts in their home because she often urged him so that he got redeemed but he refused her request. He was the last who processed redemption. Almu also indicated that he could not have processed the redemption; he did it because of continues scorning and ridicule from the *lathi* of Belete. He pointed his situation as follows:

*In the church we have often been thought that in Christ there is no distinction. There is no distinction between ayle and mala, all are equal in Him. Having internalized this teaching, eleven brothers and I talked and concluded to breach the cultural sanction which distinguishes members in the church into ayle and mala. Such segregation typically occur when ayle's kin/relative die, apart from weeping with deceased's family for while, people do not comfort them and share meal until the seventh day after the death of the slave descendant. The avoidance is because of the cultural sanction, eating chancha turn mala into ayle. We discussed so many times and lastly decided to eat chancha if ayle lose his/her relative. Meanwhile Belete Banda (ayle) devoted Christian, married and has a daughter accidentally died in our community. We gathered and decided to eat the chancha. We were ignorant that the ogathi, communicator, of Belete's master was inspecting whether the mala were eating the chancha. We ate the chancha, but it immediately caused family breakdown among us. On my part, I was cut off from my parents and even from my clan. Because of my action my wife too detached from her parents and from her*

*clan. This brought forth frequent conflicts in our home. Clan and family tie is very important for us and cutting off from it means dead while alive. So, my wife always conflicts with me, urging me to be purified and reintegrated to our family, clan and the rest community. Brothers who eat chancha also faced similar problem in their respective home. Because of the pressure, we became disintegrated, and some purified themselves and got reintegrated to their family, clan, and the community. In the meantime, my wife gave birth and as result we were left alone, not only her and my family, but our Ganta neighbors excluded us because it is believed that before seventh day making close intimacy with ayle family who give birth turn mala into slave.*

*The more psychological breakdown was from other side. We were reported to Belete's master by the time we ate chancha by his ogathi. Consequently, whenever he meets us, passing by our neighbor, meets our friends or he got drunk, he says by gayro 'sing': ta messati issa issa yeletise 'my cows give birth heifers' means my ayle is duplicating. It means at once he got twelve slaves with their family members. We were dehumanized as if we were caw. That was great failure to us. I was convinced that we could not escape. Thus, it was for this reason I redeemed myself and got integrated to our kin and the rest community. I paid 1600 birr to the master of Belete to process the ritual. The fewer amounts I paid was because for chancha slaves redemption is not costly like for bacha slaves.*

This case also indicates that for *mala* turned slaves the situation is very difficult. It is great shameful for them and as the result exclusion from every direction, family, kin groups and community members. The case also shows how the slave masters provoke redemption of their slaves because it is source of their income. It also illustrates that slaves are isolated when they give birth.

## The Case of Begashaw and Church Separation

Begashaw Banchuka was among the twelve who ate the *chancha*. He refused redemption when others purified themselves. His wife is a descendant of a well known slave holder in Kanchama. Now, because of her husband's participation in eating *chancha*, she turned into slave and that was a great shameful for her. There were frequent conflicts in their home because Begashaw refused redemption. Meanwhile, their child died and they were excluded by their family and community of Ganta. Begashaw described their situation as follows:

*Before we came to Arbaminch, the situation of ayle was very serious in Ganta. I personally came across their circumstance in the areas of marriage, mourning, funeral and child delivery. When my family embraced Protestant religion, we thought that there is no difference between human beings. We understood from the Bible that in Christ all are equal. Having this account in mind, a group of brothers and I discussed over the issue and decided to closely participate with slave descendents at time of death. Meanwhile, not long, very devoted and loved protestant, Belete Banad (ayle) accidentally died. My friends and I ate chancha. Consequently, automatically we were considered polluted and turned into slave. I worried not for the situation, but it was a big blow to my wife as she is from the lathi family. Because of my action, all my family were turned into ayle. My wife urged me to get redeemed but I refused to do so. I did not want to violate the biblical truth I had been taught. I was pressed by my kin, Sara's (my wife) kin and redeemed brothers to get my family purified. I refused. Then, people from Ganta living in Shecha warned me to see the situation carefully as it ends up in isolation of my family. I resisted and continued in my decision.*

*Not long, my daughter died. As we were warned, everybody from Ganta including our kin isolated us. My position was tested; however, I took heart and continued with my decision. In a month difference I arranged feast for graduation of my elder son, and I invited neighbors and my*

*Ganta people but no one came to share my happiness. In all these social sanction I stood firmly not to change my decision. To this day I have been firmly with my decision.*

Church separation came after the death of Begashaw's daughter. Tesfaye, the current evangelist of Shecha Mekane Yesus church portrayed that at death of Begashaw's daughter the church leaders and he discussed how to comfort his family. They came up with the idea organizing members to contribute money to prepare tea and coffee. Tesfaye said that half of leaders in the church were from Ganta and they agreed to contribute the money but refused to eat. In the meantime, the money was contributed and a committee prepared tea and coffee and they went to Begashaw's home. Tesfaye pointed out that at the mourning place they noticed that all Ganta Christians, leaders and former Begashaw's friends who ate *chancha* at death of Belete but were redeemed did not go there after contributing the money.

After this, at the beginning of a new month they debated over sharing Lord's Supper in distinction. After long discussion leaders passed decision: those exclude slave descendants should not share Lord's Supper. Consequently, all Ganta Christians, leaders, preachers, singers and members seceded from church and set up their own church. They named their new church: *chewa- wosakethi* 'clean church' and their mother church: *ayle wosakethi* 'slave church'. I was told that the redeemed slave descendants took the leading role in separation of the church. They claimed that again turning into slave by participating in *chancha* means great social crises and economic damage for them.



The *Secha Mekane Yesus* church, 'ayle church' March 2013



The newly setup Ganta *mala* protestants' church 'pure church' March 2013

I have described the exclusion of slave descendants by *mala* outside within the community and inside within the Protestant churches. This could pose questions- what about their situation in Orthodox churches? How they are treated by other section of the community (*mana*) at their grievance time? The reason I have given much attention to Protestant churches is that because the dominant religion which includes many slave descendants in the study community is the Protestant faith. There are thirty Protestant churches in the study area. On the other hand, the Orthodox churches are three in number. Kassahun, vice chairman and secretary of St. Gabriel church at Meyche reported to me that there are no *ayle* members in the church. He explained that there are few *ayle* from Ochole who attend the church; however, the mistreatment of slave descendants is the same within the church. In Bonke I was reported parallel situation of the slave descendants in relation to Orthodox Christians.

#### **5.2.2.2. *Mana* and *Ayle* Relationship during Death**

Discussions with various groups (*mana*, *ayle* and *mala*) indicated that the *mana* also excludes the *ayle* at time of death. They do not participate in those mentioned areas when *ayle* die. Borko, *maga* of *mana* explained that *ayle* are below them in status and impurity. "They are bond but we are free" he said. Furthermore, he explained that *mana* is equal with *mala*; when *mana* die, *mala* do not exclude them, they eat, drink, give postmortem care for the dead...etc. All *mala* whom I communicated also agreed with Borko's idea.

Slave descendants also agreed with Borko's justification. Bekele told me that one of the factors that urged him to be redeemed was that exclusion of slave descendants by *mana*.

In Meyche I was reported one extreme case. Yelima Yegezu is unredeemed slave descendant. His wife Tubabe Ture is from Zegiti. They have seven children. Tubabe became redeemed through her parent in 2008. Then after, she pressured her husband so that he and children get redeemed but Yelima is Protestant and he refused to be purified claiming that he has already been redeemed by Christ. In the interim, their child died and Tubabe ran away fearing that she could be contaminated again in her child death. Conflict occurred, Yelima hit her and she was forced to eat *chancha* in her child death. She turned to her previous polluted status.

After months of this incident, out of their knowledge Etashe, their daughter, married Bezabeh, *mana* and gave birth to a child. Now, both *mana* and *mala* informants argued that Bezabeh turned into *ayle* first by marrying a slave girl and second by participating in her delivery case. Therefore, they claimed that if death occurs at Bezabeh home, they will not closely cooperate with him. They even argued that "Tubabe Ture ran away not to be contaminated at death of her own child and they, therefore, will run much than she did if death occurs at her daughter home". Thus, we can understand that the cruel exclusions of slave descendants are from every direction; church, *mala* and *mana*.

### **5.2.3. Exclusion of Slave Descendants at Child Birth**

Exclusion of the slave descendants during child delivery is the third major area of discrimination. Various discussions with informants (*ayle*, *mala* and *mana*) indicated that exclusion of slave descendants during time of child delivery is almost similar to the one described in time of death. They portrayed that non-*ayle* do not help when an *ayle* woman give birth. They do not give the office of midwife to her. After she gave birth, the non-*ayle* can visit about the well being of the woman but they do not eat and drink at her home. They also do not wash hand, brush teeth and sit on wet leaf. In addition, no household tool can be exchanged between that *ayle* home and the rest people until the woman gets cleaned at the seventh day, *la'a*. In other words, any household tools borrowed by *ayle* before the delivery case would not be returned to the non-slaves home

until the seventh day. Only *ayle* do give office of midwife to *ayle* woman when she gives birth. It is also they who cooperate and interact with them after she gave birth.

The logic behind excluding *ayle* at time of child birth is controversial among informants. Many argued that during the child birth the woman sheds blood and that contaminates the *ayle* and their home further. Especially *mala* informants claimed that standing where *ayle* bloodshed potentially impure him/her. This is not at every time and every place, they argued, it is only culturally sanctioned time, child birth. This assumption is not clear but many accept the thought and they simply argued that it is culturally established norm.

On the other hand, the majority informants (*mala*) asserted that in the past *mala* freely gave office of midwife to *ayle* woman when she gave birth and it was not considered as source of impurity and turns one into slave. Bekele explained that he has five children, and during the birth of the first two children they were not marginalized. He explained that exclusion started when they gave birth to other children. In addition, Tesfaye, who turned into slave but was redeemed, argued that exclusion of *ayle* during child delivery is recent phenomenon. He even claimed that it was started in 1980s when he was serving as *gabale* official. According to Bekele and Tesfaye the origin of exclusion of slave descendants during child delivery associated with two factors; first and for most commercialization of slave redemption<sup>47</sup>, and second the *kati* married a woman from Zega Bonke and the idea was brought with her.

Whatever the reason could be, all women of slave origin I communicated in the field indicated to me that they were not looked as human being when they gave birth. The people do not treat them as equal as them in those times. Tesfaye said to me that after he turned into slave by eating *chancha* when Belete died, his wife gave birth and as the result his mother isolated him for three years until he got redeemed.

In this chapter we have seen that exclusion of slaves during mourning and funeral started right from the origin of slavery in the study community. Initially, exclusion of slave descendants was manifested by food avoidance and overnight stay. However, with

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<sup>47</sup>. Although slave redemption started in past, it became rampant since 1990s. the detail will be described in the next chapter

commercialization of slave redemption the redeemers, *maga* and *kati* introduced new avoidance rules that aggravated the situation of slave descendants.

Also, we have seen that like in the context of marriage slave descendants are severely excluded in church and outside churches during mourning, funeral and child delivery. We have discussed that both Protestant and Orthodox Christians hold belief that embracing Christianity cannot change the impure status of slave descendants and associating with them inevitably pollutes them. Nevertheless, some *mala* Protestants hold different biblical interpretation basing their premise from Galatia chapter 3v26-28. They consciously participated with slave descendants by eating *chancha*; however, that brought forth family breakdown and serious exclusion on them. Furthermore, we have noted that exclusion of slave descendants in church culminated by church separation into clean and slave churches.

In addition, we have discussed that slave descendants are excluded by *mana*. Both *mana* and *mala* claimed that the *mana* is free born whereas the slave descendants are bond. The *mala* are free to eat with *mana* when they die but they ignore slave descendants during same time.

Generally, before concluding this chapter one question must be answered: why has the situations of slave descendants have been worse in the community of Ganta not in other Gamo community? In fact answering this question demands further advanced study. In my brief field duration I realized that although Ganta is part of Gamo community, they have distinctive social settings. The community has not undergone demographic transformation or intermingling of its population with other Gamo community or other near or far society. They know each one's clan origin, purity and impurity of descent line (paternal and maternal) of each person. They critically investigate descent line of people whom they do not surely know. They know who is slave and who is not very clearly. It is for this reason they demarcate boundary among themselves and exclude one another.

Ketema, from Ganta and foreign educated explained to me that the Ganta are "closed society" i.e. they are not freely associating with other people. He indicated that most often the Ganta marries Ganta. There were also no experiences of population movement

into and from Ganta. Very recently, however, many people moved to Arbaminch (upper town, Shecha) but in the town the Ganta closely know each other, and they have been tempted to continue their tradition. They exclude each other in the metropolitan center. He also explained that there are few higher educated people from Ganta but they are under the pressure of the community's cultural dogma. The communities know them, whom they married and where they live. Therefore, they do not closely associate with slave descendants because it will disrupt their intimate relation with their families as well as their social position in the entire community.

In the community of Ganta the powerful traditional political setting has also role for continuation of the propagation of the ideology of slavery. The customary political structure has been functional with various degrees throughout the successive political regimes of the country. This traditional political structure has been the flowing line of the ideology of slavery. The important figures in the customary political structure are *magas* and the *kati*. They are final authorities through whose approval and acknowledgment that people get slaved and then redeemed.

## CHAPTER SIX: Integration of Slave Descendants

There are two ways in which slave descendants can be integrated into the main stream society of Ganta. One is an indigenous way of ritually cleansing; the *ayle* pay back what has been spent for their ancestors by their slave owners several generations ago, the other one constitutes a recent effort of the Synods of South Western Ethiopia. The Synods conducted intensive community conversation and convinced the politico-religious ritual experts to abolish slavery from the community. In this chapter I will discuss the integration of slave descendants. First I will describe the indigenous mechanism, the *wozzo* ritual purification, and then will describe the Synods strategy.

### 6.1. The *Wozzo* Ritual: ‘Slave’ Redemption and Integration

*Wozzo*<sup>48</sup> is Ganta language and implies redeeming or ransoming, and refers to “the buying back” the “sold” freedom and identity of the *mala*. The *wozzo* ritual is the indigenous most trusted mechanism through which slave descendants have been integrating into the mainstream society since ancient time when slaves and their descendants began to accumulate wealth. The ritual consists of several complex steps and missing one of them leads to a complete failure of the process. In case all required ritual steps are completed, this guarantees an *ayle* to be fully integrated into the mainstream society and assuming all rights and privileges of the *mala*. The intricate and exact procedure of the ritual performance depends on the category of the slave to be redeemed. Generally, the *wozzo* is a costly ritual and severs the economic situation of the redeemed slave descendants, some of which may have been wealthy when they started the process.

Before looking into the redemption process, let us see half of the interview script I conducted with my host family Bekele. I believe it will shed light to understand the redemption process. Bekele was *ayle* by descent, now fully redeemed and integrated into the mainstream community.

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<sup>48</sup>. In other Gamo communities the *wozzo* ritual is called *wajjo*

- Bosha: How did you start your redemption process?*
- Bekele: Let me tell you how I became ayle and then how I started the redemption process, because the way I became ayle is somehow unusual.*
- Bosha: How?*
- Bekele: I was an ayle because of my grandfather Orqa. He was the son of Orta, and Orta and Samate were brothers. Samate had a female slave. Orta slept with her (committed sexual immorality) and as a result Orqa was born. Samate claimed that his brother's son was his slave. I was told that Orqa was rich but because of his half slave origin, he got married to a slave girl and gave birth to Basa. Basa was then married to a girl called Gontore, also of slave origin. I was born from Basa. I started the redemption when I discovered my slave origin. Sisay, the known communicator, ogathi, helped me discovering my slave origin.*
- Bosha: What is the importance of going back to the origin?*
- Bekele: Without redeeming the descent head (the first in the line who became a slave) redemption cannot be complete. It is a must to start from the descent head and then redeem all up to me and my offspring. Redemption process is bilinear, that means it includes both parental lines, starting from origin.*
- Bosha: Do you mean you are required to redeem your deceased ancestors?*
- Bekele: Yes!*
- Bosha: What did you do after discovering your parental origin?*
- Bekele: I took Sisay with me and we went to Meyche where my slave ancestors had lived. There we met an aged man, Gergo, who connected us with my lathi, the descendent of our slave master, and also my kinsmen. After long pleading we were appointed for a week later. I summoned other five lazantha (local elders). Together with Sisay we went again to my master's home at a planned schedule. On that day my master gathered his own elders and family members. Negotiation over the redemption price and the insults one has to hear during this process are heart breaking. For example, when the suggested amount of money to be paid was less than the master had expected, he said: "Ta gaydi hano bichawa 'Are my cows only these?' hereby expressing that I and my family were treated like his cows, and he was demanding money for each of us. If I report everything that was said, we will not finish this conversation..."*
- Bosha: Generally, how much money did you pay to undergo the complete redemption?*
- Bekele: Let me tell you first my side and then my wife side. On my side I had to redeem and pay for the following people: for Orqa's*

*mother: 2000 ETB<sup>49</sup>, for my father Basa: 6080 ETB, for Basa's mother (Orqa's wife)" 6000 ETB. For my own mother Gontore: 4000 ETB, for my grandmother (Gontore's mother): 5080 ETB, and for our five own children 400 ETB each. In addition, I spent 2000 ETB to invite the elders who processed the ritual with me. I also paid 1000 ETB to maga of Meyche, and 1000 ETB to the kati of Ganta. With all this I finished my own and my children's redemption.*

*Then, I started redeeming Demekech's (my wife) side. To redeem her and her family line I paid the following: For Demekech's father: 6060ETB, for Demekech's mother: 7090ETB, for mother of Demekech's father: 8090ETB.*

*After completing the required payment and redemption of mine and her, the next step of the process held at home of Ochole maga. Finally, the Kati ended the redemption process. I had to pay 2600 ETB to the maga and 1000ETB to the kati.*

*Bosha: Finished?*

*Bekele: No! Soffe is left. It is ceremonial public announcement at Shoshane market in three phases. The cost is very expensive. I gave very fatty ox to be slaughtered for the community and drinks in kind in the first phase. In the second phase I also accommodated drinks in kind. The third phase was sponsored by friends and neighbors. I have nearly spent 54000 ETB excluding the cost for soffe to undergo the whole process.*

*Bosha: Have you fully integrated?*

*Bekele: Yes! We are completely integrated to the community. Our elder daughter married to mala immediately after redemption. We are very happy to see this. On the other hand, we are cut off from my half sister and my wife's relative. My half sister married to ayle and gave birth to children. I had wanted to include her in the redemption process but I could not because of shortage of money. My wife's relative started redemption even earlier than I but they stopped it due to shortage of money. Thus, you see, if death occurs in my sister home or my wife relatives, we cannot eat.*

(Place and time: Sirra 10/2/2013)

We can learn many things from the account of Bekele. To begin with, before commencing of slavery his descent line was pure. His grandfather was free born and slavery (impurity) originated in their family line through sexual immorality with a slave girl. Bekele is the fourth generation of his apical slave ancestor and consequently he could be *bacha ayle*. We also learn that to process complete redemption one has to redeem his deceased ancestors. Furthermore, if the slave descendant is married the

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<sup>49</sup>. ETB implies Ethiopian Birt (Currency)

redemption process demands the purification of both the husband and the wife side. In addition, there is quite variation in redemption price between the male and female slaves although this is not always the case. Also we can learn that the redemption price is very expensive and poor slave descendants cannot redeem themselves. Still we can learn that though slave redemption is the effective mechanism to integrate the slave descendants into the mainstream society, it will result in distinction among family members if all are not redeemed. Finally, we can learn that the redemption process critically damages the economy of the one being redeemed. Nevertheless, Bekele is very rich slave descendant and the redemption process did not affect his economy much. While I was in the field he bought modern house in upper town of Arbaminch with 300,000 ETB.

### **6.1.1. Origin of the *Wozzo* Ritual and the Contemporary Situation**

Informants are not quite sure when the practice of redeeming slaves through the *wozzo* ritual was introduced. The majority, especially the descendants of slave masters, elucidated that it commenced when slave descendants began to accumulate wealth. When slaves became rich, they began to return the money paid for their ancestors by the slave masters in order to redeem themselves and be integrated into the mainstream society. This started around the beginning of the nineteenth century. My informants emphasized that from the beginning, the amount of money returned by far exceeded the amount originally paid for the slaves and that the amount was usually unilaterally decided by the descendants of the slave owners, and by the religious leaders in the customary political setting, i.e. the *maga* and the *kati*.

Sadika, an educated descendant of slave holders pointed out that slave redemption started after the abolition of slavery in Ethiopia. According to him, in the pre-abolitionary period slaves were fully under the control of their masters. They were bought, sold, given as gift and constituted the main sources of economy. After the abolition of slavery by Emperor Haile Selassie in the year 1942, slave holders lost their prestigious status and their main sources of economic income and power. To make up for that, they introduced the practice of slave redemption with the main objective of recollecting the money their ancestors had paid to buy slaves. While through this the slave descendants could restore their former

social position, as the amount asked was usually very high, Sadika called this a “hidden commercialization of slavery”, comparing the practice with the pre-abolitionary period.

Elias *et al* (1990) indicate that the redemption of slaves through the *wozzo* ritual was already common before the arrival of Menelik conquest in the year 1894. When the indigenous political structure was destroyed, the redemption weakened and was finally given up i.e. after the Gamo high-lands had been merged into the central government, the redemption of slaves became extinct and since then the term *ayle* only designate social status of the slave descendants. They note:

አይሌ የሆነ ሰው ከጊዜ በኋላ ሀብትና ንብረት አፍርቶ /ጌታው/ የጠየቀውን ያህል ገንዘብ ወይም ንብረት መክፈል ከቻለ ወደ ቀድሞው ማህበራዊ ደረጃ ሊመልስ ይችላል። የዚህ ዓይነት ሥነ ሥርዓት -ወዚያ/ወዛ/ ተብሎ ይጠራል' በዚህ ዓይነት ሥነ-ሥርዓት ግልሰቡ ራሱን ነጻ ሲያወጣ ወዚህ፤ (ነፃ ወጣ) ይባላል። ሥነ ሥርዓቱ የምንልክ ወረራ የአካባቢውን ማህበራዊ አደረጃጀት እስከ ናጋቦት እስከ 19ኛው ምዕተ ዓመት መጨረሻ ድረስ በሰፊው የተለመደ ነበር ከዚህ በኋላ እየተዳከመ መጥቶ በብዙዎች አካባቢዎች በመቅረቱ አይሌ የሚለው ስም ለዚህ ክፍል አባላት ቋሚ መለያ ሆኖ ቀርቷል(1990: 14<sup>50</sup>)።

As we can observe today, the ritual redemption of slaves through the *wozzo* ritual has been continuing throughout the twenty first century. Numerous discussions with various groups of people indicated that during the three successive political regimes of the country the slave redemption have been sustained but with various degrees. During the Haile Selassie (1930-1974) regime, backed by the feudal system the customary political structure was strong and as a result it made the redemption of slave descendants easily possible. Under the Derg regime, i.e. from 1974 onwards, the practice was banned. However, slave descendants were continued being redeemed clandestinely, but the overt process was punishable. With the coming of EPDRF, previous values and cultural practices got attention; The EPDRF promoted indigenous culture and an ethnic based self government, and this regenerated the customary political settings in the every corner of the country. In Ganta (Gamo) such experience subsequently led to exclusion of slave descendants.

<sup>50</sup> . የጋብቻ የልደትና የለቅሶ ባህል በሰሜን አሞ በሰሜን አሞ ባህልና ማስታወቂያ መምሪያ 1990

Regarding the time before 1990, the slave descendants and descendants of masters I interviewed were not quite sure about the procedures and people involved in the redemption. Whenever I asked, people gave me the example of a man called Belay Basha who, together with his family was redeemed in the early 1990s. After him, many slave descendants underwent the redeeming process, and I met many of them. As the people I interviewed were not quite sure how the *wozzo* was performed before the 1990s, in the following I will describe the redemption process as it has been practiced since then.

According to interview I conducted with redeemed slave descendants, slave owners and ritual experts (*maga* and *kati*) the *wozzo* ritual involves several people and complex procedures with no clearly fixed steps. As a novice field worker it was a challenge to fully understand the various intricate steps, as different redeemed slave descendants explained their experience in different ways. Likewise, the descriptions of descendants of slave masters (redeemers) showed differences in the performance of the ritual. Furthermore, the redemption cost is not fixed; it mainly depends on category of slave and the economy power of the slave descendants.

In the following I have outlined the four basic levels or steps in the *wozzo* ritual that all have to undergo to complete the redemption process. Missing out one of the four steps disqualifies the overall course<sup>51</sup>.

### **Level One: Redemption with the Master, Lathi**

At level one the slave descendants accomplish the redemption process with their 'master'. Given the threatened situation and exclusion of slave descendants described in preceding chapter, often as a way out the slave descendants take the initiative to redeem themselves from 'fallen' identity. However, some times *oge maga*<sup>52</sup>, 'communicator' plays significant role by connecting the slave descendant and his 'master'. He persuades

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<sup>51</sup>. In the following sections I have narrated the procedures of *wozzo* ritual based on data I collected from those informants. The way I presented the text seems more personal; however, there are no other good ways to describe the context.

<sup>52</sup>. The slave descendant and his master have their own *oge maga*. The slave descendant selects his *oge maga* when he wants to be redeemed and the duty of the *oge maga* terminates when the slave descendant gets redeemed. The *oge maga* of the master however, works permanently. It is the *oge maga* of the master who persuades the slave descendants to be redeemed. The slave descendant is required to pay to *oge maga* of the master during the redemption process.

the slave descendant to get rid of from his inherited ancestors' debt 'gale' if he is *bacha ayle* / *lataa ayle* or to be cleaned from *gale* of others if he is *chancha ayle*. On the other hand, he reports to the 'master' of slave descendant about the initiative and economic power of his *ayle* which enable him to decide the mount of redemption price.

When the slave descendant decides and get ready to undergo the ritual process, he selects elders, *lazantha*. The *lazantha* should be aged, socially accepted and respected and influential. They should also be knowledgeable of detailed *wozzo* ritual performance and of the *lathi* families and their descent line. The numbers of the *lazantha* is not fixed but often they are seven to eleven and some times more. Usually the *lazantha* do not refuse the request because they benefit much from the process. They would be lavishly invited and even some times paid. Once the *lazantha* are selected, they have to finish the four levels of redemption process. The *lazantha* consists of males and female have no role in the process of slave redemption.

Then, the selected *lazantha* and the *ayle* go to the master home. After their arrival, the *lazantha* on behalf of the *ayle* fell down at the master feet and while kissing the soil plead- "*Tsela! Tsela! Tsela!*", 'Look! Look! Look!' The master knows the issue<sup>53</sup> but he pretends not know and say "*alay methoy?*", 'What is problem?' Then the *lazantha* representing the *ayle* say "I came to pay my father debt" and say "*Tsela! Tsela! Tsela!*" The *lathi* puffs up him and claim "do you really pay my father debt or you come to waste my precious work time? Are you really able enough to pay my father debt?" Then the *lazantha* continues beseeching at his feet- "*Tsela! Tsela! Tsela!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*" The *lathi* has absolute power; he can accept or reject the request of the slave descendant, can fairly undergo the ritual performance or can make the situation more complex. Depending on the good will of the *lathi* the next steps follows after weeks or months.

On the appointed time the *lathi* gets ready; he gathers all his family members<sup>54</sup> and selects his own *lazantha*. The *ayle* and his *lazantha* come at planned occasion. After arrival, the *lazantha* fell down at the *lathi* feet and plead representing the *ayle* "*Tsela!*

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<sup>53</sup> through his *oge maga*

<sup>54</sup> . Presences of all *lathi* family members are necessary because they fairly share the money paid. Unpaid *lathi* family member has right to disqualify the redemption which the slave descendant undergone after serious steps and expensive price

*Tsela! Tsela!*” After so many pleadings the *lathi* accepts the request of the *lazantha* by asking *uma harafa* ‘the price of the first ancestor of the slave descendant’ which costs 300-400 *ETB*. Paying *uma harafa* is the beginning step to redeem all in the descent line; without paying *uma harafa* the slave descendant cannot process the redemption of all in his descent line. However, some redeemed slave descendants repeatedly told me that they were asked once more to pay for the first ancestor in the redemption process.

When the *lathi* collects *uma harafa*, he initiates the next steps by commanding the *lazantha* of slave descendants: “*gaydi eshayto!*” ‘Drive my oxen/cows’ meaning the slave descendant is considered as his ‘ox/cow’ and he is asking the price of each in the descent line. During the redemption process the *ayle* fell down on their knee and walk like an ox/cow before the master. He roars like an ox/cow. Thus, while the *lazantha* process the payment, they lead the slave descendant before the *lathi* by saying: “*eshayto gaydi! Hiti! Hiti! Hiti!*” ‘Your ox/cow is this’ The *lathi* does not receive the payment if it is not as he decided. Thus, during the redemption process negotiation over the price of each slave descendant is tedious. It may take the whole day or more to redeem an *ayle* or his deceased ancestors as the redeemed slave descendants asserted to me.

In the redemption process the cost is not fixed; it depends on the category of the slave (*bacha/chancha*), sex and the economy power of the slave descendants. *Bacha ayle* are not easily redeemed. If they want to be redeemed, they have to give up their residence and farm land, and material produced and attained in their life time to their master, descendant of the slave holder. They cut their nail, shave their head and go naked after being redeemed, and start new life in new area. The rich *ayle* are required to pay much money than the poor ones. The *chancha ayle* have no impurity in their descent line and they, therefore, undergo only their own case and as the result the cost is lesser compared to *bacha ayle* or/and *lataa ayle*. Often the cost of female *ayle* is expensive than the male ones because the female *ayle* are considered as seed to produce new slaves through formal marriage or any sexual immorality. This explanation, however, is not quite clear from biological perspective of slavery; a child shall be slave by descent through either parents or both. Nevertheless, as redeemers indicated to me it is an accepted norm.

At level one the *ayle* can first redeem his descent line or his wife's descent line if he is married. However, redeemed slave descendants indicated to me that often husbands redeem their descent line first and then they redeem their wives'. The slave descendant can also redeem his deceased ancestors first or he can redeem himself, his family and his live parents first and then his deceased ancestors.

When the *ayle* finishes paying the required amount for his father, him and children, the *lathi* starts redeeming.

In the redemption stage the *ayle* can be with his children or he can represent them by ritual sticks i.e. for example, if he has three children, he can represent them by three stick. The *lathi* spells on him:

*Hanzope gede nena anjakotede, nena dere maqada la'akotede, kati shato maqe, dana shato maqe ne shatora ta shatora eputi geluti*

'Now on wards I bless you so that you be citizen, live like king and noble man, may your children and mine marry each other'.

Then he puts wet grass on the *ayle* signifying he is redeemed. Soon the *ayle* starts *gayro* 'singing':

*Ntsa kesisade wozitisade, lathi kare halsutesadee, hanzope gede galape kastakotede metope kesokotede*

'I am set free, I am redeemed, and I finished at master outdoor, today after ward, I am released from his debt, my problem is solved'

Then, he runs away not looking behind the *lathi* because gazing at back the *lathi* during the ritual process is believed to disqualify the redemption.

I have tried to show unfinished redemption process at level one, especially for *bacha ayle* or/and *lataa ayle*. Unfinished redemption I said because the *ayle* redeemed only his father, himself and his children. He is left with extra redemption processes. He has to redeem his ancestral line with similar steps and procedures I have mentioned. Then, he has to redeem his wife and her parental line with parallel procedures and steps, if she and her family are not redeemed. Often I was told that when parents redeem themselves, they

include their married daughters. If that is the case then the burden of the *ayle* could be lessened.

The *lazantha* of the *ayle* processes the redemption with him until he finishes all. In each case they are to be invited food and drink. The *ayle* is also expected to cover the invitation cost of his *lathies'* *lazantha*. The main functions of *lazantha* of both (the *ayle* and his *lathi*) are negotiating the redemption price, checking the overall process i.e. whether the *ayle* finished everything with various *lathies* and their family<sup>55</sup>, and becoming eye witness during publication process in the following levels.

Generally, level one is the most complex and important part of the redemption process because the *ayle* directly deal with his various *lathies*. Without completing the redemption process with *lathies*, the next levels of redemption process cannot be undertaken. The following levels are more of acknowledgement and publication process starts at *maga* home and end with *soffe* at Shoshane market.

### **Level Two: Redemption with *Maga***

The *maga* is a leader in customary political structure positioned below to the *kati*. The slave descendant runs the redemption process mainly with the *maga* of his residence *qabale*; however, sometimes he can process the redemption with the *maga* of other communities if his ancestors had lived in that community or if he has married from that community i.e. to redeem his ancestors or his wife and her descent line. At *maga* outdoor many people attend the ritual performances; especially the elders of the community, all the redeemer family and his *lazantha*, the slave descendant and his *lazantha* necessarily attend the ritual processes. The process of pleading is similar at here: the *lazantha* on behalf of the *ayle* fell down at *maga* feet and while kissing the soil plead-“*Tsela! Tsela! Tsela!*” ‘Look! Look! Look!’

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<sup>55</sup>. The descendants of masters fairly share the redemption money. Unpaid has authority to disqualify the redemption. Thus, the *lazantha* especially of the *ayle* has responsibility to check whether they equally shared the money paid. Nevertheless, regarding the amount of sharing there is no fixed principle; it depends on the amount of the money paid by the slave descendants and the number of the *lathi* families (if they are many the money shared will be less)

Before acknowledging and ritually blessing the *ayle*, the main task of *maga* is to cross check whether the *ayle* completely finished his redemption with various *lathies*. He confirms the completeness of the redemption of the slave descendant from the *lathies* family or from the *lazantha* of slave descendant. The *lazantha* of the slave descendant have great responsibility to verify the completeness of the redemption process prior to the stage at *maga* outdoor. *Maga's* critical commitment in cross checking the overall process is due to the fact that unfinished redemption of the slave descendant will endanger *maga* or others in the community if he makes marriage alliance with them or they eat and drink with him at death/ funeral.

The *maga* and his wife are paid for redeeming the *ayle*, however, as I have noted there is no fixed amount of charge. It mainly depends on the economic potential of the *ayle*. After completion of payment, the *maga* purifies *ayle* by saying:

*Hanzope gede nena anjakotede, nena dere maqada la'akotede, kati shato maqe, dana shato maqe nu shatora ne shatora eputi geluti*  
'Now afterward I bless you, be citizen, live like king and noble man may our children and your children marry each other'.

Then he puts wet grass on the *ayle* head suggesting he is cleaned and emancipated. Soon the *ayle* starts expression of his happiness by *gayro* (singing):

*Ntsa kesisade wozitisade, maga kare halsutesadee, hanzope gede metope kesokotede*  
'I am set free, I am redeemed, my freedom is assured by *maga*, and my problem is solved'.

The attendants join the *ayle* and together they leave *maga* home while expressing the cheer of the *ayle* by shouting, dancing, and singing.

### **Level Three: Redemption with *Kati***

Ritual purification of the slave descendant with *kati* is the third most important level. Like in previous levels at this stage the *lazantha* of the slave descendant on behalf of him fell down at the *kati* feet and while kissing the soil beseech "*Tsela! Tsela! Tsela!*" 'Look! Look! Look!' The *kati* does not go into detail in checking and assuring the completeness

of redemption in the earlier levels, it is the duty of the *maga*. All people who attend the ritual performance at *maga* outdoor also attend the same process at the *kati* home. The difference between *maga* and *kati* redemption is that the *maga* recognizes the redemption of the slave descendant to his constituency only whereas the *kati* acknowledges his redemption to the entire Ganta community. The *kati* and his wife are paid for the ritual process. The *kati* ends the redemption by saying:

*Hanzope gede la'a maqe apute, gelute*

'Now afterward you are emancipated and integrated into the rest community, marry and be married with them'.

Then, while leaving the *kati*'s home the attendants and the redeemed slave descendant sing and dance together to express the cheer of the redeemed slave descendant. Hereafter, the slave descendant is no more identified as *ayle*, he is *mala*. Nevertheless, his purification should be publicized.

#### **Level Four: *Soffe*, Public Announcement of the New Status**

*Soffe*, celebration, is the final stage of the *wozzo* ritual performance. The *soffe* is performed at Shoshane market. The Shoshane market is connecting point of the entire Ganta community and the surrounding areas including Arbaminch and other Gamo communities. It is also the sacrificial center of the *kati* and symbolizes the entire Ganta community. The market is held at Tuesday. The basic objective of celebrating the redemption at this market is to announce the entire community and the neighboring as well as far and distance people that the slave descendant is redeemed and integrated. It is also aimed to clear future confusion in marriage issue and social participation and interaction during grief as well as happiness time with the redeemed slave descendant.

*Soffe* celebration is very expensive. The redeemed shall cross the market (when people highly gathered) in three phases i.e. on three market days accompanied by neighbors and friends by singing, shouting, dancing, picture taking and the like. In the first phase the redeemed slave descendant shall give fatty Ox to be slaughtered for the people of his residence. He shall also accommodate drinks of different kinds for the crowd. In the

second phase he only accommodates drinks for accompanies and interested attendants. The last phase is sponsored by friends, neighbors and the community members.

As I carefully tried to understand data elucidated from redeemed slave descendants, *maga* and *kati* these are steps and procedures through which the slave descendant is supposed to pass to assure his redemption and subsequent integration into the mainstream society. I heard when some people talk that slave descendants process their redemption clandestinely and finish covertly. I do not think so; they might do it perhaps at level one. However, without recognition and acknowledgement by *maga* and *kati*, the redemption cannot be absolute; they are determinant bodies to recognize the redemption. In addition, without *soffee*, future relationships of the slave descendant will not be granted. Finally, in the field I never came across slave descendants who redeemed themselves secretly and integrated into the mainstream society covertly.

To undergo four levels of redemption an average of four to six months is required but many redeemed slave descendants indicated to me that in most case it demands more than that due to financial limitation of slave descendant and extraordinary 'bureaucracy' of the redeemers. Regarding the overall *wozzo* ritual process many people I interviewed claimed that it is the most corrupted institutionalized process. My *mala* informants argued that often the redeemers are the determinant bodies of the ritual process. They said that the redeemers can decide bilaterally whatever amount of money to be paid for the ritual process. In Ochole some *mala* informants told me that once *kati* was asked to ban slavery from the entire community of Ganta but he refused by saying "today a man buys shoe by 500 *ETB* and why not he does spend whatever amount of money to clean his whole being".

Some redeemed slave descendants pointed out that the *ayle* have no saying in the ritual process. The only thing that the slave descendants do in the ritual process is that they beseech their master through their *lazantha*. These informants also claimed that economically the ritual process damages the economy of the slave descendants; especially, the economy of *bacha ayle/ lataa ayle* seriously ruins. They could not easily recover from the economy lose.

However, despite all these critique, the *wozzo* ritual is the most trusted mechanism through which the slave descendants have fully been integrated into the rest community. Regardless of its complex and economically destructive process, the community trusts in it. Out of seventy one households with total population three hundred I identified fifty one households were integrated through these mechanism (after completing the noted levels and steps), five households left unfinished i.e. they processed level one and interrupted there by the arrival of the Synods project and today they are perceived as potential sources of impurity, and the remaining fifteen households are unredeemed.

Among the redeemed slave descendants eleven are *chancha ayle*, two are *bacha ayle* and the rest are *lataa ayle*. Out of the four *qables* of Ganta community, in Bonke all slave descendants were redeemed and integrated. In the finding twenty households of redeemed slave descendants are from same *qabale*. In Meyche out of eighteen households of slave descendants sixteen were redeemed and integrated and the remaining two are not. The majority unredeemed and few redeemed slave descendants are in kanchma-Ochole

### 6.1.2. Case Studies

In the following section in addition to the account of Bekele noted in the beginning, I will be dealing with some cases to illustrate the findings. These cases show different experiences; some of them completely redeemed themselves and integrated into the mainstream society, others started the redemption process but interrupted by the arrival of the Synods project and today are in the state of exclusion. The remaining case is distinct in nature. The slave descendant was challenged to repeat the *wozzo* ritual for he was *bacha ayle* but redeemed without giving up his residence land and property on it to his master, instead he substituted it with money. The historical background of these slave descendants also varies. The ancestors of some slave descendants turned into slave during the famine (*gaffe*), the others through marriage alliance with slave origin, the others during the slave trade and the sources of some is arguable between the slave descendants and their so called masters. I have selected only five cases and two of which are conducted in Bonke, one in Meyche and the remaining the two in Kanchama- Ochole. Out of five cases, data of four cases are based on interview conducted with slave descendants themselves but one (the case of Belay) based on interview with his elder

sister. I will not focus on the procedures and levels I have noted for each case because it will be duplicating. Thus the focus of the case study will be on their background, experience, redemption and aftermath occurrences.

### **The case of Dalalo at Bonke**

Dalalo was *bacha ayle*. Damo, his great grandfather, was bought as slave when he was child during the intensification of slavery in the high-lands with appearance of international slave trade at the dawn of the nineteen century. He had been slave of Anko, *maga* of Ganta Bonke. While serving his master, Damo was given plots of land for building his residence and to grow his own food by his master. His master also arranged him marriage with a slave girl. Then Damo give birth to Dafo. Dafo also married a girl of slave descendant and give birth to Dalalo. On his part Dalalo were married a slave girl and they have three children. He has been living on the land of his ancestors given to them by their master.

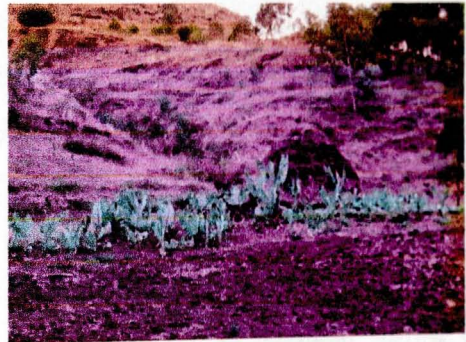
Dalalo indicated to me that though there is no slave-master relationship today, however, the circumstance is very awful. Because of the blood attachment with his ancestors and because he was living on the land given to his slave ancestor he was still considered as 'slave'. He faced serious degrading joke in various times like 'one who live in his master land is still slave'. He explained that in the context of Ganta culture unless the slave descendant clean his ancestral root he/she cannot be equated with the rest community member anymore.

Dalalo started redemption in the beginning of 2008. Nevertheless, due to his *bacha ayle* background he was challenged to give up his residence land and properly he produced on that. Dalalo described that the situation were two negative approaches for him: unwilling to give up the residence land and property he produced on it means to continue living with the stigma of being a slave descendent, on the other hand abandoning it implies ready to be impoverished. He was challenged by these two approaches, however, as he explained finally he decided to be redeemed and then after to change his life.

Regarding the redemption process Dalalo pointed out that besides giving up his residence land and property on it to his *lathi*, he was exposed to unexpected expenditure. The cost

spent was connected to inviting his *lazantha* during the four levels of redemption, covering the invitation cost of his *lathi lazantha* in same procedure and conducting *soffe* at Shoshane market. Furthermore, the extra cost was spent when redeeming his wife and her descent line.

Dalalo elucidated that after redemption he was completely integrated to the rest community. Not long after the redemption his wife died and the whole community participated with him. They ate at funeral and buried his deceased wife. He remarried *mala* woman. In addition, his two sons were married to *mala* girls. However, economically he experienced serious damage. Due to lack of residence land his married sons migrated to Meyche. After two years he bought plots of land to build his new residence nonetheless the new area is small and could not be used for further purpose i.e. to grow food. Thus, during my field stay, only his mother lives in the new residence and he lives in low land area, Sirra.



The ruin of previous Dalalo residence in the left side and his new residence where his mother alone now lives, March 2013

### **The case of Hezina at Bonke**

Hezina is the third generation of his apical slave ancestor. His first ancestor Handiso was turned into slave during the great famine in the mid of nineteen century. The family of Handiso was impoverished and they gave him to Churqasha to be grown as adopted son when he was child. Hezina indicated to me that in the beginning of 1990s with intensification of slave redemption the descendants of Churqash, Butsa claimed that they (Hezina and his family) were his slave. Since then they had been severely excluded. He

pointed out that before they got redeemed; his family came across isolation and serious discrimination two times at death of his sister and his brother. They were barred to bury the dead in the community's common tomb. The dead were buried in their agricultural farm.

Hezina explained that the basic reason they (he and his father) planned to get redeemed was to come out from the degraded situation and to get spouse for him, Hezina, from *mala*.

Regarding the redemption experience, Hezina explained me that they were counted as cattle of their master. They walked on their knees and roar like cattle before the *lathi*. Hezina pointed out that the redemption process was abusive and exploitative; while redeeming the ancestors they not only paid for them but also for various services they gave to their masters. In each redemption level they were challenged to pay huge money<sup>56</sup>. They also gave up their arable land where their dead were buried to their *lathi*. They completed the redemption process in 2005.

Hezina explained that after the redemption, he found the social circumstance fascinating. Even he described that the huge amount of money spent and the farm land lost during redemption is nothing compared to social life aftermath of the redemption. He says: "*terro gidafa ufasisi fo 'oo gida adhe*" 'we transferred from darkness to marvelous light'. Soon after the redemption his father died and the community cooperated with them. They ate and drank with him during mourning and funeral, stayed overnight, gave postpartum care to the dead, freely dug a tomb and buried the corpse. In addition, Hezina was married to Tanshe, *mala* girl, and they gave birth to two children.

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<sup>56</sup>. I was not told the amount of money they spent for overall redemption process. They simply indicated to me the money was "huge". Kome, native and *qabale* official much helped me in identifying slave descendants, elucidated me that the family of Hezina exposed to "huge wastage" of money during the redemption.



Hezina with his wife, kids and mother, April 2013

### **The Case of Tamene at Meyche**

Tamene is among three men who asked me different questions in my first entrance to Ganta, on the way to Ochole. He was married to a slave descendant in 1991 and they have seven children and four of which are daughters.

Tamene told me that slavery introduced into their family line through marriage. His grandfather Chulde was ignorantly married a slave girl from other Gamo *dere* and through that their descent line became contaminated. Hundesa, the father of Tamene also married a woman of slave origin and he, Tamene and his brothers were born. Tamene described that because of his slave origin he could not marry from *mala*. He married slave descendant from other Gamo *dere*, Garbansa.

Tamene claimed that slave descendants cannot compensate their slave status with power, economy progress or education i.e. power; level of education and economy cannot prohibit or minimize ridicule and scornfully assaults against them. Regarding his own experience, he described that beginning from 1990s he has been working in various *qabale* offices; however, he indicated that in all these time the people have undermined him because of his slave background. Tamene explained that for that reason he developed low self esteem.

Tamene pointed out that though he had urgent aspiration to get redeemed, however, it took him nine years to finish the whole process. In 2002 his wife and their children were redeemed through her parent<sup>57</sup>. At the redemption of his wife and children Tamene provided 800 birr to her parents. Because of financial shortage Tamene could not immediately start redeeming himself. He has to wait for six years planning and allocating money for the redemption process. He started in 2008 and finished the whole process after three years in 2011. Regarding the whole redeeming process and its cost he claimed that yet he could not recover from the loss. I was not told the exact figure but it seems that he was ruined.

Tamene is delightful while sharing his life after redemption. His two daughters were married to the kinsmen of *kati* and *maga* respectively. Recalling the failure he faced in spouse selection from *mala*, Tamene explained that it was great success for him to see such experience. He further pointed out that his present acceptance by community and equivalent social participation and interaction he has with the community is far greater than the cost he spent to redeem his whole family. He says: “*ayletethafe wozuti duretethafe adhokoshone*” ‘being redeemed from slavery is by far great than being wealthy’.

We can learn a lot of things from the above three cases. First and foremost, it becomes clear that the *wozzo* ritual is the most trusted mechanism to integration slave descendants into the mainstream society after eliminating all that links them to slavery. In all cases the redeemed were completely accepted by the community and were fully integrated. A very clear indicator for that is the participation of mainstream community members in funerals of redeemed slave descendants, as in the case of Dalalo who lost his wife, and Hizena when he lost his father. Second, as all three cases have shown, after redemption slave descendants can freely intermarry with free born (*mala*). Especially the marriage of Tamene’s daughters with the kinsmen of the ritual experts’ family (i.e. *kati* and *maga*) shows that the *wozzo* ritual is an effective and fully accepted mechanism to integrate the

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<sup>57</sup>. I was told that often parents include their married daughters when they redeem themselves. Children are usually redeemed through their father. Here Tamene’s case i.e. his children were redeemed through their mother, is the only typical case I came across. It seems that in Garbansa, from where Tamene married, the redemption process might differ from what has been practiced in Ganta.

despised social class of the slave descendents, and even allow intermarriage with the most respected class in the community of Ganta.

At the same time, the *wozzo* is a mechanism from which the redeemers benefit immensely through the high payments that have to be given to them, and which is intentionally destructive and exploitative to the *ayle*, “who should leave as poor and naked as they arrived”.

The account of Dalalo like many other cases shows that redemption can result in economic damage and family fragmentation. Also the stories of Tamene and Hizena illustrate how the high financial expenses and even land loss damage the economic situation of redeemed slave descendants.

In the following remaining cases we will see the incomplete redemption story of Salife family and the contested redemption account of the family Belay Basha.

### **The Case of Salife’s family at Dhele: Incomplete Redemption Story**

Salife, blind, live with his wife Shuqure in Dhele. They are parents of Teshome and Abera and their brothers whom I described as cases in relation to fixed marriage practice in chapter five and the historical origin of slavery in Gamo high-lands in chapter four.

Sade, the father of Salife was free born. He was spiritualist and came to Ganta from Amaro-Kelle. Salife explained that after his arrival Sade was welcomed by a man called Karatse in Dhele. By the time traditional belief was the common practice of the community and as the result Sade much benefited from his spiritual work. Initially he was given land for building house by Karatse, and later through his religious work he gained popularity and became rich. Then one day Karatse claimed that Sade was his slave for he provided him plots of land in his arrival for construction of a house. Since then he was suspected to be slave and as the result he married slave girl Adeno from Shube. This was the incident through which slavery commenced in their family although the descendant of Karatse claimed that originally Sade was bought from Wortiso, the main slave market in south west of Shoshane market during the slave trade (see chapter four).

Salife revealed that While Adeno was with Sade, she was sold to a man called Lanche by her master. Sade accused her master at Chencha Court in the beginning of 1940s; however, with the intervention of elders in the situation the process was interrupted. Later on when slavery gained weight, the descendant of Adeno master, Qota recharged Sade at customary 'court' for his attempt of accusing his wife's master. The customary court decided that Sade was to give Qota a milking cow with her calf. He did that, nevertheless, the cow was eaten by a wild beast.

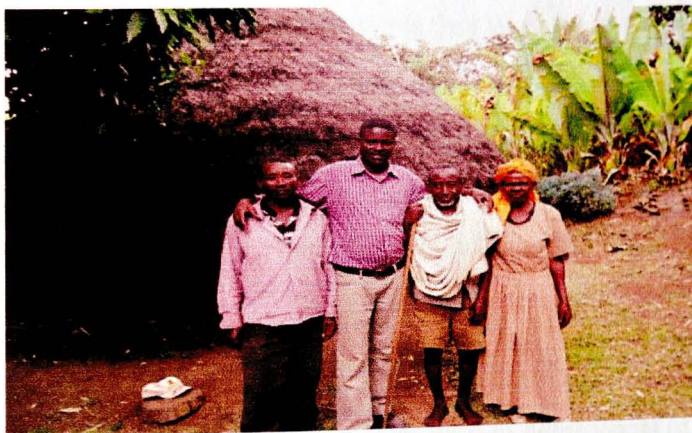
Salife elucidated me that the severe situation of the slave descendants especially during the time of death and funeral pressed him to start redemption process. He told me that he was shocked by the death of Mella Wogaro, his neighbor slave descendant. At this incident the community seriously excluded the grieving family. Learning from the situation Salife started redemption in 2010. However, Salife pointed out to me that before processing any step, he was asked to compensate the lost cow i.e. the cow given to Qota as compensation but eaten by a wild beast. He paid 300 *ETB* for that. Also he was charged 200 *ETB* as penalty by his master for violating *wozzo* ritual process; he and his *lazantha* went to the *lathi* home without appointment.

Salife started redemption from his deceased grandmother, Adeno. He paid two times for Adeno; first for descendant of her master the son of Qota, Qolide: 6800 *ETB*, second, for Lanche who processed to buy Adeno but interrupted by her husband. I was told that Lanche spent 50 cent as *fintsir* 'broker cost' to buy Adeno. For that case during the redemption Salife paid: 3800 *ETB* to the descendant of Lanche, Mekonen. Then to redeem Sade, he paid: 3600 *ETB* to Sumale, descendant of Karatse.

Following this he redeemed his wife Shaqure with 6600 *BTB*. Then he redeemed the father of Shaqure, Shufa, with 5800 *ETB*. Then, he redeemed his other deceased wife Dasse with 3400 *BTB*. Totally Salife spent 30500 *ETB* to undergo level one redemption process. In addition, he gave up the agricultural land which was given to Sade to Sumale. When Salife was about to process the next levels i.e. with *maga*, *kati* and public announcement through *soffe*, the office of Synods launched the project work and taught the community not to lose their asset in *wozzo* ritual. Thus, hoping that the Synods would eliminate the social difference through the project work Salife interrupted the next levels.

During the redemption Salife's four married sons; Teshome, Abera, Hezibayehu, Tariku and a married daughter Seteyo were included. However, their children and wives and also the husband of Seteyo were not redeemed. Therefore, after level one redemption process problem occurred in their family. The child of Teshome died and the community refused to take part in their grieving situation. Most shocking to Teshome was that Salife and Shaqure ran away from their situation by fearing the processed redemption might be disqualified. This led to fragmentation among family members; except Abera the rest sons migrated to Sirra. During my field stay Salife and Abera told me that the community perceives them as unredeemed.

The case of Salife family shows that if the *wozzo* is performed incompletely, the whole ritual process will be considered a failure. The account shows that they wasted more than thirty thousand birr, gave up their agricultural land, but as some steps in the *wozzo* were left out and today they are still considered as impure and *ayle*.



From left to right, Bekele, I, Salife and Shaqure, March 2013

### **The Case of Belay and Bazute Basha: The Contested Story**

Belay and Bazute are brother and sister respectively. They have been living in Kachama-Ochole. The data of their life situation was obtained by the interview I conducted with Bazute and other *mala* informants from their community. Their case is typical from the previous one; they were challenged to undergo the *wozzo* performance twice by one of the family members of their master because they were *bacha ayle* but were redeemed without giving up their land and residence. They substituted that with money. Conflict

occurred between the two i.e. the family of Belay and the descendants of his masters and the government intervened in the situation. Both Belay and descendants of his master were detained for a month. Finally, the *Kati* of Ganta ritually solved the problem.

Bazute indicated to me that Belay was very rich slave in Kanchama-Ochole. He had more than 100 cattle. Because of his richness he and his deceased son Arege were married to *mala* women though these women were severely isolated by their original family.

Bazute pointed out that their ancestor came from Wortiso (Amaro-Kelle) during the beginning of the slave trade in the middle of nineteenth century. There is controversy between Bazute and the descendant of their master Tamene over the beginning of slavery in their family. While Tamene claimed that the ancestor of Belay and Bazute had been bought from Wortiso market and he was their original slave, Bazute argued that their father Basha was given to Tamene's ancestor when he was child to be grown as adopted son due to the death of his father, and later on he, Basha was claimed to be slave (see the detail chapter four P.2).

Bazute explained me that in the beginning of 1990s they were the first slave descendents who initiated redemption. Before redemption they faced serious discrimination during the death of Belay's two children. Bazute said that in that time they were treated "below dog" i.e. they were isolated and dehumanized. The community members did not eat and drink with them until the end of the grieving time; they did not bury the dead, stayed overnight and closely comforted them.

Regarding the redemption process Bazute indicated that as *bacha ayle* Belay was required to give up his residence land and property on it to descendants of their masters, however, he substituted that with cash money. Belay sold almost all his cattle for the redemption process. Bazute told that today Belay has less than fifteen cattle. To finish the overall ritual process they spent 25000 *bir*.

Aftermath of the redemption the daughter of Bazute was married to the *kati* of Ganta.

However, in 2005 dispute arose. The redemption of Belay and his family was claimed to be incomplete. Bazute told me that during redemption process among three descendants

of their master (Tamene, Gini'a and Magalcho), they paid money to Tamene who is senior. Then, Tamene shared the money with his brothers. Later on Gini'a claimed that he was given less money and he began to persuade the community that Belay's family was not fully redeemed. He reasoned that as *bacha ayle* Belay did not give up his residence and areable land to his master. In the meantime the elder son of Belay, Arag died. Persuaded by Gini'a the community excluded Belay's family in their grievance time. Thus, after losing their life time capital Belay and his family again entered into their "polluted" status.

- Angered with the situation Belay accused his *lathies* at *woreda* court. The issue became complicated. The *woreda* police imprisoned Belay and his *lathies* by reasoning that both violated the constitution of the country, i.e. Belay was imprisoned for the money he paid to redeem himself from slavery, and his masters were imprisoned for they propagated the ideology slavery. Meanwhile the *kati* and more than thirty community elders intervened in the situation. *Kati* warned the *lathies* of Belay in the presence of *lazantha* (elders who processed the redemption with Belay) and community elders. The *kati* ended the dispute by declaring that the redemption of Belay was complete; and his masters would be turned into *ayle* if they claimed anymore that Belay and his family was their slave.

The case of Belay and his family shows that *kati* has final authority in acknowledging or disapproving the redemption of slave descendants. He can make the rigid customary norms flexible. According to the *wozzo* ritual law *bacha ayle* are required to give up their residence land and property on it to their *lathi* if they want to be redeemed. They cannot substitute it with money. However, in Belay's case *kati* approved without sticking to the ritual law. This perhaps he has arranged marriage alliance with Belay's family immediately after their redemption.

The other thing we can learn from their account is that like in other cases the economy of Belay got ruined. He lost almost all of his cattle to buy freedom. Many informants who knew Belay's wealth before he got redeemed claimed that he would have been an investor today if he had not sold his cattle.

Generally from all cases I presented one can learn that the *wozzo* ritual is the trusted mechanism for integration of slave descendants into the mainstream society. However, the method is exploitative and abusive. The overall course of action is determined by the redeemers and the slave descendants have no saying in ritual process. From the point of development the *wozzo* builds the economy of the few redeemers' family but it destructs the livelihood of many slave descendants.

So far, no serious attempt has made by the government to solve the severe situation of slave descendants. The Synods of South Western Ethiopia based at Arbaminch has conducted successful attempt to end slavery in the study community. In the following section I will be dealing with the mechanisms of Synods Project on the integration of slave descendants into the mainstream society and then will be briefly analyzing comparatively the two mechanisms (the *wozzo* and Synods project) in terms of the community perception and scope of integration.

## **6.2. The Synods Project: Dealing with Marginalization of Slave Descendants**

In the preceding chapter I have described the grave situation of slave descendants inside and outside the churches. Christianity could not eliminate the severe exclusion of slave descendants within the churches. Many churches in Ganta community are denominationally Mekane Yesus. Conflict over situation of slave descendants (accepting and disgracing) within the churches reached at climax point when Shecha Mekane Yesus separated into the church of the impure and the church of the pure in 2008. The intervention of Synods in the situation of slave descendants emanated from this point. The office of Synods started to work in the circumstance of slave descendants at the end of 2009.

As the office of Synods indicated to me, they developed a five year project work entitled: "Community Based Health Service" with three thematic areas; Water and Sanitation, Female Genital Mutilation, HIV/AIDS Control and Marginalization. The project has been implemented in two *woredas* of Gamo Gofa Zone, Boreda and Arbaminch Zuria. In Boreda the project focused on FGM and HIV AIDS control whereas in Arbaminch Zuria it paid attention on marginalization of slave descendants in the community of Ganta and

water and sanitation implementation in the similar community and other areas. To accomplish the overall program the Synods had received funds of more than 2.5 million *ETB* from the Norway Lutheran Mission. The project was launched in August 2010.

Discussions with the office of Synods elucidated that the major objective of the project in the community of Ganta was eliminating the grave exclusion of slave descendants. Ketama, a native of Ganta community and the general manager of the project implantation pointed out that from the initial beginning to the implementation of the program the project was aimed to come up with community-driven solution for the severe exclusion of slave descendants. Thus to achieve the planned objective the major strategy devised was community conversation.

Accordingly, three categories of community conversations were conducted at various levels. The first was carried out within sub units, *gutas*, of selected *qabales* (Meyche and Kanchama-Ochole). Before carrying out conversations at this level, three literate and socially respected individuals from each *qabale* were selected and trained to lead the conversations. Selection of participants (both male and female) was made randomly from *ayle*, *mala* and *lathies*. Randomly selected slave descendants participated in the conversations, but Kemata indicated that they were passive in the conversation partly due to low self esteem, and partly due to open running of the program i.e. in the presence of their master. The major themes of conversations were:

Why slavery is so serious in Ganta alone?

How it can be eliminated?

What are strategies/ devises to eliminate slavery?

The other community conversation was conducted at churches. Ketama elucidated to me that before conducting conversations at churches communications with church leaders were made to get their consent. Based on that, various conversations were carried out with congregations often after Sunday worship and service program. The thematic areas of the conversations were similar but the discussions were led by members from Synods.

Church conversations were mainly processed in Ochole and Sirra because many Mekane Yeus churches are found there.

The third conversation was held at office of Synods. At this level various participants from the project site were involved. From the indigenous political setting, participants were *kati*, *magas*, and *oge magas*. They were responsible personalities for perpetuation of slavery in the community. In addition, various church leaders, *qabale* officials, slave descendants and elders from community participated in the discussion. Furthermore, various educated individuals from Synods and government offices who are from Ganta, and invited guests from zonal and *woreda* office participated in the program. At this level historical origin of slavery, today's experience, strategies to end the severe exclusion of slave descendants were widely discussed.

Generally, as Ketama indicated, after various dealings, the community came up with two alternative strategies to end the critical circumstances of the slave descendants. The first was *la'a* 'emancipation and integration' but after clearing ancestors' debt. In line with, many suggested that the debt has to be cleared on mass base i.e. all unredeemed slave descendants should clear their ancestors' debt at once on scheduled time, however, the cost and procedures should not be like in *wozzo* ritual i.e. the price should not be determined by redeemers. On the other hand some recommended that each slave descendant has to process his redemption through *wozzo* ritual process. Nevertheless, this strategy was rejected for three reasons; first, church leaders opposed the strategy because they reasoned that it opposes biblical doctrine<sup>58</sup>, second, it was believed that the government does not acknowledge the strategy because slavery is officially illegal and redeeming slave descendants after paying is not legally accepted; third, the offered solution was not encouraging to slave descendants, it is the strategy through which they have been suffering for long.

The second alternative option was *la'a* without debt clearing. This option was derived from the historical lesson of the *maga* of Meyche. In the past Bere, the *maga* of Meyche renounced exclusion of slave descendants at event of death and funeral. He did so when

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<sup>58</sup> . It seems that this idea contradicts with the actual practices of the church leaders. In Ochole I was told that some church leaders encourage the redemption of slave descendants through *wozzo* ritual.

his devoted slave died and people refused to eat and drink at his *kare* (outdoor). Ketama indicated to me that since then for many years exclusion against slave descendants during mourning and funeral did not exist in Meyche<sup>59</sup>. Thus based on this historical lesson the community suggested that in like manner the *kati* and the *magas* can eliminate slavery from the community without charge or ritual process because they are determinants to perpetuate or end slavery. Without approval of *maga* and *kati* no one can be changed into slave or no slave descendant can get redeemed. Therefore, this recommendation was accepted. To implement the suggested solution mass conference i.e. gathering of the entire Ganta community at Shoshane market recommended.

Ketama indicated that before conducting the mass conference, the office of Synods together with the *qabale* officials made adequate campaign over the entire Ganta community; they mobilized and taught the people in each *qabale* to get ready to attend the conference. It was on 19 October 2012 the conference held at Shoshane market. According to Ketama the majority people from five Ganta, the *magas* and the *kati*, Arbaminch zuria *woreda* court judges, the zonal High court judges, officials from zonal and Arbaminch zuria *woreda* and officials from Synods participated the conference. In the conference *kati* officially condemned and abolished slavery from the entire Ganta community by delivering a speech:

*Hanzopa gede Ganta gade gala aylethi ba'a. Ayle hede athi beroko ayle maqo, hanzope gede la'a maqo, eputi, geluti.*

'I declare! now no wards there is no debt slavery in Ganta community, if anyone says slave to someone, he/she turn into slave, now on wards we are integrated, we can marry each other freely'(personal communication with Ketama)

To seal the abolition of slavery the *kati* slaughtered an Ox, and the *magas* stood at shedblood hereby they expressed that they agreed with what the *kati* had declared, and at the same time made a public oath not to involve in slavery practice anymore in their

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<sup>59</sup>. Tsena, chairman of Meyche *qabale*, indicated that the ban worked only for slave descendants at Meyche *qabale*; the people did not eat at funeral of slave descendants in other *qabales*. Tsena said that with passage of time many slave descendants from Meyche arranged marriage alliance with other slaves from outside Ganta. When children of these slaves died, people would exclude them. In the beginning of 1990s when slavery got weight, the community began to exclude all slave descendants.

respective constituency. They vowed publically never to engage in slavery, and promised to count themselves slave if they involve in that practice again. The participants of the conference unanimously accepted and ratified *kati's* declaration and *magas* public oath. The situation marked collapse of the ideology of slavery because the determinant personalities condemned and publically abolished it.

Following the conference some *qabales* such as Bonke established law to punish those who scorn and discriminate slave descendants.

The liquidation of slavery at Shoshane conference was given due attention in the publication of *Wogaa Magazine*<sup>60</sup>. In the Magazine page 34-6 indicates that the lingering of slavery in Ganta community is due to forceful government intervention in the past i.e. in the past the government did not convince the community to end differential treatment of slave descendants. The magazine claims that the Synods have devised an effective method to eliminate slavery from the community of Ganta. At the conference, therefore, an ideology of slavery was “buried” once and for all, and all unredeemed slave descendants (through *wozzo*) in the community were assured that they were integrated with the mainstream community.

### **Developments Aftermath of the Conference**

After the conference there were cases of death and funeral at *ayle* homes in Kanchama-Ochole and Shecha (upper town of Arbamich). In each case the majority of Ganta community including *kati*, *maga*, *oge maga*, religious leaders and elders from the community participated in eating *chancha*; however, there were challenges. The first case occurred at Shecha town. A child of Luqa, slave descendant, died two months after the Shoshane conference. In order to see the fruits of the conference decision, the Synods involved in the situation; they brought majority people from Ganta by car to the family of grief. The *maga*, *kati* and all others ate the *chancha*; however, some who feared the situation refused and escaped. I was told that some educated Gantas who work at government officials in Arbaminch also feared the situation and escaped.

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<sup>60</sup>. *Wogaa Magazine* is published in every six month by Gamo Gofa Zone Culture, Tourism and Government Communication Affair Department. This Magazine is twelfth and it was published in March 2012.

Despite the refusal of some people, Keta and other Synods project officials claimed that the participation of the majority people in the funeral was a big historic step in the community of Ganta. In the previous time as they argued let alone eating *chancha*, tasting it, brushing teeth, sitting on wet grass, washing hands and smoking cigarette on the outdoor of the deceased's family of the slave descendant turn people into *ayle*. Now, at this event *kati* and *maga* who are ultimate decision makers on slavery participated and as the result the ideology was collapsed. In other words, no one was condemned and turned into slave by eating *chancha*.

The other incident happened in Ochole. A child of Sille Gushe, slave descendant, died. At this event partition occurred among the community members. After presenting food and drink to grieving family, the majority of people refused to eat and escaped but some ate after *kati* and *maga*. Alemayehu and Samuel, commander and policeman of Ochole respectively, told me that they forced the refused people to eat the *chancha* and many participated in it, however, still some people refused to eat the *chancha*. After the funeral the deceased's family accused the refused people at *woreda* police office. The *woreda* police imprisoned them for days and then released them.

Alemayehu and Samuel also indicated to me that at death of Fano mother in Ochole similar problem occurred. Dispute rose regarding who would start digging a tomb to bury the dead. They told me that they ordered men to go to grave and commonly started digging the tomb. Then after, all people freely shared food and drink before and after funeral ceremony. Apart from these death events no other case occurred at slave descendants' home since then.

Generally, it seems that despite the wavering of the community, the noted incidents prove that the ideology of slavery has been weakened. No one is condemned and turned into slave because of his/her participation in the above situation. Almayehu and Samuel claimed that as far as *magas* and *kati* stand firmly in their decision, the future is also granted. My personal communication with the *kati* and the *magas* indicated that they have liquidated slavery from the entire Ganta community at Shoshane conference. They claimed that slavery will no more exist in Ganta community.

Besides participating in *chancha*, free born started marrying slave descendants. In Dhele Daniel Mella, slave descendant whom I described as case study in chapter five, was married to Heywot Bezabih, a free born, in September 2012. The couples told me that they arranged their marriage in complete freedom and love. Before union they discussed in detail, and agreed that the class difference was banned by Synods conference. During my field stay I observed that they led cheerful life; nevertheless the family of Heywot is not happy with her marriage. Until today they have been excluding her.

### **6.3. Comparing the two Strategies: Community Perception and Scope of Integration**

Basically, the Synods strategy and the *wozzo* ritual share one fundamental principle in common in doing away slavery. In both cases the ultimate decision makers' *maga* and *kati* involved. They are final authorities who endorse the emancipation and integration of slave descendants. Given this premise, in either strategy they can eliminate slavery from the entire community. Thus, according to this premise, all unredeemed slave descendants were emancipated and integrated into the mainstream society through Shoshane conference. Nevertheless, the community has differing perception on slave descendants who were redeemed and integrated through *wozzo* ritual and those who were considered as 'emancipated and integrated' through Synods strategy. In the field duration I learned that despite its exploitative process the community trust more in *wozzo* ritual than the Synods approach. I will show how this differing perception affects the scope of integration of slave descendants who were considered as emancipated through Synods project.

First, the community is wavering to participate in eating *chancha* at death of those slave descendants i.e. those who are not redeemed through *wozzo* but considered to be emancipated at the mass conference. In the above noted cases the participants were not self initiative. They were pressured by Synods, *qabale* commander, police and other *qabale* officials to take part in the situation. There are many people who refused, some hide from the situation whereas others escaped.

On the other hand, there is no such incident reported in the case of those who were redeemed through *wozzo* ritual. Many redeemed slave descendants through *wozzo* ritual told me that the community freely participates with them during events of death and funeral. For example, Hezina from Bonke shared me that his family faced severe exclusion at death of his sister and brother before they got redeemed, but immediately after their ransom, his father died and the community freely collaborated with them in every aspect. Many *mala* informants also told me that they felt free to eat and drink when redeemed slave descendants (through *wozzo*) died but they hesitate to involve in the situation of those slave descendants 'emancipated' (through mass conference). They justified that during the *Derg* regime the traditional practice was banned, *kati* and *maga* were forced to eat at death of slave descendants and so did the community, however, after the collapse of the *Derg* regime the hegemony of the traditional setting reestablished and the ideology of slavery got momentum. Thus, they say: who knows the future? It is better to keep one clean than to be contaminated with uncertain redeemed slave descendants.

Second, the *mala* are wavering to make marriage alliance with slave descendants emancipated at Shoshane conference. Numerous conversations with the *mala* indicated that they never want to arrange marriage with slave descendants who freed at Shoshane conference. It could be for this reason that there is only one case of marriage between a slave descendant emancipated at Shoshane and a free born which I have noted above. Even in such case the free born has been excluded by her family. Conversely, I have discovered fourteen marriage cases arranged between redeemed slave descendants (through *wozzo*) and free born, seven in Bonke, four in Meyche and three in Ochole. In all cases there are complete agreements and recognitions from both sides.

Third, the community considers freed slave descendants at Shoshane 'unredeemed'. In Dhele where I spent most of my field work, the community members demarcate the boundary between slave descendants redeemed through *wozzo* and those emancipated at the mass conference. They said that in the earlier time there were ten households of slave descendants in this community (Dhele) but now their number is eight. They deducted Bekele and Dalalo who finished their redemption through *wozzo* in 2011. This shows that the deep rooted ideology of slavery is not removed from the mind of the people.

The aftermath of conference politics, 'redeemed/unredeemed, emancipated/ not emancipated, integrated/ not integrated' are hold on mainly by three groups; the older generation, the *lathies* and redeemed slave descendants( through *wozzo* ritual). The older generation claimed that *ayle* and *mala* cannot be mixed unless the former clean their 'dirty' through *wozzo*. They also argued that there is no mass redemption of *ayle*, every slave descendants has to process his through *wozzo*. In the same manner the *lathies* also try to persuade the community that slave descendants who did perform the *wozzo* are still in their impurity. The redeemed slave descendants also assert that the right redemption is what they processed through *wozzo* and apart from that other mechanism is not guaranty.

Generally, although *maga* and *kati* publically renounced slavery from the community, the mind of the community is not transformed. Thus, to remove the ideology from the mind of the community, further intervention is required.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Change and Continuity of the Circumstances of Slave Descendants during the Successive Political Regimes of the Country

The situation of slave descendants has been unremitting with various degrees throughout the successive political regimes of the country (during Haile Selassie, under the *Derg* and since EPRDF). During the imperial regime the exclusion of slave descendants had been practiced freely. With the coming of the *Derg* regime the exclusion of slave descendants became less because the *Derg* almost entirely banned the traditional practices of the community that support the propagation of the ideology of slavery. The EPRDF reconsidered the indigenous culture, language and ethnic identity. The main objective of rethinking indigenous culture, language and ethnic identity is to create access for all nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia to equally develop themselves and exercise self government. This revived the deteriorated previous values and traditional practices; and in this context the ideology of slavery got renaissance and became even more severe than before. In this chapter I will deal with the situation of slave descendants first under imperial regime. Then, I will describe their situation under the military government. Finally, I will show the serious exclusion and exploitation of slave descendants under EPRDF.

#### 7.1 The Circumstances of Slave Descendants during the Imperial Regime (up to 1974)

Exclusion of slaves goes back to origin of slavery in the high-lands. Olmstead explains that during nineteenth century the slaves were considered as “non-citizens” and they were excluded from owning agricultural land. The slaves (*ayle*) and craft workers (*mana*) were given public land only for construction of house and they were prohibited from using it for agricultural purpose (1973: 224). While conducting the field work I realized that the concept ‘non-citizen’-when referring to *ayle* has persisted until day<sup>61</sup>. In Bonke I heard many times when the *maga* (leader in traditional hierarchy below to *kati*) said about slave

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<sup>61</sup> . I never came across when *mana* are degraded as noncitizen.

descendants: 'if an *ayle* wants to be a *dere*<sup>62</sup> child, if he wants to be an Ethiopian child, if he wants to marry a *dere* child, if he wants to marry an Ethiopian child', he has to be redeemed and cleaned from impurity. This implies that he is a 'non-*dere* child' or 'non-Ethiopian child', or a *dere* child or an Ethiopian child is above him.

In the beginning of 1890s the Gamo high-lands were brought under the Ethiopian Empire. Unlike the other south western Ethiopian societies such as Woleyta, the Gamo high-lands were peacefully submitted to Menelik's expansionist policy. Consequently, the *dere kawos* (communities' kings) were appointed as representative of the central government. The central government established indirect rule through *kawos*- renaming them as *balabats*. The main function of the *balabats* was collecting tributes and maintaining order. The appointment of the *kawos* a *balabats* had resulted two consequences; first they were served as legitimate *dere kawos* and as the result they were freely exercising traditional practices, and second they enjoyed privileged life as delegate of the central government( Freeman 2004: 31-32).

The situation in *Ganta* was similar. The present *kati*, king, of Ganta, Alemayehu elucidated to me that after the Gamo had been brought under the central government; his father was made as *balabat* and allowed to exercise his power over the community. Consequently, the indigenous political setting was sustained and the *kati* and *magas* continuously practiced the local tradition among which slavery was one. Slave descendants were discriminated in marriage, death and funeral. Redeeming slaves was also commonly practiced.

The indirect rule of the Gamo high-lands through *balabats* continued until the end of the imperial era in 1974. *Kati* Alemayehu told me that in the 1930s he was appointed as *qegn-azematch*<sup>63</sup> of Ganta by Emperor Haile Selassie and the *magas* under him were appointed as *cheqa shum*<sup>64</sup>. The emperor collected land tribute from the community

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<sup>62</sup>. *Dere* literary implies community but here it stands for *mala*, and they are considered as citizen, an Ethiopian

<sup>63</sup>. administrative position in the imperial government; intermediary between the state and the local communities; position given to *kati*

<sup>64</sup>. administrative position in the imperial government; intermediary between the state and the local communities; position given to *maga*

through them. Thus, the traditional political setting had been unaltered until the end of imperial rule as the community leaders continued ruling in their structural hierarchy. Exclusion of slave descendants had been maintained through indigenous political settings. Isolating of slave descendants in time of death and funeral and marginalizing them in marriage sustained during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie.

In 1942 Emperor Haile Selassie abolished slavery; however, the abolitionary law was impractical in the study community. No one was condemned for propagating the ideology of slavery and exclusion of slave descendants. Sadika, an educated adult Ganta man living in Arbaminch indicated to me that it was for two basic reasons that the abolitionary law was unpractical in the community of Ganta during the emperor time. First, there was no accuser. He said that slave descendants were not accusing their master for they claimed them as their slave. This was not because they feared their master. Rather according to the local tradition if a slave descendant accused his master, his allegation was considered as “wealth” for the master i.e. “additional debt of slaves towards the master”. In other words, if the master was convicted and imprisoned, the slave descendant was expected compensate the expense of his master before processing redemption if he wanted to integrate into the mainstream society<sup>65</sup>. Because of this practice, slave descendants did not accuse their master. Nonetheless, sometime public prosecutors did involve in the situation of slave descendants but they were never successful because the community members (*mala*) did not witness and report the maltreatment of the slave descendants in the court for it was against their cultural doctrine. In some cases a master would be detained for weeks or months but this could not stop the ideology during the imperial regime.

Second, the mixed political structure contributed to the failure of the abolitionary law. Sadika explained that the *magas* and *kati* had dual authority. They were figures through whom the central government directed the community. At the same time they were also legitimate leaders of the customary political setting. The community had more trust in the customary political power than the modern structure extended to them through their leaders. This provided opportunity for the customary leaders to continue practicing the

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<sup>65</sup> . See the unfinished redemption story of Salife in chapter six.

local tradition openly. The central government was not concerned with the local agenda as far as the *magas* and *kati* collected tribute and maintained peace and order. Thus the half hearted implementation of the new regime had played a role in perpetuating the ideology of slavery and the subsequent exclusion of slave descendants during the imperial regime.

Both Protestant and Orthodox Christianity expanded to the community of Gamo during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Protestant Christianity was introduced to the highlands in the early 1930s by Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), first in the community of Ocholo (Freeman 2004:36). Communication with protestant religious leaders indicated that this faith was launched into the community of Ganta in early 1950s. The Protestant missionaries preached equality of all human beings, condemned local traditional practices including traditional belief systems. On the set of this new faith many slave descendants embraced the religion hoping that the ideology of the new faith would override the deep rooted cultural ideology of inequality in the community. Yet, the initial *mala* converts who became the first evangelists sustained the differential treatment of slave descendants in the churches. Sisay, one of the first *mala* converts of the new religion told me that the early *mala* converts refused to accept slave descendants as their fellow brothers. They continued to maltreat them in those areas of exclusion. He explained that his very reason to backslide from Protestantism was that it could not dominate the entrenched cultural power that leveled the slave descendants below of any in the community.

The Orthodox Christianity had well known in Gamo high-lands since the merging of the area to the central government. However, by then Orthodox Christianity was centered in Chenchä, the first garrison town in Gamo community. From that the new faith defused to the other Gamo communities (Freeman 2004: 36). In Ganta Meyche and Bonke the Orthodox churches were planted very late. Informants claimed that unlike the early Protestant missionaries Orthodox Priests did not deal with local traditional practices and belief systems. Consequently, some slave descendants who embraced the religion were continued to be excluded in the churches.

## 7.2 The Circumstances of Slave Descendants during the Derg Regime (1974-1991)

Following the 1974 nationwide revolution remarkable changes happened in the country. The *Derg* took serious of measures to modernize the country. Fundamental to the *Derg* policy was the aspiration to breakdown the traditional settings and belief systems and to change the country into modern state of citizens with equal rights. Freeman writes:

*Soon after the revolution all universities and secondary schools were closed, and the students were sent out into the countryside to teach the socialist values of the new government. These young men and women of the Development through Cooperation campaign became known as zamach (Amh: campaigners), and with greater or lesser degrees of sensitivity they gathered together local elders and told them to change their ways. Their role was to nationalize land, build schools, bring basic health education and modernize what Mengistu saw as a backward and superstitious peasantry. This involved the abolition of all religious practices except Orthodox Christianity and Islam, including all traditional practices that were to be exploitative or hierarchical. In the Gamo highlands the zamacha, as they were locally called, taught that everybody was equal, that the kawo, the regular farmer and the artisan were all brothers. Stirred up by the campaigners, most communities expelled their balabbats and looted their houses and property. Many balabbats were forced to flee the highlands, and they sought sanctuary in Arba Minch or Addis Ababa (2004: 39).*

The situation in Ganta was more or less similar. Bisirat<sup>66</sup> was one of *zamacha* in Ganta community. He indicated to me that during the campaign the *zamacha* banned all local traditional practices. They prohibited traditional belief systems, condemned slavery and the class difference. They banned customary political settings and its leaders because the structure as well as its leaders was interpreted in light of feudal ideology that served the imperial regime. They taught the community that all human beings should be considered equal, that there was no distinction between *kati*, *maga*, *mala*, *mana*, and *ayle* and also every occupation was equally valuable and no one should be excluded because of their livelihood. Bisirat portrayed that in the *zamacha* the kinsmen of the Bonke *maga* and of the *kati* of Ganta were also participants.

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<sup>66</sup> . He told me that they conducted the campaign from 1966-68 E.C (1974-76 G.C).

The *zamacha* campaign had some positive consequences on lower social classes. The *mana* and the *ayle* were appointed in *qabale* offices and in farmers' cooperative organizations that was unthinkable in previous time. For example, Kanko, an unredeemed slave descendant, told me that he served three times as secretary of Kanchama-Ochole *qabale* from 1975-88. He described that the derogative terms were banned and the community members were less prone to use "*ayle*" to refer to the slave descendants or *mana* to refer to craft workers at least in their presence. In Bonke, Samuel, a *mana* indicated to me that he was appointed as chairman of farmers' cooperative organization and served the institution until the demise of the *Derg* regime.

In addition, some informants indicated that during the 1975 Land Reform the *mana* and the *ayle* were given agricultural lands which they had been ignored during the imperial regime. The *ayle* were given the lands of their masters. However, during my field stay I could not find *ayle* who were given their masters land by Land Reform proclamation.

Informants also indicated that food and drink avoidance at slave descendants' home at time of death was minimized. They said that often the people did not openly refuse but concealed from the situation. Those participated were not overtly claimed as slave by master of deceased slave descendants because the situation was not conducive to propagate the ideology; the *Derg* officials cruelly punished whenever they saw such violation.

However; despite such change on the life of the *mana* and the *ayle*, informants indicated that during the *Derg* regime slavery was not totally eliminated. They indicated that the ban on marriage continued strictly i.e. slave descendants were prohibited from marrying *mala* and vice versa. In addition, redemption of slave descendants was practiced clandestinely. Regarding the redemption process, Sadika explained that the situation was not as exploitative as today. In most cases redemption was conducted in least cost and the ritual performances were processed covertly. Public recognition through *soffe* was not required as necessary part of the ritual process. The implicit acknowledgements of *maga* and *kati* were considered as final step to integrate slave descendants into the mainstream society.

### 7.3 The Circumstances of Slave Descendants Since 1991

With the coming of the EPRDF in 1991 the situation of slave descendants was reversed; they faced a more serious situation than ever before. The resurrection of exclusion of slave descendants was strongly linked with reconsideration of traditional practices as an expression of ethnic identity under EPRDF. In response to the *Derg* policy the EPRDF reorganized the state structure into federalism based on ethnic identity. The objective of this was to promote self government and create access for equal development for all nation, nationalities and people of the country. The reconsideration of indigenous culture resulted in cultural revivalism and renaissance of previous values and practices as an idiom of ethnic and cultural identity of nation, nationalities and people of the country. In this context the Gamo high-lands went back to the traditional practices prohibited by *Derg*. Freeman described the situation as follows

*The EPRDF has also reversed the Derg's policies about traditional practices. In reaction to the Derg's attempts to create a nation of modern 'Ethiopians', the new government is trying to organize the state into a federation of mini-states according to ethnicity. The internal map of Ethiopia has been redrawn along ethnic lines, and a federal state structure that theoretically guarantees the unrestricted right of nations and nationalities to self-determination up to secession has been adopted. Local languages are now being used in schools instead of Amharic, and the process of writing down these previously oral languages is well under way. In this context traditional practices are actively encouraged as an expression of ethnic and cultural identity, and thus those who have not converted to Protestantism are going through something of a cultural revival. In many parts of the Gamo highlands this has been expressed by a return to the traditional practices banned by the Derg (2004:43).*

In the community of Ganta the resurrection and revival of traditional practices and values have been connected to this situation. Sadika portrayed that the promotion of local custom has led to reestablishment of traditional political settings. The *kati*, *magas*, *demuthas* and *oge magas* were reappointed into their previous position. The *dubusha* and *dulata*, 'community assemblies,' that moderate the power of *magas* and *kati* have been reorganized. The traditional belief system, sacrificial roles and other time honored community practices have been reinstated. Having achieved these, Sadika said, the customary political leaders claimed "Why not practicing slavery?" as it was part of their

cultural practice but banned by the *Derg*. Therefore, descendants of slave holders, *lathies*, openly began claiming slave descendants as their *ayle* and consequently exclusion of slaves at mourning and funeral soon became rampant. Thus, as a way out from this situation slave descendants overtly started redeeming themselves.

The situation of slave descendants under EPRDF is described as having as harsher than ever before. This has been so, as I learned during numerous discussions with different people in Ganta, because slave redemption has become more “commercialized”. Also, the customary political leaders have introduced new norms that are believed to cause slavery and as the result the rift between the slave descendants and the mainstream society has deteriorated.

Informants from various categories (redeemed slave descendants, *lazanthas* ‘elders in slave redemption’ and some *mala*) indicated to me that from 1990s onwards the slave masters, *lathies*, and customary politico-religious ritual experts, the *magas* and *kati* have become “super bodies”; as they have absolute powers to unilaterally determine the redemption cost as they like. On the contrary the slave descendants have no right to negotiate over the redemption cost but give up or pay to their masters their life time collected assets to retrieve their ‘real humanity’.

It seems that the situation of slave descendants under EPRDF has become more serious than what they faced before. Under the umbrella of promoting the indigenous culture and tradition, the study community members have gravely been excluding the slave descendants. Despite the severe situation of the slave descendants, the government has done nothing to improve the lives of the marginalized people. The constitution of FDRE in article 18/2 states: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. Trafficking in human beings for whatever purpose is prohibited”. In addition, in article 25 the constitution states:

*All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status.*

However, in practice it produced no effect on the life of slave descendants in the community of Ganta.

The only successful attempt that weakened the ideology of slavery in the study community is the recent work of Synods of south western Ethiopia based at Arbaminch town. The office of Synods started project work on the situation of slave descendants in 2009 and after two years of intensive community conversations, they were able to persuade the *maga* and *kati*, determinant personalities for the perpetuation or ending of slavery in the study community. In October 2012 at Mass Conference the community leaders (*maga* and *kati*) banned slavery. However, during my field stay I observed that the community members waver to closely participate with slave descendants. They related the situation with the *Derg* policy by saying “*Derg* prohibited the practice of slavery but it got resurrected under the present government, so who knows it will resurrect tomorrow.”

On the part of slave descendants no organized attempt has been taken to break the sanction placed on them. Only in Munche<sup>67</sup>, parts of Kanchama-Ochole *qabale*, as a way out the slave descendants have segregated themselves from the mainstream society and formed their own ‘community’ since 1995 until the Mass Conference held in Shoshane market. They established their own distinct *Idir* (burial association), *wude* (reciprocal cattle shepherding group), and they detached themselves from the rest society in everyday life. I was told that the majority of slave descendants in Munche are economically richer than the *mala*. In addition Munche is called “slave village” because many slave descendants live there and as the result the *mala* feared the action taken by them. However, informants indicated that after the Shoshane mass conference the difference in daily life i.e. between the slave descendants and the *mala* was liquidated and common *Idir* and *wude* have been reestablished. Nevertheless, there were no recordings of death, or marriage from slave descendants home that help measure the community’s perception and scope of integration in this specific village.

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<sup>67</sup>. I did not go to Murche due to shortage of time. I collected the data regarding the Munche slave descendants from Kanko, unredeemed slave descendant who by many people is considered as leader of slave descendants and activist of their right, and Tesfaye *mala* turned slave now live in upper town of Arbaminch town. Tesfaye is one whom I presented as case in relation to severe exclusion of *mala* turned slaves in chapter five under topic marriage.

Generally, in this chapter we have seen that the circumstances of slave descendants have been unchanged during the successive political regimes of the country. During the imperial regime i.e. beginning from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1974 the customary political setting helped perpetuating the ideology of slavery and as the result slave descendants were openly discriminated economically, socially and politically. After the 1974 nationwide revolution, the *Derg* took series of measures aimed to modernize the country. The *Derg* banned traditional political settings, its leaders, traditional belief systems, sacrificial roles and class differences. Consequently, exclusion against slave descendants was minimized. Nonetheless, with the coming of EPRDF the circumstance of slave descendants was reversed. They entered into severe exclusion than ever before.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 8.1. Conclusion

By way of concluding I will discuss the ethnographic data in the theoretical framework I have used, and analyze the finding cross-culturally. As we have learned from the ethnographic evidences exclusion of slave descendants in Ganta community is manipulative and intentional. The exclusionary practice is to some extent relates to Sen's(2000) expression- "active exclusion" which is deliberate discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, social origin or age and Fischer's(2008) "structural, institutional or agentive processes of repulsion or obstruction". In the community of Ganta the ideology of slavery is deeply entrenched in the customary politico-religious setting. The exclusionary practice and redemption of slave descendants is institutionalized within this political structure. The customary politico-religious leaders (also ritual experts) are the main agents who have been maintaining discrimination of slave descendants for long time. The exclusion of slave descendants is deliberate and intentional because descendants of slave masters and ritual leaders profit from it; during slave redemption the *ayle* are to give their life time assets to them.

Dehaan's (2001) perspective, exclusion in terms of relation and process is fundamentally conforms to the Ganta situation. He articulates that social exclusion is denial of individuals and groups as the result of inherent social stratification in a society. The community of Ganta is differentiated in three status groups, the *mala*, the *ayle* and the *mana*. The *mala* are the dominant section of the community and enjoy privileged life being perceived as pure but the *mana* and the *ayle* are minorities and are excluded. While both *mana* and *ayle* are considered as impure, the impurity of the *ayle* is believed as dangerous; it transmits from *ayle* to non- *ayle* through marriage and social participation in time of funeral and child delivery and consequently they have been severely excluded. Thus, the *ayle* are the most denied social group in the community of Ganta especially during time of mourning, funeral and child delivery.

Exclusion of slave descendants in Ganta can also be explained in terms of identity base. Sonowal(2008) states that exclusion in terms of identity implies cultural devaluation of groups and categories of people in a society. In the study community slave descendants

are less valued, undermined and even perceived as inferior creatures. This is because the ancestors of slave descendants were exchanged like commodity and animals in a market; and the slave descendants are believed to share this dehumanized attributes of their ancestors.

The five thematic dimensions (spatial, political, economic, social and cultural) Pankhurst (2001) indicates to analyze the exclusionary practices of minorities in south western Ethiopia is also helpful to analyze the situation of slave descendants in the community of Ganta. Pankhurst asserts that in the past minorities (craft workers) were excluded both politically and economically from the mainstream society. They had no accessed to traditional and formal political setting and agricultural land. In Ganta during the imperial regime both the craft workers and the slaves and their descendants were given public land only for construction of houses and they were prohibited from using agricultural land. They were considered as non-citizen (Olmstead 1975).

Pankhurst explains that social dimension of exclusion reflects non-reciprocal interactions. It implies restricted social interaction, commensality, and joint labour, membership of association, burial practices and most profoundly, intermarriage. As we have learned from the ethnographic data social interaction between the slave descendants and the other section of the community is limited. While in daily life both slave descendants and the other sections of the community live in coexistence and peacefully, during the time of death, mourning, funeral and child delivery the slave descendants are excluded. Also, we have seen that there is strict marriage custom which bans an alliance between the slave descendants, the *mala* and the *mana*.

Cultural dimension of exclusion, Pankhurst articulates that it is mythological justification and negative stereotyping for the low status of minorities. Our ethnographic data indicates that the low status of slave descendants associated with the dehumanization of their ancestors. In the past slaves were treated below human being. They were sold, given as gift, bought, killed and the like. Slaves were considered not more than commodities and animals. The today's justification that slave descendants are "not real human" related to this mythological explanation that slave descendants share sub humanity of their ancestors unless they retrieve their real identity through ritual purification.

Social exclusion in Ganta can better be expressed by ideological justification. Ideological justification is embedded in religious belief system, and accordingly the concept “purity and impurity” regulates “contact and avoidance” by supernatural sanction or in scientific theories of human nature, natural instinct theory of segregation (Damtew 2003:15). Schlee also explains that the concept “purity” and “power” regulates the relationship of social members in a society. Members in the society keep standards of purity to preserve their status in their respective groups. Exclusion of “impure” can be manifested through avoidance of commensality and inter-marriage (2003: 1ff). In Ganta exclusion of both craft workers and slave descendants are embedded in the ideology of “purity” and “impurity”. In Ganta both social categories are considered as impure but the impurity of slave descendants is believed to be dangerous; it transfer from ‘slave’ to ‘non-slave’ through close relation during rites of passage. Therefore, the mainstream society excludes these social categories, especially slave descendants during the rites of passage. The concept “purity” and “power” can also be seen in the role of ritual experts. The ritual experts have power to purify and change the identity of slave descendants.

Cross-cultural look indicates that the situation of slave descendants in Ganta resembles to the circumstance of slave descendants in West African countries such as Senegal, Mauritania, Benin, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Serra Leon and Burkina Faso( e.g. Hahonou & Pelckmans 2011). In these societies the slave descendants are strictly excluded from marrying free born.

In Guinea coast of West Africa (the Susu society) perspective of slavery resembles to the Ganta community’s perception of slavery. In both societies slavery is conceptualized as biological and social, however, in Susu society slavery is believed to be transferable only through male line (James 1981)<sup>68</sup> but in Ganta it is considered to be hereditary through both parents line.

The ethnographic case in Ganta also resembles to what Regnier (2012) found in southern Betsileo (Madagascar). He indicates that because of cultural belief in ancestral wrath and social sanction, the Beparasy (free born) did not live out mutual marriage union with the Berosaina (slave descendents) over the four or five generations. He points out that the

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<sup>68</sup>. James, S. Thayer. ‘The Persistence of Slavery on the Guinea Coast’. [www.webcote.net/bibliotheque](http://www.webcote.net/bibliotheque) accessed on 10/04/2013

ban on marriage with slave descendents and social sanction that enforce the rule are cultural heritages handed on from the pre-abolition, where the powerful ideology stratified the Betsileo society into three endogamous status groups (nobles' commoners and slaves). Similarly, in the community of Ganta the slaves started marrying slaves and that continued to practice for more than four generations. In addition, the powerful ideology of purity and impurity stratified the Ganta community into three endogamous groups (*mala*, *ayle* and *mana*).

The ethnographic resemblances I have discussed are being so yet my finding in Ganta is typical. The community's perspective that slavery is transferable like "communicable disease" through close social participation with slave descendents is distinctive. It is this aspect that widened the rift between slave descendents and the mainstream society.

The integration mechanism of slave descendents through *wozzo* implies both the slave descendents and the mainstream society are redefining cooperation and social common identity. They are forging new forms of reciprocal relationships and social interaction. These kinds of integration directly relates to Blanc's perspective of social integration (Blanc 1998: 783).

The integration of slave descendents can also be understood in terms of removing obstructions to commensality and reciprocal social life. It is an enlargement of the sphere and extent of the flow of interaction between slave descendents and the mainstream society by changing the identity of the slave descendents (e.g. Baron 1967).

Social integration in Ganta (Gamo) can better be explained in terms of identity construction. In the perspective of Ganta community identity is fluid and change over time. People can change their identity by renouncing one and claiming the other through agentive process. Our ethnographic material indicates that identity change is precondition for slave descendents to be integrated into the mainstream society. Slave descendents disclaim their "impure identity", blood attachment to their slave ancestors, and claim "pure identity", the status of *mala*. Ritual experts are the main agentive power in the process of identity construction. They are involved in ritual purification of both slave descendents and *mala* turned slaves in constructing their new identity (e.g. Shlee 2005: 82).

## 8.2. Recommendations

Before the October 2012 Mass Conference all slave descendants in Ganta-Bonke were redeemed through *wozzo* ritual and were fully integrated into the mainstream society. Equally, in Ganta-Meyche out of eighteen households with the total individual population eighty, except two households, all were redeemed and integrated into the mainstream society. Therefore, in these two Ganta communities there is no severe problem because almost all slave descendants were integrated into the mainstream society. However, the people in these two communities still vacillate to make close relationship with unredeemed slave descendants living in other Ganta communities. Today the majority unredeemed and few redeemed slave descendants live in Kanchama-Ochole.

Although at October 2012 Mass Conference the unredeemed slave descendants were considered as liberated and integrated into the mainstream society, the aftermath of the conference developments indicate that the community members have not freely accepting them; they still perceive them as potential sources of impurity. Therefore, it seems that to dismantle the deep entrenched ideology of slavery from the entire Ganta community and to ensure integration of unredeemed slave descendants into the mainstream society strong measures should be taken by the zonal government and the other concerned body. I suggest the following measures as strategy to handle the problem sustainably:

**First**, continued awareness rising regarding the ideology of slavery should be done. For the community of Ganta slavery is beyond derogative social status; it is a complex cultural system conceptualized as biological (hereditary), social (communicable through social participation) and innate debt. This deep rooted dogma cannot be uprooted overnight. Therefore, to transform the mentalities of both i.e. slave descendants and the rest community members continues awareness creation through community conversations, and training and education should be given to customary political leaders, religious leaders, slave descendants, *mana*, *lathies*, elder community members, women and youths.

**Second**, from the economic point of view, the *woreda* and zonal government should make continue following up to ensure decline of the *wozzo* ritual practice. In this regard, the focus should be on unredeemed slave descendants, ritual leaders such as *magas*, *kati*, *oge maga* and *lathies*. Since October 2012 mass conference there is no recording of the ritual performance but to maintain the lasting decline of the ritual persistent supervision should be taken because the *wozzo* ritual works against the government economic policy; it promotes poverty by damaging the life time assets of individual slave descendants.

**Third**, religious organizations, both Protestant and Orthodox Christians, should play role to eliminate the social difference between the community members. They should implement their ideological teaching that all human beings are created after the image of God and are equal.

**Four**, the *woreda* and zonal government should implement various international and domestic legal instruments that prohibit slavery. These instruments could include UDHR, the constitution and the penal code of the country. The implementation could be by making awareness that how slavery is legally punishable or by punishing violated individuals.

**Fifth**, Experience sharing with other Gamo *dere* is important. Today in many other Gamo *dere* except in marriage area there is no severe exclusion of slave descendants. In some areas slavery is totally declined. Therefore, experience sharing with these communities could show the strategy to handle the typical problem in the community of Ganta.

## Appendix II: Profile of key Informants

No	Name of Informants	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place of Interview	Remark
1	Abera Salife	40	M	Farmer & qabale policeman	Ochole	Unredeemed slave descendant
2	Adama Anako	60	M	Customary political leader	Bonke	Maga of Bonke
3	Alemayehu Arshe	70	M	Customary political leader	Meyche	Kati of Ganta
4	Almu Shama	37	M	Farmer	Upper town of Arbaminch	Redeemed mala
5	Alto Kayti	80	M	Farmer	Upper town of Arbaminch	Descendant of slave holder
6	Azajje Bezue	38	M	Farmer	Meyche	Redeemed slave descendant
7	Bazute Basha	50	F	Household woman	Kachama	Redeemed slave descendant
8	Begashaw Banchuka	45	M	Farmer	Upper town of Arbaminch	Unredeemed mala
9	Bekele Basa	50	M	Farmer	Sirra	Redeemed slave descendant
10	Belete Bezabih	43	M	Evangelist	Dhele	Evangelist of Dhele Mekane Yeus
11	Borko Botola	45	M	Craft worker( mana)	Meyche	Mana
12	Buzinesh Arika	30	F	Household woman	Dhele	Redeemed slave descendant and wife of kati
13	Daniel Mella	38	M	Farmer	Dhele	Unredeemed slave descendant
14	Demekech Tina	40	F	Household woman	Dhele	Unredeemed descendant of slave

15	Diaqon Cholo	38	M	Historian	Upper town of Arbaminch	Historian working in zonal office
16	Eyob U'lla	27	M	Primary school teacher in Ganta	Ochole	Teacher( mala) in Ganat
17	Gego	45	M	Chairperson of Ganta-Bonk	Bonke	Chairman of Bonke <i>qabale</i>
18	Gebeba Tserma	50	M	Farmer	Sirra	Mala works <i>lazzantha</i> during <i>wozzo</i> ritual
19	Hezina Hanqo	28	M	Farmer	Bonke	Redeemed slave descendant
20	Hewot Bezabih	27	F	Household woman	Dhele	Mala but married Daniel Mella*13
21	Kanko Kasita	56	M	Farmer	Upper town of Arbaminch	Unredeemed slave descendant
22	Ketema Kelile	44	M	Former project manager of the Synods in Ganta	Lower town of Arbaminch	Descendant of slave holder
23	Kome Kota	30	M	<i>Qabale</i> Official	Bonke	<i>Mala</i>
24	Kasahun Birze	30	M	Secretary of St. Gerbil Church at Meyche	Meyche	<i>Mala</i>
25	Kyba Belay	38	F	Household woman	Upper town of Arbaminch	Redeemed slave descendant
26	Mariyam Dicha	50	F	Evangelist	Lower town of Arbaminch	Evangelist and Mala
27	Mesele Tona	35	M	Farmer	Sirra	<i>Mala</i>
28	Sadika Seme	55	M	Gov't official	Upper town of Arbaminch	Descendant of slave holder

29	Sumale Arga	45	M	Farmer	Dhele	Descendant of slave holder
30	Sisay Toha	40	M	Farmer	Dhele	<i>Lazantha</i>
31	Tamene Taye	37	M	Business man (trader)	Upper town of Arbaminch	Descendant of slave holder
32	Tamene Udesa	45	M	Farmer	Meyche	Redeemed slave descendant
33	Taye Dema	50	M	Government official	Upper town of Arbaminch	Historian working in zonal office
34	Tesfaye Gameda	26	M	Student	Upper town of Arbaminch	Unredeemed <i>Mala</i>
35	Tesfaye Gere	34	M	Farmer	Kanchama	Descendant of slave holder
36	Tesfaye Gezahgn	37	M	Evangelist	Upper town of Arbaminch	Evangelist
37	Teshome Salife	40	M	Farmer	Sirra	Processed incomplete redemption
38	Tsena Tseza	40	M	Chairman of Ganta Meyche	Meyche	Chairman of Meyche
39	Tunashe Tura	28	F	Household woman	Bonke	<i>Mala</i> but married redeemed slave descendant
40	Tujje Tufa	60	M	Farmer	Bonke	<i>Lazantha.</i>

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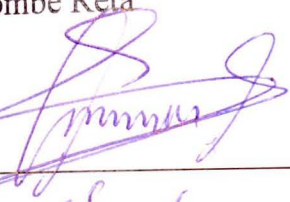
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# Declaration

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

Bosha Bombe Reta

Signature 

Date: 08/07/2013

