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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
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***MOORA: A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC PLACE AND ITS  
MULTIPLE PURPOSES AMONG THE KONSO PEOPLE OF  
SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA***

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95

**JULY, 2011**

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SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA**

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**BY**

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Affa Xonso</i>	Konso Language.
<i>Akattuma</i>	Dishonesty.
<i>Alletta</i>	The hut of Konso where family members live.
<i>Alletta damttaanqalla</i>	Kitchen where food is prepared for the household.
<i>Alletta yoqa</i>	Grinding house.
<i>Appa saletta</i>	Literally, “father of announcement”, person who disseminates information for the public.
<i>Appa Timpa</i>	Literally “father of the drum”, office with the highest political authority within a town.
<i>Arpa</i>	Elephant.
<i>Arumta (Pl. Arumma)</i>	Circular stones put on <i>Moora</i> by the generation grades.
<i>Arxatta</i>	The lower level of the homestead located near the main gate and used for animals shed.
<i>Axawota</i>	Roasted seed of maize, sunflower, wheat, barley and chickpea and is eaten by the Konso.
<i>Aypo</i>	Name of the sacred drum of Koriya Dekatto town.
<i>Birr (Amharic)</i>	Ethiopian money.
<i>Da'ayta</i>	<i>Glorya declor</i> .
<i>Daka dukatta</i>	Literally the stone of truth on the <i>Moora</i> where the disputants would swear by touching it.
<i>Daka Xella/ daka dirumma</i>	Stone of Manhood which are erected to commemorate good administration skill and heroic achievements.
<i>Dakinta</i>	Human Body.
<i>Dama</i>	Konso staple food prepared from ground sorghum, millet, maize, wheat and cooked with the leaves of <i>Moringa oleifera/Moringa stenopetala</i> tree, beans and sometimes meat.
<i>Dawra</i>	Neutral town that forbids fighting between the towns.
<i>Detata</i>	<i>Accacia totlis</i> .
<i>Dina</i>	Small shrub belt around the towns where waste is deposited.

<i>Dota</i>	Ritual sacrifice during the transfer of generation grades.
<i>Duffeta/sereta</i>	The act of excluding wrongdoers from social life.
<i>Ekayteta</i>	One type of Konso children games.
<i>Ellallasha</i>	<i>Cf. Crinum sp.</i>
<i>Farayta</i>	Name of the stage in the generation grade where it is not allowed for a man or woman to conceive a child before the initiation ceremony of their generation grade.
<i>Fo'ota</i>	Cheetah.
<i>Gada</i>	The Oromo age system.
<i>Hada</i>	The spiritual power to harm somebody, similar to curse.
<i>Hakayta</i>	Small rainy season between September and November.
<i>Hankalta</i>	<i>Balanites aegyptica.</i>
<i>Hara'ta</i>	<i>Euphorbia tirucalli.</i>
<i>Heella</i>	Children.
<i>Hirpa</i>	One section of the generation-set.
<i>Horeta</i>	Domestic animals.
<i>Innanama</i>	Human beings.
<i>Iska</i>	Stars.
<i>Jalatata</i>	Plant type ( <i>Lamiaceae family</i> ) used as spice for the preparation of <i>xola</i> (see <i>xola</i> ).
<i>Jallaqa</i>	A small flat topped stone terraces attached to the fences of the some private houses, usually near the gate of the compound.
<i>Jaqqa</i>	Locally prepared alcoholic beverage made of grain.
<i>Jilanjilla</i>	Hurdle.
<i>Kaffa</i>	Clan or lineage.
<i>Kaajja</i>	One type of Konso children games.
<i>Kajjata (Teff in Amharic)</i>	Indigenous cereal crop in Ethiopia which is mostly cultivated in highland areas.
<i>Kalkusa</i>	One section of the generation grade.
<i>Kanta (pl. Kantada)</i>	Neighborhood/sub-town /ward.

<i>Kara</i>	A special ceremony during the transfer of power from one generation to the next.
<i>Karayya</i>	Spirits of dead human beings.
<i>Karma</i>	Lion.
<i>Katama</i>	Derived from Amharic term to represent town or city.
<i>Kawatta</i>	Stone wall or stone terrace.
<i>Kayya</i>	A tobacco pipe smoked by Konso elders.
<i>Kebele (Amhric)</i>	The division in the administrative structure below <i>Woreda</i> , primary level of administration for the rural community in Ethiopia.
<i>Kekesha</i>	A roof top decoration on <i>Pafta</i> (see <i>pafta</i> ) and on some private houses.
<i>Kelellayta</i>	Literally "shadow of a person" an inside-person.
<i>Killipoota</i>	<i>Solanum incaneum</i> .
<i>Killipota addatta</i>	One type of Konso sports.
<i>Kirdiffayya</i>	Plant type ( <i>Ocimum americanum</i> ) used as spice for the preparation of <i>xola</i> (see <i>xola</i> ).
<i>Kissilla</i>	Panther.
<i>Kittota</i>	Wooden poles erected on the <i>Moora</i> outside the town during <i>xomma</i> (see <i>xomma</i> ).
<i>Kommayta</i>	Peripheral areas of wilderness.
<i>Kopta</i>	<i>Pinna Christ</i> .
<i>Kossa</i>	Big granary.
<i>Kottarra</i>	Small granary.
<i>Kurayila</i>	One type of Konso sports.
<i>Kutuma</i>	Ball like circles made from flour of grains to make Konso staple food, <i>dama</i> .
<i>Kuyata kutta</i>	Mid-day.
<i>Lea</i>	Moon.
<i>Letta</i>	Sky.
<i>Liipp'a</i>	Loss of consciousness.

<i>Madota/Ererota</i>	A locally prepared unfermented drink made of grain.
<i>Masana</i>	The post-harvest period for resting.
<i>Megnerra</i>	Incest.
<i>Mida</i>	Leaves of <i>Moringa Oleifera/Moringa stenopetala</i> which is cooked with <i>kutuma</i> to make Konso staple food, <i>dama</i> .
<i>Monta</i>	Heaven.
<i>Moora</i>	Public place that can be located inside or, outside towns and serves multiple functions.
<i>Murmurajja</i>	One type of Konso children games.
<i>Nama-Dawra</i>	Neutral man who forbids fighting between the towns.
<i>Nessa</i>	Literally “breathe or voice” and can be equivalent with soul.
<i>Olahitta</i>	Dried juniper tree erected by the generation grades to signify the transition of power to the next generation.
<i>Orshayta</i>	Rhinoceros.
<i>Oyta</i>	The upper level of the homestead where members of the household live.
<i>Pafta</i>	Big thatched house on the <i>Moora</i> .
<i>Palpala/pahpaha</i>	Open field on the <i>Moora</i> .
<i>Pinana</i>	Wild animals.
<i>Pirpirta</i>	Juniper tree.
<i>Pirtota</i>	Sun.
<i>Pofa</i>	Python.
<i>Pona</i>	Dry season from September to February.
<i>Poqqalla (pl. Poqqallada)</i>	Clan or lineage head(s).
<i>Poradukata</i>	Literally “place of truth” euphemized place for underworld where spirits of dead human beings live.
<i>Porshotta</i>	Literally, ward leaders.
<i>Qadda</i>	Animal stable.
<i>Qahtiita</i>	<i>Commiphora Africana</i> .
<i>Qapaya</i>	Timber lateral pillars.
<i>Qaqawwa</i>	Lightning.

<i>Qayranta</i>	Leopard.
<i>Qimmota</i>	Old men who are the members of retired generation and all individuals whose children got married.
<i>Qoqqopa</i>	Stone enclosure on the <i>Moora</i> and is used as animal compartment.
<i>Qoyira kattaa</i>	Tree for shade.
<i>Qura/Kasarta</i>	Buffalo.
<i>Shelaqata/ Telaqata</i>	<i>Moringa Oleifera/Moringa stanopetala</i> tree and its leaves are used as cabbage.
<i>Shetanna/Orritta</i>	Evil spirits.
<i>Shorokota</i>	Literally “rich persons” people responsible to cleanse wards.
<i>Siika</i>	One type of Konso dances.
<i>Sorora</i>	Rainy season between Mid-February and June.
<i>Sottaa</i>	Wrestling
<i>Takeka</i>	Pebbles played on the wooden board, also plant, <i>Caesalpinia volkensii</i> .
<i>Tika Xella</i>	The house where the ritual properties of the generation in power is placed.
<i>Tolohtta</i>	<i>Cordia monoica</i> .
<i>Torpa/Tapa</i>	Week.
<i>Tuda</i>	A high pole in the middle of the <i>Pafta</i> and also found in some private houses.
<i>Tulla</i>	One type of children games.
<i>Tulpeta</i>	Hippopotamus.
<i>Waq</i>	Supreme being.
<i>Woreda (Amharic)</i>	Level of administration below special <i>woreda</i> and <i>zone</i> .
<i>Xalala</i>	<i>Cissus rotundifolia</i> .
<i>Xarsha</i>	Konso food type prepared from cooked beans.
<i>Xatikela/pitakela</i>	Underworld.
<i>Xaxa</i>	Swearing.
<i>Xayyolayta</i>	Youth.

<i>Xella</i>	The generation grade in power and all junior generations which are responsible for carrying out political, economic and social duties in the community.
<i>Xetalumma</i>	Prolific hunting ability.
<i>Xola</i>	Common morning drink prepared from coffee leaves.
<i>Xomma</i>	A ceremony at which adults take away food from families who did not keep it in secured places.
<i>Xora Dehamta</i>	Assembly for discussion.
<i>Yakawwa</i>	Decorative chain or string of jewels worn by Konso women.

## Abstract

*This ethnographic fieldwork was carried out from 21<sup>st</sup> January up to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011 among the Konso people of Southern Ethiopia. The main objective of the study was to explore the origin, meaning and functions of the Moora of the Konso people of southern Ethiopia as well as the changes it is presently facing. With this aim, the study examines the elements, usage and function of Moora in different cultural domains of Konso people and change and continuity with regard to the Moora.*

*The methods used to conduct the study include: participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Although I encountered some challenges mainly with regard to difficulty to talk to farmers as the fieldwork was conducted during an important agricultural time, shortage of time and financial constraints, I tried my best to gather necessary information I was interested in.*

*The findings of this study reveal that regardless of the prevalent changes, the Moora retains a central role in the social, political and religious life of the Konso people in the past and present.*

*Moora contain several elements such as the big thatched house, the open free space, the generation poles, the flat stones, the stones of manhood, the circular stones, the tree for shade and the animal compartment. Each of these elements has its own symbolic meaning.*

*Since the structure, form and function of Moora can vary, the elements found on them also vary. For instance, none of the outside town Moora has a thatched house, flat stones and an animal compartment, while the generation pole and circular stones are commonly found on every Moora, whether inside or outside the town*

*The data shows that there exist different types of Moora serving different purposes. Moora are public assembly places for the resolution of dispute. Moora are a place of informal learning and the dissemination of information. They are public sleeping places for male members of the community. They are experience sharing places for males from childhood to old age. Together with this, Moora is a place where different types of Konso dances and plays are performed. Moora are places where remembrances for the past generation are staged. Moora is a traditional guest-house and a shelter for refugees in times of crisis. Christian churches also use open field on the Moora as conference rooms. Modern health officials use Moora as a place for vaccination. Trainings on the transmission of certain diseases and prevention mechanisms are also thought there. State's political election process is held on the Moora.*

*The study shows that the spread of Christianity (Orthodox and Protestantism) challenged the indigenous culture of Moora: traditional religious practices are considered as works of evil spirits and the swearing Mooraa within which cursing and swearing take place are meaningless for Christians. Expansion of modern school system has much been contributed to the weakness of the indigenous culture of Moora as children spend much of their time at these schools. As a result, the role of Moora as a center of informal learning through which they learn social values and norms have undergone significant change. The indigenous role of Moora as a center of Konso political activity has been undermined by the modern legal court system as people prefer to take their cases to modern judicial institutions. The deterioration of ecological condition of the area has a great impact on the culture of Moora as it is challenging to get woods and grass of which thatched houses are built.*

*Finally, despite momentous challenges it is currently facing, the Moora, however, is still maintained and gives multiple purposes for the people.*

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1. Background

If the contention that entertainment in one form or another is almost as old as humanity itself, it must surely follow that public assembly facilities cannot have been far behind (Jewell, 1978:1). Perhaps one of the very early facilities was Rome's Circus Maximus, an enormous structure, 625-yard long, with seats for more than 150,000 persons. It served primarily as a course for chariot races but was often the scene of wholesale slaughter. A later development was another kind of Roman arena, the amphitheater. One of the largest was the Flavian amphitheater, now known as the Colosseum. Meanwhile, on a higher cultural level the outdoor theater, devoted to drama, was developing in the Grecian world (Jewell, 1978: 1-2).

In America the colonial log cabin perhaps housed the first public gathering. This early meeting house served not only for regular assemblies but also as a refuge in times of danger or emergency, and in this one building much of the life of the community was focused (Jewell, 1978:2).

The meeting house of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus became the forerunner of the town hall, opera house, theater, concert hall, or whatever name it may have been given. Additionally, Jewell also describes a place for sports, conventions, exhibits, dances, banquets, and etc (Jewell, 1978: 3).

On the other hand, Kultermann (1969:52) stated about the creation of institutions and buildings for social and ritual, political and other types of gatherings in the settlement pattern of many African communities with different characteristics of forms and locations.

The status of public spaces is an essential element among any society whether it is "modern" or "traditional". In both urban and rural settlements societies are well aware of designing public places. These places have immemorially been held in trust for the use of the public and serve many purposes: a place of joyful social celebration, community discussion, entertainment and recreation, worship, economic exchange and so forth. Therefore, greater understanding of the roles and social values possessed by public place is highly needed.

In Ethiopia, the issue of public places and their significances has not been recorded extensively in literature. In due fact, many societies in Ethiopia have their own public gathering places at which various activities of the society take place. For example, different Oromo groups are known for their public meetings which are held under a big tree 'Oda'. The Borana group of Oromo society used to held assemblies for discussion under the shade of a tree (Bassi, 2005: 169). Taddese (1991:325) stated that the Omotic speaking Gamo people adhere to a number of rituals and celebrations that take place on public places called *dubbusa*. The Gamo *dubbusa* are not only settings for rituals, but also assembly grounds in which various social activities are performed (Taddese, 1991:325-326). Taddese concluded that the life of the Gamo communities is inconceivable without the *dubbusa*.

On the other hand, the Cushitic Di'irashe people of southern Ethiopia, who have cultural and linguistic similarity with the Konso, have a public place called *Moora* which has a significant role in their life. Hansemo (1983:63) explained about the *Moora* of the Di'irashe as follows:

*Moora was a public meeting place where different public assemblies were held... It served as a place where public discussions were conducted. It was also the place of judgment. The plaintiff and defendant brought their cases before the local adjudicators. It was an open jury for the whole community. Any person (male) could attend it without any restriction. Moora was also like a park where people spent their spare time in recreation. On the Moora the skulls of varies types of wild animals were displayed. It showed how cleaver a certain village was in hunting wild animals. The skull of the animal was put on ten woods which were erected for this purpose.*

Likewise, the rural settlement pattern of Konso people of Southern Ethiopia is remarkable for its uniqueness and location on the top of hills selected for strategic and defensive advantages. The towns are surrounded by stone walls, and have public places (*Moora*) located at different locations within the walls and sometimes outside the walled towns in the open field. Hallpike in his monographs on Konso gave the following explanations about *Moora* located inside the stone walled towns.

*The focal point of Konso ritual for most purposes is the Moora. In each town certain Moora have a special sanctity, and there are in addition Moora located outside the towns which are used for more important ceremonies concerning the*

*region as a whole. Of the Moora within the towns, some are wholly profane in their function. At the smallest, they may even have no dancing open ground, and comprise only a sleeping-hut and some stone platforms for sitting on during the day... Some Moora are only used for religious ceremonies, while others have mundane activities performed in them, such as meetings and dances, as well as rituals (1972:232).*

Hallpike (1972) in Taddese (1991:336) was perceptive in concluding that “if the social organization of the Konso is based on the towns, the life of the towns is inconceivable without the *Moora*”. Notwithstanding the short explanations made about *Moora*, its indispensable value in the life of the community has never been profoundly explored. It is only this research which explores the communal place ‘*Moora*’ and its multiple functions among the Konso ethnic group of the southern Ethiopia.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Many anthropological studies have been conducted on the areas of conflict and its resolution, ritual ceremonies, social organization, political organization, age grades/sets, social institutions, and any other aspects of the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia. But public places and their function to their respective communities in the past and present has received little attention. This tendency is well reflected in almost all accounts written about various ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

Similarly, in the few studies that deal with the Konso, only few authors mention about the public place, *Moora*. And even those sources fail to give us a full picture about the *Moora* at the time of their study. Moreover, they do not give any detailed description on the function of the *Moora* in the life of their respective communities. It is only the short article written by Taddese (1991:325-326) and the report by ARCCIKCL (2008) which give some information on the *Moora* and its function. This study argues, similar to Hallpike, that it is difficult to understand the way of life of the Konso people without understanding the *Moora*. No aspect of the Konso people can be fully explained without understanding the enormous role the institution of *Moora* plays in their lives.

The *Moora* plays a central role in the social, ritual and political life of the Konso, more specifically it plays key role as a place for conflict resolution, socialization of children and youths, dissemination of public information, it serves as a traditional playing ground area, a place

where deceased generations are praised and remembered, a shelter for refugees, a sleeping place for males of the town and as an indigenous guest house. It is also a place where state's election process is carried out as well as a place of vaccination and worship place. So far, no detailed ethnographic document has been written on the institution of this public place, and a comprehensive research is highly needed. In this paper, the multiple functions of this place and the changes the institution is currently facing due to the spreading of Christianity (particularly Protestantism which consider the rituals taking place at *Moora* as Satanism), the introduction of modern education (where Konso children spend much of their time at school) and the modern legal court system (which undermines the role of *Moora* as an indigenous place of jury) and other factors were genuinely investigated.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The aim of this study is to explore the origin, meaning and functions of the *Moora* of the Konso people of southern Ethiopia as well as the changes it is presently facing.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are:

- ❖ To describe the origin, usage and function of the public place, *Moora*, in different cultural domains of Konso people.
- ❖ To identify the different cultural elements which constitute the *Moora* (such as the grass thatched house, flat stones, play field (ground), generation pole, erected stones (stone of manhood), circular stones, animal compartment, tree for shade and others) and to assess their symbolic meanings.
- ❖ To examine how the role and function of *Moora* has being changing over time, especially since the introduction of Christianity and modern, modern legal court system and modern education.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

The outcome of the study may have the following significances:

- ❖ A detailed study of the *Moora* as an important and central element of Konso culture will put a new perspective on Konso.
- ❖ It will also add information to the limited knowledge we have on the anthropology of space/place.
- ❖ The findings of this research are believed to benefit both governmental and nongovernmental organizations working on the culture, tourism and development and as well as those who are working on the conservation of cultural and historical heritages (sites).

## 1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This ethnographic research was conducted among the Konso people with the purpose of understanding the origin and usage of the *Moora*, the elements which constitute the *Moora* and the symbolic meanings attached to them, function of the *Moora* and the changes it is currently facing. Nevertheless, this research has the following major limitations. Due to time, financial and other constraints, I was not able to visit other towns from different regions to comparatively exhibit the culture of Konso *Moora*. Therefore, the study had to focus only on the three clusters (Dekatto Alaka, Hulme and Purqutta) which together form the traditional town of Koriya Dekatto in the Karati region of the Konso *woreda*. In this town a number of *Moora* were identified and some of them which give service for the three clusters were selected for further explanation. Though the *Moora* seem to be similar in most places, it is likely that each traditional town has its own *Moora* with unique characteristics and functions. It seems therefore, difficult to claim that this study is a comprehensive work that could fully explain *Moora* throughout the *woreda*.

Secondly, the fieldwork was carried out from 21<sup>st</sup> January to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011. This was the time when farmers were sowing their seeds; therefore people spent most of the time on their fields. As a result, I faced difficulties to talk to as many farmers I had planned to. Secondly, as ritual ceremonies and different types of dances take place mostly after the crop is harvested, I could not

observe these and other important events that take place on the *Moora*. I therefore had to greatly rely on information given in interviews.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

### **1.6.1 Selection of Research Site**

For this study, the traditional town of Koriya Dekatto which is situated some 3 kms away from Karat, the capital of Konso *woreda*, was chosen. The reasons were:

- ❖ Geographical proximity to Karat, the capital of the *woreda* which has brought significant change on the indigenous culture of the Konso, and also the usage of the *Moora*.
- ❖ Koriya Dekatto town has a large number of *Moora*, inside and outside the town with different forms and unique characteristics.
- ❖ The researcher was born and brought up in the same town, so that rapport with the local people was easily established.

### **1.6.2 Field Experience**

The overall circumstances of the fieldwork and the experiences obtained are as follows: I arrived in Konso on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and left on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011; during that time I spent about one month and half in the field. I had chosen Konso as the site of my study since I am a native both by birth and upbringing. As I knew many people in the area, it was easy for me to establish good rapport with the society. This enabled me to immediately immerse into the local culture. Acting as a member of the community, I participated in different community affairs, such as burial ceremonies, playing and relaxing with people sitting on the *Moora* during day time, rebuilding of an old *Moora* which has started only few days before my arrival. I easily identified key informants: by asking individuals I knew well from the past about whom they would suggest to me, i.e. whom they considered as knowledgeable on the topic of my study.

In case of the Dekatto Alaka cluster, I preferred to work with only few selected informants whom I came to know well. I started to talk to them informally to find out how serious they were in giving information for my study. After they came to know me very well, my informants began to

invite me food and drink whenever I went to their houses. They were very willing to share their experiences and knowledge about Konso people and their culture with me.

In the upper clusters (Hulme and Purqutta), I had the chance to ask one person randomly after introducing each other in one local coffee house in Purqutta town. I asked him to suggest me people who might have good knowledge on Konso culture and he took me to the house of one person who has been an informant for many local and foreign researchers. It was in such a way that I met my first informant in the upper cluster of the town. Onwards, the first informant himself began to indicate other individuals to me whom I wanted to work with. However, I did not totally depend on the people whom he suggested to me, rather I informally asked other individuals to teach me about *Moora*. I came to know many persons in the area, most of whom showed interest to participate in my study.

What was a bit uncomfortable about my stay at Konso was that there is a belief among the society that if a person speaks out what all he/she knows, he/she would die. And therefore, people hesitate to give all the information they know and only give short answers to the questions they were asked. This was quite challenging to easily overcome, but I tried all my best to get the information I needed for my study. So, I always used to derive questions from what they have spoken.

Despite, the Konso are friendly people and quite ready to discuss on general matters (except what they considered as the secret of the society). They showed great willingness to share their experiences and many asked me about my field of study. After I had told them that I was studying Social Anthropology (simply, studying culture), they were happy because no Konso had conducted this kind of research. They referred to "Dr. Metasebia Bekele" (non-Konso) who had conducted research on Generation system in Koriya Dekatto for several years and people expressed their wish that I would be like him.

Informants and other people frequently asked about the progress of my work and encouraged me to be strong. Some of my informants even came up to my father's house where I lived during the time of my fieldwork to provide me additional information that might have been missed during discussion schedules.

Generally, despite little uneasiness because of the hot dry season in which I had walked several hours to visit *Moora*, my stay on the field among Konso people, I passed a special time with the people and felt great pleasure.

### **1.6.3 Sources of Data Collection**

The selection and usage of specific method of data collection depends on the type and nature of information intended to be obtained. Thus, to collect data, the researcher employed a combination of the following techniques:

- ❖ Participant observation
- ❖ In-depth interview
- ❖ Focus group discussion

#### **1.6.3.1 Participant Observation**

I had the chance to participate and observe special occasions that took place on the *Moora* during the time of my fieldwork. Among these were: the traditional dispute resolution processes in the mornings on different *Moora*, males sleeping on the *Moora* during night time. I often sat with people on the *Moora* both during day time and evenings, playing chess like play on the wooden board during day time. I participated in the building of the *Pafta* in Dekatto Alaka town in *Lehaytii Moora*. Participant observation was also carried out when I travelled to Konso for the celebration of an Easter holiday. Then, I attended the procedure of punishing wrongdoers during an important public meeting held on the *Detatii Moora*. On that occasion, four wrongdoers were punished and fined to pay 500 to 3000 Ethiopian birr each for the misdeed they had committed. I also conducted participant observation on the inauguration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by Protestants on an open field of the *Moora* around 8:00 o'clock in the night. Sometimes I tried to combine participant observation with informal conversation.

I documented my observations as well as conversations on my field diary. I took photographs of different structures of *Moora*, children playing on *Moora* and elders playing pebbles on wooden material.

### **1.6.3.2 In-Depth Interview**

The researcher conducted both semi- structured and unstructured interviews with individuals from different age groups, social categories and sexes. Out of the thirteen informants, three were above eighty years of age, eight were between fifty and eighty and two below fifty years of age. In terms of social categories, educated individuals, merchants and farmers were involved. But, this classification is uneven, since it is very difficult to classify these individuals on the basis of social category into pure farmers, merchants and educated. This is due to the fact that they combine occupations at the same time. In terms of sex composition only four were women, whereas the remaining nine were male. All four women informants were pure farmers because there were no educated women and merchant women in the area above the age of 30. I recorded most of the interviews and transcribed and translated them.

### **1.6.3.3. Focus Group Discussion**

In order to triangulate the information collected through participant observation and in-depth interview and to supplement more information for my study, two focus group discussions were carried out. Participants were invited to join two focus group discussions, each consisting of six participants. The participants were drawn from different age, sex, religious and occupational groups. Through focus group discussion information on the generation system, types of *Moora*, ritual ceremonies and the changes the *Moora* is currently facing was gathered.

## **1.7 Ethical Consideration**

All the necessary ethical considerations were adopted in this research. Thus, informed consent from participants to take part in the research, assurance of confidentiality (non-exposition of secret information and use of abbreviated names), consent from the participants to present the data collected and the absolute right of the participants to withdraw from the research study at any time were adopted in the study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1 A Conceptual Approach of the Issue**

Public Places and their functions have not been a central concern for anthropologists interested in material culture. Only few of the writings on material culture provide explanations and theories concerning public places as part of it, showing that social processes (such as decision making, cultural ceremonies, ritual activities, political actions and etc) happen through the material forms that people design, build, and use.

The elements of cultural theory of space came from Europe. Emile Durkheim and his associates in the *Annee Sociologique* began to elaborate a theory of the social differentiation into dichotomies. The differentiation of space into areas of different values (sacred and profane) was for Durkheim an integral aspect of social differentiation (Durkheim, 1915 in Thornton, 1980:13-14).

However, Kokot (2006:10) suggested that although there have been valuable attempts, a fully-formulated anthropological theory of “culture and space” does not exist yet. For theoretical orientation, anthropologists refer to developments in geography, urban studies or sociology.

### **2.2 The Concept of Space and Place**

Among the key concepts in anthropology, “space” holds a prominent position. On first glance, relations of “culture” and “space” seem to be quite obvious: spatial relations are a central variable influencing human behavior and cognition, while major methodological strategies in anthropology have been closely related to spatial boundaries of “the field” (Kokot, 2006:10).

Taylor explicated that Space is often understood as commanded or controlled area, whereas place is understood as lived or experienced areas (Taylor, 1999 in Mendoza, 2006:541). Places exist not only as physical entities but also as a result of people's different experiences. Thus places are full of meanings and encompass an existential dimension, an emotional link with the human being (Mendoza, 2006:541).

Anthropologists would do well to follow geographers' renewed interest (Agnew and Duncan 1989b:2 in Rodman, 1992:643) in reunifying location (i.e., the spatial distribution of socioeconomic activity such as trade networks), sense of place (or attachment to place), and locale (the setting in which a particular social activity occurs, such as a church) to yield a more rounded understanding of places as culturally and socially constructed in practice (Rodman, 1992:643). Despite considerable reappraisal of "voice" in anthropology, "place" has received surprisingly little attention. There is little recognition that place is more than *locale*, the setting for action, the stage on which things happen.

Hillier and Hanson (1984) in Gieryn (2000:465) explained that place is not space-which is more properly conceived as abstract geometries (distance, direction, size, shape, volume) detached from material form and cultural interpretation. Space exists when unique gathering of things, meanings, interpretations and values are sucked out (de Certeau, 1984, Harvey, 1996 in Gieryn, 2000:465). Place exists as argued by Gieryn (2000:465) when a space is filled up by people, practices, objects, values, meanings and representation. Places have symbolic and material processes and should not merely understand as locations. Moreover, DuPuis and Vandergeest (1996) and Schama (1995) in Gieryn (2000:465) argued that place is a compilation of things or objects at some particular spot in the universe.

Places are mainly constructed: most are built or in some way physically carved out from the existing material. They are also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined by their users (Soja, 1996 in Gieryn, 2000:465). In spite of its relatively enduring and imposing materiality, the meaning or value of the same place is labile-flexible in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested (Gieryn, 2000:465).

Entrikin viewed a place as favorite armchair, a room, building, neighborhood, district, village, city, county, metropolitan area, region (Entrikin, 1989 in Gieryn, 2000:464). Place has physicality whether built or just come upon, artificial or natural, streets and doors or rocks and trees. Places are worked by people: they make places and probably invest as much effort in making the supposedly pristine places of nature as they do in cities or buildings (DuPuis and Vandergeest, 1996, Schama, 1995 in Gieryn, 2000:465).

In putting the defining features of place, Gieryn (2000:466) stated that places cannot be ranked into greater or lesser significance for social life. Thus, places cannot be ranked in a hierarchical order, nor can one be reduced down to an expression of another. Place is, at once, the buildings, streets, monuments, and open spaces (Gieryn, 2000:466-67).

Despite its scantiness of the ethnographic literature, Stoller (1996:785) suggested that the social and political significance of place has a long history in anthropological researches. For theorists such as Levi-Strauss (French structuralists), spatial relations shows dual social orders (Levi-Strauss, 1966 in Stoller, 1996:785).

Gieryn (2000) noted that place is one medium (along with historical time) through which social interaction takes place. Similarly, Whitaker explained that place stabilizes and gives durability to social structural categories, differences and hierarchies; arranges patterns of face-to-face interaction that constitute network-formation and collective action; embodies and secures otherwise intangible cultural norms, identities, memories and values (Whitaker, 1996 in Gieryn, 2000:473-74).

Place also plays a role in minimizing the rate of deviant or criminal actions if they are properly designed to avoid large and assigned public spaces (Gieryn, 2000:479-80). Hence, place is imbricated in moral judgment and the control of deviant behavior.

The formation of emotional, sentimental bonds between people and a place brings together (in yet another way) the material formations on a geographic site and the meanings invested in them (Altman and Low, 1992, Gupta and Ferguson, 1997 in Gieryn, 2000:481). Gieryn (2000:481) stated that place attachments result from accumulated biographical experiences which people associate places with the fulfilling, terrifying, traumatic, triumphant, secret events that happened to them personally there in a given period of time (Gieryn, 2000:481). Additionally, Halbwachs noted that place attachment facilitates a sense of security and well-being, defines group boundaries, and stabilizes memories (Halbwachs, 1980 in Gieryn, 2000:481).

Perhaps for this reason, mnemonic places are specifically designed and constructed to evoke memories, trigger identities, and embody histories. National monuments commemorating wars or centennials or atrocities (Barber, 1972, Sarfatti Larson, 1997, Spillman 1997, Wagner-Pacifici

and Schwartz, 1991 in Gieryn, 2000:481) inspire patriotism, at least in theory (on place and contested national identities: Borneman, 1997; Gupta, 1997; Zelinsky, 1988 in Gieryn, 2000:481), just as sacred places become the destination of pilgrimages because of their mythic or symbolic connection to the transcendent (Barrie, 1996, Friedlander & Seligman, 1994, Hecht, 1994 in Gieryn, 2000:481). In these cases, built places give material form to the ineffable or invisible, providing a durable legible architectural aide-memoire on national identities (Cerulo, 1995; Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996 Gieryn, 2000:481-82). Bell stated that Places might also be home to ghosts (Bell, 1997 in Gieryn, 2000:482).

### **2.3 Public Places**

Communally owned places are highly valued by their owners. In the study of social interaction, Erving Goffman (1963; 1971 in Gardner, 1989:43) had basically focused on public places. Public places are more than merely spatially-defined objects. Amborn explained that public places show a multi-layered space-time dimension, which does not limit time of action and place of action only to the here and now, but also constitutes the temporal axis of past, present and future as a virtual continuum which on a spatial axis is continually permeated by a similarly virtual space (Amborn, 1997a:386 in Amborn, 2006:80).

Amborn (2006:81) explained that the specific temporal depth of a place develops from the constant repetition of an event which has occurred there, and which was understood as carrying meaning since the time occurrence. Amborn also noted that an event around which social practice (cultural, religious, symbolic, etc.) was organized within a space-time contextualization, and which invited repetition precisely because of this interaction. With the practiced remembrance of things past and future, in which one's own existence can be meaningfully integrated, these places serve to consolidate the sense of community and the formation of a cultural memory—and thus reinforce the basis of a meaningful common world orientation (Amborn, 2006:81).

Staeheli and Mitchell (2007:797) give multiple definitions of public space as follows; public places are physical aspects (e.g. streets, parks, etc), meeting places or place of interaction, sites of negotiation, places of contest or protest, public sphere, opposite of private space, sites of display, public ownership or property, places of contact with strangers, sites of danger, threat and

violence, places of exchange relations (e.g. shopping), space of community, space of surveillance, places of open access and places lacking control by individuals.

Amborn stated that with their sacred and profane connotations, public places have a multiple purposes and meanings. For instance, political negotiations are held here, rites of passage and sacrifices and benediction of the land are carried out in these places. Remembrance ceremonies for the deceased generation are staged, the deeds of the deceased and their ancestors are praised as well as those of the age sets that are cyclically connected with them (Amborn, 2006:80). Moreover, Staeheli and Mitchell (2007:798) explained that public space is important for functional or sociable activities such as meeting, recreation, walking, important for socialization into community norms, important for building community, sites of identity affirmation and sites of living for homeless people.

## **2.4 Urban Public Places**

Neal (2009) explained that for centuries, public spaces have been a central concern of urban planners, from the management of Greek agoras and Roman fora to the planning of renaissance Italian piazzas and the nineteenth century boulevards and arcades of Paris. Neal also noted that more recently, public space has captured the attention of sociologists, geographers and political scientists interested not only in how such places are built and managed, but also in how they function.

Urban public spaces such as parks and town squares have physical and social structures (Derese, 2008: 4). As physical structures, they provide a “potential environment” for social interaction (Golicnik, 2004:1 in Derese, 2008:4). They bring various kinds of dwellers of the city into contact (Derese, 2008: 4). According to Golicnik (2004:1) in Derese (2008:4) urban public spaces are relatively adaptable and can accommodate a variety of users.

Apart from providing a highly adaptable physical arena for public action, urban public places serve as focal points of shared identity: people meet, get in touch with each other, and communicate to act (Derese, 2008:4). According to Huning (2007) in Derese, public spaces serve as the platforms of collective political action “where citizens unknown to each other meet as equals, without having to give up their different standpoints.”

Derese (2008:4) argued, public spaces do not only bestow a sense of personal and shared identity for their residents. Derese also said more importantly they are culturally managed, arranged and used by different actors: by the state, the municipal authorities, private developers and urban dwellers themselves. Concerning the problems urban public spaces face, Derese argued that that despite their vital importance in the urban setting, urban public places usually face the risks that common resources usually face. They are ill-managed, deteriorate in physical and aesthetic forms and become desolate spaces.

In the study conducted on public places in Addis Ababa, Derese (2008:5) stated that Jan Meda (a public place) is a public space freely accessible to the residents of Addis Ababa. Additionally, Derese concluded that Jan Meda has been playing a pivotal role in the modern history of Ethiopia staging religious festivals, coronations, military reviews and campaign inaugurals. Moreover, Derese stated that Jan Meda has also served and is still serving as the play ground for various sports activities ranging from horse racing to athletics field events. Jan Meda has also served as a place of refuge and temporary settlement in times of crisis and transition (Derese, 2008:5).

## **2.5 Public Places among “Traditional” Societies**

The culture of designing and using public places in different domains are traceable in non-Western societies. For example, among the West Indies of Saladoid village, in pre-historic Puerto Rico, Siegel (1999:216) briefly argued that the circular aspect of the cosmos is reproduced on the ground by a circular distribution of midden deposits arranged in the central portion of the village. These middens ring a communal village space or plaza, often containing a burial ground, which is situated precisely in the settlement center.

These centralized communal area functioned as a plaza, serving as a focal point for community life in general (Siegel, 1989, 1991c; Siegel and Bernstein 199, in Siegel, 1999:216). The public rituals that took place in the centrally positioned village plazas were orchestrated and presided over by the village shamans (Siegel, 1999:217).

Among the East African Hhay Ga'angw section of Irqwar Da'aw of Tanzania, Thornton (1980:49-50) explained that the original homestead is today remembered and is marked by a

prominent tree. This place is a well-known “meeting place” called *tlahho Amo*, ‘the sacred place of *Amo*’, where elders may convene their gatherings to discuss the ritual state of the land.

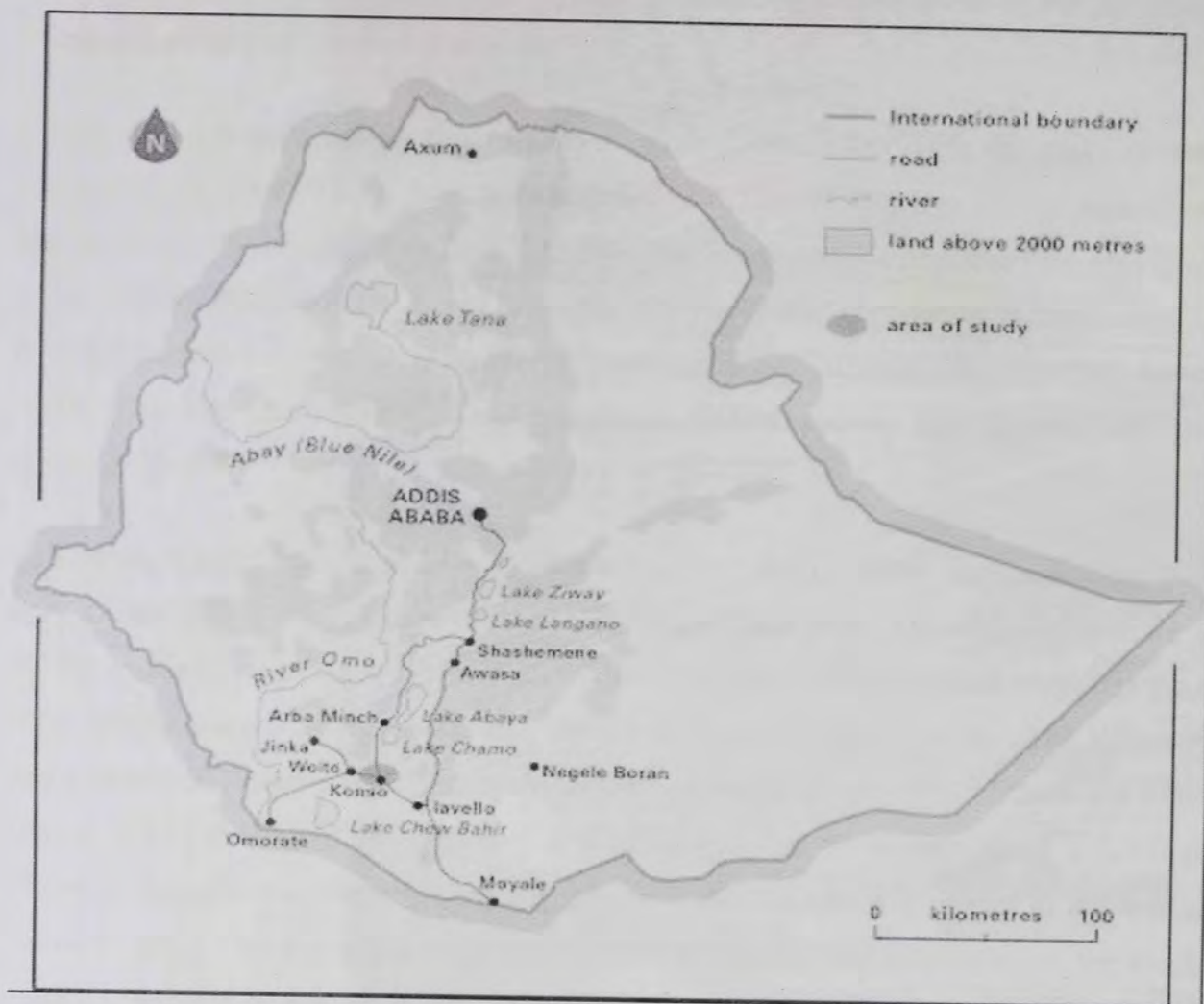
Danyer (1978:57) stated that in societies with less autocratic constitution, most decisions were taken in the open air where meeting places existed. In his thesis, Dejene (2007:34) stated that among the Waliso Oromo of eastern Macha, the *gada* court system has the highest political authority and is held under the shade of a tree called *Oda*, which is the center of *gada* and is common among the Oromo groups.

Among the Konso people of southern Ethiopia, the site of this thesis, public places have been and still retain central role. Taddese (1991:325) stated that the Konso people adhere to a number of rituals and celebrations that take place in sacred place called *Moora*. Awoke (2007:13) stated that the Konso people have a long history of cultural knowledge of designing and building community assembly areas. Additionally, Awoke (2007:55) stated that in the walled towns of Konso, each path from the gate leads to public gathering places called *Moora*.

Other writers such as Christopher. R. Hallpike (1972; 2008), Elizabeth. E. Watson (1998), Menfese Tadesse (2010), Ellise Demeulenaere (2002), Shako Otto (2004), Mamitu Yilma (2002), Yilma Sunta (2002), Lakew Regassa (1998), Senayet Tafarra (1989) and others have also mentioned the *Moora* of the Konso.

## Chapter Three: Description of the Study Area

### 3.1. Geographical Location and Population Size



Map 1: Location of the study area in Ethiopia (Adapted from: Watson, 1998:66)

The Konso people live on and around a small range of mountains, some 600km south of Addis Ababa, in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia (Watson, 2009:25). Following the 1991 change of government, Ethiopia was decentralized into different self-governing administration units based on ethnicity. At that time Konso became a “special *woreda*”-an area with a certain degree of autonomy and self-governance, with its own ministerial offices, administration, and some authorities (Watson, 2008:65). Konso special *woreda* is now reduced to a mere *Woreda* (unit of administration for local government and lesser than special *woreda*) in the newly formed Segen

Area Peoples Zone (unit of administration which is larger than special *woreda* and smaller than region) whose capital is Segen town in the former Gumaide area of the Konso special *woreda*. In the newly formed Zone five ethnic groups (Konso, Di'irashe, Burji and Amaro special *woredas* and Alle *woreda*) were amalgamated together with the very assumption of the government to abandon the status of the special *woreda*.

Konso special *woreda* has an area of approximately 2,276.25 km<sup>2</sup> with the total population of 236,465 (CSA, 2008:38). Of the total population, 225,574 (95.4%) live in rural *kebeles* and the rest 10,891 (4.6%) in urban *kebeles* (CSA, 2008:38). In sex composition, there are 115,757(49%) males and 120,708(51%) females (CSA, 2008:38). Population distribution is highly varied from mid-highlands to the lowlands with average crude density of 103.9 persons per square kilometers (CSA, 2008:38). The FDRE Census Commission (2009) reported that the total population of Konso is 234,987.<sup>1</sup>

Its Capital, Karat, is situated about 595 km away from Addis Ababa via Shashmane, Wolayita Soddo, Arba Minch. From Konso the road continues to Jinka town. The Segen River in the south, the Woito River in the West, Alle *woreda* in the south west, Derashe special *woreda* in the north, Burji special *woreda* in the South east, Borana in the East bound Konso. The Konso people speak their own language, *affa Xonso*, an eastern Cushitic language (Watson, 2009:25). Likewise, Bender (1971:174) cited in Hallpike (2008:63) stated that the Konso speak a lowland east Cushitic language, and share 44% of cognates with the Borana. With regard to the link of *affa Xonso* to other Cushitic speakers, Hallpike (2008:63) stated that linguistically, the Konso are close to the Oromo, and other peoples in their language family, to which Paul Black (1973:4) gives the name of "*Konsoid*"; Derashe, Mashile, Gato, Turo, Bussa

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<sup>1</sup> In another census from 2009 it was reported that the total population of Konso is 234,987. In sex composition, there are 113,553 (48.3%) males and 121,634 (51.7%) females.

### 3.2. Konso Environment and Subsistence

The Konso highlands run across the Rift Valley in an east-west direction, and are situated in the lower side of the highlands' low-potential areas which are characterized by dry climate. Topographically, the Konso region is comprised of a rugged landscape which is predominantly composed of many hills (Menfese, 2010:52). The Konso *Woreda* is part of the volcanic-sedimentary region and is characterized by a relief of medium mountains, between 1400-2000 meters above sea level (Demeulenaere, 2002 in Menfese, 2010:52-53).

The rain falls in two seasons: the largest rains, known as *sorora*, fall between March and May, the main cultivation season. Smaller rains, known as *hakayta*, fall between September and November. The period of December and January is very dry, sometimes with no rain at all, and is known as *pona*. In this time the fields are prepared so that they are ready for sowing at the first sign of rain in February-March (Watson, 2009:34). Lakew (1998:19) stated that the Konso divide the year into four seasons of unequal spans: *Pona* (December to Mid-February), *Sorora* (Mid-February to June), *Masana* (July to August), and *Hakayta* (September to December). It is during the *Masana* season that the Konso have time to rest and enjoy themselves (Lakew, 1998:19).

The human ecology of the Konso of southwestern Ethiopia is characterized by an intensive form of hoe culture and a type of hill-top settlement unique in Ethiopia, namely densely populated walled towns. Their mixed agricultural system includes extensive stone terraces, intercropping, the use of animal manure and drought-resistant crops, including sorghum, millet, tubers (yam and taro), maize and the Konso cabbage tree (*Moringa oleifera*), and cattle, sheep and goats (Kloos, Tufa and Teklemariam, 1989 :309).

Sorghum is the most common and important cereal crop, followed by maize and millet and in the highland areas (over 1800m), wheat and barley. Some teff (*kajjata*) is grown, usually in areas which are flatter and where ox-ploughs can be used. Pulses are also important part of the Konso diet, and they are grown among the cereals. Common varieties include common bean, hyacinth bean, cowpea, chickpea and pigeon pea. Mung beans, lentils, horse beans and peas are cultivated but less commonly (Watson, 2009:39).

In addition, sunflower, castor and linseed are grown and used in cooking. Pumpkin, yams, sweet potatoes, potatoes, cassavas, and tomatoes are all grown, and make occasional contributions to the diet. Taro is important for its edible tubers and leaves, especially during times of food shortage (Förch, 2003: 11). Gourds are grown and used as water or food containers (Watson, 2009:40). The type of cash crops grown in the area include: coffee, cotton, tobacco and chat. Fruits such as papaya, mango, banana, orange, lemon, avocado and etc are also grown in the area.

The Konso keep cattle, goats, sheep and a few chicken. Some livestock is kept in the lowlands; far from the settlement where children will stay and look after it, but most of the time, it is kept on the lower level of the home compound and zero-grazed. Fodder must therefore be collected daily (often twice a day) and generally from the household's own fields (Watson, 2009:35).

Hunting is highly esteemed among the Konso people, as long as it involves big game animals such as lion (*Karma*), leopard (*Qayranta*), cheetah (*Fo'ota*), elephant (*Arpa*), buffalo (*Qura*), rhinoceros (*Orshayta*), hippopotamus (*Tulpeta*) and sometimes panther (*Kissilla*) and python (*Pofa*) hunting. Most of these animals were extinct in Konso region. However, killing animals such as hyena, aardvark, monkey, apes, dik-dik, antelopes and others as well as hunting for food is of no significance.

Within the villages, *Moringa stenopetala* trees (the cabbage tree), locally known as *Shelaqata* or *Telaqata* is planted all around the family compounds and on some agricultural fields and its leaves (*mida*) are harvested regularly to form one of the staples of the diet (*dama*). They are boiled and mixed with grounded sorghum and maize flour formed into a ball like circles called "*Kutuma*". Cooked beans (*xarsha*), cattle products; milk and meat, roasted seeds (*axawota*) also make special diet of Konso people. Honey forms an important part of the diet of Konso people.

The Konso prepare a kind of coffee hot drink from the dried leaves of the coffee tree: they grind the roasted leaves together with garlic, chili, *jalatata* (*Lamiaceae* family), *Kirdiffayya* (*Ocimum americanum*) and sunflower and mix the paste and salt with hot water to make a common morning drink locally called *Xolla*. The other main type of drink in Konso is *jaqqa* and *Madota/erorota* (*non-alcoholic type*) a sort of sorghum and maize beer. It is drunk as a broth mixed with hot water.

With regard to the division of labour on the basis of gender, blacksmithing, weaving, building houses, designing the *Moora* (public place) and building the *Pafta* (big thatched house on the *Moora*), collecting honey, slaughtering cattle, building and repairing terraces, felling trees, and all other heavy or dangerous outdoor work are male activities. Pottery, tanning, fetching water, preparing food, collecting firewood and child rearing are female activities. Working in the fields, bird scaring and spinning cotton are activities of both sexes.

### 3.3. Konso Calendar

In Konso, a year has twelve lunar months of thirty days each (Hallpike, 1972:66). The Konso year unlike the Ethiopian calendar does not start at September and end at August. But, it starts at January and ends at December similar to the Gregorian calendar. Each month has its own local name:

**Table 1: Names of Konso months and their Ethiopian and Gregorian Equivalents**

No.	Konso months	Ethiopian months	Gregorian months
1	<i>Oyppa</i>	<i>Tir</i>	January
2	<i>Sakanukama</i>	<i>Yekatit</i>	February
3	<i>Murano</i>	<i>Megabit</i>	March
4	<i>Pelalo</i>	<i>Miazia</i>	April
5	<i>Haree</i>	<i>Ginbot</i>	May
6	<i>Tolla</i>	<i>Sene</i>	June
7	<i>Orxolasha</i>	<i>Hamle</i>	July
8	<i>Sesaysha</i>	<i>Nehase</i>	August
9	<i>Partupta</i>	<i>Meskerem</i>	September
10	<i>Kisha</i>	<i>Tikimt</i>	October
11	<i>Olindala</i>	<i>Hidar</i>	November
12	<i>Porinka</i>	<i>Tahsas</i>	December

**Source:** Interview with female informant, PD, January 2011.

The week (*torpa or tapa*)<sup>2</sup> has seven days, and is based on the weekly markets, a typical cultural feature of this area (Hallpike, 2008: 244). The names of the days vary from one area to the other as market days and places vary.

Their calendar has an important meaning for the timely performance of rituals related to the generation system. (See more about generation system in chapter three).

**Table 2: Names of Konso days of the week and their Amharic and English equivalents**

No.	Konso days	Amharic days	English days
1	<i>Ompoko/Ajjajo</i>	<i>Segno</i>	Monday
2	<i>Ompokoparayta/ajjajoparayta/lankaya/dipapa</i>	<i>Maksego</i>	Tuesday
3	<i>Qomossa</i>	<i>Robe</i>	Wednesday
4	<i>Paqawle</i>	<i>Hamus</i>	Thursday
5	<i>Paqawleparayta/ hartile</i>	<i>Arb</i>	Friday
6	<i>Itikle/palawa</i>	<i>Qidame</i>	Saturday
7	<i>Sampata</i>	<i>Ehud/Sembet</i>	Sunday

Each day is divided into a number of specific periods, (see table 3). Most of these words refer to natural conditions, as for instance, *kuyata kutta*; *kuyata* means day, *akutta* means big; thus the expression means “great day” for the time of the day during which the sun reaches its zenith (Hallpike, 2008:247). People perform different activities on *Moora* in each timely division of the day. For instance, in Konso, public decisions are most of the time performed in the morning. Public announcements are announced during the morning or night time when people are available at their homes.

<sup>2</sup> *Torpa* derived from the Oromo term which denotes number seven. *Tapa* is number seven in Konso language which exactly denotes the week since a week in Konso has seven days.

**Table 3: Division of Konso day**

No.	Konso time	English time reckoning
1	<i>Para/ para qiteta</i> (first light)	First light
2	<i>Jamjamayta</i> (end of night darkness)	Just before sunrise
3	<i>Pirtota</i> (sunrise)	Sunrise
4	<i>Teykanta</i> (morning)/ <i>Xola eketa</i> / <i>Passasa/Amayita</i> (the time of eating breakfast)	Sunrise until 9:00am (morning)
5	<i>Qudada</i> (late morning)	9:00am-11:00 am
6	<i>Kuyata akutta</i> (midday)/ <i>Takalayta</i> (great day)	11:00am-2:00pm
7	<i>Kalakala/Kalapta</i> (afternoon)	2:00pm-4:00pm
8	<i>Xarshadha</i> (late afternoon)	4:00pm-5:00pm
9	<i>Kakalsuma</i> (time of returning back from job)	5:00pm-6:00pm
10	<i>Dumateta/ dumaduma</i> (sunset)	Sunset
11	<i>Timtima</i> (dim light)	Sunset until 7:00pm
12	<i>Shishipha</i> (early night)	7:00pm-8:00pm
13	<i>Etowa</i> (dinner time)	8:00pm-10:00pm
14	<i>Halketa</i> (night)	4:00pm-12:pm
15	<i>Oliqota</i> (midnight)	12:00pm
16	<i>Otmala/ Etaalaayo</i> (great night)	12:00pm until cockcrow (great night)
17	<i>Lukala Eyeta</i> (Cockcrow)	Cockcrow

## Chapter Four: Social and Political Organization of Konso

### 4.1. The Konso Towns and their Physical Structure

Konso settlement pattern is regarded as town organization due to their large and dense population, their defensive walls and their self-governing status as opposed to villages (Hallpike, 1972:7). The Konso term for town is *Palletta*. Twelve years ago, the average population in towns was well over 2000 souls. When estimated at present for example the population of Koriya Dekatto town is around 7,814 souls.

Towns are surrounded by huge stone wall (*Kawatta*) built of the basalt without mortar (Amborn, 1988: 753 in Lakew, 1998:51). Regarding the purpose of the stonewall Hallpike explained that it has defensive purpose against external enemies. Nowadays this function has out-lived. The walls have different main entrances to the towns through which people and cattle exit and enter. Hallpike (2008: 48) stated that these gates connect the towns with the chief routes traversing through Konso. In the past the gates were closed at the night but they are left open this days.

According to Demeulenaere (2002:89) there are tree-and-shrub belts (*dina*) doubling on the outside the dry-stone wall that traditionally surrounds fortified towns. *Dina* is according to Lakew (1998) a place where humans defecate (a communal toilet) and places assigned to dump garbage disposed from each homestead. Another function was mentioned by Demeulenaere (2002:89), who said, in the early beginning of the Konso settlement, when there were some harsh conditions such as war, *dina* was planted with shrubs all around the town so that people could hide in the *dina*. Demeulenaere also stated that some towns are not built according to the Konso traditional model (characterized by a dense habitat grouped inside a space delimited by fortifications) and do not have any *dina*. Nowadays, the main threat for a town is the risk of burning when fire is broke out in one house due to overcrowded settlement. This is particularly true in the dry season as then the woody and grass houses can easily flare up very quickly. Water is often not available in the nearby towns. On this point, *dina* play an important role thanks to their dominant species, *Euphorbia tirucalli* (*hara'ta*) which produces abundant latex and its branches are used to extinguish fire. When a fire starts, men quickly go to cut branches of *hara'ta* and throw them on the fireplace. Regarding this idea, Lakew (1998:50) stated that the Konso

have a wonderful skill of extinguishing fire where all able men of the town have social and moral obligation to be mobilized to work as a fire brigade. While men concentrate on extinguishing fire with the branches of *hara'ta*, women are obliged to bring water to the fire place either from the water wells and ponds or from their houses. Locally prepared drinks are also used to extinguish fire in times of the shortage of water.

Inside a town each homestead is divided from another by a high wooden fence, to keep some privacy from the forced intimacy with neighbors which results from the high density of the towns (Watson, 2008:72). Wooden fences form continuous walls along the paths within the towns. Förch (2003:5) also stated that fenced homesteads are connected by narrow pathways. Most homesteads have a hut (*alletta*), kitchen (*alletta damttaanqalla*), a grinding house (*alletta yoqa*), granaries (*kossa* (big granary) and *kottarra* (small granary) and animal stables (*qadda*). The houses are made of wood, mud and thatch. The homestead is usually divided into two parts: the upper (*oyta*) division has houses in which the family live, and the lower division (*arxatta*) is the place where the granaries are and livestock are kept (Watson, 2008:72). Given researcher's observation, granaries are also found on the upper level of the homestead. The houses in the compound are located closely together to give some space for backyard gardens.

The family compounds are further organised into sub-communities, which form sections of the town. The sections are further divided into sub-wards (*kanta*, pl. *Kantada*). Sub-wards are also further divided into sub-sub-wards. These wards have special social functions. They may contain more than fifty homesteads of different clans and have large, open public places, *Moora*, where general discussions, religious ceremonies and socialization are carried out. Each sub-sub-ward has at least one *Moora*.

*Moora* are public places of Konso that are located in the traditional towns and at different locations within the walls, and sometimes outside the walls in the open field. All the *Moora* whether be inside the town or outside the town have their own functions. Any individual town whether it is stone walled or not has several public places, which are connected to one another by narrow footpaths both inside and outside the town. Poissonnier (2009: III) stated that in every town, one can find public places, the *Moora*, which are centers of public (male) life. Poissonnier further adds that *Moora* is a place where *waka* statues are erected. *Waka* are memorial wood

statues to a dead man who has killed an enemy (this tradition has out-lives) or game animals such as leopards and lions. *Waka* are erected on the tombs of the individual heroes but not on the *Moora*. I was told that in some towns *waka* are staged on the *Moora*, but I did not observe in the site of this study.

## 4.2. Derivation of the Name and Settlement History

The word Konso (or '*Xonso*' as it is pronounced in Konso language) is used by Konso people to refer to the highland area itself, derived from *Xonso* hill<sup>3</sup> (near Koriya Dekatto town) (Watson, 2009:51). My informants briefly stated that the Konso people believe that the name *Xonso*, refers to the central highland areas not far away from settlement-windy cold enough and suitable for life having dense population and settled for a much longer period as it is also free from problems related to various diseases as we go far from it-*Kommayta*, the peripheral lowlands with sparse and recent settlement. Furthermore, Demeulenaere (2002:81-82) stated that the term *Xonso* refers to the central highlands and is associated with the idea of domesticated nature and security; it is opposed to *Kommayta*-peripheral lowland-area of wilderness and danger.

My informant, KD explained to me that the word describes areas with moderate temperature which are relatively cold and get higher rainfall than the lowland areas surrounding them. Hence, areas with cool temperature are also called *Xonso*. The areas are where the cultivated crops frequently flourish and are able to give a relatively consistent production from year to year as compared to the hotter lower rainfall lowland areas due to the low evaporation and high water retaining capacity of the soil that is resulted from terracing.

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<sup>3</sup> *Xonso* is a term which stands for hills throughout the Konso land which have cool temperature. However, the Koriya Dekatto people believe that it stand for the hill nearby Purqutta and Hulme clusters of Koriya Dekatto town facing Kamolle and Majjalla towns and is relatively taller and cooler than other mountains in Karati region.

The area is also free from tropical diseases like malaria. As a result, the climate is convenient for the settlement of people, and hence most of the nucleated traditional settlements of Konso are highly concentrated in such favorable areas.

According to their oral history, Konso people began their settlement at very early time and began their social life at a place called Aylotta in the Kommayti part of the present Konso district under the spiritual leadership of the *Aylo* family, the founding group of the nine Konso clans. From there, they spread away to the east, west, and northwest directions to settle in different area of the present day district of Konso (Shako, 2004:51).

### 4.3. The Nine Clans of Konso

The Konso are a patrilineal society and eldest sons continue to live in their father's homestead, ultimately inheriting it, and many generations may be present in a homestead at once. Each subsequent son, however, must leave his father's house on marrying and setup his own home (Watson, 2009:72).

The Konso are organized into nine exogamous clans (Shako, 1994). These clans (*kaffa*) are dispersed throughout Konso and have no territorial associations (Hallpike, 2008:156). Hallpike also explained that though some clans are larger and of more ritual importance than others, they are not ranked into superiors and inferiors. The names of nine clans of Konso according to Hallpike (1972; 2008), Shako (1994: 81), Watson (2009) and Lakew (1998) are *Keertitta*, *Paasantta*, *Tokmaletta*, *Eelaytta*, *Maxaletta*, *Eshalaytta*, *Arkamaytta*, *Tikisaytta* and *Sawdatta*. Except some differences in pronunciations, this list is identical to all researchers.

The head of each clan (*Poqqalla*, pl. *poqqallada*) is believed to be a descendent by primogeniture from a known founder. According to Shako (1994) some clans in Konso have more than one head. Lineages like clans are patrilineal and exogamous but unlike clans they are localized (Hallpike, 2008:156). Each lineage also has its own lineage head, also called *Poqqalla*. The members of one Konso clan are regarded as brothers and sisters, therefore sexual relations (marriage) among clan members is considered as incest (*megnerra*), and intra-clan marriage is strictly forbidden. Clans have a sort of corporate personality that is linked to totemic emblems,

forbidden foods, and oath words (Hallpike, 1972; 2008, Shako, 1994; Yilma, 2002 and Mamitu, 2002).

**Table 4: The Nine clans of Konso, their totemic emblems, forbidden foods and special characteristics.**

No.	Clan	Totem	Forbidden food	Special characteristics	Oath word
1	<i>Arkamaytta</i>	<i>Rasota</i> (plant), camel ( <i>kala</i> ), sun ( <i>leta</i> ), God ( <i>waqa</i> ), Falcon ( <i>alateta</i> )	Camel	Intercession to the sky and God for rain	Our Kamel! ( <i>Kalayno!</i> )
2	<i>Eshalaytta</i>	Dik-dik ( <i>sakarita</i> ), kind of worm ( <i>ratota</i> ), hair ( <i>gnirfa</i> )	Unknown	Happy, kind-hearted, praiseworthy, harmless	Our <i>Ishalayta!</i> ( <i>Ishala!</i> )
3	<i>Sawdatta</i>	Earth ( <i>pita</i> ), elephant ( <i>arpa</i> ), monkey ( <i>keltayta</i> ), rat ( <i>tapayta</i> ), locust ( <i>farata</i> ), <i>Karsata</i> (plant)	<i>Karsata</i> (plant)	Destructive	Our <i>Karsata!</i> ( <i>Karsatayno!</i> )
4	<i>Maxaletta</i>	Hyena ( <i>orayta</i> ),	<i>Hompopayta</i> (part of animal body)	Glutton	Our <i>Maxaletta!</i> ( <i>Maxala!</i> ) Our hyena! ( <i>oraytayno!</i> )
5	<i>Keertitta</i>	Squirrel ( <i>kara</i> ), fox ( <i>ka 'alta</i> ), heart ( <i>satata</i> ), <i>Kantayteta</i> (gourd), hornless bull ( <i>moyita</i> )	Heart ( <i>satata</i> )	Serious	Series! ( <i>Xache!</i> ), our gourd! ( <i>Kante!</i> )
6	<i>Paasantta</i>	Lion ( <i>karma</i> ), <i>tipita</i> (plant), kidney ( <i>xala</i> ), fox ( <i>ka 'alta</i> )	Kidney ( <i>xala</i> )	Magician	Our kidney! ( <i>Xalano!</i> )
7	<i>Tikisaytta</i>	Stone Pebbles ( <i>qira</i> ), <i>kunita</i> (plant), <i>napala</i> (bird)	<i>Kunita</i> (plant)	Greedy	Our pebbles! ( <i>qirayno!</i> ), our <i>Kunita!</i> ( <i>kunitayno!</i> )
8	<i>Eelaytta</i>	Fiber of the neck ( <i>xolmayta</i> ), heart	<i>Xolmayta</i> , heart	Anger and skilled craft workers	Our heart! ( <i>satatino!</i> ), our fiber of the neck! ( <i>xolmaytayno!</i> )
9	<i>Tokmaletta</i>	Sheep ( <i>kahirta</i> )	Fat tail of sheep	Nagging, grumbling	Our sheep! ( <i>tokme!</i> Or <i>sunke!</i> ) <i>sunke</i> is the name of sheep

Source: interview with informants, January, 2011

#### 4.4. Konso Cosmology and Religion

Shako (2004:153) stated that in Konso cosmology the universe is divided into three worlds: *Waqqa* (the sky/heaven), *pita* (the earth), and *xatikela* or *Pitakela* (the underworld). Shako indicated *Waqqa* as sky/heaven. Shako does not make distinction between sky/heaven and *Waqqa*. However, Konso believe that *Waqqa* is the power/force residing in the sky (*letta*) and heaven (*monta*). Although Konso people believe in *waqqa*, it is quite misleading to represent *Waqqa* as the creator in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the Konso religion as the straightforward monotheism, just as it is difficult to say to what extent *Waqqa* is for them a “personal” deity (Hallpike, 2008:288). Hallpike also stated that there are no professional theologians or other learned specialists who can give an authoritative insight into their religious beliefs. Moreover Hallpike argued that the Konso are not aware of the possibilities of unbelief and to believe is the sense employed by Christians saying the faith.

*Waqqa* is not supposed to have created the first man and woman as many monotheists believe. But, Konso have a myth which says there was in the beginning a gourd planted by *Waqqa* and it got bigger and bigger until it burst and various people: farmers, craftsmen and *Poqqalla* emerged (Hallpike, 2008:292). *Waqqa* is seen as the founder of the social order, but the responsibility of maintaining this is thought to have been delegated to the old men (Hallpike, 2008:289). Thus blessing is essentially a male function and vested accordingly in the hands of elders, *Poqqalla*, and other functionaries (Hallpike, 2008:289).

*Waqqa* is the source of rain, morality, justice and social order: when it rains the Konso people do not just say “It is raining”, but “*Waqqa* is raining”, and certain phenomena associated with rain, such as thunder and lightning and rainbows, are regarded as manifestations of his power (Hallpike, 2008:288). To the Konso, rain is the urine of *Waqqa* (Shako, 2004:155). Shako also argues *Waqqa* urinates into the earth and fertilizes it so that everything will grow and become available to maintain life. Rain is considered as an expression of *Waqqa's* approval of social conduct (Shako, 2004:155; Hallpike, 1972:22). *Waqqa* also punishes towns that are guilty of too much quarrelling and animosity by withholding the rain from their fields (Hallpike, 1972:223; 2008: 292-293). As Konso people associate the absence of rain with *Waqqa's* response to people's

wrong deeds, they perform a kind of ritual; “cleansing” on the land on which people are in conflict.

*Waqqa* is also believed to have the power of punishing individual wrongdoers by calamities, ill health or death (Hallpike, 1972: 310), and may be appealed to in a dispute so that a liar will be struck by *Waqqa's* vengeance (Shako, 2004:155). Shako also stated that in case of demonstration of severe punishment or settlement of a serious dispute, *Waqqa* strikes symbolically an object, a tree, an animal or a human being with a thunderbolt (*qaqawwa*). According to Shako *Waqqa* can exhibit his anger or disapproval of a certain act by sending thunderbolt.

There is no private prayer to *waqqa* among the Konso, and personal hardships such as disease, the attack of pests on one's own particular fields, finding evil medicine in one's own homestead and having terrible dream are taken to a diviner for help.

On the surface in the sky are heavenly bodies (Shako, 2004:153) such as *iska* (stars) with different characteristics, *lea* (the moon) and *pirtota* (the sun). In the heavens abide *Waqqa* since the time he had been offended by one woman. Long ago *Waqqa* was close to the earth and a woman hooking the leaves of *Moringa* tree and bleed the *Waqqa*. Then the *Waqqa* went far away from the earth (Hallpike, 2008:293). On the earth lives mankind (*innanama*), domestic animals (*horeta*), wild animals (*pinana*), all kinds of vegetation and earthly spirits (Shako, 2004:153). These are believed to be under persistent observation of *Waqqa* (Shako, 2004:153).

In the underworld (*xatikela* or *Pitakela*) euphemized in Konso as *poradukata* (literally “the place of truth”), dwell the spirits of all dead human beings (*karayya*) (Shako, 2004:153). Followers of the traditional religion most of the time swear in the name of the *Karayya* of the family's house where they present saying “*Karayya tikositi a'anna dakayyen*” (Literally “let the ancestral spirits of this house hear me”).

Shako explained that when a person dies, his/her soul (*nessa*) goes to heaven because it belongs to *Waqqa*. The soul (*nessa*) is understood as breathing and whenever a person dies, Konso people say *Waqqa* has taken away her/his soul. The body (*dakinta*) decays in the burial grave (Shako, 2004). *Kelellayta* (the inside-person) (Hallpike, 1972: 160) leaves the body and pursues an independent existence for the subsequent world as *karayya*. The inside-person (*kelellayta*) is

understood as an invisible image of a person and become *Karayya* after a person die and can walk on the earth in hardly visible form (Shako, 2004:154). Hallpike (1972) stated that it is bad to hear and see *karayya* and one would die soon afterwards. I was told that certain individuals have the power to see and talk to *karayya*. Corporately, *karayya* are believed to have a power to summon each individual person living on earth to their subsequent world (Hallpike, 1972). Individuals who have lost consciousness (*liipp'a*), due to serious febrile illness report on the conditions of the nether world and the dead relatives they have met there (Hallpike, 1972).

The name for evil spirit in Konso is *Shetana/Orritta* and some persons can be possessed by them. Evil spirits are believed to be the enemy of both *Waqqa* and humans. *Waqqa* can strike large trees by lightning when it is raining because it is assumed that evil spirits sit in the shade and open their eyes and stretching-out their tongues for *Waqqa*. This has also been noted by Hallpike (1972: 227). Konso people believe that it is not good to shelter under the tree when it is raining. The great plain below Konso is particularly thought of as the home of evil spirits (Hallpike, 1972: 228). Konso people hate traveling outside the town in the dark night and mid day because people believe that it is a special time for evil spirits (Hallpike, 1972: 227). Evil spirits can also cause sickness and certain diseases are attributed to the action of evil spirits (Hallpike, 1972: 310).

The traditional religion of Konso people has undergone serious challenge since the time of its incorporation into the Ethiopian empire in 1890's. In the following years, Christianity; Orthodox and Protestantism introduced have worked seriously against the survival of the traditional Konso religion. Shako (2004) examined the negative impact of mission (protestant) and Orthodox on the traditional culture of Konso. With regard to the change of old religion, Hallpike points in the following paragraph:

*The Sky God, Waqqa, has been easily converted into the Creator God of Christianity, while the evil spirits (all the spirits which cause harm to human beings and what the human beings use) have been transformed into Satan. In the process, of course, the old Sky-Earth opposition has been lost because the whole notion of the Earth has no place in Christianity. The Moora Dawra (sacred public places) and the homesteads of the Poqqalla, within which telling lies is forbidden, have also made the idea of Christian Churches, as sacred places, easily comprehensible to the Konso. The idea of Waqqa as giving moral commandments to men, and the content of the Konso moral code itself has many points of similarity to the Ten Commandments. The sacrificial elements of Konso religion have close parallels in the Old Testament, and the idea of Jesus as the Lamb of*

*God who died for our sins has been readily accepted. The traditional religion was sufficiently similar in a number of respects to allow many Konso to accept the new religion (Hallpike, 2008: 457).*

Nowadays, the dominant religions in Konso as explained by Mamitu (2002:41) are three: the traditional religion, Orthodox and Protestant Christianity (Mamitu, 2002:40). There is also significant number of Muslims, particularly, in Karat town. The *Moora* plays a significant role in the traditional religion of Konso people, but is also, as will be shown latter used by Christians for certain gatherings such as conferences and celebration of the holidays.

#### **4.5. The Generation System**

According to Konso oral history, their generation system has existed from their early days (Shako, 2004:51). Konso generation system is different from most east African age systems, because entry into a grade does not depend upon a person's age, but on the position of his father in the generation grades (Hallpike, 1972). Hallpike stated that the Konso have a generation grading system of the *gada* type of which there are three different varieties in the northern, eastern and western regions of the Konso. These systems are essentially ritual and moral (Hallpike, 1972: 258).

Hallpike states the following four cycles in Konso generation system:

*In more general terms, the systems serve to conceptualize the generations into four principal categories (though there are more than four grades in most cases). The first is that of the useless youngsters, who cannot marry, claim a game animal if they kill it, take part in councils, or sacrifice, and are not held responsible for damage caused by negligence. Above them are the warriors, who also act as a police force, arresting and punishing criminals on the orders of the elders' councils of the towns. They can marry, and are in all other respects full members of society. Senior grades have primarily the responsibility of blessing the warrior grade, to ensure not only its fortitude and success in battle, but it's very survival against sickness and death. They also curse pests which attack crops. Besides their religious functions they represent the collective wisdom of society. Finally, in the fourth category, there are the oldest men, senile, who can do little but sit in the sun and spin cotton, and doze (Hallpike, 1968:261; 2008:96). Thus the generation systems provide an ideal hierarchy of functions for the main ages of man, which is also linked with the principal values and needs of the Konso (2008:96).*

So, they have four grades: children (*Heella*) whom Hallpike named as useless youngsters. The youths (*Xayyolayta*) are warriors grade (as Hallpike calls) and shoulder much of the social responsibilities in a society. The seniors (*Xella*) is considered as the father of the towns and play a significant role in political, ritual and social life of the towns as it will be briefly shown latter under political authorities. The final grade is elders (*Qimmota*), retired groups who have been passed through initiation ceremony and are exempted from social responsibilities as it will be shown under political authorities.

The most prominent characteristics of the generation systems are the prohibition of marriage to men and women who have not yet reached a certain grade, and the determination of one's grade by the grade of one's father (Hallpike, 1970:258). However, these prohibitions have presently out-lived. I found some individuals whom the Konso people call "*Hella Faraytta*"; the children who were born from spouses who got married before the initiation ceremony of their generation grade.

Political power, like today, peacefully passed from the older generation to the younger one after a fixed period of years (Shako, 2004:51). According to Hallpike, the generation set in the three regions of Konso is different in the number of sets: seven in Karati, eight in Takati/Kena and four in Turo. The other major difference is the difference in its organization: two divisions in Karati, three divisions in Takati/Kena (Fasha as shown on the map) and division on the basis of seniority in Turo. The length of the cycle is 18years in Karati, nine in Takati/Kena and five in Turo.

Hallpike (1968; 1972; 2008) explained that on the completion of a cycle everyone moves together into the next grade (1968; 1972; 2008). Metasebia (1998:8) stated that:

*Men's major actors in this system are divided into two major age groups, which are generally called Hirpa and Kalkussa. Each grade is further divided into two sub-sets. Males are initiated to their distinct groups during a special ceremony called Kara, which takes place twice in eighteen years (every seven and eleven years) and marks the transfer of responsibilities from the retiring major grade to the other.*

Metasebia's explanation is valid in case of Karati region, particularly Koriya Dekatto town where two generation sets exist (*Hirpa* and *Kalkussa*). Associated with these generation systems are a number of ceremonies the purpose of which, broadly speaking, is to ensure rainfall, the fertility

of the fields and crops, of women and domestic animals, the absence of disease, internal peace, good hunting, and success in warfare (Hallpike, 1968:260). Many of these ceremonies are held on the *Moora*.

#### **4.6. Indigenous Political Organization**

According to Hallpike (2008:84-5) Konso is divided into three regions, namely; Karati in the east, Takati (now Kena) in the west and Turo in the north. The place called Xolme to the south of Kena region was not mentioned by Hallpike. These regions are divided into different traditional towns. Each region has several towns. Some of these towns are allies and form a strong traditional administrative town. For instance, the walled sister towns such as Dekatto Alakaa, Purqutta and Hulme allied together and form the big town known as Koriya Dekatto.

Each traditional town is autonomous and further sub-divided into *Kantada* (wards), which are responsible for the building of the *Pafta* (thatched house) on their respective ward *Moora*, undertaking the burial ceremony of their respective ward and deciding on every social and political issues pertaining to their respective ward. With regard to the division of towns into different quarters, Yilma (2002: 33) explained that:

*Within each town there are a number of kantada (wards), sub-kantada and sub-sub-kantada. The term kanta is similar to the term neighborhood. Each kanta and the sub-kanta has its own administrative head who is responsible for conducting certain tasks such as mobilizing people to repair town walls, collecting food items needed for ritual. The sub-sub-kanta comprises of 15 to 20 households though its number differs from one sub-kanta to another. This sub-kanta level is chiefly concerned with transporting a sick person to a health center. Burial of the dead is the exclusive responsibility of the sub-kanta which consists of 2 to 3 sub-sub-kantada.*

In my observation of the area, some sub-wards consist more than five to eight sub-sub-wards. Sub-sub-wards consists around 30 households. Each town, ward, sub-ward and sub-sub-ward has its own political institutions which at the same time serve political, social, religious and economic functions.



lineages). The regional *Poqqalla* are senior leaders whose authorities are regional than clan focused. The regional *poqqalla* include Qufa family (the head of *Keertitta* clan in Takati/ Kena region), Kalla family (the head of *Keertitta* clan in Kamole town and some towns in Turo region) and Pamalle family (the head of *Arkamaytta* clan in some towns of Karati region). Together with the management of their own clan fellows, they also deal with matters which involve non-clan mates so long as they live within the territories of their respective domains (Lakew, 1998: 92).

Hallpike (1972) explained that *Moora Poqqalla* are guardians of particular sacred public places of their respective traditional towns. Ideally, there are *Moora* which belongs to a certain *Poqqalla* family. These families have the responsibility to protect these *Moora*. Lineages *Poqqalla* on the other hand are several in number since there are various lineages within a single clan. They are considered to be guardians of their lineages and bless them (Hallpike, 1972).

In conclusion, a *Poqqalla* does not only have religious power but also political authority. The most important political role of all the *Poqqalla* is in the reconciliation of disputes, as they are concerned with the keeping of the peace (Hallpike, 1972). The regional *Poqqalla* is thus, a high authority, who is called into deal with situations that are beyond the control of the town between lineages. The main role played by regional *Poqqalla* as described by Hallpike (1972) is the reconciliation of warring towns or lineages, where he would urge them to make peace. The lineages *Poqqalla* are adjudicating in issues of conflict between individuals within his lineage. It is possible to conclude that besides their ritual role, the *Poqqalla* play a role in settling disputes and fining wrongdoers. They act as agents of peace keepers.

#### **4.6.2. *Appa Timpa* (Father of the Drum)**

The office of *Appa Timpa* is a non-spiritual office and can therefore be considered as the highest political authority at the town level. The *Appa Timpa* holds a drum which symbolizes political authority. Each town has its own sacred drum which symbolizes peace, harmony and rain. The sacred drums are held by the *Appa Timpa* (father of the drum) and circulated annually among the families who by tradition are known to be holders of such sacred drums (Lakew, 1998: 67). According to FGD participants the name of the drum of Koriya Dekatto town is *Aypo* and circulates among prominent families within the town.

The *Appa Timpa* and *Xella* (the generation in power) are always described as the main authorities keeping law and order in the town (Watson, 1998:217). These officers are seen as working together (Hallpike, 1972). The *Appa Timpa* is responsible for the law and order of the town (Watson, 1998:219). Usually cases are dealt at neighborhood level by elders, but if resolution fails, the case is referred to the *Appa Timpa*, the highest judicial authority in the towns. His decisions are binding and an attempt to refuse the punishment he had decided on would result in sanctions called *duffeta/sereta* (excluding) someone, i.e. exclusion from community life. Thus, no one will work with the wrongdoer, no one will give him fire or water, no one will carry the sick person of the household to the health centers, and no one will bury a person. Such sanctions can be applied at the lowest level, at the neighborhood level. In that case a wrongdoer may change his membership to another ward within the same town. But when the sanction is applied at a town level, it will have a serious consequence where the person is even forced to leave the town. For such serious measures, men meet on the *Moora* and agree to destroy the wrongdoer's house. Once such a sanction has been applied against someone, this person has no chance to be reintegrated into the society. There is no chance for apology, even if the wrongdoer begs for a different kind of serious punishment. In making decisions the *Appa Timpa* calls the elders and the generation in power to come and discuss the case and advise him. Some of these decisions are made at the house of *Appa Timpa* while others on the *Moora*. Many *Appa Timpa* are at the time members of *Poqqalla* family.

#### 4.6.3. *Xella* (Youths and the Generation in Power)

*Xella* refers to the young energetic males that carry out economic, political and social roles and also all the people in the most junior generation. *Xella* is a group which stands for maintaining social order and involve in social affairs such as taking sick person to medical centers, building wards' terraces, cleaning water wells and ponds and burying corpse. They are backbone of the society and assume the responsibility of protecting the territory and resources of their respective town. They support *Appa Timpa* in the process of decision making. The decision of *Xella* is binding. They carry out the orders of *Appa Timpa*. They are messengers of the town and carry out all the service of the town. The *Xella* is a kind of an executive body that enforces the decisions passed by other authorities, such as *Appa Timpa*, the *elders* and *Poqqalla*. They also punish

individuals who did not participate in public work, such as burials, cleaning ponds and water wells, taking sick people to the health centers and so forth.

The generation in power is considered as father of *Moora*. In any public discussion they finalize speech. No one is allowed to deliver speech anymore after a member of the generation in power delivers the final speech.

#### 4.6.4. *Qimmota* (The Elders)

As clearly elaborated in the chapter on the Konso generation system, it is not one's chronological age, but it is one's father's generation grade which determines one's membership in a certain generation. Though, the members of a retired generation do not have the same biological age, they are considered as elders. Individuals whose children got married are also considered as elders but involve in community works. However, the retired generation grade do not involve in heavy tasks of the community. Elders are the most respected group among Konso and in most cases run routine affairs such as resolution of disputes that may arise between two individuals in a community or a wider level between groups. The conflict between family members is also reconciled by the elders.

Elders play a great role in the traditional administration of Konso people (Mamitu: 2002). Most of the time they pass their time in recreation (drinking *jaqqa*, playing *takeka*- a chess like play on the wooden board) and doing easy tasks such as spinning cotton and sewing cloths and broken gourds. Konso people consider their elders as experiences, wise and knowledgeable group. Members of the retired generation are the first to speak in public meetings held on the *Moora*. They participate in conflict resolution between individuals and towns and act as advisors for the generation in power. During public dances they appear on the front line and enter into the *Moora* before the junior generation and in the process of taking the corpse to the burial area and after it, they appear on the front line. Elders contribute much to the socialization of children by telling stories and riddles on the *Moora*.

#### **4.6.5. *Dawra/ Nama-Dawra (Neutral Town/Neutral Man)***

Enmity and Conflict between Konso traditional towns is common. When two towns are advancing to war, other towns would side on their allies as they had formed long held traditional alliances. Konso traditions on the origins of these alliances are vague (Halpike, 1970). However, some Konso towns are considered as neutral (*Dawra*). The *Dawra* are a group of some recognized towns that are forbidden to take part in conflicts and considered as janitors of peace. *Dawras* stand between the disputing towns of Konso and try to stop the fighting by mythical sanctions. *Dawra's* role in mediating between the conflicting parties and the respect and obedience they get from Konso people is described by Hallpike (1972) and Metasebia (1998). The traditional town of Lehayti is regarded as *Dawra* and is always expected to negotiate the combating towns of Konso. Neutral towns send neutral persons (most of the time the *Poqqalla*) to urge peace between the combating towns. These peacemakers from neutral town are known as *Nama-Dawra (neutral man)*, people who forbid the fighting or quarrelling among traditional towns.

#### **4.6.6. *Shorokota (Literally, Rich Persons)***

As described by Hallpike (2008: 116) *Shorokota* is someone who performs certain functions by the hereditary right. *Shorokota* are persons whose role is more of ritual than political. *Shorokota* are persons in the towns whose role is to cleanse the towns in case of conflict within the town either between individuals or wards. Bloodshed and much quarrel is believed to incur disease and death so that it should be cleansed. Hallpike (2008:116) stated that *Shorokota* is essentially someone who performs by hereditary right certain functions for the town (or in some cases the region) which we would describe as of a religious nature. It is possible for a *Poqqalla* to be a *Shorokota*, but not all *Shorokota* are *Poqqalla* (Hallpike, 2008:116). In the past the position of *Shorokota* was prestigious. However, the position of *Shorokota* was deteriorated and is not well functioning today.

#### **4.6.7. *Porshotta (Ward Leaders)***

In the past the gates of the walled towns were closed during the night time and this responsibility was given to the so called *Porshotta*. *Porshotta* also engaged in resolving conflict between

individuals in their respective ward. Porshotta punishes individual wrongdoers in their respective ward. They have the responsibility to mobilize labour for community work such as repairing wards' terraces and cleaning water wells and ponds. During ritual sacrifices that are performed during calamities like shortages of rain, sudden accidents, war and occurrences of certain epidemics, etc, they collect food from households. My informant stated that whenever a tree on *Moora* and *dina* (community's waste depositing areas) is dried up, only the *Porshotta* can use it as fire wood. During the ceremony called *Xomma* (where adults take away food from families who did not keep it in secured places) *Porshotta* erect a wooden pole called *kittota* for the group (see more about *xomma* under section 5.4.2.1 and 6.2).

In conclusion, everyday life in Konso is made up of interactions between people which are at once, social, cultural, ritual, economic and political. Therefore, there is the degree of overlap between the above discussed authorities. The office of *Poqqalla*, *Appa Timpa*, *Xella*, *Shorokota*, *elders* may be held by one individual at the same time. The position of *Porshotta* is not as prestigious as other authorities and therefore can be separately dealt. It is possible to conclude that in Konso political power is deeply embedded in other kinds of power, from religious, political to economic power.

## Chapter Five: The Elements, Usage and Functions of *Moora*

### 5.1 Elements of *Moora* and their Symbolic Meanings

The *Moora* are not only open places within and outside town, they have many elements which carry symbolic meanings. These include: the big thatched house (*Pafta*), the open free space (*Palpala/Pahpaha*), the generation poles (*Olahitta*), the flat stones, the stones of manhood (*Daka Xella/ Daka dirumma*), the circular stones (*Arumma*), the tree for shade (*Qoyira Kattaa*) and the animal compartment (*Qoqqopa*). Since the structure, form and function of different *Moora* can vary, the elements found on them also vary. For instance, none of the outside town *Moora* has a thatched house, flat stones and an animal compartment, while the generation pole and circular stones are commonly found on every *Moora*, whether inside or outside the town. A brief description on the elements of *Moora* and their symbolic meaning is made here below.

#### 5.1.1 The Big Thatched House (*Pafta/Makana*)

Most inside town *Moora* in Koriya Dekatto town have one big thatched house, called *Pafta*. It is an approximately 10meter high wooden building, which is open on all sides. The ground floor is supported by juniper and timber lateral pillars (*qapaya*). A high pole (pillar) in the middle of the building is called *tuda*. The niche is a suitable place located in the higher section lined with flat timber from one to the other end is comfortable for sleeping. A small opening is left in the middle just above the central pole which also serves as a footing step to access high in to the niche. There is an angled thatched roof covering a wooden ceiling covered with grass. The floor of the *Pafta* is covered with flat stones placed for sitting and sleeping. The structure of the *Pafta* is different from ordinary houses, as it is wide in diameter and tall in height.

The *Pafta* on *Moora Lehaytii* which was under construction in Dekatto Alaka is a huge house which as I explained can stay for over 50 years without rebuilding. It has eight lateral pillars, one pillar in the middle, two horizontally placed big woods; one in the front and the other at the back and the vertically placed flat woods. Regarding the general structure and usage of the *Pafta*, Lakew (1998: 58) noted:

*It is constructed in such a way that its lower part does not have walls but is left open. Standing on a number of wooden pillars fixed in the middle and in all the four corners and between them, Pafta stands tall impressively. The upper part which is thatched is suspended until it is close to one meter height from the ground and is closed horizontally with logs put in a row and with a small entrance somewhere in the middle. The upper part, which is accessible through the small hole, accommodates as many as twenty or more married and unmarried men to sleep and pass the night there. The lower part which is open is elevated from the ground with big pieces of flat stones. These stones are put in a horizontal way to allow rest and sleep and enjoy the shade of the Pafta. It is old men and children who enjoy the shade of the Pafta, but not women. Sometimes sick men also sleep there...on the outer part of the structure of the Pafta, there exists a miniature of the cone-shaped roof itself which is put on top of it to give it an impressive image. This small structure is called Kekesha.*

According to different informants, the *kekesha* signifies prestige and protects *Pafta* against damage from the top. *Kekesha* on private houses imply the same meaning and are used as fodder during the time of serious grass shortage. The neck of the *kekesha* is tied with yellow colored fruits of *Killipoota* plant (*solanum incanum*) tied on a big rope. Despite a decorative function, these fruits are said to protect the *Pafta* from the evil eye. On the apex of the every *Pafta* is decorative pot (Shinohora, 1993). These pots are unique in their structure and more expensive than ordinary pots put on private houses. The pots used for *Pafta* are usually brought from *Gewada* (neighboring group) and nowadays often painted with green, yellow and red colors, to symbolize Ethiopian flag.

Given the observation of the researcher, not all *Moora* have a *Pafta* but most of the inside town *Moora* have one. Some of the *Pafta* today carry iron roofs instead of grass. None of the open field *Moora* the researcher visited had *Pafta*. I was told that the reason behind is due to the fact that people do not sit and sleep on the open field *Moora*. The main purpose of building a *Pafta* is to usher adults, and to offer a place for guests to sleep in the night. It can also serve as a shade during daytime and a shelter during rain in the rainy season. Adult men of the town sleep in the *Pafta* to defend the walled town from the attack of enemies and wild animals and old men and sick persons and children sit and play under its roof during day time. According to informants, the more *Pafta* in a given ward exist, the more the ward is considered as strong.

Every member of the community should be involved in the construction of a *Pafta*. Even though, the *Pafta* mostly give services for males, the contribution of women in the construction is great,

as they carry grass for the roof from distant places. Men bring the big woods, flat stones and build the *Pafta*, while women prepare the food for the men throughout the process. The completion of the construction of the *Pafta* ends with a ceremony for which young women of the ward, including those who have been married off to other wards have to prepare *Jaqqa*, a local alcoholic drink, which will be drunk on the commemoration day.

On the commemoration day, both men and women of the town gather on the *Moora* when the pot is put on the roof, the women make a piercing ululation. An ox is slaughtered and its meat is eaten by the male members of the community. Some amount of meat is also distributed for women of the respective ward.



Plate 1. The *Pafta* on *Detatii Moora* in the Parkutta section of Dekatto Alaka

### 5.1.2 Generation Pole (*Olahitta*)

The erection of wooden poles (*olahitta*) is an important part of Konso culture. The tall juniper trees are cut down from the sacred forests of clan heads and are erected on every *Moora* both inside and outside Koriya Dekatto town. Each generation is responsible for the erection of one generation pole when taking power from the old generation. This period lasts eighteen years. Special ceremonies mark the corresponding hand-over of all roles and responsibilities to the subsequent generation. Each newly-responsible generation erects a newly-cut tall juniper tree

(*pirpirta*) against the trees of the old generations to symbolize itself and binds the tree together with the earlier ones by a creeper plant named *Xalala* (*Cissus rotundifolia*). Under the generation pole, another important ritual plant, *ellallasha* (*Cf. Crinum sp.*) is planted.

If the process of erecting the generation pole is done on a *Moora* used by the three cluster towns of Koriya Dekatto i.e. Dekatto Alaka, Hulme and Purqutta, this is marked by the ritual slaughtering of an ox and on some *Moora* a goat is sacrificed as per the tradition of the society. A small pole is erected by members of the wards without sacrifices on *Moora* which are not used by the three clusters. If an erected generation pole is blown down by wind or simply falls down, again an ox or a goat is sacrificed for the erection process.

As explained by Taddese (1991: 332):

*The erection of the olahitta is sometimes done as part of the rites of passage of generation-sets and the naming of a younger generation-set. It is accompanied by sacrifices of a bull. On erecting the olahitta and the Xalala (Cissus rotundifolia), cow dung, water, and chime from the intestines of a slaughtered animal are put into the pit. The sacrifice of the beast is performed by the owner of the Moora. The practice of erecting the olahitta in terms of time and animal offering varies in the Moora of the regional Poqqalla...prayers and blessings accompany the erection of the olahitta.*

As described in chapter four, there are persons whose major role is to protect some public places. These persons are the *Poqqalla Moora* (heads of the *Moora*), whom Taddese refer as priests and owners of *Moora*. In fact, Konso do not have priests and no equivalent translation can be found in Konso language. However, the roles the *Poqqalla* play can be compared to some extent with the role priests play in Christian churches: Konso *Poqqalla* pray to *waqa* (traditional Konso sky-God), bless the people and sometimes curse diseases and pests which destroy crops.

The generation poles are erected to symbolize the transfer of power from one generation to another. The youngest generation pole is always the tallest, shorter ones represent the previous generation grades. The height difference of the generation pole has its own symbolic meaning: the tallest tree represents the generation in power exceeding everybody in the community and also previous generations. By counting the poles, it is possible to understand the number of generation-sets that have been administering the town, since its foundation. But, since the poles are made of trees, some of them decompose after some time, so that it is difficult to know the

number of generations that have administered the town in the remote past. Women are not allowed to participate in the erection of the generation pole but they can watch the ceremony from the corners of the *Moora*. It is also forbidden for fertile women to sit under the generation pole. If they would, people believe it would make them infertile/ barren.

On the generation poles on inside town *Moora*, skulls of animals can be seen. According to different informants, a person who kills animals such as monkeys, apes, dik-dik and other wild animals should cut down their heads and sometimes tails and hang them to the generation pole of their respective ward *Moora*. As monkeys and apes destroy crop on people's field, their heads are hanged on generation poles in order to embarrass animals. The skulls of lions and leopards are only placed on the *kopta* tree (*ziziphus mucronata*) on *Halawtilla Moora* in the open field. They are hanged on the open field *Moora* in order to show that animals are found in the wilderness. The number of skulls on the generation pole represents their prolific hunting ability (*xetalumma*).



Plate 2. Skulls of animals on the generation poles on *Dayile Moora* (inside town) in the Illika section of Dekatto Alaka

### 5.1.3 Stone of Manhood (*Daka Dirumma* or *Daka Xella*)

The erection of generation poles and stones of manhood form an important part of Konso rituals. Each generation is remembered for whatever its good achievements which are not only weighed in victory over enemies but also in proper administration of the towns. Thus, during their retirement they erect a relatively tall stone of manhood of approximately 2m height, either along main roads or on inside town *Moora*. On inside town *Moora*, one can also see a number of such stones (*daka dirumma*) erected for the commemoration of victories in battles of the town.

According to informants, the retiring generation grade should only erect a single stone along the main road outside the towns in memory for their good administration skills. Only generations who have achieved victories in battles and/or confiscated property from their enemies, whether from Konso or outsiders are allowed to erect their generation pole on the *Moora*. *Daka dirumma* or *daka Xella*, are erected in memory of particular events or more precisely to mark victories in a battle over both internal and external enemies. Certain rituals surround its erection of which the sacrifice of a bull precedes the erection. As the stones are erected in memory of heroic achievements of a generation set, they are named after the respective generation they stand for. For example, one can find the erected stone of the generation set called *Onaylla* on *Detatii Moora* inside the town of Dekatto Alaka, six stones of manhood erected on *Jemotte Moora* in the Purqutta cluster town. Several stones of manhood are also visible throughout the territory of the Koriya Dekatto town along the main roads. These were erected for generations who did not achieve any victory over enemies. These stones and the generation who had erected them are remembered in songs. Particularly women sing a song for these stones whenever they are working or when they dance on the *Moora*. Men also remember these stones and praise the generations that erected them when they are working mainly on their agricultural field, either individually or in group.

Regarding the *daka Xella*, Taddese (1991:333) gives the following explanation:

*One can find as many as five or six "stone of manhood" erected in the Moora in memory of successful generation-sets who returned victorious. The stones are named after the sets. Prayer and blessing is performed during the erecting of the stones.*

The number of stones of manhood in a particular town can help to estimate the age of the town. However, since sometimes stones of manhood are removed from their original places due to several factors such as erosion and flood, age estimation by these stones is not reliable. A large number of the stones of manhood were erected on *Halawtilla Moora* in the open field. *Halawtilla Moora* is located in the open field on the main road which leads to different towns of Konso. Therefore, while passing through this *Moora*, people from Koriya Dekatto town as well as people from other towns can see the stones and admire and praise the generation sets that had erected these stones. Generally, the researcher observed, stones of manhood are erected in places where they can be easily seen by everybody. Not all *Moora*, neither the inside nor outside towns have stones of manhood, because generations prefer to erect their memorial stones on the *Moora* that are used by all cluster towns of Koriya Dekatto. Of all the inside town *Moora* the researcher visited, *Jemotte Moora* contained the largest number of stones of manhood. This is due to the fact that this *Moora* is highly respected so that generations prefer to erect their memorial stones on it. *Jemotte Moora* is highly respected and valued due to the reason that it is the only *Moora* used as swearing place as it will be shown under the function of the *Moora*. According to my informants, the stones of manhood on this *Moora* have been erected starting from the left to the right so that when one moves from left to right the age of the stone of manhood gets younger.



Plate 3. Stones of manhood on the *Jemotte Moora* in the Purqutta

#### 5.1.4 Circular Stones (*Arumma*)

Each generation set puts circular stones (*arumta*) on the *Moora* it had preferred when it came to power. According to informants and my own observation, the circular stones called *Arumma* (pl.) are placed on *Moora* both inside the town and in the open field. These circular stones are carried and brought to the *Moora* by the generation in power from the Yanta River, some 20kms north of Koriya Dekatto town. The stones carry meanings. *Arumta* symbolizes strength and unity of the generation in power. The generation set puts one *arumta* in the house of the family holding ritual properties of town while others on the *Moora*. The house is named as generation's house (*tika Xella*).

According to my informant KG, an old man from Dekatto Alaka explained that circular stones are used to measure the weight lifting capacity of Konso adult men. The circular stones have different sizes and males from childhood to adulthood compete with their age mates to lift them up. The *Arumma* also retain an important place in the ritual life of the community. Konso men most of the time carry spears and knives when they go to the fields for work or to cut fodder for their domestic animals. Whenever a male member of the community leaves the town, first sharpens spears and knives on the stones on the *Moora*. Men sharpen their spears and knives on the *Arumma* of an open field *Moora*. Additionally, KS, an elder informant from Dekatto Alaka stated that the *Xella* (generation in power, see chapter four) sharpen their spears when leaving for a ritual hunt during the *Kara* initiation ceremony. Taddese (199:333) also stated that: "the *arumta* stones on certain *Moora* are used for ritual sharpening of the spears of the generation-set prior to game hunting".

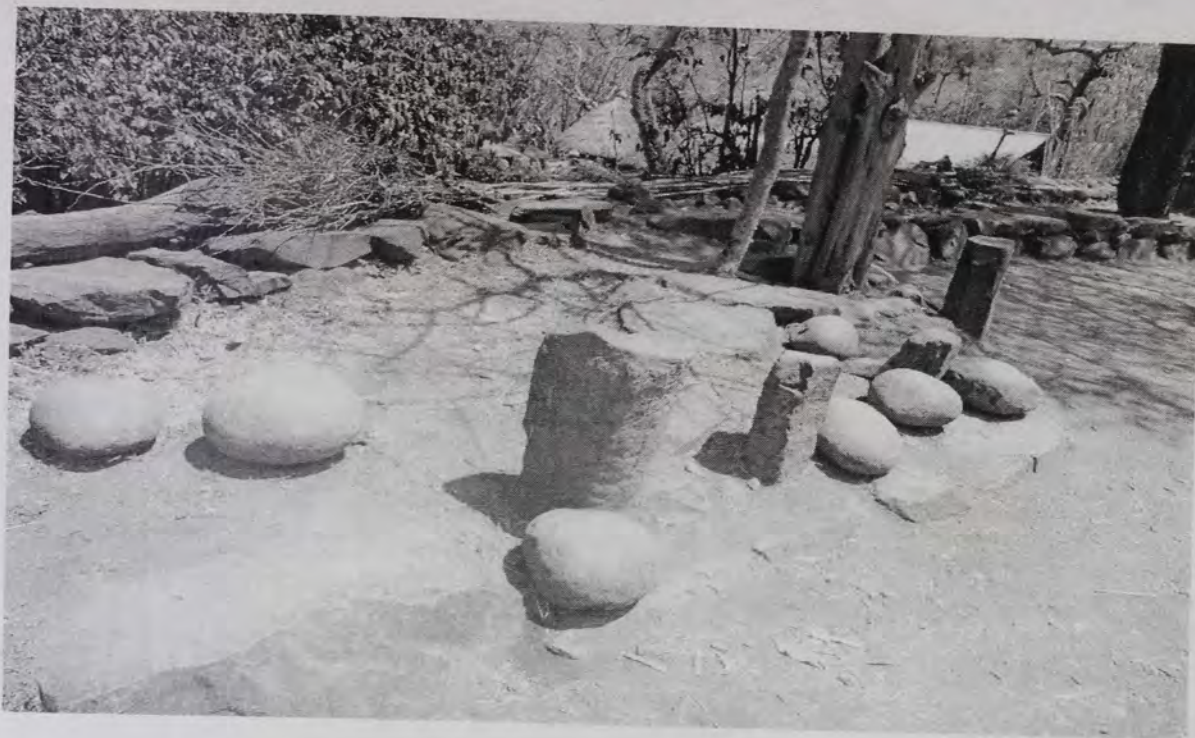


Plate 4. Circular tones, *Arumma*, on *Oltiya Moora* in Hulme

#### 5.1.5 Open Free Space (*Pahpaha/Palpala*)

All *Moora* in the open field are relatively large fields which can accommodate a large number of people. These fields serve as the place for public meetings for important community discussions. *Moora* such as *Nakaylle*, *Orpasho*, *Halawtilla* and *Kolalta* are open free space *Moora* of Koriya Dekatto town, they all have large open fields, while only some of the inside town *Moora* have open big enough spaces for public meetings. Political meetings on the inside town *Moora* are mostly carried out on flat stones placed for the purpose of sitting and sleeping. Open free spaces on the *Moora* are mainly used as “playing places” and only sometimes for political and ritual activities. What is called “play” to the Konso are different dancing ceremonies and games. In Koriya Dekatto town, inside town *Moora* such as *Kitolle*, *Oltiya*, *Jemotte*, *Kenpello*, *Detatii*, *Koptalle*, *Dayille*, *Poloqii*, *Hankalla* and *Kayyo* have an open play ground.

#### 5.1.6. Tree for Shade (*Qoyira Kattaa*)

Open field *Moora* can have different types of trees, in some cases the *Moora* look like small forests. *Moora* inside the town usually have at least one tree for shade. Taddese (1991: 334)

explained that mainly the *Kopta* tree (*pinna Christ*) can be found on Konso *Moora*. Taddese's explanation might have been correct during the time of his study, but the observation of this research revealed that it is not *kopta* trees (*Pinna Christ*) that are dominating, but rather the *qahtiita* tree (*Commiphora Africana*). Other types of trees also exist on *Mooras*. These include: *Detata* (*Accacia totlis*), *Hankalta* (*Balanites aegyptica*), *Tolohtta* (*Cordia monoica*) and *Takeka* (*Caesalpinia volkensii*). As stated above, open field *Moora* can look like small forests and have different types of plant species. Both cutting a tree and collecting firewood on the *Moora* is strictly forbidden and an attempt to do so would result in serious punishment. Only the *Porshotta* can collect dried woods on the *Moora* for themselves.

According to KG, many *Mooras* were named after the trees planted on them. For example, *Moora Detatii* is named after *dettatta* tree (*Accacia totlis*), *Moora Daylle*, after the *Da'ayta* tree (*Glorya declor*), *Moora Hankala*, after the *hankalta* tree (*Balanites aegyptica*) and *Moora Koptale*, after the *kopta* tree (*pinna Christ* or *zizifus*). Except *Detatii Moora* where *kopta* tree (*Pinna Christ* or *zizifus*) is found, all the above mentioned *Moora* contain the trees they were named after. Informants stated that *Moora Detatii* in the past had *dettatta* tree (*Accacia totlis*) but when it died and it was replaced by a *kopta* (*Pinna Christ* or *zizifus*) tree.

#### 5.1.7. Animal Compartment (*Qoqqopa*)

The observation of this research revealed that some of the *Moora* inside the town have an animal compartment, i.e. a kind of stone enclosure in the corner of the *Moora*. In this enclosure animals that were lost in the neighboring towns and found are kept until the owner come to claim them. A good example is on the *Kayyo Moora* in Dekatto Alaka cluster. According to the explanation of informants, taking someone's lost animals has been strictly forbidden among the Konso society since centuries. One may find lost animals such as cows, goats and sheep from other towns somewhere; in that case the animals should be brought to the animal compartment on the *Moora* where they are kept safely until the owner searches for them.

Livestock merchants, who cannot keep a large number of animals in their houses, also keep their livestock in the stone enclosure on the *Moora* during holidays a large number of oxen are slaughtered by work parties, wards, lineage members and other group of individuals. These oxen are kept in the compartment on the *Moora* until the celebration day.

## 5.2. The Origin and the Usage of *Moora*

According to the description of my informants, when the Konso people came from three directions to the area they live in today. First, they lived dispersed in different places but due to the attack of the families and individuals by enemies, people agreed to live together in one town. Many of the nucleated settlements were the surrounded by stone walls built for defensive purpose against enemies and dangerous wild animals. These fortified towns have their own public places, *Moora*.

Historically, *Moora* have emerged when the originally settled people occupied their residential houses. Small flat topped stone terrace (*jallaqqa*) attached to the fences of the some private houses, usually near the gate of the compartment were constructed. My informant, KD confirmed that the *jallaqqa* serve to let old people sit for their leisure and entertainment. In the past, elders used to smoke a tobacco pipe called *kayya* on the *jallaqqa*. They are places where the elders of the family and other individual members sit to discuss on neighborhood matters. Moreover, they were designed for elders to sit there and appreciate the nature or to observe children playing in the space next to the compound. The young people share experience from elders sitting on the *jallaqqa*. Although, *jallaqqa* can today not be found near private houses, they can easily be seen at the main gate of the compounds of pioneer families. Remnants of *jallaqqa* can still be found next to some private houses that have lived long in the towns.

The system of arranging *jallaqqa* to let elders and other individuals sit and leaving open spaces next to private compounds for children to play from the very beginning of the settlement has been the foundation for the emergence of the then public place, *Moora*. Hence, with the passage of time, when the people began settling closely together in a specific area, they might have probably made their common place where they meet and discuss about different issues of life. It was through this process that open public places were carefully designed and being consistently used among Konso people. In every traditional town these places can easily be found serving many purposes. My informants, especially KD and KS stated that the system of designing and building *Moora* has existed since the early days of the compact settlement in the area.

There exist different types of *Moora* serving different purposes. During my interviews, whenever I asked someone to define *Moora*, she/he automatically mentions its purposes. Informants defined *Moora* as an open public place where different social, political and ritual activities of the people are performed. In due fact, the *Moora* can be understood from the perspective of its functions.

### 5.3. Types of *Moora*

There exist different types of *Moora* in different traditional towns of Konso. These public places have certain things in common. They are all open for public usage, respected and highly valued by the society, have certain elements, and so forth. However, it is very difficult to classify *Moora* in to different categories.

Some writers such as Hallpike (1972; 2008) and Watson (1998) classify *Moora* into two dichotomies: sacred and profane. Their classification is based on their usage: some *Moora* are used for swearing and important ritual ceremonies and others are routinely used for day to day activities of the community. In the article written by ARCCIKCL (2008: 55-57) the *Moora* were classified into five categories: main *Moora* (the main meeting sites for all the people of the whole town), swearing *Moora* (where wrongdoers swear oaths), watching *Moora* (located on high ground of the town from which people could watch their surroundings and could pass information about the coming of an enemy), wards' *Moora* (Wards people perform cultural ceremonies and rituals) and general purpose *Moora* (located at main roads where non-Konso travelers take rest).

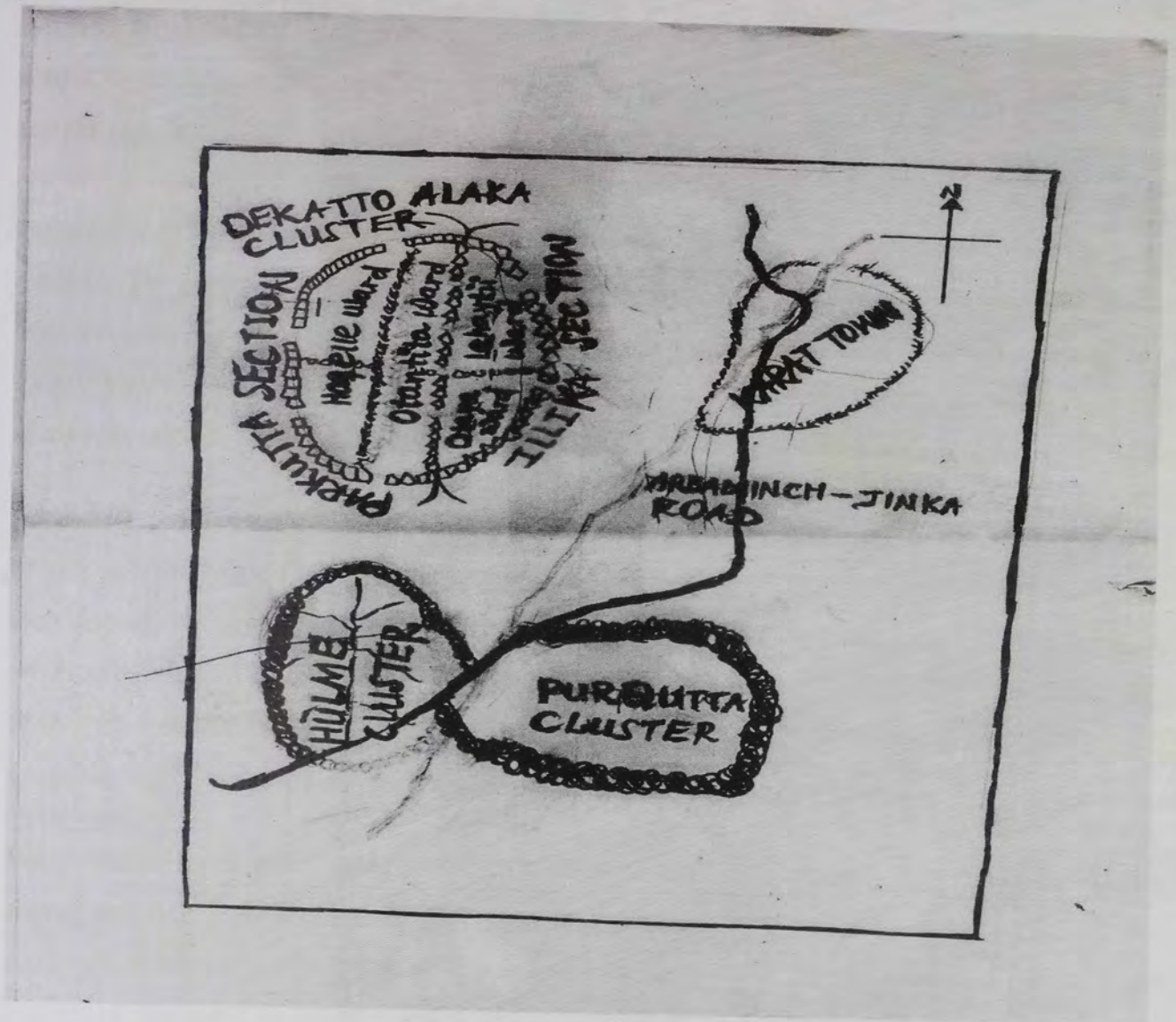
Both, the dichotomy given by Hallpike (1972; 2008) and Watson (1998) and the classification made by ARCCIKCL (The Association for Research and Conservation of Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Landscapes) have never been approved by the informants and FGD participants of this research. For instance, my informant, KG explained that it is impossible to put *Moora* in hierarchical order, i.e. to say one *Moora* is greater or more important than others. Although the functions differ, all *Moora* have equal status and are equally valued among Konso. Thus, based on the information I was given and the observation I have made, I decided to classify the *Moora* on the basis of their location: inside town and outside town *Moora*.

#### 5.4. Types of *Moora* in Koriya Dekatto Town

Koriya Dekatto town is amongst the earliest traditional stone walled towns in Konso land. Koriya Dekatto, a walled town in Karati region of the *woreda* is a collective name for the three clusters walled towns (Dekatto Alaka, Hulme and Purqutta). Dekatto Alaka is located a few hundred meters west of Karat (the capita of the *woreda*), both Purqutta and Hulme walled towns are located to the southwest of Dekatto Alaka walled town and are separated by Konso-Jinka road (ARCCIKCL: 113). It has the population of around 7,814 souls. Koriya Dekatto town is amongst the ten stone walled towns where are currently registered as world heritage in UNESCO.

Each cluster town of Koriya Dekatto town is divided into sections and these sections were further divided into wards. My informants explained that the criterion for the division of the town into wards is based on the founders of different wards who have been started settlement there.

Each cluster town of Koriya Dekatto has its own inside town public places, *Moora*, but they have several outside town *Moora* in common. Some of these *Moora* are used by the three communities during common ceremonies such as the transfer of power from the old generation to the subsequent generation. More than forty *Moora* were identified in Koriya Dekatto town, serving different purposes for the community. Due to the shortage of time, I selected some *Moora* for description. These include some inside town *Moora* and outside the towns, which are commonly used by the three cluster towns during common ceremonies.



Map 3: The sketch map of Koriya Dekatto town

#### 5.4.1. *Moora* Inside the Town

There are thirty-seven *Moora* inside Koriya Dekatto town; seventeen in the Dekatto Alaka cluster, six in the Hulme cluster and fourteen in the Purqutta cluster. These *Moora* have different structures and functions. Also the elements these *Moora* contain vary from one *Moora* to the other. According to informants like KD and KG, inside town *Moora* were established in the early beginning of the compact settlement. They have been carefully planned, designed and built to give many services.

The oldest *Moora* are located in the center of the town. Hence, the nucleolus settlement has started in the very beginning in a small area from where it expanded into all directions into the surrounding areas. Both in the Hulme and Purqutta and Dekatto Alaka clusters of Dekatto town old *Moora* are found in the center of the compact settlement. For example *Moora* such as *Haqelle*, *Koptalle*, *Daylle*, *Poloqii*, *Oltiyya*, *Jemotte*, *Kempello* and others are located in the center of the town. As it was explained under section 5.1.6, many of these *Moora* were named after the trees planted on them. For example, *Moora Detatii* is named after *dettatta* tree (*Accacia totlis*), *Moora Daylle* after *Da'ayta* tree (*Glorya declor*), *Moora Hankala*, after *hankalta* tree (*Balanites aegyptica*), and *Moora Koptalle* after *kopta* tree (*Pinna Christ* or *zizifus*).

According to informants, each generation grade is responsible for either establishing their own *Moora* or rebuilding and repairing the thatched house built by the previous generations. As members of the same generation live dispersed in all wards of a town, they are responsible to repair old thatched houses on their respective ward's *Moora*. They can also establish a new *Moora*. During the time of this research the thatched house on *Moora Leahytii* in Dekatto Alaka town was being rebuilt by *Karpahsha*<sup>4</sup> generation set of the respective ward.

For a detailed description, some inside town *Moora* which provide services to the three clusters during communal ceremonies such as *Kara* ceremony were selected. The research showed that most of the *Moora* in the center of compact settlements have different elements to those at the corners of the town. Given the researcher's observation, new *Moora* are still being established. The new *Moora* named as *Moora Kutatta* in the eastern corner of the Purqutta cluster was under construction during the time of the research.

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<sup>4</sup> *Karpahsha* is a generation grade which was in power in the town of Koriya Dekatto during the time of this study. They are responsible to defend the boundary of their town, repair thatched houses which were built in the past, exercise authority in the town and all other community responsibilities.

#### 5.4.1.1. *Moora Jemotte*

According to informants, *Moora Jemotte* is the common swearing *Moora* (in local language *Moora xaxa*) of the three cluster towns until now. There, an oath is sworn when someone is accused of having harmed someone else and there is no witness. This *Moora* is highly respected and valued by the members of the community. Wrongdoers swear oaths to show that they are innocent. Swearing is also done when men are disputing over unclear boundary of compounds and agricultural land or property. Disputants would swear by touching the stone of truth (*daka dukatta*), erected in the east corner of this *Moora* to prove their innocence. It is believed by the local people that if someone does not tell the truth, this would incur death on the liar.

*Moora Jemotte* belongs to the Pata<sup>5</sup> family. This *Moora* is not the private possession of this family, rather they are responsible to make sacrifices on ritual ceremonies that are performed every seven and eleven years during the transfer of power from the old to the subsequent generation set. The Pata is said to have spiritual power called *hada* (similar to curse). It was believed that the Pata can curse and inflict death on an evildoer by pouring boiled coffee at its homestead (ARCCIKCL, 2008: 123). This *Moora* is located close to the Pata homestead. But nowadays this family is one of the prominent Christians and does not involve in cultural practices of the Konso. Now a days this is done by another person from the same lineage performs ritual sacrifices on this *Moora*.

During the transfer of power ritual sacrifice is done on *Moora*. Concerning *Jemotte Moora*, my informants, especially KK and KS, stated that during the generation power transfer ceremony there is a ritual called *Dota*, where a bull of either red or brown color, healthy and with unbroken horns is suspended high on four logs carried by the power taking generation members. The animal is stabbed at its nape from underneath by a ritual spear, by members of the ritual family of

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<sup>5</sup> The Pata family is one of the pioneer families of Koriya Dekatto town and lives in Purqutta cluster. This family is the head of Sawdatta clan and was believed to have the power of cursing the wrongdoers. However, this family is currently an active member of the protestant church and the role they had played in the past does not exist.

Pata. The ox's meat is roasted and eaten by the gathered men including children of both sexes who were watching the process of the ceremony; where as its cud and skeleton are buried under the generation pole and its skin is cut into stripes and given to the generation set members who then tie it around their arms.

In addition to the ritual function, the *Moora Jemotte* serves as a public dancing field for the Purqutta cluster. People also sit there and play games, such as the *takeka*, a chess like game. The *Jemotte Moora* contains elements such as big house (*pafta*), the open field, generation poles (*olahitta*), circular stones (*arumma*) and different species of trees. Also several stones of manhood were erected at different times by different generations on *Jemotte Moora*.

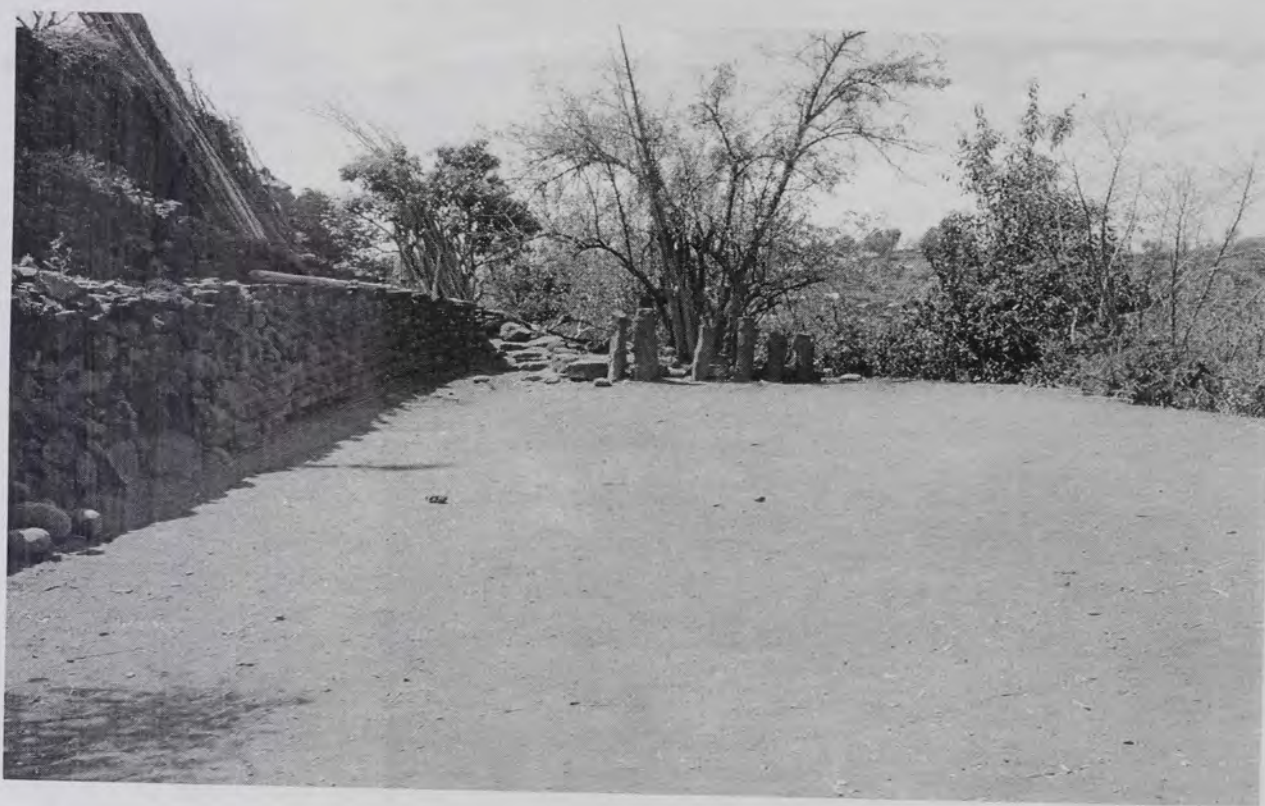


Plate 5. Structure of open field on *Jemotte Moora* in Purqutta

#### 5.4.1.2. *Moora Detatii*

The *Moora Detatii* is located in the Parkutta section of Dekatto Alaka. *Detatii* is used by three cluster towns for different purposes. The open space in this *Moora* is relatively wider than the one in other *Moora* and it can accommodate a large number of people. As noted in ARCCIKCL

(2008: 132), *Detatii Moora* has a huge dancing and assembly space where ritual ceremonies like the *Kara*<sup>6</sup> ceremony take place. Also a certain Konso sport game (*Kurayila*)<sup>7</sup> is played on *Detatii Moora*. According to informants, all ceremonies of the three sister towns take place at *Detatii Moora*. A dance called *siika* is also performed on the *Detatii Moora*. After *siika* dance is over, other dances are also danced by men on *Detatii Moora*. Women also perform different types of women dances on this *Moora*.

*Detatii Moora* contains several elements such as the big thatched house (*Pafta*) on the eastern corner of this *Moora*, the generation poles, a *Kopta* tree (*Pinna Christ*), which was planted there for shade, an open field, the flat stones, circular stones put at different times by different generation-sets for remembrance, and one stone of manhood erected by the generation named as *Onaylla* for their heroic achievement and others.

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<sup>6</sup> *Kara* is a ritual ceremony during the transfer of power to the succeeding generation. It is held every seven and eleven years, and is synchronized with generation cycle. This ceremony is ended by the killing of leopard or lion (see more about *Kara* under section 5.4.1.4 and 5.4.2.1).

<sup>7</sup> *Kurayila* is a play type between groups where the parties compete to hold a wooden ball thrown in the sky. Most of the time it is played between first born sons and the youngest sons, between clan members, wards and nephew's of clans. The group that held the ball five times consecutively is assumed to have achieved one goal. When the same group achieves ten goals in succession the game is over and the group is the winner.



Plate 6. The structure of *Moora Detatii* in Parkutta section of Dekatto Alaka

#### 5.4.1.3. *Moora Koptalle*

*Moora Koptalle* is located in *Parkutta* section of Dekatto Alaka. It is one of the oldest inside town *Moora*. According to FGD participants, the drum which revolves annually among prominent families of the three cluster towns of *Koriya Dekatto* is transferred from one holder to the succeeding holder at *Moora Koptalle*. The drum symbolizes peace, harmony and rain and is transferred every January (Konso New Year) from one family to the other. Power transfer from old to the next generation is also carried out at *Moora Koptalle*. In the process of transferring power, a stick symbolizing power is taken from the retiring generation by the head of the then generation grade. This has also been noted in ARCCIKCL (2008:125).

Informants, such as KS and KS stated that during the generation power transfer ceremony there is a ritual sacrifice, where a bull is sacrificed by member of a ritual family named Banalle (one of the first settlers in *Parkutta* section of the Dekatto Alaka). This has been explained in ARCCIKCL (2008:125).

Like the *Detatii Moora*, the *Koptalle Moora* contains several elements such as a big thatched house (*Pafta*) on the eastern corner, an open field, two generation poles, a *Kopta* tree (*Pinna Christ*), which was planted there for shade, flat stones placed for sitting and sleeping, circular stones put at different times by different generation sets for remembrance and one stone of manhood erected for the heroic achievement.



Plate 7. The structure of *Moora Koptalle* in *Parkutta* section of Dekatto Alaka

#### 5.4.1.4. *Moora Kitolle*

An open *Moora* located on the northeastern edge of the Hulme cluster is one of the most important *Moora* in the traditional town of Koriya Dekatto. According to informants and FGD participants the ritual ceremony, *Kara*, is celebrated every seven years in the small generation and eleven years in the great generation on this *Moora*. *Moora Kitolle* belongs to the Hoysiya family (the pioneer family) of the Hulme cluster. This family is also responsible for performing the ritual sacrifice ceremony during the transfer of power from the retiring generation to the next generation on *Moora Kitolle*.

Every *Kara* ceremony is concluded by the killing of dangerous game animals such as lions and leopards. Success in hunting a lion or leopard has enormous prestige; their killers are praised for their bravery. Regardless of their generation grade, male members of the community concentrate on hunting. The killer and his hunting partners only return back to their home town after five days of sacrifices near the *Halawtilla Moora* in the open field. The skin of that animal is brought to this *Moora* and is hanged on the big acacia tree on it. The members of the three clusters gather and perform the last *Kara* dance on *Moora Kitolle*. Members of the Koriya Dekatto town regard *Kitolle Moora* as the public place of the towns of Karati region since persons from other towns can watch the final dance and can enter into the town onwards. But it is forbidden for persons from other towns of Konso to enter into the Koriya Dekatto during *Kara* ceremony. With regard to generation pole on this *Moora*, it is explained in ARCCIKCL (2008: 126) that every 18 years the generation grades of *Hirpa* and *Kalkusa* erect a new generation pole to commemorate their generation.



Plate 8. The structure of *Moora Kitolle* in Hulme

### 5.4.2. *Moora* Outside the Town

My informants confirmed that *Moora* are not only located inside the town's wall but also located outside the wall in the open field in different distances. This has been proved through observation in the process of the fieldwork. Given the researcher's observation, there are many *Moora* in the open field in the territory of Koriya Dekatto town. Those *Moora* located outside the town have their own significances. Some outside town *Moora* which provide services to the three clusters during communal ceremonies such as *Kara* ceremony were selected for explanation.

#### 5.4.2.1. *Moora Kolalta*

*Moora Kolalta* is an open *Moora* located east of Dekatto Alaka in about 500m distance. It is said to be the oldest *Moora* in Koriya Dekatto town. It belongs to Illika section of Dekatto Alaka cluster. It is said that, elders of the pre-Dekatto scattered settlers that later formed the Dekatto Alaka cluster used to gather on this particular meeting place for negotiations of community affairs (ARCCIKCL, 2008: 121). Informants briefed that *Kolalta Moora* however, retains an important role in the ritual life of the Koriya Dekatto town.

During the *Kara* ritual ceremony it is used by the three sister towns. The *Kara* ritual dance of the whole Koriya Dekatto cluster towns is officially opened at *Kolalta Moora* (ARCCIKCL, 2008: 121). My informant, KK stated that the land where *Kolalta Moora* is located belongs to the Pata family of the Purqutta cluster. Given the observation made on this *Moora*, there is large agricultural land owned by Pata family nearby the public place. In the earlier times while erecting the generation pole an ox was sacrificed by Pata family.

When the *Kara* ceremony commences, the sections of the Koriya Dekatto enter through different gates and when it ends they exit also through different gates. This has also been noted in ARCCIKCL (2008:122). The *Moora Kolalta* is surrounded by a small stone wall. It has many *acacia* trees and many other species of trees. Other elements in the *Moora Kolalta* are ruins of the *Kittota* wooden poles of *hankalta* tree (*Balanites aegyptica*), generation pole and a wide open field. In the past a ceremony called *Xomma* was celebrated during the harvest season here, during which adult members of the Illika section of the Dekatto Alaka take away food from families who did not hide it. This food was brought to *Kolalta Moora* and eaten by the gathered

males. At the end of the ceremony, the group erected one wooden pole against the old ones on this *Moora*.



Plate 9. The structure of *Moora Kolalta* in the Illika section of Dekatto Alaka

#### 5.5.2.2. *Moora Halawtilla*

Another very important open field *Moora* in Koriya Dekatto is *Moora Halawtilla*. It is located around 3 km distance on the main road to the northeast direction of Dekatto Alaka cluster town. As explained in ARCCIKCL (2008:121), *Halawtilla* is the ritual *Moora* of the three clusters of Koriya Dekatto town. According to informants, the *Halawtilla* serves as a place for public meetings. Because of its location on the main road, it is impossible to hold secret discussions on *Moora Halawtilla*. Therefore, public discussions are only held there when for example, there is a public work where members of the town repair damaged roads and ruined terraces along main road sides. Having finished the work, people summon to *Halawtilla* and held discussion about how to punish persons who did not involve in the work. People also advice each other about keeping social harmony and work hard for the wellbeing the town.

Informants and FGD participants confirmed that during the *Kara* ceremony, while leaving for ritual hunting, the male members of the three cluster towns' sharpen their spears and knives on circular stones (*Arumma*) placed on this *Moora*. As noted in ARCCIKCL (2008:121), at the end of the ritual hunting, the generation grade hangs the animals' skull, often a lion's or leopard's skull on a living tree at the same open *Moora*. Moreover, informants mentioned that, the skulls of the lions and leopards killed at any time are hanged on a living tree locally called *Kopta* (*Pinna Christ* or *ziziphus mucronata*). The tree is usually referred to as *Kopta Karmada* (lion's *Kopta* tree), and until today it serves the same purpose. Generations also erect the stone of manhood at *Moora Halawtilla* to commemorate their good deeds for the town. Several stones of manhood are visible on this public place.



Plate 10. Skulls of lions and leopards on the lions' tree on the *Halawtilla Moora*

In addition to *Kolalta* and *Halawtilla Moora*, there are other *Moora* outside the town in the territory of the Koriya Dekatto. These include *Ataroo*, *Orpasho*, *Nakaylle*, *Kora'a* and others. However, since no unique activities are performed on these *Moora*, I did not describe them in detail; no as new information would be given. *Orpasho* is an outside town *Moora* in northern direction not very far from *Halawtilla Moora*. Important and secret discussion ceremonies also

held there, such as declaring war and punishing wrongdoers who might have publicized the secret of the town. *Ataroo* is located to the west of Dekatto Alaka. In former times, *Xomma* was celebrated by adult members of the Parkutta section of Dekatto Alaka cluster. Ruins of *kittota* poles are still visible in this *Moora*. Women also dance when they come in group from fetching water from the water wells. The *Moora Nakaylle* is located in about 3km distance from *Halawtilla* to the northeast direction. Several circular stones were put by generation-sets at different times. People can sharpen their knives and spears there. *Kora'a Moora* is located to the west of *Ataroo Moora* and has the same function.

*Kora'a Moora* was not allowed for women with their menstruation to pass through. Traditionally, Konso women are expected to come out of maternity after bearing child only after initiation ceremony is conducted; it is forbidden to go out of the house before this ceremony (Mamitu, 2002). In Dekatto Alaka town, the initiation ceremony is carried out by going to fetch water and bring mud in the well located at about 8km to the west of the town. While leaving out for this process, they were not allowed to pass inside this *Moora*. *Moora Kora'a* (outside town *Moora*) located some 6km to the west of Dekatto Alaka is believed to be forbidden for these groups of women. There is a belief that the ghosts that dwells in that *Moora* hates blood and an attempt to pass would cause harm upon the woman.

## **5.6. The Function of *Moora***

Until today *Moora* retain significant role in the life of the Konso people. As mentioned in the previous chapters. This will be highlighted in more detail in the following pages.

### **5.6.1. *Moora* as Public Assembly Place**

*Moora* play a pivotal role in the political, social and ritual life of Konso people. In the early morning, around 5:00am, adult men and elders begin to sit on *Moora* to follow the negotiations which are held on *Moora*. The negotiations are made among individuals who are disputing on issues such as: the push of the boundary of someone's agricultural land, damage of someone's crop by another person's cattle, refusal to pay debt, insulting and fighting, punishing someone else's children without the permission of their families, adultery, theft, cutting grass on person's land without permission and other personal issues. I was told that settling disputes takes place on

*Moora* almost every morning and I observed it many times during my fieldwork. Juries on the *Moora* are open for every male member of the community, while negotiations regarding to marriage issues are held in the private houses where only few elders are allowed to attend the case.

Similarly, Taddese (1991: 332) illustrated that town *Moora* in Konso are used for the arbitration of disputes that arise from refusal to pay debts, fighting, manslaughter, adultery and other social ills and the council of elders presides over such matters and their decisions are binding. Konso people are reluctant on the killing of a person; particularly deliberate killing may result in revenge. Accidental killing may not result in revenge but in most cases lead to peaceful negotiation. As indicated above, the *Moora* had also been serving as a place where ritual ceremonies of traditional religions take place. Nowadays, I was told, there is an emerging trend to use the *Moora* as a center for religious ceremonies for protestant Christianity as well.

KS, an old man from Dekatto Alaka, called the *Moora* (*porra opaa Dukatta kaa nakayta umma kaa daradda patissa*) "a place of creating truth and peace and dismissing lies". To lie is strictly forbidden among the Konso people and an attempt to do it may result in *xaxa* (swearing, self curse or oath). As mentioned under section 5.4.1.1, the *Moora Jemotte* plays a central role as place of confirming truth. KG, an old man from Purqutta cluster stated the following story:

*Moora Jemotte in the Purqutta cluster has been serving as a swearing place for three cluster towns. When two individuals are disputing and it is difficult to bring witnesses, the disputants are taken to the Moora Jemotte and make an oath on themselves to be punished by accidental death. For example, struck by lightning, taken by flood, bitten by snake, fall down from the tree. Either of the disputant who is punished by death would be considered as wrongdoer. Whenever, serious crimes is committed, for example burning the thatched house on the Moora and burning private houses and is difficult to provide witnesses, people gather to Qudanpato Moora in Purqutta cluster, where the mass curse the person who committed the crime.*

People also gather on *Moora* to discuss on different community matters particularly maintenance of the social order. These meetings are called *Xora Dehamta* (assembly for discussion) and are carried out on *Moora*. The importance of *Xora dehamta* ceremony has been explained by Hallpike (1972:81). Male members of the community can express their opinions on the public discussions.

There is an oral history that once upon a time, public discussion was held on the *Moora* and craftsman was given a chance to deliver speech but he immediately stopped the speech when he had seen and followed after a person who has been taking a goat to the market. And since that time, craftsmen cannot independently give opinions in public discussions held on the *Moora*. When they want to give their opinions, they must lean on the cultivators. Thus, their suggestion is regarded as if the speech was delivered by the cultivator.

As explained in chapter four, there are institutions that have jurisdiction in the towns and are responsible to reconcile and judge on cases that are referred to them. Most of these decisions are made on *Moora*. Thus, the *Moora* can serve as a traditional court where wrongdoers are punished: by fees, social exclusion which results in refusing to give him water or fire; not selling to and buying from him; not taking any sick person of his family to health centers; and refusing to participate in his burial ceremony. In this adjudication system there are no professional judges but all male members of the community have the right to involve in decision making process. Nowadays, also the modern local administration system at town level use *Moora* as a place for assembly to discuss with the community dwellers.

All the above discussed activities are non-secret and are performed on *Moora* inside the towns. The *Moora* outside the towns were established to serve special purposes such as discussing on issues that should be kept secret from children and women, for example on planned raids or warfare. Regarding this idea, Taddese (1991: 332) also stated that most secret meetings are held in the *Moora* outside the town. Warfare, both defensive and offensive is secret and should not be exposed. The act of exposing it is interpreted as *akattuma* (dishonesty) and an attempt to do it may result in serious punishment: destroying the person's house and dismissing him from the town so that he would have no chance to be reintegrated into the society.

Issues which are considered as public matter and accusations are most of the time carried out on the *Moora*. However, private matters, such as marriage and its negotiation are considered as private matter and is always discussed in the houses. Dispute between members of the family are often reconciled in the houses.

### 5.6.2. *Moora* as a Place of Informal Learning and the Dissemination of Information

Informants explained that the *Moora* also serve as a center of socialization and information dissemination. *Moora* is a place of sharing experience for males. Konso elders are always ready to speak about their heroic deeds with the young generation. This is always carried out on *Moora*. Old Konso men can be observed while sitting on *Moora* both during daytime and in the night time. They are proud of their achievements and initiate children and adults to be brave at hunting and warfare and to be hard workers. They also advise children and youths to have good moral character by respecting Konso values, such as telling truth, peace, respecting elders, and others. Elders also orally transmit the history of their society and the heroes who had contributed good thing for their town to the young generation.

*Moora* is a place where Konso male children learn Konso riddles, stories, values, norms, customs, traditions and the overall cultural traits of the society. Riddles and stories are in most cases told by elders during night time. Children who spend much time with elders are also good at telling riddles and stories to their age mates. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that *Moora* is a place which serves as a traditional "school" for Konso children and youths.

*Moora* is also a place where male members of the community discuss openly on what is forbidden to discuss in the houses. Discussing sexual matters with family members in the house is taboo. It is not a taboo for male to discuss sexual matters with people of the same sex regardless of age difference. This is particularly done in the night when they gather either waiting for dinner or sleeping. Konso men spend the evening on the *Moora* until they disperse for dinner either individually or in a group of friends. After having eaten these men come back to the *Moora* for sleeping. I was told that the children who spend much time on *Moora* are better in storytelling and have better knowledge on Konso culture than those who do not stay on the *Moora*.

In the early morning males who stayed the night at their houses, go to the *Moora* to hear what has happened in the last night. KD explained that a person who has come from farm land in the evening also comes to the *Moora* to gain information about what has happened in the town during the daytime. Whenever a man has spent the night outside the town, in the early morning he also comes to *Moora* to hear how the town spent the last night. Those individuals who have

left the town for other places also seek to hear and know what has been going on during their absence. Thus, they come to *Moora* and obtain information from people who are sitting there.

Getting information from the *Moora* updates people with the existing situation and enables them to act accordingly. Community leaders give all the necessary information and rules and regulations to a man called *appa saletta* (father of announcement). Therefore, he would disseminate for the community by shouting loudly on the *Moora*. Presently, during the holidays, rules and regulations are posted on steams of trees on *Moora*. Rules and regulations of the town, preparations for community work and other social issues are announced on the *Moora*. It would not be an exaggeration if *Moora* is said to be a traditional “public mass media” for Konso people that provide information through hearing.

### 5.6.3. *Moora* as a Traditional Play Ground Area

For any activities whether they be indoor or outdoor activities, there is the need for open space. Conducive and attractive areas are essential in providing satisfaction for smooth and healthy functions to take place. It is for this reason that many people establish open public grounds where people can play. In urban areas for example are sport fields and stadiums where different types of sports and races take place. In modern schools are sport fields where students play both during and outside school.

The Konso community has developed a diligent tradition for entertaining its people in *Moora* both children, adults and elders. With its big house, trees for shade, flat stones arranged for sitting and necessary space for traditional game, play and sports, the *Moora* can be considered as a public place where men population get recreation and discuss on affairs related to the community. Informants, like KD, KG and KG confirmed that the elders, children and adults, especially males may gather there to play, chat and relax when they are not working.

Children of both sexes are allowed to play different traditional games of Konso on *Moora* but females are forbidden to play on *Moora* when their age is above ten. Konso children games are of various types such as *ekayteta* (children hide themselves inside the thatched house on the *Moora* and one child tries to get each of them), *kaajja* (two or more children play with the necklace called *yakawwa*), *tulla* (played between two groups of children where they run to touch the

corner of their opposite group without being touched by his opponents), *murmurajja* (two children compete each other by running through opposite roads which leads to *Moora* where the first arrived child is considered as fast runner), *jilanjilla* (hurdle) *sottaa* (wrestling) and etc. Nowadays, they also play football and ride bicycle on the fields on the *Moora*. Adults play wrestling, hurdle, football, *kurayilla* which may be played throughout the whole night until the next morning (see details under section 5.4.1.2) and others. Most of the Konso games and sports are played by both children and adults and therefore, there is no clear demarcation between children and adults game.

Other different types of Konso sports are also performed on *Moora*. Sports that are performed on *Moora* include: lifting up circular stones (*Arumma*) to measure weight lifting capacity, *Killipota addatta* “a play type where a person play the fruit of *Killipoota* plant (*Solanum incaneum*) on his ankle, *Sottaa* (wrestling) and any other types of sports. Nowadays, there is a significant change in the role of *Moora* as a play ground area. Some plays have totally disappeared and replaced by other types of sports such as foot ball, bicycling, gymnastics, and others.

In addition to the purpose of pure entertainment, *Moora* have memorial functions, where the good deeds of the past generation are praised through song. Many Konso songs are not merely sung for enjoyment rather they serve to remind the achievements of deceased heroes and generations. The *Moora* themselves are also praised in the songs. KG, a woman from Dekatto Alaka, gave me the following example of a song about *Moora*:

<b>Song in Konso language</b>	<b>English translation</b>
<i>Ataroo Moora, Arkashie Dawura</i>	<i>Ataroo</i> is <i>Moora</i> and <i>Arkashie</i> (one of the lineage heads) is sacred.
<i>Qahtita a Kayyo, Kalatta Laka</i>	<i>Qahtitta</i> (a tree for shade) belongs to <i>Kayyo Moora</i> and <i>Kalatta</i> (an agricultural land to the lower part of Dekatto Alaka) is plain).
<i>Koptalle xano Kadin Kota Qaptaye</i>	<i>Koptalle</i> , our <i>Moora</i> , if it is like a

*Konfa kama Kodan*

person, it would have been dressed with a beautiful cloth).

*Jemotte a Purqutta dexe delotadi*

Discussion is the habit of

*Jemotte Moora* which belongs to Purqutta.

*Detatii a Dekatto dexe delotadi*

Discussion is the habit of

*Detatii Moora* which belongs to Dekatto town.

*Hankaltino Hankalla katean hassa sahaa data isha hayshan*

Our *Hankalta* tree on the *Hankalla*

*Moora*, if it has a mouth, it would have been given a butter.

*Moora* are sung about like individuals and seen as specific places with their own character and history. Through songs, people show their respect and the value given for the *Moora*.

Women are not allowed to sit and relax on the *Moora*. But they dance different types of dances during daytime on occasions when the men have performed the *siika* dance. Both male and female informants stated that women and men do not dance together since they perform different dances. Women are not allowed to dance in *Moora* in the night. When males play *Kurayila*, women watch standing from the corners and encouraging their respective parties by making ululation when their group had held the instrument.

Besides, the open spaces used for playing, there are sitting areas at the edges from where non-participant group observe the plays. The spectators give verbal support and encouragement for those who play. When for example children are playing, those who get tired and take a rest, and those who are unable to play for other reasons, and those who wait for substitution together with youths and elders form the audience and support play by extending verbal reinforcements.

*Moora* are occupied by playing groups depending upon the form of play and the group of children who play. Adults and elders make conversation, humor and play pebbles on the wooden board containing holes under the *Pafta* or outside on stone made floor.

*Xora dehamta* ceremony “assembly for discussion”, festivity and the public work will have dances on *Moora*. According to informants, among Konso all dances except *Shilletta*<sup>8</sup>, mourning dance performed during the death of an old men and women, all other dances are performed on *Moora*. Unfortunately, I could not observe and participate in any dance of Konso. I conducted my fieldwork in the time when the people were busy with sowing seeds on their fields and did not perform any dance.

#### 5.6.4. *Moora* as a Public Sleeping Place

All adult men among the Konso people have the responsibility to protect the towns from various unexpected incidents such as fire breakout, theft, and other attacks on the towns during night. Therefore, there are always some adult men sleeping on the *Moora* at night. I observed during my research that every night several children, youths and elders were sleeping on flat stones placed for this purpose. Taddese (1991:333) also noted that ideally, men above twelve are supposed to stay overnight on the *Moora*. This meant that men were grouped and ready to defend the town in the case of attack either by enemies or wild animals, in case of theft and any other case of emergency by clothing the very narrow foot paths inside the town which lead to every *Moora*. In case of attack by the enemies and fire breakout, they can easily be mobilized to stand in a group. They also take the person who has get sick to health centres. The tradition is still maintained and many adults sleep on the *Moora*.

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<sup>8</sup> The death of a grandfather or grandmother among the Konso people has no bitter mourning. The death of this group would be followed by a mourning dance called *Shilletta* and according to Mamitu (2002) is performed only for those who have grandsons but not granddaughters. Hallpike (1972:157) and the informants of this research have argued that all dances and sings associated with death are forbidden on the *Moora*. When a person comes to the mourning house with chanting, she/he has to cease to do so when passing through the *Moora*.

KS, an elder informant from Purqutta, stated that dispute among human beings is an inevitable phenomenon. There is a saying among Konso which states “*peqanna choo olqarra kehni*” (the gourds make a sound when they are put together). As far as people live together, they would not avoid dispute. Spouses may sometimes be in dispute over private matters which may result in serious fighting if both sit together. Therefore, either of them has to leave the house and if the wife would do, she has to go to her relative’s house. When the husband leaves the house, he has to go to *Moora* and spend the night there until his anger cools down.

KG in his unpublished article in Hallpike (2008:114-5) gives the following explanation:

*the reasons for sleeping in these huts for men are (a) in case fire breaks out and the alarm is sounded, when the men are at hand to deal with it by euphorbia branches, and water passed to them by women. (b) if a man spends too much time at home with his wife, his strength gets drained and cannot be employed in important duties such as hunting wild animals and doing deeds that can be passed on to the next generation. In addition, a woman who is used to sleeping with her husband will find it difficult to live without a husband if her husband accidentally dies and leave her children to look for another man to marry. Therefore there is a belief in the society that a man must not sleep with a woman unless it is to produce children...this practice works as birth control to avoid a mother getting pregnant before her other child had time to grow out of breast feeding.*

Similarly, Taddese (1991: 333) clearly noted that women are seen as the weakness of men, whose vitality is drained by sexual intercourse, and for this reason married men as well as bachelors often spend the night in special men’s houses, to preserve their virility. Konso people believe that much contact with women weakens men and it is not good for husbands to have much contact with their wives. My informants stated that the tradition of the *Moora* acts as a form of cultural contraception, since men must spend the night there.

*Moora* render great service in providing accommodation for guests whose own homes are too far to reach. During the day time, guests can relax and chat with persons sitting on *Moora*. KS and KD explain the function of *Moora* as areas of ushering male guests for sleeping during the night. This was also mentioned by Taddese (1991: 333) that guests too are entitled to spend nights at these places. However, women guests are neither allowed to sit during the day nor sleep during night on *Moora*.

### 5.5.5. Other Functions of the *Moora*

Rites of passage are special rituals among the Konso people. These life transitions for example, generation grades are given a name, youths enter adulthood and are given responsibility to participate in social affairs and elders retire on the *Moora*.

My informants stated that *Moora* had served as a center of literacy development and modern education system in the early time of the introduction of modern school system in 1950s. Amharic script had been taught on the *Moora*.

According to KG, *Moora* served as a place of refuge during the time of conflict. This was happened when conflict occurred between Konso and Borana in 2008 where the Konso people who were living in Borana land were forced to leave their land. Refugees were sheltered under the iron roofed *Pafta* on the *Moora* on the market place. The refugees were helped by the local community dwellers and *woreda* administration officials.

Currently, Protestant churches (especially *Akalle Yesus* church) arrange church conferences on some *Moora* in Dekatto Alaka. Given the researcher's observation, Protestants were celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ on *Moora* in the Easter holiday. Therefore, *Moora* has become a place of warship for Christians.

*Moora* inside the town are also used for smallpox and polio vaccination for Konso infants. Health officials also teach communities about the causes, nature ways of transmission and prevention mechanisms of certain diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Public discussion between community members and government officials is also carried out on inside town *Moora*. Election campaigns, the registration for election and election itself are also carried out on the *Moora*.

## **Chapter Six: Change and Continuity in the Role and Function of *Moora***

The institution of *Moora* is currently facing more drastic transformations than in any previous period of history due to over all social change in the area. As clearly explained in chapter four, everyday interactions in Konso are at the same time often, social, cultural, ritual, economic and political. Thus, the change in one of these aspects results in change of other dimensions of life. The spread of Christianity (Orthodox and Protestantism), the expansion of modern school system where Konso children are expected to spend much of their time there, the establishment of the modern judiciary institutions and the deterioration of ecological conditions of the area are factors that had and still have an enormous impact on the indigenous culture of the Konso, and also on elements and usage of the *Moora*.

### **6.1. Change in the Building of the Thatched House and Other Elements of *Moora***

In the past, *Pafta* (grass thatched houses) have been built from grass and wood. Grass thatched covering the wooden ceiling and beneath are flat stones placed for sitting and sleeping purpose. However, currently, *Pafta* are being covered by iron roofs. Cement floor is replacing the flat stones placed for sitting purposes under these houses. According to informants, the change is the manifestation of modernity and has significant impact on the indigenous culture of *Moora*. According to the observation of this research, there are two *Moora* in Purqutta cluster that were covered with iron roof. One was built on *Moora Katama* (town's *Moora*) on the market place, and the other one on the *Moora* inside the Purqutta town. I was also told that the change is prevalent not only in Koriya Dekatto town but also in other towns of Konso. In Patinkalto, a town near Karat (the capital of Konso), there is a *Pafta* roofed by iron and its floor is made up of cement.



Plate 11. The *Pafta* covered by iron roof on *Moora* in Purqutta on market place

According to informants, ecological change made it difficult to get enough wood and grass of which *Pafta* is constructed. Forests were cleared out, big trees were cut down and almost all land in the region was cultivated. As a result it is difficult to build grass thatched houses on *Moora* as they are very large and need a large amount of wood and grass to cover its roof.

The construction of iron covered houses on public places has changed the indigenous architectural structure of the *Pafta*. For instance, the structure of the iron roofed *Pafta* on the public place in Purqutta cluster has a structure that resembles Orthodox churches. Its floor has been left empty neither having flat stones nor cement. As stated in chapter five, women play a great role in the construction of the *Pafta*, as they cut and carry the grass, and prepare food for the males throughout the process. However, the building of iron roofed public houses has undermined the role of women in the construction process.

On the top of many newly constructed thatched houses, one can see the flag of Ethiopian state. Though, there is no influence from government side, people choose to hang the Ethiopian flag on the apex of the *Pafta* until on the final day a pot is put there. The pots today are often painted

with the color of the Ethiopian flag. This act of hanging flag on the *Pafta* and painting the pot on its apex with flag colors implies that the Konso see themselves as part of Ethiopian state.



Plate 12. The newly built thatched house on *Moora Lehaytii* in the Dekatto Alaka with the Ethiopian flag

The Circular stones on the *Moora* are today being painted with the color of the Ethiopian flag: green, yellow and red. This act of painting the circular stones on the *Moora* implies that the Konso see themselves as part of Ethiopian state. Besides, it represents the influence of modernity.



Plate 13. Circular tones painted with green, yellow and red colors on *Kempello Moora* in Purqutta

## 6.2. Change in the Activities Taking Place on *Moora*

The activities taking place on *Moora* have been under slow but constant change. KG explained that the function that the *Moora* has traditionally served has undergone a drastic transformation.

The spread of Christianity (both Protestantism and Orthodox) in the region has contributed much to the traumatism of Konso culture in general and *Moora* in particular. Ritual practices which were performed on the *Moora* are considered as works of evil by the Christian churches and thus conversion to Christianity resulted in a withdrawal from participating in different activities taking place on the *Moora*. The swearing *Moora* on which telling lies is strictly forbidden, quickly lost meaning, as followers of Christianity do not accept the act of swearing on the *Moora*. This is endangering the traditional ritual function of the *Moora*, though the tradition is still upheld by some followers of the traditional religion.

All dancing, singing, swearing and any other activities which are ritual in nature have been forbidden by the Christians, as they consider these activities as works of evil and they strongly oppose them. An attempt by a Christian fellow to involve in ritual and dancing performances would result in an exclusion from the Church. As Taddese (1991:335) explained also the *Kara* initiation festival is not accepted by Protestant Churches and some Orthodox Christians as it has some ritual activities. Christians only involve in non-ritual performances *such* as conflict resolution, sitting and entertaining and other activities.

In concomitant with this, Taddese (1991:335) explained that in Konso public places are well kept and in constant use, however, some agents of modernity in Konso- represented by some members of the *Mekane Yesus* Church-have attempted in vain to hinder some important celebrations, such as *Kara* festival which would have endangered the fate of the *Moora* (Taddese, 1991:335). Despite the influence from the *Mekane Yesus* and Orthodox churches, the tradition of the *Kara* festival is still functioning. Currently, Christianity is the dominant religion in Konso and as both Hallpike (2008) and Watson (1998) noted is in conflict with the traditional religion of the Konso.

Both during the day and night children used to play games on *Moora*. However, due to the introduction of modern schooling system, children spend their days at school. During the night both adults and children stay at their own houses to study and do assignments for school. Children and adults who are Protestants often go to churches to attend spiritual teachings in the night time. After church programs they do not sleep on the *Moora* because it is difficult to pray there as expected before sleeping. This has endangered the role of *Moora* as a sleeping place and place of storytelling. Nowadays, many children do not know Konso riddles and stories, but are rather good at telling biblical stories which they have learned from local churches.

The introduction of modern legal judicial institutions has also enormously undermined the role of *Moora* as a place for indigenous jury system. The *Moora* had served as a punishment and rewarding place since the long past, but today people prefer to take their cases to modern courts where the decision is made by professional judges through formal procedures. This has significant impact on political role of the indigenous dispute resolution institutions in general and the role of *Moora* in particular.

*Moora* is a place for performing many cultural sports. However, these days modern sports which are not indigenous to Konso are being constantly performed on *Moora* by the children. Given researcher's observation, children perform different types of gymnastics sports, playing footballs and bicycling on the open field on the *Moora*, while traditional games are neglected.

Informants stated that as a result of modernization, some indigenous cultural practices which were performed on *Moora* have totally disappeared. What they considered as modernization is the influence of Christianity, modern education and modern court system. As explained in section 5.4.2.1, in the past was a tradition known as *xomma* (youths take away food from families who did not keep in safe places and summon to the *Moora* outside town where it would be shared). This ceremony is finalized by the erection of a wooden pole, *Kittota* (a wood erected on these *Mooras* by *xomma* group). *Moora* such as *Kolalta* and *Ataroo* in Dekatto Alaka had served these roles, but it was abandoned many years ago. My informant, Kedaya Gara explained that some dances, such as *Qanotta*<sup>9</sup> and many other men and women dances were abandoned. This has indirectly endangered the function of *Moora*. As described in section 5.5.2.2, the tradition that some *Moora* were not allowed for women with their menstruation to pass through was abandoned.

In conclusion, despite traumatic changes the *Moora* is presently facing, Konso community still protects *Moora* from damage. Since *Moora* is a public property, community members work for its wellbeing.

Konso *woreda* bureau of culture and tourism takes its own part in the conservation of the heritages in the towns in general and the *Moora* in particular. Konso is one of the key tourist destination places in Ethiopia and *woreda* culture and tourism bureau collect fees from visitors and distributing them to the towns. Being beneficiaries from tourism industry enables the towns to conserve the heritages in the towns.

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<sup>9</sup> *Qanotta* is danced by male members of the same generation grade before *Kara* initiation ceremony. It is danced by insulting members of the generation-set who got married before carrying out initiation ceremony. It is a male dance only and is danced in the night without wearing clothes.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusion

This thesis dealt with the central role the *Moora*, public place, plays in the social, political and religious life of the Konso people of southern Ethiopia.

Many ethnographic studies have been conducted on the Konso people. Christopher. R. Hallpike (1972; 2008), Elizabeth. E. Watson (1998), Menfese Tadesse (2010), Elise Demeulenaere (2002), Shako Otto (1994; 2004), Mamitu Yilma (2002), Yilma Sunta (2002), Lakew Regassa (1998) and Senayet Tafarra (1989), Nicole Poissonnier (2009) and others have composed ethnographic documents on Konso, but seem to have underestimated the institution of the public place, the *Moora*. It is mainly in the short ethnographies of Taddese Wolde (1991) and the profile compiled by the Association for Research and Conservation of Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Landscapes (ARCCIKCL, 2008) that the *Moora* has been described more extensively.

Anthropological theories about place argue that places have both symbolic and material forms and places are full of meanings and cultural interpretations. Nevertheless, public places and their functions have not been a central concern for anthropologists interested in material culture. Only few of the anthropological writings on material culture provide explanations and theories concerning public places, even though public assembly facilities have played a great role in entertaining people in different areas for centuries serving as meeting places for social, political, economic and ritual activities.

The elements of a cultural theory of space have established a sacred-profane dichotomy on the differentiation of cultural space. This differentiation was for a French sociologist Emile Durkheim an integral aspect of social differentiation.

A conceptual approach of the multiple definitions of public space by Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) and Amborn (2006) is based on their function: meeting places or place of interaction, sites of negotiation, public sphere, opposite of private space, sites of display, public ownership, places of contact with strangers, space of community, space of surveillance, places of open access and are important for functional or sociable activities such as meeting, recreation, walking, important for

socialization into community norms, important for building community, sites of identity affirmation and sites of living for homeless people. Places also secure memorial events.

Though public space and places serve different purposes and have multiple definitions, Gieryn (2000:466) argued that public places cannot be ranked into greater or lesser significance for social life because they have equally valued by their respective societies.

To see how the Konso *Moora* fit into the concept of public place is the central concern of this study. To explain the multiple purposes of the *Moora*, first a general introduction into the region and culture of Konso has been given. Hence, an attempt was made to explore geographical location of the area and population size, natural environment and subsistence and Konso time reckoning.

Then, different domains of Konso life have been explained in order to give enough background information to understand the role the *Moora* plays in different aspects of life. As interactions between people are often at once social, cultural, ritual, economic or political, there is the degree of overlap between the different aspects of life and it was difficult to separately deal with any one of the dimensions.

The social and political organization of Konso has been explained with the intention to examine the nature of its unique characteristics. In light of this, the traditional Konso towns and their physical structure have been investigated. Settlement history, the nine patrilineal exogamous clans, cosmology and religion of the Konso have also been explored. The generation system of whose membership is principally male has been dealt. Together with this, indigenous political authorities such as clan or and lineage heads, the father of the sacred drum, the power holding generation, the elders, the neutral towns and neutral man, the rich persons and ward leaders within the towns whose decisions are binding were explored with the understanding of their political role. Ultimately, the fundamental role the public place (*Moora*) retains in the social, political and ritual life of Konso people has been studied.

The method used in this research was purely qualitative; the researcher highly relied on informants' views, the data collected through FGD and participant observation. The reason for

using qualitative methods was that symbolic meanings of things, people's experience and cultural knowledge cannot be put in figurative form.

The research showed that Konso public place can be defined in different ways, as there exist different ways of using the *Moora*. Thus, *Moora* are public discussion places where dispute is settled through local institutions. They are sleeping places for male members of the community. They are experience sharing places for males from childhood to old age. *Moora* are also places where socialization process and information dissemination is carried out. Riddles and stories are also told during the night there. Together with this, *Moora* is a place where different types of Konso dances and plays are performed. Male members of the community discuss openly on what is forbidden to discuss in the houses (such as sexual matters) and they have contraceptive functions since married men spend their nights there. *Moora* are places where remembrances for the past generation are staged. Konso people praise the achievements and memories of their ancestors through songs. *Moora* is a shelter for refugees and a guest house. Today Christian churches also use open field on the *Moora* as conference rooms. Modern health officials use *Moora* as places for vaccination of infants. Trainings on the transmission of certain diseases and prevention mechanisms are also thought there. State's political election process is held on the *Moora*.

There are different types of *Moora* with different functions. Although their functions vary, the *Moora* among the Konso people cannot be put in hierarchical order, i.e. to say one *Moora* is more important than others.

The finding of this research also showed that there are a number of changes going on with regard to the meaning, functions and usage of *Moora*. *Moora* is currently facing drastic transformation than in any previous periods of history due to over all social change in the area. The spread of Christianity (Orthodox and Protestantism) challenged the indigenous culture of *Moora*. Traditional religious rituals are considered as works of evil spirits by followers of Christian belief. The swearing *Mooras* on which cursing and swearing take place are meaningless for Christians.

Expansion of modern school system has also contributed to the weakening of the traditional usage of the *Moora*, as children today spend much of their time at school and not on the public

places. As a result, the role of *Moora* as a center of socialization through which children learn about indigenous knowledge, cultural norms and values has decreased, and children are now only exposed to modern school curriculum. The indigenous role of *Moora* as a center of Konso political activity has been undermined by the modern legal court system as people prefer to take their cases to modern judicial institutions. The deterioration of ecological condition of the area has a great impact on the culture of *Moora* as it is challenging to get woods and grass of which thatched houses are built. Thus, both elements and functions of the *Moora* have undergone prompt change as for example, grass thatched *Pafta* is being replaced by iron roofed houses. However, the *Moora* is still used for multiple activities. Konso children play football, ride bicycle and play other modern play types. It is used by Christian churches and modern court system as a place of worship and election process respectively.

In conclusion, this paper argues that despite momentous challenges it is currently facing, the *Moora*, however, is still maintained and gives multiple purposes for the people.

## 7.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions made from the study, the researcher forwarded the following recommendations.

Firstly, indigenous authorities such as *Poqqalla*, *Appa Timpa*, *Xella*, *Qimmota* and *Porshotta* play significant roles in the social, political and ritual life of the Konso which are highly intertwined domains of their culture. These authorities have an indispensable value in governing the relation between people and the environment (cultural and natural). For example, some *Poqqalla* are guardians of certain *Moora*. However, these authorities have undergone and still undergoing constant change. Therefore, it is very important to sustain these authorities.

Secondly, rapid expansion of Christianity is found to be one of the major challenges to the institution of *Moora* as traditional ritual practices, dances and songs performed on the *Moora* are declared to be of Satanism by Orthodox and Protestants. To avoid such misunderstanding related to belief system, intensive awareness creation should be carried out to change the people's attitude. Therefore, the tourism and culture bureau of the *woreda* should teach local communities

about the benefit of preserving local culture. Christians should be advised to avoid misconception about the *Moora* and should only exercise their influence in their religious domain.

Thirdly, modernization is a great challenge to the *Moora*. Particularly, expansion of modern education and modern legal system are threats to the institution of *Moora*. Children spend their time at schools and cases are mostly preferred to be taken to the modern courts. Therefore, schools should sometimes take children to the *Moora* and invite elders to tell them Konso stories. Legal system should encourage people to adjudicate their cases on the *Moora*.

Fourthly, ecological change due to the deforestation of the lowland areas has also a negative effect on the *Moora* as it is difficult to get wood and grass for the construction of the grass thatched houses, the *Pafta*. Conservation of the *Moora* would have an indirect impact on the forest. Therefore, basic awareness among the local people should be created to protect their forests. Moreover, government and nongovernment organizations should give due attention for conserving natural environment by protecting forests from damage and reforestation of the cleared land.

Fifthly, Konso towns are registered as one of the sites of UNESCO world heritage. And UNESCO has a plan for the proper implementation of heritage conservation policies and programs which address proper strategies of the conservation of cultural heritage. As *Moora* is part of UNESCO world heritages, a local committee that can highly protect and properly conserve the *Moora* is urgently needed.

Sixth, the institution of *Moora* is on the spot of significantly transforming. Therefore, proper documentation by the stakeholders is urgently needed. Individual researchers and organizations should come together for the proper documentation of the indigenous culture of the Konso in general and the *Moora* in particular.

Finally, what can be recommended is that *Moora* must be carefully managed in order for it to remain alive for the coming generations. The researcher also earnestly invites individuals and organizations that could conduct their research on the institution of *Moora*, as this study has left open many questions for future researches. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it can serve as a starting point for future research.

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## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX 1: NOTES ON THE INFORMANTS (NAMES ARE ABBREVIATED)

1. **KK**  
Age: 90; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Purqutta
2. **KS:**  
Age: 95; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
3. **KS**  
Age: 63; Sex: Male; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Purqutta
4. **KD**  
Age: 62; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Lower Dekatto
5. **KK**  
Age: 63; Sex: Female; Religion: Protestant; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
6. **KT**  
Age: 43; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
7. **KN**  
Age: 40; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
8. **KP**  
Age: 90; Sex: Female; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
9. **KU**  
Age: 65; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Hulme
10. **KK**  
Age: 67; Sex: Female; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Lower Dekatto
11. **KG**  
Age: 65; Sex: Male; Religion: Protestant; Major occupation: Educated; Residence: Lower Dekatto

**12. KG**

Age: 63; Sex: Male; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Educated;  
Residence: Purqutta

**13. PD**

Age: 61; Sex: Female; Religion: Protestant; Major occupation: Farmer;  
Residence: Lower Dekatto

## APPENDIX 2: NOTES ON FGD PARTICIPANTS (NAMES ARE ABBREVIATED)

### Guide line questions:

- ❖ Explain the characteristics and the ritual ceremonies related to the generation system.
- ❖ What types of *Moora* exist in Konso?
- ❖ Explain the change and continuity with regard to *Moora*?

#### 1. AY:

Age: 59; Sex: Female; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Purqutta

#### 2. DW:

Age: 83; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Purqutta

#### 3. HL:

Age: 57; Sex: Female; Religion: Protestant; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

#### 4. KD:

Age: 36; Sex: Female; Religion: Protestant; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

#### 5. KJ:

Age: 67; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

#### 6. KK:

Age: 62; Sex: Male; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

#### 7. LS:

Age: 63; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

#### 8. OT:

Age: 38; Sex: Male; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Trader; Residence: Purqutta

**9. PX:**

Age: 32; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Dekatto Alaka

**10. RU:**

Age: 42; Sex: Male; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Trader; Residence: Purqutta

**11. SR:**

Age: 36; Sex: Female; Religion: Orthodox; Major occupation: Farmer-trader; Residence: Hulme

**12. TS:**

Age: 72; Sex: Male; Religion: Traditional Religion; Major occupation: Farmer; Residence: Hulme

## DECLARATION

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

Name:

Kansole Gellebo

Signature:

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Date:

18/07/2011

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my full approval as a University advisor.

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18.7.2011