

**Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Social Anthropology**

**History, Memory and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in
Northwest Ethiopia**

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in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Social
Anthropology

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Declaration by the candidate

I, Desalegn Amsalu, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “**History, Memory and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in Northwest Ethiopia**” is the fruit of my original research work. I made every effort to clearly indicate when I used the contribution of others. Besides, the work has not been previously submitted in fulfillment of requirements for obtaining any degree other than this one.

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A guide to reading local terms

In order to avoid unnecessary diacritics, in this dissertation, only those local terms which are significantly different from English pronunciation are represented in transliteration. The following are the major ones.

Sound	Phonetic features	Example
ä	Open central unrounded vowel	as in Agäw
ɨ	Close central unrounded vowel	as in ɨ gir in Amharic
q	Uvular ejective	as in an q a in Awngi
x	Velar ejective fricative	as in X amta Agäw
s'	Voiceless alveolar	as in s' axasivi in Kumpal Awngi
k'	Voiced velar ejective	as in k' äbäle in Amharic
ñ	Voiced nasal palatal occlusive	as in k'olä ñ a in Amharic
t'	Dental alveolar voiced ejective	as in säk' ot' a

Moreover, transliteration is not used to write names of oral informants. In this case, it was my belief that it is enough, from the context they are mentioned, they are identified merely as informants. Names of authors in written sources is also represented the same as they are found in source material.

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Glossary of Key Local Terms

A. Terms in Kumpal-Awngi

<i>abala</i>	a lineage system of the Kumpal
<i>axubamba</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> presumably played while or a play that has originated after ancestors in the exodus crossed river in their journey; literally “swimming”
<i>anki</i>	a slim-flat-bread traditionally made from <i>teff</i> (<i>Eragrostis tef</i>) flour risen as dough, a staple food in Ethiopia
<i>anqa</i>	a young virgin girl
<i>ariki</i>	a locally-made liquor
<i>ayatini-agotini</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> presumably played by or a play that has originated after ancestors during the exodus crossed the river; literally “my brother, my uncle”
<i>awgi</i>	a local witch
<i>bamba</i>	a local fig tree species (<i>Ficus sychomorus</i>)
<i>damara-tikili</i>	a person designated to erect <i>damari</i>
<i>damari</i>	a large stack of poles, tree branches and sticks erected at a place of <i>Meskal</i> celebration
<i>dixwarngi</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> presumably played while or a play that has originated after the Kumpal ancestors were packing donkeys to go for exodus; literally “donkey style”
<i>dingariti</i>	a big kettle drums
<i>Fifi</i>	a Kumpal commemorative musical field with ritual performance and narration of the story of exodus
<i>gamma</i>	a young girl with a traditional Kumpal hair style
<i>gaway/gambiri</i>	a kind of spirit which, unless properly worshipped, is believed to cause shock to harvest

<i>gingi</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> presumably related to the act of the Kumpal ancestors running in exodus; literally “run”
<i>kiriwi</i>	drum
<i>k'onjo</i>	beautiful
<i>kwali</i>	a kind of wild and household spirit which is believed to cause danger unless properly worshipped
<i>Meskal</i>	cultural and religious celebration of the Finding of the True Cross
<i>mishi</i>	a yellow mead brew, also can be called honey wine produced at home, flavored with dried and powdered hoops-like plant leaves
<i>nixwasu</i>	a designation for a person who is believed to be belonging to the Kumpal community
<i>shingwa</i>	a girl with young breast
<i>silxi</i>	a brown locally-made brew
<i>s'uqi</i>	smear from maize, wheat, peas, and/or chickpeas
<i>s'axasivi</i>	a spirit that would cause danger if not worshipped properly; literally “throw and stab with a spear gun”
<i>s'axasive kivs'anti</i>	a person designated to ritually turn away danger otherwise caused by <i>s'axasivi</i>
<i>tintili</i>	traditional mat made from lowland bamboo tree
<i>wombla</i>	a tree species where <i>s'axasivi</i> spirit is believed to dwell
<i>wosiadal</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> play presumably played to signal the coming of Wosiadal to catch the Kumpal ancestors in exodus; Wosiadal is also represented as an enemy or leader of the enemy who chased the Kumpal ancestors in exodus
<i>worabu</i>	an animal, in the Kumpal memory of oppression, a despot ruler ordered Kumpal ancestors to capture and make him ride
<i>Yimanja-tikili</i>	a genre of <i>Fifi</i> presumably played or a play that has originated after the Kumpal ancestors in exodus begged seeds from

	villagers they met in journey and sowed them for making life after they left behind their homeland; literally “beg and saw”
<i>zana</i>	a tree species which the Kumpal ancestors are believed to have used to heat fire while going to exodus

B. Terms in Amharic

<i>gasha jagre</i>	guards and escorts of a ruler/an administrator
<i>getoch</i>	a tile of honor, literally “sir”
<i>gīrazmach</i>	traditional title of commanders; literally “commander of the left”
<i>k’ābāle</i>	the lowest level in the administrative hierarchy of Ethiopia both in the current regime and under the Därg
<i>k’olāña</i>	a designation for the Kumpal, literally “lowlander”
<i>Mārigeta</i>	an Ethiopian Orthodox Church title, given to a highly learned man; literally “chief cantor”
<i>rīst</i>	the traditional land tenure system of the Amhara where a hereditary entitlement to land is accrued to individuals by virtue of their membership in a particular descent group
<i>worāda</i>	the level of political administration higher than the lowest level, i.e., <i>k’ābāle</i> administration
<i>yāchīgīr washa</i>	a cave where the Kumpal ancestors in exodus are believed to have hid them from enemy; literally, “cave of bad times”

Acronyms

ANAZ	Awi Nationality Administration Zone
ANRS	Amhara National Regional State
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BGNRS	Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party
HTPs	Harmful Traditional Practices
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
MA	Master of Arts
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
WWII	World War II

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father who has become a good cause for my education. Had it not been for him, my life would not have been in the line of what I am now.

History, Memory and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in Northwest Ethiopia

How the past is commemorated and memorialized in a negative way and defines identity of a particular ethnic group as such is one of the least studied and explored topics in social and cultural anthropology. This dissertation studies what appears to be a mesmerizing but disempowering relationship between the past and the present among the Kumpal-Agäw. It does so through qualitative methods of interviews, observation, focused group discussion, case studies and written sources.

The Kumpal-Agäw today believe throughout history, and in some respect until today, their ancestors and they themselves have successively lived under oppressive rulers. The ancestors of today's Kumpal used to pay tax in every kind and received every form of punishment if they "disobeyed". Once upon a time, under one of the cruelest rulers, they were asked to give tax of beautiful young daughters. However, they found the demand too harsh to comply with. They took counsel among each other to decide on the right course of action. Accordingly, they came up with an elaborate plan on how to successfully defy the plan and get away with their action. They decided to kill the tax collectors when they come to their village and to avoid retaliation, they would go on exile leaving behind their home and villages. To make sure that there would be no traitors from their midst who would compromise and frustrate the plan, they entered solemn oath under pain of perpetual curse. At long last the plan was successfully executed. They killed the tax collectors when they arrived to the village to take away the girls as a form of tax, and then the people evacuated the village at once to avoid retaliation. Unfortunately, as they made little progress with the voyage, they found a river bursting to its bank because the exodus was made during a rainy season. Worse, information was leaked and the enemy soldiers were approaching them from behind. Some prayed to the river; and the river was kind enough to split into two and allow them to pass safely. Others had absconded into the bush. Consequently, the absconders were cursed for breaking the oath they took to act in a collective determination. The curse is believed to be perpetual/eternal passing from generation to generations. Today's Kumpal believe themselves to be descendants of the "cursed" absconders. Thus they believe they are cursed too. They are cursed to be poor and not capable of getting rich. They are cursed to remain "uneducated" and not capable of education. They are also cursed not to have rulers from their own community and, thus, despite today's ethnic federalism, they still live under the domination of highlanders. The curse is a comprehensive one which addresses almost all aspects of the Kumpal life. This story of oppression and curse is interpreted into the everyday life and almost every failure in life today is attributed to this curse. This memory is also elaborately reproduced by oral narratives and annual commemorative ritual of *Fifi*.

To interpret this collective memory, the dissertation entered into the thrust of the following theoretical questions. Is this Kumpal memory a myth or something which has a historical reality? How does “history” make its way into collective memory? Since the memory of the Kumpal is the memory of victimhood, how can a community reproduce an identity that undermines itself? The dissertation uses the dynamics of memory approach to explain the relationship between history and memory. I argue that memory among the Kumpal is neither entirely historically authentic nor merely a myth. Rather, it contains edifices of the past which evidence for some sort of historical validity while it has been reinterpreted through cultural system of cursing. Within this approach, I have attempted to contribute a “cultural model” of memory reconstruction. Apart from debates on the relationship between history and memory, the dissertation also entered into the heart of the other theoretical question: how can a community reproduce negative identity, in the case of the Kumpal, I call, an identity of victimhood? Here also, I hope to have made new contribution to the existing discourse of victimhood identity. Social science theories believe that memory is selective; only those “useful” ones are maintained while negative ones are repressed or “forgotten”. I argue otherwise: a memory of victimhood can even be actively reproduced when it is a moral duty to do so. Hence, I formulated a “moral theory” of memory in particular and identity in general.

The people, the Kumpal-Agäw, are found in northwest Ethiopia, in particular to the southwest of Lake T’ana. It is one of the splinters of Agäw, an old ethnic group which was historically dominant in the entire northern half of Ethiopia, but has been broken apart into today’s different dialectical minority groups. The Kumpal are not represented in official census (latest one is in 2007), and I, assisted by local experts, estimated them to constitute a sheer maximum number of 15,000 people. They are least studied; there is no work at all on this group in social sciences and humanities, let alone in anthropology. What I can mention are only a couple of works in the field of linguistics.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

“Agäw”, or otherwise “Agaw”, “Agew”, “Agau”, “Agao” (hereafter Agäw) as an ethnic group is widely mentioned in the literature of Ethiopian studies. Trimingham (1952), Murdock (1959), Simoons (1960), Gamst (1969), Taddesse (1972), and Sergew (1972) are a few examples. The list is not exhaustive nor is it useful to make so here. In fact, many authors who try to reconstruct ancient and medieval Ethiopian history, or those who give a historical background to one or another topic they write, inevitably refer to the Agäw as an indispensable group in ancient and medieval political and cultural history of the country.

A comprehensive study of this ethnic group is however hardly possible to find. To the best of my knowledge, none of the studies mentioned above, or others, have given a significant attention to this ethnic group let alone one of a comprehensive. What we have is only most of the time as mentionings and sometimes as a little bit extended pieces of information. These can be taken as flashes of light in a virtually unexplored topic, but I believe they are insignificant, be taking the Agäw scholarship in its own standard or the standard of scholarship attention paid to most of the ethnic groups Ethiopia has today. The Agäw is an ethnic group with historically a big name, but with such an objective lacuna of knowledge almost about every aspect of it. The question independently devoted to this ethnic group as an originally homogenous entity has never been asked in any of the conventional disciplines, be it history, anthropology, archaeology, or linguistics.

By today, this formerly a single homogenous ethnic group has been changed fundamentally. A proto ethnic group called “Agäw” has been transformed into a number of mutually unintelligible splinters broken apart from an original group. Adhana (1988:747) enumerates *seven* sub-groups of the Agäw which are the “Bilan of Eritrea”, the “Qemant”, the “Bete-Isreal”, and the “Kunfel of Gondär”, as well as

those dialectical groups of “Awi of Gojjam”, and “Xamir and Ximtanga of Wallo”. On his part, Gamst (1969:5-6) lists *eight* “remnants” of this formerly much dominant ethnic group in northern Ethiopia. “Awiya, Qemant, Kumfal, Hamir, Bilan, Damot, and Hamta” are found enclaved while the eighth one, i.e., the “Falasha” are found dispersed within the Amhara settlement. Even more, Bender (1976:11) mentions *twelve* varieties of Agäw to exist, but he does not list them by their name. Simoons (1960:42-43) identified the Agäw group of “Sahalla” who seem to have survived as an extension of the Agäw of northwestern Wällo, and now living in Täkäze valley. Tecle Haimanot (1984:12), Cohen (1939: 358–371), Gamst (1965), and Bender (1983) also propose a probability of the Woit’o of Lake T’ana to be a remnant of the indigenous Agäw. On my part, I include Gagrissa in Bälaya¹ to the list, a less known Agäw territorial group who are but culturally predominantly similar to the highland Awi division of the Agäw.

As it can be seen from the above literature, there is even discrepancy in the listing of the Agäw family. This means there is no complete knowledge even about the number of existing Agäw splinters. There seems to be a probability of finding other unidentified Agäw communities or at least their identity remains in different parts of northern and central Ethiopia. With a lot of disappointment, what one can say standing here today is that generally Agäw families are dispersed over the four geographic directions of central and northern half of Ethiopia, in addition to those who live in Eritrea.

But what we do not know is not only about the “proto Agäw” as such and about inventory of possible Agäw varieties. The sub-ethnic groups those of whom we already know today have also received little or no scholarly attention. Literature about them in the domain of the social sciences and humanities is more or less no more than what can be summarized below for each sub-ethnic group.

¹ Bälaya is a mountainous area in Dangur Woräda of Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State (BGNRS). The area is known after Mount Bälaya, which, according to www.getamap.net/maps/ethiopia/et06/_balaya (accessed 7/10/2015), has an elevation of 2,604 metres above sea level.

The Awi have been covered by more MA theses than any other group. Bekalu (1994) for example studied traditional agricultural practices and resource management mechanisms; Alemneh (2004) highlighted socio-cultural changes in this Agäw variety up to 1941, particularly in terms of changes and continuities in religion; Desalegn (2007) studied traditional associations; Alemu (2008) focused on indigenous farming practices; and Negalign (2010) explored the theory versus practice of ethnic federalism with respect to the Awi in Awi Nationality Administration Zone (ANAZ) under Amhara National Regional State (ANRS). Even though there are many MA theses on them, but the Awi are perhaps one of the least published Agäw group. As far as I know, an article by Tadesse (1988) on the process of ethnic integration and interaction in the case of the Awi-Agäw is the only publication ever existing in the domain of social sciences and humanities except linguistics.

The Säk'ot'a Agäw (as they are popularly known today) seem to have received more research attention regarding their history than ethnography. One can find some work on their history, such as Pankhurst (1984)², Getachew (1986)³, Alebachew (2007)⁴ and Wudu (1995)⁵. These sources give some insights into the history of autonomy, resistance, and incorporation of the northern Agäw into the central state.

The K'imant Agäw and the Fälasha (otherwise also known as Käyla, Betä-Isra'el, or Ethiopian Jews) have also attracted some scholarship. An earlier work by Flad (1886)⁶ and works by Gamst (1969)⁷, Dawit (2010)⁸ and Yeshiwas (2013)⁹ can be mentioned. Unlike works on the Säk'ot'a Agäw which focused on historical aspects, K'imant literature pertains to ethnography. These works focus on either detail

² Entitled "Wag and Lasta: An Essay in the Regional History of Ethiopia from the 14th century to 1800"

³ Entitled "On the House of Lasta from the History of Zena Gäbrä'al"

⁴ Entitled "The Socio-Economic and Political Issues in Waghimra Oral Poetry" (MA Thesis)

⁵ Entitled "A Political History of Wag & Lasta 1543-1919" (MA Thesis)

⁶ Entitled "A Short Description of the Falashas and the Kemants in Abyssinia"

⁷ Entitled "The Qemant: A Pagan-Hebraic Peasantry of Ethiopia"

⁸ Entitled "Ethnic Identity: The Case of the Qemant of Chilga Woreda, North Gondar Zone" (MA Thesis)

⁹ Entitled "From "Melting Pot" to the Quest for Recognition" (MA thesis)

ethnographies of this ethnic group and/or their identity. With regard to the status of this group as viable ethnic group, Gamst (1969), the only (ethnographic) book I ever know on the K'imant and the Agäw at large, presented them as they were dying while later works by Dawit (2010) and Yeshiwas (2013) describe their revival and quest for their autonomy.

The Fälasha Agäw have received scholarly attention more and earlier than any other Agäw group. Flad's earlier work in 1889 also applies to the Fälasha. But Quirin (1992)¹⁰ represents a thorough analysis of the history of this ethnic group. Shelemay (1986 and 1977)¹¹, Grinfeld (1980)¹², Quirin (1977),¹³ and Leslau (1951),¹⁴ are some example of works on this ethnic group. This ethnic group also received attention on comprehensive topics in history and ethnography.

Fitsum (2006)¹⁵ and Adhana (1988)¹⁶ are some examples to mention on the Bilen Agäw also. The first one gives a good introduction about a belief system of this group and the second one about the origin and dissemination of Bilen to a region in today's Eritrea.

Tecle Haimanot (1984)¹⁷ presents Woito, another community in Lake T'ana. His research is on identity. He presents different scholars' argument of who the Woit'o are. Many researchers relate them to the Wata tribe of Oromo, others to the Agäw particularly the K'imant, and still others to the Zällan¹⁸. Tecle Haimanot is of the opinion that they are probably the Agäw who used to have distinct language which

¹⁰ Entitled "The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of the Beta-Israel (Falasha) to 1920"

¹¹ Entitled respectively "The Liturgical Music of the Falasha of Ethiopia" (Dissertation) and "Music, Ritual and Falasha History"

¹² Entitled "Jews in Addis Ababa: Beginning of the Jewish Community until the Italian Occupation"

¹³ Entitled "The Bete Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopian History: Cast Formation and Culture Change." (PhD Dissertation)

¹⁴ Entitled "Falasha Anthology"

¹⁵ Entitled "The Origin of Blin: An Overview"

¹⁶ Entitled "Ancestor Veneration in Blean Culture"

¹⁷ Entitled "The Woito of Lake Tana: an Ethno-historical Study"

¹⁸ "Zällan" is an appellation given to agro-pastoral societies in lowlands of northwest Ethiopia. It is also an Amharic designation to all pastoral or semi-pastoral societies in the country. Today the name is taken as a pejorative one.

declined or disappeared as the result of negative stereotype from the neighboring ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, Cohen (1939), Gamst (1965), and Bender (1983) also mention the Woit'o in relation to their linguistic identity.

The purpose of background review made in this section is to retrieve and evaluate some studies representing the Agäw as a proto-group and its different varieties. A scoping review of the type, extent and quantity of available research on history and culture is made, and from this one can summarize that scholarly value of this literature is minimal, fragmented, and non-comprehensive.

Other than regretting on the lost past, yet, there is much we can do today on the still surviving Agäw sub-groups. Of the various Agäw splinters begging for research, I focus on the Kumpal (*See Chapter Three for debates over the right ethnonym of the people*). The Kumpal are by far the least known as well as the least studied. Virtually, there is no study about them even in MA theses or BA essays which we find for other groups as mentioned above. Only few studies, for example Cowley (1971), gave limited attention to their linguistic aspect. Others, for example, Simoons (1960:44), Gamst (1969:6), and Bender (1976) only incidentally mention their name. But none of these or others have made meaningful contribution to knowledge about them; they are unexplored from all directions they can be studied. Such lack of knowledge is much regrettable. At the same time, it gives solid justification for the necessity of this research which makes original contribution to our knowledge of this Agäw group.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

After I was employed as a researcher at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) in 2008, my first task was to search for a research area of long time interest. With almost no background information about the Kumpal except the existing mentionings and linguistic studies (which are already mentioned in the above section), I just started to search for their place of settlement. In July 2010, I headed towards today's Jawi Woräda found in the lowlands of northwest Ethiopia.

When I arrived for the first time at Fändäk'a town, the capital of Jawi Woräda, I was not able to find right away a group of people other than highland Amhara or Agäw. I approached Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office¹⁹ for assistance. And I got information about the presence of the Kumpal in the *woräda* but their villages afar and isolated. I was put in contact with some Kumpal elders living around Fändäk'a. And when I gradually entered the community through these elders, I found the Kumpal group physically and culturally relatively unique from the rest of highlanders, and according to my understanding, culturally and psychologically restrained, wary, and desolate.

At this time of the visit, I was quite unprepared to find anything specific about these people. I just gathered many things to be able to know who they are, what their “culture”, language, religion and history look like. From this fieldwork, I was able to present a paper at a workshop organized by Addis Ababa University²⁰ and later I submitted an article for possible publication²¹.

In the meantime, when I was enrolled in September 2009 in Social Anthropology PhD program, I started to determine a topic on which I would do my dissertation. My previous experience among the Kumpal became a starting point for working out a topic. However, I had to curve a deeper space than I did in the previous fieldwork, and thus tried some options. For instance, I tried to advance towards studying the Kumpal morphological features (language, belief system, and history) from the perspective of identity, and also tried to pursue a comparative study: comparing them with other existing Agäw splinters. When I began to prepare the PhD dissertation proposal, I returned to the fieldwork in February and March 2012, and by this time I got a more practicable idea of what I should do for my dissertation.

¹⁹Sewagegn Shiferaw, 46, the then head of the Culture and Tourism Office received me when I went in July 2010.

²⁰ The workshop was held on 14//12/2010, under the banner of “University Wide Research Outputs Dissemination Workshop”, held at Eshetu Chole Hall, Addis Ababa University.

²¹ “The Kumpal Agäw: An Ethnographic Introduction” has been submitted to the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. By the time this dissertation was submitted, the article was accepted for publication.

When I defended my proposal for this dissertation in December 2012, I fixed a title: “An Identity of the Kumpal Agäw Splinter in Northwest Ethiopia: The Past in the Present”.

The Kumpal attitude towards their past is striking. When I asked them about their “history”, many informants showed me the same reaction. They frequently diverted their answer to social and cultural aspect of how they used to hunt, how lion hunters used to be honored²², how they used to have abundant honey, or how they share an Agäw identity. I meant to know a “history” of their origin and change but getting data about this was not easy. They appeared they do not know, or even do not have history. This aspect of knowledge was not overt while they told me about who they are.

Posed to the same scenario among the Betsimisaraka of Madagascar, Cole (1998) invokes how earlier anthropologists would have explained this situation. Levi-Strauss would have argued that the Kumpal are “cold” society. In his *The Savage Mind* published in 1962, this structuralist classifies societies into “cold” and “hot” ones. He believed, “primitive” or “cold” society does not have history while “civilized” or “hot” society has. Malinowski also got wrong at this point. This early functionalist believed everything about the past is to be found in the mere conversation of the people and hence he stressed studying everyday open conversation to study about the past. In other words, instead of history determining everyday conversation, he conceived rather otherwise. Malinowski did not believe the basis of people’s conversation can have a root in the past (Bloch 1989:2). This is what later came to be a notion of the politics of memory approach (See Chapter Two and Chapter Ten).

²² I contributed a paper entitled “Hunting as a Cultural Practice among the Kumpal Agäw” to The Third Annual Workshop of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies held in June 2014. The contribution is under review for publication in the proceedings of the workshop.

But, this conception of early and later functionalists is already over (Cole 1998:612). Many studies have thoroughly shown that the difference between the so-called “hot” and “cold” societies is not one of having or not having history but that of different ways in which representations of the past are made. Similarly, it was not in my mind to leave the Kumpal as without “history”. The reality is they have “history” but seem to have found it painful as well as “shameful” to talk about it openly for a researcher who arrived there as a guest. Officers in Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office, who had had better acquaintance with the people also heartened me that, in fact, the Kumpal have “history” and it is interesting to study it, but not easy to get in²³. Thus, I continued probing informants and they were slowly provoked into their knowledge of the past, which is about sufferings from rulers and curse from ancestors. When they got into mood, they talked about it, but accompanied with different psychological reactions, some in disappointment, others still in denial, and others with deep resentment and a sense of victimhood but almost all of them struck in a sorrow.

The interpretation of history is the touchstone of understanding the Kumpal. I became convinced that how they live today can sufficiently be understood only through a macroscopic view of how the people see what is generally called “history”. One cannot claim that knowledge about this group can be fully explained without first studying their memory of how they perceive what history is for them all about.

The foundational story of the problem goes as follows. In the past, the Kumpal say, taxation²⁴ was so unjustified that their ancestors were asked to pay even their children in the form of “tax” as slaves and sexual objects to rulers. One day, the community took an oath to conduct exodus against this exploitation. Unfortunately, as soldiers were chasing them behind following the news of disobedience of their subjects, and to make things worse, as the exodus was during rainy season, River

²³ I would like to thank Zerihun Asres (an acting head of Jawi Woreda Culture and Tourism Office in 2012 and 2013) for his encouragement of me to enter into this direction of researching the Kumpal.

²⁴ I use “tax” as informants call it. Otherwise, as indicated in Chapter Two, tribute is a more appropriate term.

Abay (some also say River Ayma) was also full ahead to block their retreat. Sandwiched between the raging river and the raging soldiers, some oathers skedaddled, breaking the oath they had made all to go without separation. These so called “deluders” in this exodus were cursed by those who kept up the oath. Unfortunately, today’s Kumpal believe they are descendants of the cursed group, and since the curse is capable of trnasgenerational contamination, they believe they are also cursed.

The original curse is so comprehensive and so does the Kumpal today live under the burden of a comprehensive ancestral curse. They are cursed to be poor and not capable of getting rich. They are cursed to remain “uneducated” and hence not capable of education today. They are also cursed not to have rulers from their own community; hence, despite ethnic federalism *de jure* since 1995, they still live under domination of highlanders. These and other detriments such as why they are physically “ugly” and “short” and why their children do not grow, to mention but some are blamed on or attributed to the curse they believe they received from their ancestral group. This memory of oppression and curse is interpreted into the everyday life and almost every failure in life is attributed to the curse. This memory is reproduced by elaborate oral narratives and annual commemorative ritual of *Fifi*.²⁵

The past for the Kumpal is not where they left it. It is strongly related to the present, shaping their subsequent worldview. And it is not contestable to say that there are different pasts for different communities depending on how they have lived or perceived the past. For the Kumpal, there is no pleasure in thinking about the past. Rather, they are haunted by what history has done against them and failures of their ancestors long ago. In this way, the past takes up too much of their present and, in effect, the future.

²⁵ As mentioned in the glossary of terms, *Fifi* is a musical ritual of the Kumpal. It is one of the institutions depositing the Kumpal collective memory. It comes as a topic of separate discussion in Chapter Ten.

A significant social and political change has been witnessed in Ethiopia after 1991, with its “both radical and pioneering” social and political ideology (Turton 2006:1). However, the Kumpal believe, and true to my observation, the “oppression” continues until today, in some cases even worse than before. For example, large scale development projects have made their way to Kumpal settlements and negatively changed their life without viable alternative livelihood mechanisms for this minority group. Moreover, highland, predominantly Amhara, state sponsored and self-initiated migrants are overwhelming this, as I will show, vulnerable group.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Given this problem, objectives of the research are the following. The general objective is to examine the Kumpal memory about oppressive governorship they or their ancestors may have lived or believe to have lived in the past and to see how the interpretation of the past affects the present. Within this pack, the following specific objectives are drawn.

1. To explore the historical conditions that may have given rise to today’s Kumpal memory about oppressive governorship and ancestral curse
2. To investigate cultural institutions of the Kumpal by which memory about oppressive governorship and ancestral curse is transmitted and reproduced
3. To explain detriments of the ancestral curse in today’s Kumpal lives and analyze their ensuing belief in vicarious victimhood
4. To assess the Kumpal perception of changes and continuities in “oppression” and changes and continuities in the ancestral curse
5. To analyze existing theoretical perspectives on memory as such and its nexus with history and victimhood; and to construct, evaluate, and reconstruct them through the Kumpal collective memory

1.4. Proposed Contribution of the Research

I argue that this dissertation has made contributions in different ways. It contributes new empirical knowledge at different levels; it also contributes to

theories in several fields of anthropology; and gives an in-depth analysis of socio-cultural make up of the community being studied for intervention.

1.4.1. Empirical Contributions

From specific to general, the dissertation contributes to history and ethnography of the Kumpal, to the Agäw and to the northern Ethiopia at large. First of all, it significantly contributes to our knowledge about the Kumpal. I have already made a claim that this research gives a new knowledge about this group of Agäw. Besides, it serves as a springboard for further study on a number of other complex issues about these people from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. The research makes a new and first start to expand this very dissertation or launch on many other separate topics about the same people.

With regard to its contribution to the knowledge about the ethnic landscape of the Agäw, this dissertation has also a strategic importance. Studying the Kumpal as the least known variety of Agäw entails the first logical step in a comparative study of the ethnic landscape of the entire Agäw. Today, various Agäw families have a number of startling cultural differences which cannot be reconciled without serious inquiry. For example, musical culture of the Himra, the Awi, and the Kumpal are unique among each other. The differences in their religion and belief system among the Awi/Himra (devout Orthodox Christians), Fälasa (Jews), K'imant (traditionally "pagan Hebraic") (Gamst 1969), and the Kumpal ("traditional" belief system) are not studied. Even the somatic feature is noticeably different among these "sister" ethnic groups. Among others, the Kumpal are different, as they themselves say, they are "between the Gumuz and the Awi"²⁶ while the rest of the Agäw varieties have fairer complexion. One can aptly say that this theme of cultural contradiction among related ethnic groups is, for example, more than ripe for research. Thus, focus on the Kumpal is not only an immediate need to fill knowledge gap on this ethnic group as

²⁶ Tessema Derib, 75, Bagusa Mariam, 06/03/2012

such, but it is also a strategic step towards future comparative research on identity of Agäw groups at large.

Even more, knowledge about the Agäw in turn adds to knowledge about the ethnic landscape of northern Ethiopia. As Taddesse (1988:6) puts, studying the Agäw is not just studying ethnic survivors. Studying these people is important because they are the ones “the very basis on which the whole edifice of Axumite civilization was constructed”. From this point of view, Murdock (1959:181) also believes that “[...] lack of information about the people [the Agäw] and their contributions is doubly regrettable [...]”. This dissertation is a small contribution to curb this regret which is still in place after nearly six decades since Murdock made this remark.

1.4.2. Contribution to Theories in Anthropology

Apart from empirical contributions, I believe this research also adds something new not only to the field of social memory but also, implicitly or explicitly, to theories in different fields of anthropology. The work links three notions: the one of history, the one of collective memory, and the one of vicarious victimhood. I argue this is indeed an innovative and original approach, that will enrich anthropological debates on collective memory and processes of memorization, on the relation between (historical) imaginations and daily practice and behavior, finally on embodied and on materialized historical local knowledge.

I have coined the specific way the Kumpal deal with “their” history as “cultural model of memory reconstruction”. This indeed is a creative and innovative theoretical concept that I argue may prove its usefulness far beyond the Kumpal case. Moreover, I propose the second concept namely the “moral theory of identity reproduction”. I argue that both of these provide interesting path to pursue. I short, leaving verdict to readers of this dissertation, I propose that I have made theoretical contributions to different fields of anthropology, such as to historical anthropology,

to collective memory and memorization, to ethnicity and identity building, to material culture and embodied local knowledge.

1.4.3. Contribution in Relation to Solving Local Problems

The contributions mentioned in the above two consecutive sub-sections are, however, both academic. But this research is also relevant to solve the Kumpal problems at practical level. The Kumpal are probably one of the most marginalized and underprivileged groups in Ethiopia to-date. As I will show in this dissertation (See Chapter Nine in particular), they exist under the historical burden of continued marginalization and lack of opportunities from post-1991 development endeavors. They are not represented in the local self-administration. While they deserve affirmative action to emancipate them from the long-standing historical disadvantage, they are just treated like other “better-off” Awi-Agäw or currently rapidly overriding Amhara settlers (Desalegn 2014a). The output of this research provides with detail historical and cultural fabric of the Kumpal as well as their present condition on the basis of which the need for intervention *should* be considered. I believe that the dissertation, when positively accepted will attract a number of concerned bodies of GO and NGO to intervene in an attempt to address virtually a total predicament of the Kumpal today.

1.5. Methodology

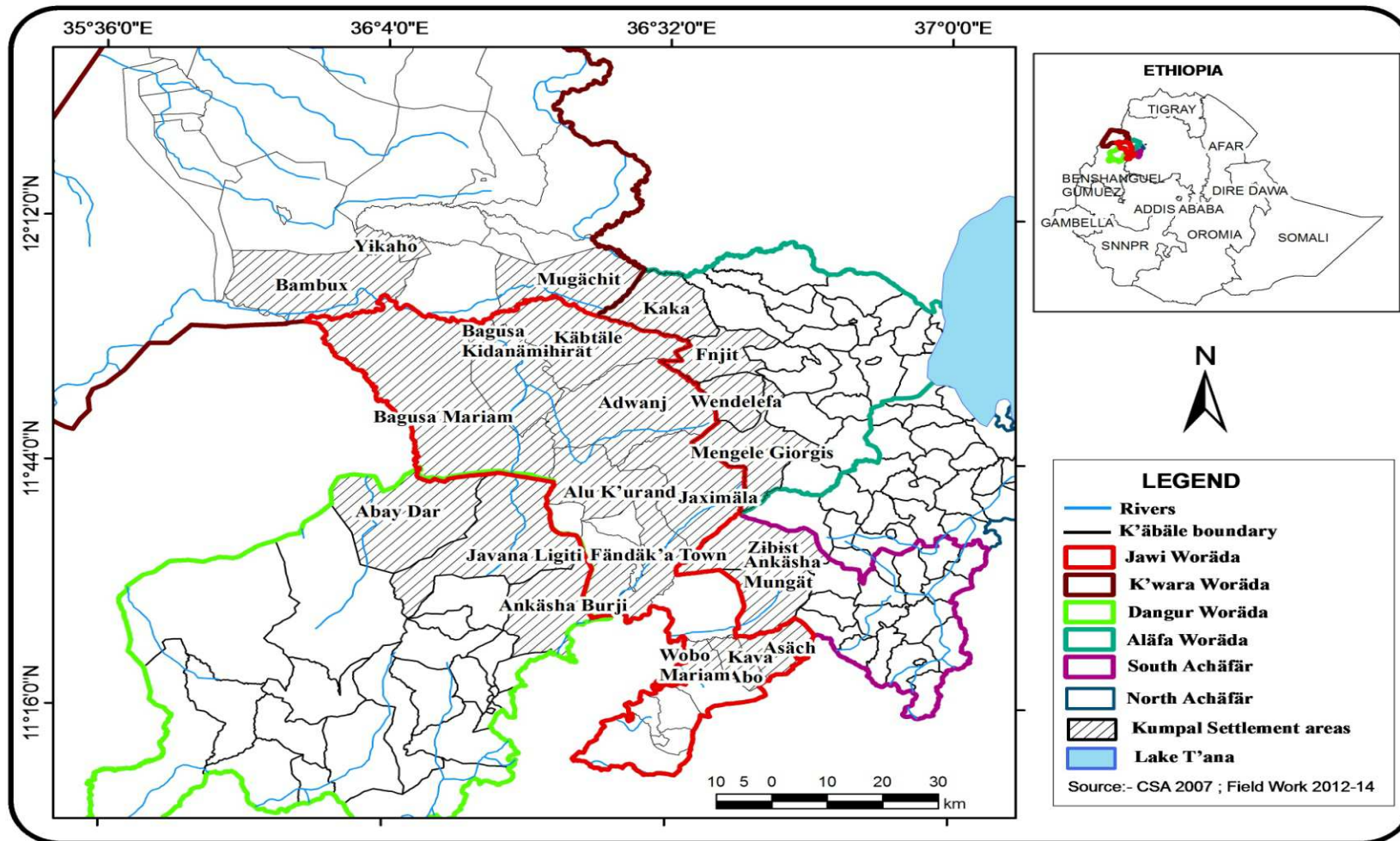
1.5.1. Research Site, Site Selection and the Fieldwork Duration

According to the administrative set-up in place since 1995 and existing to the completion of this dissertation, the major population of the Kumpal is found in Jawi Woräda (See Map 1 below). This *woräda* has twenty-eight *k'äbäles* two of which are small towns and twenty-five rural *k'äbäles*. The towns are Fändäk'a and Däk'. The *k'äbäles* are Addis Woin, Adwange, Alu-K'urand, Arga Abo, Asäch Mäläxa, Ayma Gäbri'el, Bagusa Kidanä Mihirät, Bagusa Mariam, Bambluk, Buni Jira, Däk' Wärk' Hagär, Däk' Zärä Gänät, Dir Mariam, Filfil, Gonj, Jaximäla, Käbtäle, Kava Abo, K'äzk'azit, Kumbir, Sälen Wuha, Säwatamp, Simda Frint', Wobo Mariam, Womblasi, and Zänzän. The distribution of Kumpal in these *k'äbäles* varies (See Chapter Nine

for more details). In some *k'äbäles* they live in more concentration while in others settlers have just replaced them. The major areas of Kumpal settlement today in Jawi Woräda are only Alu-K'urand, Adwange, Bagusa Mariam, and Bagusa Kidanä Mihirät.

In addition to Jawi Woräda, one can also find fringes of Kumpal settlement across contiguous administrative units. In the northern and western end of Jawi (See Map 1), they live in few areas of K'wara Woräda. The Kumpal settlement *k'äbäles* in this *woräda* include mainly, but not exclusively, Yikaho and Bambux. In the east, they also live in South Achäfär Woräda in West Gojjam Zone, also in ANRS. In South Achäfär, there are some isolated Kumpal settlements in Zibist and Mungät K'äbäles. In the western end, they inhabit eastern part of today's Dangur Woräda in BGNRS. *K'äbäles* of Agäw dominance in this *Woräda* are Java, Abay Dar, and Ankäsha Burji.

The base of my fieldwork is Alu-K'urand K'äbäle, because transportation is accessible to other K'äbäles only from this place and accommodation is also available in Fändäk'a Town which is found close to Alu-K'urand K'äbäle. However, I also had short stays ranging from one week to two months in other *K'äbäles*, such as, in their order of importance, Bagusa Mariam, Wobo Mariam, Bagusa Kidanä-Mihirät, and Säwatamp in Jawi; Yikaho in K'wara; Aläfa in West Gojjam; as well as Java, Abay Dar, and Ankäsha Burji in BGNRS.



Map 1 Some of the Kumpal settlement and study *K'äbäles*
 (A complete list of *K'äbäles* is not provided in the map since CSA 2007 has not made a complete GIS survey. Moreover, some of the *K'äbäles* are created after the CSA 2007.

This dissertation benefited from data collected in a total of three phases of fieldwork. As indicated already, the first phase was during the month of July 2010, and this was just a preliminary survey of the Kumpal as part of my duty at the IES. The second phase was made for the purpose of developing the proposal of this dissertation, conducted during the months of February and March 2012. The third phase was the fieldwork conducted for nine months during 2013. It was a more focused and intensive one conducted for the specific purpose of answering research questions of this dissertation. The researcher has also visited the place a couple of more times after 2013, and in fact continued to visit until submission of this dissertation for data collection to other researches in the community. He has also used some data and a photograph from these later visits of the area by the researcher. All in all, the data collection for this research lasted for at least twelve months.

1.5.2. Research Paradigm

The assumption of knowledge in this dissertation is constructivist (also called interpretivist). My experience among the Kumpal shows that research is a co-production of knowledge by the research community, the researcher, and the research context. Regarding the community, Willis (2007:6) also says “.... for interpretivists, what the world *means* to the person or group being studied is critically important to good research in the social sciences”. The knowledge about history, memory and victimhood is a subjective reality for and by the Kumpal. Besides, the researcher’s role in influencing the kind of knowledge produced is imperative. The researcher has the ability to influence the kind of knowledge produced by imposing his or her own interpretation or the interpretation of other scientists. The role of context in knowledge production is also significant. The knowledge the community holds and the interpretation of the knowledge by the researcher are both influenced by time and place. Hence Kumpal knowledge about history, memory, and victimhood will not remain the same for generations to come and might not have been the same for foregoing generations. At this point, Reeves and Hedberg (2003: 32) also note the “interpretivist” paradigm stresses the need to

put analysis in a context. The following figure shows how the production of knowledge is conditioned by these different actors and factors.

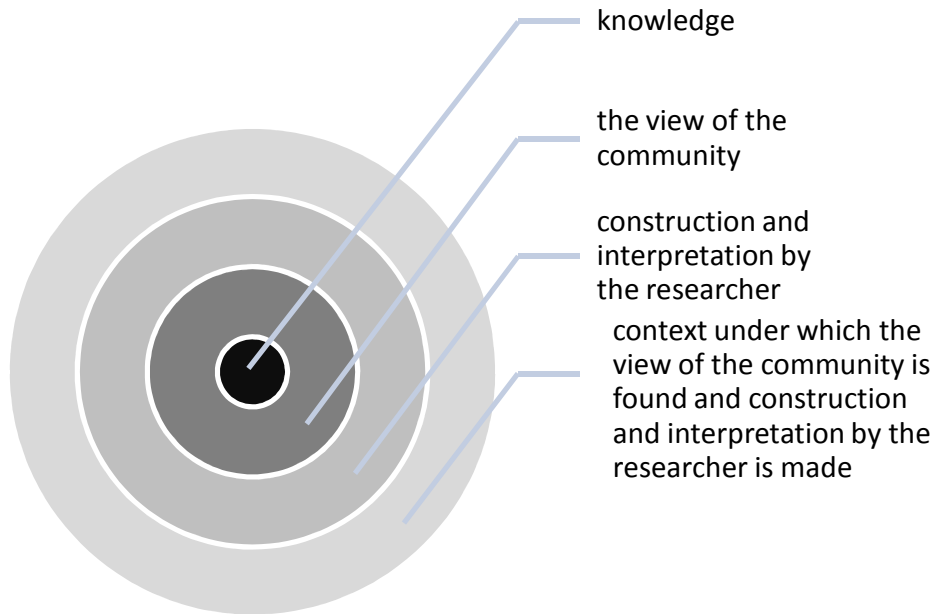


Figure 1 Actors and factors of knowledge production

Source: Developed by the researcher

1.5.3 Research Design

In this dissertation, I used a qualitative research design against quantitative. I reached on this decision based on the type of assumption to knowledge I made in the preceding section and the type of data required to meet objectives set for this dissertation. The research objectives, which are stated in Section 1.4, do not require measuring individual responses on the basis of which numerical generalizations are to be made. They are rather oriented towards discovering issues and understanding of their meaning (Neuman 2000: 123) in the analysis of the relationship between the Kumpal past and present.

1.5.4 Research Methods

Data was collected through in-depth interview of twelve key informants and several participants in formal and informal interview (See Appendix II). It also made use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with four groups each group composed of six respondents. Both interviewees and FGD participants were chosen based on snowball sampling on the basis of proposed knowledge and experience they have to contribute towards data for this dissertation. Written sources were also used to complete data on the historical context of Agäw integration and their ensuing oppressive historical experiences. Let me explain each in a more detail.

1.5.4.1 Interviews

Interview in its different forms was one of the most important methods used in this dissertation. Formal or structured in-depth individual interview is one of them. A set of structured questions (See appendix A) were used to make interview with selected data in individual interview.

But, often even best recommended informants said they did not know or were not certain about all or parts of what I asked them. Incomplete or distorted information would be fetched if individual interviewees were used invariably. Alternatively, two or more elders were put together to cooperate and construct more reliable, accurate, and comprehensive information through group interview, particularly about the distant past.

Informal individual and group interviews were also used. The people were not always genuinely open in sit-and-ask approach, and with the researcher recording and/or taking notes of their answers. Rather repeated contact, off-record conversations, and local *silxi* or *ariki* bars were important approaches to heartfelt conversation.

All in all, different types of interviews were indispensable techniques for data collection about stories of the past and also the present. As it is suggested in the

discussion so far, the dissertation required two sets of data for filling in the entire framework of argument. The first set of data is on and about the past as such and the second one about the presence of the past in the present. Interviews were *sine quo non* methods to get memories about the past and the meaning they attach to them in the present.

In order to select informants for interviews, first, I outlined on major set of data I needed and sought informants appropriate to get each set of data. Potential individual interviewees were aggregated into 1) senior Kumpal elders with the supposed general knowledge about the community, 2) into local political officials who worked or are working in the past and present regimes and who have more detail knowledge on special topics on the political regimes, 3) into neighboring/mixed ethnic groups who are the Amhara, 4) into elders with church background, 5) into women and youth/students, and 6) into elders who know Kumpalngi²⁷. Based on this arrangement, I used snowball sampling for selection of informants in most of these categories, and some informants served for more than one category. I did not have chance to locate informants myself, in a hard-to-reach villages and their inhabitants whom I did not know. My entry point was Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office. Officers here connected me to Kumpal elders in Alu-K'urand K'äbäle, and some Kumpal elders also connected me to other persons both in Jawi Woräda and other places of Kumpal settlement. All in all, sixty informants were used for formal group and individual interviews, and some more used for informal interviews (See Appendix II for representation of different informants).

In spite of my effort to represent them in the process of selection of interviewees, the contribution of women in actual interview was, however, small compared to other group of interviewees. Women resisted to be interviewed; they said they were not willing to be interviewed at all; or appeared shy or inarticulate. Only five women

²⁷Kumpalngi is an old Kumpal language (See more under Chapter Three).

directly participated in the study as informants. I believe that this will not leave a significant lacuna, however. (See Appendix II for the profile of informants).

1.5.4.2 Participant Observation

Observation with a strong degree of participation was done on various socio-cultural and physical domains of the present day life of the Kumpal. I have hitherto made brief mentionings that the *Fifi* is one of the repertoires of memory for this group. It is a yearly ritual the entire community performs from July to September every year and which has profound connection to the Kumpal past. This ritual was observed intermittently from June 2013 to the beginning of October 2013²⁸. Had it not been for the method of participant observation, it would not have been entirely possible to learn about embodied Kumpal memories in the *Fifi* musical instruments and the musical ritual.

To get an impression of what they talk about their subsistence, during March and April 2013, I also made an observation of the Kumpal slash-and-burn²⁹ activity while they were preparing crop fields for sowing. Interaction of the Kumpal with other ethnic groups in market places, churches, funerals, and community meetings were also observed. The focus was their interaction with the Gumuz, other non-Kumpal Agäw, and the Amhara, all ethnic groups who live in contiguous and/or mixed settlements with the Kumpal. I also made observation in the court, police station, classrooms, school compounds and government offices to see the pattern of Kumpal interaction with members of other ethnic groups and state representatives.

1.5.4.3. FGDs

The application of FGD to data collection for this dissertation is relatively limited. It was used only to generate data regarding the impact of post-1991 political change on the Kumpal. There are divergent opinions of the Kumpal on the impact of ethnic federalism of Ethiopia which is in place since 1994. Some argued that ethnic

²⁸ This ritual comes as Chapter Six of this dissertation.

²⁹ The detail of this is provided under the second chapter describing background of the people.

federalism has at least somehow emancipated them from forgoing “dark times”³⁰. Others perceived that what had existed before 1991 also exist until the time of completion of the fieldwork for this dissertation, and ethnic federalism for them was merely on the paper. Two focus group discussions each group consisting of six members were applied to develop this argument with the local people purposely selected for their strength of divergent opinions. An attempt to include political actors in this discussion was not possible for, of course, there would be undue influence on the part of the community participants, nor was it possible to make FGD among politicians/government officials themselves also because it was worthless endeavor to discuss with them who comprise a mere insignificant difference in opinion.

Other two FGDs, each group consisting of again six members, were conducted one with students and another with teachers. The purpose here was to discuss about the belief of the Kumpal in the curse and its impact on their participation in education. Totally, four FGDs were conducted, and twenty four discussants participated.

1.5.4.4. Individual Case Studies

Data collection also benefited from the technique of case study. Case study was used to build on data presented through other techniques. For example, individual beliefs on the ancestral curse or the culture of cursing and how they were personally affected by this was best presented by case study. Many individuals attribute the ruin of their life to some curse imposed on them by their ancestors or imposed each other based on the current culture of cursing and blessing among the community (See Chapter Ten for the current way of cursing and blessing among the Kumpal). Besides, in reviewing the historical context of the people, it is also more helpful to present cases of how individuals have personally experienced the past. Case study in this sense means a detail presentation of individual experiences. All in all, seven individual case studies were used in the dissertation.

³⁰ This expression is often used by many Kumpal informants to describe the difference between their situation before and after 1991.

1.5.4.5. Community and Official Meetings

I had also the opportunity to participate in local meetings organized by the local government officials and to which the Kumpal were called to discuss on agenda set by the former. I participated in three major meetings. The first was on February 25, 2012, agenda on the so called Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) among the Kumpal. The second one was on March 2, 2013 agenda on the inauguration of a single *Fifi* song. And the third one was in September 2013. This one was a *Meskal*³¹ celebration at ANRS level conducted, at Alu K'urand K'äbäle in Jawi Woräda, in recognition of progress of establishing T'ana Bäläs Sugar Project (See Chapter Nine) being constructed in the Kumpal settlement areas. All the meetings gave me the opportunity to participate and collect data which otherwise I would have missed. Besides, these meetings gave me an immense opportunity to contact with elders and government officials who were gathered for these meetings.

1.5.4.6. Photographing

In addition to all the above methods, photographs were also used as means of data collection and presentation. They were used to capture important scenes and performances. For example, it was not optimally possible to give a telling description about *Fifi* celebration had it not been photos used to assist textual description. They are inserted in the appropriate place where they can best explain a story at hand.

1.5.4.7. Written Sources

Literature was also important source of data particularly for Chapter Four which constructs “oppression” of the Agäw in general and the Kumpal in particular by rulers who were tasked with the process of state formation through integration of previously independent ethnic groups. The literature review also supplements oral interviews about the Kumpal past.

³¹ *Meskal* is the annual celebration of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, in commemoration of the Finding of True Cross. See details in Chapter Six.

1.5.5. Primary vs. Secondary Data Sources

Now it is more explanatory to characterize the data sources used in this dissertation as primary and secondary. However to avoid possible confusion, this should begin by clarification of their distinction with oral and written sources respectively. Here primary sources, whether written, oral, or in any other form, refer to sources that provide first-hand witness or direct evidence concerning a topic under study. Secondary sources on the other hand are sources in any form that are one step distanced from the primary sources. The difference between primary and secondary sources is based on whether or not a source gives a direct experience or firsthand information about something. The following figure would make the point clearer.

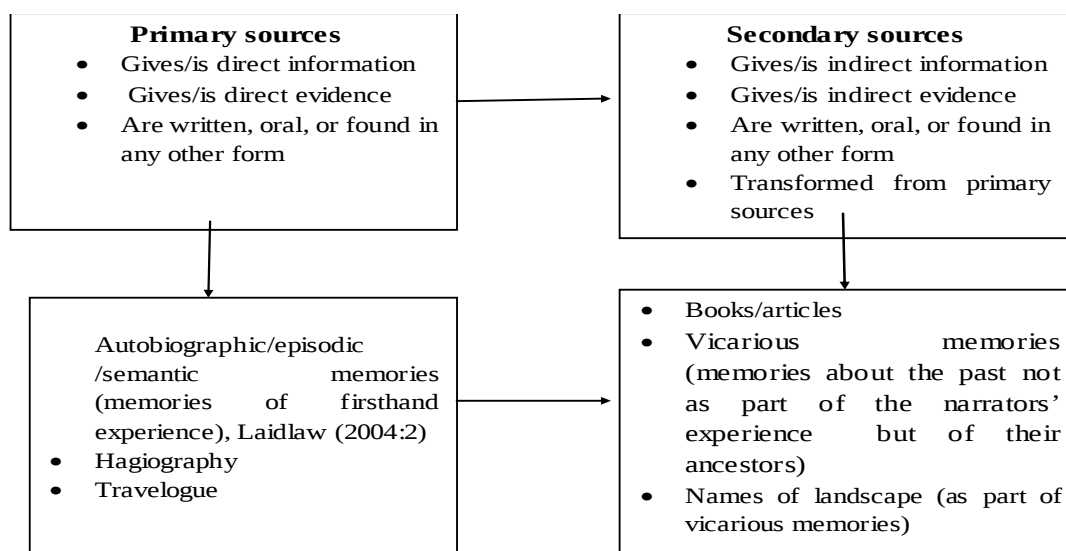


Figure 2 Relationship between primary and secondary data sources (Developed by the researcher)

Data obtained for this dissertation were both primary and secondary. Chapters Three, Seven, Eight, and Nine primarily, but not solely, relied on primary oral sources. Few written primary sources i.e. hagiography and travelogue were also used under Chapter Five. But Chapters Two and Four largely, but not solely, relied

on written secondary sources while chapters Five and Six primarily, but not solely, relied on secondary oral sources, which is about vicarious memory.

1.5.6 Techniques of Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis for this dissertation began, as an *interactive* process. Rather than after the data collection has been completed, the analysis began with the beginning of the major fieldwork itself in February 2013. Since then, every time after data were collected in one or another method from one or another source, as soon as possible I jotted down pieces of them into tentative categories, and tried to see how they could relate to each other and make a coherent argument. When at any stage additional data were needed to be investigated and/or new relationship of concepts explored, I adjusted and readjusted not only data analyses but also the data collection process itself. Initial research questions were modified or even replaced in the course of the research. Construction of this work as a coherent material was a slow but sure process of creating and recreating new data, their relationships, meanings and arguments.

The analyses and interpretation for data of this dissertation was also made through both *emic* and *etic* view. The presentation of the insider's view (*emic* view) is, whenever possible and at various levels, analyzed through my own view as a writer and through existing theoretical, conceptual and empirical literature. There are two ways the analysis through the *etic* view is made. First, sometimes the view of other scholars and also my own view are cited in the text. Second, a separate chapter (See Chapter Ten) is devoted to interpret overall findings through my own view and the view of other scholars.

I also employed a *reflexive* technique in the course of both data analysis and interpretation. "Reflexivity", gives the technique of "turning back on oneself" while writing, or is "a process of self-reference" (Davies 2008:4). I used this technique while data collection, analyses and interpretation. Sometimes, data analyses and interpretation are strengthened by informative accounts of how I made interaction

in the field. Such technique is used when I believed that it was useful to build the argument also from circumstances in the fieldwork process. As I indicated under 1.6.1., I do not see myself detached from the construction of knowledge; and reflexive technique is one of the ways researchers influence construction of knowledge.

1.6. Ethical Issues

The first ethical issue peculiar to this fieldwork is my position, in some cases, in terms of advocacy for the community. Often times, I received complaints from the Kumpal about the difficult situation for them, mainly, displacement of them by large-scale development intervention and adversities due to alleged “incommensurate” compensation (See Chapter Nine). I was often asked to take their grievance to concerned authorities at local level and even in Addis Ababa. The requests were made by people in desperate situation for whom I could not help but speak to the *worāda* officials through interviews. But this does not mean that the whole exercise of this dissertation is to advocate for local communities. It is not advocacy anthropology all in all though it cannot avoid, from its very nature, to speak in favor of people regarding how they were and are disadvantaged throughout regimes and how they should be set free today.

I was also able to make a presentation of problems of the Kumpal in a meeting where higher government officials from ANAZ and ANRS participated. In this presentation, I spoke about the quandary of Kumpal marginalization under the current regime. In the Kumpal area today, there is a large-scale development project which establishes three sugar factories together with an extensive sugar cane plantation. This resulted in displacement of the local people. Moreover, massive state-sponsored and self-initiated migrants from places other than the project area are benefiting a lot, for the moment, from employment opportunities. Conversely, the project-host Kumpal people have become bystanders. They cannot participate in the job opportunities due to unfavorable socio-cultural and historical conditions.

For example, they had not been educated to take advantage of job openings in the project³².

Shortly after I made this presentation, the Kumpal in Alu K'urand K'äbäle thanked me for their problem of land for relocating grind mills was solved. I was not able to make sure if the solution came in response to my presentation. But the reality on the ground for most of the problems remains the same until September 2013.

Apart from these which I think are ethical issues unique to my case, I have also observed common ethical standards with regard to data collection. Individuals and groups who participated in the research did so voluntarily. They were not forced by me or someone else to participate in the research. Not only this, they were also informed about why they participate. They were fully informed about procedures and risks involved in the research and have given their consent to participate. This principle also required me not to put participants at a risk. Privacy and anonymity were respected to the extent it was important to participants who are sources of data.

1.7. Challenges, Limitations and Opportunities

1.7.1. Challenges

There are some challenges I faced in the process of the fieldwork and writing up this dissertation. Let me begin with mentioning that the culture of secretiveness of the people was somehow challenging. I presume that this has itself evolved from two things. The first one is from the Kumpal belief in the ancestral curse and exodus. As

³² The meeting was held on April 28, 2013 at Genet Hotel in Addis Ababa. It was aimed at orientation of Awi community in Addis Ababa on development activities in ANAZ, and then soliciting material or ideological support from the Awi “diaspora” in Addis Ababa. My presentation (and a presentation by another invited person) was supposed to contribute to this awareness raising activity. But my presentation seemed to have slammed the existing administration and one of the top state officials in the meeting who was also a moderator for the presentation rejected my research findings as having no ground of truth. In his closing official remark, he spoke: “I advise you to exercise this research again”. Contents presented in this meeting were also upgraded and presented at the Second Annual Workshop of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies held in May 21, 2013 in Addis Ababa. The title of my paper to this workshop is “Formal and Informal Migration of People in Jawi and a Quandary of the Kumpal Marginalization”. The paper appears in the proceedings of this conference.

stated hitherto, when the Kumpal ancestors went for exodus against their oppressors, they took an oath to keep secret. Unfortunately, for some oathers, it was not possible to do so and the whole story of who they are today came as a result. So, I consider today's secret culture is a legacy of that phenomenal happening. Second, there was also a long process of discrimination of the Kumpal from the state and their neighbors. Thus, it was normal for them to hide their identity. They seem to have developed the mentality of being what others would want them to be, rather than assert to what they want to be who they are.

Moreover, a challenge also came from the view of some, but not all, informants towards recording a "negative" history about them. When these informants gave me data, they asked me not to mention their name. Even a non-Kumpal local officer in Jawi Woräda challenged me if writing a "negative" history is in the first place a worthy exercise.

To overcome both secretive attitude and that of reluctance to participate in writing a "negative" history, I made a relentless effort to convince the people. I often argued that their idea of avoiding "negative" history is mistaken and there will never be any "history" about them if they did not tell me openly about their knowledge of the past. I took advantage of a joint gathering of local officials and the community (See section 1.6.4.5 above) to advance my argument. I was formally introduced to participants in the meeting by *woräda* officials three times in various meetings as the one who came to study their culture and "history". In one of the meetings, I spoke to them the following among others:

As you know, Agäw has a big place in the Ethiopian history. Like any other people, they have culture and history important in the civilization of entire Ethiopia. But, we are ashamed of *our* own culture and history not because of *our* problem but what has happened by oppressive rulers. Previous rulers have shunned the beautiful reputation of Agäw, and developed a number of stereotypes. That is why you may not be interested in telling me about your history. But there is no bad and good, right and wrong history that has been made as the result of you. What belongs to us should be written for we will learn from it anyway. Self-knowledge whatever it is will end as light at one time, and you should not be afraid of the light. Many things have been lost

about the Agäw without being studied. Particularly, there is none about the culture and history of K'oläña Agäw³³.

Besides, in order to break the secretive attitude and get trust, I ought to personally socialize with my informants. It was foods and drinks that helped me in this regard. As far as emotional comfort is concerned, I had the experience with my informants that no amount of persuasive argument could match the loosening power of foods and drinks.

Lack of in-field transportation and the need to travel on foot for long hours in a hot weather of up to 40°C³⁴ and fighting with malaria disease by which I was seriously sick were also other challenges.

1.7.2 Opportunities

There are some opportunities that have gone in favor of me while dealing with some challenges or limitations in the work of this dissertation. To overcome secretiveness and indifferent attitude of people in participating in writing “negative” history, in addition to socialization and trying to convince them by explaining things, as stated above, speaking the language of the people has helped me gain considerable openness and trust. My ability to the two languages, Amharic and Awnigi, the language of highland Agäw, is granted. Besides, I speak the language the Kumpal speak today. As the Kumpal-Awnigi resembles 75% to the Awi-Awnigi (See section 3.3. under Chapter Three), I used this language to communicate with Kumpal informants without difficulty. Due to trust they bestowed on me as the result of the shared identity, they were more open to genuine conversation than otherwise if I were not “part” of their identity. *Nixwasu* and *awi* are terms they used to include me to their identity.

³³ Date of the meeting on which I made the speech was on February 25, 2012. Agenda of the meeting was on how to avoid HTPs in the Kumpal culture.

³⁴ I, together with my colleague Hiruy Abdu, measured this degree of temperature in March 2012 at Bambluk K'äbäle

At this juncture, I want to reflect on whether, consequently, I was an “insider” or “outsider”. During my presentation of tentative findings on various seminars (*See below*), I was often asked this question. My answer was that “Today, the very activity of fieldwork places us somewhere on a continuum between familiar and strange, self and other, domestic and foreign, same and different” (Fox et al 1999:160). “The ambiguity of the terms *insider* and *outsider* is quite apparent, for each author may be considered an insider by some measures and an outsider by others (emphasis in the original)” (Fox, Stoeltje, and Olbrys 1999:177). I am much insider than a European would study them; yet lesser insider than a person who is born and has been socialized in their culture would study them. I am only partly insider being identified as an Awi.

Another opportunity I had in doing this dissertation is the chance to visit foreign libraries. During June 2013, I participated in the Brown International Advanced Research Institutes (BIARI 2013) residential school. Then I was able to access as much relevant materials as available from the Brown University library which has a network across some American universities. Moreover, during the entire month of November 2014, I made use of library at Bayreuth University which has a large collection of materials on African Studies.

I had also the opportunity to participate in various academic events and was able to communicate parts of my research findings. I had the chance to present chapters of dissertation on a seminar at Bayreuth University in November 2014, at the IES Monthly Seminar Series in December 2014, and at the Monthly Seminar Series of French Centre for Ethiopian Studies in May 2015. I also participated at the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held in Warsaw in August 2015. I have benefited from many comments in these presentations.

1.7.3. Limitations

I believe that outlining possible limitations of a work is the expression of its strength, not exposing its weakness. Accordingly, despite all the efforts, I want to mention some limitations I feel this dissertation has, yet does not compromise its quality. They are points which I did not work on them to the level of my satisfaction since it was not possible to do at this stage.

Among the Kumpal, it is strictly necessary to live with the people and do the research even for more than twelve months, until data the community gradually exposes were adequately mined. Besides, stories about the Kumpal are told in some places of northern Ethiopia, places beyond the research sites. Had it not been for both time and funding constraints, I would have stayed even more with the community as well as visited more places in northern Ethiopia at large where oral stories about the Kumpal are mentioned.

On some topics, lack of access to adequate literature was also another limitation. Particularly, anthropology has worked less on the culture of cursing and blessing, particularly none or little on expression of victimhood as institutionalized by cursing. It was hard for me to get materials on both of these topics to the level of my satisfaction. I have to deal only with some of old and inadequate materials that I could manage to find.

Besides, the Kumpal memory is put in a scanty data about its historical antecedents. As I have hitherto said, this dissertation argues that the oppressive historical condition today's Kumpal and those of their ancestors have lived has given a background to the memory the Kumpal hold today. The Kumpal memory is an extension of a real historical condition. Yet, this historical condition has been mythologized from the view point of the Kumpal culture, i.e., through their culture of cursing and blessing. I believe that I have sufficiently argued to show actual link between the history and that of memory. However, the argument I made seems to be less than one may be satisfied including myself. This is not because I did not

make enough effort, but the Kumpal story is too local that it does not seem to be possible to find this story in the already existing historical materials. I have passed this just by outlining a general historical context and by providing some specific logical connections. A reasonable person can understand that to establish factual and sufficient connection between the past and present is even more than a topic of another dissertation. It requires a long-time research endeavor both by historians and archaeologists. It is not something an anthropologist can just solve in a twelve months fieldwork, and in the first ever fieldwork in the community.

1.8. Dissertation Structure and Overview

The dissertation is organized into eleven chapters. Following this introductory Chapter, Chapter Two presents literature review. There are three concepts underlying the construction of this dissertation: history, memory, and victimhood. Chapter Two therefore reviews these terms from their conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives. There are messy conceptual and theoretical debates around these issues and the Chapter tries to work out a framework of analysis, workable concepts and theories suitable to this dissertation. It also reviews empirical literature.

Chapter Three gives an introduction to the Kumpal in holistic terms, but particularly about their location and demographic landscape, about disputes on their ethnonym, about their language, social organization, belief system, livelihood, and the nature of interaction with other neighboring ethnic groups or those who share common settlement. This Chapter gives an original ethnographic background to the Kumpal.

The remaining chapters are structured diachronically, by which I mean those which deal with the past are presented first while those on the present next. Accordingly, Chapter Four reconstructs a historical context which is presumed to have given rise to today's Kumpal memory of oppression and then the ancestral curse. As it has been said in the earlier parts of this Chapter, "history" is blamed for almost all of the

adversities the Kumpal have today. This Chapter is thus dedicated to reconstructing a historical condition of the Agäw in general and the Kumpal in particular.

Chapter Five gives the oral narrative account to the rise of ancestral curse. It describes story outlining severe exploitation of the Kumpal ancestors, ensuing exodus, and the origin of curses on defecting oathers during the exodus. It also gives a list of such curses.

Chapter Six gives a remarkable account of *Fifi*, a musical ritual of the Kumpal. The Chapter discusses *Fifi* both as a performative and ritual way of narrating and reproducing memory about the curse and the exodus. It argues that the place of memory among the Kumpal is beyond the mind; it is also deposited in the body movements and patterns of behavior exhibited during the ritual of *Fifi*

Chapter Seven presents the major adversities of the ancestral curse on the life of the present Kumpal. Virtually, every aspect of today's Kumpal life is affected by their notion of the curse. But it is not possible to investigate all. In this Chapter, the major impacts of the belief in the curse are described. Particularly, it provides with how the people blame on the curse for their "unattractive" phenotype, poor or no education, lack of fortune for self-rule and poverty.

Chapter Eight examines continued "oppression" of today's Kumpal during the Imperial Regime of Hailä Sillassie I and that of the Därg Regime. Besides, it also shows how this continued oppression motivated the people to change their relationship with the past by way of attempting to break the curse. The ancestral curse is potentially breakable, but the procedure is stringent.

Chapter Nine completes my dissertation's temporal scale and shows the full scope by investigating what is happening on the Kumpal after the rise of the radical social and political policy in Ethiopia since 1991. The Chapter endeavors to understand how state intervention after 1991 has improved or exacerbated problems of the

Kumpal. It also captures differing opinion of informants on changes and continuities of the curse as the result of changes and continuities of oppression as the result of state intervention since 1991.

Chapter Ten takes up major theoretical threading factors in the Kumpal memory. It analyses the Kumpal memory against existing theoretical debates. I argue that the Kumpal memory has both historical authenticity and mythical reconstruction. To argue along the latter line, I proposed my own theoretical insight called “cultural model of memory reconstruction”. This Chapter also ponders on why the Kumpal maintain memory of victimhood, and to answer this question, I proposed a “moral theory” of identity of victimhood.

Chapter Eleven concludes the entire dissertation and gives some compelling recommendations for intervention to lessen or solve the Kumpal problem.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTS, FRAMEWORKS, THEORIES AND THE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

“Memory” is both a multi-disciplinary and an interdisciplinary subject. It is multidisciplinary because it is a topic of inquiry for many disciplines such as Psychology (e.g. Jay 2000; Lurie 2007), Popular Culture (e.g. Bacon and Bronk 2014; Darroch 2009; Carpenter 2010), Philosophy (McCormack 2007: 43) and Religion (e.g. Waugh 2005) in addition to history and anthropology. It is also an interdisciplinary because insights developed in one discipline are used in another. Anthropology, Sociology, and History heavily borrow concepts, theories and methods from each other. Sometimes, the phrase “memory studies” is used to draw together all these fields of memory-related scholarship ranging from “the neuropsychological to cultural”. However, its identity as a field is still contested (Beim 2007). “Anthropology of Memory” (e.g. Werbner 1998:2) can be a label for the identity of this dissertation. I argue that the main defining characteristic of anthropology of memory is studying memory as a cultural phenomenon. Yet, I devote this chapter to carve out, from “memory studies”, a more appropriate space for concepts, frameworks, and theories suitable to my study while I make a review of the existing literature to show how my dissertation relates to the existing corpus of materials.

2.2. Key Concepts/Themes

2.2.1. History

The notion of history is contestable. I do not make a review here about what it is. In order to fill the gap in the structure of conceptual discussion in this section, I just lay down a simple and nominal notion, by which I mean the notion that will be made clearer as I discuss what memory is in the next sections.

Accordingly, it suffices to say that history is the study of the human past traditionally relying on written documents left by human civilization. The study is made by reconstructing the human past, at best, as it really happened. Hence, the notion of “objectivity” is the fundamental claim made by early historians. However, this has been contested especially with post-modernism, which claims that history is also a subjective representation of the past, the subjectivity infused by authors, political ideology of a time and credibility of sources (Carr 1961; Nora 1989).

2.2.2. Collective Memory

The terminological disarray existing around “memory studies” is also really messy and it should be trimmed in the first place. “Collective memory” is the oldest term “explicitly used” to refer to a group memory (Olick and Robbins 1998). The usage of it in the contemporary studies is traced to a French sociologist and a student of Durkheim, Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) (Olick and Robbins 1998). Today, in addition to sociology, the phrase is used in social sciences and humanities at large.

A number of different terms also evolved to refer to a group memory: “social memory” (e.g. Fentress and Wickham 1992), “collective remembering” (e.g. Wertsch 2004), “popular history making” (e.g. Rosenzweig and Thalen 1998:3), “public memory” (e.g. Baines 2007), and “myth” (e.g. Gedi and Elam 1996), to mention but some. There is even inconsistency within a single disciplinary tradition. For example, in the anthropological literature, some use “social memory” (Connerton 1983); others use “collective memory” (e.g. Beim 2007), others just “memory”, and in some literature the usage is interchangeable (e.g. Kaplonski 2004: 9; Cole 1998, Cole 2001), and some even say “collective social memory” (DeBoeck 1998:3). Scholars use one or more of such terms without explicit justification.

I use “collective memory” against others because of some logical reasons. Most other usages are loaded with expression requiring further definition. For example, “social memory” suggests not only to the fact that memory is of a group but also is of *social* (Bar-Tal et al 2009:2). “Public” memory requires further qualification because it

suggests there is a “private” memory such as of “individual” or “family” memory. “Collective remembrance” may refer to only one aspect of memory, i.e., the act of remembering; and the like. On the other hand, I believe that “collective memory” makes clear the fact that memory is shared by a particular group of people, such as communities and ethnic groups. The collectivist approach to studying memory also entails us that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In this sense, collective memory is more than a mere aggregate of individual memories. The collectivist approach rather elevates individual memories into a common past that generally members of a particular community share (Zerubavel 1996). Collective memories are the product of “mnemonic socialization” through which members of a group learn to see the world (Zerubavel 1997: 87).

I think such terminological confusion is largely underlying in the disciplinary background of scholars. For example, sociologists seem to focus on studying memory in the urban context and take it as social phenomenon. Likewise, anthropologists focus on studying communities and study memory as a cultural phenomenon, and the like. The difference also seems to be implicated in the type of group or society whose memory is studied.

In addition to its terminology, there is also fluidity in the concept of memory. But central to its definition is the presence of historical antecedents in the present (Beim 2007:9; Confino 1997:1386; McCormack 2007:3). What makes memory unique from other fields of knowledge such as myth is it being connected, at least in some way, to things which have or are believed to have really occurred in the past. As Assman (2008: 113) says, not just all consciousness about the past can be called memory, but only that which is related to historical consciousness. And like history, memory also suggests some distance in time, a distance that distinguishes it from mere present experience (Riano-Alcalá 2000:24)

While this notion of collective memory seems to be less disputable, the scope of things constituting memory is however arguable. In the literature, memory has been

often criticized for being a catch-all word not only in anthropology but also in other disciplines. Berliner (2005) argues that the meaning of memory has been overextended and hence as wide as the notion of “culture”. Gedi and Elam (1996:40) also argue that “memory has become the all pervading concept which in effect stands for all sorts of human cognitive products generally”. Boyarin (1994:23) also adds “identity and memory are virtually the same”. Connerton (1989) uses the concept in its broadest sense and argues even society is itself a form of memory. Indeed, the idea of memory as every-single-trace-of-the-past-in-the-present (Berliner 2005) is disputable.

In order to create a more workable concept of memory, scholars pin down the above definition into different ways. Some refer to “formats” (A. Assaman 2008:55), concrete physical “sites” (Nora 1989) or “institutions” (Kansteiner 2002) in which memory can be studied. Depending on the type of society or group (e.g. the level of literacy), memories can be found in oral narratives, commemorative rituals, books, monuments and museums, generally through a combination of various methods such as “discursive, visual and spatial elements” (Kansteiner 2002:190).

Moreover, scholars also break down memory, either implicitly or explicitly, into internal and external. The internal domain is a cognitive aspect of memory while the external is the “institutionalized” representation of it (Beim 2007). This raises further disagreement among scholars on which aspect of memory is more amenable to analysis. Some scholars in anthropology say memory can be studied only or at best through its institutionalized manifestations (Schwartz 2000, Connerton 1989, Kansteiner 2002:190, Baines 2007:167). On the other hand, other scholars say the internal memory as well can be open to analysis (Beim 2007).

How does this concept of memory work when it comes to the Kumpal? In the first place, I argue the idea of some sort of connection between memory and history is a critical point that we need to take into account if we have to study memory as a unique field from, particularly, other oral domains of knowledge. This should be an

indisputable point. Rather disagreement arises in the things that constitute the scope of memory. In this regard as well, blaming memory as a too broad concept to serve as an analytical tool is not or is less applicable in the case of the Kumpal. Memory among these people is virtually tantamount to culture. In order to assert this, let me discuss this along with how the idea of “institutions” of memory applies to the Kumpal.

The Kumpal case shows that memory is mainly institutionalized through two essential areas: oral narration and ritual performance. As to the oral narrations, Edy (2006:2) also says that the role of oral recounting in upholding collective memory is very important. Oral narrative memories are basic forms of memory among the Kumpal too. They are basic in the sense that all other forms of memory exist based on oral narratives. Second, memory is institutionalized among the Kumpal in the commemorative musical ritual of *Fifi*. As Connerton (1989:72) shows, memory at its best can also be institutionalized through performances such as commemorative ceremonies, and can be “sedimented” in clothing patterns, behaviors of people, musical performance, and other socio-culturally mediated bodily practices. This also is true to the Kumpal.

But apart from “institutions”, the Kumpal interpretation of the past enters into every aspect of their life at present. Memory exists in a broad range of beliefs, behaviors and actions in the everyday life in addition to particular institutions in the form of oral narrations and musical ritual. In this case, it is difficult to apply the notion of “institution” to the Kumpal memory. The “everyday life” among the Kumpal is not just confined only to certain institutions such as oral stories, rituals, or discourses. Memory is not something which is hanged only at the level of occasional oral narratives or periodic ritual performances; it is also the fuel that runs the people’s actions and decisions in everyday life and that affects their world view at large. Beyond “institutions”, I understand that the Kumpal memory is also a pool of ideas, beliefs, and behaviors informed by the historical past and are represented in almost every important aspect of the Kumpal life at present. I understand memory as part

of a cultural system. Understanding memory only as something “out there” in “sites” (e.g. museums, monuments) or “institutions” is not tenable in the Kumpal case. The day to day activities are tangled or are interpreted through their perception of what the past has done to them. This tells us that memory is virtually tantamount to “Culture”.

With regard to the “internal” versus “external” domains of memory, I believe there is also no rigid boundary. It is possible to study memory in anthropology both from the cognitive and the social/cultural perspective in tandem. For example, as Beim (2007) argues, it is necessary to understand the “memory schema” that serves as a mental framework for institutionalization. But, this aspect of memory has been neglected with the focus only on the external. There is also much of the cognitive and psychological aspect to study the Kumpal memory, but as a matter of defining the scope for this dissertation and because my knowledge on psychology limits me, I however focus on the expression of memory. Yet, the psychological aspect is evident from the overall pattern of the data and argument.

2.2.3. Victimhood

Psychologists who study “victimhood” at individual level see the concept to constitute a sense of “loss”, or “misfortune” as the result of some event or series of events (Aquino and Byron 2002: 71). Bar-Tal et al (2009) use this analogy to understand “victimhood” at group level. According to them, like individuals, groups also suffer from collective victimization. The harm may be felt to have been deliberately inflicted to suffer the group in question. According to Bar-Tal et al (2009:236), the past is “an imperative aspect” for the understanding of victimhood. Likewise, virtually the entire aspect of Kumpal life at present is filled with the mentality of victimhood from the imperative of actual and/or perceived oppression by rulers and cursing by their ancestors, both in the past.

It is to be mentioned that communities can be proud of their past, particularly may have positive attitude towards how they lived in the past (e.g. Guidi 2013). It is not

contestable claim to say that some groups which were attached to those wielding power in a given political regime, which enjoyed certain privileges over other oppressed communities, and which have experienced better psychological and social comforts can have positive memories of the past. But the Kumpal memory is filled with victimhood from the perceived and actual historical condition of oppressive governorship and ensuing rise of ancestral curse.

I want to make clear why I study only the memory of victimhood. The Kumpal memory is studied here under a dominant picture of victimhood, not because I suppress or fail to investigate another (positive) picture, but because there is none or little. I could not find but only a negative memory about the political and social “history”. There is no memory that is counter narrated to balance or neutralize the negative, which seems to be the case for many societies. The Kumpal internalize a sense of victimhood as part of their identity as they are informed by their knowledge about the past. They are dominated by the feeling of suffering from the collective victimization.

2.3. Structural Matters

There are still more analytical issues which are salient to the above analytical framework. It is to the presentation of these points that I turn now.

2.3.1. Agency

I argue that the past may come principally from two different agencies. In the first place, as Friedman (1992: 837) suggests “the practices of groups themselves create an inevitable confrontation in the construction of histories”. People have the past which they made themselves in their own practices without being forced by external power. They have memories of self-constructed events such as narratives of heroes symbolic to their community, memories of origin, and the like. A narrative is institutionalized and gets articulated or formulated, perhaps by only one or few of a group’s members. In this sense of agency, the past is constructed or believed to have

been constructed by the people themselves. The people are authors of their own “history”.

Second, there can be some other external forces to which the construction of identity regarding the past is attributed. Of all, political circumstance under which ethnic groups lived can be the most important responsible factor in determining the past a group has. Specific political conditions under which communities lived can be the only or dominant historical resource a community has. For example, if a community was persecuted by a powerful group, political or social, that is created by external power. In this view, the past is authored by external actors.

But, this division should not diminish the role of interaction between the two agencies. Both the internal and external forces work together and there may not be past purely isolated from involving another party no matter how the level may vary. Yet, for this dissertation the distinction is also important for analytical purpose. What the people perceive how their history has been made implies what and how the past is represented today. Accordingly, the authorship of the Kumpal memory is from both oppressive rulers and the ancestors themselves, though ultimately the latter is the result of the former. As it has been said hitherto, the oppression ensued in the exodus affirmed by a collective oath, breaking the oath ensued in the curse, and the curse ensued in the condition the Kumpal live today. So the agency of memory making is dual among the Kumpal, both from external political forces and from their ancestors; hence the Kumpal of today is not directly part of authoring their past.

2.3.2. Level of Analysis, Source of Legitimacy, Medium of Communication, Status and Type

Just a glimpse on existing literature on memory shows the different levels and types of studying memory. In terms of the *level of analysis*, a collective memory can be studied at any level ranging from a collective memory of a family to that of an international collective memory. This does not mean that such analysis is bounded

to a certain level; there can also be significant interconnections of memory at different levels. However, focus can be made at a particular level. From this point of view, this dissertation studies memory of particular minority ethnic groups called Kumpal.

From the *means of legitimacy*, collective memory can be official or unofficial. The former refers to approved, controlled, and used memory by the state while the latter is culturally institutionalized at a community level (Ivanova 2003:17). From this point of view, the Kumpal memory is controlled at local level through mechanisms of cultural mediation.

In terms of *medium*, memory can be also analyzed as oral or non-oral. The former is mediated through or created from oral tradition while non-oral memory is deposited and manifested through, for example, publications, museums, and monuments including those which can be officially approved. In this sense, I study memory of an oral culture. From the memory I study here for the Kumpal, none has been preserved or represented other than the oral medium.

In terms of *status*, memory can also be consensual or contested (e.g. Burgoyne 2003). As the names indicate, contested memory is significantly disputed among its holders, while consensual memory is more or less accepted by all or majority of members of a group. From this perspective, this dissertation studies consensual memory of the Kumpal. The Kumpal memory is dominantly narrated from the perception of victimhood. The differences exist such as in names of personalities in the story and places where events are believed to have taken place; but they are mainly emanated from discrepancy in the knowledge about specific details of the past, rather than the basic template of their memory.

Based on *type*, collective memory is also designated variously as, to mention major ones, cultural, social, historical, and political. “Cultural memory” is institutionalized through tangible and intangible cultural means (e.g. Assmann 1995; Sturkin 1997),

and historical memory generally reaches through records of history (Olick and Robbins 1998:111; Funkenstein 1989:9; MacCormack 2007:4). “Political memory”, also called “the politics of memory”, refers to memories created and recreated by political discourse (e.g. Hodgkin and Radstone 2003). The nature of the Kumpal memory from the view of these points can be briefly put as *cultural* memory, in the sense of culture as a way of life of people both at ideological and practical level, and in terms of both tangible and intangible aspects.

For the convenience of reference, the overall characteristics of the Kumpal memory are summarized in the following diagram.

nature (positive or negative)	•memory of victimhood , dominated by a sense of loss, despair
agency (external or internal)	•Bsically, the Kumpal present their memory as authored by oppressive rulers, and then their ancestors. In both cases, the Kumpal generation today is largely not part of "history making".
level (international, regional, national, or community)	•Analysis is made at community or ethnic group level. The Kumpal are a splinter of old proto-Agaw.
legitimacy (official or unofficial)	•The source of legitimacy for the memory is the community itself. The memory is accepted as something which defines the Kumpal, and is accepted and instituted in their culture, hence unofficial memory
medium (oral or literate)	•The memory is entirely mediated through narrative and performative means. It is memory of oral culture.
status (contested or consensual)	•The memory is not contested among the community. There may be discrepancy in some points while narrating. That is due to narrative discrepancy rather than contestation, hence consensual memory
type (cultural, historical, etc.)	•The Kumpal memory is of cultural one. It is transformed and carried on by cultural plethora.

Figure 3 Summary of structural terrain of Kumpal memory (Developed by the researcher)

2.4. Summary of the Analytical Framework: Three Terrains

As my discussion already suggest, there are three terrains of analytical framework which is used in this dissertation. The first one is temporal terrain. In this regard, the analytical framework for this dissertation is diachronic. The dissertation analyzes contemporary Kumpal memory of victimhood as having root in actual and/or perceived historical phenomenon. A view of society as an isolated formation without having any influence from the past has already fallen out of favor in anthropology (Cole 1998:612). Particularly in this dissertation, it has already been presented in Chapter One that the Kumpal present is essentially linked to the past. So the past is used as a macro scope to explain the present. This explanatory framework gives the template of analysis, but unleashed and enriched by descriptive techniques of data presentation. But, this does not mean that I am going to put the analysis in certain chronologies. I am not going to give a historical chronology with certainly fixed dates. The dissertation is concerned with time rather than dates.

The second terrain is thematic. The thematic terrain is also as much an organizing principle as time. The concepts enshrined in the thematic terrain of this dissertation have also already been discussed in the preceding section: history, memory, and victimhood.

The third terrain is structural. Since memory exists at different levels ranging from the international to that of individual, it is necessary to locate what level of memory this dissertation is concerned with. This has been clearly indicated in the preceding section.

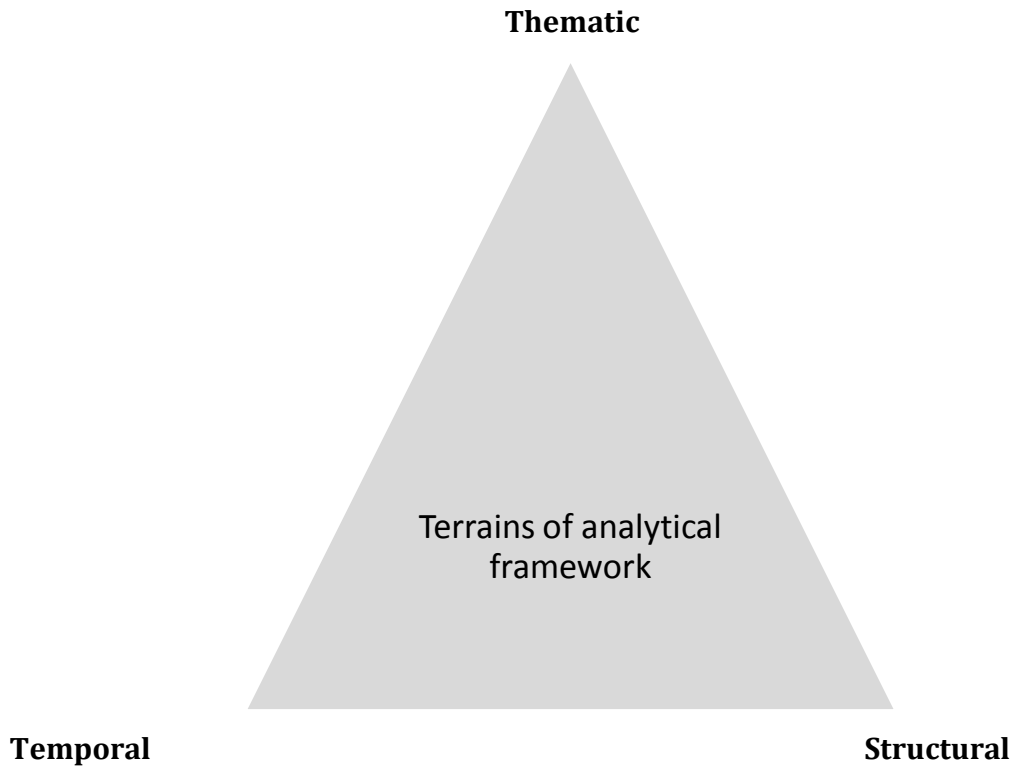


Figure 4 Terrains of analytical framework (Source: Developed by the researcher)

As the above figure suggests, the three terrains of framework interlink each other and are used to organize the data and arguments put in this dissertation. Accordingly, the study begins with putting the Kumpal memory at the epicenter of the past. This gives a basic difference from presentists who believe that the epicenter of memory is the present (*See details in the next section*). I enter into an overview of the “official” history of Ethiopia with regard to state formation and incorporation of ethnic groups, where the centre of Kumpal memory formation would be based on. And the level of analysis that this all is made is memory for the Kumpal, memory at local community level.

And then, I establish that the historical condition is the one which has left the consciousness of victimhood in today’s Kumpal memory. Indeed, official Ethiopian

history teaches us that the process of state building has taken place for a long time, and in this process, there has been an abusive relationship between the central state and the local people as well as among the local people themselves. The state-society relationship in this process has been diplomatic, but it is the coercive one that is more characteristic (Bahru 2012:346). In addition to the process of incorporation, the governorship of the incorporated entities has been a protracted suffering. Some existing literature which suggests to the historical context the Kumpal lived in the past (*See also Chapter Four*) and the memory of the people themselves alike show that these people have been battered since the annals of history, i.e., mainly from oppressive governorship.

2.5. Theoretical Approaches

There are generally three stages in the evolution of the debate on the relationship between history and memory. The first stage was during the early modern period (generally from the 16th c to early 19th c), and it was the time when the two domains were not clearly identified each other. The second stage was in the late modern period (from the mid-19th c to the rise postmodernism), and during this time there emerged polarized views between the two areas of study. And the third stage comes within the context of postmodernist view (since late 20th c), and here history and memory are seen as supporting rather than opposing each other (A. Assmann 2008:62).³⁵

With regard to modernists, generally one may say, they tend to work under the rubric of what is called presentist approach. A number of scholars (e.g. Halbwachs 1926, 1950; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1991; Tonkin 1992) endorsed this approach, which is denoted through, for example, pragmatic and interest-based models (Misztal 2003). Three interconnected central tenets which characterize this approach can be summarized. First, the epicenter of the past is considered to be the

³⁵ The periodization is inevitably contestable and A. Assmann does not tell us about approximate time frame. From my review, the early modern period, as it applies to memory scholarship in social sciences, may refer to pre-Halbawachian period which is before the end of the 19th century. Modern period may refer to the beginning to late 20th century and postmodern period which is since late 20th century.

present (e.g. Rappaport 1990, Misztal 2003). Second, the rationale for origin and existence of memory is for a mere utility (e.g. Rappaport 1990; Misztal 2003). And third, although all scholars under the presentist tradition do not agree (e.g. Rappaport 1992), presentists see memory as a mere construction of power players, and not from something true. This approach is otherwise known as the “invention of tradition perspective” or “theory of politics of memory” (Misztal 2003:56; Rappaport 1992). Scholars who advocate this approach may also be called “purists” (Winter 2010:14) because they believe memory is purely mythical, a phenomenon of the present and that exists for instrumental purpose.

Post modernists’ line of argument may be more generally aligned with the “dynamics of memory approach” (Misztal 2003). This approach puts a more balanced argument, and it rectifies weaknesses in the presentist approach. To begin with, scholars working under the dynamics of memory approach view the origin of memory in a historical context. The approach argues that the ability of actors or groups to change memory as they are pleased is limited. As Schudson (1989: 68) argues, it is not always the case that groups have a pleasure to choose one memory against another. There can be only one way to understand the past. Hence, one can ask whether people are free to choose as they want. According to Schudson (1989: 109), they are not: “Far from it. There are a variety of ways in which the freedom to choose is constrained”. Among the many factors, traumatic or oppressive events make, like in the Kumpal case, “the past part of us”. Memory sustains itself even if we do not want to (Misztal 2003:69).

Unlike presentists, the dynamics of memory approach views that memory is not something merely imaginative material authored for sale by individual or a group of power holders. As Misztal (2003: 68) says, indeed the dynamics of memory approach accepts the possibility of the construction of memory, and it does not deny either instances of memory distortion as manipulated by political or social élites (Kammen 1995: 340). In some cases (e.g. in post-colonial situations where the creation of national identity is necessary for functional reasons of political and

cultural cohesion), Kammen (1995:340) says, “the willful alternation of collective memory becomes a necessity for a valuable, progressive society”. Yet, this approach insists, even if memory can be constructed, it does not mean that it is devoid of any historical validity. There can be some factual elements that are retained in the memory from the past. This is simply to mean, for example, names of places can be part of memory, and those can be parts of an actual story which happened or existed in the past. So the dynamics of memory approach argues the past is neither a mere subjective formation nor a linguistic fabrication. It locates memory in “the space between an imposed ideology and the possibility of an alternative way of understanding experience” (Radstone 2000:18). Schudson (1997:3) says in general the presence of the past in the present can be manifested through “psychological, social, linguistic and political processes”.

The conception of memory as genetically related with history is not new to this dissertation. As indicated in the above section on conceptual and analytical framework, in general, anthropological usage of memory “hovers between history as it is lived by people [or their ancestors] and those issues of cultural persistence” (Berliner 2005, Holtzman 2006:362, Wertsch 2004, Schwartz 1996, Schwartz 1987, Schwartz 1982).

Among the Kumpal, the presentist perspective cannot work entirely. To begin with, I have characterized the Kumpal memory is of victimhood. It is the kind of memory which is not a resource but a burden. Memory for this community is not a way of holding things they love, contrarily, it is a way of holding things they wish they have not happened and which they cannot break with, at least easily. The Kumpal can never easily block memory even if it is painful. Rather than being a resource, it is a burden that haunts them today. They were raised in certain way that the past should be maintained as a matter of moral duty. They cannot make a choice whereby they can teach their next generation that they should forget about the past. Presentist approach may apply to “modern” societies which invent “memory” for political interest but not for the Kumpal who maintain the past not because of its

utility but because of a mere reason of not being able to avoid it as they interpret it culturally.

Two points need to be stated before I close this section. First, when I argue that dynamics of memory approach, and therefore the past as the epicenter of the present, I do not mean to speak in absolute terms. Even though the dominant view is that the Kumpal past is something which gave material to their present, in some cases, the reverse can be true. For example, informants talk a lot about education as something they cannot achieve as the result of the curse. One may ask here how much education was important at the time of exodus. The meaning of education the ancestors referred in the curse must be different from the kind of education we know today. Or one can argue that this concept of education is something the present reflects upon the past instead of the past projecting to the present. The same true to other concepts as well. Informants talk about “tax” in their conception today while actually what they talk about is similar to what is called tribute.

Secondly, the dynamics of memory perspective is not yet a well established and coherent theory though; and it is not something which strictly guides the theoretical argument of this work. Scholars who work under this approach commonly share the view of culture as a repertoire for remembering and elaborate on the issue of the temporality and context of remembering (Misztal 2003:71). I think it is a loose school of thought which is open for scholars to find space for their own work. In other words, for a detail application of this perspective, different writers, like in the presentist perspective, articulate the dynamics of memory approach through various models such as process oriented model (Cole 1998), and interactionist model (Beim 2007:10). Since they are mentioned, I want to say some points on why process oriented and interactionists models do not well apply to the Kumpal. I believe that these models do not prove to be satisfactory to best explain the Kumpal case. Process oriented model suggests to a simple process of memory construction and reconstruction while such phenomenon is a complex relationship of factors, not necessarily a unilineal process. Interactionists focus on the mental abstract model

of memory construction and reconstruction rather than external cultural models like in the Kumpal. In this chapter under 2.2.2., I have already given less favor to analyzing the Kumpal memory based on this approach. In this dissertation, I would like to put forward a “cultural model” of reconstruction of memory. In the cultural model of memory reconstruction, I argue that circumstances of history are reconstructed through cultural means, in the Kumpal case by interpretation of history through cultural system of cursing. Suffices here to mention the model; the detail analysis of it is presented in Chapter Ten.

2.6. An Overview of Global Empirical Literature in the English Language

In this section, I use a meta-synthesis approach to literature review. I try to evaluate, integrate, and interpret findings of multiple qualitative research studies. I do not try to engage in an unrealistic activity of picking up a single literature, narrating about it and giving an isolated analysis. Instead, I identified common core elements and themes across empirical studies, and tried to draw them together to summarize key characteristics in a body of literature on history, memory and victimhood.

2.6.1. Temporal Trends in the Literature

Direct or indirect intellectual preoccupation with memory in general began with Greeks (Russel 2006: 792, Olick and Robbins 1998). But, late ninetieth and early twentieth century popularized the subject. In the scholarship of group memory in particular, “collective memory” was first “explicitly used” in 1902 by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Olick and Robbins 1998), and perhaps it is the first turn of phrase used to study a type of memory shared among a particular group of people. Next, a French sociologist and a student of Durkheim, Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), popularized the contemporary study of collective memory (Olick and Robbins 1998). Since then, one can observe from the literature that in addition to sociology, group memory studies spread into many disciplines in social sciences and humanities, including social and cultural anthropology. Besides, as shown in the section 2.2 of this chapter, a number of different terms evolved to refer to studies made on a group memory.

Still renewed interest on the subject in social sciences and humanities came as a consequence of post modernist turn since 1980s (Wertsch 2004; Berliner 2005: 202).. The publication of two materials on memory is taken as landmarks in popularizing memory studies in academics during this time, i.e., the publication of Yerushalmis' *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* in 1982, and Nora's *Between History and Memory* in 1984 (Klein 2000:127). It seems the study of memory has been also increasingly embraced with the increasing concern with the study of identity after 1990s, and also with the rise of the liberal theory of identity. Studying memory grew with the growth of studying identity politics in the US (Berliner 2005) and reappraisal of national identities in most of European countries (Klein 2000). Moreover, Said (2000:179) says, concern with "consumable" memory came only in late 20th century. He states:

...study and concern with memory of a specifically desirable and recoverable past is a specially freighted late twentieth-century phenomenon that has arisen at a time of bewildering change, of unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies, competing nationalisms, and, most important perhaps, the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial, and dynastic bonds.

"Memory boom" or expressions related to it have been commonly used across literature (e.g. Berliner 2005:198) to express burgeoning studies after the period of postmodern turn. In fact, taking the entire area of memory studies, we can really say literature on the subject is thriving.

In the field of social and cultural anthropology, scholars argue that this discipline was, directly or indirectly, concerned with the subject of memory since a long time. Indeed, the study of memory in anthropology was older than the postmodernist turn (Berliner 2005:202; White 1996:495). Anthropological concern in memory is simply a reinvention of approaches to culture and identity commonly pursued in ethnographic research on narrative, ritual practice, life histories, and so forth (White 1996:495). Berliner (2005:202) also agrees, without minimizing the role of

post modernist turn, memory in anthropology is a topic of old interest, as a part of the conceptualization of culture and society.

Whatever the case may be, the Halbwachian time and the postmodern turn seem to be two major landmarks in the temporal dimension of understanding the development of memory studies. This review also proves that more and explicit anthropological concern on memory is found in literature mainly after 1980s. Since this time, a flurry of literature exists, and according to Berliner (2005:197), there are even programs of Anthropology of Memory in many European and American universities³⁶, something which was “unthinkable” before the 1980s. There are also journals devoted for this field alone.³⁷

2.6.2. Major Themes in the Literature

In the conceptual framework in an earlier section of this chapter, I have identified a structural terrain of studying memory in terms of: *level of analysis, means of legitimacy, medium, status, type, and nature* (as the concept of these terms has been explained already). To get a comprehensive picture and the defining characteristics of memory studies, it seems appropriate to base the next review on these points. I begin this with the level of analysis with the geographical spectrum (memory studies at the regional and national level).

I have come across much literature on national and regional memories. In particular, a lot of literature can be found at regional level: Kim and Schwartz (2010) for South East Asia, Sa’di and Abu-Lughod (2007) for Middle East, Borofsky (2000) for the Pacific, Hill (1990), and Carpenter (2010) for South America, Tilmans et al. (2010) and Bacon and Bronk (2014) for Europe, and Darroch (2009) for Guyanas

³⁶ Cultural History, Memory and Identity MA (PGCert PGDip), University of Brighton
<https://www.brighton.ac.uk/courses/study/cultural-history-memory-and-identity-ma-pgcert-pgdip.aspx>,
accessed 09/06/2016

³⁷ The *Journal of History and Memory*, a peer reviewed journal established in 1989 and edited by Tel Aviv University and published by Indiana University Press can be mentioned as an example.

are just few examples. Even more, innumerable list of literature can be cited for studies at national level. Kosicki (2007) for Rwanda, McCormack (2009) for Algeria, Waugh (2005) for Morocco, Ivanovo (2003) and Witt (2010) for Ukraine, Levy and Sznajder (2005), and Bammer (2001) for Germany, Wertsch (2004) for Soviet Russia, Bukh (2007) for Japan, and Zerubavel (2008) for Israel are quite few examples to mention. In fact, memory is everywhere but there are some “memory areas”, (Rwanda through its memory of genocide) so to say, which one can find much concentration of literature on the topic.

The common characteristics of this literature is, in one way or another, the past in these areas gives a background, albeit at different levels, to the rise of corresponding memory. Slavery, colonialism and postcolonial encounters for Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America (e.g. Werbner 1998, Borofsky 2000, Kosicki 2007, Cole 1998, Drroch 2009, McCormack 2007, and Cole 2001); WWII for Europe and Asia (Witt 2010, Kim and Schwartz 2010) are examples to mention. With regard to theoretical arguments, there is no pattern in the regional/national literature to classify into either presentist or dynamics of memory perspective. There are some on each, and there is only one in some, depending on individual stance of authors. Second, in much of this literature, I could find in their content not only history and memory integrated but also victimization implicitly or explicitly and at various levels, as it was happened in the past. This is otherwise called traumatic memory. The vectors of such traumatic memory include those mentioned in the above (slavery, the two world wars, holocaust, genocide, etc) (McCormack 2007:3-4). But in this case, victimhood is represented as it has been caused by power actors alone, i.e., victimhood as caused by external agency. Third, they also go around mostly memories of literate culture. They deal with memories whose media is of documented in addition to and/or other than that memories characteristic in oral societies.

But I need to look at studies at narrower scope based on the specification I indicated for studying the Kumpal memory as *collective at community level, unofficial,*

consensual, of oral culture, of victimhood, and mainly cultural. At this level, I can find significant number of studies. Examples include White (1991) among the Santa Isabel community in Solomon Islands, Cole (1998, 2001) among the Betsimisaraka of eastern Madagascar, Hill (1995) among different South American communities, Kuschel and Monberg (1977) among the Bellonese, and Stoller (1995) among the Hauka in West Africa.

In this type of anthropological case studies in general, the characteristics on regional/national literature also apply true, but particularly some points are to be stressed. First, they recount the continuity of the past in the present, i.e., they establish relationship between memory and history. Most of these writers in the anthropological tradition claim history and memory as not different in kind but of degree. They believe that memory has some degree of historical facts or its antecedents. As early as 1977, for example, Kuschel and Monberg in their article *History and Oral Tradition: A Case Study* provided two versions of the same Bellonese story. They showed that the two oral versions are, to a certain degree, different because the same story can have different versions depending on who tells it and in what context. They argued in such oral story, there is yet a historical reality; hence it is not possible to generalize that oral stories are all fictions. To add another example, in *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past* edited by Hill (1995), thirteen contributors discuss oral traditions that range from myths of Paleolithic roots to contemporary political discourses and consider the historical implications of myths and legends. They unanimously reject the structural dichotomy of atemporal myth and chronological history as simplistic. All of the case studies in this material explore myths in particular as mechanisms socially relevant to preserving the memory of important historical incidents which story tellers themselves or their ancestors have experienced.

Second, the quality of anthropological study of memory at local level is investigating the historical accounts as they are not only *narrated* but also *ritualized*. Parmentier

(1987:510) refers this as “mythologized” history. Most, literature in the anthropological tradition not only maintains the past in the form of memory, but also recounts them in the form of rituals. White (1991) in his *Identity through History: Living Stories in the Solomon Island*, for example, gives historical junctures in the life of the Santa Isabel people (contact with Christian missionaries in 1889, with British colonialist, and later independence movement). These historical incidents are now “mythologized” and enacted and re-enacted in the form of myths and performances. Cole (1998) also gives almost similar account for the case of Betsimisaraka in Madagascar.

Third, memory studies at local community level are not debated as much as national or regional memories. As long as such memories are seen as part and parcel of values and beliefs in a given community, they are usually taken as acceptable.

2.6.3. Major Gaps in the Literature

Even if there are a number of studies in anthropology of memory, there are also gaps in the literature which are but strengths to this dissertation.

First, there is a widespread belief that only positive memories about the past endure while the negative ones shrivel or are reinterpreted into some form of positive memory. From this also follows that memory exists because it has something to serve gainfully at present (e.g. LeGoff 1992:99, Hacking 1995:3, Novick 1999:5, Funkenstein 1989:5). The victimhood nature of memory is less represented, and whenever it is represented is as though it is ephemeral, anomalous. As indicated above, there is a tendency to believe among scholars that negative memories do not persist.

Secondly, with regard to representation of the literature across the major analytical concepts of this dissertation (particularly memory and victimhood), there are contrasting representations of the subject. As indicated so far, there is innumerable literature in the field of memory. As already stated, the “memory boom” has been

used to refer to the explosion of studies on this subject. On the other hand, victimhood is less analyzed compared to social memory.

Thirdly, memory as everyday life (as a cultural whole) is also little studied. Memory is studied as something which is pegged only on institutions or sites such as on statues, museums, or in the mere oral story or celebration of a community. The possibility of memory as something which runs everyday life is less or not studied. An example only partly resembling the case of the Kumpal in this regard is Cole (1998:614), who shows “ancestors have the ability both to bless and curse”. I have never come across a case study which shows a community living under a total dominance of victimhood from the past like the case of the Kumpal.

Fourthly, there is no literature, I can say, whose memory and victimhood is mediated through curse. Curse is at the centre of anthropological concept, but there is no much literature on this subject at large, even without connection with memory and history. Particularly there is no literature I could find with regard to the role of curse in constituting memory and mediating victimhood.

2.7. The State of Knowledge in Ethiopia

In the Ethiopian scholarly tradition, there is a striking dearth of studies on collective memory. There is no need to cite evidence as to the existence of a number of local memories about the past; but I know and could find no material of significant consideration on collective memory. Likewise, it does not take a long effort to just realize lack of knowledge on cursing and victimhood too. Particularly there is no risk at all in making a claim on a total absence of studies which comply with the genre of this dissertation (history, memory and victimhood in nexus).

2.8. Conclusion

“Memory” is a subject of inquiry for many disciplines; “memory studies” is a set of several concepts and theories; is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. A corpse of literature in this field is so enormous though the topics within it do not equally come

out. Memory at national and regional level with political interest and in the context of literate societies is abundant. However, anthropological studies in general and its case studies in particular, on a collective memory at community level and for oral culture are still relatively less represented. Even in these case studies, the issue of memory of victimhood is not possible to find much at the community level. Moreover, the role of curse in transforming history to memory is also unavailable. I have tried to make an extensive search of such materials, but since I could not find any, I could attribute this only to the fact that anthropological literature on the curse as a speechmaker of memory is less or no represented. Moreover, though the fact that the past can have the power to exist in the present is indisputable claim, *how* the past operates in the present is not well investigated. It seems much has not been changed since Cole (1998: 611) remarked that anthropological literature is relatively silent regarding the work of memory in the everyday life. The state of knowledge on this subject in Ethiopia is even not worth significance. Given this picture, the empirical and theoretical contribution of this study is, I believe, significant. In the first place, it contributes to the existing knowledge on history, memory and victimhood in the oral culture in particular. In terms of theory, it also contributes to reappraisal of the widespread assumption that memories are only selective. It shows how the negative memories can still endure in oral cultures and even can be actively interpreted into the everyday life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KUMPAL IN HOLISTIC TERMS

3.1. Introduction

Many scholars barely knew that the Kumpal exist. Since a long time, it has been the style of social and cultural anthropology that the research on a community should not stand alone without having a holistic background to that community in concern. This is particularly true to the Kumpal. Not giving their background is like leaving the findings of the objectives in empty space. So, this chapter is devoted meet this purpose. It describes the current location and demography of the Kumpal, their ethnonym, myths of origin, language, their social organization, belief system, livelihood, as well as their interaction with other groups living with and/or neighboring them. As it has been already said in the previous two chapters, these people are hardly known in the literature of Ethiopian studies particularly in those fields other than some aspects their language. Thus, this chapter gives an original and pioneering background to them not only for this dissertation as such but also to the entire knowledge of an Agäw splinter called Kumpal.

3.2. Location and Demography

The Kumpal today live in the hot lowland of northwest Ethiopia, more specifically to the area west of Lake T'ana (*See Map 1*). My experience of their geography and topography during the fieldwork shows that they inhabit areas along and after the cliffs that run north-south and make a highland-lowland divide in this region. Railed by the folding and unfolding terrain of the highlands and with no infrastructure at all, according to some informants,³⁸ the lowland of the Kumpal settlement had been inaccessible generally until 1991. As will be shown in Chapter Eight, the area had been rather a safe hub of groups, mainly the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), which rose up opposing the Därg.

³⁸ Nigatu Wasse, 50 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 12/03/2012; Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk'a, 18/03/2012.

The area is fed by water basins (*See Map 1*) from rivers that trickle down from the highland areas, and one who travels, like I did, through the Kumpal region, crosses Abat Bäläs, Gīlgāl Bäläs, Ayma, Sänel Wuha, and Zängäl rivers, to mention but the major ones. Due to its rich water resource, the area has attracted a large-scale development project known as T'ana Bäläs Integrated Sugar Project being constructed in the area its sugarcane plantation fed by T'ana-Bäläs River (*See details under Chapter Nine*). It is the opinion of every Kumpal elder³⁹ that the area is certainly and rapidly becoming barren while it was formerly covered by thick bamboo forest, large woodland trees, and extensive grassland vegetation that grows fast with little rain.

Jawi Woräda which is the main settlement area of the Kumpal is located in the northwestern fringes of ANAZ which is in turn tucked in the western fringe of ANRS (*See Map 1*). The *Woräda* falls between 1,025 and 1,225 meters above sea level (Jawi Woräda Communications Office 2012) with average temperature of 26°C (Tesfaye 2007). It covers an area of 5,150 km², and this means it is half the size of the entire ANAZ. Currently, Jawi Woräda is divided into twenty-seven *k'äbäles* (Jawi Woräda Communications Office 2012) (*Also see section 1.6.3 under Chapter One*).

According to CSA (2007), the entire population of the *woräda* is 79,090 people. And according to data from Jawi Administration Office (2013), the total population projection of the *woräda* in 2012/2013 was 89,000. However, the Kumpal are not independently represented in the official census; rather they are counted into either Awi or Amhara ethnic groups depending on who dominates their contiguous settlement.⁴⁰ Thus, it is difficult to know exactly how many Kumpal would exist today in Jawi Woräda or neighboring areas. From their very scattered settlement, I

³⁹ For example, Nigatu Wasse, 50 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 12/03/2012; Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk'a, 27/03/2012

⁴⁰ For practical purposes, the local government considers the Kumpal the same as the Awi. Until today, the Kumpal also tend to regard them as Awi rather than Kumpal, for the former has a better social and political status.

would estimate a maximum number of 10,000 (12.6%) people in Jawi Woräda and 5,000 in the rest of neighboring places, total 15,000⁴¹.

3.3. Ethnonym

How the study community whom I tentatively call “Kumpal” shall be designated is not yet a settled issue. There are different names for them in those few studies who devote considerable attention to them or in those who mention them in passing. Moreover, neither the people themselves nor the local administration seems to have clarity on the issue.

To begin with how they are represented in the literature, different writers who mention the Kumpal name in passing or with significant interest call them differently. Such names include “Kunfäl” (Cowley 1971), “Kulisi”, “Yäk’ola Agäw” (Takele 2014), and “Kulsi” (Yohannes 2011). “Kunfäl” is an ethnonym which is but pejorative and not acceptable by the people today. The latter three are used with the intention to replace this name, but have themselves become pejorative and equally unacceptable by the people. Moreover, “Kulisi” and “Yäk’ola Agäw” mean “lowlander” and “lowland Agäw” respectively. But some ended up mistaken by using “Kulsi” in trying to use “Kulisi”. “Kulsi” does not have any meaning. In any case, all of the terms in the latter category, which means, “Kulisi”, “Yäk’ola Agäw”, and “Kulsi” are descriptions rather than being ethnonyms. And as I mentioned already, these terms have also developed into pejorative ones and the people are also unfavorable to these “names”.

A recent event reaffirms how even the name holders themselves are not yet clear about their designation. A certain office under Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ethiopia published a magazine where there is an essay on Awi Conflict Resolution Mechanisms. Here, the Kumpal were designated as “Yäk’ola-Agäw”. The magazine reached at the hands of the local elders, when it arose some discontent regarding

⁴¹ I was assisted by the local elders and some Woräda officers in making this setsaimation. The elders estimated the number of Kumpal existing in each *k’äbäle*, and finally added up all figures.

the naming. According to Zerihun⁴², a group of elders were gathered to discuss on the way their name appears on the magazine was not correct. But, they did not also agree on an alternative name they should have been called. Some said they should have been represented as “Jawi Agäw”, which is impossible to apply in works in that magazine as well as in this dissertation which is concerned not only with Kumpal in Jawi but also those Kumpal living in other places too. Others maintained their having been represented as “Yäk’ola Agäw” was still ok.

There is no clear official designation too. The local administration does not seem to have an agreeable and official name for these people. In meetings and other official occasions where they refer to the Kumpal, officials call them sometimes “indigenous community” (*näbbaru mahibäräsäb*) as they call them in Amharic, and another time as “Yäk’ola Agäw”, and still occasionally, “Kumpal” or “Kunfäl”.

It is not possible to fix problems related to naming the Kumpal here in this dissertation. Nor should this study be get stuck by the problem. To expedite the research, I just use “Kumpal”, something which looks like the native name for “Kunfäl”. There are also some suggestions in oral stories, as I will show in this dissertation, that this name may have been something which is “original”. The descriptive names i.e., “Yäk’ola Agäw”, “Kulisi”, and “Kulsi” do not seem to be viable options because they are description of their geographical settlement rather than being proper names.

3.4. Myths of Origin

Marginalized groups can be attributed to different origins ranging from human beings to that of non-human objects (Pankhurst 1998:13). Example of origin from the non-human objects includes Somali myths relating to *Sab* origin to descent from a younger son discovered in the bush (Lewis 1955:53-5); Kafa myth relating to the Manja hunters’ origin to descent from offspring of a dog (Lang 1982:265); and a

⁴² Zerihun Asres, 27, Officer, Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office, Fändäk’a, 02 /03/ 2016

Sidama myth relating the Hdicho potters' descent to a union with a donkey (Hamer 1987:57). When origin is recognized to humans, it is from the lowest status. For example, the marginalize potters in Wolayta are attributed to have come from a primogeniture of an elder to a younger (Tsehay 1994:342-3).

The Kumpal are also attributed to multiple myths of origin. Let me start with narratives of human origin. One version goes on to undermine the Kumpal by attributing their decent to a person who is the result of an outlawed intercourse. A certain local chief used to have a daughter. When he was in a duty as a chief along with his daughter, the time went dark. He then placed a trust on one of his followers in order for him to escort the girl home. However, the person to whom the trust was made embezzled the faith and raped the girl under a shade of tree and the girl became pregnant. The father was so annoyed that he renounced her daughter and the newborn grandchild. The Kumpal today are considered to be generations of the renounced daughter.

Another myth of the Kumpal lowest human origin goes as follows. A priest used to have two daughters. The daughters grew up and both attained a marriageable age. But they were unhappy about staying without getting married. One day, they agreed to prepare a good drink, which they call was *t'ej*, and served their father when he came home in an evening. When he was under the whim of the drink, the two daughters made intercourse with him one after another: first the elder one and later the younger. Then, they both conceived but hid their pregnancy until they were able to do so. As time passed, the pregnancy became obvious and their father was confounded by how his daughters could get pregnant without getting married to men. One day, when they went to collect firewood, their father insisted them to tell him how they were impregnated. The elder daughter told the truth while the younger did not. The latter said:

My father, I got pregnant when one day I went to the bush to collect firewood. On that day, I was so zealous about having a husband. Then I saw a

wombla tree in front of me and hugged it in the wish that it could be my husband. Then I immediately got pregnant.

There is also at least one version on myth of the Kumpal origin from the non-human objects. The first one is directly related to the history of power transition from Zagwe to Solomonic dynasty in 1270 (See also Chapter Four). According to informants, when the Solomonic dynasty was restored by Yikuno Amlak (1270-1285), he took revenge on the Agaw who had usurped the throne for about 300 years. Then, Yikuno Amlak launched an attack not only on the last Agäw king himself (named Yitbaräk, also Elmäkun) but also on the then Agäw people at large. One day, the Agäw people were hidden in the bush to escape the persecution of the new king or his followers. Among others, some hid themselves under a shade of tree known as Kumbil. One day, the soldiers of the new king saw a pregnant woman sitting alone under the shade of the Kumbil tree, for her husband and the rest of the people were in the bush to collect their daily food. The soldiers asked her about who her husband was. The woman, not to identify him for enemy, said, "I don't have a husband". The soldiers then mocked her: "Then your husband must be this (Kumbil) tree". It is suggested that the name "Kumpal" itself may have come from this designation.

The view of the Kumpal as people who have come from wood seems to be more dominant than the human origin. This story is so popular and instrumental among the Amhara than other groups. The Kumpal themselves also narrate this story when they are provoked into a topic of marginalization, but believe that it is a fabrication of the other people. Similar stories of "wood" origin are also common among the K'imant who are similarly stigmatized by the Amhara in Gondar (Zelalem 2003:46)

3.5. Language

Among the Kumpal, there are two languages which exist at different conditions and one of which can be called "Kunfäl" (or Kumpal Awngi) and another one Kumpalngi. The former is the one which they speak today but the latter the one they used to

speaking in the past. The former is the one which is used in everyday life today including rituals and celebrations while the latter is left only on the level of mere knowledge (not usage) of only few elders. The former is the one considered to have been adapted later while the latter is considered by the Kumpal as their original language.

According to the usage in few existing literature, the language of the Kumpal which they speak today is called “Kunfāl”. It is one of the languages of the Agäw family, particularly much related to Awngi, the language of highland Agäw who are today called Awi. Cowley (1971:101), presenting reports done by Teqebba and Zena, compares “hundred-item basic word list in Kunfāl Agäw ” vis-à-vis other Agäw languages. On the basis of this comparison, he indicates that the “Kunfāl” is 78% related with Awngi, 40% with K’imant, 38% with Xamta and 31% with Bilen.

The high degree of similarity between the “Kunfāl” and Awngi languages in particular makes the former is the dialect of the latter (Cowley 1971). Besides, according to the local people⁴³, the designation (in the literature) of the language they speak today as “Kunfāl” is not correct. It is just an Awngi dialect. As said above from Cowley’s report, this language is 78% related to highland Awngi of the Awi people, and it is logical that the Kumpal thus call it simply Awngi. As a person who can speak highland Awngi language, I can understand that the language the Kumpal speak today is quite similar to the highland Awngi.

According to the people, “Kunfāl” is rather a different language, the one they used to speak in the past and the one which is now believed to be dying. Since the name “Kunfāl” itself is an Amharic or of the Amhara designation, rather the name in its own language seems is likely Kumpalngi. From my listening to Kumpalngi, I can understand that it is an Agäw language, but neither Awngi of the highland Agäw nor that of its Kumpal-Awngi dialect.

⁴³ For example, Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013; Nigatu Wasse, 49, and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Tilahun Wondimu, 56, Fändäk’a, 04/07/2010

There are only few elders who know, but not use, Kumpalngi today. Based on informants⁴⁴, I was able to list about twenty five speakers of the language⁴⁵. And according to information from the Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office quarterly bulletin (Year 1, Number 1), the number is estimated to be only about twenty. I have contacted four of the Kumpal elders speaking this old language. Cowley (1971:99) was also aware that the original language of the “Kunfäl” people was in part forgotten. As far as I was able to trace, except Cowley, no one is even aware of the existence of this language, and to be sad, of course, no one did any research or documentation⁴⁶. The situation of language among the Kumpal is regrettable.

Generally, the Kumpal believe that social, political, and religious conditions they lived in the past caused stigmatization to their identity, and therefore lack of interest in using or option to use their language. Expansion of religion by highland rulers in particular is considered as a forceful factor for near-extinction of Kumpalngi. Referring to the spread of Christianity, an informant⁴⁷ for example proposed that there was a stigmatic process of spreading Christianity to the Kumpal. As the church progressed from the highland into the Kumpal lowlands and converted some from this group, it divided between those who were baptized and those who resisted. The former were labeled as “superior” while the latter as “heathens”. The former enjoyed relative inclusion into the mainstream Christian community while the latter suffered from discrimination. One would even preach Kumpalngi was a heathens’ language and no one should speak it. Consequently, the people gradually shifted their language to what they speak today, Amharic and Awngi, which had better but not equal prestige. It is possible to propose that this

⁴⁴ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Maariam, 08/03/2012.

⁴⁵ I was informed that one of few women elders who know this language died in 2013.

⁴⁶ This dissertation follows the people in differentiating between the two languages among the Kumpal. I use “Kumpal Awngi” to refer to the language they speak today and “Kumpalngi” for the language which is now on the verge of extinction.

⁴⁷ Belete Asres (Pseudonym), 72, Fändäk’a, 22/03/2012

process of assimilation has also a general repercussion to the people to develop a self-denigrating attitude and “shame” towards their own identity.

Most or all of these factors are not unique for the Kumpal but shared by other Agäw groups as well. For example the situation among the K’imant was, and is still, basically the same. See for example Zelalem (2003) for how the K’imant received similar discrimination to the Kumpal and, Alemneh (2004) for the Awi.

3.6. Social Organization

The Kumpal social organization seems to have a complex structure and thus requires separate investigation. For the purpose of this dissertation, there are three important points that need to be mentioned. The first one is social organization based on territory, the second based on common descent known as *abala*, and the third based on social status. However, social organization based on *abala* is more defining than the other two.

Traditionally, typical Kumpal villages are nucleated around a common descent known, probably in old Kumpal language as *abala*. There are at least seventeen *abala* from which every person claims his allegiance. They are *diligchi*, *damini*, *balambi*, *banqri*, *falingi*, *mxurfeni*, *tirki*, *lingi*, *ayi*, *banji*, *ajiri*, *gubalti*, *wuqli*, *dinqisi*, *kanchiwi*, *gozar*, and *χamaj*⁴⁸. Each lineage traces territorial control over a particular area of land known as *rist*, as the informants call it in Amharic. Members of each lineage, in turn, claim over a plot of land within the lineage’s *rist*⁴⁹. When a village is more populated, a senior or a younger villager may move to a vacant place and establish his own village, together with few people who follow him. And villages within the same lineage can be very much isolated to each other⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Mengist Atalele, 76, and Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

⁴⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

⁵⁰ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

According to one of my key informants⁵¹ and as I can make observation during my fieldwork, lineage relation is changing today. Lineage-based claim over a territory has been weakened after strong state intervention through development projects and influx of highlanders into the region (*See Chapter Nine*). State ownership of land since 1991 has also weakened the very notion of communal Kumpal ownership. Today, the lineage boundary is thus diffused. Yet, according to informants⁵², there are some respects to which lineage organization is still relevant. A close affinity is recognized within members of a lineage, and intra-lineage marriage is prohibited.

Another social organization which is not pursued deeper but has to be raised here is their internal division into four subgroups known as “Kulisi”, “Kumpal”, “*ḡamaj*”, and “Danqsi”. The basis of this division is not much clear, but from references of one against another, it seems social status is the rationale. The Kulisi believe that they are superior to others but this same feeling is also said to exist among the Kumpal. Identification between Kulisi and Kumpal subgroups is much vague when they generalize both of these names mean the same group: “Kumpal” as an ethnonym and “Kulisi” as a description of their lowland inhabitation, literally meaning “lowlander”. But *ḡamaj* and Danqsi are more undermined. The Danqsi are known for their magic, to the extent that they are believed to have the ability to convert themselves into other creatures, for example to hyena. The *ḡamaj* are most assuredly at the lowest rank, most stereotyped. Inter-marriage between this group and all others is prohibited. Unlike Danqsi magicians, the *ḡamaj* are best known for their ethno medicine. During the fieldwork, it was not possible to meet a solid division of these two groups in particular, as most of the people practically claim they belong to one or the other of a better group or deny that such division exists at all.

3.7. Belief System

Even though the Kumpal are currently characterized by their apparent devotion to Orthodox Christianity, a great concentration of traditional belief systems coexist

⁵¹ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 13/02/ 2012

⁵² Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

today upon which the whole edifice of the people's socio-cultural system has been built. They have a number of beliefs and practices and here only the major ones are explained, i.e., a belief in *s'axasivi*, *kwali*, *gaway/gambiri*, and omens.

3.7.1. *S'axasivi*

To begin with, there is a spirit known as *s'axasivi*, as its name indicates, the spirit which has the power to invisibly throw a spear and hurt a person. It is believed to have the power of injuring people's health, causing them death, and/or loss of their property. The people are assembled in lineages every year in order to beseech this spirit. The households contribute honey and other festive items for the spiritual entreat which is usually conducted under a *wombla* or *bamba* tree both of which the spirits choose to domicile. A ritual leader called *s'axasive kivs'anti*, literally meaning "one who prevents or redresses danger to

be caused by the *s'axasivi*", is selected from the community to lead the ritual. He is chosen by virtue of his local knowledge as well as his respect to the people and the culture. He must be endowed with leadership skills of his community and have wisdom of mediation. He is a person who shall never keep resentment. It is believed that if he does not constantly perpetuate required good conduct during his office, problem occurs against human life or property of the *wagan* which he has been



Photo 1 A bamba tree /*Ficus sychomorus*/ (taken by the researcher, April 2013). A person posing under the tree is a colleague at The Institute of Ethiopian Studies who accompanied me during the fieldwork)



Photo 2 A *wombla* tree (taken by the researcher, April 2013)

chosen from. When the office of this person is terminated for his death, or for he not being able to attract good fortune during his leadership, his son, if so qualifies, replaces him. If he does not have a son at all to pass his office or if the son is not properly qualified, another leader is chosen from another *wagan*.

The prayers begin when the leader sticks iron-tipped arrow into the ground under the tree where the ritual is being undertaken and pours honey onto roots of such tree. Then, he makes intercessory prayers to the *s'axasivi* on behalf of the people. He prays health for sick, wealth for poor, children for barren and other life pursuits for all. At this moment, women bow down to ground like prostration of believers in the church. Men on the other hand, follow the ritual leader in each side until he completes the prayers. Then, festive events continue with contributions they have made to this ceremony. At this event, in addition to the spiritual leader himself, all the laity must forgive each other if they have quarrels before. Otherwise, the prayers bring punishment in place of admittance.

This ritual is also taken as a precondition to upcoming familial or personal events. Individuals require the spiritual leader to arrange them a special event for prayers in favor of personal events or problems. For example, if a person is going to celebrate a marriage ceremony of his children, it is required from him first to take part in a public ritual, or request the spiritual leader arrange a separate ceremony of prayers for an individual. This ritual is believed to make smooth accomplishment of a planned personal ceremony. Upon sickness of a family member or when a property is stolen or lost, one also presents the case to the spiritual leader to address intercessional prayers in favor of the sick person or stolen/lost property. bring solution to existing problems, and recover a lost/stolen property.

3.7.2. Kwali

Another local belief system is *kwali*. *Kwali* is a certain spirit believed to be vested in the power of veneration. It is believed to have its home in rivers, mountains, and trees. As a result, a person passing under a tree, climbing onto a mountain or going

beneath its foot, or crossing a river is expected to give proper veneration to *Kwali* at the moment of the passage. For example, if one is crossing a river carrying a local drink, he/she should dispense some onto the river bank or into the water. This is done as a premier gift to the spirit. Besides, one has to eat some for oneself to prevent possible infliction believed to be caused by the spirit otherwise.

In addition to casual venereal acts devoted to *kwali*, the whole community or a certain group also gathers to hold a prayer and pay worship to this spirit. Particularly, a communal ritual against drought is notable. Rain-making ritual is performed under a certain tree, mountain or river. During disasters of drought, the people prepare a ceremony to conduct prayers accompanied by a mass of celebration feast. A bull which is bought through contribution made by villagers is slaughtered, accompanied by more foods and drinks prepared by participating households. The participants all earnestly beseech *kwali* to seek it forgiveness from possible offense they may have made so as to cause them punishment, for example, punishment by forbidding them a season's rain. Following this ceremony, according to the local belief, the expected rain will come or at least the disaster will become less sever.

3.7.3 Gaway

Gaway/gambiri is another belief system, which is associated with the flowering of bamboos (See also Chapter Six). According to the local knowledge, bamboo flowers and bears seeds once at about forty years and, then dies. Following this incident, it is believed crops will shock. For one thing, they would not become seed-bearing ones or, if otherwise, they will be infested by pests and worms. The scope of this effect is so wide that even if *gaway* occurs in a village, eventually it spreads to all surrounding villages.

The risk of having crops shocked or infested by worms can be averted by a ritual of escorting *gaway*. In order to undertake this ritual, first the people agree on a date and then raise contributions made in money or kind. Then, a black bullock which

has not begun mating and has never eaten bamboo tree is purchased from the neighboring non-bamboo growing highland areas. The bullock is muzzled for precaution against eating bamboo tree until it is slaughtered. Then a rat is caught and put into a well-decorated gourd. A chaste girl is selected to carry the rat in the gourd. The local people, accompanying the girl, drift towards the ceremonial place at the border of a neighboring village where the boundary is divided by a river or stream of running water. The people walk to the ritual place, playing and dancing surrounding the girl, as an informant⁵³ compares, like believers walk escorting priests who carry *tabut* /replica of the Ark of Moses/ to place of a celebration. As informants⁵⁴ further describe, when the people reach the ceremonial place in procession, they slaughter the bullock. They throw ancillary parts of the meat including the skin into running water to wash it away. All other meat is consumed on the spot and none is to be left or carried to home. Then, the rat is released over the other bank of the river to the next village. If it runs away, the *gaway* is believed to have gone as well, and the harvest safe. But if the rat returns to the very village which is escorting it away, the *gaway* is not pleased with the celebration because of faulty ritual or does not consent to go away by this very moment. In this case, they undertake another ritual another time in the same season or next year, improving and careful of things which the *gaway* was not pleased in the previous observance. But, if it has been escorted once successfully, the next village shall take turn to push the spirit further out of their village until successively it is wiped out from a reach of the whole community.

3.7.4 Omens

The Kumpal are also rich in omens. Restricting or enforcing actions based on a belief in bad or good occurrence is very prominent feature of their everyday life. Based on a number of foretelling omens, they enforce or restrict doing or refraining from doing something subsequently. There are a number of such beliefs. To take an

⁵³ Nigatu Wasse, 49, 23/02/ 2012, Fändäk'a

⁵⁴ Nigatu Wasse, 49, 23/02/ 2012, Fändäk'a; Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk'a, 26/09/2013

informant's example⁵⁵, if one is prepared to go to collect wild honey, there is a certain local bird to prophesy the luck. This bird is believed to guide people to places where the bee colony exists in the bush. Then, honey can be collected around the place where the bird stopped. On the other hand, there is another bird known as *warsa* which carries message of a bad luck. When a person on her/his way meets this bird, he/she returns back home against expected bad luck. Many other informants⁵⁶ also agree that, for example, whether or not a donkey barks, a cock crows, or a dog defecates in front of a person going to his/her activity, are also some beliefs which enforce behavior of the people.

3.8. Subsistence

Traditionally, the Kumpal livelihood was based on a number of mechanisms such as beekeeping, hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation, and animal husbandry. Particularly, they primarily relied on a combination of beekeeping, hunting and gathering, as well as shifting cultivation.

Simoons
(1960:44)
witnesses that the
Kumpal forest
hosted an
abundant wild
and semi-
domesticated
bees. When one
met numerous
cylindrical
beehives tied high



Photo 3 Beehives (taken by the researcher, April 2016)

⁵⁵ Nigatu Wasse, 49, 23/02/ 2012, Fändäk'a

⁵⁶ For example, Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K'urand, 25/03/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 50 , Fändäk'a, 26/09/2013

in the branches of trees away from villages, one could know that he/she was in the Kumpal village. This is confirmed by local elders existing today. According to some informants⁵⁷, they used to harvest abundant wild honey for food at least three times a year. Honey is also one of the best gifts they can offer for their deities until today in their ritual of traditional belief systems such as *s'axasivi*, *gaway/gambiri*, and *kwali*. Simoons (1960:44) adds that honey was also an important commercial item for the Kumpal, and by it they even paid their taxes.

Hunting animals was another subsistence mechanism for the Kumpal. Previously covered with a dense forest, the Kumpal environment hosted a number of animals they used to hunt to satisfy their demand for meat. Cowley (1971:100) notes that hunting was also made for game. A man used to kill game animals in order to assert his manliness and to have a social honor as a full man. It is a nostalgic memory of the Kumpal elders today⁵⁸ that they were ritually escorted to the forest for the best of luck, and ritually honored after their success in game hunting.

The Kumpal also used to gather various wild food sources. A list of those commonly mentioned by informants⁵⁹ includes, as they are called by Kumpal Awngi, *arangwi*, *shimel gwazgi*, *sinsi* (also called *sisi*,



sinsa), *awani*, *baguri*, *bilbils'i*, **Photo 4** *Bilbils'i* (taken by the researcher, February 2013)

and *bamburi*. For example,

arangwi is an ivy plant species climbing or ground-creeping, whose seeds are

⁵⁷ Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Maariam, 08/03/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 49, 12/02/2012, Fändäk'a

⁵⁸ For example, Koyew Malede, 57, Chairman, Wobo Kābāle, Wobo, 12/03/2013

⁵⁹ Koyew Malede, 57, Chairman, Wobo Kābāle, Wobo, 12/03/2013; Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk'a, 28/02/2012

consumed, cooked or raw, as a stew or alone. *Shimel gwazgi* is prepared from the inner pulp of bamboo shoots pounded, mixed with some crop powder and eaten as a bread or porridge. *Sinsi* is a kind of potato, but very big, obtained from the roots of a plant known as *sinsi*, a vine which has narrow leaves and climbs trees. The root of the plant is eaten peeled after boiled until its sours are washed away. It seems the Kumpal had a long list of wild food sources for gathering. But today, I could hardly see these foods consumed among the Kumpal, according to informants,⁶⁰ for two reasons. First, the people do not eat, even if they want, these food items for fear of discrimination from highlanders who live with or contiguous to them. Second, there has been a rapid depletion of the environment and some of the plants cannot be found easily in the forest.

The origin of hunting and gathering of the Kumpal livelihood is also perceived through the ancestral curse. When the ancestral group who kept up the promise was able to cross the river, the absconders remained behind and slipped into the bush. Since then, they hid themselves in the bush for a long time for fear of the despots. In the meantime, they relied on hunting and gathering and that is how this mode of subsistence has been probably developed into a major livelihood mechanism.

In their system of shifting cultivation, the people produced various crops such as maize, red millet, cotton, and peanut. Red millet is, in particular, the chief produce (Jawi Woräda Communications Office 2012). While I was travelling through rural households, I found the red millet consumed in different forms such as *s'uqi* (smear), bread, and *anki* (*enjera*, as it is called in Amharic) and I was often invited it. Elsewhere (Desalegn 2014a), I have described that in the shifting cultivation, plots of land are cultivated temporarily usually for four to five years. When the soil shows a sign of exhaustion or the land is infested by unusual weeds, they shift to other plots of land prepared through slash and burn. They cultivate in the newly prepared

⁶⁰ Yekoyew Malede, 57, Chairman, Wobo Käbäle , Wobo, 12/03/2013

land for other four to five years, and in this way it would take them ten or twelve years to return to cultivation of the land they left first. According to an informant,⁶¹ until they used metal hoe later, long-handled forked branches of *k'amo* tree (*Celastus serratus* or *Rhus abyssinica*) were used to till the farm.

Informants⁶² also witness that animal grazing was a significant source of their livelihood. In an extensive and dense forest, they used to leave their cattle, without any risk of them being stolen or attacked by disease. When they went to visit their herd once in a five or six months, the owners would find more calves added to the herd. When they needed them for meat, the animals, which had grown big but wild, were shot dead. They also consumed milk from their cows, which were separately kept around their village until their milk supply was depleted.

These subsistence mechanisms have either ceased or declined as they stand today due to negative environmental change and relative population increase. With the ensuing decrease in forest coverage, honey production decreased substantially. Hunting is virtually impossible today for not only illegal hunting is regulated (Proclamation 541/2007) but also there is depletion of wild animals. Their livestock population was also seriously hit by frequent outbreak of disease, sometimes killing almost all animals a person had. Thus, the Kumpal have been increasingly restricted to intensive sedentary agriculture as their primary mode of subsistence⁶³. Crop production and, to some extent, animal rearing are now common and dominant practices in addition to beekeeping still surviving to a certain extent. The major crop types on which eventually the people rely today are cereals such as *tafi* (*Eragrostis tef*), red millet, rice, maize, and corn; grains such as peas, beans, and haricot beans, and oil seeds such as sesame, Niger oil, peas, and sunflower (Jawi Communications Office, 2012).

⁶¹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 10/09/2013

⁶² Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 10/09/2013

⁶³ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 10/09/2013

3.9. Interaction with Other Ethnic Groups

The Kumpal are in contact with four ethnic groups. In the south and southeast are the Awi, in the west the Gumuz and Gagrissa, and in the east the Amhara. These ethnic groups live contiguous to or mixed with the Kumpal.

The Amhara are the one who are increasingly getting mixed with Kumpal villages and yet the Kumpal relationship with this ethnic group is highly pejorative. Throughout my formal and informal interview with Amhara informants, I could understand from their opinion, a higher status this ethnic group members accorded themselves and the lower to the Kumpal. An informant⁶⁴ for example told me the following story. A priest used to have two daughters. They grew up and both attained a marriageable age. But they were unhappy about staying without getting married. One day, they agreed to prepare a good drink, which they call was *t'ej*, and served their father when he came home in an evening. When he was under the whim of the drink, the two daughters made intercourse with him one after another: first the elder one and later the younger. Then, they both conceived but hid their pregnancy until they were able to do so. As time passed, the pregnancy became obvious and their father was confounded by how his daughters could get pregnant without getting married to men. One day, when they went to collect firewood, their father insisted them to tell him how they were impregnated. The elder daughter told the truth while the younger did not. The latter said:

My father, I got pregnant when one day I went to the bush to collect firewood. On that day, I was so zealous about having a husband. Then I saw a *wombla* tree in front of me and hugged it in the wish that it could be my husband. Then I immediately got pregnant.

An important label derived from this stereotype is relegation of the Kumpal as those people who came from wood. This story is so popular and instrumental among the Amhara than other groups. The Kumpal themselves also narrate this story when they are provoked into a topic of marginalization, but believe that it is a fabrication

⁶⁴ Kehulu Yawukal (Pseudonym), 47, Fändäk'a, 17/03/2012

of the other people. Similar stories of “wood” origin are also common among the K’imant who are similarly stigmatized by the Amhara in Gondar (Zelalem 2003:46)

There is also a stereotypic relationship between the Kumpal and the Awi as well. In my experience, I knew pejorative labels that circulated in areas around the Awi settlement. Even in those areas they have no contact, the highland Awi people portray the Kumpal as those who are “short” heighted and “bad” hearted. Yet, there seems to have been less established discrimination from the Awi than it is from the Amhara. And today, there seems to be also a growing common belief between the Kumpal and the Awi about the two groups having a common ancestry. As indicated already, the Kumpal are now included to a common political administration with the Awi, i.e., in ANAZ and are treated by political administrators as belonging to Awi branch of the Agäw. Besides, the Kumpal have generally a favorable attitude to both political and social merging of them to the Awi.

The Gagrissa Agäw, who are much like the Awi but may have some difference in their historical background and culture, are found at the foot hills of Bälaya Mountain, in BGNRS. The Kumpal relationship with this group is also characterized by unequal relationship if not wide inequality like with the Amhara. The relationship between the two groups can be understood by looking at a situation I encountered on 28 September 2013 when I was doing my fieldwork in relation to the Kumpal *Meskal-Fifi* celebration. While I was staying with my key informant⁶⁵ at his house, one of his daughters jumped into the house from outside, passed onto a scullery, and began almost furious conversation with her sister who had been also in the same room. The conversation went hotter and hotter, and I learnt the two sisters were talking about a rejection by a Gagrissa girl’s family of proposal of their daughter’s marriage to a Kumpal man. "How can they reject marriage with us" asked one of the daughters in the conversation. The response to this question came from all people who were until then just listening to the conversation and it was almost similar in its content. Some said this should not happen at this "civilized time"; and

⁶⁵ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 28/9/2013

others remarked that it was a mere stupidity for the family to reject this marriage proposal. But a comment by the very daughter who brought the case is most telling. Looking at me, she said:

You know, if you look at the man whom they [the parents of the girl] are rejecting to marry, he does not seem he is the one from our community [Kumpal]. He is so beautiful. Moreover, he now earns about 5000 birr per month while the girl proposed for the marriage just stays at home without work. Can an Agäw reject an Agäw at all? They don't know that they are themselves *gagri* (probably related to the name Gagrissa), meaning literally "black"?

The Kumpal relation with the neighboring Gumuz seems to be horizontal. They undermine each other. The Kumpal would often compare them with standard of the Gumuz by saying: "Even the Gumuz have been changed these days; even the Gumuz have been displayed on television screen"⁶⁶.

3.10. Conclusion

The Kumpal have fresh socio-cultural systems that seem to be unique to other Agäw groups and some of which are still practiced and others just in a fresh memory. In relation to their position among the Amhara and other Agäw ethnic groups, the Kumpal are probably the most or one of the most marginalized Agäw group. Although not spelt out clearly in this chapter because it is discussed in the subsequent chapters, history seems to be the root cause for this marginalization. As Pankhurst and Freeman (2003) argue, the current scholarship on marginalization in Ethiopia alludes into explaining through caste, class, race, or other social factors, and the named scholars propose historical perspective as a more viable explanation for marginalization of minorities. The Kumpal case would give an interesting example of how marginalization crops up from history. The next chapter dwells on a historical context of Agäw integration into the central state system and will try to show how the process thereof could have been potentially oppressive for the Agäw at large and the Kumpal in particular.

⁶⁶ Tata Hailu, 37, Alu K'urand, 02/03/2012

CHAPTER FOUR

A HISTORICAL PRELUDE

4.1. Introduction

This chapter enters into exploration of a historical process of state formation in Ethiopia, in which the Agäw are at the kernel. The purpose is not to establish this historical process as such, but to show how the process resulted in oppression of the Agäw in general and the Kumpal in particular, in the course of integration of this ethnic group into an expanding central state. The chapter wishes to give a shade of historical context to the Kumpal memory of oppression existing today. I argued in Chapter Two and I argue in subsequent chapters that the Kumpal memory of today is not something merely mythical reconstruction about the past. It is based on some historical antecedents and this chapter is intended to give those antecedents in general.

4.2. From an Early Time to the Gondärine Period

For scholars of ancient Ethiopian history or those who use it as a background to a different subject they write about, there are stories of immigration which have become conventional entry points to start writing (*See for example, Trimingham 1952, Simoons 1960; Gamst 1969; Taddesse 1972; Sergew 1972; Bender 1976*). These stories represent the onset of the social and political history of the country such as the beginning of changes in the ethnic landscape and the inception of the long history of state formation. There lied also the beginning of the social and political history of the Agäw, for the ancient history in particular is indispensably linked to them as one of the earliest inhabitants of the northern plateau of today's Ethiopia.

The anecdotes refer to movement of people from both west and east of the present Ethiopia. To start with the former, the first anecdote of immigration goes as follows. During the Paleolithic era, two races of hunter-gatherers occupied Ethiopian plateau (*Gamst 1969:11; Simoons 1960:12*). While the Bushmanoid occupied the

southwest, the Caucasoid inhabited the northwest. As time went by, Caucasoid, the Hamitic stock of Cushitic speakers, dominated the entire area. But, at some unknown time before 3,000 BC, they were, in turn, dominated by Negroids who came from the west into the highlands of Ethiopia (Simoons 1960:12).

But a more important population movement and the one which we have relatively more information came about later between 1000 and 500 BC. According to this story, the Semitic speaking South Arabian immigrants started at about 1000BC occupying the northern plateau of today's Ethiopia. Sergew (1972:26) speculates that because of the relative population pressure in their original place and due to economic opportunities in the new place of migration, the South Arabians began to make a long and gradual movement to the highlands of Ethiopia at least beginning from 1000BC. And according to Taddesse (1972: 5), before 500BC, they had already advanced into the hinterlands of Adulis as far inland as the surroundings of today's Axum.

This immigration is believed to have set in the motion a long process of state formation and change in ethnic landscape. The settlement of the Semitic immigrants took place in areas which had been already occupied by the indigenous Cushitic peoples of Beja, Kunama-Barya, Sidama, and Agäw. Particularly, the Agäw are believed to have existed south of the Märäb and Bäläsa rivers and probably extending as far south as Jäma River, from the edge of the plateau in the east to the valley of the river Täkäze in the west. Thus, among other groups "[b]ut it was the Agäw group of the Cushitic people in northern Ethiopia that the South Arabian immigrants established a lasting relationship, and it was among them that their cultural and political impact was most deeply felt" (Taddesse 1972:8).

According to writers of this anecdote, (e.g. Sergew 1972:26-43), the level of "civilization" between the immigrants and the host population is represented hierarchically. According to Sergew (1972:26-43), while the native people including the Agäw lived at "primitive" stage, the new comers had a superior culture. For

example, the natives had had lower level of material culture and lived only in a small isolated clans or group of clans with no better form of political organization than the new comers. However, the representation of the Agäw as having “lower” level of civilization than that of the immigrants contradicts remarks made by other writers. Murdock (1959) for example says, the Agäw had one of the most creative civilizations even in the entire Africa.

Whatever the case may be, the story of Arabian immigration continues. The supposed superiority of the immigrants is believed to have put them in relative technological and political advantage to easily dominate the host people. This condition of power relation created a favorable ground for the immigrants to establish a chain of political and social relations further inland into various directions mainly in the form of hunting, commercial interest, and conscious territorial expansion. In this early pattern, a few South Arabian or natives assimilated into them were the primary actors in carrying out this task through political and cultural leadership they were designated among the indigenous people. It is possible to imagine that by this time the Agäw population of northern Tigre had been organized into small political units within the settler population. And this was a “private” process which was undertaken without the official act of territorial expansion and incorporation. In this way, we can best envisage the origin and eventual expansion of the embryonic state organization long established in northern Ethiopia (Taddesse 1972: 8, 12).

During the last half millennium BC, a pre-Axumite “Sabea-like” kingdom called D’MT arose in its capital Yeha in northern Ethiopia. The origin of the kingdom is not clearly known. Whether it was the result of indigenous peoples mainly the Agäw or the immigrants or both is not clearly known. Nonetheless, the emergence of “kingdom” in itself indicates the political transformation of the time from the informal organization indicated in the preceding paragraph to the formal one. This, in turn, resulted in a new phenomenon to the process of ethnic interaction and integration in the region (Fattovich and Bard 1994:16).

In about mid-second century AD, another new dominant polity developed on the town of Axum (Taddesse 1972:16). Having been favorably situated on trading routes from the Nile Valley to the Red Sea, Axumite Kingdom was able to gain control over a large area extending from South Arabia to eastern Sudan. The kingdom thrived so much so that by the later 3rd century AD, it was one of the four major kingdoms of the world at that time (Munro-Hay 1989:327; Taddesse 1988:5).

Such power of the Kingdom brought an impetus to launch the task of political and economic expansion in two dimensions. On the external dimension, it intensified its economic and cultural contacts with their neighbors in the Red Sea and the East Mediterranean regions. On the internal dimension, it continued to integrate highland peoples, to create a strong unified state, and to ensure peace and order throughout their domains (Taddesse 1988:6). One of the peoples who had confronted this process of internal expansion was the Agäw.

The first record of something which relates to the name Agäw itself was even found within this context of internal expansion. The Adulis inscription in the second half of the third century mentioned the name in relation to a campaign undertaken against the Agäw by King Ezana, and in which the former were the losers (Taddesse 1988:8). King Ezana, who ruled Axumite kingdom between 320 and 360, mentions: "ALYA", a resting-place on the frontiers of the "Atagau". During the campaign, the king kept in the Agäw territory for twenty days "the camels, the pack animals, the men, the women and the provisions..." which probably comprise the proceeds that had been hoarded during the earlier days of the campaign. By the time they were mentioned on this inscription, their region seems already to have been relatively abated. In this way, the Agäw and many peoples who had existed with unique culture were gradually brought into administrative, socio-economic and cultural domination by the Axumite Kingdom (Taddesse 1988:5-6).

While the introduction of Christianity had already become a good impetus for the incorporation of the “pagan” Agäw during King Ezana as mentioned in the above paragraph, the expansion of the church gave this process yet another force. By the time the Agäw were mentioned in the work of Cosmas in the 6thc, two hundred years after Christianity had been declared as the state religion of Axum after king Ezana had been converted in 330 AD, their status had considerably changed compared to what they had been before. At least an important segment of their population had become an integral part of the now Christian Axumite Empire (Taddesse 1988:8). It might be due to this effective integration that during the reign of Kaleb (493-534) the Agäw were entrusted over the trade route through which gold was transported from the south, mainly Sassou of the Gumuz region (Taddesse 1972:26). Between the first half of the 6thc and the beginning of 14thc, incorporation was considerably successful, and the Agäw dominion in Dämbiya and east of the head waters of the Dinder, the Bäläsa, and the Dura rivers in Gojjam was already incorporated (Taddesse 1972: 9, 12)

Response of the Agäw to the process of incorporation is little known. However, some indications exist that there were some reactions. The famous example often mentioned in the literatures is the resistance of Yodit (Gudit). Yodit was a Fälasha or “pagan” Queen of Agäw origin. She militarily reacted against Axumite power from the 9thc onwards (Sergew 1972:240). She destroyed churches and monuments in order to exterminate the Axumite Dynasty altogether. She is credited to have led the first Christian persecution against expanding Axumite kingdom (Sergew 1972: 225).

Eventually, the Axumite Kingdom began to decline because of some cumulative factors. Externally, little after amicable relationship was created between Prophet Mohammed and the Kingdom of Axum, Islam arose and took control of the Red Sea and most of the Nile. This caused serious blow to economic and political interests of Axum. Axum lost the sea-routes and coastal towns via which it had built strong transnational trade on which it had flourished. The whole of 7th century was characterized by this maritime conflict between Axum and the Muslim world

(Taddesse 1972:31). Internally, the loss of maritime trade must have weakened the wealth and control over the internal affairs as well. Hence, the Cushitic people of Beja in the north also arose against the Kingdom and contributed to its downfall (Taddesse 1972:34; Sergew 1972:237).

Amidst this crisis, the Agäw of Lasta region, who had already been integral parts of the Axumite Kingdom, appeared into the stage. They formed a new dynasty known in Ethiopian history as Zagwe Dynasty (Taddesse 1972, Sergew 1972). Literature that alludes into this dynasty gives unsettled information, for facts are shrouded in the mystery of time. On the length of time during the dynasty was in force, the number of years varies from 133 to 375. On the monarchs who have ruled under this dynasty, figures also vary from five to fifteen. The beginning of the reign is also confused between 1030 and 1150AD and its end from 1268 to 1270AD (Taddesse 1972:54; Sergew 1972:239-240). Yet, some reliable documents put the overall duration of Zagwe Dynasty between 1150 and 1270 (Bahru 2002:8).

The confusion was because of chroniclers of the time who were also proponents of the view by the church and the people of Semitic origin that the Zagwe Dynasty was a usurper who did not deserve rule. Chroniclers simply summed up facts in one sentence that "[t]he kingdom was given to the people who did not belong to the Tribe of Israel". Even if the church recognized individual spiritual merits like for king and saint Lalibäla, it strongly objected their political rule. Apart from obscuring historical facts, this denial of support and recognition as the legitimate ruling power gradually weakened the power of the dynasty (Sergew 1972: 239-242). As the result, the Zagwe kings could not restore order throughout the empire. There was also internal conflict among the Zagwe princes themselves which greatly left them out in the open for external anti-Zagwe movements (Taddesse 1972:67-68).

In the end, Yikuno-Amlak (1270-1285), who obtained military support from Shäwa, attacked the last Zagwe king, Yitbaräk, killed him and declared himself king of Ethiopia. In 1270, the throne was once again taken away by a chieftain of one of

earlier subdued peoples. He newly inaugurated what is called Solomonic Dynasty to note the difference from the foregoing “illegitimate” Zagwe Dynasty (Taddesse 1972:67-68). The Agäw rule, however, left us Lalibäla, the glaring world heritage, named after a prominent king and saint of the dynasty who hewed eleven churches from a monolithic stone.

Whatever historical process might have taken place particularly during power transfer during medieval period, with the inauguration of the Solomonic Dynasty, the process of ethnic interaction and integration followed a new phase in Ethiopian history. Gamst (1969:15) believes that with the restoration of power by Amhara, integration of new areas was accelerated. To begin with, the first king of the Dynasty, Yikuno Amlak, drafted various programs to form a united empire, militarily and politically strong and dominant throughout the whole of today's northern Ethiopian region. Externally, by containing the rise of Islam in the lowlands surrounding the highland Christian kingdom which had contributed to the fall of the Axumite Empire, he was inspired to regain the historical trade route. Internally, by consolidating territorial grip over peoples who had already been incorporated and by incorporating new ones, he worked to regain the historical supremacy of the pre-Zagwe successors (Abir 1968:xix; Taddesse 1972:128).

Among other rulers, Amdä-S'iyon (1314-1344) is notable among earlier Solomonic kings for whom some record exists in relation to the incorporation of the Agäw. He expanded the previous “programs of expansion into the Agäw districts in the northwest” (Taddesse 1972:132). Probably by the time of his reign, the “pagan” people of Agäw found were south of the Zäge Island under an Agäw ruler called Jan-Chixway. Zäyohannis, a saint in the Island, crossed over to these people and began to preach them. When Jan-Chixway heard of this religious intervention by the monk, he put him in prison until he was released by the intervention of officials of the Christian Kingdom. Similarly, “[b]oth Tigré and Amhara clerics worked side by side in the Christian mission among the Fälasha (Taddesse 1972: 196-197). By 1527, Shäwa north of the Awash, eastern Gojjam, Dämbiya, and Wägära had been

intensively Christianized and semitized. The remaining vast polities to the west, south, and southeast of the river Awash were only minimally affected by the presence of the church. The peripheral people of Fälasha of Sämen and the pagan Agäw south of Lake T'ana were still small fragmented societies but who could hardly pose any serious challenge to the continued Christian domination (Taddesse 1972:297).

In spite of much progress, the Christian Abyssinian Kingdom was however weakening, like Axumite, predecessor for various reasons. In 1527, a wave of problems broke out to challenge the realization of the modern Ethiopian Empire (Mohammed 1990:1). There were internal factions and rivalry among newly formed conglomerates. Having this opportunity, Ahmed Grañ invaded the kingdom causing devastating decline (Taddesse 1972). There was also irresistible population movement of nomadic Afar and Somali which, together with Grañ's invasion, led the Muslims into a series of victory. The Oromo also swept the country across the highlands like a tidal wave (Bahru 2002: 9-11).

Amidst these problems, the political centre of the country was retreating to the south. In 1636, Gondär was established as an imperial capital with the coming to power of Fasilädäs (r.1632-1667). In the meantime, the power of regional lords continued to grow. By the second half of the 18th century, "the emperors in Gondär merely reigned: they did not rule". In Ethiopian history, this period is known as *Zämänä Mäsaḥint* (Era of the Princes) (1769-1855) (Bahru 2002: 9-11). The shift in power centre to Gondär was, however, another precipitating force to the integration of the Agäw. While the Agäw in the north had already become part of the embryonic highland state since early times of Axumite campaign, Agäw in the south also fell into an immediate control by the Gondärine kings. While confrontation based on regional sentiments was heating up on various parts of the highland empire, several campaigns against the Agäw were heating up too.

4.3. The Gondärine Kings' Campaign on the Agäw

The Gondärine kings expanded interventions into and campaigns on the Agäw in and around today's Gondär, and those in south and south west of the city. To begin with, the city of Gondär was itself established in the land of what are today called the K'imant Agäw (Gamst 1969:16). Hence this Agäw group was integrated into the nucleus of the Gondärine kingdom. The K'imant principal area of settlement as they exist today, Chilga, was the strategic place which laid in the Gondär-Mätämma-Sudan trade route since the rise of Tewodros II (1855-1868). Prior to 1855, it was also a battle ground between the royal families of Gondär on the one hand and Tewodros II on the other, and in 1889, between Yohannis IV and the Dervishes. The K'imant were in an intensive participation of the regional geopolitics both as victims (e.g. they were attacked against their favor for Tewodros II) and supporters to the royal family of Gondär. They were intensively integrated until the political centre of influence was again shifted to Shäwa in 1889 (Quirin 1977:287; Pankhurst 1967; Zelalem 2003:39).

The Fälasha identity was also shaped in the historical process of integration, particularly during the Gondärine period. They have passed a long history of resistance and war with the highland kingdom. However, they were continuously subdued and gradually scattered across the Amhara and Tigre settlements. Most of them were concentrated in the area around Lake T'ana and north of it in Dämbiya, Sägält, K'wara, Bäläsa, and some in the city of Gondär itself. However, the establishment of the capital city of Gondär became an opportunity to annex the Fälasha in this region into the Gondärine Kingdom. During Emperor Susenyos I (1605-1632), the Betä Israel autonomy in Ethiopia ended. Their land was confiscated; they were sold into slavery and a number of them forcibly baptized. As a result of this, much of the traditional Jewish culture and practice was lost or changed. The Fälasha community however continued to survive during this period. They served as craftsmen, masons, and carpenters for the Emperors in Gondär. Such roles had been shunned by highland Ethiopians as lowly as and less honorable than farming (Kaplan 1992, Quirin 1992).

With respect to the Kumpal also, more important seems to be Gondärine kings' campaign against the Agäw in the south and western parts of today's Gondär city. From the expeditions of the Gondärine Kings into the Agäw in this region, we can identify two major routes. One is into the west of Lake T'ana from K'wara via Aläfa following the upper course of Bäläs River right into the hot lowlands of BGNRS, which means, including the place where the Kumpal Agäw exist today. The other is from the southern extreme of the Lake into the highland districts of what was earlier known as Agäw Mîdir, or in today's designation, into the Awi Agäw who live today in ANAZ.

Särs'ä Dingil (r. 1563-1597) was one of the pioneer Gondärine kings who made earlier inroads into the Agäw south of Lake T'ana. This king made expedition against the Agäw in both directions indicated in the above paragraph. For example, he made campaigns in 1581 and in 1585 (Huntingford 1989:149).

Susenyos I (1605-1632) continued the campaign with several punitive expeditions to the Agäw. We can learn from his chronicle that campaign against the Agäw was one of the highest preoccupations of the Emperor together with expedition against the Oromo. His campaign seems to have made several brutal punishments to the Agäw. Let's see the following quotation for example.

... the Agäw gathered and came closer to the King [Susenyos who was in the expedition against the Agäw]. At this moment, those who accompanied the King were frustrated and were disbanded. Then the Agäws killed a person called Eslam Dar. The King then counter-attacked the Agäws and saved the people with him. Then the King found them [the Agäw] gathered in a cave in Hankäsha⁶⁷. He ordered his followers to lit fire onto them. The army obeyed the King's order. Then the Agäws died as the result of burning from fire and suffocation from the smoke sent into the cave they were hiding in (Chronicle of Susenyos, P 109, Amharic translation).

⁶⁷ Hankäsha is a place in today's ANAZ, Ankäsha Guagusa Woräda

Yohannis I (r. 1667-1682) also invested much of his effort in integrating the Agäws. Huntingford (1989) states of the eleven itineraries he reproduced for the King, seven are of military expeditions. Three of those expeditions were made against the Agäw living in the areas of what was earlier called Agäw Midir.

Generally, much of the process of incorporation of this ethnic group was accomplished during the eleven decades from 1563 to 1682, i.e., from the time of King Särs'ä Dingil to that of Yohannis I. After the basic task of the incorporation was accomplished, the Gondärine Kings diverted their attention to the integration of the Gumuz (Taddesse 1988). This does not mean there was no expedition against the Gumuz at the same time with that of the Agäw. For instance, during the reign of Särs'ä Dingil, many aggressive attempts were made to incorporate the Gumuz (Taddesse 1988). Cerulli (1956:15) also indicates that in 1587, Särs'ä Dingil subdued the Gumuz at Bälaya in the lower part of the Gumuz settlement. Yet, it was the Agäw incorporation that served as springboard for accelerated expedition against the Gumuz.

Iyasu I, or, as he is called otherwise, Iyasu the Great (r.1682-1706) made the last decisive campaign against the Agäw in Zigäm, a far Agäw area in the region into the southwest. During this time, the Agäw to the west and southwest most parts of the area of Lake T'ana were more effectively integrated into the Christian Kingdom (Taddesse 1988b:202). Iyasu also made a final breakthrough to the Gumuz by setting up an indirect rule via Agäw elites. For instance, an important ally of the Gondärine kings and a local chief of Agäw, named Chixway, was promoted to the title of *Fitawrari* (traditional title for commander of the vanguard forces) for his successful role in the expedition against the Gumuz by Iyasu. He was also entrusted to the affairs of the Gumuz. By 1770s, the Gumuz were, in turn, generally integrated into the central state (Bruce 1790).

4.4. Post-Gondärine Period

Mīnilik II (r.1889-1913) is the most or one of the most remarkable emperors after the fall of Gondärine kingdom. Mīnilik II boosted up the project of modern state building. He paid expeditions to several ethnic groups in almost all directions from the centre i.e., Shäwa. He subdued small, autonomous and semi-autonomous local rulers and incorporated ethnic groups which had not yet been envisioned during his predecessors. Over a period of more than two decades, the demographic and territorial landscape of the country expanded dramatically. It was during Mīnilik II that the basic shape of today's Ethiopia was drawn (Bahru 2002).

During Emperor Mīnilik II, incorporation of the south Agäw into the highland kingdom was also consolidated. During King Täklähaymanot of Gojjam (r. 1881-1901), Ras Mäsfīn was appointed as governor of the Agäw Mīdīr and Mätäkkäl. Furthermore, the Agäw continued to be allies of the integration process of the Gumuz. In 1898, King Täklähaymanot conquered the Gumuz with an army of 10,000 soldiers of whom 2,000 possessed rifles. At this time, the drive for expedition was necessitated for internal and external factors. Internally, after Great Famine of 1889-1892, Mīnilik was initiated to revive trade in gold and other commodities such as, civet, ivory, and even slaves. Externally, the Anglo-French rivalry over the White Nile threatened Ethiopian interest, and hence he was agitated to proceed to Fashoda on the way subduing the peripheries of the Gumuz. Consequently, the Gumuz lowlands were conquered and Ras Mäsfīn became governor of both Agäw Mīdīr and the Gumuz. King Täklähaymanot also empowered the Agäw military chiefs to continue to work as frontline tax collectors from the Gumuz region (Abdussamad 1995:56).

The trend of integration was consolidated with the coming to power of Emperor Hailä Sīlassie I (1930-1974). By this time, the focus was on strengthening the already accomplished task of geographical annexation and cultural assimilation. This is evidenced by the first Constitution of Ethiopia enacted during the Emperor in 1931:

The territory of Ethiopia, is, from one end to the other, subject to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor. All the natives of Ethiopia, are subjects of the Empire, form together the Ethiopian Empire (Article 1). The Imperial Government assures the union of the territory, of the nation and of the law of Ethiopia (Article 2).

Knutsson (1969:88) states the focus during this period in particular was on Ethiopianization which was tantamount to Amharization. This was mainly through cultural assimilation of ethnic groups and forming a common national identity. Assimilation was growing faster; uniformity and conformity to highland Amhara/Tigre cultures was spreading slow but sure to petty ethnic groups. Donham (1999:128-129) also concurs with this view of trends of assimilation in Hailä Sillassie's Ethiopia. In his argument ethnic groups during this period were channeled into what are "modern" (*zāmānawī*), "civilized" (*silit'ane[sic]*), and "educated" (*yätāmarä*). The status of these was achieved by adopting Christianity and speaking Amharic. The ethnic groups follow Amhara who were at the top of the above qualities, and there were some seen next to them such as Oromo and Gurage, for example, and there were others at the third level who are typical "backward" but have to be assimilated all successively.

Though ambivalent, Därg's rule (1974-1991) on ethnic groups was also essentially the same. On the one hand, it promoted one indivisible Ethiopia and one mode of thought, i.e., Marxism, and on the other, its rhetoric goes that all nationalities have equal right, equal recognition and development of one's culture and language. This is what Donham (1999:129-130) observes too. According to him, the Därg was fiercely committed to the foregoing notion of old Orthodox Christian definition of the nation yet seemingly pronouncing equality of ethnic groups. Mängistu and other Ethiopians like him desired to resolve competing tensions between nationalism on the one hand and ethnic claims on the other. For this, he further says that the Russian model served as a blue print. This model understands the rights of ethnic groups and any explosion thereof, but repressing the tendencies that threatens the

nation. In other words, Lenin's and Stalin's examples offered a narrative of how to fasten together disparate ethnic groups into a unitary center, analogically "by Russians in the Soviet Union and the Amhara and Tigréans in Ethiopia".

As a result, both later regimes organized the country's administrative division not based on cultural or ethnic identity but geography. The Agäw sub-groups who had already been controlled were split into one or another direction, in the circumstances of highland Ethiopia, culturally and administratively absorbed into the neighboring Amhara or Tigré ethnic groups.

Let's see the case of the Kumpal, for instance. Until they were created into the current framework, they have passed through different administrative formations. Before 1994, part of them constituted *Shimälä-Jawi K'äbäle* under *Aläfa T'akusa Woräda* of the then Gondär Province, part of others *Agäw Midir Awuraja* of Gojjam Province, and still others *Mätäkkäl Awuraja* of, also, Gojjam Province. When ethnic based redefinition of administrative entities was implemented in 1994, these fragments of Kumpal settlements were reconstituted to a *k'äbäle* within *Dangila Woräda* in ANAZ. But, owing to their vast territory, they were created into a new *woräda*, known as *Jawi Woräda* within the same zone since 2006 (Jawi Woräda Communications Office 2012). Yet, a few of them are still separated into one or other administrative zones in bordering areas for mere geographical convenience of administration.

4.5. Conclusion

A point that one can strongly remark about the Ethiopian history of incorporation and state formation is that this long process of integration and interaction into the ever expanding population of central power has had very crucial consequence on the Agäw. The influence began at earliest period when the South Arabians immigrated into Agäw inhabited areas. In the subsequent periods, majority of the Agäw population has been integrated into an expanding group at different levels thereby many of them hitherto assimilated into neighboring speech categories

(Simoons 1960:12, Bender 1976:7-8, Gamst 1969:11). For example, “Today, the Agäw of Agäw Mīdir and Mätäkkäl are for all practical purposes indistinguishable from their Amhara neighbors. Most of them are bilingual; and the names of even those who speak only Awngi are completely Amharized” (Taddesse 1988:10). Yet,

[t]he tenacity of the Agäws is such that despite what must have been the most intensive onslaughts in their institutions and culture by the central state and neighboring communities for over twenty-four centuries, they have managed to survive at least in their linguistic identity in some isolated-even if dwindling- islands dispersed unevenly from the region of Keren in Eritrea to Agäw Midir in Gojjam (Taddesse 1988:6).

As I will show in the next chapters, it is the repressive and oppressive aspects of integration that are enshrined in the Kumpal memory today. They are enshrined in the oral and performative memory, as well as the everyday life of the Kumpal. The ultimate consequence of this process of integration and possible ensuing oppression of the Kumpal does not seem to have remained only in the darkness of history, but, of course with reconstructions, it comes into the present Kumpal life by way of memory. It is to the presentation of the Kumpal memory that I turn in the next chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

ORAL NARRATIVE MEMORY

5.1. Introduction

This Chapter is devoted to presentation of memory of the Kumpal in the form of oral narratives. I have promised to investigate (*See objectives*) in what way the Kumpal memory exists at present, and one of such mechanisms is oral narrative repertoire. Scholars have noted on the importance of oral narratives in maintaining and transmitting collective memory. For example, Edy (2006:2) remarks, oral narratives are very important field of memory, and Goucher et al. (1998) say memories presented in the form of oral narratives are the “oldest” system of memory. As an ethnic group whose culture and history has yet not begun to be documented and transmitted in writing, the role of oral narrations in upholding the collective memory is also quite indispensable for the Kumpal.

5.2. Memories on the Rise of Solomonic Dynasty against the Kumpal

There are three recurring lines of Kumpal story about migration and dispersal of their ancestors to places where today's generation lives. The first line of story narrates separate migration of Kumpal ancestors from Säk'ot'a, or as some say from Lasta, and settlement of them or their descendants in the present Gondär area, and then gradual expansion to the rest of places where today's Kumpal live. The second line of story narrates rather a common migration route from Säk'ot'a of a Kumpal ancestor with ancestors of today's Awi branch of Agäw, and gradual dispersal of the Kumpal ancestor and his family via Bälaya to the places where today's Kumpal live. And the third story also narrates a separate dispersion of the Kumpal ancestors or their descendants from Säk'ot'a to the places where today's Kumpal live, via Siḡadi which is found in today's Gwangwa Woräda, ANAZ. Each story is orderly described in a more detail.

Story 1

According to the story by Atikilt⁶⁸, there was a Zagwe ruler who was gifted for interpreting cock-crow. One day, he understood a cock-crowing at the break of dawn as referring to “he who eats my head will be the next king”. Subsequently, the king became so anxious for fear that the cock might be stolen by villagers or his enemies who wrestle to take over his throne. With no waste of time, he ordered his maidservant to slaughter the cock and prepare the chicken for him to eat. However, the maid servant did not cock the head of the cook; rather left it on *kwanan* (three-stone stove) for it had never been an edible component of a chicken food. In the house of this Agäw ruler, there was a boy servant who is believed to have come from a poor family both to make a living as a servant to the king and to learn from the latter’s wisdom of interpreting birds’ language. In the very day the king ordered the maidservant to slaughter the cock, the boy servant had been herding sheep and came very soaked with rain. As the chill is said to have gone to his heart, the boy sat around the fire to dry himself. Right away, he saw the head of the cock left on the *kwanan*. As he was also too hungry, he picked up the head and consumed despite he knew this part of the chicken was inedible. Later when the king asked the maidservant to serve him the chicken including the head, unfortunately she had not cooked the latter nor did the king specifically tell her to do so.

The king was so sad and anxious about the risk of losing his kingship. He contemplated various options to stop the happening of the prophecy. One day, he threw the boy servant to the side of a long cliff in an intention to kill him. The boy fell down rolling and rolling until he was however saved by a forked *Chibiha* tree (*acacia nilatica*) where monkeys had also made it a home. The boy stayed there for some time and tamed himself with the monkeys. He cut their hair, prepared a long leash and rappelled down to arrive safe at the base of the cliff. From there, the boy went to another house and grew up again as a servant. But when the time arrived, he became the next king and the prophecy was fulfilled. Later he became King

⁶⁸ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K’wara), 13/03/2012

Yikuno Amlak (1270-1285), a person who belonged to a group of people who stood against the Agäw, according to the view of the story teller, the Amhara. From this time on, the throne was taken away from the Agäw rulers by the Amhara.

This story is corroborated by the hagiography of Saint Täklähaymanot (pp 67-75), and in fact it is possible to argue that it is the hagiography which may have given the material to the Kumpal story teller who has also a church background. The hagiography begins that upon the annoyance of God at Israel, He took away the throne from Dīl Naod and conferred it upon rulers of Zagwe Dynasty for 333 years (approximately from 900-1270). But after such a number of years, God returned the throne from ḥmākun (the last Zagwe ruler who was otherwise known as Yitbarāk, the Son of Lalibāla) to Israelites through Saint Täklähaymanot and entrusted upon Yikuno Amlak. The hagiography also states that the power transfer was made through the head of a cock. The story continues that the king who had a gift to interpreting cock-crowing is named ḥmākun. After ḥmākun understood the prophecy, he rushed to Saint Täklähaymanot seeking for advice. After the King told the Saint about the cock crowing and its prophecy, the latter advised him to go and eat the head of the cock with no waste of time. However, when ḥmākun went to his house, the head of the chicken had been already eaten by the boy servant. The King became so upset upon the maidservant who was named Dälilawit, but went back to the Saint to tell him about this and seek another advice on the way out. The King also asked the Saint to pray for him. Unfortunately, the story tells us that “But, the angel of God came and told the Saint not to pray for the King who belonged to the Zagwe Dynasty and who took three hundred thirty years of rule while they do not deserve it. ...”. Based on this message, the Saint rather anointed the boy servant as King Yikuno Amlak, and further sent him to attack King ḥmākun. On July 13, of about the year 900 AD, God returned the throne to Israel.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ This story of power transfer is also found in an 18thc document: “Bi’ilä Nägästat (Wealth of Kings)”. This text also relates the fall of Zagwe Dynsty with Saint Täklä Haimanot. See “Dälilawit” Pp 45-46 in *The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography*, edited by B. Michael, S. Chojnacki, and R. Pankhurst Volume 1. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopia Studies.

It is also worth noting that the account on Yikuno Amlak is differently represented by Taddesse (1972:66). Based on Conti Rossini (1928)⁷⁰, Taddesse says that the king rather lived with a local Amhara chief where his mother served as a slave. And it was the experience with the royal family that gave him impetus for his future political career. Based on the same author,⁷¹ Taddesse (1972:67) also mentions another tradition recounting that Yikuno Amlak was imprisoned by Yitbaräk (who is Ilmäkun) in Mälot where he managed to escape. It is possible that the king might have different experiences both as a servant to the Agäw king and as an Amhara chieftain.

Let me come back to the hagiography and the people's oral story. The hagiography is more elaborate only on the transfer of power from one dynasty to another. Moreover, apart from the information that the newly enthroned King was directed by the Saint to attack the deposed Zagwe rival, it does not tell us more about the damage the new king might have caused on the deposed Agäw ruler. Of course the hagiography is also silent on details of assault the new king might have launched on the people who belonged to the deposed king's dynasty as well. For this information, we need to be re-connected to the oral memory of the people.

Atikilt and at this stage more other informants continue their story. They say that to revenge on the Zagwe king who almost threw him to death, Yikuno Amlak launched attack not only on the last Agäw king himself, i.e., Ilmäkun, but also on the Agäw people at large. According to Zerihun⁷² also, in one incident, the Agäw people are said to have been hidden in the bush to escape from the persecution of the new king or his followers. Among others, some hid themselves under a shade of tree known as Kumbil. They stayed there for several days hunting and gathering. One day, the soldiers of the new king saw a pregnant woman sitting alone under the shade of the Kumbil tree, for her husband and the rest of the people were in the bush to collect

⁷⁰ Storia d'etiopia, 1928, pp 283, 287.

⁷¹ 284-285, 289

⁷² Zerihun Asres, 27, Officer, Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office, Fändäk'a, 24/03/ 2012

their daily food. The soldiers asked her about who her husband was. The woman, not to identify him for enemy, said “I do not have any husband”. The soldiers then mocked her: “Then your husband must be this (Kumbil) tree and the tree must be the father of your child”. It is suggested that the name “Kumpal” itself may have come from this designation.

As the persecution was harsh, the Agäw ancestors decided to leave their place of origin, and this time is supposed to mark the beginning of the dispersal of the Agäws into different directions.⁷³ Names of some original ancestors who might have spearheaded the migration are mentioned by various elders though not uniformly. Some mention Mirfi Gulima, Mīnase Fuchi, Daminis, and Ifes⁷⁴. Others mention Chixway Gali, Ifes, and Daminas⁷⁵, still others mention Ifes, Daminas and Chixway Gali⁷⁶, and still more Daminas, Ifes, Mirfi Gulima, and Chixway Gali⁷⁷. Most commonly mentioned names by all informants are respectively Ifes, Daminas, and Chixway Gali.

Yet, other informants⁷⁸ who seem more logical however mention rather other three ancestors whom they say are pioneers to all Kumpal ancestors, known as Gumana (which in original Kumpal language means “lion”), Malaxan (meaning “finished”), and Xalgna (meaning “we saw”). According to these informants, Daminas and Ifes are the descendents of Xalgna, and Mirfi Gulima is the descendent of Malaxan. Atikilt also suggests that the persecution by the solomonites might have been made on only some group or lineage and hence war induced migration may not explain migration of all Kumpal ancestors. For example, Gumana is said to have come for hunting while Malaxan and Xalgna are believed to have come as the result of the

⁷³ Taddesse (1972:68, see footnote), based on Conti Rossini “Studi su popolazioni dell’Etiopia”, 1910, pp 53-54, 60-61 and 82 (extract) also says that the “Zagwa and Adkāma-Mālga in Eritrea have traditions of migration from Lasta as the result of invasion from Shāwa”.

⁷⁴ Tägele Ambaw, 75, 20/02/2012, Fändāk’a

⁷⁵ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013.

⁷⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändāk’a, 13/03/ 2012

⁷⁷ Belew Takele, 75, Fändāk’a, 28/03/2012

⁷⁸ Example: Belew Takele, 75, Fändāk’a, 28/03/2012

persecution. This further suggests that the migration should be understood as a continuous process that may have been taken place over a period of time.

Informants also remember the route of the migration though there is also discrepancy in telling the routing. Atikilt mentions a place the Kumpal ancestors first arrived, that is Goya in Aläfa. Others remember their ancestors may have taken the routing from Lasta or Säk'ot'a through Kimir Dingay, Armach'ihö, and K'wara⁷⁹ all in today's Gondär. Some mention⁸⁰ the *kimir dingay* (heap of stones) was built by the migrants to protect themselves from enemy.

Story 2

The second version of the Kumpal migration story also connects the place of departure to Säk'ot'a and attributes the same reason for the migration. Elders who have knowledge of this perspective⁸¹ state that an ancestor known as Gulima gave rise to today's Kumpal. This person was one or additional of the seven brothers (hence known as "the Seven Houses of Agäw") who migrated from Säk'ot'a and are ancestors of today's Awi Agäw in highland areas. As Gulima was ugliest of other brothers, he was discriminated. As a result, he abandoned his brothers and left for the place known as *Kumbil*. Zerihun (2010) in his document I found at Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office puts another conjecture on the origin of the name "Kumpal". He says that "Kumpal" as a name may have a root in the people's settlement in *Kumbil*, another name for a place today at the foothills of Bäläya Mountain. It is to be recalled that such a name has been mentioned above as a name for tree.

When they arrived at Kumbil, however, Gulima and his followers found the climate harshly hot. As a result, they returned to Zändi (in today's Aläfa area). According to

⁷⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 25/02/2012

⁸⁰ For example, Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 25/02/2012

⁸¹ For example, Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 29/02/2012; Abera Tebikew, 58, Alu K'urand, 28/09/2013

Nigatu⁸², they could not rest in Zändi as well for they were not welcomed by the people who settled in the area i.e., the Amhara as the informant calls them. From Zändi, then they decided to leave for Baglti, another frequently mentioned place in the memory of the Kumpal.

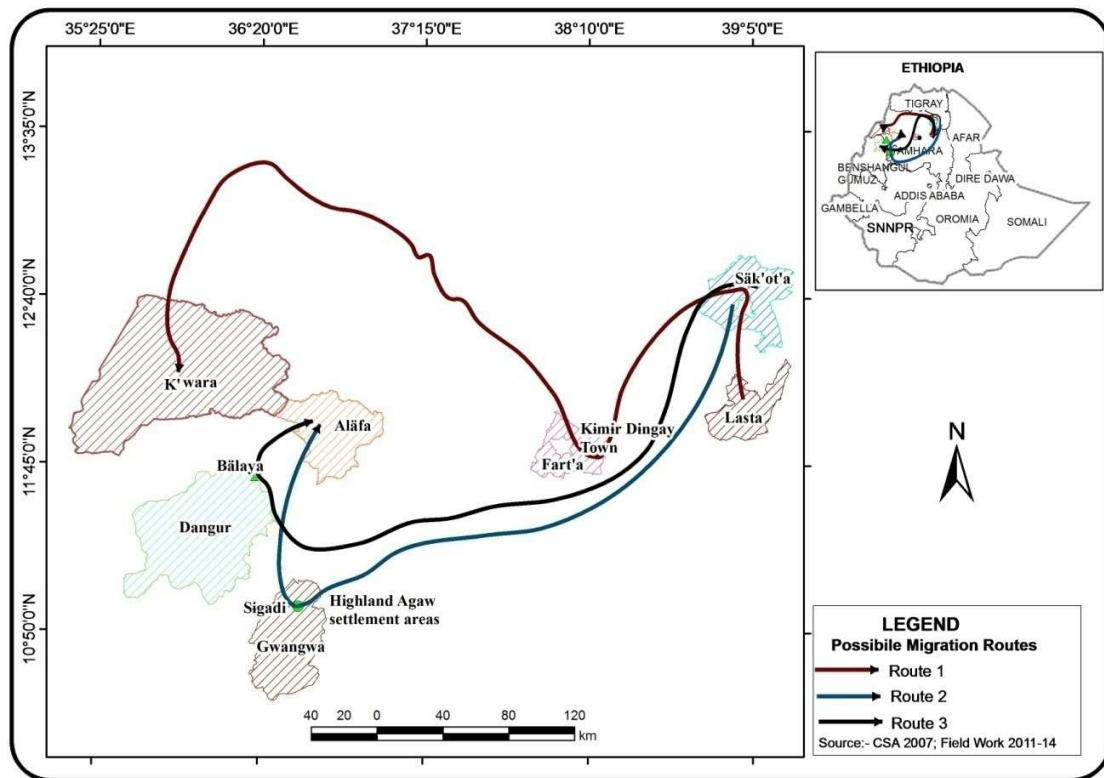
Story 3

The third perspective on the Kumpal origin also agrees the ancestors migrated from Säk'ot'a. This story however puts Sigadi, a place near Chagni, in Gwangwa Woräda of today's ANAZ, at the centre of the routing. Besides, as the second story attributes Gulima to be the founder of the community, this story on the other hand takes Chixway Gali into the centre. Perhaps to the relevance of this story, Hiruy (2014), from chronicles of King Bakaffa (r. 1721 –1730), traces the name called Jawi existed in the 17th century in a place about 40 kilometers south of today's Chagni town.

According to Enyew⁸³ Chixway Gali, with his followers, set off on a journey to Aläfa T'ak'usa from Sigadi with his ox known as Badi. When he reached Aläfa T'ak'usa, Chixway asked a ruler of the time to give him a land where he could settle. The ruler however challenged Chixway that he could accept the request only if his ox could beat that of the king's in a fight. Fortunately, Chixway's ox knew an Agäw language. When the two oxen went head to head, Chixway took advantage and told his ox in clandestine language to beat its opponent up from the girth, and down from the flank. Badi beat its rival and the king was forced to give Chixway a piece of land to settle in Aläfa. According to this story, it is from this place that the Kumpal have spread to different places they live today. Chixway himself is said to have been buried in Gazge, a place in Aläfa.

⁸² Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 29/02/2012

⁸³ Enyew Asres, 77, Alu K'urand, 02/03/2012.



Map 2: Map showing possible routes of Kumpal migration

5.3. Oppression at the Place of Destination

Whichever route their ancestors may have taken from Säk'ot'a or Lasta, a common thing about today's Kumpal memories of migration is the fact that their ancestors were persecuted not only in the place of origin but also in the place where presumably there is today's Gondär. The problem in the place of origin is already described and what remains is how today the Kumpal remember the problems they believe their ancestors have faced wherever at the destination. The memory of this latter time is narrated by mentioning various names of the then rulers. And all or at least some of the names of these rulers are the same as those used by rulers of the Gondärine period.

To begin with, once upon a time there was a ruler known as Ist'ifanos who used to rule somewhere in Gondär, as we call this place today. The ruler is remembered for

forbidding settlement of the Kumpal in Gondär and lowlands of today's Jawi. When the people were trying to settle in lowlands of K'wara, Aläfa and Jawi, Ist'ifanos came to them. Looking towards the lowlands, Nigatu⁸⁴ says, the ruler is said to have beaten *dīngariti* (a large kettle drum)⁸⁵ declaring that the place where the Kumpal ancestors tried to settle on, i.e., from Zändi in Aläfa to Bäläya in today's BGNRS, was all under his territory and thus denied settlement of the people. Many informants quote a decree they believe Ist'ifanos passed against their ancestors:

**የረገጥኸውን መሬት አትረስ፤ ያረስከውን ፍሬውን አትሰብስብ፤ የቃጣሃውን አትጉረስ፤
የጎረስከውንም አትዋጥ ወደመጣህበት ተመልስህ ሂድ።**

This can be translated as

Let you not till the land where you stop, nor shall you collect its reaps; let you not send to your mouth a morsel of food you hold at your hand, and nor shall you swallow the one you put in your mouth. Just go back to where you came from.

However, the ancestors persisted to settle in lowlands of today's Gondär though there has never been recognition of them as lawful holders of the land. Atikilt⁸⁶ remembers that as recently as 1971 and 1972, descendants of Ist'ifanos tried to evict Kumpal settlers to regain the land they believed it was originally theirs. The matter went to a serious dispute especially during those two years. Representatives of the Kumpal went from Bagusa, Käbtäle, and Jawi, and the matter was amicably settled. A group of people who claim they are descendants of Ist'ifanos still exist in Aläfa and Gazge.

Besides, Ist'ifanos is also remembered for his oppression through coercive taxation. He used to coerce the Kumpal ancestors to pay too much tax and of every kind. As honey was traditionally one of the most important items of their livelihood, earlier Kumpal villagers abundantly used to submit it for rulers. Meat from hunting animals

⁸⁴ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 28/09/2013

⁸⁵ Traditional Ethiopian rulers use large kettle drums to call people to gathering and make public announcements.

⁸⁶ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/03/2012

was also a common item of taxation. Traditionally, the Kumpal are very skilled hunters of wild animals. They hunted animals not only for food but also for game. For instance, a killer of a lion is rendered great reputation among the community. What is more, they were forced to pay tax in egg, chicken, and goat, which all of them were tolerantly supplied. To exacerbate their misery, the rulers ordered the Kumpal to submit tax of mushroom in a bare dry season. To humiliate them most, Ist'ifanos also asked the Kumpal men to give their shorts as tax.

Historical records on oppressive taxation and tribute of the Agäw at large are quite many. Pankhurst (1968:192-156), citing James Bruce (1790) provides that Agäws used to pay much quantity of gold, honey, cattle, butter, wheat, hides, and wax to rulers in Gondär. In fact, during Iyasu II and all other regimes, Pankhurst adds, Gondär relied on Agäws for tax and tribute of every kind. Probably, it is this context of heavy and abusive taxation the Kumpal are also narrating in their oral memory.

When Ist'ifanos disappears from the narration, another ruler known as Hılawe (also called Hılay) comes into picture. Even worse than Ist'ifanos, Hılawe had the atrocity of infanticide. He had a prophetic belief that his throne would be taken by a man to be born. Thus, he used to kill male infants, including his own, to avoid the risk of losing his throne. In the meantime, there was a woman pregnant from him while she was serving as his servant. She was scared that if she gave birth to a boy, the king would inevitably kill it even if his own. The woman left the king for a bush in K'wara and hid herself. She then give birth to Mäkonnän Hılawe. When grown up, Mäkonnän, in turn, begot a male child called Kasa (name given by his mother) from an Agäw woman who was a servant in his house. As Kasa was from the poor family, he was forced to serve as a soldier. Kasa later became Tewodros II, and the story justifies also Tewodros' Agäw origin on the side of his mother.

One day, Hılawe required the Kumpal to bring alive a wild animal known as *worabu* (*tora* in Amharic). *Worabu* is a very big animal and runner at a top speed of many other animals. Besides, it is also so fierce that it would fight back when under attack.

An informant⁸⁷ remembers three of these animals he killed in his life time, in 1991, 1992, and 1993. Others also count three or four of those they killed using their skill of hunting; but to bring it alive was very dangerous⁸⁸.

So the people quote Hilawe saying, “Go bring this animal alive so that I may enjoy riding on its back”. There was no option but to obey. Informants’ memory on the technique they used to capture the animal is different. In one version, some⁸⁹ state that the ancestors first caught a baby and then its mother when it came for the former. Some others⁹⁰ say that they put a snare with rope in a place around a river. As they knew the time when the animals came out for water, they ambushed in the river side while they prepared the trap for a *worabu*. While trying to drink the water, the animal stepped into the snare. Soon, the people pulled it from distance and arrested it in cooperation. Some informants⁹¹ even in distaste tell that their ancestors were ordered to bring the animal using only a cotton rope. As a result, they suffered a lot from the rope several times cut while they tried to catch the animal. But, still informants⁹² say that the king insisted the people should bring another animal rather using only their bare hand because the whole interest of the king was in seeing the people suffering.

⁸⁷ Abera Tebikew, 58, Alu K’urand, 27/10/2013.

⁸⁸ Today, this animal cannot be found unless by chance in a remote desert where it is not overwhelmed by people.

⁸⁹ Example: Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

⁹⁰ Example: Abera Tebikew, 58, Alu K’urand, 27/10/2013

⁹¹ For example: Nigatu Wasse 47, Fändäk’a, 01/07/ 2010

⁹² Example: Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K’urand, 25/06/2011; Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

To his death, Hilawe asked the people to saddle him onto the animal and rope him so tightly that he would not fell down and had no any sort of injury. Moreover, the people were asked to lead the animal. They did what the king ordered them to do. However, the animal escaped away and, according to some informants⁹³, disappeared into a jungle. When the people followed it by foot prints of the animal starting from the place around today's K'wara where the King had been saddled, they found first the ruler's legs fell off. The people were happy for the ruler must have died. When they followed the print further, they found his hands again fell off. As they followed prints more and more, they found all his bodies fell off one by one. When they reached today's Ambo (in Jawi), they found his belly fell off. It is from the belly of this king that the Ambo water in today's Dear Ambo is believed to have come out. The remaining corpse of the king is also believed to have been buried in this place. This place is also otherwise known as Gaze, after the burial of Gaze, as Hilawe is still known otherwise.⁹⁴



SKULL OF TORA.
Thimerler Jowee.

Photo 5 A Skull of worabu (*tora*). This picture is reproduced from a book by a British author named Powell-Cotton. The book entitled *A Sporting Trip through Abyssinia: a Narrative of Nine-months* was published in 1902 documenting journey of Powell-Cotton from "the plains of the Hawash to the snows of Simien" (p 262). In the northwest, he went as far as the eastern part of today's Jawi Woräda from where he narrates several animals he hunted including *tora*. The skull was presented to informants to identify whether it was the skull of *worabu* they used to hunt and the Hilawe asked their ancestors to capture. Some informants questioned on the shape of its horn which, in the *tora* they know, turns forward rather than point to eachother. And many informants agreed that indeed this was the animal, his horn bending forth and then pointing eachother

⁹³ Nigatu Wasse 47, Fändäk'a, 01/07/ 2010; Mengistsu Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013.

⁹⁴ The ambo mineral water which exists in this place today is traditionally believed to have come out from the burial of the cruel king who used to create problem to the Kumpal. Paradoxically, it has a significantly positive place in the life of the Kumpal. This place today is famously known among them as well as other neighboring ethnic groups for its healing power and the power of solving social problems. People believe in getting relief from an illness after they fulfill ritual at Dir Ambo and drink its water. Moreover, the place is also ardent hearer of people's vow. When one loses his cattle and comes to vow for fulfillment of something upon the recovery of the lost cattle, it is immediately fulfilled. When one plans to marry one's

After putting down the story recounted in the above paragraphs in my dissertation, I was quite surprised to find a similar story in an article entitled *Always Some Kernel of Historical Truth: Aṣe Hezbānañ (1430-1433) Resurrected in a Morāt Folk Story* by Taddesse (1997). In this article, Taddesse presents a local Morāt story about Hezbānañ as “an impossible, vainglorious despot!” Like oppressive characters told by the Kumpal, this king also used to impose impracticable orders on his people. For instance, he ordered them to build houses in the air; to bring to him two-headed horses and many other similar “obscenities”. As a result, his subjects suffered a lot and always devised a mechanism to abolish him. One day, they conspired to send him to death. They demonstrated in front of his palace proclaiming that he had achieved all the necessary accomplishments of a commendable monarch, except one simple thing. They started singing to him:

ሕዝብ ናይ ሆይ! ሕዝብ ናይ!	O! Hezbānay! Hezbānay!
አንድ ነገር ቀረህ አንድ ነገር፤	You have only one thing left, only one thing!

To make a long story short, the people captured *tora* and the monarch rode on it. But it would show a striking similarity of the story with that of the Kumpal if I put an extended quotation:

[.....] He [the monarch] declared his willingness to take up his followers’ challenge and enjoy the pleasure of flying over his vast domains, carried by his beloved pet, *Tora*! To make sure that he did not fall easily from the back of the animal, he agreed to be tied up securely (hands, feet, and all) with *Tora*’s body.

[....] *Tora* rushed like the wind, flying poor Hezbānañ over frightful mountain tops, in different directions. At first, the king’s regalia began to drop one by one at various locations, with each of these locations later being known after the name of the particular royal dropping! His warrior’s grabbed, the *lämd* (ለምድ) fell first; then his dagger (ካራ) ፣ then other things including even his personal wastes; and all gave rise to a number of place names! Finally after having flown him aimlessly to various places, *Tora* threw the despot on the

daughter or son, he comes to make a vow also to get his plan a success. If a woman has a problem of fertility, she needs only make a ritual vow and she will be granted a child.

top of the Yärär Mountain in central Shäwa, with sore wounds all over the body and terrified almost to death.

The difference between this story and that of the Kumpal is, in this story, it was the people who played the king into their hands, but in the case of the Kumpal, it was the king himself who played into his own hands. How the two stories came to have similar narrative is another problem to investigate; but for the moment, as the very title shows, Taddesse matches this story with existing, though few, written records about Hezbānañ and concludes that there is “always some kernel of historical truth” in oral stories.⁹⁵

The story of Kumpal oppression by those whom they remember as despots of the time continues. After the death of Hīlawe, another king known as Sandula (also known as Sandawula) was replaced. Unlike other two rulers I mentioned so far (i.e., Ist’ifanos and Hīlawe), Sandula is rather very infamously and consistently known among many Kumpal today. Even when they do not know the whole story, they know the name of this person. One would say “I don’t know much of this story except that there was a ruler called Sandula”. An informant⁹⁶ rather asked me if I know him in history: “since you are educated, it means you know this person. So you better tell us about him”.

⁹⁵ The *tora* story seems to be common in northern and central Ethiopia. A colleague of mine (Tilahun Tefera, Ph.D student at Addis Ababa University) told me the following reference about *tora* from a story he used to listen from his father.

ለእንዳንት ያለ ነጋሲ
ለእንዳንት ያለ ንጉሥ
ይገባህ ነበር የቶራ ፈረስ

Which can be translated as

For a king like you,
For a king like you,
A *tora* horse is deservable

This verse is also said by *azmaris* to exalt kings or local chiefs. An *azmari* is an Ethiopian male or female poet-musician, who plays with traditional musical instruments of Ethiopia. *Azmari* is used to accompany an event in traditional Ethiopia. Today *azmaris* often play in cultural bars. It seems to be also common to find “*tora meda*” in northern and central Ethiopia. There is *tora meda* (literally, “*tora* field”) in East Gojjam Zone, at Märt’ulä Mariam, and Bahru (2002:128) in his *Modern History of Ethiopia* also mentions *tora mäsk* (*tora* field) as a battlefield in central Shäwa.

⁹⁶ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012

Sandula is also known by the most gruesome cruelty. According to Asru⁹⁷ once upon a time, he ordered the people to stack stone in *Mäläxa* area in Gondär. He then rolled the stack down and the stones destroyed the people. This stack of stones is believed to exist until today. Like his predecessors, he also made them pay all sorts of taxes unjustifiably merely to enjoy from the people's suffering.

In one of the worst times of all, Sandula ordered the people to submit a tax which its predecessors had not probably commanded. One day, he called the entire community of men and ordered them to bring him young girls as a tax. Informants agree that it was the most disappointing command and morally so unbearable to give one's daughters for physical and sexual abuse. This command introduced a critical course into the Kumpal life. I shall give this more attention in the next section.

5.4. Sandula's Unique Despotism: Command for Taxation in Young Girls

Among other things in the order of memories presented above, as already started, there is a uniquely painful one emanating from exploitation while Sandula was a ruler. Oppression during this ruler was perhaps the worst moment in the Kumpal knowledge of their history, representing unparalleled oppression that is told not to have unfolded before or after this despot. While history for the Kumpal has always been a continuous turmoil of oppression even after the rise of the curse and up until today, during the governorship of Sandula, the story makes so tragic twist to the rise of a generational curse. It shows something that history is characterized to have played a double burden. One is history as cultivator of rulers who oppressed the Kumpal and the second is history as responsible for the rise of enduring generational curse that has severe impact on the present Kumpal identity. An

⁹⁷ Asru Abitew, 90, Alu K'urand , 24/03/2012

informant expresses this situation in a proverb which can be equivalent to the English: “It is to heap insult upon injury”⁹⁸.

It has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter that the Kumpal were asked to submit tax, from every single important thing. In addition to taxation for feeding the despots, there were also taxations for mere purpose of humiliating the people. I have also mentioned punishments for any reason the rulers were triggered. Severity of punishment was also depicted such as rolling down stack of stones over the people. An informant says⁹⁹,

They did everything they wished in the name of taxation. They asked our ancestors everything including shorts. When they felt they were not satisfied by all this, they asked them to pay tax in girls. They would have even asked them to lower down the sky because the purpose was either to humiliate or to make them suffer. But, it was their command to pay tax in girls that changed the subjects’ life including the life of ours today.

It was not every girl that the ancestors were ordered. Informants used different expressions to refer to the type of girls the ruler requested the ancestors: “*shingwa*”, “*gamma*”, “*konjo*”, or “*anqa*”¹⁰⁰, all to refer to girls who were beautiful, young, and virgin. This command means that the girls were to be abused in two major ways. They would be used as servants in houses of rulers and their associates, and above all they were to be used for sexual exploitation by the cruel rulers and their soldiers.

Demand for taxation of girls does not also seem to be strange at early times. In the chronicles of Susenyos (r.1605-1632), as generally stated in Chapter Four, it is recorded that the king made a number of raids to the Agäw (the South Agäw). In one of them, the Agäw were confiscated women.

⁹⁸ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 21/03/2012

⁹⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 27/09/2013

¹⁰⁰ Mengist Atalele, 76, and Nigatu Wasse, 49, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

[...]After this, the king started his journey from T'ak'usa, took the route through Aläfa and Sageba and went down to the desert. There, he conquered the people of Legen¹⁰¹. They were shroud and they do not pay tax to the king. So he destroyed them; burned their country; and destroyed their harvest. He ordered his chiefs of the military to watch those Agäw who slipped into many caves like squirrel (*Procavia habessinica*) and aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*) so that they would not escape at night. However, when they were thirsty and were not able to resist the heat in the caves, they sent a message to the king to give them a pardon. And they came out from the caves. The king did not take measure to kill them. To give them a lesson, *he took their women and children* (translated from Alemu 2005 EC: 102) (Emphasis mine).

Similarly, in the expedition of the same king to Fälasha, the following can be noted. "They [loyals of the King] finished all Fälasha. No Fälasha were left except those who had retreated with Finhas¹⁰². And the King enslaved all *wives* and *girls* of Fälasha and distributed them to any one he was pleased" (Emphasis mine) (p 114)

A number of similar examples can be mentioned, but let the Kumpal continue their story. As the people mention Sandula as the "ruler" in relation to this extraordinary despotism, they also commonly mention names of Hfewos (otherwise more prominently also called Hfes) and Daminas from their side. As indicated in the preceding chapter, these names are also mentioned simply as the names of their ancestors or the most senior (or a couple of the most senior) elders of the Kumpal who migrated from Säk'ot'a/Lasta. And they are also mentioned probably as local rulers at that time of Sandula. They are at the tip of the tongue of almost every story teller, and even if one does not know the story of exodus fully, they would mention the name of these persons as those who existed during the exodus. From the chronicles of Bakaffa, Pankhurst (1984:223) also briefly mentions "Hfyos" as the local chief of Lasta Agäw who fought Bakaffa's contingent known as Jawi. Hfyos resisted the contingent until later he was captured in 1729 and was hanged in

¹⁰¹ It has not been possible to identify some of the names in the quotation, i.e. "Legen" as the name of a people and "Sageba" as the name of a palce. "T'kussa" is still an area around Aläfa (See Map 1 & 2 for Aläfa).

¹⁰² Finhas, (ፊንሐስ) died about 525 A.D. Finhas was a pre-Islamic King of Himyar. He was born from a Jewish mother from Nisibis. He imposed a Jewish faith upon his subjects. For more details, see "Dhu Nuwas." Pp 50-51 in *The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography*, edited by B. Michael, S. Chojnacki, and R. Pankhurst Volume 1. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopia Studies.

Gondär accused of treason¹⁰³. But the Kumpal mention most likely another Ifyos who was their own local leader during Sandula. It was Daminas and Ifes who had primary contact with the story of Sandula.

So under the leadership of Ifewos and Daminas, the Kumpal ancestors did not agree on the idea of paying tax in girls to the rulers. For the moment, however, the two local leaders were wise to give safe response. They said, “[y]es sirs, we will bring you our children, but give us time to select best ones to suit your honor”¹⁰⁴. The despots were happy on the obedience Ifes and Daminas showed to submit girls best suitable to the ruler’s honor. Happily, the ruler agreed and gave them some time. As soon as they reached their village, however, Ifes and Daminas gathered the community to hold a counsel. They raised the issue of whether or not to submit their children. Subsequently, all the community members agreed with the latter idea. They all confirmed that they shall never give their children to the cruel rulers. What followed this is described below.

5.5. Preparation for Exodus

But it was not enough to disagree to submit their girls as tax objects. It was not possible to stay safe after one refuses to obey the despotic rulers. This would rather follow in cruel and unusual punishment. Killing was usual, but there are said to be many things a person suffered before he was killed under these rulers. In the previous section, all such types of punishments and humiliations were mentioned such as rolling the people with stack of stones and giving them order of any kind to see them suffering. So the community knew even more severe punishment would follow if they did not act swiftly in order not to fall in the hands of the cruel rulers.

¹⁰³ The chronicle of Bakaffa mentions Jawi as the contingent of the King (Pankhurst 1984:223), and Bruce’s travel account *Travels to Discover the Source of the Blue Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773* (volume III) page 55, mentions “Djawi” as one of the western “Galla” tribes. There seems to be a complex historical background to study the relationship between Jawi and its today’s inhabitants, Kumpal.

¹⁰⁴ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 24/03/2012

Accordingly, the mechanism which the community devised was exodus from their “country”. They made the most critical decision. “So a long time ago, first our ancestors migrated from Säk’ot’a, because they had to escape the persecution. And later and more recently, their descendents and our ascendants migrated from this place [Jawi]” says Atikilt¹⁰⁵. But this time, it was not a mere exodus they calculated. With determination, they decided to revenge their exploiters once and for all.

Informants¹⁰⁶ remember that they have known *mishi* (a yellow local mead brew with honey) and *silxi* (a brown local mead brew without honey) since early times, but not in the way it is made today. For example, rather than hop (*Rhaminus prinoides*), they used to prepare *mishi* with plants known as *girawa* (*Vernonia amygdalina*) and/or *ankelna/awiri*, both of which are very sour. So the first thing the people decided to take measure against the tax collectors was all households to prepare a strong local drink, according to informants, which was *mishi*, and so to serve them upon their arrival to collect the tax in girls. They calculated that intoxication of the tax collectors must be a precondition to take any retaliatory action.

Accordingly, when the tax collectors came to take the selected best girls, the villagers received them as “guests” in a “good” hospitality. Each household was assigned to host two soldiers and invite them until they were stupefied. Iffewos and Daminas took commitment to host the big boss himself, i.e., Sandula, while other households divided among themselves ordinary soldiers. Informants even those other than the Kumpal¹⁰⁷ often mention that the Kumpal villagers are known for touching hospitality until today. Any person who would arrive in their village would be astonished by kindness of the people not only for the insiders but also outsiders. So the tax collectors might have not also expected any bad would unusually come from these people.

¹⁰⁵ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K’wara), 12/03/2012

¹⁰⁶ Example: Abera Tebikew, 58, Alu K’urand, 25/11/2013

¹⁰⁷ Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk’a, 28/02/2012

The households served the “guests” until midnight, when all the tax collectors were intoxicated. Hfewos began the measure as they agreed in advance and cut Sandula from his neck. He then gave a signal of three beats of *dingariti* (a kettle drum) upon which all households would take a similar action. In the first beat, the households were signaled to prepare with their instruments. At this moment, they pulled out their choppers they had prepared in advance. In the second beat, they took action cutting the head of one person from the two and in the third beat they cut the neck of the second. In this way, Hfes and Daminas themselves and all villagers seemed to have accomplished the mission successfully. They chopped off all the soldiers from their neck, according to the agreement they made in advance.

With this success story, however, there is another counter story of failure told, still further critical one. Unfortunately, there was a soldier, who had slept the night with a “prostitute”. According to some informants¹⁰⁸, the woman was assigned to take care of a soldier that became in excess after, as already said, the rest of the households each took a pair of them. Other informants¹⁰⁹ on the other hand say she seduced him secretly and there was rather no soldier who was left for the responsibility of mere a woman “prostitute”. Whatever the case may be, this woman did not kill this soldier while every other households had fulfilled the promise.

When everything seemed accomplished, the community leaders went around the villages to inspect that no enemy was left behind. However, the patrol learnt that the “prostitute” had saved the soldier and hid him in a grain store. Moreover, she helped him escape with no one’s notice before the break of dawn. While fighting was being made to protect abuse of girls in the name of taxation, this woman “waged war”

¹⁰⁸ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 24/03/2012

¹⁰⁹ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 28/03/2012

against the protection of women. An informant¹¹⁰ mentioned a local Amharic parable: “But there are tares among the wheat”¹¹¹.

The escape of the soldier was shocking news to the villagers. They knew that the escapee had carried the news of the massacre of his colleagues. The whole community was disturbed. In an informant’s dramatic expression¹¹², there was no one who could stand, no one who could sit either. It was as though the earth was opening to swallow our ancestors. Not only humans, their animals and even plants were disturbed; everyone expected apparent and cruel death. They expected the rest of soldiers left in the dwelling of the rulers would immediately come to invade in vengeance and destroy them without mercy. Another informant¹¹³ further explains,

We know what war looks like during the fight between the EPRP and the Därg. We know what punishment looks like in all our lives. But, that time must have been unique. Our forefathers killed the oppressors chopping them off in sword. How do you think the enemy would kill those slayers in vengeance?

With no waste of time, they had to make the exodus more urgent than they planned. They have to flee away and quickly to any place where they could be safe, flee before the enemy could catch them up in their villages.

5.6. The Exodus

The Kumpal decision to exodus was accompanied by a play which later, according to informants, gave rise to what is today called *Fifi*. To abandon the country of home was not still easy; they knew that they would soon fall in irresistible homesickness. It was nostalgic moment for them to imagine going to some place they had ever not

¹¹⁰ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 24/03/2012

¹¹¹ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 24/03/2012. Probably there could be an interesting thing into the gender aspect of this story. Women have betrayed society at this time and if this has a gender implication today remains to be investigated. As data collection for this dissertation was so ardent because of many factors, I was constrained by limitation in time and finance.

¹¹² Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 28/03/2012

¹¹³ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

known; an informant¹¹⁴ says “to places where they did not know the people around; where they did not know tree, and homesteads; and after all to place where they did not know if there would still stay another tyranny”. “How do you feel when you come here (to their village) leaving the place you now live? Even if you come for work and you know you will go back soon, you feel some sort of anxiety”, the informant asked me to imagine what the ancestors would have felt when they decided to abandon their place permanently. He added, “So our ancestors were very much urged about leaving the miserable place but where they have formed affection. Yet, they have to leave or perish”.

In spite of the urgency, one of the mechanisms they could depart their country by easing the fear of the unknown place they go and the homesickness of the place they had lived was to organize a festival of play and dance. Each village organized events in which all men and women as well as children played composing songs of departure to release the invading sense of homesickness. All villagers played day and night for three days, stopping all courses of life. They changed all they have in their home to feast: their honey, crops, and the livestock. They played without interruption, with no sense of fatigue, with no worry about rain falling upon them, and with no pain of heat from the scorching sun. “Do you remember the story in the Bible which is about Sodom and Gomorrah?” an informant¹¹⁵ who has a church background asked me. “They danced for three nights and days, but theirs was out of defiance. When they decided to go for exodus, our people also played three days and nights, but they did out of pensive sadness”.

In order to make their play hot, the people are said to have cut small pieces of bamboo branches to make from it a musical instrument known today as *Fifi*. They cut seven pieces known today by various names and sounds (See Chapter Six for details). According to almost a common knowledge of the people, the *Fifi* was used not only for satisfying the desire to play at the time of departure. But, they also used

¹¹⁴ Abejew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Mariam, 10/03/2012

¹¹⁵ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/03/2012.

it as a means of communiqué in the journey during the exodus. Beats from the *Fifi* were used to give a signal to leave their village, and to speed up or halt their journey depending on possible dangers. Today, these sounds are believed to have developed into various genres of *Fifi* play. The interpretation of today's *Fifi* play is so profound that the story is described separately in the next chapter.

After the people had completed the play of departure, then, the people made another critical oath which later decided the fate of the people who are known today as Kumpal. The migrants took an oath that all shall go together without division among them. If this secret was not strictly kept, they would fall into another danger. If the soldiers knew which direction they escaped, they would follow them and destroy before they left enough away from the face of the enemy. In order to affirm their swearing strongly, they buried in the ground a black bitch and a mortar with a pestle. With the former, they were sworn "one who broke the oath should give birth to a black bitch", and with the mortar, they swore "anyone who broke the oath should get no wealth or be deprived of gains in general and be impoverished". By way of this, oath among the Kumpal today is not "simple" and temporary. It deeply invokes the past.

Swearing in giving birth to black bitch seems to be common among cultures of the Agäw. In my MA thesis (Desalegn 2007: 56) which was on traditional associations of the Awi, I have recorded the following oath made by members of *mikal mabara* (association in the name of St Michael). To quote English translation:

I, (so and so), am the member of this association afterwards. I accept the norms of this association. I do not lie and give false witnesses; I do not steal and let foods turn out into bones and chock me if I do so; I do not also make mischief and treachery. If I break the oath, let St Michael drown me like into amidst of the ocean, put me into fearsome blaze, let I not own property and have no children. If I break the oath, Let St Michael make my wife or at least my cow give birth of *black bitch*."(Italic added for emphasis).

The idea that foods can be “vehicles for reconnecting with the lost past” (Holtzman 2006:372) is found in this story among the Kumpal as it has been mentioned in the above and as it is shown in what follows. After dancing and taking oath, the Kumpal ancestors farewelled everything for which they gave respect. They gave farewell to monkeys, trees, and all. Particularly, there was a *bamba* (See Photo 1) tree which belonged to Ifes. Although every *bamba* tree’s fruit is edible until today, Ifes’ *bamba* was however unique. It bears fruit in all seasons. After the routine of washing their face in the mornings, villagers went to Ifes’ *bamba* to collect fruit for every breakfast as much as one was pleased. To this tree, an informant¹¹⁶ mentions a couplet composed by ancestors upon departure.

እልፌስቲ ባምባ
እንድስናክ ቻካጎካ ኸይምባ

Closely translated as

You *bamba* of Ifes,
Who will collect your fruits hereafter?
Let the birds and fowls collect your fruits.

As indicated in Chapter Three, *bamba* is generally a ritual tree in the life of the Kumpal today. What is to be mentioned here is, the people use this tree in *abala* to worship their *s’axasivi* (See Chapter Three). Today, *bamba* is one of the sacred trees the Kumpal know in their environment. Ifes’ *bamba* was also the one which the generation of Ifes used to worship *s’axasivi*.¹¹⁷

After they played *Fifi* to offset nostalgia and farewelled everything for which they gave respect, what is left is to go. It was time that they should then run. It is believed that a *Fifi* was blown as a starter to the people to “go”. As the very name itself indicates, *Fifi*, in today’s Kumpal Awngi is a compound word referring to “go out, go out”. So once *Fifi* was blown, the people thronged away from the villages.

¹¹⁶ Abejew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Mariam, 10/03/2012

¹¹⁷ Molla Million, 42, Fändäk’a, 02/03/2013, Burji K’ebele, BGNRS

The direction of departure is even less contestable. Almost all informants agree that the people went towards “the sun set”, as they call it. They did not go to the direction of sun rise because that was the direction from where the enemy was situated. As will be shown later, the story extends to Kenya and the route of migration is still to the south or southwest. According to their positioning, east refers to the direction to Gondär and Gojjam, into highlands of Ethiopia, making a probable connection to the settlement of the rulers in the highland centers of expansion.

It is also believed that during the exodus, the people walked in a single file, holding the swords on their right hand and carrying them on their shoulder. The justification for this style of marching and for carrying the choppers was



Photo 6 A *s'us'i* tree/*Myrica salicifolia*/ (taken by the researcher, February 2013)

because they were

walking ready to promptly act if the enemy attacked them on their journey. They also used the choppers to clear a track through the bush when necessary. But when they carried the sword, they did so with the cutting blade upwards. The file of people walking is believed to have cut many trees by cumulative cutting of people who pass one after another. But, one tree known as *s'utsi/myrica salicifolia*/ (See Photo 5) resisted this and was never cut. This tree is now known for its strength for construction of houses and for firewood

It is a common opinion of informants that the exodus was made during rainy season. Even some dare to be exact. Their ancestors went on the date of Hamle Abo (Hamle 5 of Ethiopian calendar, July 12) ¹¹⁸, one of the main rainy seasons in the area.

So after they made some journey, River Abay (other informants say rather River Ayma¹¹⁹) stayed bursting to its bank. To make things worse, the enemy soldiers were approaching them from behind after hearing the news from the person who had escaped from the “prostitute” woman. So, the people were stranded between Abay in front of them and ferocious soldiers behind. The fugitives had no choice but to get into the flowing river. However, they talked to the river before they jumped into it:

Do you also do injustice like men? Why do you swell while we are trying to escape enemy? Now, you will give us verdict. If we are escaping because we have been really oppressed, subside down and allow us to cross. If we are escaping in disobedience, take us all away.¹²⁰

Fortunately, the moment the people made this prayer, the river became rather divided. An informant¹²¹ who has a church background compares it with the exodus of Israelites and the split of the Red Sea. He says, Moses commands the Red sea to split into two and pass the people who had faced tremendous oppression. By the time soldiers of Pharaoh reached, the Sea became normal. Likewise, by the time the Kumpal ancestors prayed to the river, the over flooding river was split and allowed the people go safe. In addition to the Biblical tradition, it seems that the construction of story of a river dividing into two to let oppressed people cross it is common.

¹¹⁸ Abunä Gäbrä Mānfās K’ədus or Abo was a monk who lived during the time of King Lalibela. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church dedicates every fifth day of all months according to the Ethiopian calendar to Abo and the annual celebration is on Tikimt 5 (October 15). Hamle 5 (July 12) is also celebrated in the Agāw tradition with some quasi-Christian rituals. The celebration of the day coincides with the breaking of Fast of the Apostles, which the Apostles kept after they had received the Holy Spirit. It begins after Pentecost.

¹¹⁹ Ayma is one of the rivers in Jawi; its source is in today’s Fändäk’a town.

¹²⁰ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

¹²¹ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K’wara), 10/03/2012

Schlee (1994:103-106) for example presents similar story among the ethnic groups living in and moving across northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The following quotation is reproduced as an example.

The cavalry [literally: “the horse”] came and followed the footprints. They [the refugee] reached the Dawa [Daua, Dawwa] river. One holy man made us pass the water [bahari (Swahili) literally: “sea”, i.e., big water. People went, passed through, passed through. The cavalry came. When the end (of the caravan) passed the water, the cavalry came [...]. When the cavalry came the river was allowed to close. The water did not separate...

The Kumpal story goes on. The soldiers who were following them from behind saw them crossing safely. They also tried to follow them through the divided river, but, when they reached into it, the river closed itself again. The soldiers learnt from this miracle and became sympathetic to the people for whom even the river was on their side. They believed that they were escaping indeed out of exploitation rather than disobedience.

As it was rainy season, the migrants were very much soaked with rain, and so were the soldiers following them. After the group crossed the river, they found a wood ash and a fire smoking from underground burning the root of a tree called *zani* (See Photo 6). In the dry season, the fire had burnt the stem and all its branches, and in this rainy season, it was burning the underground roots. They dug out fire from the underground and heated it. They also saw the soldiers were soaked like them. They slung the fire over the other bank of the river for the enemy who had been chasing them from behind. The *zani* tree is known today by the Kumpal as the tree that has done favor to their ancestors. But bees do not use the flower of this tree, nor do they tolerate their smoke. The tree is not also brought to home for firewood because, it is believed the pumpkins will decay.

After the fire episode too, the story continues forward. After the people regained warmth from the fire, they continued their journey. As it was said earlier, they headed towards the direction of sun set. Those who could walk continued afar to the

place where they cannot be traced while other less able people remained scattered across what is today called Southern Nations, Nationalities, and



Peoples Regional State.

Photo 7 A zani tree/*Stereospermum kunthianum*/ (taken by the researcher). The person posing under the tree is a colleague of The Institute of Ethiopian Studies who accompanied me during the fieldwork

Almost all story tellers have a striking knowledge of the name called Korkoch, the place where the goers are believed to have arrived finally. The location of this place is not known in detail except it is said to exist in Kenya or in Ethio-Kenyan border in Moyale. My attempt to trace this place proved to show that there is a place called Korogocho in Kenya at the outskirts of today's Nairobi. It is a slum area known by its abject poverty¹²². Whether this is linked to the Kumpal's Korkoch remains to be studied.

5.7. The Rise of the Generational Curses

The most important part of the story still remains. It now transforms into the most momentous phase, into the stage where the incident which gave rise to the Kumpal identity today occurred. During the interview, an informant¹²³ paused first looking at the ground and soon at me. He said “this was where a final and arresting mistake was made. It is not possible to judge whose mistake it was but of history”.

¹²² Mkwe Alex (Pseudonym), 37, Providence USA, 12/05/2013; Paula Gary, 27, (Pseudonym), Bayreuth, Germany, 20/10/2014

¹²³ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 24/03/2012

Fearful of soldiers following them from behind, and of Abay roaring in front, some members of the group in exodus had betrayed into the bush. By the time the main cohort had crossed the river and saw back, there were some people who were absconding into bushes, and as some informants say, hid themselves in a cave which informants call in Amharic *yächigir washa*¹²⁴ (literally cave of the bad times) around Bälāya Mountain. The community was then divided into two: one group which kept up the oath and was able to cross the river, and another which broke the oath betraying the other group. So today's Kumpal are believed to be descendants of the latter, those who skedaddled behind failing to their oath in that nervous moment. So when the original cohort had seen the oath-breakers over the other side of the river, the former felt so sad. Following this, elaborate curses befall on the “traitors”. In the first place, the oath they took all to go without splitting up has now been changed to automatic or self-made curse. The buried oath at the time of departure now became curse on the oathers who failed to keep it. Besides, the ancestors who kept up the promise also added curses on the “deluders”.

The first of such curse is that the runaways were made to be physically “inferior”. This is often expressed in sayings at the tip of the tongue of almost every informant I met. The loyal group cursed the “absconders” to be seated under the shade of a flax plant, in Kumpal Awngi quoted as “**ተልቢ ሜንዳዳ እንጅኩጽምባ**”, literally, “let you be so short as to sit under the shade of a flax plant”. Otherwise, some informants say the “absconders” were cursed “**ታፊ ሜንዳዳ እንጅኩጽምባ**” literally, “let you be so short as to sit under the shade of a *tafi* (*eragrostis tef*) plant”. Still others also say they were cursed to “**ዋምባሊ ጉመባዳ እንጅኩጽምባ**”, literally “let you be so short as to sit in the hollow of *wombla* tree”.

Second, they were cursed to have no educated people of their own. In Kumpal Awngi, this is expressed “**ክንትኹ ዋጋን ፋቲምባ**” which literally means “let you not

¹²⁴ Literally, *yächəgər washa* refers to the cave of the bad times. It is believed to exist in areas around Bälāya in today's BGNRS, and it is believed to be the place where the defecting Kumpal ancestors have hid themselves to escape from the enemy during the exodus.

have educated people”. Today’s Kumpal believe the loyal ancestors imposed the “absconders” non-removable illiteracy, as a result, the latter were permanently disabled from the ability to pursue both formal (“modern”) and the church educations.

Third, the goers also cursed the “deluders” to be subjects always. This curse is often quoted in Kumpal Awngi as “**ወምበርዳ እንጅኩጸቲምባ**”, literally, “let you not seat on a chair”. Idiomatically, “chair” refers to some sort of leadership or an ability to be a ruler. Some informants mention another common saying referring to the curse on one’s ability to be a ruler: “**አቺ ፋቲምባ**” literally meaning “let a ‘person’ does not come out from you”.

Fourth, they were also cursed to the detriment of their growth and prosperity. This curse pertains to the fruits of labor. In Kumpal Awngi, the people quote this curse is said “**ግርቦ ቤራካቲምባ**”. Literally this can be translated as “let the fruits of your labor not be blessed”. This includes failure of one’s harvest, extravagance in what one has collected, and in general the condition of poverty.

Fifth, they were also cursed not their born ones grow. This was meant to punish the traitors with loss of their newly born children. It is aimed at punishing the people with premature death of their offspring. In Kumpal Awngi this is referred to as “**ካማንቱኑ ሌጋሳቲምባ**”.

Six, they were also cursed to not their cattle thrive. This curse refers to the livestock aspect. In Kumpal Awngi, it is referred to as “**አጋልቱኑ ማታቲምባ**”, which literally means “let your cattle not multiply”. This is aimed at punishing the people through deprivation of them the livestock.

Generally, the curse which is believed to have fallen on the betrayers seems comprehensive. Informants quote “**አቺድስ ኩክራ ቺጸምባ**” literally to mean “let you be

inferior to others”, or “አቺ ቹና ክሚ ቹና ፋቲምባ”, literally meaning “let you not have a ruler and let you not own a bull” to cover the rest of curses which were not mentioned above and to show that the curse is so totalistic.

5.8. Conclusion

The data in this chapter support some important arguments to be mentioned at this stage. First, the oral story shows the Kumpal have a heightened awareness of the past which was violent to their ancestors. The legacy is etched into the oral memory they tell us today. The oral narrative memory is one of the essential ways to the establishment of the Kumpal awareness to their past and their identity as an oral culture. Second, with respect to the structure, the Kumpal oral memory has an interesting structure of narration in which sequence is an important aspect (Riessman 1993). As Misztal (2003:10) also says a successful story about the past must have a beginning and end, as well as impressive heroes. According to Riessman (1993), in order to reach an end, narratives may follow chronological, thematic, and/or consequential model of sequencing. The Kumpal story of exodus and curse has its beginning from the excessive exploitation and ensuing exodus and it has its end, unfortunately, in curse. In between, the story is narrated in clear arrangement, as Young (1987) has argued in Riessman (1993: 17) for “consequential structure”. In consequential genre of narrative structure, one event causes another, and thus a story is built from a chain of causations. From this perspective, the story of the Kumpal exodus depicts a clear consequential flow, with only a little or no structure imposed by me as a writer. The story has actors in it, actors who may be considered as heroes and others who may be considered otherwise. In the slaying of the soldiers, the community as a whole bravely acted together, but later the actors split into two such as into those who continue in their bravery and those who became cowardice and who ended up in almost a lasting curse.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MEMORY IN *FIFI*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the second mechanism by which the Kumpal memory is deposited and reproduced, known as *Fifi*. *Fifi* is a performing and commemorative musical ritual whose actions and behaviors of performance saves and reproduces memory. Paul Connerton, a pioneering anthropologist in studying performative memory, argues that “If there is such a thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies” (Connerton 1989: 4-5). As Connerton further says, such memories can be called commemorative in so far as they are performative; and “performativity cannot be thought without the notion of bodily automatisms”. Like Connerton, Narvaez (2006) also says the study of memory had been only partial because scholars link its notion merely to mental process of remembering. However, Narvaez says, memory can exist beyond the mind, i.e., in movements and representations in our body. A very good evidence for the arguments forwarded by both Connerton (1989) and Narvaez (2006) exists in the Kumpal *Fifi*.

6.2. A General Description of *Fifi*

Fifi is a specialized¹²⁵ musical and ritual repertoire of the Kumpal past. More detail and more lustrous than oral narration, the story of exodus told in the previous chapter roars to life through extra-linguistic mechanisms of narrating memory, i.e., by the Kumpal musical type known as *Fifi*. *Fifi* tells the story of the exodus by way of performance, unlike the preceding chapter whose medium of narration is linguistic narration. More than the words of mouth, *Fifi* commemorative musical ritual

¹²⁵ A musical panorama of the Kumpal shows that there are different genres that play role in all walks of life from love to wars, from wedding to death and from bravery to insolence. For example, *xa-xa* is a field of song used to express love and emotion associated to nostalgia and longing. It is an important musical field through which men and women exchange words of romance. *Yambuli tika tika* is a bravery song which is used in the war fields. The Kumpal believe that this type of song was used since the time of Yikuno Amlak, discussed in Chapter Four, when an earlier oppression began in connection to confrontation between Solomonic and Zagwe dynasties.

performance immortalizes events that are believed to have occurred during the exodus.

As discussed in Chapter Five, a line of argument by informants says that the Kumpal ancestors invented what are today known as *Fifi* instruments, and diligently played them for three days and nights so that they would exonerate the nostalgia they would face when they abandoned their country as the result of oppression. Moreover, *Fifi* was also used to meet the need for something to use as a means of group communiqué while preparing for the exodus and later during their journey. An idea that *Fifi* might have existed even before exodus is less appealing among many informants.

As it is used today, *Fifi* constitutes two dimensions of meaning: one particular and another general. In its particular sense, it refers to the musical instruments as such. It designates to objects made to produce musical sounds. In its general sense, it refers to the entire musical field performed seasonally and a commemorative ritual of exodus. It is commemorative because it “remembers” things which are believed to have happened in the exodus; it is ritual because “Rituals are acts of repetition or quotation” (Bloch 2004:69).

I discuss both in order. Before this, however, let me summarize some unique methodological techniques to this chapter in addition to what has been generally mentioned in Chapter One. For this chapter, anthropological approaches to ethnomusicology were adapted. Merriam (1964:45-47) in his classical book known as *Anthropology of Music* establishes approaches and procedures anthropologists use to study the musical dimension of culture. “Observation axes” identified by Merriam (1964:45-47) are 1) the meaning of musical instruments in the context of their culture, 2) also the meaning of song texts in the context of their culture, 3) the type of local musical categories, 4) mechanisms of learning the musical categories, 5) the role and status of musicians in their culture, 6) the functions of music in relation to other aspects of culture, and 7) the place of music as a cultural creativity.

I collapse these “axes” into two broad aspects to study *Fifi*: the musical instruments and commemorative ritual performances, both from the context of collective memory.

6.3. Memory as Sedimented in the *Fifi* Musical Instruments

Fifi musical instruments are made from lowland bamboo trees (*oxytenanthera abyssinica*) that have reached only at the stage of flowering. If a bamboo tree is not old enough to this stage, its branches will not have hollow to produce a desired sound texture. As indicated in Chapter Three, lowland bamboos gregariously flower in cyclical intervals of forty to fifty years and then die as a matter of natural life cycle. However, this does not mean that *Fifi* instruments are cut only once in forty or fifty years. Although bamboo trees flower *en masse* at a long interval, there are some exceptional ones that give flowers in their own unique life cycle. However, searching them from a thick bamboo forest is hard. Fortunately, as the *Fifi* instrument once cut can serve for a very long period of time, cutting bamboo for professional use is made only once in a decade for a new complete set of instruments or for substitution of some which are broken or lost.

Informants¹²⁶ further explain, to make new *Fifi* instruments, one should carefully compare them with old ones, to have a similar size and shape. There are some elders who are experts in fixing new instruments without comparing them with old ones. But generally beginners should have serving *Fifi* instruments to which new ones are adjusted. Yet, any apprentice, especially the children, can cut a bamboo or other plant with hollow and learn to design and play *Fifi* instruments.

Among various classifications of musical instruments based on the means by which they produce musical sounds (See Shelemay 2006:16-21), *Fifi* belongs to a category of wind instruments called aero phones. *Fifi* instruments are tube resonators, into which a column of air is set in vibration by the player blowing into a mouthpiece.

¹²⁶ Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Maariam, 07/03/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 12/02/ 2012, Fändäk’a

They should be made from single branch or culm internodes depending on the size of the instrument required. The end of the *Fifi* must be blocked by the node in order to vibrate the air.

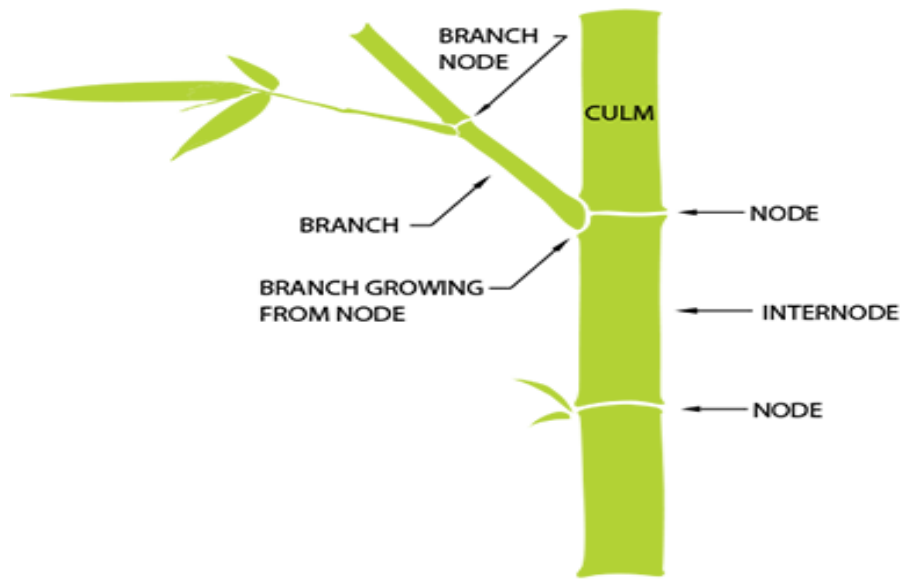


Photo 8 Structure of a bamboo nodes and internodes

Source:

<https://www.google.com.et/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bamboobotanicals.ca%2Fhtml%2Fabout-bamboo%2Fbamboo-growth-habits.html&ei=WZttVY6EBIKqUcjegeAN&bvm=bv.94911696,d.d24&psig=AFQjCNFHe7pYMNv5fjhP-rn-bobyesuFug&ust=1433332925792545> accessed 07/08/2015

A complete set of *Fifi* instruments are eight pieces with different sizes, which are all played together to produce a desired sound texture from their combination. Except two instruments always tied and played together as one by one person, the rest are each played individually, hence a total of seven persons are needed to play the entire eight instruments. The instruments are known as *jerka*, *jerka sivs'a*, *saraqa*, *chakuchakwa*, *ins'anti*, *xisanti*, and *darazuri/bend*. Each instrument has different size to produce different sound texture based on the length and size it was made.



Photo 9 A complete set of *Fifi* instruments. The rope binding tied at the lower tip of some reeds is used to strap them all together and hang at a corner of a house when they are idle. See also number one (*jerka*) which are permanently tied together towards their mouth piece. (Taken by the researcher, September 2014)

The instruments do not only have musical significance. They are also “sites of memory” in themselves. Casey (2004:18) says, “....memory can be effected on the slenderest of reeds...” This is true to the *Fifi* instruments as well. In the following orderly discussion of each piece of instrument, I will show how the past is more or less deposited in them.

1 *Jerka* (a set of two)

Literally *jerka* means "children". They are so said because they are the smallest in size of all other *Fifi* parts. In terms of sound also, they produce the texture of high but thin pitch. Even between the two, one is smaller both in size and thinner in sound than another, thus producing slightly varying sound pattern. It is these two instruments that always start the entire play. The meaning of this in relation to the Kumpal memory is suggested by some informants who say this pair of instruments is played first because during the exodus, women and children were moved first.

2 *Jerka sivs'a*

As said above, literally, *jerka* means "children". Added to it is *sivs'a*, which means "one who is followed by". *Jerka sivs'a* is both larger in size (See the photo above) and also thicker in its sound texture. Players of *Jerka* instruments should always go, depending on the pattern of dance, at the back or shoulder to shoulder with players of *Jerka sivs'a*. The logic with this is related to what is said above, i.e., during the exodus, women were said to have been escorted first, with their children trekking behind or shoulder to shoulder.

3 *Saraqa*

This instrument is characterized by its sound effect which is "smooth to the ear"¹²⁷. However, there is lack of knowledge about the specific connection of *Saraqa* to the memory of exodus except the general impression that it had also a part to play during the exodus. Its literal meaning is also not known because it may be a name from the old Kumpal language (See Chapter Three).

¹²⁷ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 27/09/2013

4 *Chakuchakwa*

Chakuchakwa literally refers to “nagging”. It is characterized by its very high pitch, thin sound, and disturbing vibration. Informants believe during the exodus, this instrument might have been used again and again to warn the group in exodus to act fast in the face of the enemy. An informant¹²⁸ says, “I believe a person who played this instrument was ‘nagging’ people to escape quickly from the enemy during the exodus”.

5 *Ins’anti*

Literally, *ins’anti* refers to “the younger”. It is so said because it is smaller in size compared to *xisanti* under number 6 (See Photo 8 above and the description below). The connection of *ins’anti* to the memory of exodus is also not clear.

6 *Xisanti*

Xisanti literally refers to “elder”. It is so said because it is bigger in size and thicker in sound texture than *ins’anti*. For the moment, its meaning in the context of the exodus is also not clear.

7 *Darzuri/bend*

Laterally, *darazuri* means “the one which goes round”. Today, a person who takes this instrument should play by going round players of other instruments. It goes round the players to encourage them to play without fatigue. He also regulates the beat of other instruments by signaling the players to adjust the beat. Informants¹²⁹ also suggest that the reason to go round other players today is because some of the members in the exodus were assigned to go around and oversee the security of the entire group. To this effect, what is known today as *darazuri* was used to give alarm in case

¹²⁸ Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

¹²⁹ Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Maariam, 09/03/2012

there was a danger for precaution or some measure to be taken. *Darzuri* is always large physically, and its sound texture is thick.

6.4. Memory as Expressed in the *Fifi* Musical Ritual

The performativity of memory refers to a set of acts, some embodied in speech, others in movement and gestures, others in art and others in bodily form (Winter 2010:12). As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, there is already a shift in studying memory from merely focusing on the mind (such as narration, remembering) to that of the body, i.e., performance. According to Winter above, indeed, today's era can be described as "performative turn", when we see performativity broadly including both socially embedded context based performances and those which are made through artistic media such as movies, theatres, novels, and the like. "Indeed, there has never been a time when the past is performed as much as it is today" (Winter 2010:12, 21). Since "performativity" is a wide concept¹³⁰, a narrower appellation for the *Fifi* is what Connerton (1998) calls "embodied memory". Embodied memory is that part of performative memory which is realized through bodily movements. The Kumpal memory of *Fifi* is also a *commemorative ritual*¹³¹. It is commemorative because it remembers what happened or is believed to have happened in the past, and it is ritual because it has formalized time, place, and behavior for performance, as I will explain in the next sections.

6.4.1. Time of Performance

Fifi is an annual ritual, performed from June to September, for about three months. The time for starting an annual ritual is marked differently depending on different informants. Some say *Fifi* begins after the sowing of *linguxi* (*guizotia abyssinica*)¹³²;

¹³⁰ It includes representation of memory through artistic media in addition to live performance by memory holders.

¹³¹ In addition to commemorative ones, rituals can be of different types. For example, rituals of rites of feasting and festival, rituals of politics and that of religion can be mentioned (see for example Turnor 1969; Bell 1997).

¹³² Molla Million, 42, 02/03/2013, Burji Kābāle, BGNRS

others say it starts when other sown seeds for the season begin shoot;¹³³ and still others refer to time when pumpkin is ripe or cabbage is ready to be harvested¹³⁴. But some informants¹³⁵ go to the extent of specifying a date, which is July 12 each year. Whatever the exact date may be, all informants agree that it starts at the beginning of July. I experienced *Fifi* played all over the Kumpal villages starting from this time. However, my observation also shows that *Fifi* is declining. It is not played in some villages where there are also Amhara settlers; other villages play only intermittently; and still other villages, when they play better warmly than other villagers, their participants are mainly children and the youth. It is only few villages who play with full enthusiasm and more or less throughout the *Fifi* period.

The reason for starting *Fifi* play at this time of the year is related to the story of the ancestral exodus. Opinion of many informants commonly suggests that it starts at the designated time, among others, because the ancestral exodus was made during the rainy season. To argue for this point, informants mention some evidences from the story of exodus narrated in Chapter Five. An informant¹³⁶ said “Remember that when the people were migrating, they faced Abay full in front of them. Remember also about the story of heating fire”. Celebration of *Fifi* in this season is therefore said to be linked to commemoration of the ancestors’ exodus. However, the time seems to have been formalized with their celebration of *Hamle Abo* (12th of July) after their conversion to Christianity. Today the season of *Hamle Abo* has become a ground of reference by many informants to the time of beginning *Fifi* play. Consequently, they even dare to be exact on 12th of July as the day when the migration of their ancestors was started from their villages. Informants¹³⁷ who refer to this date strengthen their argument that *Hamle Abo* falls after at least a month of fasting. The soldiers who were sent to collect the girls for taxation (See Chapter Five) must have come after they broke the fast.

¹³³ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012

¹³⁴ Sewagegn Shiferaw, 37, Head, Jawi Culture and Tourism Office, 05/07/ 2010

¹³⁵ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012

¹³⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012

¹³⁷ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012

The ritual is undertaken every day nearly for the following three months. There is no excepted day from the seven days of a week. Theoretically, no day passes without having been *Fifi* played no matter how larger or smaller the audience may be depending on events in a village (e.g. mourning) or the work they still have at their home or outside.

Informants also argue that the time when it is performed from twenty-four hours of the day also tells the story of exodus. *Fifi* is an event of evenings. During the season, evenings are filled with intense mood of celebration. Everyone anticipates them eagerly to gather around their villages from wherever they were working or had any activity. They eat their dinner earlier and wait ready for the ritual. When informants reckon this in time, it kicks off between 7:00 and 8:00 pm and lasts up to the mid-night and when there are occasions such as New Year celebration and *Meskal*, they play up to 3:00 after the mid night, or even stay the whole night.

It is a common belief of many informants that the time to kick off the daily ritual and the time to complete the same is also linked to the story of the exodus. As the story was already elaborated in Chapter Five, the justification behind the time is also certainly linked to the exodus. It is believed that when the tax collectors were admitted to the villages, the time was in the evening. The villagers served them drink until the mid-night, and launched them assault in the end. The reason why the every-day *Fifi* play starts in the early evening and ends in the mid-night, therefore, corresponds to this story of receiving and slaying the atrocious tax collectors who came to collect tax in girls.

6.4.2. Place of Performance

Performance of the play is undertaken at an open air, at the house yard of a senior elder. This person usually leaves a space in his homestead without cultivation of any crop or planting of any tree. The person in charge of the community, i.e., *s'axasive kivs'anti* (See Chapter Three) is also, usually, in charge of preparing places for the *Fifi* ritual.

The ritual place is also selected based on geographical convenience or proximity. While the Kumpal celebrate some other rituals such as *s'axasivi* in lineages (See Chapter Three), here, there is no any discrimination in lineage or any other social characteristics. This is completely inclusive ritual that all people collectively commemorate the collective story of exploitation and exodus in the nearest convenient place. For geographical proximity, villagers who live around the same place participate in the ritual; hence there are a number of places of celebration across villages.

6.4.3. Behavior of Participants

Ideally every individual of a village is expected to participate in the *Fifi* play. This ritual is eagerly awaited among all walks of life; “eagerly awaited like one’s own wedding day”¹³⁸. It is also sensually expected by the children, and seriously looked forward by the elderly like any other communal event, even more important than anything else. In these days, nobody will remain at home. As an informant¹³⁹ also said, during this time, “even the [non-Kumpal] priests are tempted to put off their priestly fez and join in the play.” When everyone gathers, another informant adds, “The earth will go smoking. No child, no pregnant woman, no disabled person, no one stays at home while he or she hears the sound of *Fifi*”¹⁴⁰.

However, there are some role differentiations particularly along the line of gender. Women do not play *Fifi*, the instrument per se, because it is believed that during the exodus, “they were moved ahead as a precaution to the possible sudden appearance of the enemy soldiers”¹⁴¹. In another line of argument, “women were denied from playing this instrument because it was a woman who harbored enemy in bad times”¹⁴². There is also role differentiation based on age such as the old people cannot play *Fifi* instrument which is demanding to blow it.

¹³⁸ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

¹³⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 16/04/2013

¹⁴⁰ Mengist Atalele, 75, Alu K’urand, 21/03/2012

¹⁴¹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 16/04/2013

¹⁴² Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 16/04/2013

The *Fifi* dance is also an embodied act to convey a more striking symbolism of the past. To begin the dance, one comes and holds any of the seven *Fifi* instrument. Generally, everyone is able to play all variety of the instruments; in practice some are more skillful to play one instrument more than another. To be sure, as the dance is very rigorous, for the reason of stamina, younger boys must make sure that they play with the smaller instruments. When all of the instruments have been grabbed, all players give two or three blows to harmonize various sounds generated by all instruments, and they formally kick off the play with *jerka*.

Players of the instruments take the center while the rest surround them. The dance is performed in circle of serpentine pattern all participants typically rotating round from right to left. The players are hugged shoulder to shoulder as a symbol of unity and brotherhood, lesson believed to have been drawn from the mistake the ancestors made during the exodus failing to take action in unison. When the dance gets hot, all players jump up and beat the ground with their right leg, as the symbol of beating the enemy at the time of exodus. Typically they go round, but sometimes moving now to right and now to left; with movements corresponding with the feet movement now slow and now fast; now forward and now backward. Women, elderly, and the children who are surrounding them follow in dancing and chorusing ensemble. Women dance is made with slight body movements like the *iskista* of the Amhara dance today, but, in addition, typically with strong arm movement now up and now down, or now fore and now back, in any case as a symbol of beating their enemy as though it was the time of exodus and all movement accompanied by a strong emotion. Boys and girls also follow them round with less ability than the grownups.



Photo 10 A *Fifi* play during *Meskal* celebration in an Ethiopian Orthodox church, September 2013. At the center are *Fifi* players hugging each other with left hand while they are buzzing the *Fifi* instruments with the right. Women and children are surrounding them, with flowers on their head symbolizing the dawn of a new season in the Ethiopian context (from rainy season during mainly July and August to autumn starting late September), but in the context of commemorative *Fifi* play symbolizing the news about the ancestors' whereabouts since departure at the river episode. The whole dance goes in rotation from right to left. (Taken by the researcher, September 2014)

A point to be added in relation to embodiedness of memory is its emotional aspect. Embodiedness carries a significant body movement which reinforces not only the body movements but also emotions. Emotions reinforce a strong body movement and body movement reinforces emotion. Hence, emotions play essential role in the recollection process and have strong impact on its members (Barbalet 2004). *Fifi* performance is a good example of how memory is also loaded in the emotion of performance.

6.5. *Meskal* and the *Fifi* Ritual

In addition to everyday casual celebration, the most important event that is strongly associated to *Fifi* today is celebration of *Meskal*. *Meskal* is a ritual celebrated among

the believers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church at large, on the occasion of the Finding of the True Cross, every year on 26th and 27th of September. The *Fifi* play which started at the beginning of July gets warmer when the Ethiopian New Year (September 11) approaches, but reaches peak on the occasion of the celebration of *Meskal*.

Meskal and *Fifi* are highly intertwined; this intertwinement shows the original *Fifi* play is blended with the *Meskal*, a tradition later adapted by the Kumpal as they shifted their belief to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It cannot be attributed as entirely *Meskal* or entirely *Fifi* play, for one is influenced by another. It is a unique practice among the Kumpal.

Meskal has more different phases among the Kumpal. It is warmly celebrated at least for four days (people can extend a little bit longer as they wish), before the end of September each year. The four major phases are: September 26 (*damari*), 27 (*Meskal*), 28 (church celebration) and 29 (village celebration).

Meskal-Fifi celebration is executed by *damara tikili* (literally a man who erects *damari*). He is a person chosen from the community on the basis of trust conferred upon him by the people, based on his good manner, hospitality, and good luck expected to bring during his office. He is permanent except in two conditions. If he himself willfully resigns or there is an occurrence of associated misfortune during his term of authority like drought, and unfortunate death of humans or animal property.

September 26

Although in the interest of space it is difficult here to elaborate the profound preparation prior to the arrival of September 26, as mentioned above, the first phase of celebration begins on this day which is known as *damari*. In restricted sense, *damari* refers to a large stack of poles, tree branches and sticks built at a place of celebration. In wider sense, it also refers to an entire eve celebration.

In the afternoon of this day, the *damari* is built at a place of celebration with tree branches and woods contributed from participants in a given village of celebration. To erect the *damari*, the villagers proceed to a designated place headed by the *damara tikili*. The *damara tikili* holds in his hands only *zikti* (crude from which *silxi* is commuted) and a bundle of *adäy abäba* (*Bidens macroptera*) (young mass flowers of autumn). Other male villagers carry tree branches and woods, and women carry preliminary festive materials. All proceed towards the place where *damari* is to be erected, playing the song designated for this day, known as *eyoha*. After they reach the place, the *damara tikili* ceremonially begins to dig a hole for erecting a pole to build around woods and tree branches. After some poles are erected by men around the one the *damara tikili* began, the *damari* is then built by stacking woods and branches. Then the *damara tikili* disperses some *zikti* from the pot he carried. He dispenses first to the *damari* itself, and then to all participants one after another. Then the people play *eyoha* going in circle from right to left. They also play *Fifi* until they are interrupted by food and drinks served by women.

After they suffice festivity at this place, they go to the house of the *damara tikili* in procession of still playing *Fifi* band, and where there are lion killers playing *gume*. When the people reach the house of the *damara tikili*, his wife comes immediately out with *zikti* by which she daubs over the mouth of men and vice versa.

After the participants enter the home of the *damara tikili*, the latter bequeaths *silxi* and *ariki* (local liquor) in order to rejoice the celebration with continued feast. The *Fifi* play then resumes until they are paused by elders to give blessing and all celebrants to take rest on drinking. Then, another round of play is instigated. This time, depending on their choice some play *Fifi* and others *siti*, another traditional play well known among the Kumpal. Some who feel tired from the fatigue of play since the afternoon go home at night fall but the play goes overnight with some enthusiastic group.



Photo 11 *Damara tikili* dispensing *zikti* for participants in *damari* celebration (taken by the researcher, September 2014)

September 27

The next day enters to *Meskal* proper. In restricted sense, *Meskal* too refers to actual date of festival which falls on 27th September each year. In wider sense, it refers to the whole festival in its all phases.

In the early morning at about 5:00am, male villagers together proceed with their lit *chibo* (a bundle of sticks for bone fire), and fire the *damari* built the previous day. This is called *dirins'a*. From the time they fired the *damari*, the *Fifi* play goes into the hottest hit until women join them at dawn with festal contributions. The *Fifi* players take rest and enjoy incoming festal materials one after another. The *damara tikili* dispenses apiece from each arriving festal contribution onto the *damari* for premier gift. After some of the feast is consumed at first, the rest is collected typically under a shade of tree for celebration or a *das* if there is no tree. Each incoming feast material is put together for consumption at a later stage.

In the mean time, the *damara tikili* prepares an oval gourd which contains pieces of stuff such as *anki*, *chiwi* (pulverized pepper), and cotton. Then a goat is slaughtered

from which the first meat is put onto the *damari* as premier gift too. At the proper festal time, the participants consume all foods and drinks through repeated servings. At this moment, animal killers wear a hairy lion skin known as *gofer*; carry gun; touch the burnt damari ash with the muzzle and button; and play warrior song to celebrate their bravery. Then, all participants embark on *Fifi* play on the spot.

After completion of this celebration towards late afternoon, the participants proceed back to the house of *damara tikili*. On their way, they continue playing *Fifi*, and if there are loin killers playing *gume*. When they reach the house of *damara tikili*, the wife repeats the ritual as the previous day daubing men's mouth with *zikti*. Then, they play and dance until the mid night or the whole night.

September 28

September 28 comes with its own phase of celebration, the major one being church ceremony. In the early morning, villagers take a fun and prepare for the church ceremony. Men and women go around households for informal play and joke. In the mean time, they also prepare their celebration cloths and materials such as *Fifi* instruments. Depending on the proximity of their village to the church, they stay in their villages.

But around noon, all villagers from far and near must reach a church where they take part in the celebration. People from different villages proceed to the nearest church, with a band of *Fifi* players so that the assembly of different villagers into a church gives a large crowd.

In the church, while *Fifi* play continues mainly among the young Kumpal boys and girls, the religious ceremony mainly by priests, non-Kumpal men and women, as well as to some extent the Kumpal continues. Towards the end of the church ceremony, attendants of mass prayers slowly join *Fifi* players, to take part in the play or just to observe. As more and more people join the playing group, the *Fifi* gets warmer and warmer, making an impressive celebration during this season.



Photo 12 Partial view of people's procession to the *Fifi*-Meskal ceremony at St George Church in Fändäk'a town. Within this crowd, there are groups of *Fifi* players coloring the procession and the entire *Fifi* celebration in the church. (Taken by the researcher, September 2014)

After the church ceremony, participants in the celebration proceed in groups to respective villages, specifically to the house of their *damara tikili*. Then, another phase of play resumes at the house of this person. Later, they continue house-to-house celebration. At this stage, they reach each household which is a member of a group celebrating together. If the village is too large and cannot be completed in that day, they continue to finish in the next morning, for, if they do not reach every household, it creates a sense of resentment and division from the part of unreached households. This celebration is concluded in contribution of money for another phase of festivity in the coming days. Each person donates one Birr, or two, or even cents, according to one's consent and capacity of contribution.

September 29

In the second day from the day their contribution is raised, they buy a goat and *ariki*. They slaughter the goat once again at the compound of *damara tikili*. They eat

and drink and play *Fifi* and, upon conclusion, the elders give blessing and the many days celebration of *Meskal* and the three month's *Fifi* ritual is mainly concluded with good wishes to meet next year. The following are standard blessings given by elders.

አማታ አማታቺ	Let's all cross over into the next new year
ሜስካለ ዲሩጻቺ	To the new <i>Meskal</i> and New Year
ሜስካለ ጉግምኪ ችሪዊ	Which are times of another happiness
አኹ ሙላትካ ኩራዊ	And the times rivers proudly burst to their
ፍየልኪ ዝኩስ ሙክቲ	bank
ጋንዳኪ ዋኸምባ ዝክቲ	Let's not be deprived of castrated goat
	And let's have <i>zikti</i> everyday full in our
	<i>gan</i> ¹⁴³

Finally, the *Fifi* instruments are immersed in the blood of a goat. Until the next celebration, they will be hanged at a corner of house of *damara tikili*. According to some informants¹⁴⁴, immersion into the blood represents remembrance of the atrocity their ancestors experienced in the past. Moreover, they believe blood also gives strength to the instruments.

I have indicated at the beginning of this chapter that the reason the *Fifi* starts during *Hamle Abo* corresponds to the time their ancestors left their village for the exodus. Informants also relate the end of the ritual at about the end of September or the beginning of October to the story of exodus of ancestors. This time represents the time the oath-breaker ancestors received news about those ancestors who had committed to cross the river and had gone to some far places. Today's Kumpal believe the oath-breaker ancestors heard news about those who were alive and who were dead after they departed at the juncture of crossing the river. The reason they perform in the church is like prayers for those who were dead. Moreover, it seems to represent the lasting covenant of remembering their ancestors through *Fifi*. The remembrance also gives a lesson to today's generation not to repeat the same mistake as their ancestors.

¹⁴³ *Gan* is a large clay jar traditionally used for commuting *t'ella*.

¹⁴⁴ Getiye Nure (Pseudonym), 44, Alu K'urnd, 13/02/2012; Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk'a, 26/03/2012

There is more symbolism of *Fifi* performance embedded in the order of performance of different genres, and for the time being, it is to this that I return next.

6.6. Sequence and Genres in the *Fifi* Play

There are six, allegedly “original”, sub-genres of *Fifi* play. These are *dixwarngi* (literally donkey style), *gingi* (running), *wosiadal* (the name of a person believed to have been an exploiter), *axubamba* (swimming), *ayatini agotini* (my father, my brother), and *yïmanja tikili* (beg and sow). Other genres of recent innovation include, but not limited to, *ajabi* (literally “it is amazing”), *tankey*, *sharara*, and *kulibtu*. While the first six genres are the original ones believed to be directly connected to the story of exodus and are commonly known among all Kumpal people in different areas, there is variation from one village to another on the rest of genres. Some of such genres exist in some villages but not in others and vice versa, because it depends on what the villagers have invented through time to express their daily course of life. For example, *ajabi* particularly describes the changes in the bride wealth. In the past, expected bride wealth in cash was three or four Birr. But now it has been inflated to almost two thousand Birr. So, this is expressed in *ajabi*. In this section, only the first six ones, i.e., original songs believed to have connection to the exodus, are discussed.

What is interesting in *Fifi* genres is that each of the six genres is associated to a story of what happened during the exodus and the encounters and emotions corresponding to it. There are different ways by which the relationship between the *Fifi* played today and the events in the original story seems to be related. First, as in the words of mouth described in Chapter Five, the sub-genres tell the story presumably in order of occurrence in the original story of exodus. In essence, every genre communicates, in order, a part of the meta-narrative, and is encoded into the very structure and *raison d'être* of that story. It shows that one genre is created after another corresponding to one event after another as depicted in the story of exodus.

Second, all subgenres have different rhythms. The instruments are adjusted to beat out various rhythmic patterns in a particular genre. The sound generation for each is governed by important significance-motivated considerations to influence a particular kind of rhythm. Different rhythms in different genres also correspond to the type of emotion they express in relation to the exodus. Whether they are fast or slow, hot or cool, etc suggests to the corresponding act and emotion in the acts of the story.

Third, although *Fifi* is performed predominantly through actions in the dances, emotions in the movements, and instruments, there are some verses in each genre which suggest to meanings relating to the original story, and are not to be neglected. I argue some fragmented verses associated to the *Fifi* play today suggest to something about the past, that they can be taken as giving a light to the shadow of the real story. They show the past that is strong and did not wither away.

Now I will pass to describing individual genres in the order of the story they tell from the first one, i.e. *dixwarngi* to the last i.e., *ayatini agotini*.

6.6.1. *Dixwarngi*

When the ritual of a day comes, *Fifi* instrument players arrive at the playground first of all other participants. Some punctual and/or fervent participants and/or those who have no duty that delays them also come earlier and accompany the *Fifi* players. Gradually, all villagers join them one after another and *dixwarngi* is played until a reasonable number of participants have arrived. In today's usage, therefore, the play is used to make a call to villagers to finish their work at hand and join the day's event. It is expected that when the people hear this play from their home, even those who are at their meal, they should finish it quickly or stop and join in the playfield.

It is believed that after the people accomplished their mission of slaying their enemy, they were in a hurry to pack their stuff on the donkey back¹⁴⁵. As it was stated in Chapter Five, an alternative opinion exists that the people rather stayed in their villages for three days after they accomplished their mission, and thus the packing was rather made later. Whatever the case maybe, in order to mobilize the people to do the packing, a *Fifi* play which is believed to have given rise to today's *dixwarngi* was blown by the organizers of the exodus. As this activity is the one from the several package of events depicted in the story of the process of the exodus, *dixwarngi* is one of the six plays in the package of corresponding *Fifi* performance today. As the story of migration begins with packing of stuff on horseback before people hit the trail, the narration of this migration through *Fifi* rituals also begins with *dixwarngi*. The name *dixwarngi* itself means “donkey style” suggesting to the act of packing on the donkey back.

It makes sense to say that the nature of the song also conveys to the nature of the act. *Dixwarngi* has a shorter but faster uniform rhythm, with the sense of urgency that seems to convey to the action of packing in the face of approaching enemy. When invoked to these characteristics of the genre, an informant¹⁴⁶ compared this to how we act when the rain comes while we are in a (traditional open) market place. When the cloud hooves around, everyone hurries up to collect their stuff and to pack on their donkey back if they have one. What has happened to the ancestors was like this. The sky roaring and the cloud was like their condition in the face of the enemy, and packing to escape the rain was like what the ancestors did the packing to escape their enemy. There was no going slow in the face of the death-affirming anger of the enemy. They all must have been done quickly and with hustle.

Furthermore, the following verses suggest some words which may have relevance to the “original” players. As mentioned above, there is no detail set of verses that

¹⁴⁵ Molla Million, 42, Burji K'äbäle, BGNRS, 03/03/2013,

¹⁴⁶ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk'a, 27/03/2012

coherently tell us about the story of the exodus, but some fragmented and recurring words exist to suggest us their connection to the exodus. The verses below are what the first-comers (callers including the *Fifi* players) say today to make a call to those at home.

	Callers
አሆ	Aho
ችኹኒዲ እንክርናው	We are playing with the sepia
አሆ	Aho
ሻጊዲ እንክርናው	We are playing with the beautiful
አሆ	Aho
ዋዳኒ፤ አዋሊ	Where are you, come out
አሆ	Aho
ካንታሊ፤ ታምፓሊ	Look at us, come out
አሆ	Aho
ካንታሊ፤ ታምፓሊ	Look at us, come out
አሆ	Aho
አዋልኛ፤ ታምፓልኛ	Please come, join us
አሆ	Aho
ይጉኸማ፤ ታምፕኸማ	Have you not come; have not yet reached?
አሆ	Aho
አዋልኛ፤ ታምፓልኛ	Please come, join us
አሆ	Aho
.	Aho
.	.
.	.
.	.
.	.

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁴⁷

Dixwarngi is the only genre played by two alternating group of performers: the callers and respondents. The callers are those who have come to the place of celebration earlier while the respondents are those who still join them.

When the callers play verses as in above, ideally the comers should also respond to them. The most enthusiastic ones join them playing loudly and running to rise in the occasion, while others may play in their interest of loudness and come slowly. A

¹⁴⁷ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

cohort of people may join playing the response together or individuals may even join alone if they do not find someone to join in together. The following verses are the most recurring ones that are used to respond by the comers.

አንትኹሳ	Here we come,
አሆ	Oho
ታምፕኹሳ	Here we reach
አሆ	Oho
ሻጊጊ	The beautiful ones
አሆ	Oho
ካንትኹሳ	That I saw
አሆ	Aho
ሜስካልጊ	The <i>Meskal</i>
አሆ	Aho
ኪግሚጊ	And the <i>Kwagmi</i> ¹⁴⁸
አሆ	Aho
ታምብኹሳ	Have (also) come
አሆ	Aho
እነክርንስ	Let's play
አሆ	Aho
.	.
.	.
.	.
.	.

Source: *Asres Belay* (Pseudonym)¹⁴⁹

As can be understood from the verses, the words used in the callers' and the respondents' songs go together. The song by the callers is replied by the respondents. As we can see from the first group of verses in this section about *dixwarngi*, there are words almost in every line which appeal to the villagers to come out, and there are words giving response to that in almost every sentence of the second group of verses in the same *dixwarngi* section.

¹⁴⁸ Here they refer to *Meskal* and *Kwagmi* celebrations when the *Fifi* play becomes hot. The Ethiopian Calendar has twelve months of each thirty days. Besides, it has an additional month placed at the end of the year, known as *Pagumen* (*Kwagmi* in Kumpal-Awngi) with five or six days depending on whether or not a year is a leap one. Hence, the Ethiopia calendar is considered unique, among others, in having thirteen "months".

¹⁴⁹ *Asres Belay* (Pseudonym), 68, Jawi, 27/03/2013

This moment gives an interesting evening village scene. The children run and blast in happiness, some around the group in the playground and others running out from their home in a fun and relaxed mood where they can enjoy and learn about *Fifi*. In this event, women also come out to the festive place, usually casual but most of them more adorned than they are in other times. This play marks the beginning from when the villages turn into the liveliest theatrical and entertainment scenes ideally until the mid night, amidst wobbling rainy season cold and comfortable temperature to play the most.

This genre is also played as an exit after all the six genres. Why it is repeated in the end is not clear, but some have suggested that analogically, the genre has been standardized to serve both to call people out and escort them home.

6.6.2. *Gingi*

Literally, *gingi* refers to “run”. After a reasonable number of villagers have arrived at the ritual place, the play then enters into the next genre, i.e., *gingi*. In today’s context, *gingi* signals that everyone should “run” to the *Fifi* place of celebration. It is played to urge those still at home or those on the way to “run” to the ritual place. So when this version of the play is signaled, everyone is expected to quit everything he or she might have been engaged in and join the ritual place.

The connection of this genre to the exodus is that after the ancestors have packed their load on donkeys back, the *Fifi* was played to urge them to “run”. Informants’ assumption is that for their ancestors it was not possible to go slow in the face of their enemy. For example, an informant¹⁵⁰ says, “This is what one does also today. You escape your enemy by running away, and that was what our ancestors did then”.

¹⁵⁰Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 23/03/2012

As the meaning of the name, i.e., *gingi*, itself suggests, the rhythm of this play is speedy, with a uniform unison. It is possible to say that in this case also, the act must have dictated the characteristics of the play.

This play goes together with the *dixwarngi*, and usually, in today's context, no clear distinction is made between the two as they can be performed mixing one with another. In *gingi*, however, there are songs of rebuke on those who are still staying at home. Those who already went to the playfield will compose songs of insult to provoke those who still remain at home. The following are some songs composed words of insult.

እንግርትኸ	<i>You are so late</i>
ሳቻና ኔታ	<i>For you like sleep</i>
እንግርዳቲትኸ	<i>You are left behind</i>
ሸጊ ይጓትኸ	<i>While the beautiful ones have come</i>
ችኸኒ ይጓትኸ	<i>While the sepia ones have come</i>
ውላ ካጓትኸ	<i>That all are looking at us</i>
ጃዊ ጄራ	<i>You children of Jawi,</i>
ቢሊ ጄራ	<i>You children of Bili¹⁵¹</i>
ሻኸናው ጌና	<i>We will dance more</i>
ጆምናው ጌና	<i>We will sing more</i>
ጎፈሬሊ	<i>With his afro</i>
አራዳሊ	<i>With his aradali¹⁵²</i>
ታምፓፓማ	<i>He is coming,</i>
ካንታፓማ	<i>And I saw him</i>
ንኪጃዊ	<i>Our Jawi</i>
ካርጃጋዊ	<i>Is stoneless</i>
.	.
.	.
.	.

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁵³

The words in the above verses literally show that the villagers should not hold back from the ritual out of liking sleep. But, originally it seems logical to say that these words might have a root in the original actors of the exodus. They express how

¹⁵¹ “Bili” refers to Kumpal settlements in the Benishangul Gumuz. In Amharic, the place is referred to as Bälāya (See Map 1).

¹⁵² Afro and aradali are local hair styles.

¹⁵³ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

holding back was bad in the face of the enemy. The songs at this stage can even switch to insult.

ዱሻ ታንኩይ ውሽዳ ሳኩይ
ሹምባ ታንኩይ ውሽዳ ሳኩይ
ጊምብሬ ታንኩይ ውሽዳ ሳኩይ

*You cut pumpkin and hide at your embrace
You cut the corn, and hide at your embrace
You cut gembra¹⁵⁴, and hide at your embrace*

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁵⁵

Though men are always the supreme authority of the Kumpal society, this conversation gives freedom to further exchange of the same words by the women too, who respond even in a sort of sexual insult. Men also give answer to the insult and exchange of funs continues until they switch to the next genre, i.e., *wosiadal*.

6.6.3. *Wosiadal*

Wosiadal (also otherwise *wosidal*), is the most representative *Fifi* genre. Whenever playing *Fifi* is sought of, it is this genre that comes into picture. It is also the liveliest play, in the sense that the villagers participate in this genre with an increasing interest more than the preceding two genres.

The term *wosiadal* seems to have been taken from the name of a person who belonged to local despot. For the moment, an investigation into the identity of this person did not yield in a satisfactory result. But there is a common reminiscence among informants that he was surely the enemy to the ancestors, and perhaps a notorious ruler replaced after the death of Sandula. In the process of exodus, he is portrayed as a person who was running behind the exodees, alone or along with his soldiers. Informants¹⁵⁶ in Fändäk'a area said they knew a person by the name *Wosidal*, but passed away recently. This name is also used until today as a

¹⁵⁴ “Gembra” is a type of local crop

¹⁵⁵ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

¹⁵⁶ Abera Tebikew, 58, and Nigatu Wasse 50, Alu K'urand, 28/09/2013

nickname to persons considered as "ugly", such as with broad nose and unattractive face.

This musical genre is also unequivocally attributed to the story of exodus. It is believed to have been used as a means of communication by the exodees not to retreat but keep going destroying any enemy that would have come across while they were going. The Kumpal believe after their ancestors executed the tax collectors and went for exodus, one of the soldiers already escaped and disseminated information to the remaining enemy. So their journey was dangerous and scary because other soldiers may still seize them from behind or face them in front. It was in this context that the sound which gave rise later to today's *wosiadal* is believed to have been played.

The rhythm of this play also suggests to the type of anxiety the ancestors had during the exodus. Unlike the preceding two genres and the rest that follow, it has various fluctuating rhythms at times shrill and at times rapid, at times energetic and at times alarming. It is the most important of all genres in terms of provoking intense emotion and eliciting the highest participation of attendants. In the verses put below, there is "*Eyo Eyo*" used at the beginning of this play, and, according to the interpretation of some informants¹⁵⁷ and indeed to one's commonsense, the term suggests to convey a clamor of danger.

In addition to the sounds, the words used in this play also show reasonable connection to the memory of the exodus and the meaning of *wosiadal*. In the following set of verses, we can see *wosiadal* used as the name of a person who was an enemy coming to catch the people on their journey or at the time of preparation for the exodus. The lines in the verses below contain words which convey warnings, advises, precautions, and overcoming obstacles.

¹⁵⁷ Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Mariam, 08/03/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 12/03/2012

እዮ እዮ (x3)
 ወሲዳሊ ወሲዳሊ
 ማቻቻሊ
 አቻቻሊ
 ወሲዳልካ
 ካንታጀካ
 ይንታጀካ
 ታምባጀካ
 ይቻቻወካ
 ሸቴንካማ
 ካንቲንካማ
 ታምቤንካማ
 ማቻቻሊ
 ቻቻቻንኩይ
 እንጋናኒ
 ቻቻቻንኩይ
 አገው ጀራ
 ሻካው ጌና
 ጅማው ጌና
 ንኺ ቢሊ
 ቻርጊ ዋሪ
 ንኺ ጃዋ
 አገው ጀራ
 እንክራንቲኺ
 ጅማንቲኺ
 እንክራናኒ
 አቫዳዋ

Eyo Eyo (x3)
 Wasidali
 Will get angry
 And crush you
 He, Wosidal
 If he sees you
 If he comes,
 If he catches you
 He will crush you
 Will you wait for him there?
 Do you want to face him?
 Or will come quick
 If he gets angry,
 He will crush you
 If you say no,
 He will crush you
 You, sons of Agäw ,
 We will play more
 We will play more
 Our country Bili
 Has honey in wiri¹⁵⁸
 You sons of Agäw ,
 You like play
 You like play
 When it comes to play,
 You become crazy

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁵⁹

6.6.4. Axubamba

The fourth genre is *axubamba*, which literally means “swimming”. After *wosiadal* is played, the people then shift to this genre, with falling rhythm from the *wosiadal*.

In the story of the exodus, the sound which is believed to have later given rise to *axubamba* was said to have been blown when the people were halted from their journey because of river Abay (or Ayma) full in front of them. As it has already been said, the people had already agreed that they should not be stopped even when they

¹⁵⁸ Wiri is a traditional sack made of a strong material such as animal skins and the sisal plant fibers.

¹⁵⁹ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

find river full. They must rather run into it to cross through swimming, or better be taken by the river than fall in the hands of the enemy. *Axubamba* was thus used to communicate people to jump all at once to the water following the sound of a *Fifi* which is believed to have given rise to today's *axubamba*. As it was described in Chapter Five, the river showed them compassion and they were able to cross safely.

አሆ
አኸብምባኒ

አሆ
ዝኮ ዛንዛኒ

አሆ
አዋን ካንሲ

አሆ
ጃዊ ጎፈሬ

አሆ
በለው ጎፈሬ

አሆ
ሸጋ ዴፈሬ

አሆ
ቢሌ ካንሲ

አሆ
ካናና እንዳራ ካንሲ

አሆ
አኸብምባኒ

አሆ
ጎፈሬ ዋና

አሆ
ሜልካሚ ጌና

አሆ
ዳምኸ ካና

አሆ
እንክራንቲ ጌና

Oho
Swimming

Oho
*Here there is zanzani*¹⁶⁰

Oho
Let's go

Oho
You afro of Jawi

Oho
*Belew*¹⁶¹ *afro-haired*

Oho
Courageous and beautiful

Oho
Let's go to Bili

Oho
Having gone there, what do we do?

Oho
We will swim

Oho
You the man of Afro

Oho
You beautiful

Oho
*We'll go to damxi*¹⁶²

Oho
We will play more

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Zanzani refers a zana tree (See photo 6)

¹⁶¹ "Belew" refers to the name of a person. Why he is mentioned in the play is not clear.

¹⁶² Damxi is the name of a place, but specific place not known today.

¹⁶³ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

6.6.5. *Ayatini Agotini*

The fifth genre of play is *ayatini agotini*. This is interpreted to be a braving song during the exodus. After the people went a long distance, they needed to hearten each other. Mainly, this genre of song is believed to have come from some sort of play the fleeing ancestors created to encourage each other. Moreover, some informants¹⁶⁴ believe that after they cursed the absconders, the goers played something for those who remained behind as the result of absconding. Even if they cursed them, the fleeing ancestors are believed to have soon felt compassionate towards those who remained behind, and they went away playing the nostalgic song of *ayatini agotini*. However, how those people who remained at home learned from the goers is not clear. Some informants suggest¹⁶⁵ that they adapted from the goers who played over the other bank of the river for those left behind. Others say that it was rather the invention of those who were left behind, or others believed that the life after crossing Abay and the whereabouts of the goers was informed by some people who came back to hearten the people who were left behind.

Like the preceding genres, *ayatini agotini* has also a rhythm of what feelings sound like during the exodus. This genre has a quiet gentle song, believed to have emotions that reflect the split of the committed oathers from their absconding counterparts.

Verses in the songs also support the same idea. Look at the following set of verses.

አጎቲጃ
እዮሆሆ አጎቲጃ
ፖኒ ካንስ
እዮሆሆ አጎቲጃ
አዮቲጃ
እዮሆሆ አጎቲጃ
አዮጂኒ
እዮሆሆ አጎቲጃ
ሙራ ካንስ

My uncle
Eyoo my uncle
Let's go to our country
Eyoo my uncle
My brother
Eyoo my brother
My brother
Eyoo my brother
Let's go to our country

¹⁶⁴ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk'a, 27/03/2012; Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

¹⁶⁵ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk'a, 27/03/2012; Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013

እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 አዋን ካንሰ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 አጎቲጃ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 ካናላማ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 ጅምናላማ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 አጎቲጃ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 ማቻቸንኩ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 ማንዳቲንኩይ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 ካንታቲኒኩይ
 እዮሆሆሆ አጎቲጃ
 Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁶⁶

Eyoo my brother
 Let's go together
 Eyoo my brother
 Don't we sing together?
 Eyoo my brother
 Don't we play together?
 Eyoo my brother
 They will grow angry
 Eyoo my brother
 They don't wait for us
 Eyoo my brother
 They don't see us
 Eyoo my brother

6.6.6. *Yïmanja tikili*

The sixth genre is *yïmanja tikili*. Informants say that once they went away from their homestead, the ancestors were strangers to every place they stayed. On their route which must have taken several seasons, they are believed to have been making some cultivation. But, they faced problem because they had no sowing seeds. The only option they had was to beg from neighboring people to where they stayed. *Yïmanja tikili* is therefore believed to be that genre of *Fifi* which was played when the migrants beg sowing-seeds from other villagers. The phrase itself suggests this: *yïmanja* “to beg” and *tikili* “sow/plant” therefore beg sowing seeds and plant/sow them.

ይማኑጃ ቲኪሊ
 እዮሆሆሆ (x2)
 ቦቤኪ ቲኪሊ
 እዮሆሆሆ
 ሹምቤኪ ቲኪሊ
 እዮሆሆሆ

Beg and sow/plant,
 Eyahohoho
 Sow the corn,
 Eyahohoho
 Sow the maize

¹⁶⁶ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java, 25/02/2013

አረንጓዴ ተክሊ
 እዮሆሆ
 ወዴ ዜባናዊ
 እዮሆሆ
 ዝኮ ዳሻናዊ
 እዮሆሆ
 ይማንኛ ተክሊ
 እዮሆሆ

Eyahohoho
*Sow the arangwi*¹⁶⁷
Eyahohoho
Where do we relax?
Eyahohoho
We are still in trouble
Eyahohoho
Beg and sow
Eyahohoho

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

Source: Yinesu Gedif¹⁶⁸

6.7. Play with drum

The daily *Fifi* play does not just come to an end after the successive performance of all the six genres I described so far. In addition, another play with drum, which can be considered as a genre in itself, is taken up as a closing. This play is commonly referred by the people as *kiriwi inkra*, literally means “the play with drum”.

In the context of today’s Kumpal, playing the above mentioned six *Fifi* genres above is normally concluded at around the mid night; it can be played longer or end sooner depending on the time they start and the enthusiasm participants have. The play may go until or after midnight. During the *Meskal* and the Ethiopian New Year celebration, it may be played even for the whole night. Whatever time the six genres may end, *kiriwi inkra* comes only after all the *Fifi* genres are performed in succession. It is one of the most important genres in the complete ritual of *Fifi*.

¹⁶⁷ *Arangwi* is a local root plan of the Kumpal. See chapter three for detail.

¹⁶⁸ Yinesu Gedif, 39, Java K’äbäle, 25/02/2013

The rationale to keep up the *kiriwi inkra* and the logic it is played after all *Fifi* genres is also related to the exodus story. As described in Chapter Five, after the villagers intoxicated the tax collectors, a large kettle drum known as *dīngariti* was beaten to announce the beheading of the latter. And this is believed to have been done in the mid-night. Hence, today's *kiriwi inkra* is also played at around the mid-night as a symbolism and commemoration of this event. Even if it was *dīngariti*¹⁶⁹ which is believed to have been used in the original event, it is no longer so today. *Dīngariti* is too large to move from one place to another. Too many people or a donkey drawn cart may be required to take it to today's ritual places including to a far off church *Meskal* ritual. Besides, it is too expensive to buy or not easy to make it. It has thus been replaced by the smaller drums used today known as *kiriwi*.

It has been reported that in some localities of the Kumpal, *dīngariti* is still used but only for the *Meskal*. A question regarding whether the original *dīngariti* beaten by their ancestors during the exodus can exist today is not certainly answered by informants. Some¹⁷⁰ say that there are said to be original ancestral materials left in the *yāchigir washa* (See page 109), and *dīngariti* can be one of them.

The *kiriwi inkra* does not have verses that convey a message specifically relating to the story of exodus. An informant¹⁷¹ said, “we can understand that the ancestors did not use words other than



Photo 13 A pair of *kiriwi* rested after the people played with it on a *Meskal-Fifi* ceremony. The ash after the two *kiriwi* is from the burning of *damari*. (Taken by the researcher, September 2014)

¹⁶⁹ A large kettle drum, in Amharic known as *nāgarit*

¹⁷⁰ Abera Tebikew, 58, and Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K'urand, 28/09/2013

¹⁷¹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K'urand, 28/09/2013

announce the beheading”. The action must have been taken as quietly as possible and no play was, of course, necessary, but just beats of *dīngariti* to communicate the start of beheading. Today, the *kiriwi inkra* has just included some traditional song verses most of which are borrowed from Amharic and which do not have relation to the exodus.

The drums used today show that the right drum is somewhat wider than the left one. The hollow of the drum is perched from wood, and the head of each drum is perched with the goatskin which is held tight by the attached leather string which is knit up and down all around the drum. It is basically the same as drums in the highland Amhara and Agäw.

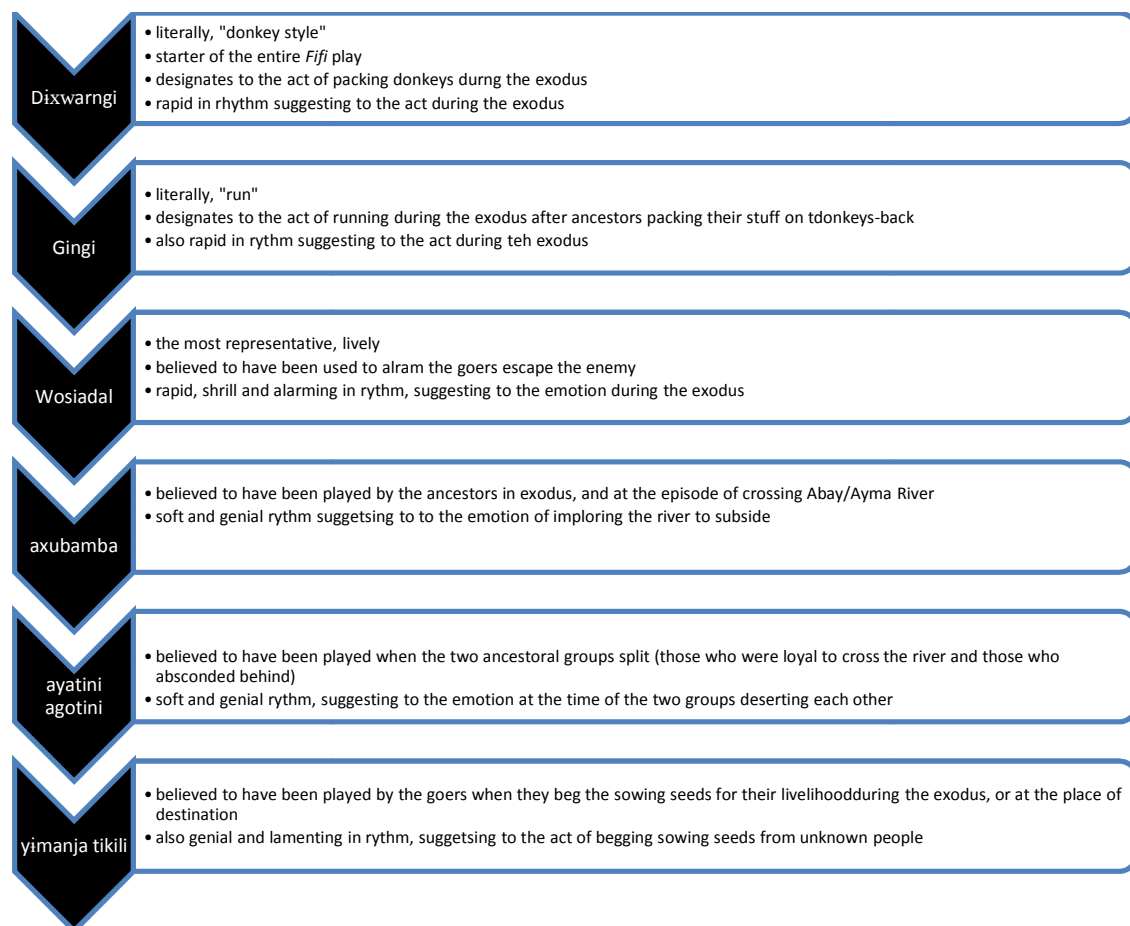


Figure 5 Genres of *Fifi* and corresponding designations to the past (Developed by the researcher)

6.8. Conclusion

If oral narrative memory in Chapter Five shows a heightened awareness of the Kumpal about their history (See Page 121), the *Fifi* shows even a more thoroughly heightened awareness. Indeed, history can be deposited on the music of a society. Music presents, constructs, and interprets historical information, through musical materials, content of verses, patterns of sound, time and place of performance. Though one may raise logical questions, at least a general relevance of *Fifi* to the past is clear. *Fifi* is a commemorative musical ritual. It is commemorative because it memorializes events supposed to have happened in the past; it is ritual because rituals have a formalized time, place, and behavior of performance (Connerton 1989); and it is musical because basically *Fifi* is a local musical performance. The purpose of *Fifi* seems to be to re-present the past in the present, with profound collection of meanings about the exodus. It is a part of comprehensive pattern of the memory of the past. And *Fifi* is a good example of how constructed and/or real history can be deposited in society, rather than on texts, in the form of collective memory. Bithell (2006:7) says, "In many societies, history is literally sung", and so is it among the Kumpal. History has been reconstructed in to the ritual musical performance of *Fifi*, and a more heightened presence of history in the present than that of the oral story presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ADVERSITIES OF THE CURSE

7.1. Introduction

From presentation of how the past makes its way to the Kumpal present (as in preceding two chapters), now I turn to presentation of how it actually affects a way of life at the present. Among the Kumpal, memory works beyond narratives (*See* Chapter Five) and beyond commemorative musical ritual (*See* Chapter Six). Among these people, memory also works in the interpretation of conditions of their phenotype and their everyday life. Why they are physically “short”, why the adults are not “educated” and why their children are incompetent to education, why they are not destined to have their own ruler who represents them in formal governance, and why, until today, they exist in the mere situation of “poverty” and “backwardness” are all blamed on the adversity of history through the ancestral curse. Possibly, the curse as a cause of women’s infertility, of child mortality, and of lower status given to women in comparison with men is among aspects that need independent research in the future. The purpose of this chapter is not to exhaust but to illustrate how memory among these people explains why they became who they are today.

7.2. “Let You be so Short as to Sit in the Shade of a Flax Plant”: Somatic Identity

In Chapter One, I mentioned that the Kumpal are unique from the rest of highland Amhara and Agäw who live mixed with or contiguous to them. One of the differences is in their phenotype. One can observe that generally the Kumpal, among other things, appear significantly shorter in height than highland Amhara or Agäw, and they have also relatively more flat nose and darker face. This raises a critical question about why the Kumpal are significantly different from other Agäw groups to whom they claim and to whom we attribute a common tradition of origin (*See* Chapter Five). At this stage, it is not possible to get an objective answer for this question. It needs further research. But from the Kumpal point of view, they became who they are today phenotypically because they believe the curse imposed on their



Photo 14 The Kumpal villagers in a wedding ceremony (Taken by the researcher April 2013).



Figure 15 A Kumpal man posing for photo, Alu K'urand Resettlement area (Taken by the researcher, February 2013)

ancestors has been transmitted through posterity with the same degree of potency as it was levied on the ancestors who absconded.

According to the Kumpal informants, the loyal ancestors during the exodus imposed the curse on the defecting group by saying, “Let you be so short as to sit in the shade of a flax plant” or “Let you be so short as to sit inside a *wombla gumbra* [a hole of *wombla* tree stem]” (See Chapter Five). The impact of the curse which befell on the defecting ancestors is believed to have passed down to generations, and that is why today’s Kumpal became physically different. The past is lived through the body among the Kumpal. Narvaez (2006:60) explaining Marcel Mauss’s¹⁷² argument in this regard states “The body is a crucible of social meaning because its potentialities, though born in nature, are ultimately realized through culture.”

The construction of the Kumpal as having “ugly” face and “short” height is also popular in farther communities who know about them merely from oral tradition. In an area where I was born but geographically not close to them, joking one as

¹⁷² Marcel Mauss. 1935. “Les Techniques du corps,” *Journal de Psychologie* 32:271-93. “Techniques of the Body,” Unpublished. N.d. English Translation: L.Wacquant.

“Kunfāl” was an insult¹⁷³. In a place as far as Boräna in today’s North Wollo Zone, the term “Kunfāl” is also an insult by people who know them only in oral tradition.¹⁷⁴

7.3. “Not be Educated”

The state of education among the Kumpal today shows there is less participation of their children in the school and there are no or few educated members of the community either. From the interview of teachers¹⁷⁵ and parents¹⁷⁶ as well as from personal observation of classrooms, it was possible to know that the Kumpal children dropout school more than that of other students whose ethnic group origin is from highland Agäw or Amhara. According to some principals¹⁷⁷, when schools open usually in September, they receive into a class twenty to thirty Kumpal students. At the end of the first semester usually in January, there may be even two or three students remaining in a class and at the end of an academic year at the end of June, there may even be no Kumpal student remaining at a school. In March 2012, I was able to observe classrooms in a primary school in Bagusa Mariam K’äbäle where the Kumpal settlement was said to be more dominant compared to highland Amhara and Agäw settlers. The result of my observation was that there were only three students in a class, as informants¹⁷⁸ said, from twenty-three students originally enrolled.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Here, I like to remember my childhood experience. I was insulted as “Kumpal” by family and friends to characterize my short height.

¹⁷⁴ Yemiamrew Jorgi, 37, Addis Ababa, 24/06/2013. Yemiamrew is a PhD student at Addis Ababa University, Department of Social Anthropology. How this construction of Kumpal has spread to these probably other places in northern Ethiopia seems to be striking. It needs further study in the future.

¹⁷⁵ Yalemken Derebe, 29, and Getahun Simachew, 25, Fändäk’a, 22/02/2013

¹⁷⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 23/03/2012. One of the challenges in studying this topic of education among the Kumpal is lack of official data. As it was already indicated in the first chapter, the people are not disaggregated, not seen by the government as distinct ethnic group from other Agäw s and even any other community in the *woräda*. Therefore I was not in a position to get a quantitative measure of the Kumpal children at school age, those who go to school at their age, and the like. Hence, I have relied on interview and observation.

¹⁷⁷ Getachew Tilahun, 34, principal, Digul General Primary School (Grades 1-8), Bagusa Mariam, 10/03/2012

¹⁷⁸ Getachew Tilahun, 34, Principal, Digul General Primary School (Grades 1-8), Bagusa Mariam, 10/03/2012

¹⁷⁹ This dropout applies to both boys and girls, but according to informants, there is a tendency of more girls dropping school compared to Kumpal boys. However, I was not able to find any aggregated information. Moreover, apart from the Kumpal belief in the curse as the cause of their failure at school, it is also important to give some context about other “objective” factors contributing to the Kumpal school dropout.

Moreover, until recently, there are only few Kumpal who can be mentioned for having completed degree or diploma. But some informants even dispute them because some of these people who are called “educated” do not have both parents from the Kumpal. So there remain only few “real” Kumpal people who are exceptionally successful in graduating in diploma.¹⁸⁰ So it is the curse which is to be blamed on this “illiteracy”. Of all the words of the curse, “Not be educated” is the one which seems to be the most regrettable. Informants¹⁸¹ believe this curse has not only made the Kumpal “illiterate” and “backward” in terms of education, but also hindered them from progress that can be achieved but if only they were educated. One day, after an extensive discussion with some of my informants¹⁸² about development-induced villagization and ensuing problems the Kumpal complain to have suffered from (*See Chapter Nine*), I finally asked them why they do not appeal to the *woräda* administration to seek a remedy. All informants answered almost similarly. First, they are not able to explain their case to authorities. Second, even when they dare to speak in the face of authorities, the latter “do not listen to us for they consider we are uneducated and worthless”. “It is lack of education that is

A long distance of school from some villages where the Kumpal inhabit, high temperature which makes walking difficult, and “culture” can be mentioned as some factors. In relation to distance, students are forced to walk a long distance from their home for up to, as I met some during my March 2012 observation, seven hours. The temperature also seems to be true. During the hottest months in April and May, the daily high temperature reaches upto 40°C, and this has an impact on students who walk a long distance. Here, it has to be noted that the temperature applies to all students, i.e., including the Amhara, but the Kumpal presentation of temperature as an “objective” factor to school dropout itself shows less commitment of them to school than the Amhara students, which in the end is to justify them as not capable of education because of the curse. A culture of extended celebration of ceremonies is also another factor that keeps the Kumpal children away and then out of school. I have received many reports from teacher and parent informants about the fact that the Kumpal students do not appear to school during and after rituals or festivities in their villages. For example, they do not return to school before they complete extended *Meskal* festival (*See Chapter Six*). They stay two weeks and even a month when they have wedding ceremony in their family or village, and they return to school after two weeks or more following Easter. And usually, there are some students who do not at all return to school after every holiday.

¹⁸⁰ In 2013, Tessema Ajebew, 37, (Miktil Cygen), a Kumpal police in Jawi Woräda counted me four Kumpal members whom he knew were “educated”. One holds a BA degree, another diploma, another 10+3 and he himself grade 7. When other people are also asked about people they know as educated among the Kumpal, they would mention these and some more. The Kumpal who have pursued education above Diploma are really scarce, and if they exist, they are only since recently.

¹⁸¹ For example, Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K’urand, 25/07/2010; Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013; Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K’wara), 10/03/2012; Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012

¹⁸² There are three sugar factories under construction in the Kumpal resettlement areas. The people were villaged in order to clear land for the project. About project intervention and the displacement of the local people, see chapter nine.

hurting us” is the frequent explanation for this and other similar problems. According to informants,¹⁸³ unfortunately, it is the curse which is still to be blamed on, particularly for crippling them to remain uneducated and “graceless” in the face of rulers until today. The mechanisms by which the curse impedes them from being educated are described below.

7.3.1. The Curse as an Obstacle to Staying at School

When they are asked about how the curse works against their success in education, some students would even deny the incapacitating role of the curse in this regard. They would say they belong to the new generation¹⁸⁴; therefore, they “do not believe” in the curse at all. Others would say they believe in the curse but they are not sure about its impediment to education. Still others would say they believe both in the curse and its impact on education. No matter how apparently their opinion varies in the disabling role of the curse, the belief in it as capable of lying an obstacle to continuing the school is held by many students no matter how at varying degree. Even if they would first say “they do not believe in the curse”, ultimately they would blame on the curse when they face an *obstacle* to continue their education.

Case 1: Molla Million : war as an obstacle to education

Molla Million, 42, lives in Burji K’äbäle, Dangur Woräda of BGNRS (See Map 1). Molla remembers that he was very good at school. He was so clever that he passed double for one year. But when he reached grade six, he regrets, he was forced to drop the school regardless of his intention. EPRP came and chased out school teachers where he was enrolled in. He had no friends or family nor anyone to support him to continue school at a safer place in Mambuk¹⁸⁵. In his interview with me¹⁸⁶, at first, Million entered into this “objective” factor to justify obstacle to his education. At one point he said, “Had I had someone who would host me outside the war zone, I would have pursued

¹⁸³ For example, Molla Million, 42, Burji K’äbäle, BGNRS, 2/3/2013; Getinet Mitiku, 20, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012

¹⁸⁴ The introduction of urban centres together with highland-to-lowland massive migration of people and intervention through large scale development projects (See Chapter Ten and Desalegn 2014) seems to be exposing the Kumpal “new generation” to a new consciousness. But this is far more less than something which can be given a significant consideration.

¹⁸⁵ Mambuk is a nearby town in BGNRS

¹⁸⁶ Date of interview: 2/3/2013

my education". But, when I invoked him into the possibility of curse which may have foiled him, he took a gap and said, "Ah..., actually it is that curse which is operating against us". According to him, he is only an example.

I have met a number of people like Molla who tried and were forced to drop their school, and who would at first invoke one "objective" reason or another, but finally resort to blaming on the curse. Whether or not one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to succeed in his school, curse brings one or another obstacle and places obstruction against one's future to education. From the Kumpal point of view, the curse is the greatest secret that crosses against the intention of one to stay in the school.

7.3.2. The Curse as a Cause for Failure in Exam

The curse also works against the Kumpal education acting as a cause of *failure* in exam. Getinet¹⁸⁷ said, "[o]ur students are good in education, even are better than others [non-Kumpal students] in physics and math". "But", he added "even the most outstanding" ones fail when it comes to exam. According to him, school failure is not a Kumpal student's inability to meet the minimum academic standards of a particular grade level, but the curse.

It is possible to realize from investigation of records in schools¹⁸⁸ that students begin the slide into failing patterns at any grade, but failure in exam is more likely to occur at major transitional stages, such as when graduating from primary to junior school and from junior to high school.¹⁸⁹ For this reason, there are more number of Kumpal who have tried education, but the higher the grade the fewer they are.

¹⁸⁷ Getinet Mitiku, 20, Fändäk'a, 25/02/2012

¹⁸⁸ Students' record has been investigated in Jawi General Primary School in March 2013.

¹⁸⁹ In the current education system of Ethiopia, primary school ranges from grades 1-6, and this is in turn divided into first cycle (grades 1-4) and second cycle (grades 5-6). The junior school runs from grades 7-8, and highschool from grades 9-10. Grades 11 and 12 are called college preparatory schools. As of 2013, there were few or no Kumpal students in the college preparatory school.

7.3.3. The Curse as a Source of Despair

Another way the curse operates against the Kumpal education is it being a source of *despair*. I think it is not contestable to say that the school which students and parents begin in the hope of unlimited success is more fruitful than the one which is started with the notion of a limited success. Unfortunately, the Kumpal seem to start their school in *a priori* belief in failure; they believe not in themselves and in what they are as any other student, but in the curse as an external force that appears into their way when they insist in education. Despair is the Kumpal belief in and doubt on the curse to have more triumphant power than that of who they are in terms of their effort and willingness.

There are different specific sources of despair from the curse. Despair comes directly from being aware of the very *idea* of the curse per se. As a student explained¹⁹⁰ “even when he commits himself to raise him from despair and promises for a better performance, hopelessness looms into his mind and this feeling about curse wins him”. As an informant¹⁹¹ also explains, “parents and students of the Kumpal have already disabled their mental power on education as the result of their belief in the curse”.

Besides, other students who have tried the school but failed in exam serve as negative models for the Kumpal students to despair. Student informants¹⁹² mentioned one or more people with no good success story in their exam. Moreover, the informants used the unsuccessful students to generalize that the situation for them is also unpromising. They justify that regardless of a Kumpal student’s hard work and keen interest, they fail in exam because they will end up in what the curse destines them to be. When what students see happening on others also happens to them, there comes painful desperation and a lesson of unfed hope.

¹⁹⁰ Getinet Mitiku, 20, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012

¹⁹¹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

¹⁹² For example: Getinet Mitiku, 20, Fändäk’a, 25/02/2012; Edilu Yihun, 24, Fändäk’a, 12/03/2013

Parents also have the same state of mind. During sensitization program of parents to persuade them to send their children to school¹⁹³, this is an argument posed by them. They mention the name of students who failed in education from another family and justify that the fate is the same to their children as well. They would say “what can I (my child) get from going to school even when so and so’s daughter or son has failed?”¹⁹⁴

Case 2: Edilu Yihun

With the support of his parents and the zeal from him to pursue education, Edlu Yihun (Pseudonym), 24, and who lives in Fändäk’a,¹⁹⁵ was able to reach grade eight sometimes with only minor obstacles including failure once in one grade. However, after he reached grade eight, he was unable to pass to the next. After he failed the matriculation national exam the first time, he was allowed two more times to sit for the same exam as a regular student. After the third failure, he was expelled from the regular program but was admitted in the evening. In the latter again, he sat for the exam three more times and he failed all of the sits, totally he failed for six times. In 2013, he was still to try, but whether or not he could pass is not known. Even if he alleges he does not believe in the curse (that is why he tries so many times), for others, he is a good example of how the curse operates against the Kumpal students.

It is also true that the higher the grades the higher fear and despair among the learners. As one’s grade level increases, the hope for pursuing further fades away. As the grade level increases, their intention to terminate the school also increases because they believe they are not destined for better. As mentioned in one of the above sections, particularly, grades eight and ten are when destruction of one’s hope looms into the students’ mind, and they may go even out of school before they sit for

¹⁹³ There is a committee whose members are drawn from the community and who is responsible for “sensitization” of the people generally towards a better way of looking at and doing things. This also includes convincing them to send their children to school. See chapter nine for more details.

¹⁹⁴ For example, Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K’urand, 25/06/2011; Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 01/03/2012; Yibeltal Mengist, 57, Alukurand, 23/02/2013

¹⁹⁵ Date of interview: 10/02/2012

grade eight or grade ten exam because it has been believed that it makes no difference.

7.3.4 “Extraordinary” Success as a Killing Curse

The fourth way by which the curse works against the Kumpal education is a belief in “extraordinary success” as a *killing* curse. According to the Kumpal belief, “extraordinary success” in education can, in the end, kill a person. Even when he or she overcomes all these problems, such as obstacles and hopelessness, there can be a possibility that one might end up in death if they show persistence in education. The ancestral group’s words of curse are binding. Even when one escapes obstacles or overcomes hopelessness, they cannot escape another, i.e., ultimately falling into the trap of death.

Case 3: Gashaw Derebe

There was a person known as Gashaw Derebe who lived in Ankäsha Gäbri’el K’äbäle of Mambuk Woräda in BGNRS (See Map 1). He pursued his education up to grade twelve. Then he joined a college to be trained as a professional in agriculture. After graduation, he was assigned to a job in Ankäsha Burji K’äbäle (Kumpal area in BGNRS). After his service for one year, he died in 1995. The people believe that he died because of the ancestral curse and he is cited as a famous example of why the Kumpal people cannot be destined to the civil service even when they are able to be educated.¹⁹⁶

7.4. “No Ruler shall Come out of You”

“A community who does not have educated members and a house without a pillar is the same. That is why we are going downwards”. This was a comment given by a participant¹⁹⁷ in the public conference on March 2, 2012. This opinion reflects the idea of not having their own person who would represent them in politics or government offices, who works for the cause of the Kumpal as a community.

¹⁹⁶ I also attempted to include medical reports about the death of this person.

¹⁹⁷ Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K’urand, 25/03/2012

As I have introduced in Chapter Three, the Kumpal have a strong traditional political institutions of leadership. However, they believe that they have not been destined to have their own person assuming political leadership as their representative. They believe that in history they never had a ruler from their own community and representing their interest. They were merely exploited by “others”. Even if such condition before the rise of the curse can be attributed to a mere historical matter of fact, lack of rulers after the rise of the curse is believed to be the result of the curse itself. Among others, the Kumpal believe their ancestors were cursed to have no rulers of their own: “let your generations give no birth to rulers” is a way of phrasing the adversity of the curse on the ability of the Kumpal to rule (See Chapter Five for the list of curses believed to be levied by their ancestors).

Case 4: Atinkut Arifew

The construction of Atinkut as an important personality begins with a story of him about salvaging a girl, one day, while he was in a church school at Yimala K/Mihirät Monastery. While collecting firewood at a hillside, Atinkut heard a voice like a girl crying. He thought it was the *zar* (See page 93), but the young Atinkut immediately ran back to the monastery to tell monks about what he had heard about. When the monks, suspicious of the thing, went to the place, they found a girl crying tied onto a tree. Atinkut played a key role in identifying that it was her father who went so cruel to his own daughter. Atinkut also disparaged the father in the face of the community.



Photo 16: Atinkut Arifew (while he was a young) (Source: Nigatu Wasse)

While establishing a new administration after the fall of the Därg, the community selected Atinkut in 1992 to represent them in the then Shimala Jawi K'äbäle under Aläfa T'ak'usa Woräda of North Gondär Zone. During his office, he often visited his people and talked them about their problems. He built *das* (local pavilion made from tree branches) to teach them about their rights and preserving identity. In his own initiative, he used to offer formal education for free together with another friend called Koyew. He also mobilized the community to participate in non-formal education, simply those who could read and write teaching the same to others. He also fought for establishment of formal schools.

He also noticed people drinking *ariki* under the shade of trees. He allocated plots of land among the residents in the area and advised them to build *dases* which would serve as local bars. In this way, he first laid down the foundation of today's Fändäk'a Town. However, while he allocated land for others, he held only a marginal one for himself, because he had the conviction that he does not live for himself but the people. Informants say, nothing seemed in the nature of Atinkut that he wanted to live for himself.

After a year from his appointment as the people's representative, he was however removed from his position. While he was fighting for the community even after he was deposed from the position, he became suddenly sick. The news was heard across the Kumpal villages, and soon his death was announced too. He died in October 1993, at fifty. Nigatu¹⁹⁸ says that "while we were encouraged by his move, his catastrophic death left us lonely in some profoundly bad situation". The hope of the people for having someone on their side and from their own people failed.

The danger of the curse always extends to the extent of death. As mentioned in the preceding section, "extraordinary success" in education can be a killing curse. Likewise, a Kumpal who aspires to be a "successful" leader may also end up in death because of the curse. That is why Atinkut Arifew also died.¹⁹⁹

For the Kumpal, Atinkut is a legend, who is represented as a revolutionary person in the history, as an informant said,²⁰⁰ next to those ancestors who disobeyed taxation of girls, albeit in the end they went for exodus and some group ended up in generational curse. Obviously, the curse hinges upon this kind of "extraordinary" persons.

It is important to emphasize two levels of discourse in general among the Kumpal while they explain adversities caused by the curse: the surface and the underlying. In this particular instance of Atinkut's death, the surface explanation is that he died from some natural cause, like any other person in this world. The surface is an explanation that one would speak more easily and with less disappointment. But

¹⁹⁸ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a 12/02/2012

¹⁹⁹ Atinkut was born from his father Arifew Demissu and his mother Kasech Yimer in 1943 in today's Alu-Kurand Kābāle. When his age reached to education, his uncle took him to Yimala Kidanemihret monastery to pursue church education.

²⁰⁰ Deresse Nigussie, 66, Bagusa Kidanemihret, 21/02/2013

beneath it, there is a real explanation given as truly operating as the ultimate cause of any “successful” person’s death, told with more disappointment and reservation. The curse is all that works. Nigatu²⁰¹ says,

If you patiently probe into anyone, they will most probably say they believe Atinkut died in the curse. And if they do not say they believe Atinkut died in the curse, they will say others believe that Atinkut died in the curse. That is because in the end everyone believes that Atinkut died in the curse.

When informants remember him following my interview, they break into tears or at least feel an intense disappointment. But no one was disappointed, of course, like his mother. Atinkut’s mother²⁰² first burst into tears and was unable to talk about the death of his son. She was robbed off her normal language by the sorrow and it took me several minutes to calm her down and say some words about what she believed about the death of her son. Expectedly, she was general telling about what caused the death. “It is God who knows it”; “what can I say about it”, and other similar meandering answers came at first. In the second step, she became more specific and said “it is believed that Atinkut died in the hand of people [was poisoned]”. In the end, she said “it is true that we are not destined to a model person”. This is not an ordinary comment, but expressing the inner belief of the people that slowly but surely comes to explain many significant adversities of the curse on them. The belief in the curse is the hidden effective force but that can be discovered by a foreign learner only through persistent and systematic investigation.

It should be also mentioned that death may not be the only setback against people who would try to ascend to administration (and also in education) from the Kumpal group. One may be sick tied onto bed; one may go mad, deaf or blind. They do not have examples to this, like the example they have from Atinkut regarding manifestation of curse through death. Yet, many informants are sure about the bare fact that the words of the curse are sure to be fulfilled in one way or another.

²⁰¹ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a 12/02/2012

²⁰² Kassech Yimer, 80, Alu K’urand, 23/02/2013

7.5. “You shall not Prosper from Fruits of your Work”

Adversity on the Kumpal betterment and prosperity is another legacy of the ancestral curse. “You shall not prosper from your work” is something they quote to have been said by the ancestors who were angry at those who broke the oath during the exodus. And by virtue of the curse’s ability to propagate over generations, today’s Kumpal believe they are also hit by these words of the curse. This section describes how the Kumpal believe they are “poor” and not capable of getting rich, and how they believe they are so because of the curse.

As I have shown in Chapter Three, the aspect of livelihood based on hunting and gathering is now offering little and the people are now stuck between lack of sources from the nature and adaptation to a full-fledged culture of intensive agriculture. As the latter has not been their prominent way of life, the ability to secure adequate livelihood has been shocked. Hence, the period the Kumpal exist today can be characterizes as an anxious stage of livelihood transition. They are faced with lack of household supplies which used to be abundant from both sources of livelihood. An informant²⁰³ says

Now there is much dispute in every household between spouses. Wives have been accustomed to an abundant source of household food from hunting and gathering as well as crop production. Now such sources have not been fruitful, and the husband rather stays at home during rainy season instead of, as it used to be before, going to bush to kill animals. This is not acceptable for women who are supposed to give food for their family members and then the quarrel arises.

In addition to inadequate source of subsistence, shared opinions by the Kumpal informants²⁰⁴ and experts²⁰⁵ shows that, to make things worse, the people do not know about the “wise” use of resources they have at hand. For example, they do not

²⁰³ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²⁰⁴ Koyew Malede, 57, Chairman, Wobo; Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 27/09/2013

²⁰⁵ Addisu Birle, 34, Fändäk’a, 23/03/2012 (Soil Fertility Protection Officer, Fändäk’a Woräda Office of Environmental Protection)

have the culture of “wisely” distributing their produce for all seasons. A year’s harvest may rather be consumed only within few months.

According to informants²⁰⁶, the season of gathering crops is a “special” time for Kumpal households. During this time, a household has at least two cooking ovens at the same time. In one oven, they cook one thing; on another, they cook something else. In this way, they “extravagantly” consume their harvest in a short period of time and rely merely on hunting and gathering for the rest of the seasons. Elsewhere in Desalegn (2010), a similar situation prevails to the Gumuz, and the notion of “extravagance”, seen from outsiders’ standard, seems to be common in traditional societies.

Informants²⁰⁷ explain that in addition to “extravagant” eating, the Kumpal also “waste” their crop in the market for selling in cheaper price than the market can offer them. From their produce, each adult and young member of a family carries packs of crop for a market. A wife, husband, and even children each carry a bag for oneself. Each sells one’s pack for small price and buys small household items in return. Every market, they do the same until their harvest is depleted from granary.

It seems important for analogy to raise a characteristic attributed to be common to peasants is also, from my observation, common to the Kumpal²⁰⁸. Scholars argue that peasants all over the world in one form or another maintain subordinate position to urban communities, in the sense that the former are often treated as backward and not worthy of respect (Cancian 1989). For example, Keesing and Strathern (1998:144-145) present the case of subordinate and economically exploitative relationship between Mayan peasants and Lindo urban communities in Cristobal Market, in India. The Lindo women place themselves at city entrance on

²⁰⁶ Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk’a, 23/07/2010; Koyew Malede, 57, Chairman, Wobo K’äbäle, Wobo

²⁰⁷ For example, Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk’a, 23/07/2010; Koyew Malede, 57, Chair Wobo K’äbäle, 12/05/2013

²⁰⁸ I believe the Kumpal are not actually peasants as such, they are in transition between hunter gatherers and the peasant community.

market days almost violently forcing incoming Indian peasants to sell their wares at imposed lower price than they deserve in the market. This is due to economic and social dominance of the urban Lindos. This is described as “internal colonialism”.

I have made an observation²⁰⁹ of the market relationship between the Kumpal and settlers, and I can see that the Mayan case resembles to the Kumpal market relationship with other ethnic groups in Fändäk’a Town. Residents in this town place themselves along the entrance routes of the market, and approach the Kumpal entering the market with crops and domestic animals. They screw up the Kumpal men and women by saying their crops are not quality and their animals not healthy.

They almost force them to sell their item at a lower price. Even when they reach the market, the Kumpal are not much concerned about getting highest possible price as far as they get something they think is “enough”. Ato Yekoyew²¹⁰ says that



“Our people do not take advantage of the price the market offers them. They just sell for a lower price they are impressed in”.

Photo 17 At front centre is a Kumpal man selling a chicken. An attempt to interview this person on the spot was not successful to know about his chicken market. Informants who comment on this picture say that he might have sold for cheaper price some chicken on the way from his home. Moreover, he may not still sell this one in a reasonably good price even after he reached in the market. (Taken by the researcher, February 2013)

In addition to “extravagant” consumption, the local *worāda* officers and neighboring Amhara and Agāw communities also characterize the Kumpal by “extravagant”

²⁰⁹ Date of observation: 21/3/2013

²¹⁰ Koyew Malede, 57, Chair Wobo Kābāle, 12/05/2013

drinking, which in turn contributes to their poverty. An officer²¹¹ in the *worāda* effectively expressed this in Amharic: “እነሱ ቢጋ ቢጋ አለማዊ ክረምት ክረምት ባህታዊ ናቸው”. Contextually, this refers to the fact that the Kumpal “are monks during rainy season (the time of cultivation of crops) but worldly during the harvest-season”. They waste the produce not long after they harvest their crops, and when the rainy season comes, they beg for loan from the Amhara. And according to Desalegn (2014a, 2014b), an Amhara knows how to take advantage of the Kumpal in this situation. For 100 Birr of loan during the rainy season for example, an Amhara makes a Kumpal swear to return one quintal of sesame during the harvest season. When the latter fails to get a loan or when the loan he got is not adequate, he sells any household property to buy food crops.

While describing the Kumpal pattern of consumption, both Kumpal and non-Kumpal informants agree that, among these people, a property that is owned by one person in the line of a particular kin group is practically the property of the entire kinship group. When a person from a kin group is “rich”, other members of the group visit him and enjoy his hospitality. And this person does not feel exploited when he hosts a number of “guests”, because the rule is in turn he can go himself to another person when he is in short of something to eat at his home²¹².

There is also a lot of discourse about how the Kumpal wasted the compensation they were paid for their displacement as the result of T’ana Bälās Sugar Project during 2012 (See details in Chapter Nine). As of March 2013, there are three Sugar Development Projects undergoing in Jawi Worāda and neighboring BGNRS. The community were displaced and villagized for the project. As compensation for the displacement, both the Kumpal and the Amhara settlers were given compensation-in-cash in addition to replacement land. A widespread conversation went around this issue during 2012 and 2013. Among others, many commonly say that the Amhara generally have benefited from this compensation. For example, they were

²¹¹ Getahun Besufekad (Pseudonym), 27, Fändäka, 27/02/2012

²¹² Desta Anley, Head, Jawi Worāda Office of Trade and Transport, 28/02/2013.

wise to use the money to buy a house in a town. On the other hand, the Kumpal are represented as losers in this intervention because many of them “wasted” their money to pay for drinks in town or to buy animals to slaughter at home. Both Kumpal and non-Kumpal informants agree on this point.



Photo 18 The Kumpal villagers sharing meat from slaughtering an ox. I met these villagers in Alu K’urand K’äbäle on a Sunday while I was traveling through the village for data collection. When I asked them about what occasion the ox was slaughtered for, they answered me it was for the *Fast of Nineveh*, fast of *näy näy* or *nänäwe*, as it is called in Amharic, which as they said was a week after that day. When I actually realize the fasting day begins after two weeks. An informant who was accompanying me through the villages commented this practice is common regardless of a special occasion. Their philosophy is “eat-and-die-today”. The meat will not even be taken to home as they consume it at once on the spot. (Taken by the researcher, February 2013)

While I was conducting an interview near newly constructed villages of the people displaced by large-scale development intervention, a non-Kumpal informant²¹³ in the middle of the interview said stretching his hand to the villages, “Look at the houses in these villages”. He explained that the Zällan (settlers) houses have corrugated tin roofs while the households of Koläñas, as he calls the Kumpal, are like “birds’ nest”. The big problem with them [the Kumpal] is, he added, they like feasts. Many Koläñas have finished compensation-in-cash they received from the relocation. Another informant²¹⁴ also adds, in the weekends as well as even in the working days, all young and old members of a family go to town and drink extravagantly. They used to drink *ariki* before, but after they received the money from compensation, they have begun to drink beer. The Kumpal poverty is often

²¹³ Melese Tezana, 31, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

²¹⁴ Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk’a, 23/07/2010.

contrasted with the astute character of other people mainly what are called “settlers”. It is the opinion of many informants²¹⁵ that people who came through resettlement have bought commercial cars, house, and shops within few years both in Fändäk’a Town and in their place of origin. Particularly, while the new settlers prosper from rich sesame cultivation, the natives are getting worse into poverty. Talking about the case of conflict induced resettlers (See Chapter Ten), an informant²¹⁶ says, “When they come (in Bagusa), the conflict induced emergency settlers were given only one hectare of land. From the land they rent from their neighboring K’äbäle [Kumpal] Agäws, they earn 60,000-70,000 Birr each year from the crop they sell in the market. Their irrigation skill is also good. For instance, Bambluk is the second in irrigation from the entire Jawi Woräda. In this K’äbäle, there are some people who get up to 50,000 Birr every year from irrigation. They also save money in the bank. But, informants say, the Kumpal life could not be changed until today. They have virgin land and a lot of resources. But, they did not make use of it.

While their neighbors and the authorities in the *woräda* talk about the Kumpal “culture” is responsible to all these problems, the people in their own more specifically blame on the curse to be responsible for all this quandary. In Chapter Five, I mentioned about “not prosper from the fruits of your work” as one of the components in the package of the ancestral curse. The way they live today, as described above, is therefore the translation of this ancestral curse into practice. Poverty among the Kumpal is not only deprivation of material needs, but is also about their *belief* that they are destined to be “poor”.

²¹⁵ On the occasion of inauguration of the *Fifi* songs (See Chapter Nine), a short video of agriculture in Jawi Woräda viewed, among others. I was able to observe that many farmers who were presented as successful were the settlers, and none of the Kumpal were presented as a positive example. Contrarily, they are mentioned in various occasions as not still “civilized” in farming, and the presence of the settlers is taken as an advantage for the Kumpal to take lessons.

²¹⁶ Getachew Alemu, 27, Bambluk K’äbäle, 13/02/2012 (Manager of Bambluk K’äbäle)

7.6 Conclusion

Apart from an array of information displayed about the past in the oral narrative and performative *Fifi* memories, the Kumpal interpret the memories into their experiences in everyday life, into conditions of their almost a total predicament. In a discussion of the relationship between Betsimisaraka of Madagascar and their ancestors, Cole (1998:614) mentions that the ancestors of Betsimisaraka play both an enabling and disabling role. But, the Kumpal ancestors have levied stringent and trans-generational curses, and by way of this, they play almost only a disabling role. On a related take, in Chapter Two, I have conceived memory as culture, and this chapter is also an apt assertion to that claim. Furthermore, it would be an interesting point to look into this part of the Kumpal material through the window of debates on culture and development. But I have to limit my interest and pass to the next issue in the tie of memory, history, and victimhood among the Kumpal.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTINUED OPPRESSION AND ATTEMPTS TO BREAK THE CURSE: 1930-1991

8.1. Introduction

If the curse has this much grip upon the Kumpal present- both upon their ideology and everyday life- one would logically ask: would there not be any remedy to get out of this impasse? Can the memory system embedded in the curse offer a solution to break itself? There are two tasks upon which this chapter dwells. These are to appreciate attempts made to break with the curse and to appreciate the continuity of oppressive conditions that gave rise to the movements to the curse breaking. It has to be also mentioned that in previous chapters, informants narrated or performed stories from “vicarious memory” (See Chapter One for the primary versus secondary data of this dissertation). In vicarious memory, today’s generation who never experienced the past personalizes events from the perceived experience of their ancestors. This chapter, however, depends on memory which the people are witnesses themselves. This kind of memory is known by various names such as “experiential memory” (Teski and Climo 1995), and “autobiographical memory” (Misztal 2003:10).

8.2. The Imperial Regime (1930-1974)

8.2.1. The Oppressive Governorship during the Imperial Regime

During the Imperial Era, the Kumpal were one of the most lucrative corners for economic exploitation by the Ethiopian feudal lords at various levels, through various forms from quasi-legal state taxation to direct confiscation of property for personal gain. There was even a blatant destruction of property out of a mere disparagement of Kumpal owners. The Kumpal had little or no security over their property, but only waiting for some appropriation by “getoch” (literally the “lords”), as tax collectors and local or high-level officials were called in Amharic.

During the imperial feudal regime, “taxation”, as it had always been before, was a source of great oppression. The valuation of taxes was arbitrary; it followed no prescribed rules but a mere desire of tax collectors. Hence, no one knew how, what, and when to be taxed. The punishment when the Kumpal fail to pay the designated tax was also sever and inhuman. Informants said, “The term ‘tax’ was a terror, which paralyzed us especially when the news about the coming of tax collectors to villages was disseminated. The fear was true; we were taxed not only our property but also our skin”²¹⁷.

Everything was subject to “tax” during this time. There was no classification of taxable and non-taxable items. It is a common experience of many informants²¹⁸ that they used to submit tax of, for example, in money, butter, honey, castrated goat, chicken, and egg. Even they were required to submit “tax” of or were confiscated *tintili*, a flat sleeping mat made of bamboo and placed on a floor for sleeping.

According to informants²¹⁹, when tax collectors planned to visit the Kumpal villages, they spread ahead of time news of their coming. The content of the message was simple and brief: “We will come to this village on this or that day. Be prepared”. At this time, the whole village used to get troubled. Markets became so busy during this time. People sold their cattle, crops, or whatever they had to generate cash to pay tax, and had to prepare a feast for hospitality which was itself an obligation. They had to also identify grassland from where they carried grasses for mules of the “guests”. They had to also construct private house for the tax collectors. They used to wall the houses and gated them well, and any opening that exposed the guests’ to view by villagers was curtailed. They also had to slaughter castrated goats, sheep, and chicken to prepare food apposite to serve the “dignitaries”. The preparation was

²¹⁷ Mengist Atalele, 76, and Nigatu Wasse, 49, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012. “Skin” in the quotation is metaphorically used to designate to the heavy taxation of the time, including confiscation of anything worth if the locals failed to pay tax.

²¹⁸ For example Nigatu Wasse, 49, and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (Kwara), 12/03/2012; Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012

²¹⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 49 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

made at the level of an individual household or a group of households in a village(s) around the place the tax collectors stayed.

As the tax collectors arrived at the villages, they would proceed to the houses which, as indicated in the above paragraph, had already been especially designated to them. The houses used to be surrounded by, as informants²²⁰ call it in Amharic, *gasha jagre* (literally, guards and escort). Thus, there was no easy access to the tax collectors. One must first approach the guards and escorts to get permission to see the “guests”. Even this was not easy. As he approached the guards and escorts, any villager had to first drop their walking stick behind and bow down to feet of the *gasha jagre*. The guards would then conceitedly say, “[y]ou want to see *getoch*?” If one said “yes”, then the guards would ask him to give *ginbara kans’is’i* (literally, “the fee to see the bosses’ forehead”). The guards would receive one or two Birr as he was pleased. An informant²²¹ explains this in comparison to the customary bridal practice. In a customary bridal practice of most of the Agäw groups, the bride rests in a separate room, well curtailed so that nobody can see her unless she completes her nuptial period or, otherwise, one will pay money or gifts in kind. Bestmen protect her from any encroachment of people without appropriate bridal gift. The tax collectors were treated alike. No one was allowed to enter the house the tax collectors used to stay except with the permission from guards and payment them of *ginbara kans’is’i*.

In the meantime, the feast would go. *T’äj*, traditionally the drink of a high class, was served in abundance; food was served too. The head of a household would never have a rest until the “lords” finished eating and drinking. He went around and ushered them offering more and more. As households were expected to prepare ahead, a “high class” meal had to be served. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, a householder is expected to serve the tax collectors with their favorite foods such as chicken, egg, and goat. Unless the tax collectors came in a fasting time

²²⁰ Nigatu Wasse, 49 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

²²¹ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

(which was not usually the case), they never ate fasting foods. If they were not offered to their satisfaction, they would demand the householder the fee of *yät'om adari* which means fee for making the lords spend the night "fasting". An informant²²² remembers a couplet at the time:

ኹና ጋቲታ ቻቲዋ
ዲሪ ላሻኸ ጋቲታ ኸቲዋ
እንታኳው ዳኚ ይንታማ አቋ ቼጋርፃዊ

This is translated as

One who does not sleep without a woman
One who does not eat except for chicken food
What kind of ruler is this troubling us

After they had finished festivity and then taking some rest in the house they were first received, the "lords" would go to another village. For their journey from one village or household to another, they would ask someone, particularly a person who offended them, to lead the road pulling the mule with a very short tack. This person would be made go very close to the mule, and while pulling, the mule running over his heel. In this way, the "lords" travel from one village to another and after they ate and drank enough in one or more households in the first two or three days, then they used to start going around villages and collected "tax" still receiving deep hospitality from one village to another until they went back to their "office" after they finished their "duty".

As the tax collectors visit to villages was always announced in advance, any excuse for being unable to pay part or all of "tax" in due time was not acceptable. Everyone had to have money ready in his pocket to pay the collectors as soon as the latter wanted it. Those who did not have money would borrow from others, or would sell

²²² Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2012

their livestock or crop to generate some. If one refused to pay or just said “I do not have all or some to pay”, he would suffer from severe punishment. The “lords” would first clutch his leg in iron. They would also fist his hands. Then, until they ate and drank as well as took regal rest, they would put the “disobedient” onto a scorching sun, or throw him onto thorns or stone. Then, the person would confess to pay them soon, or would allow them to take whatever property of him as they were pleased. Then, he would be released.

Even getting released from the iron clutch was not for free. One used to be required to pay money for someone who unlocked his hands and his legs. If two people unlocked him one from the hands and another from the legs, each of them would demand a payment of two or one Birr. An informant²²³ painfully remembers his own observation of his father’s experience.

Case 5: The case of Mengist Atalele’s father

One day, *at’ibiya dañā*²²⁴ and Atalele went to quarrel over a matter of taxation. Atalele could not pay all amount of money the “lords” claimed for tax. He begged them to tolerate few remaining cents until he gave them borrowed from his villagers or from selling something at a market. The *at’ibiya dañā* was annoyed however at this person. He said “we sent you message earlier so that you should be prepared!” Having said this, the *at’ibiya dañā* jumped onto the alleged defiant and hanged on his neck. He arrested him and knocked on ground, his face down to earth. Then he ordered a pot of *t’äl’a* be placed on Atalele’s back. He cautioned him not to move because if he did so, the pot would be turned over and the *t’ella* emptied out. This would make the punishment even more sever. The *dañā* and his companion enjoyed the *t’ella* in that pot, and when they finished the overall feasting, they took the pot safely from Atalele’s back, ordered him to stand up and kiss the leg of the *at’ibiya dañā* and his companion. Then he kissed their leg one after another and asked them mercy. They gave him mercy for the remaining cents.

²²³ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

²²⁴ The administrative division at that time was, from highest to lowest, Kiflähagär (Province), Awuraja, Woräda, Mikitil Woräda, At’ibya Daña (K’äbäle), and *ch’ək’ashum*.

When the tax collectors came to villages, they used to gather in advance information about well-off members of a village. They gathered information about those persons who possessed guns, who had good size of cattle or goats or chicken, who had a good plot of land and the like. When they wanted to seize any property from these villagers, they falsely accused them of something. For example, they used to falsely accused people of arson, robbery, or any other crime, and therefore say they wanted them for “legal” action. Then they snatched their gun, cattle, or anything as the punishment to an alleged offense. This would force the alleged person to give them a good deal of bribe to set him and his property free or he would be dispossessed the property permanently and/or be jailed.

Even more, if they saw one holding a gun on his journey, the so called tax collectors used to snatch him for no reason. A *ch'ik'ashum* would come and assign one or another false reason on a person just going on his way and snatch him the guns. Then, the owner of the gun gave them fifty, sixty or seventy Birr to release his own property. Otherwise or in addition to money they received, they would put him to jail and take both the money and the gun.

The so-called tax collectors also used to snatch land under a local person's holding. When they had someone who was their relative in the highland, they used to bring him and settle on the land they snatched from the Kumpal holder. Or, a land holder would simply be imposed to submit half or whatever amount of crop he produced just for a person who was settled by a tax collector. If someone did not belong to a feudal family, they just took the land. One of the things that the Kumpal were despised during this time was that since they did not have any relationship with feudal rulers, they could never claim entitlement to any plot of land. Any feudal lord could allocate or confiscate any amount of the Kumpal holding to another non-Kumpal person or himself.

In addition to the above economic exploitation, the Kumpal also faced serious social discrimination and subjugation during the Imperial Regime. In the places where

both the Kumpal and other ethnic groups lived together, the former were treated differently, stereotyped as backward, inferior, and even of a lower human standard. Rulers of the time ranked the Kumpal at the lowest place in the hierarchy of ethnic groups around the area.

Some informants also witness that there was also discrimination of the Kumpal against education. Debassu²²⁵ remembers that the typical Kumpal settlement areas never had schools. This is not surprising because that was the time when many parts of the country did not have access to school. But even where there were schools around the predominantly Amhara settlement areas, the Kumpal could not enroll their children. There was a common belief that the Kumpal did not deserve schooling other than just being subjects to rulers; or even there was a tendency to believe that these people were not of the same intellect as the “feudal” family, which are said to be either family of highland ordinary Amhara or Amhara rulers. According to informants,²²⁶ when some exceptional Kumpal students insisted on going to school, they could not go a single step higher grade. They would be forced to repeat the same grade on the pretext that they failed exam. On the other hand, if one was a feudal family member, he would be added marks even when he failed exam or one would give bribe to teachers for additional marks. Those who used to learn and who used to rule were only the Amhara. It was the time when only one ethnic group was favored to education.

In relation to this, an informant²²⁷ remembers his experience when he was a young. During the Imperial Era, a certain *Märigeta* Kebede²²⁸ came to their village from the highland. He gathered children around the village of today’s Fändäk’a town (showing the place that was around where we sat for interview) and taught them Ethiopic alphabet. After he did for few days, people from the highland came and threatened him to death. They warned the *Märigeta* that he had not to teach the

²²⁵ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

²²⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

²²⁷ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²²⁸ *Märigeta* is the church title referring to a Choir leader

Kumpal children because if they were taught, they would become aware and resist exploitation. The informant quotes them saying “How can we bring up our children if they become aware and disobedient to us?” The *Märigeta* gathered elders and announced quitting his teaching.

Lack of equal access to justice was another area of discrimination and oppression the Kumpal informants have in their memory. “We were not considered as people when we stood in the court of justice”, says another informant²²⁹. For example, sometimes, the Kumpal litigate over a plot of land. The feudal Amhara judges however used to dismiss the case on the ground that a person from Kumpal did not deserve the right to ownership of land. Even a “judge” would utter words by saying the Kumpal were not human beings the same as others, but those “who came from wood” (See Chapter Three). A *rist*²³⁰ title could not be bestowed upon these people. When a Kumpal and another non-Kumpal person stood together to litigate for a piece of land or for any other claim, the court officials themselves used to mock at the Kumpal by saying it was contempt for these people to stand in front of a “court”. They used to be even beaten, slapped, and locked into jail. When they tried to explain their case using their language, they were forced to shut up, or were scorned as speaking “birds' language”.

The response by different informants to the question of the political condition of the Kumpal during the Imperial Era was also uniform. But a conversation with one informant²³¹ seems more telling. When I asked him about the political rights of people during this period, he asked me what political rights were in the first place. I told him about the power to participate directly or indirectly in the establishment of administration at least at a local level, and the right to hold public office. The

²²⁹ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

²³⁰ *Rist* is a usufructuary land right in the *rist* system. A community of people who have blood relation held the ultimate reversionary rights over *rist* land. A person belonging to the community could claim a portion of land from his or her ancestors who originally held the land that constitutes the *rist* system. This system of land tenure is the oldest and was the most common form in northern Ethiopia.

²³¹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

informant responded in Amharic by saying “ጽድቁ ቀርቶ በቅጡ በኩነኝ” which can be translated as “Let me be condemned properly let alone to be appreciated”.

To begin with, the Kumpal never ruled themselves even at the lowest level. They were considered as people who did not deserve or were not capable of ruling at any level. The Amhara rulers came from the highland and ruled them. But, gradually towards the end of the regime's period, they were allowed the position of *ch'ik'ashum*, the lowest level in the hierarchy of politico-territorial administration during the Imperial Era.

In a joint interview of Mengist Atalele and Nigatu Wasse,²³² the former summarized the Imperial Era with disgust:

Regarding the tax, any local despot would come and simply impose any amount of it as he was pleased. We paid money that went to the pocket of the tax collectors as well. They openly used to say, “[t]his is for the government; then where is our share”? In case we refused or were unable to pay to their satisfaction, they used to capture our goats, cattle, or any property we had. They would even take our wives. When we talked with them, they shout “Stop! You speak as though you are equal to us!” They would even beat us terribly or arrest us for speaking “equal to them”. They may even intimidate us by pointing guns at our head. When we went for appeal to higher authorities, rather they would also throw us to jail. It was a terrible time; we shall not talk about it. Rather it shall be forgotten my son. Let's not talk about it. It was so miserable time.

8.2.2. Response to the Oppression by Attempting to Break the Curse

This oppressive condition during the Imperial Era of Hailä Sillassie I was so unbearable that the people had to think about reversal of the ancestral curse which, according to them, was responsible for all this brutality. According to informants²³³, there is no doubt that the curse was responsible for all this atrocity. Particularly, the curse not to have rulers from their own people was indeed working. When elders

²³² Nigatu Wasse, 50, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013

²³³ Nigatu Wasse, 49 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2012

met in the church or on their way to market or anywhere, they started informally talking about how to change their relationship to the past.

Accordingly, the decision to try to break the curse came to the front. In a group interview, I invoked informants²³⁴ by saying if using the same technique of intoxicating and beheading of their despots would be possible like they believe their ancestors had done a long time ago. A moment of silence went. Two informants one after another explained that this idea is not acceptable today. Either or both of them said it is not appropriate to enter into an act which would give rise to another mistake while the mistake which was done during that time is responsible to what is happening today. One of them quoted an Amharic saying “እሾህን በእሾህ” literally “a thorn with thorn”. A better way is to solve the problem with the remedy the curse offers itself. The remedy is not to chop heads of the tax collectors as their ancestors did, nor was to pretend that the curse was not the cause for all this subjugation. To do this will be itself to be a victim the second time. To prevent them from suffering, the best option was to attempt to break the curse.

So in the 1970s, some elders began to promote the idea of breaking the curse. An informant²³⁵ who spearheaded the process remembers that after consensus was reached among some elders, they began to share villagers about this idea. People immediately positively received the idea since they were highly uncomfortable with the existing oppressive governorship and ultimately with the brunt of generational curse. Churches and other communal gatherings as well as informal talks gave rise to taking practical measures of preparation for the ceremony of breaking the curse, the villagers in K’wara (*See Map 1*) area particularly at the forefront.

The ceremony would become a big event. Many Kumpal households contributed a gift of food or money or both to help with preparation of the feast. Accordingly, each

²³⁴ Nigatu Wasse, 50 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²³⁵ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K’wara), 10/02/2012

household contributed two Birr or more, to afford buying oxen and other feast materials for the event.

There are two types of curses depending on their amenability to breaking: absolute and relative (*See Chapter Ten for detail discussion*). Absolute curse is the type of curse that should be broken only by the person who has levied it. It is mandatory for a person who deems himself cursed to get the same person who cursed him to break the curse, or if he is not alive or not willing, his descendants. If the person who ought to break the curse is already dead or if all other qualified persons for this role have also died or are not willing, the fate of the person is always to live under the burden of the curse. Depending on what a person has been cursed, he/she may remain poor, devoid of children, and/or become mad. A relative curse, on the other hand, is another type of curse that is believed to be removable by administration of an indigenous “medicine”, as the people call it, meant only for this purpose. In this case, it is not mandatory to get the same person who levied the curse also to break it. “Medicines” can be administered to break this type of curse.

The ancestral curse is rather an absolute curse. It must be broken only at best by the original curse makers or by their descendants. In the case of individual cursing among the Kumpal today, normally the curse applies to the person cursed and his descendants up to seven generation. But Ifes and Daminas, senior members of ancestors who went for exodus, cursed the entire land in such a way that it affects all Kumpal living in the land. As already said, the curse is also made in such a way that it must be handed down from one generation to another.

So, when thinking about breaking the ancestral curse during the Imperial Regime, there must be a parallel preparation of nominating one who must break the curse, a person from the lineage of Ifes or Daminas. However, elders from these lineages disagreed over a person who should make the breaking. The reason for evading this responsibility was because it is believed the breaker would die after he makes the breaking. Here things become more complicated. I have shown in Chapter Seven

that the Kumpal ancestral curse is serious so much so that it can be even a killing curse. Not only the curse but also breaking it is also considered as a killer. Hence, senior members of the lineage of Ifes and Daminas were not willing to take the risk of life if they were to break the curse during the Imperial Regime. The plan failed and the oppression and subjugation continued.

An informant²³⁶ remembers villagers were very angry at the descendants of Ifes and Daminas. The feast for the ceremony was to be ready, and the people were actually eager to see this ceremony taken place. But when elders were not willing to break the curse, the people were disappointed. They were expecting relief from the bondage of the curse but that could not become successful. When the organizers asked the people to get their money contributions back, the latter refused. Rather they uttered from their home: “let the curse be belied only on those who refused to break it, on descendants of Daminas and Ifes, and let the money collected to the ritual be a curse to them”.

Not long after this plan failed was the Imperial regime overthrown and a new government under the brand of “Därg” replaced. However, the role of the curse in ravaging these people continued too, hence, the Därg Regime also came up with its own version of oppression to the Kumpal.

8.3. The Därg Regime (1974-1991)

8.3.1. Oppressive condition during the Därg

While the Imperial Era is remembered for all encompassing exploitation of the people, the main characteristic of the Därg Regime was war between its soldiers and that of the EPRP. During late 1970s and especially in 1980s, Jawi was literally a battleground between the two forces, and the Kumpal were the major victims of the

²³⁶ Asru Abitew, 90, Alu K’urand, 02/03/2012

war. An informant²³⁷ characterized this as a “double” burden, in the sense that the people faced impacts of the war from both warring parties.

According to informants²³⁸, the problem began when both parties approached the community to recruit fighters or get their acceptance. Members of the EPRP used to circulate rumor that they had magic which protected them from bullets and thus anyone who would join them would never be shot dead. They also used to circulate a rumor that if worst came, they had the ability to convert themselves to snakes and poison the enemy. They also used to say they had the power that can even tame a spirit, let alone their enemy. They also used to say they had modern guns enough for everyone who would join on their side against the Därg, and the like.

The Därg soldiers in their part also used their own technique to attract the people to their side. More characteristic for the Därg however was that it used to force the young members of the Kumpal to fight the war. Male members of the community were caught in the farm or while hunting in the bush, or from their home. Anyone who opposed the call for defending the “motherland” was beaten or even killed. The EPRP used some false promises to incite the Kumpal to fight against the Därg while the Därg used a nude coercion to make the local people fight against the EPRP.

When the people did not respond to the interest of each party, each accused them of collaborating with another. Often times, the Därg used to spread frightening rumors to the Kumpal villages to make them submit to its interest. As it was said in Amharic, “Jawi shifta ak’äfä alu” ²³⁹, literally “we came to learn that Jawi hosted the enemy” was a common message of dread to villagers before the soldiers came to punish them. The Kumpal area was regularly patrolled and the people were seriously punished for any sign of support to EPRP. The Därg soldiers, with full force of brutality, invaded the villages for until sometime whenever they suspect that the

²³⁷ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

²³⁸ Sileshi Ferede, 45, Fändäk’a, 28/02/2012; Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012; Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²³⁹ Abich Workineh, 51, Alu K’urand, 02/03/2012

EPRP soldiers would emerge in the area. When they immediately withdrew, the latter occupied the villages to replenish their food source. The people faced all types of punishment such as accusation, mass execution, torture, looting, and burning down villages.

Perhaps one of the dire punishments the Kumpal experienced as the result of the war was mass execution by both the Därg and the EPRP. In addition to fighting each other, the opponents also used to punish the Kumpal villagers by killing them in mass for some pretexts. According to an informant²⁴⁰, in 1982, several people joined the EPRP from Fändäk'a area. The news reached the Därg and the Därg immediately deployed its soldiers to the villages from where people are said to have joined the EPRP. They also began search for the "traitors". When they were unable to find them, they caused suffering to their family in order to make them force their members come back home.

An informant²⁴¹ remembers, one day, the Därg helicopter dropped flyers announcing pardon for those who had joined the EPRP. It encouraged them thus to come back home, or else, they, wherever they were, or their family would face the risk of death. The "traitors" positively viewed the offer by the Därg and, they came out from the bush and joined the community. Soon, the Därg officials called the whole community for a meeting. In the meeting, officials asked the returnees to raise their hand and register for a reward for respecting the call of their government. The officials also asked those who intended to join but returned from their way to raise their hand. Names of all those who raised their hand were taken, told to come back the next day for the reward. When they came, however, they were seized and detained in a secret place. On the third day so, the officials summoned the entire community again for a meeting. The detainees were also brought to the meeting from the place they had been secretly detained. The officials brought both the detainees and their family into the same meeting. The officials, furthermore,

²⁴⁰ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013

²⁴¹ Abich Workineh, 51, Alu K'urand, 02/03/2012

ordered the family of the captives to dig a grave. The officials chose seven major actors from the captives and told the people to unanimously cry for their death. At this moment, when the people became silent or were reluctant to cry for the death of selected detainees, they were beaten each of them with the muzzle. Eventually, all of the participants in the meeting were forced to clap for approval of the assassination. The selected seven captives were shot and thrown into the mass grave dug by their family. The rest of the captives were taken to Bahir Dar, and imprisoned for several years without justice. The case of the following person gives an eyewitness account.²⁴²

Case 6: Haknew Asru

Haknew Asru (died in 1993 of sickness) was in journey to join the EPRP in 1982. But, he changed his mind and returned home before he actually joined the EPRP. In the community gathering described above, he was one of those who raised his hand. Fortunately, he was not among the seven who were shot dead and buried in a mass grave. He was taken to Bahir Dar with others and imprisoned for three years without appearing before the court.

On his own part, the EPRP also continued killing the villagers even if not as brutal as the Därg was. When the EPRP accuses a person of collaborating with the Därg, it would not shoot him in public. “The Därg used to shoot in broad daylight those who were suspected of collaborating with the enemy, but the EPRP took them to bush and hanged them on a tree branch without trace by anyone”²⁴³. In order not to break reputation among the public, the EPRP did every killing in secret.

Harrowing physical torture was also another brunt of the war on the Kumpal. As indicated above, when the Därg soldiers heard rumor that the people had had taken side with EPRP or the latter appeared into villages, they would come and invade the

²⁴² Abich Workineh, 51, Alu K’urand, 02/03/2012

²⁴³ Abich Workineh, 51, Alu K’urand, 02/03/2012

villages. They used to force the villagers to show them where the EPRP soldiers were hiding. When someone was reluctant to "cooperate", an immediate and severe punishment would follow. If one ran or hid himself in trying to escape from their atrocity, they would become crueler. Almost the same applies to the EPRP at least sometimes. After the Därg soldiers left the villages, the EPRP in turn, came and asked the people to show them where the Därg soldiers were staying. They also used to force the people to give information against the other. They beat villagers if they think the people were not willing to "cooperate" on something.²⁴⁴

There are several instances where the Kumpal villages were turned into ashes by the fighting groups but, an informant²⁴⁵ explains only two examples from his village called Wondim Got' in Bagusa Mariam (See Map 1). In 1986, EPRP came into this village. Then, the Därg heard about this and the people knew that its soldiers were inevitable to come too. All villagers left their household and were hidden in the bush for fear of punishment from the Därg soldiers. When the soldiers came, they found no villager. They were so annoyed that they consumed everything they could find in every household, took some property such as goat and cattle, and set fire on over eighty houses in different villages. Then they waged war against the EPRP in this village. The name of this mission as it was called in Amharic was "käbo mat'ifat zämächa", meaning "flank attack". They fought for one day; and as both sides were weakened, they ambushed for the next day, and fought again in the third day. The Därg soldiers then were defeated in the war. The villagers came back to their village, cleaned the debris, and restored new villages. Again in 1988, the same thing happened. The EPRP sent news to villagers in Wondim Got' to evacuate themselves from the villages. The Därg heard about this and came soon. They found no villager again. Annoyed at the "betrayal" of the people, the soldiers robbed every property, ate whatever was in. Finally, they set fire on every village, the second time within two years.

²⁴⁴ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

²⁴⁵ Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012

Another non-Kumpal Agäw informant²⁴⁶ also remembers the severity of the Därg period. When he was grade eleven, he joined the EPRP for he was too restless about the exploitation of the Kumpal from the Därg as a government and marginalization of them by other ethnic groups who lived in and around them. He stresses that in addition to the impact of the war, the marginalization of these people was continuing. When an Amhara and a Kumpal stood in front of the court, the latter was not treated equally. There was no one who would release him for bail. If a Kumpal spoke fluently and was well reasoning, the people in the court would scorn him “Who is speaking like this? How can a speech like this come from the mouth of a Kumpal?” They never acknowledged them as human beings like them.

When informants were induced to compare the Därg and Imperial Era, they stuck for a while finding for points of comparison. Both times were evil, but when they are encouraged to choose the lesser evil, they are more favorable to the Därg. An informant said,²⁴⁷ it was the Därg who established a school and a clinic in Jawi for the first time. When an epidemic broke out in 1982, the Därg sent experts to the Kumpal region to help the people in the epidemic. The experts further gave a witness to the Ch’ilga Woräda about the rampant disease in the Kumpal area and the need for a clinic. For the first time, a clinic was established in the Kumpal area in 1983. A primary school was also established in the same year. They were also allowed to teach and learn basic education which was impossible during the Imperial Era. Nigatu himself was employed in 1977 and 1978 to teach basic education. For the first time in history, a *k’äbäle* chairman was elected from the Kumpal in 1978. Similarly, the militia was also selected from the community for the first time. Compared with the Imperial Era, the Kumpal tend to believe that the Därg had shown them some spotlight of worth and betterment.

²⁴⁶ Sileshi Ferede, 45, Fändäk’a, 28/02/2012

²⁴⁷ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 01/03/2013

8.3.2. Response to the Oppression by Attempting to Break the Curse

The curse devastating the Kumpal is believed to be still on its place, but unlike their effort during the Imperial regime, the people did not move onto a full step to breaking the curse during the Därg. While they were thinking about it, the EPRDF came to power. This was the time when ethnic federalism and equality of ethnic groups was disseminated in a wave of ideology. Thus, this political condition gave a new impetus to the idea of breaking the curse. The idea of breaking the curse at this time was initiated for fear of the future; the fact that unless they broke the curse, they would not benefit from the promise of new political opportunities. So they started to do away with the curse in the early 1990s, both in response to the past and for fear of the future.

Like what had been done during the Hailä Sillassie's Regime, mainly elderly people drawn from the entire Kumpal villages took a counsel of organizing an event to remove the curse. Each household contributed two Birr to cover the cost of the ritual, mainly to buy oxen. All in all, a sum of two-hundred Birr was raised. Besides, the surrounding communities where the ceremony took place contributed to festive materials such as food and drink items.²⁴⁸

The site of the ceremony was Bagusa Mariam (See Map 1), the place where the deserting ancestors are believed to have cursed those who run away behind. All people, men and women, as well as children participated from the villages in the surrounding area of the ceremony. Besides, those able ones from far areas like in K'wara could participate. Pursuant to what has been said above regarding blessings to be made for the curse to be broken, a descendant of Daminas from Java known as Minayew Addis made the blessing. Afterwards, the ox was slaughtered and consumed on the spot by all, foods and drinks consumed as well.²⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the person who gave the blessing in fact died subsequently. It was widely believed that unlike those who had refused to give blessing in fear of death

²⁴⁸ Asru Abitew, 90, Alu K'urand, 02/03/2012

²⁴⁹ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 01/03/2013

during the Imperial Era, this person sacrificed himself for the community. As informants say, there was a sense of relief going around in the mind of every person soon after the ceremony, but at the expense of Minayew Addis.

Gradually, people came to notice the situation was not any better despite the ritual to break with the curse. The validity of this ceremony was increasingly questioned. Some rumors of failure of the ritual began to circulate from elders who are said to have attended the ceremony but did not speak the problem not to disturb the mood. There was something missing. Before the forefathers fled to Korkoch (*See* Chapter Five), informants argue, they took an oath in giving birth to black bitch if anyone would retreat behind. As a symbol of this oath, there was a black dog buried in their land. To remove the curse fully, they should have buried a black dog at the place of the ritual and dug out as a symbol of removing the original dog and therefore the ancestral curse. Rumors also emerged contesting the cause of death of Minayew Addis, the person who gave a curse-breaking blessing, to be something else.²⁵⁰

Controversy also emerged over the legitimate place of the ritual. In the first place, the place of ritual should be the burial place of the person who levied the curse. Today this is not possible because Iffewos and Daminas are believed to be already in Korkoch. The second option is to make the ceremony in the place where the curse was actually levied. And the third option was to make the ritual in the homestead where the person who levied the curse lived. In this case, Ifes and/or Daminas lived in Baglti. But the ritual was not made in this place either. So against these three options, the ritual was made in Bagusa.

Moreover, there were also additional rumors about this ceremony had not take place at all. During this time, only few representatives from various villages were sent to the place of the ceremony. Later, it came to be contended that the organizers took the money for themselves and had not held any ceremony. It was the K'waräña

²⁵⁰ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 01/03/2013

(people from K'wara) who bought the ox for this ceremony, money from their pocket to be reimbursed later from the contribution of Kumpal in other areas. When they asked for the money before the ox was slaughtered, others were unwilling or unable to give. It is said that the organizers were very angry, and they left the ox there in the ritual place. They cursed other villagers that the curse shall remain only on those who hindered the process. It is believed by other villagers that it is because of this the K'waraña are now believed to be better off than Kumpal in other areas.

8.4. Conclusion

It deserves the level of seriousness to mention again and again about how history has been adverse to the Kumpal. In the first place, before it caused the curse sometime in the past, it has harmed them *sue generis*. After the curse, history, i.e., in the form of oppression became itself the result of the curse so that all subsequent regimes after the curse became oppressors. Worse, it was not possible to break with the curse causing them oppression by rulers. The curse, worth the name, denied the Kumpal the opportunity to break with it, by giving different excuses that are explained by only the curse itself. When the Kumpal review their condition to enable them respond to the oppressive governorships or lack of better change, curse in its complex system gives a negative answer. There is a striking situation of cultural reproduction of curse and hence victimhood. Again the theoretical implication of this is to be discussed under Chapter Ten. Now I turn to the last chapter which is about evaluating changes and continuities after 1991. If the curse has not offered a remedy for itself and the end of oppression, could interventions after 1991 do, as a matter of fact? I will evaluate the changes and continuities in the Kumpal life since 1991 and I will evaluate whether there are concomitant changes and continuities in the Kumpal perception of the workings of the curse.

CHAPTER NINE

CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES DURING EPRDF'S REGIME: 1991-2014

9.1. Introduction

Post-1991 government of Ethiopia implemented, compared to that of its predecessors, a “radical” and “pioneering” (Turton 2006:1) social and political policy. Needless to mention, many ethnic groups are influenced, either negatively or positively, by what is often labeled by scholars as the “ethnic federalism” (E.g. Aalen 2002; Alemante 2003; Turton 2006; Desalegn 2014b). Likewise, since 1991, there are new changes, positive or negative, to the Kumpal, and these changes are not objectively interpreted by the people, but through the lens of the curse and in relation to changes and continuities with the oppression. Some positive developments were identified and seen as evidences for the curse to have been lifted as the result of previous attempts to break it, or for the curse to have been false in the first place. On the other hand, the negative changes are interpreted as evidences for the resilience of the curse even at the age of ethnic federalism. This chapter elevates our amusement in the Kumpal perception of curse by looking into these points.

9.2. Positive Developments

The notion of “dark times” is frequently invoked by Kumpal informants²⁵¹ to describe the condition of time they lived generally before 1991. In their comparison of the time before and after 1991, they describe the former as something completely having no sense of gain and pleasure, but the time when rulers were bedeviling them through oppression, and when the ensuing generational curse added an insult into injury. On the other hand, they describe the period after 1991 as the time when they began to see at least a spotlight of hope and have begun to appreciate some positive changes. Indeed, a person who has been to Jawi Woräda can observe that

²⁵¹ For example: Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk'a, 11/06/2013; Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013; Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K'urand, 25/06/2011; Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk'a, 26/09/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/02/2012

apparently there are some changes to the area since 1991. It is no surprise, therefore, to hear from informants who say these changes are dissipating the cloud of darkness that was hovering over their life since an early time.

9.2.1 Changes in Infrastructure and Social Services

When informants were asked to list what they call are positive changes after 1991, they would refer first of all to the domain of infrastructure. The fact that the Kumpal region used to be an isolated area and hence a camping ground for rebels is mentioned in Chapter Three and Chapter Eight. Indeed, the area was cut from other neighboring places. But since 1991, it has been made possible to access Jawi Woräda through gravel roads from two directions: one via Dangila in ANAZ and another via Pawi in BGNRS. The former was constructed in 2007 and the latter in 1997 (Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office 2013).

Another change in the area of infrastructure is the introduction of telecommunication, particularly the mobile phones. No less Kumpal people, particularly in urban areas, carry mobile phones today. In the past, exchange of information to announce the death of a person, for example, was entirely made through personal communication, vigorously walking for long hours through a lowland-forest. But today, no less people call from their home about something. An informant²⁵² referred to the case of making my contact with informants in the field. He said had it been in earlier times, it would not have been easily possible to contact elders and collect data. It would take several days to travel from one village to another and contact an elder of interest for interview. But today, it is possible to arrange contact through a call and go to a village where the elder lives, or make him/her come to where the researcher is located. This is a remarkable change.

The introduction of electricity is also seen as an important development after 1991. Through electricity, some Kumpal also saw their house or town in their area

²⁵² Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk'a, 01/03/2012

lightened by bulbs; and more or less they are also wired into radio and television. An informant²⁵³ said jokingly “We used to know lightening but we see electricity today imperceptibly dripping into houses.”

There are also changes in the area of social services. To begin with education, there are some observable positive developments. According to Jawi Woräda Education Office²⁵⁴ with regard to the physical expansion of education, as of September 2013, there were forty-six schools all in all, including one high school and one preparatory school. This is a significant breakthrough for the area today called Jawi Woräda which had almost no school at all before 1991. In addition to accessibility of the schools, there is no formal discrimination of the Kumpal on equality of access to the school. It is mentioned in Chapter Eight that particularly during the Imperial Hailä Sillassie’s regime, students of the Kumpal origin were considered unworthy to school even when there was one to go. There is also implementation of mother tongue at schools today. In this regard, the *Woräda* has also begun to train the Kumpal natives as Awngi teachers. So far, the Kumpal mother tongue education was handled by the highland Awi teachers, not the Kumpal natives. But, now steps are seen where the native Kumpal teach their children. As of April 2013, there were a total of 614 mother-tongue teachers in the entire *Woräda*. Of these, five were the native Kumpal (one female and four males). Of these, three males are diploma holders, one female diploma, and one male certificate. Having five Kumpal teachers is the highest record ever in the education history of the community.

According to informants²⁵⁵, the Kumpal area was also ridden by disease, and used to have no clinic. In previous times, it was common to see people particularly children dying day by day in every village because of malaria and other epidemics when they become beyond the control of indigenous medical treatment or are too fatal to take time to treat them in indigenous medicine. The same was true to animal diseases.

²⁵³ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 01/03/2012

²⁵⁴ Interview with Andualem [father’s name not obtained], Head of Jawi Worada Education Office, 23/09/2013; 07/03/2012.

²⁵⁵ Mengist Atalele, 75, Alu K’urand, 08/02/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 28/11/2013

But today, they began to appreciate the importance of clinics around them. One day while I was conducting an interview with him, Nigatu²⁵⁶ received a call from villagers. It was a call requesting him help to take a pregnant woman to deliver in Pawi Hospital in BGNRS, upon referral by Jawi Health Centre. He quitted the interview and rushed to the woman who was placed onto an ambulance given by the *Worāda* health centre in accordance with “an ambulance for a *worāda*” program of the government²⁵⁷. When he came back from the hospital the next day, I continued the conversation with him about the situation of women delivery today. In this interview, Nigatu said the following among others:

In the past, we gave the responsibility of safe delivery to the hands of local midwives. On the other hand, today it is possible to get an ambulance to go to a hospital even when a pregnant woman feels a mere headache. In the past, we used to complain against governors for not helping women save them from death while giving delivery. Today, the government officers accuse, us the villagers, of not being learned about using the opportunity created by the government regarding safe delivery in the hospital through free (one way) transportation. When we think about it, the change is remarkable.

These changes in infrastructure and the social services have been facilitated or have come as the result of the state sponsored population resettlement (to be discussed below in a more detail). There are different ways that resettlement has brought expansion to infrastructure and services to the Kumpal (Also see Yohannes 2011). It is believed to have brought better access to services not only to the resettlers themselves but also to the Kumpal host. Officials²⁵⁸ of Jawi *Worāda* insist that the state has been engaged in building infrastructure and providing social services such as clinics for resettlers and for natives who live around resettlement areas. Resettlement has also opened access road, as discussed above, to this *Worāda* which

²⁵⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

²⁵⁷ One ambulance for each *worāda* is a program by Ethiopian government to make accessible one ambulance in every *worāda* so that delivering mothers can be transferred to the nearsets health centre or hospitals for delivery. It is part of a Millennium Development Goal to reduce maternal mortality. For more details, see *Road Map for Accelerating the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals Related to Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia* (2012).

²⁵⁸ Tiruneh Behailu (Pseudonym), 47, Fändäk’a, 19/03/2012 and Muluken Azeze (Pseudonym), 36, Fändäk’a, 20/03/2012. During the interview, these informants were resettlement and food security officers in Jawi *Worāda*.

has been inaccessible periphery in the previous regimes. Resettlement also facilitated the process of urbanization. For instance, as Yohannes (2011) says Womblasi and Bambluk were resettlement sites which emerged into towns. The indigenous Kumpal people are now able to get market access in these emerging towns.

In addition to resettlement, development intervention (also to be discussed in the next section) is considered as a big opportunity for the previously ignored Kumpal. The host people are beneficiaries from employment opportunities in these projects. It is believed to have brought an alternative means to Kumpal subsistence in the face of increasingly failing former subsistence mechanisms of hunting and gathering²⁵⁹.

All these changes are interpreted as evidences to the fact that the situation of the Kumpal regarding the curse can be changed. From the cars crossing into their villages, they evidence that the curse may no longer be potent. An informant²⁶⁰ said to me, “How did you come here to our village? You came by car (pointing the car I traveled by). You reached here in few hours while previously we used to travel for days”. Access to their villages through road transport makes them believe that their situation can indeed be changed, like other groups, if they get a government that treats them equally.

From relative changes in the education, they also increasingly disprove the notion of curse. From this some also believe that the curse may have been removed or was false in the first place. An informant²⁶¹ says:

Schools are more or less closer to our villages and therefore our children are able to go there and learn how to read and write. At earlier times, we were not able to read letters sent from government officials even ordering us to

²⁵⁹ Sileshi Ferde, 46, Fändäk’a, 28/02/2012

²⁶⁰ Tesema Derib, 75, Bagusa Mariam, 04/03/2012

²⁶¹ Tessema Derib, 75, Bagusa Mariam, 06/03/2012

kill. We used to ask the same person who brought the letter to read for us; but usually they told us something other than what the letter said and in this way, they used to abuse us terribly. Today, it is possible to get our children (pointing at their children around) read something for us. This all shows that the curse is being beaten by the changes we are witnessing today in education.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, it is a common belief of informants and it is a logical argument to say the belief in inability to education is an arresting curse of all others. By this I mean all other curses hampering the Kumpal participation such as in political leadership and in the civil service will be broken once a new educated generation is created and new values are developed. Even if little and gradual, this is what seems to be showing a sign today among the Kumpal. The reason for the Kumpal to be “inferior” to other ethnic groups as well as “to arrest themselves in the name of ancestral curse is because of lack of education”²⁶².

The importance of mobile phones after all is also that it makes them the same people as other groups who use the same phones. It suggests to the fact that the curse does not forbid them from using mobile phones, though the number of Kumpal who use mobile phones is obviously much smaller than other ethnic groups living with and/or around them. What is important is its symbolic meaning. As a community, the Kumpal can and have also attempted to do and to use what other communities do and use. “I don’t understand how we can explain the impediment of curse in this regard”, said an informant²⁶³. “Mobile phone works for all of us”, he added.

9.2.2. Publication of Local Songs

Since 1991, there seems to be a growing Kumpal consciousness about the right to preservation and promotion of their culture. Some complains were made by them to me about the apathy of the *Woräda* administration on the need for changing the

²⁶² Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

²⁶³ Tessema Derib, 75, Bagusa Mariam, 06/03/2012

situation of Kumpal identity. The Kumpal elders²⁶⁴ explain that they started to question about why they are not seen on TV and heard on radio. “We see the highland Agäw often screened on TV, but not us”, says an informant²⁶⁵. They have gradually began to discuss among themselves why they should be obscured under the name of Awi while, save for shared identities, they have their own peculiar identity which deserves independent recognition.

In June 2009, some Kumpal elders²⁶⁶ around Fändäk’a Town, made a consultation among themselves on how to work on reviving the Kumpal culture and persuading the community to change their belief in the ancestral curse. In 2010, these elders started to share this idea with other elders in remote villages. Then some volunteering and “better aware” elders came together and formed a committee and sub-committees. At the level of Jawi Woräda, they formed a supreme organizing committee of selected elders. In each *k’äbäle* again, they formed sub-committees who are responsible at their village level. The committee members, backed by *Woräda* officials, taught the villagers about cultural issues, frequently about what is called HTPs.²⁶⁷ The elders also committed themselves to sensitize the community about the fact that their culture should not remain hidden in the age of constitutionally granted rights to ethnic groups and the community should not remain “backward” while many ethnic groups are emerging. In order to promote their culture, they were able to form an amateur *Fifi* Music Club in 2009 from the young and concerned members of the society²⁶⁸. In September 2010, they were also able to co-organize with the *woräda* a “Fifi Day”, also called Fifi Musical Festival, the first official event so far for the Kumpal. The committee was effective until the

²⁶⁴ Notably Nigatu Wasse, 50, Fändäk’a, 01/03/2013; Agde Ayal, 55, Fändäk’a, 01/03/2013

²⁶⁵ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²⁶⁶ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013. These and other elders have close contact with the *woräda* officials, and they are regarded as representatives of the community. They are also labeled as having better awareness than the other mass.

²⁶⁷ The understanding of HTPs by *woräda* officials is wide, which includes the Kumpal belief in the curse. But, this issue of curse does not usually come upfront in these public discussions.

²⁶⁸ One complain by the committee members and the Fifi Amateur Club members goes that the Kumpal are not committed to the revival of their culture and the over all betterment of them as a community. They are simply indifferent or depressed, which is itself supposed to be the cause or the consequence of the curse.

completion of my fieldwork for this dissertation (See Chapter One) and the supreme committee holds a meeting on 29th day of every month.

While these awareness creation activities were

being made by elders assisted by *Worāda* officials²⁶⁹, officials in the Jawi *Worāda* were also able

to succeed in publishing a *Fifi* single song. Officials in the culture and tourism office gathered the *Fifi* amateur club members already formed earlier to play the instrument for filming. They also gathered selected community elders to solicit their opinion about an authentic dance style of the *Fifi*. As indicated in Chapter Six, there are seven genres of *Fifi*, and two i.e., *wosiadal* and *axubambani*, were selected from the old genres. Besides, one i.e., *ajabi* was selected from the new ones and three of the genres were arranged to make a single song under the title of *Jawiya*. The selected genres have relatively hot rhythm to appeal to listeners and thus promote the Kumpal among a larger audience in Ethiopia.

Through this, which is the one and the only, as well as the first ever musical publication of the Kumpal, the people now received the first ever media exposure. From my participation in the inaugural ceremony on March 2, 2013, I witnessed that it was so exciting moment to the Kumpal, to invited guests from other ethnic groups,



Photo 19 Banner advertising inaguration of *Fifi* musical songs. It reads: “Happy inaugural day of Jawiya and Tika Tika Traditional Songs, March 2, 2013”. Another text just below the photo of the former Prime Minsiter of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, reads: “Ethiopia’s and Meles’ vision shall be successful” (Photo by the researcher).

²⁶⁹ Abebe Seyoum, 34, Fändäk’a, Fändäk’a, 03/03/2013. Abebe was the Head of Culture and Tourism Bureau of Jawi *Worāda* when the publication was made. At tht time of this interview held a different position as the Head of Government Communication Affairs Bureau of Jawi *Worāda*.

and to *woräda* officials who sponsored the event and the publication. For the Kumpal, a belief in self-unworthiness because of the curse came under uncertainty. Many Kumpal attendants of the meeting expressed the view that, for them, it was a “rebirth” of the people dented for a long time. Yibeltal²⁷⁰, who was a participant in the meeting, spoke:

We used to live in the bush since early times. No other people knew us. When we went to Aläfa T’ak’usa Woräda under which we were administered for a long time, they used to insult us “backward Agäw”. We did not know anything to do but afraid of these harassments we used to “hide” ourselves in the bush. We used to consider ourselves as worthless people. But now, we are getting out of the bush. After Jawi Woräda was established, we are now becoming the same people as others, not eternally cursed.

One can hear the same opinion of “rebirth” from several Kumpal informants. It is very telling to quote a woman attendant who commented off-stage during my informal interview: “Even we hear the sound of dogs on radios and see them on TVs. But we never had such privilege”²⁷¹. She asked: “Were we inferior to the dogs?” The idea of “curse” was belittled by many informants²⁷² after the meeting. Many doubt or refute the idea of curse; that the authority for change belongs to the people who are here today, not to the curse which is believed to have been imposed several years before.



Photo 20 Yinasu Gadif- the first ever local singer in the Jawiya. (Photo by the researcher, March 2013)

²⁷⁰ Yibeltal Mengist, 57, Fändäk’a, 06/03/2013

²⁷¹ Tata Gebre, 42, Fändäk’a, 02/03/2013

²⁷² Molla Million, 43, Fändäk’a, 02/03/2013; Tata Gebre, 42, Fändäk’a, 02/03/2013

9.3. Continued “Oppression”

In spite of the positive changes due to post-1991 state intervention and some ensuing changes on the Kumpal belief in the curse, the “oppression” even after this time continued and so continued the belief in the ancestral curse. The Kumpal informants are not uniformly convinced in the possibility of the curse to have been broken or the idea of it to have been false in the first place. The positive changes, and hence the idea of the curse being broken, are still perceived with reservation, are arguable, and if accepted, not by all people. Because of new and old predicaments against what the ethnic federalism promises, many informants²⁷³ believe the purported positive changes given in the above section are more rhetorical than they actually bring significant change. Many people have the ground to strongly believe that the curse is still resilient. Many points discussed under Chapter Seven can be drawn to this section as well, but I will describe, as an illustration, only some of the *new* predicaments that have befallen after 1991, and the Kumpal belief in such predicaments as giving justification to still continuing yoke of the ancestral curse.

9.3.1 Inundating Migration of Highlanders²⁷⁴

After 1991, there has been still massive highland to lowland influx of people, and the Kumpal did not escape from this increasing trend. Following the most deadly conflict in November 2000 between the Oromo and Amhara settlers in Gidda Giramu, a number of people were displaced from the latter’s side. The AMNRS responded to this displacement by drafting an emergency resettlement program. Consequently, between April 2001 and October 2002, more than 12,000 Amhara (more than 4200 households) were resettled in Jawi Woräda and the host Kumpal people were “suddenly overwhelmed” by “unknown” group (Tesfaye 2007:124).

²⁷³ Asebe Alelign (Pseudonym), 41, Fändäk’a, 12/03/2012

²⁷⁴ Parts of this section and others that follow have been published by the same author on the *Proceedings of the Second Annual Workshop of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies* (2014) under “Formal and Informal Migration of People to Jawi and a Quandry of Kumpal Marginalization”.

In addition to emergency resettlement, the state also undertook planned resettlement program in Jawi. For the current government of Ethiopia, population distribution from densely populated highlands to sparsely populated lowlands is one of the important strategies for food security (The Food Security Strategy 2002). Based on this strategy, in 2002/03, a pilot resettlement scheme was initiated at national level. Accordingly, Amhara, Oromiya, and Tigray National Regional States undertook an intra-regional resettlement of a total of 45,000 households (180,000 people) (CFS 2003). Merely after six months of its implementation, the government declared success of the pilot programs, and therefore decided to scale up the resettlement program to about 440,000 households (2.2 million people) over a period of three years (Feleke 2004:214). Subsequently, the ANRS implemented the resettlement program in the lowlands of Mätämma, K'wara, Armach'ïho, and today's Jawi (Dessalegn 2008:2). Between 2004 and 2008, Jawi Woräda alone received 6001 households (16, 119 people) (Desalegn 2014a). Today, the resettlers occupy a number of originally Kumpal inhabited places in Jawi. Like the emergency resettlement in 2002, there was no consultation of the host people except *k'äbäle* officials, and this time again, resettlers overrun them without their knowledge of what was going on their land (Yohannes 2011).

What is more, since 2010, there is rush for investment in Jawi Woräda. Among several sugar projects intended to be built under the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP)²⁷⁵, T'ana-Bäläs Integrated Sugar Development Project is one. According to Jawi Woräda Environment Protection Office, the project comprises of three sugar factories with a crushing capacity of 12,000 tones and with 25,000 hectares of sugarcane plantation each. The project takes 75,000 hectares of land, 50,000 of which is in Jawi Woräda and 25,000 in contiguous BGNRS, yet in contiguous Kumpal settlement areas in this region. It displaced several people in different places. The

²⁷⁵ The GTP is a national five-year plan (2010-2015) of the Ethiopian Government to improve the country's socio-economic development by achieving a projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth between 11-15%. The plan includes details of estimated cost required over the five years and specific targets to be hit in all sectors of the economy. The GTP document can be accessed from <http://www.mofed.gov.et>.

plantation alone dislocates nine *k'ābāles* from Jawi. Besides, this project has also attracted a huge number of labor migrants.

Self-initiated migrations are even more inundating the Kumpal. According to Desalegn (2014a), in fact, self-initiated migration to the Kumpal area started much before the resettlement programs, in the form of territorial expansion by highland Amhara. But recent migrants are overriding the hearts of the “new land”, as Jawi is called by highland settlers. Even though many of the settlers arrive at the place where a person who first attracted them lives, they gradually prepare a space for themselves after they are acquainted with the place and the people.

This all predicament is against the post-1991 policy of resettlement which advocates intra-regional relocation of people and the integration of the resettlers into the host. Besides, the predicament is also against the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which, under article 89(4) states “Government special assistance to Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples least advantaged in economic and social development”. For detail discussion of the theory vis-à-vis practice of Ethiopian Federalism for the Kumpal, see Desalegn (2014b).



Photo 21 Labor migrants at Fändäk'a town (taken by the researcher, April 2013)

The settlers establish different relationships with the natives such as through institutions of godparent, adoption, and marriage. Then they secure land from a person they formed relation, and even more by force from clearing the land which “belongs to no one”, as the narrative goes by the settlers and the state. Desalegn (2014b) presents the detail of mechanisms by which the land from the Kumpal continuously and increasingly slips into the possession of “migrants”.

It was possible for me to notice that the settlers are represented as a more successful group in the discourse of development in Jawi Woräda²⁷⁶. Indeed, the newcomers are able to be more successful in intensive farming than the indigenous Kumpal shifting cultivators. As indicated in Chapter Seven, the settlers are able to build a corrugated iron house while the Kumpal remain in “birds’ nest”²⁷⁷. The settlers even could buy commercial cars from sesame cultivation of a single or two

²⁷⁶ A video of a model settler was presented in the meeting held on 02/03/2013 on the occasion of inauguration of Jawiya.

²⁷⁷ Melese Tezana , 31, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

years harvest. They build houses in towns and they are also able to attract and change their relatives in the highland areas. While there is a positive change to settlers, there is a negative one to the Kumpal.

The consequences of all these encroachments to the Kumpal life is far reaching so as to make the people believe that it is indeed the curse which is bedeviling them. This is a widely shared belief among the Kumpal, and a pondering remark below by an informant can be stated only as an example. The informant is speaking with the curse in the background of the justification for his questions.

Then why did people who came from Bahir Dar and other places go so prosperous and *awak'i* (knowledgeable)? Why do people who came from Addis Ababa and somewhere else go prosperous in this place where we were born and bred with our cattle? People who come from other places are growing rich at the expense of our environment and the land while we have no sufficient security of livelihood. The migrants become prosperous over us like an ivy plant rises over an old sycamore tree. They are growing up and we are growing down. Then why is this happening?²⁷⁸

The above quotation also suggests us to note on the Kumpal understanding of “them” in *relation* to “others”. The Kumpal make frequent reference to the Gumuz and that of the highland Awi and the so-called migrants (both self initiated and state sponsored) in order to show their position vis-à-vis these groups. As already mentioned above, in relation to their status after 1991, the Kumpal often make comparison of themselves with the Gumuz and the highland Awi. And in relation to economic and social changes, they further make comparison of themselves with that of the migrants. Even if they are interested in explaining their own society as such as cursed, the Kumpal informants can much better understand the responsibility of the curse by comparing their “impoverishment” with the “prosperity” of the highlanders. Curse exists with its opposite and the so-called cursed people are much better understood in relation to other people who the Kumpal believe are not cursed.

²⁷⁸Tashu Desata, 77, Alu K'urand, 10/07/2010

9.3.2. Low Political Participation

In addition to surpassing them in wealth, the migrants are also marginalizing the Kumpal from the local political participation. A few illustration can be made about how the migrants challenge the Kumpal participation even in *few k'äbäle* administrations. To begin with, the migrants deceive a Kumpal when he is appointed as a *k'äbäle* chairman. The former makes relationship with a Kumpal chairman through traditional institutions of bond formation such as godparents, adoption, and marriage (See Desalegn 2014b). As a Kumpal who once established this bond relation with the migrant remains loyal²⁷⁹, the migrants screw up him for their advantage. The migrant in the bond demands the *k'äbäle* chairman a gift of land from the chairman's possession, from public possession, or from holdings of other Kumpal. Given the power they have at their hand, a chairman would give the person a large size from communal holdings of the Kumpal. Other migrants who see special benefit of the person related to the *k'äbäle* leader accuse the latter of and demand land for themselves too, or accuse him before a superior authority.

Moreover, the migrants also easily mislead the Kumpal Chairman by making minor favors to the latter. An informant says that "K'oläña is like a Gumuz. The highlanders easily deceive the Gumuz, even by simply giving him a new paper money as though it has a greater value than the old one". The same things happen to a K'oläña as well. An Amhara can easily win a Kumpal's favor even by a single bottle of aräk'e". So, a Kumpal Chairman is also easily deceived by the migrants in making him decide in the interest of a migrant even at the cost of his Kumpal fellow. Due to this, other "disadvantaged" people complaint the chairman before his bosses and in this way, the migrants would easily be able to shatter the role of the Kumpal leadership.

The migrants also institute a false or exaggerated accusation against a Kumpal chairman. They may blame him for not stopping the destruction of the forest; or accuse him of being biased towards his people; or undermine him in the pretext of

²⁷⁹ Ayal Tessema, 43, Fändäk'a, 17/07/2013 (Pseudonym)

not being able to mobilize the people for development; or in general for propose that he is unable to discharge his role competently. Once he is misrepresented to bosses, he will be replaced by others, most likely by one of the migrants who, in the face of *Worāda* administrators, have constructed a “favorable” image as more “active” in fighting “rent-seeking” than the “incompetent” Kumpal.

The migrants also openly demand the power of chairmanship. Once they are gathered through “legal” or “illegal” migration, they put themselves in numerical majority. Sometimes, they may even exaggerate the number more than their actual size in a *k’ābāle*. Even when they are not numerically dominant, they claim that the Kumpal are unable to administer the people properly. Usually, they also demand a position as a chairman or deputy. Once they get into the picture, they make the natives dummy and decide all matters by themselves²⁸⁰.

So from the viewpoint of Kumpal, the curse is responsible for all this work to divest them from self-administration. It is so vital that indeed it has proven itself when Atinkut attempted to change the history (*See Chapter Seven*). It is the curse which beds them down from ability to self-administration, which would have been a simple thing to achieve in the context of ethnic politics after 1991. As was mentioned already, after this time, many ethnic groups, such as the neighboring Gumuz, have got the chance to self-administration. But for the Kumpal, it is the curse that derives them away from self-administration. This curse is already mentioned in Chapter Five as one which is obviously a part in the package of the ancestral curses.

9.3.3. “K’olāña k’it’ yālāwum”: “K’olāña does not have buttocks”

The Kumpal informants²⁸¹ criticize the Amhara that the latter often relegate the former by saying “K’olāña k’it’ yālāwum” literally meaning “K’olāña does not have buttocks”. The surface meaning may be perplexing, but, the usage as above is not for

²⁸⁰ In addition to limited and slipping-into-the-hands-of-migrants *k’ābāle* leadership, the Kumpal participation in the civil service is also none. I have tried to find their presence in Jawi Worāda sectorial offices, but they are nowhere found. The civil service is staffed by highlanders.

²⁸¹ Kasa Getahun, 42, Fändāk’a, 20/6/2013

its literal sense. The Amhara use the saying to contempt the Kumpal that they do not have the fortitude to remain at one place when they are pressed by other people. True to this saying, the Kumpal abandon their land and retreat to places where they are less or no impinged by the migrants. But, one cannot fail to notice the paradox here. “K’oläña k’it’ yäläwum” is a saying with a paradox because the migrants who had already left their home areas and settled on the Kumpal land insult the latter for being itinerant. In any case, retreat as a measure to escape encroachment from others seems to an established value for the Kumpal and that is how they respond to the Amhara encroachment.

The most common word used by the Kumpal in the discourse of retreat is *bäräha*. Our knowledge of this Amharic term tells us that, literally, *bäräha* means “desert”. But in the Kumpal usage, it indicates to the most common pattern of recoil made by these people in response to the encroachment by the highlanders. Massive highland migration towards the Kumpal and its consequence to their displacement is described in detail by Desalegn (2014a). With this brief background in the above paragraphs, the purpose here is to show how the Kumpal interpret their instability through the lens of the generational curse.

Indeed, the Kumpal believe that to live wandering is at the centre of the generational curse. “The defecting group was not expected to live stable while their brothers and sisters had already been displaced and gone to a foreign country”, said an informant²⁸². According to this informant, ever since the time of Yikuno Amlak, the Kumpal life is characterized by run-away. When the Kumpal face failure and loss, they look back to their past, and it is the curse which offers the dominant ideology of interpreting the past. It is the curse that has formed a sense of people’s identity through time. The Kumpal life is dominated by the past and the main plot in the story of the past is the curse. Accordingly, it is in the nature of the Kumpal curse to make them temporary inhabitants to where ever they settled; that makes them

²⁸² Agide Ayal, 56, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

always seek a sense of permanent settlement, but permanence not possible by people who continuously push them away and therefore make them retreat. Placelessness is also at the centre of their perception about the curse.

9.4. A Recent Movement to Break with the Curse

When EPRDF controlled the power, changes seemed promising. In fact, there were few glimmer of hope which gave rise to an apparent confirmation for the curse to have been broken in previous ceremony. The changes begin with the fact that a person from their side, i.e., Atinkut Arifew represented them in the *woräda* council. There was emancipating news of freedom of ethnic groups, and in general the dawn of new era.

But, there is a belief that the curse is still lingering. Even if there are improvements, the people believe they are still below other communities. For example, they look around how much the Gumuz have changed, an ethnic group who, in previous regimes, have had almost the same or even less status than the Kumpal. They mention health and agriculture extension workers who are not their children. They also see school teachers and prove that their sons and daughters are not or less represented. They also see other government employees and political administrators who do not represent them in the sense of their ethnic origin. And they cite evidence from poor participation of Kumpal children in school. Even when there are some in the school, they do not pursue much. Two decades have passed since the EPRDF took power and there has been no convincing change to accept the generational curse is broken. The young generation in particular could not rest in peace.

During my fieldwork in 2012, I met two of the *Fifi* club members known as Mirkuz, Getinet and Abawa²⁸³. I gave them an appointment to discuss with them about their *Fifi* culture as they were most senior members of the club. At the end of our

²⁸³ Getinet Mitiku, 20, Mirkuz Yismaw, 21, and Abawa 22, Fändäk'a, 25/02/2012

discussion, they told me their plan to travel. I asked them why they wanted to go to K'wara. For the moment, Mirkuz and Getinet answered me that they went to learn their culture from senior elders in K'wara, more importantly from people who still know about the Kumpal culture and "history". I asked them what culture they wanted to learn, and they told me about the interest to learn history of *Fifi*, how they came to be who they are, and in general their motivation to learn the long-suppressed Kumpal identity due to marginalization.

Asking this question, I did not have an intention to raise the beginning of the entire story of this section, a story about how the two young Kumpal men tried to mobilize breaking the curse in their age, the responsibility to "cleansing" themselves from the ancestral curse which is hindering them from their way, pulling them behind from everything and every other people who are not Kumpal.

Gradually, I came to understand that the purpose of their travel was not really as they told me. A speculation from one informant even raised my doubt that they must have most likely gone to witches. My interest became sustained at this point and when studying their belief system, I also wanted to know about their case as well. But this also was proven to be untrue. Gradually, I also got some spotlight that they went to K'wara to know if the generational curse had been broken and why they still remain unchanged. I insisted myself that I should hear the story from them. I was able to break into the underlying movement of the youth under the leadership of Getinet, Mirkuz, and Abawa for breaking the curse once and for all. I met Getinet in September 2013 and he became a kind hearted to sincerely discuss about their plan. Mirkuz was on his duty as a security guard of T'ana Bălās Sugar Project, a job he recently secured from the opportunities the development project is said to have brought to the people. I heard only from Getinet and Abawa was in K'wara.

According to Getinet, he and other few friends of him had no rest seeing their area fast changing from time to time, but their community not benefiting from the changes (See Chapter Nine. They began to question about stagnant, little changing

or worsening situation of their community. They were of the opinion that this generational curse was still arresting them from opportunities, as can be seen from their life and the lives of the entire community. So, their travel to K'wara was to hear from the elders whether or not the previous attempt to break with the curse was really successful. The response was negative. They were told that the attempt was not entirely successful. This answer proved rumors about failure of the breaking of the generational curse during the Därg too. Therefore, Getinet said, "we don't have to still continue living with the curse. It must be broken!"

The three young men (Getinet, Mirkuz and Abawa) charted a plan to break with the curse once and for all. They agreed that they must first approach schools in their communities to convince students. They submitted application to a school principal of Fändäk'a General Primary School. They also approached the principal in person and explained to him their plan of seeing the Kumpal students alone for some days after school. The school principal understood what they wanted to do and consented, even encouraged them to go ahead as long as it can be of help to them.

They made a series of meetings with the students at Fändäk'a General Primary School. In the meeting at the first day, only few students availed themselves. In the second day, almost all students came. Getinet says, all in all they held six meetings on this issue which is mainly discussion on an agenda: "why are Agäw students weaker in education than others?"

During the meetings, some students proposed that the reason Agäw students are making little or no progress in education is because they pass from one grade to another without accomplishing lower level classes. Others said it was because they are lazy. But, these ideas were opposed by the majority of students who say the real reason is the curse. Getinet himself insists:

The problem is not whether or not the Agäw students are weak. Why then even the most outstanding students fail when it comes to the exam? Why

then an Agäw student cannot answer a question in the class even when he knows the answer? We all agreed that it was indeed because of the curse.

Even to convince each other to a better extent, they conducted an experiment in Fändäk'a General Primary and Secondary Schools. Three of them, who were spearheading the activity, organized a tutorial class for six months on the weekends. Better Kumpal students were assigned to teach students below grade five. "For example I taught Physics", says Getinet.

The finding of the experiment was comforting to the idea of the adversity of the curse. As indicated above, one of the problems of the Kumpal students is their poor participation in the class because of the curse struggling them not to stand out. When a teacher asked a student, even a better student would sweat severely when he opens his mouth for an answer. In the first place, when they raise their hand to answer a question, not only their hand but also their entire body did tremble. Some suggested this might be because of poor socialization. But the problem remains the same even when they answer questions for their colleagues during the experimental tutorial. The same sweating, shivering, stuttering....! "So what is this?" asked Getinet. According to him, it is of course the curse. They did experiment for six months; there was no change; the curse is true.

Unfortunately, this debate and the result of the experiment even worked to the detriment of students who used to be better off. Students who participated in the debate and the experiment gradually convinced themselves and other colleagues that the curse is indeed true and thus no school until it is done away with. The number of students in the school dropped for some time. Everyone was anxious and willing for the breaking ceremony as a precondition to schooling. They wished the day be very soon.

Many students and more other people who joined them organized themselves into several teams of three, each team to reach a school where the Kumpal students

learn. They obtained permission from school principals, contacted Agäw teachers in schools, and asked them support of their plan. The teachers were also so positive that they even wanted to collaborate with them with things they can help. They announced the program in each of class and many schools fixed a meeting with the students at some day. They were able to reach many *k'äbäles* and every student in Gibacha, Kwayanta, other places knew this thing, says Getinet. "In this process", adds Getinet "other [non-Kumpal] students also showed interest to join this campaign. But we told them that it is not a matter of their concern".

In the meantime, the three principal organizers (Getinet, Mirkuz, and Abawa) formed them into a supreme committee, while they assigned students who would work as subcommittee members in each school. Each sub-committee discussed with students in the school it was designated. A kind of survey was made to know if and how much Kumpal students were successful in each school. The result showed a very low success rate. While some students tended to deny the presence of the curse as an obstacle to their education, many students agreed that the curse is indeed their enemy.

The supreme committee compiled findings from the sub-committees. The findings showed that the Kumpal students were willing, and indeed they were very welcome to this campaign of breaking the curse. Encouraged by the result, members of the supreme committee facilitated the idea of breaking the ancestral curse once and for all.

The next step was to scale up this mobilization from schools to the entire community. Though many villagers were already aware of the movement, the committee members planned to reach the entire community. The convenient place for this was churches. In order to go through churches and make the campaign, they needed a support letter from each *k'äbäle* administration where the intended church for campaign is found. Accordingly, two of the members of the supreme

committee, Mirkuz and Getinet, applied for a support letter from Alu K'urand K'äbäle, where they live.

However, the campaign was said to have been started in an inappropriate time. It was the time when the 2010 local election was due. The *k'äbäle* administrators refused the committee members the letter of support until the election was over. After the election, the rainy season came in and it was not possible to plan the travel to longer months. Moreover, it was also the time when *Fifi* amateur club was being organized (See Section 9.2.2.). The three young men who were members of the supreme committee were also involved in this club, for the keen interest they have to develop their culture. The work in the club also became another time-consuming matter. As a result, the campaign to organize a ritual of breaking the curse did not move any further than this!

Nigatu, who was also listening to this story from Getinet, in the end commented the following.

Our children are hurt and we did not help them. The rumor about the previous ceremonies of breaking the curse was not reliable. Some say it was broken; others say it was not. We did not take it serious. We were just wasting our time in promoting our culture through *Fifi*. The curse should have been broken before anything else. Our children are still going with the burden of the perception of curse at their head. I have to confront it. What else should I do? If the curse is really not broken, it will remain to harm us. The curse is true. Let alone in that very truthful time, the curse works even in our age of treachery.

Nigatu promised that they should do this away soon. They should free their children who go to school with the burden of curse and who are arrested in the idea of the curse. Whether or not it will be realized and more importantly, whether or not they can undertake a successful ritual is yet to be seen. I was able to follow the progress of this story until September 2014, and unfortunately there was no progress.

9.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed post-1991 interventions to the Kumpal and their interpretation of changes or lack of changes thereof. And there are two different interpretations of the changes as the result of the interventions. A group of Kumpal people see some positive changes after 1991. Hence they believe that as long as they are, no matter how the level varies, capable of changing, the idea of the curse might have been false or may have been broken in attempts made before. Another group of informants interpret by saying even if there are some positive changes and even if these changes were not thinkable in the time before 1991, there are still a large number of problems than positive changes even after 1991. This group of informants argues that the existing changes are not fundamental; they are little compared to changes to other ethnic groups and compared to what the political ideology after 1991 promises to give them. If anything, the changes are merely apparent and deceptive to make one doubt about the curse. The changes are not sufficient to convince one about the fact that the curse is indeed lifted, or is false. There is still a good reason to believe that the Kumpal curse is still working against them. There is still a good reason to believe that the curse is detrimental to their everyday life. As Mirkuz, Getinet, and Abawa launched the campaign, there is still a good reason to believe that the curse must be broken. In general, the tendency to the Kumpal perception to be changed about the curse seems to be overridden, so far, by a complex continuity of oppression even in the era of ethnic federalism.

CHAPTER TEN

AUTHENTICITY, MYTH AND VICTIMHOOD IN THE KUMPAL MEMORY

10.1. Introduction

Along the way, I have raised and dropped several theoretical issues that warrant lengthy and critical analysis in their own right. However, I have to pull together only central issues in the line of Kumpal history, memory and victimhood, and dwell in theoretical analyses from two major strands. The first one is analysis of the Kumpal material through the dynamics of memory approach. I have already discussed in Chapter Two that consistent to the arguments of this approach, the Kumpal memory has both elements of historical veracity and mythical reconstruction. In this chapter, I answer the question about which one from the package of the Kumpal memory contains a sense of reality and which one a myth. Along the latter side, I also present what I call is the “cultural-model” of memory reconstruction. And the second strand of analysis I make here is about victimhood. After reading so much about the Kumpal belief in oppression and curse, I guess readers develop a thrust to get an answer for why, in the first place, the Kumpal reproduce a memory that defeats them. This chapter tries to give some insights to answer this question too, and challenges the conventional notion about identity at large and memory in particular as something which exists only for some utility (*See Chapter Two*). As far as I can understand, the possibility of a community having the type of memory which does not have any utility in material or political sense is sidelined in the arguments of memory scholars. The fact that a community can create and reproduce a self-relegating identity regardless of its utility is not much conceived in the memory scholarship. I have tried to develop a “moral theory” of identity reproduction to explain the Kumpal scenario.

10.2. Historical Veracity

After reading so far, what judgment are we to make about the Kumpal memory as having historical veracity? Can we make it a prey to presentists/purists? I have already made clear at the level of indication my answer to this question in Chapter Two, that I cannot make the Kumpal memory a victim of purists/presentists. Here I

argue why. My basis of argument to show the historical component of the Kumpal memory is logic. As one can see, there are several interventions I have made with historical materials particularly in Chapter Four and Chapter Five to show how the Kumpal oral memory has grains of historical background directly or indirectly.

Place names are important logical evidences for the veracity of the Kumpal memory. Many scholars (e.g. Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, Casey 2004) argue that collective memory is embedded in some sort of local landscape. This also applies to the case of the Kumpal. The Kumpal memory bears place names such as Armach'ïho, Kîmir Dingay, Sigadi, Säk'ot'a, and Aläfa. These are places which we know until today and it is not possible to defy them as merely fictionally used in the Kumpal memory. Besides, in the Kumpal scenario, it is not possible to argue that these names were merely inserted for an instrumental motive without any element of reality in the background. Rather, it is more logical to argue that the place names are pegs of some historical phenomenon. I think it is not disputable to say that the more memories are situated in time and place, the more they carry historical evidences, and so does the Kumpal memory. As Riano-Alcalá (2000:125) also argues, place names speak not only an attachment of people to a landscape, but also some "practical information" about the past.

Personal names are also other logical evidences. Both names of "oppressors" and leaders of the community are often mentioned in the Kumpal story. Some of these names have references in parallel histories of other people. For example, the Kumpal mention Iffewos as their leader during the exodus, and the same name is also mentioned in the chronicle of Bakaffa as the name of a person who was then local chief of Lasta.²⁸⁴ The Kumpal mention Hîlawe (otherwise called Hîlay) as one of the "oppressors" sometime before the exodus. This name is also mentioned in the same chronicle of Bakaffa as the name of a person who was a *Girazmach* (literally commander of the left) of the Gondärine king. Tewodros II is also mentioned in the

²⁸⁴ Translation from Ge'ez to Amharic of Bakaffa's chronicle

Kumpal story to have been their best ally while he was in banditry. The last person with the name Wosiadal died about five years ago among the Kumpal. A *Fifi* genre by the name Wosiadal exists in the Kumpal memory today and the way he is represented in the story suggests a person by this name was a despot who was chasing them from behind when they were in exodus. These all names do not seem to be simply fabricated. They rather show the resilience of some historical truth in the Kumpal memory.

Parallel history of the Agäw in general also tells us the probability of the Kumpal memory to be true. In Chapter Four, I have presented, from the available literature, a short history of a long process of Agäw interaction and integration into the central state as well as ensuing oppressions. There is no logical reason to disregard that the Kumpal experience may have been different. The Kumpal memory of oppression and exodus can also be the result of oppression in the course of a historical process of integration of them into the central Ethiopian state.

The *nature* of the memory, i.e., it being about oppression and victimhood itself, is also logical evidence *par excellence*. It is hard to believe the people would invest in constructing the self-defeating story out of joke, merely as a fiction. There is no theoretical or empirical evidence which shows people investing time to invent story to defeat themselves, to destroy their pride. The expectation is rather to the opposite. As discussed below at length, ethnic groups maintain, even through invention, identities which present them as worthy. Self-respect, I believe, is a universal value of all forms of society. So the fact that the Kumpal memory survives contrary to what we expect for a human group shows that it is something which was imposed from some inescapable reality some time ago.

To sum up, pending for profound and interdisciplinary researches in anthropology, history and archeology, even at this level of data, the tendency to believe that collective memory is a mythology, “arbitrary”, “selective”, and “lacking legitimacy of history” (Misztal 2003:99) is not tenable to argue for the Kumpal. There is rather a

promising sense of truth. It is historically valid in one or another way: first by placing itself in what seems to be a genuine historical antecedent or second by maintaining edifices of historical evidences in the oral and performative narratives memory.

10.3. Mythical reconstruction

After I have argued for the first side of the coin, i.e., the historical veracity of the Kumpal memory, I now need to consider also another side, i.e. that aspect of the Kumpal memory which is mythically redefined. What aspects of the Kumpal memory can be patched as merely reconstructed myths from possible background reality of history? Of course, there are many anecdotes in the Kumpal story which are so imaginative that they seem to be merely thrilling myths. It is difficult to enter into isolated discussion of each episode on how it was mythically reconstructed. What is important here is analyzing the *foundational story* of exodus, particularly the episode creating distinction of the Kumpal between those who had gone for exodus and those who remain today in Jawi and its neighboring areas, thus into those who levied the curse and those who received it respectively, and thus between past and present. The episode in the story of levying the curse upon the defecting group is a critical juncture in the mythical reconstruction of history, and that is where I focus here to show my “cultural model of memory reconstruction”.

The argument I make here is that the Kumpal culture of cursing in general has been used to change the specific course of the Kumpal history into a forceful mythical reconstruction. By way of this, I am arguing that the general cultural system of cursing (and blessing) of the Kumpal today existed longer than the exodus time itself. Let me show the cultural system of cursing and blessing for the Kumpal at present to argue that it had been preponderated to cursing the defecting group during the time of exodus. To put what I say in a broader context, let me describe first the Kumpal culture of cursing and blessing. I begin with blessing and then proceed with cursing.

10.3.1 Cursing and Blessing among the Kumpal of Today

Giving blessings

The giving and receiving of blessings is an important part of ethical reckoning among the Kumpal today. Blessings are used as an intervention for alleviating signs of misfortune or promoting fortunes for persons and their property. Generally, the themes around the Kumpal blessings describe an ideal life centered on, for example, stability, prosperity, fertility, success and cooperation.

But as virtually every ritual is a source of blessings, which theme is emphasized at a time depends on a context it is performed. For example, for a marriage ceremony to be successful, blessing is applied at its different stages. A graceful way to conclude the wedding ceremony is to have the last words as a blessing called down on the couple by elders. Moreover, exquisite blessing is expected after conclusion of traditional rituals such as after escorting off *gambiri* and entreating *s'axasivi* (See Chapter Three).

Yet, one can find common themes across different contexts of blessing. I was able to observe²⁸⁵ several times that a coffee ceremony, most of the time, is closed by blessing. The girl who made the coffee is blessed *anke iyimish* (let you prosper). If a person giving the blessing is a neighbor, he or she blesses the entire household which prepared the coffee ceremony by saying *sisay twayimba* (let grace come into your house). Or if there is a person sick in the house of the coffee ceremony, it is prayed as *divan govanimix* (let God visit him/you). And for all in the coffee ceremony, *tino iyimba* (let you get health) would be appropriate. Generally, the blessings call for peaceful, healthy, and wealthy lives. Prayers are made for humans, the crops, the rain, and the like. Part or all of words to be called in the blessing can

²⁸⁵ Observations at the households of: Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand on 01/03/2013; Abjew Kebede, 70, Bagusa Mariam, 08/03/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 23/02/ 2012, Fändäk'a; and Debasu Kebede, 45, Bagusa Mariam, 05/03/2012 are some to mention.

be contextually determined. The themes of blessings made on the coffee ceremony can also be commonly found in many other contexts.

There are no specific rules for a pattern of blessing. A blessing depends on the oratory skill of a person. Hence, from one person giving a blessing to another, there can be additions or omissions of contents of a blessing, and even the same person does not give exactly the same contents of blessing at different times.

In addition to their content, it is also important to raise points relating to the form. Kumpal blessings consist of lines delivered by a man who is blessing, and line of blessing answered by a short word “amen”²⁸⁶ spoken in unison, by others gathered in the ceremony. The blessing thus contributes to a poetic structure and texture. At the end of the blessings, all murmur in unison including the blessing giver himself by a word or phrase depending on the context and function of the blessing.

Blessing is mainly given by an auspicious member of male or female elders ideally three, the most senior giving the blessing after his juniors. A blessing by the most senior is considered to be binding of all others blessing. The seniority is among those who are present in the context giving rise to the blessings. A person may be so junior in a context where there are other seniors and thus does not give blessings. The same person may qualify for blessing in another context where he or she is one of the three senior persons thus to give the blessings.

In addition to formalized blessings, it is possible to see, from day-to-day interaction of the people, that anyone who did well is blessed without the need for an associated ceremony or ritual. Non-formal blessings can arise from episodes such as when a son presents a holiday gift to his parents, when he or she extends different kinds of support to elders or shows them obedience, when a person pays one's debt, when a girl washes her father's legs, or when one makes bed for parents to sleep.

²⁸⁶ Is a declaration of affirmation

Virtually, every social interaction that requires gratitude in return is followed by informal blessing, which is no ceremonious compared to that of formal one.

Cursing

On the other side of blessings, there are also curses imposed on each other. Like the blessings, it seems so natural for the people to curse one another. As an informant²⁸⁷ said, it is common to call “heaven and earth” to impose a curse in the real or mere rhetoric intention to storm the life of someone. Through curses, people wish an array of misfortunes to others: to get bite or injury from a wild animal, to suffer from disease, to be devoid of fertility, and to lack peace and humor at marriage, to mention but only few. They may curse calling upon assistance of a supernatural to execute it.

Generally, there are two types of curses based on the content of intended adversity. The first ones are specified curses and the second non-specified. In the specified curses, a person may mention a particular kind of adversity to befall on the victim. In unspecified ones, a person does not specify exactly a particular adversity to befall upon the person being cursed. Curses imposed specifying an adversity or adversities are more frequent than curses imposed otherwise generally.

The content of specified curses is, in turn, different depending on the motive of the curser and the situation that triggers a curse. When one insults his superiors, when one commits incest, when one disrespects his parents and the like can cause that person to adversity relating to the specific curse imposed. This is to mean the type of curse determines the type of adversity. Let’s see them with some examples.

²⁸⁷ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013; Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012

One common example of curse in the form of specified adversity is *anke gewmix*²⁸⁸ literally to mean “let you be deprived of growth/prosperity”. If a cause is of an economic nature in general (for example refusal to pay a loan), one may apply this curse or other related ones. It is a customary practice for the people that when one goes helpless for a number of reasons, they lend their hands each other in money or in kind. But, some people may forget the favor they have received. After they overcome their problem through loan from their relatives, neighbors or friends, they refuse to pay the debt in accordance with their promise. The person who has lent money for someone may therefore be prompted to curse the defiant. In this case also, the creditor may impose curses relating to adversities on the property of the debtor. Another example may be a curse for incest. In this case, the curse imposed may be *jero gewmix* meaning “let you be deprived of a son/daughter”. But, this does not mean that there is one to one correspondence between the type of curses and the nature of cause. In the above example, a person who refuses to repay a loan may be cursed in other different ways from just *anke gewmix*. What matters is the intention of the curser (real or rhetorical) and the scope or type of adversity he or she wishes to impose²⁸⁹.

An indication into persons who have the power to author a curse is also another important task here. Curses can be said by anyone even toddlers, but it is believed their effectiveness depends on the relative age, blood relation between the curser and the victim, as well as the curser’s intention. An effective curse is levied by relatively senior elders upon any person junior, or parents on children. But here informants²⁹⁰ say that even if a curse may come from a parent, it may be for a mere rhetorical intention. Usually, a serious curse is imposed by relatives such as uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters, among others. A person not relative may say whatever he or she wants as a curse but he or she cannot bind others with that curse. A non-

²⁸⁸ Literally, *anki* is Awngi word for Enjera. In broadest sense, it refers to all forms of gain, such as getting more multiplication of cattle, or another property. So when one is cursed by this, it is to mean that he or she shall be deprived of gain.

²⁸⁹ Belew Takele, 75, Fändäk’a, 27/03/2012; Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

²⁹⁰ Nigatu Wasse, 49 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

relative is not bestowed with the power of applying an effective curse upon someone who is not related.

There are two types of curses depending on mechanisms for breaking them. The first one represents those which can be broken only through invalidatory blessings by the very person who imposed the curse, and the second, those which can be broken through administering indigenous “medicine”. The first one is an absolute type of curse while the second one relative. This means, in the first case, a victim has to find but only for the same person who has levied the curse also to break it. If the first person who ought to break the curse is not available, for example, he or she is dead, he has to find another person in the same genealogy to substitute the original one. For example, the first son of the original person who levied the curse should break the curse on behalf of his father/mother. In either case, it is also necessary to get consent of persons to break the curse. In the second type of curse, i.e., relative cursing, breaking the curse does not necessarily require finding the same person who levied it. The victim can thwart the curse by administering a traditional medicine. However, one may not be successful in applying the medicine if the curse has been so absolute that it should not be broken unless by the person who imposed it²⁹¹. The fate of this person is to live forever with the curse, and worse the curse is transmittable to seven generations.

Whichever option may exist, there are specific procedures to be followed for eliminating curses. To begin with, a curse can be imposed with or without knowledge of the victim. If the latter is the case, it is up to a person to analyze the situations happening on his life and trace possible curses that may have been levied upon him and the person who may have done so. Casualty on the life of one’s children, property, or health, are, for example, grounds to suspect that one may have been cursed. Since there is always a risk of one being cursed, the first step for a person to break a curse is to trace if and by whom he or she may have been cursed.

²⁹¹ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K^{’w}ara), 10/02/2012.

When a person knows or suspects that he or she has been cursed, they must go to a person known as *awgi* to begin the consultation for breaking the curse. *Awgi* is a witch who tells one the kind of curse imposed, the person who imposed it, as well as, whenever possible, how to break with the curse.

Specific procedures of breaking the curse through the original person or his representatives are held as follows. First, both the person who wishes the curse to be removed and one who removes the curse contribute something for a ritual of curse breaking. For example, the former may contribute some money while the latter may prepare *t'äl'a* or *t'äj*, both mixed with honey. Then, both persons go to a cemetery of the curser, if she or he is dead. The cemetery is cleaned by the eldest brother of the person removing the curse. Then, the curse remover spills the *t'äj* or *t'äl'a* over the burial place. Then, it is believed that the curse has been removed. If the person who has levied the curse is alive and the curse breaking is to be made by him, a place identified by *awgi* can be used for the ritual of curse breaking.

An informant²⁹² relates this to the custom of taking the oath and removing it. When two people take an oath, they pick up *särdö* (fresh grass) as well as roll a stone. The meaning is that if they break the oath, let them be pulled up like the grass and their life ruined like by the stone rolling. When they want to invalidate the oath, they make a ritual of oath breaking. In order to make the ritual, they have to go to the same place that they have taken the oath. They spill honey over the place they took the oath and they put the very stone they rolled while taking the oath onto the place to symbolize that the oath is invalidated. Ato Atikilt says, removing curse is similar to removing oath for the fact that in the first case one has to find the original person (hence his or her cemetery) to break the curse, and in the latter case, one has to find the original place where the oath was taken.

²⁹² Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/02/2012

Curse breaking is administered by applying traditional medicine when one does not have option for the first method, i.e., breaking the curse by the very person who levied it. Even the option of administering a medicine works in narrow circumstances, which is if the curse maker has not imposed an absolute curse. In any case, many people who believe they have been cursed and who do not have the chance to get the original curse giver to break the curse try this second option.

In order to administer the medicine, the leaves or roots of a medicinal plant (which informants do not like to disclose) is obtained first. Then, malt is prepared from barley, sorghum, and red millet. The malt from these varieties is dried, powdered together, and boiled for some time. Then, the medicinal plant, in the form of powder itself, is added onto the boiled malt powder. When it cools down, the medicine is drunk²⁹³.

In order to help him or her in taking the medicine, a person should get ready, a day before, someone to prepare him or her medicine. Administering of the medicine is made in the early morning. A person should take the medicine before speaking any word, before going to defecation, and even before touching the floor on his feet. It is only after one takes the medicine and takes rest for some time that he or she can get out of bed, touch the floor, speak a word, or go for defecation. If these conditions are not met, it is believed the medicine becomes ineffective. The following two cases show administration of medicine to foil the curse.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K'urand, 01/03/2013; Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/02/2012

²⁹⁴ Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (K'wara), 10/02/2012

Case 7: Atikilt Demeke

Atikilt Demeke, 60, lives in Yikaho K'äbäle of K'wara Woräda. He had not had an idea of having curse from someone. However, since some time, several children of him died one by one. Of the seven children he had, only two could survive to-date (until this interview in March 2012), their fate even uncertain. Besides, his wife used to be repeatedly sick. As time went by, rumors circulated about him to have been cursed. Moreover, his wife also visited witch and she was told that she has been imposed a curse. Finally, the husband and wife discovered that they were relatives and there was incest. Atikilt says, "Without his knowledge, my father had married me to someone who has a blood relation". It was his uncle who knew this secret and who cursed Atikilt, and a person from her side who cursed his wife. Subsequently, the husband and wife were divorced. Then the wife got the curse broken by the person who cursed her, and got married to another person with whom she started growing up several children safely. But, the person who cursed Atikilt is already dead to lift him the curse, and his/her descendants are not willing either to give him blessing to break the curse. As a result, he began to administer the traditional medicine. Every year, he takes the medicine on September 11 or Mäskäräm 1 in Ethiopian calendar; every year as he celebrates the Ethiopian New Year. He will take the medicine until he feels his life is free from the curse.

Case 8: Zemu Demoz

Zemu Demoz, 54, lives in K'wara Woräda. She used to offend her mother, and one day she insulted her to the point where her mother could not tolerate her temper but cursed her daughter. Yet she was a good mother. She cursed her by saying "let you have children but remain poor". She did not curse her fertility, but only for the deprivation of property. For several years, Zemu remained so poor while she had several children. One day, she thought of removing the curse, and went to the *awgi*, who also advised her to do so. She was the eldest daughter herself, and therefore cannot give blessing for herself to break her own curse. She went to her eldest aunt and got the blessing. Her poverty is over and now she has not only children but also several cattle, sheep, goats and chicken. By the local standard, she is rich enough now.

Once a person is lucky in successfully putting a stop to the curse, he or she will start living a life free from individual curse. Property lost as the result of the curse will begin to come, one's children will begin to survive, and in general be free from adversities of the curse. However, once they removed the curse from them does not

however mean they are immune to new curses. One has to always make assessment of his or her condition, consult *awgi*, attempt breaking with the curse by either of the available options.

10.3.2 Preponderance of Cursing Individuals over Cursing the Community

The purpose of bringing the system of cursing individuals described above is to show how a memory system is also a cultural system. In this particular case of the Kumpal, the central argument I make here is that it is the pre-existing system of cursing individuals that might have been extended by the ancestors to befall the curse on their absconding groups during the exodus. Or, the Kumpal may have imposed the individual system of cursing onto the community if we say that the idea of cursing is merely constructed. In any case, the curse that befell or is believed to have fallen on the ancestors charged with desertion was not all of a sudden brought in at that moment of the exodus and at the episode of crossing the river. It was rather something which was propagated from a pre-existing cultural system, as described above, which also exists until today. This argument is based on a general assumption that cursing is a universal phenomenon of societies.

Cursing *practices* vary from time to time and from place to place. They vary in how they are made and what they mean, and how they are believed they affect people's lives. Today's American's cursing "amounts to fairly short, simple, and direct" (e.g. "Eat shit and die") (Jay 1992:2). In terms of its function, in modern societies, "Cursing serves the emotional needs of the speaker and cursing affects listeners emotionally" (Jay 2000: 9). "To modern ears, most oaths are now usually 'demystified' into mere forms of words". As Hughes (1998) also adds, "statements are now made under oath only in formal, for instance, legal proceedings, or in such necessary rituals of social and political continuity as taking the oath of allegiance. They form the basic structure of trust on which all society is based, so that every culture has some form of binding oath, as it has some form of verbal taboo". Besides, the commitment to an oath also varies today. As Swift says in Hughes (1998:236):

For, now-a-days-, Men change their oaths,
As often as their cloths

On the other hand, cursing in “traditional” societies is different from those of the “modern”. Hughes (1998: 5, 236) says since “sacral” notions of language tends to be very powerful at “primitive” stages of society, taboos have traditionally grown up around offensive usages of the language. Hence imposing a curse is ritualized and more complex in the so-called pre-modern cultures. In traditional societies, cursing is more ritualized, more formal, and strongly adhered compared to modern societies.

Even if the way cursing is executed varies from culture to culture, what I want to bring forward here is essentially a universal or at least widely common practice of cursing and blessing in human culture. Hughes (1998) shows swearing has a long historical root in the English language and English speaking societies. As Antonio Machado cited in Hughes (1998:236) says, “Beware of the community in which blasphemy does not exist; underneath, atheism runs rampant”. Indeed, morality and religion tend to be universal so far, even though the type of moral and the type of religion varies from society to society. So swearing and cursing can be understood as universal or at least widely prevalent phenomenon across time and place. With regard to oathing, Hudson-Koster (2010:16, 61) also says taking an oath is “a practice that has existed throughout time and space...” Silving (1959) also adds the origin of oathing cannot be attributed to any single society; rather it is embedded in human civilizations. It existed throughout time and space so as to ensure societal order.

Indeed, the idea that cursing and blessing is universal is also applicable to the Kumpal case. The idea suggests that cursing among the Kumpal is universal or at least common, in the sense that it existed both in the past and present. And this was also true to the Kumpal including those who existed before the exodus. And the form of cursing and blessing is not like that of “modern” societies for which this practice

was attributed to be informal, serving emotion, and not in fact believed to occur. As a “traditional” society both before the exodus and even today, cursing among the Kumpal is an institutionalized, ritualized (as it has already been discussed, like burying black bitch, etc), and believed to have the ability to befall on individuals and affect their life.

Thus, the Kumpal used to have a cultural system of cursing and blessing even before the actual or believed episode of exodus, and I argue that it is this system of cursing that was preponderated over those oathers who allegedly failed to keep the oath during the exodus. An idea that the Kumpal were cursed as a group before exodus was not appealing to them. It seemed even annoying to think so because it suggests the people are cursed from the very origin. As argued above, a private system of cursing had existed before the exodus, but not the whole community “cursed”. I propose that the identity of group curse is only constructed as the result of the phenomenon of exodus, and in particular failure to keep the oath to go into the exodus all alike.

The Kumpal cultural system of cursing individuals discussed above also shows that curse is capable of passing through generations. Similarly, it is believed that the communal curse on the “traitors” in the exodus has worked down to generations of those originally cursed. It is difficult to know how many generations have passed since the beginning of the generational curse, but the idea of today’s Kumpal being hit by the curse is their belief in the ability of the curse for genealogical transmission. Some informants²⁹⁵ even support this argument that the ancestors have cursed the land and thus by mere virtue of one living on the cursed land makes one suffer from the burden of the ancestral curses.

²⁹⁵ For example, Atikilt Demeke, 60, Yikaho (Kwara), 10/02/2012; Nigatu Wasse, 49 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2012

10.3.3. A “Cultural Model of Memory Reconstruction”

The argument I made in the above section leads to what I call is the *cultural model* of memory reconstruction. In this model, I am suggesting three key points. First, as the dynamics of memory approach strongly argues, I begin from the assumption that there is some sort of historical reality that happened in the past. In the case of the Kumpal, it has been often said that the reality is oppressive governorship. Almost since the dawn of history, a number of oppressive histories are suggested in the literature and the memory of the Kumpal also witnesses this.

Second, I am suggesting to the fact that this reality has been changed and reinterpreted through cultural means. It has to be mentioned that an axis of reconstruction of memory from history can be of political (E.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), social (Tonkin 1992), and religious (e.g. Waugh 2005, Darroch 2009) processes. Political reconstruction can be made to attain certain political motives; contemporary politicians or dominant groups (re)create memory as though it was history. Likewise, memory can be reconstructed through religious reinterpretation of some pre-existing phenomena (e.g. Waugh 2005). And in social agencies, leaders of society can create memory to maintain their social powers (Tonkin 1992). So when I say cultural model of memory reconstruction, I am referring primarily to culture as the agency for re-imagination of history into memory. Culture here is taken as a set of institutions, in the case of “traditional” societies, for example rituals, oral traditions, and the like.

Third, the above point obviously presupposes to certain cultural phenomenon that gave a blue print for history to be reconstructed and interpreted. In the case of the Kumpal, I am referring to the cultural system of cursing as an agency to give rise to a new imaginative dimension of a historical reality. Through cultural meanings of the curse, the people reconstructed memory and thus see memory transformed through mutual reinforcement of curse and history.

10.3.4. The Nature of the Combination

So far, I made arguments on the two faces of the Kumpal memory, i.e., veracity and myth, and I have said that the Kumpal memory is a synthesis of a reality from some grain of historical truth and mythical reconstruction. In this section, I would like to make some reflections on the nature of the mishmash.

If the Kumpal memory has a dual nature, then one may ask which one is more dominant than the other. This question can be answered by considering few more points. First, I can only see that the Kumpal memory can be placed somewhere between the opposite ends in the continuum of “pure” myth and “pure” history, if there is something we call “pure”. In fact, I have defined collective memory in Chapter Two that what makes it unique from myth and history is having some characteristics from both. Second, I propose that the more we go back in time, the more historically valid may be the memory. Conversely, there is more and more mythical reconstruction as it passes from one generation to another. Hence, as we go from earlier point in time to the present, the mythical aspect becomes more dominant. As time passes, it has to be transmitted to different generations, and given the oral nature of the Kumpal memory and the distortion in this kind of transmission, the mythical component of the memory becomes more and more dominant.²⁹⁶

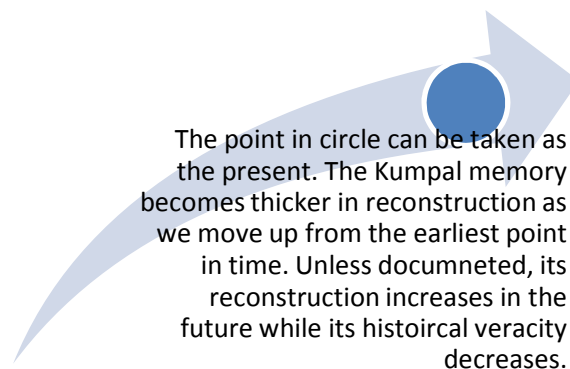


Figure 6 The nature of memory reconstruction (Developed by the researcher)

²⁹⁶ In addition to the oral transmission, other factors also increase or decrease reconstruction. For example, due to state intervention after 1991, the Kumpal situation which seemed unchangeable are now changing, and this undermines the veracity of the memory.

In order to refer to memory as having both myth and reality, Assmann (1997:8-9) uses “mnemohistory” and Parmentier (1987:510) “mythologized” history. “Unlike history proper mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such but, only with past as is remembered”. According to Olick (2008:18), mnemohistory is a theory of cultural transmission that helps us understand history neither as one thing after another nor as a series of objective stages, but as an active process of meaning making through time. The Kumpal mnemohistory is thus the result of an ongoing process of imaginative reconstruction but pegged on the past reality

10.4. Victimhood in the Kumpal Memory

My discussion of the Kumpal memory in Chapter Five, Six, and Seven is evident to its nature of victimhood. Those Chapters show that there are layers of sources of victimhood. First, there is such victimhood emanating from the oppressive rulers. Second, there is another problem inside this problem, i.e., the ancestral curse. The oppressive governorship in history begot exodus and the exodus begot ancestral curse. So there are layers of victimhood in the memory of these people. Memory of victimhood is otherwise commonly referred to as “traumatic memory” (e.g. Misztal 2003) which seems to be common subject of inquiry particularly in the psychological tradition, or “humiliated memory” as Cole (1998:626) mentions in one of her anthropological works.

The present Kumpal is actually not part of the mistake in the past, but only through their ancestors, they are victims without their fault, hence vicarious victimhood. Those chapters also show victimhood of the memory running from mere narrative level to that of everyday life and from loss at material condition to that of psychological aspects of “shame” and “guilt”. Most important for this section is to inquire why the Kumpal memory of victimhood is actively lived and reproduced. As indicated in Chapter Two, identities depositing curse and partly self-imposed victimhood have not been found in the anthropological literature, as far as I am concerned, at least to a significant degree. I have not also come across a society

without counter-memory when they have a memory of victimhood. This issue of how a community can reproduce a memory of negative self-image has important theoretical implication. I show existing theories do not adequately explain this condition, and propose for a theory of “moral identity”.

10.4.1. Theory of Forgetting/ Repression

Theories in social sciences tend to argue that negative memories in general are at best forgotten and at worst repressed. Along this line, I have already discussed the justification by presentists. Presentists believe that memory exists as far as it is positive and economically, socially or politically useful to a society and/or its elites. From the presentists’ point of view, such memory of victimhood for the Kumpal would not have existed, and *Fifi* would not have existed either. Presentists see commemoration as an “invention” (Connerton 1998).

In what can be, based on the nature of argument, dubbed under the utilitarian approach of presentists, Freud’s theory of “repression” has been “the most obvious place” or “the first place” (Olick 2008:4, 5) in the social sciences to explain such phenomenon of identity of victimhood (or trauma). According to Olick’s interpretation of Freud, the theory of repression claims that identities that negatively characterize groups tend to be repressed and people pretend they are unconscious about them. “Repressed” or “unconscious” collective memory about traces of historical events does not mean those memories are necessarily forgotten however. Repressed memories are those not recognized by the group as their own part of identity, and such de-recognition may even be explicitly ritualized. Hence, they can still continue, and can even return depending on situations (*See also* Bacon and Bronk 2014). Bronk (2014:5) in particular says “This form of undead memory refuses to remain buried but can be seen to metaphorically feed off the present, draining it of us forward impetus and normative continuity”. Such unrecognized memories can continue through oral tradition. So, as Olick (2008:20) cites J. Assmann (1997), the unconscious or de-recognition must however be in terms of cultural process of repression rather than in terms of Freudian psyche of the

individual (MacCormack 2007:37). In general, there is a belief in social sciences that memory can be repressed, or is “highly selective, deploys forgetting” (A.Assmann 2008:61).

However, findings from the Kumpal show that negative memories or haunting memories cannot be necessarily “forgotten” or “repressed”. Such memories can exist without being repressed or forgotten. The Kumpal case refutes this assumption in the social sciences that self-defeating memories among these people are not only maintained but also are constructed and actively reproduced as identity of the people. Hence, the theory of forgetting or repression does not necessarily apply to all communities.

I argue that forgetting or repression of memory depends on different factors. If memory is national or official (as these concepts are already discussed in Chapter Two), then state institutions are involved and state can coerce even by law that some aspects of memory detrimental to political or social wellbeing of a society or a state should be “forgotten”. This is common, but let me mention a couple of examples. The first example is for Germany after WWII. Due to “enormous crimes by Nazi Germany”, there was a radical rethinking about the past to newly re-forge the present. To radically change the past, there were discourses of disentangling between the corrupt state and the German culture, and re-forging the German identity into the European (Olick 2008:4). There was also the same experience in Rwanda, to “forget” about genocide in that country (Nyirubugara 2013). The examples above have quite a different scenario compared to the Kumpal. But the point I bring them here is to show how “national” memory can be “forgotten” by sanctions from political leaders. Creation and “forgetting” of national memories can be motivated by politics but creation and reproduction (rather than forgetting) for the Kumpal is mainly culturally institutionalized.

Unlike the psycho-social theory of traumatic memories, as discussed above, which claims societies suppress or forget memories which humiliate them (Cole

1998:616), the Kumpal maintain, commemorate and reproduce negative memories. They hold memories of victimhood, memories that defeat them, their present and their future and their pride. The past for the Kumpal is not positively associated. A widely conceived idea that "...the past seems to be lending dignity to the identity of many groups..." (Misztal 2003:135) is not tenable to the Kumpal. Rather the Kumpal are an "honest community" of memory who give us a striking example of a community of memory of victimhood. Bellah et al (2007) quoted below from his *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* says it clearly:

Communities have a history—in an important sense they are ...constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a "community of memory," one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community. These stories of collective history and exemplary individuals are an important part of the tradition that is so central to a community of memory. But the stories are not all exemplary, not all about successes ...and achievements. A genuine community of memory will also tell painful stories of shared suffering that sometimes creates deeper identities than success.

Even this quotation did not say it all about the Kumpal. The quotation suggests the presence of both humiliating and rewarding memories in a community. Bellah does not suggest to the fact that only a humiliating aspect of memory could exist, without a gratifying "counter memory" (Werbner 1998:1). If the community who maintains and reproduces both negative and positive memories is a true community of memory, then, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Kumpal can be called a striking example of the community of negative memory.

Fifi plays a key role in reproducing the Kumpal memory of victimhood. Merriam (1964:219-227) summarizes several functions of music from various ethnographic case studies. Functions of music include emotional expression, i.e., music can be used to express emotions which cannot be normally otherwise expressed. Example for this can be about expression of sexual taboos. Music can also be used for

aesthetic enjoyment, for communication, for enforcing community to social norms, validation of social institutions, for religious purposes, and the like. However, the function of *Fifi* is primarily for commemoration of the past events. I am not suggesting it does not have other functions; rather I am referring to the ability of *Fifi* to advance the imaginative level of cursing and add much stronger material to reconstruction. Such function of *Fifi* is a moral one.

The ritual of performance of *Fifi* is an active agent to openly reproduce victimhood among the Kumpal. “Performative act both describes a condition and recreates it” (Winter 2010:11). This claim also works to *Fifi*. *Fifi* is both a bearer of victimhood and an institution which reproduces it. *Fifi* consists of a memory which does not excite the bearers from the inside. It is the commemorative of the past misfortune that continues until today. Memory of the past may have some sort of pain for everyone because of certain connections to it, but for the Kumpal, it represents a single picture of victimhood, as far as the past is concerned. If we like, we can take the musical dimension of *Fifi*, we can see an ethic role of music more than an aesthetic. Tilmans et al. (2010: 19) attribute “[w]e have come to term people caught in such circumstances victims of trauma, understood as men and women suffering from a wound which will not heal”, and for the Kumpal heal through some narrow circumstances as given in Chapter Eight about breaking the curse.

10.4.2. Towards a Moral Theory of an Identity of Victimhood

If the Kumpal memory is kept and reproduced while it is detrimental to the pride of the people, and if it cannot be explained through presentists approach, how do we explain it? Like I have proposed for “cultural model” of memory reconstruction along the dynamics of memory approach, here I propose for what I call “moral theory” of identity reproduction also along the line of the dynamics of memory approach. Through the moral theory of identity, I argue for the existence and reproduction of memories is a moral duty. Reproducing identities which are self-defeating to the community can be made simply because certain moral premises oblige the holders of the identity to do so. I indulge into the supposition that the

reason why the Kumpal maintain their “negative” memory does not lie in the utilitarian rationale as presentists say, but rather in the moral obligation to reproduce it.

In the first place, since “morality” does not have an agreed upon concept (Fassin 2012), I need to put a working definition for it. The idea of morality refers to a set of guidelines for “...what is viewed as good, or right, or just, or altruistic...” (Fassin 2012:7). Even in this sense, morality encompasses a wide range of issues and can be considered as part of a cultural system (Csordas 2013). When it comes to specific cultural context of different cultural groups, what is moral and what is not is relative. What is good and bad or right and wrong or altruistic and selfish are determined by a cultural context for which we are talking about.

Then what is a moral obligation about maintaining the Kumpal memory which is not put to utility? As indicated in discussions made so far, for the Kumpal, the past has a voice sounding across time. What is it that sounds to the Kumpal? This has also been discussed at length starting from Chapter Five. It sounds victimhood, loss in every aspect of the Kumpal life. Specially, dimension of victimhood which I do not attempt to meet detail discussion in Chapter Seven because it extends the scope of my dissertation but which I should mention here briefly is victimhood beyond material aspects (i.e., failure to succeed in school, in political administration, in wealth, and the like) is psychological aspect of victimhood. A more moral aspect of victimhood is an accompanying sense of shame and guilt in the Kumpal memory. Briefly, “....shame is something which should accompany the failure to live up to the positive image, whereas guilt results from committing a negative act...” (Creighton 1990:302).

Let me take guilt in a further detail. In the Kumpal memory, I propose that there is a tyranny of guilt. The source of this guilt is the failure of their ancestors, i.e., the breaking of the oath and ensuing burden of generational curse. This guilt can be in theory removed only through the mechanism the curse gives solution for itself. It

gives a system of unforgiving unless in a stringent condition that the curse should be broken.

In addition to breaking the oath and its consequences in curse, the Kumpal memory also offers moral lessons from remembering how their ancestors failed, and not to repeat this in this generation. Lessons about not to repeat the same mistakes of division would be one. This lesson is already entrenched in the *Fifi* dance (See Photo 9). It has been reported that the reason people in the dance embrace shoulder to shoulder is to signify that they should stay as one and not repeat the same mistake as their ancestors. As an informant explains, “[d]ancing and jumping is not merely made for entertainment or futile waste of energy. The *Fifi* has meanings to convey to our generation not to repeat mistakes made by our ancestors. It seems to me that we have historically determined moral consciousness”²⁹⁷.

How this value is entrenched in the everyday life of the Kumpal is another subject of further study. But as an example, I would mention one aspect of their culture, i.e., secretism. As indicated in Chapter One, I have stated that the Kumpal are secretive mainly to “outsiders”. Some informants²⁹⁸ suggest this to the origin of curse. It was as the result of not being able to maintain the secret that they have been divided and the curse originated. Today’s secretive culture seems to be a lesson derived from the previous history.

In general, there is a moral duty to remember a negative identity because as far as the Kumpal believe they are cursed, they have to break with the curse. As far as they could not break the curse, they have to remember it. It is impossible to “forget” with the belief of one being cursed. It is only when they believe the curse is broken that they would “stop” remembering or at least deattribute themselves as cursed.

²⁹⁷ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

²⁹⁸ Nigatu Wasse, 50 and Mengist Atalele, 76, Alu K’urand, 01/03/2013

Being that as it is, I do not want to reduce the preservation and reproduction of the Kumpal memory merely to the obligation of moral diktat. It is not fair to scrap-off performance of *Fifi* which is made out of inclinations of the people to maintain their identity about the past and also enjoy aesthetics of traditional music. When I say memory is maintained and reproduced for moral reasons, I do not deny the fact that “we are not only obliged to do the good, we are also inclined to do it” (Fassin 2012:8). My argument above was essentially speaking, that essentially there was and is a moral element in the perpetuation of the Kumpal memory. The Kumpal remember not selecting on the basis of standard “presentists” or “purists” give, but on the basis of what is deemed to be morally right. Moreover, it has to be noted that the Kumpal reproduction of memory is unchangeable and not which the Kumpal do not want to change either. It is a negative memory, hence the Kumpal want to change it. Yet, they have the duty to reproduce it as long as they believe in the curse and as long the curse is not broken.

Finally, I need to briefly emphasize on the place of this proposition in the existing scholarly tradition of Moral Anthropology. Even if “Moral Anthropology” is a common subject since Kant (1724-1804) (Fassin 2012:1), explaining identity from moral perspectives does not seem to have been worked enough to fully explain such scenario which is found in communities, which reproduce negative identity merely because of a moral obligation. As I have discussed so far, such scenario, like among the Kumpal, can be rather better explained through what I call “moral theory” of collective identity such as collective memory.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1. Conclusion

Using a range of qualitative research methods (i.e. interviews, observation, focus group discussions, and induced community meetings as well as review of relevant literature), in this dissertation, I have pulled and organized data into several chapters and threaded them through three major but interrelated concepts: history, collective memory, and the notion of vicarious victimhood. The findings can be summarized as below.

History for some or many ethnic groups in Ethiopia or elsewhere is a burden albeit at varying levels. Data for this research suggested, in the case of the Agäw, local and regional despots oppressed this ethnic group in the process of integration and administration of them by the central state. For the Kumpal Agäw in particular, history is represented as both extremely burdensome and doubly regrettable. It is extremely burdensome because it not only gives the people a “negative” ideological basis of their identity about the past but also practical etiquette of how to lead a “down-life” based on their interpretation of their “negative” history. It is also doubly regrettable because first oppressive rulers caused the Kumpal suffering and later ancestors who tried to revolt the oppression instituted almost non-removable generational curse. To the extent of the Kumpal knowledge today, oppressive taxation is the most and best obvious example of how they or their ancestors were treated under the yolk of oppressive rulers. The local and regional despots also discriminated against in social and political spheres. Second, the oppressive governorship as such later begot its sequel, i.e., the ancestral curse. History is both the cause and consequence of the curse. The relationship between history and memory is a little bit complex in the Kumpal case and needs a little more words in the following paragraph.

The findings of the research showed a complex relationship among these concepts, and particularly the relationship between history, and memory of victimhood which is the belief in the curse. The conceptual and empirical relationship between history and memory (of victimhood) has a reciprocal causal relationship. By this I mean first “history” is attributed as, even if indirectly, the cause of the type and form of memory, i.e., the Kumpal memory of having been cursed and living according to the words of the curse. However, once the curse arose, history of oppression became in turn the result of the curse itself. Perhaps the following figure makes my point clear.

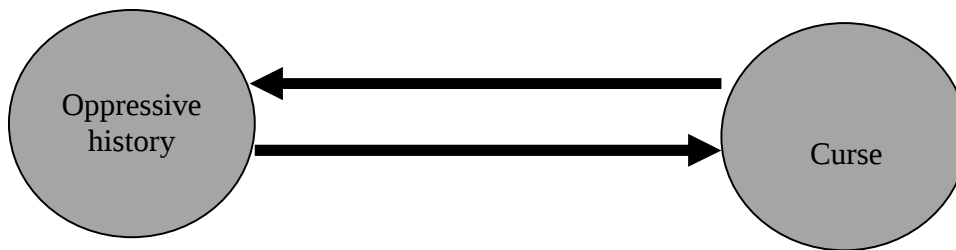


Figure 7 Relationship between history and memory of victimhood among the Kumpal

The figure needs a little bit more explanation. We start reading it from circle on the left side. And then, we follow the arrow on the lower and running from left to right. Then we follow the same direction from right to left. By this formula, oppressive history was in the first the cause of, albeit indirectly, the ancestral curse. However, once the curse arose, oppression was itself interpreted to be the result of curse.

The legacy of the oppressive historical condition the Kumpal lived and believe to have lived exists in three “fields”, i.e. the oral story, performative ritual of *Fifi*, and generally in the everyday life too. First, the Kumpal memory exists in the form of profound oral narratives containing both actual and imaginative elements. The argument that oral memory is an “indispensable” or “the most important” field of memory among the “oral culture” can be best exemplified in the case of the Kumpal. Second, memory also exists meticulously sedimented in performative *Fifi* ritual. There is an argument that memory studies should shift or at least include fields of

performative memory other than just memories which are narrated only verbally. The result of the investigation of the Kumpal *Fifi* shows that memory in the oral culture is also “sedimented” in bodily gestures and performances, as well as the material culture such as in the *Fifi* musical instruments. Third, the Kumpal memory also works in the everyday practical life, and, in this regard, I have discussed the case of self-perception of physical appearance, their “education”, administrative and educational “incompetence” of the people.

Particularly from the working of memory in the “field” of everyday life, we can say the depth of memory among the Kumpal is immense. Needless to mention, the degree of internalization of the past varies from one ethnic or cultural group to another. But it does not seem to be contestable to say that memory among the Kumpal exists in its strongest possible intensity. Bithell (2006:4) says, “It [the past] is in our bones and our blood, no matter how hard we may try to erase or forget it, it insinuates itself into our dreams”. This quotation may appear to be too exaggerated for the metaphor reaches its peak. But I think it is possible to accept it to have a strong relevance to the Kumpal. Metaphorically, it can be said the past is in the bones and blood of the Kumpal; it has already been shown how the past is believed to have made the Kumpal shorter physically as compared to the rest of groups around them. In this sense, the past is in the blood and bones of the people. The Kumpal case also shows that the past is ingrained into their perception about them as not destined to have ability for education, and not destined to having their own political representative and the like. The past gives a readily available explanation for a negative result for the Kumpal about almost everything, and they believe in it.

The reason why one can argue that the Kumpal memory represents one of the most intense presences of the past in the present is because memory feeds and reproduces itself. The *Fifi* ritual commemorative memory is one which reproduces the memory and feeds off itself. Another striking situation for intense memory reproduction is solutions offered for breaking it. Restoration of the Kumpal into their situation where they can be free from the curse is elaborate. Breaking the

curse is so complex that it is possible to do so only when the person who imposed the curse or one of his descendants volunteers to restore the curse and at the risk of one's own life. For this reason, it has been difficult to break the curse and some practical attempts to break were so far unsuccessful. However, there are some changes in the perception of the curse. As a result of some state interventions since 1991, the Kumpal are experiencing some positive changes such as access to school and infrastructure. From this, some believe the curse must have been broken from the previous attempts or *de facto* by state intervention. But, since such intervention also reproduced and created new problems, still many Kumpal believe the curse is still making them poor, uneducated, and worthless to self-rule. This is particularly evident when compared to thriving new highland migrants.

Memory is understood as something with a historical legacy. Even though this essential concept is less contestable, the actual content of things to be included into memory is contestable. The contestation seems to be the result of difference in the disciplinary background of scholars. For example, a scholar from political science may not understand memory in the same way as one who studies a "traditional" community like the Kumpal from anthropological perspective. Even if some scholars object, even within the discipline of anthropology itself, the uses of memory in its wide sense (*See Chapter Two*), in this dissertation, I have endorsed a broad conception of memory as a culture. I conceptualized it as a totality of representation of what is or is believed to have happened in the historical past. At the centre of the past is power and subjugation imposed by elites who are outsiders from the Kumpal point of view.

The dissertation has approached the Kumpal data from two strings of theoretical approaches. In the first place, I have analyzed the relationship between history and memory within the dynamics of memory approach. I have understood memory as something which constitutes intersecting realms of reality and imagination. There are two poles in the continuum of historical validity of the memory. On the one hand, there is a complete myth, fictional, valid only as oral literature. On the other

hand, there is history which is critical and a representation of historical reality. Memory runs between the two poles. It is neither fiction as many western scholars have claimed nor a reliable history. It is something which came from at least to some extent real historical antecedents. Unlike what purists say, Kumpal memories are not banal accounts of the unknown and the incredible, but local blends of historical and cultural thoughts. Even though a lot of obscurities need to be worked out further to establish an accurate historical condition of the Kumpal and relate to a broader national or regional history (but this is not the interest of this research but only an interesting topic of research in the future), their local memory shows indeed it is not a fiction. Memory for the Kumpal is the manifestation of the heavy hands of history in one or another way.

In this way, even though I used an existing but less acclaimed approach (i.e., dynamics of memory approach) to interpret memory against history, I have developed a model of memory reconstruction. Through what I called the “cultural model” of memory reconstruction, I have shown that the Kumpal historical reality that existed in the past had been folded into the pre-existing cultural system of the cursing and then a blend of mythologized history came about. The exodus is a critical juncture whereby history has been culturally reinterpreted to give rise to a reconstructed aspect of the Kumpal memory.

The theoretical discussion at this point further went to explain why communities, in this case the Kumpal, maintain solely a negative memory? My argument was that the Kumpal memory of victimhood has a moral ground. They ought to remember and reproduce memory even if of victimhood, *until* the solution comes, ideally, from itself: hence “moral theory” of memory. They are trapped in an inescapable net of moral values where as long as they believe in the curse, they have to break it, and as long as they believe the curse is not broken, they have to remember it. Social science theories do not further do justice to local memories not only by attributing memory merely as prisoner to political wills which is there only for some utility, but also by denying possible resilience of memories even if they do not carry political

utility. Reductionist argument towards memory as contingent upon its utility seems to be the result of lack of knowledge or interest to appreciate memory both as a culture and as history.

11.2. Recommendations

Apart from academic exercise, the Kumpal memory is strongly intertwined with practical problems which need not only intervention but also an urgent intervention. The dissertation has shown that from the side of the people, their perception of curse and history has arrested them from free pursuit of their lives. Besides, there are, in some ways, worse predicaments created after the post-1991 political system and its intervention to the Kumpal. Thus, it will be regrettable to leave without mentioning some major areas which need intervention to free the Kumpal from these new and old, cultural and historical, political and economic problems. As Cole (1998:628) also says, the role of anthropology should not stop in showing only oppression. Anthropological projects must also extend to the question of how people, like the Kumpal, must also sustain as a safe and viable group with their rights and privileges protected. From this point of view, despite its rigorous academic nature, this work can also be characterized as something which can be used to argue to solve the Kumpal practical problems, whether we call it action anthropology, advocacy anthropology, critical ethnography, or anthropology of development. The complex nature of this work is that it can fit into one or more of what are mentioned, at least at various levels.

Now, the central point I am suggesting here is thus a call for positive intervention into the situation of the Kumpal. Sometimes, our conceptions seem irrelevant when things change in time. If the Kumpal situations change strongly towards the positive spectrum as discussed in Chapter Nine, then the idea of curse can be thwarted as a matter of fact. To bring such changes, I propose three major ways of intervention and/or areas by governments at the local (*woräda* level), zonal, regional and even federal level. These are assisting the people break the ancestral curse, controlling

the extensive migration of others to the Kumpal land, and implementing an affirmative action.

Assisting the People Break the Ancestral Curse

In the first place, one must recognize the situation the Kumpal live under the burden of history and ancestral curse. One of the major problems from the side of political and economic practitioners is that they deemphasize or even do not recognize the impact of culture and history on the life of the people. This is partly because of lack of knowledge and awareness. Unfortunately that is what I found out during my interview with *woräda* administrators in Jawi²⁹⁹. People in power should appreciate a particular historical condition and cultural fabric of the people as different from other communities.

Second, there should be a step towards assisting these people to wipe out what they call is the ancestral curse. I have shown two attempts failed because of different problems. It is possible to identify these problems and help the people for a successful, an “impeccable” and hence convincing ritual of breaking the ancestral curse. This may be by giving training and counseling elders who refuse to give an oath-breaking blessing, or by gathering as many people as necessary to the ritual place so that they can be first hand witnesses.

It is often reported that the problem is the Kumpal being so resistant to change. The perception of curse is believed to be so imbued that they are less inclined to change. There are attempts to teach them about its HTP. There is a committee which teaches about HTP including their working behavior. But the problem is there has been little or no change. An informant³⁰⁰ explains:

²⁹⁹ Ayele Almaw, 46, Fändäk’a, 30/3/2013, Jawi Woräda Deputy Administrator; Dese Belay, 44, Fändäk’a, 30/3/2013, Head, Jawi Woräda Office of the Speaker; Zeleke Kefale, 31, Fändäk’a, Jawi Woräda Amhara National Democratic Movement Office Communication Head

³⁰⁰ Sileshi Ferede, 46, Fändäk’a, 28/01/2011

When you tell them about these things, they say “ok”. They accept you. They even present a good argument that convinces you that they have understood you. But, in practice they do not change their mind. When they go home from a meeting, they talk among themselves that it is indeed the curse that is arresting them behind. It is a substratum of everything of their life, as a matter of chance³⁰¹.

Controlling Extensive Population Movement

The Food Security Strategy (2002) notes that resettlement under the Därg regime failed, among others, because of three problems. First, the relocation was not made voluntarily. Second, it was guided by political motive of maintaining peace and security in border regions by making buffer zones of people settled from other places. Third, it was carried out hastily and was not integrated with regional development efforts. Thus, the strategy proposes that post-1991 resettlement programs should take lessons from these failures, and be intraregional, that the migrants should be integrated into the hosts, made on the basis of voluntary resettlement, and be well-conceived.

However, the experience of resettlement made onto Jawi is paradoxical to most of the above propositions. Among others, the idea of intra-regional relocation is practically untenable when resettlement is made across different ethnic groups living in the same regional state. Moreover, the idea of integration of the migrants to the hosts is simply a reverie. This dissertation has shown that there is rather a quandary of Kumpal marginalization by the overwhelming migrants unlike the principle of the strategy on the integration of the *migrants into the hosts*. As a result of uncontrolled migration of people both state sponsored and self-initiated, the Kumpal are swallowed numerically, excluded in interaction, forced to abandon their culture/identity, subjected to growing crime and insecurity, getting out of the picture of the political power, and due to all these retreating to hostile marginal peripheries from where they would never come back.

³⁰¹ Nigatu Wasse, 49, Fändäk’a, 26/09/2013

It has also been argued that some possible advantages of population movement are still not important compared with the problem this is causing. This dissertation calls for an immediate intervention by concerned state authorities and non-governmental organizations to help the Kumpal live as a viable group in the age of ethnic federalism. Under this track, population movement into these people should be controlled. It seems an irresponsible decision to see the burgeoning of migrants from other places while the native minority is forced down to all forms of marginalization.

Affirmative Action

It has been argued by other studies (e.g. Negalegn 2010) that the status of ANAZ as a special (nationality) administrative unit is simply nominal. Practically the zone is adjunct to the regional state and many benefits of being a “special” zone are non-existent. This problem is even worse for the Kumpal, as it has been discussed in the foregoing chapter. So assisting in breaking the curse and controlling population movement is not just enough for these people. They should be given a special treatment until they become competent enough with other communities. There is a compelling need for differential treatment of them from other migrants who are culturally, politically, and economically better off than the Kumpal. As far as I know, there seems to be no group in Jawi Woräda or in any other part of Amhara Region which is highly disadvantaged as the Kumpal and after all that still live under the yolk of history and culture both in the past and present. Article 89(4) of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia entrusts government, regional or local, the responsibility for assisting disadvantaged communities for which the Kumpal can be a good example. The following can be some of the ways they can be empowered.

First, they should be empowered politically. The benefits of federalism, for example, self-governance and the advantages of nationality administrative zone should be put into force. This includes participation in the political leadership positions in the *woräda*.

Second, specific social and economic development strategies targeting the people should be implemented. It deserves the level of seriousness to mention here again about the disadvantaged position the Kumpal exist because of very strong historical and cultural constraints: low level of education, less consciousness in the involvement of development activities, and are generally arrested in the notion of the ancestral curse. They have to be assisted to help their continued existence as distinct group and live in accordance with their cultural patterns. It is a matter of right that they deserve as minority and indigenous community. This has many purposes. It also helps to break the belief in curse, show that how it is possible to be changed anyway. How they take Nigatu's family as a model (a daughter has become a teacher and another police officer), and how they take current development interventions to raise doubt that the curse might be false can be mentioned for example.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I INSTRUMENTS

1. Interview Guide

1.1. Introduction

My name is Desalegn Amsalu. I am a doctoral student at Addis Ababa University. The reason why I came to this community is to study the culture and history of the people. In particular, the title of my research is “History, Memory, and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in Northwest Ethiopia”. I came to ask you some questions since I was told and learnt from my acquaintance with you that you have a good knowledge regarding your society. For the success of this study, I seek your cooperation. If you do not like to mention your name during the interview or do not want to be mentioned in the study, your identity will be kept confidential. You can also withdraw from the interview at any stage of our conversation. But I would like to remind you that your participation in this interview is important for the completion of my study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

[] Agree to be interviewed

[] Do not agree to be interviewed

(Put a tick mark as appropriate)

Date of interview _____

Place of interview _____

1.2. Profile of Interviewees

1	Name of informant	
2	Age	
3	Sex	

4	Educational status	
5	Marital status	
6	Occupation	
7	Other necessary information	

1.3. General Interview Guide Questions

1.3.1. For Kumpal Informants

- a) Is there a different place the Kumpal attribute their origin from where they exist today? If so please tell me.
- b) If a different place of origin is attributed, can you tell me how, when and why your ancestors came to the place where you are today?
- c) What was the historical condition that the Kumpal may have lived at all? Was there an oppressive experience from rulers?
- d) What is *Fifi*, and how do you perform it? And also why?
- e) How was your relationship with regimes at different times?
 - i. During Haile Sellassie I (1931-1974)
 - ii. During the Derg (1974-1991)
 - iii. During the today's regime of Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF, since 1991).
- f) What do you think are peculiar characteristics of each regime regarding its relationship with you? What do you think are changes and continuities?

1.3.2. For Non-Kumpal Informants

- a. From where and how do you come to this place (where you live with or neighboring the Kumpal)?
- b. What do you think is the thing or things the Kumpal are best known for or can be characterized?
- c. What does your relationship with the Kumpal look like? For example, do you marry each other? Why or why not?
- d. What stories do you know about them, for example about their origin?

1.3.3. For Government Officials

- a) Why is the Kumpal participation in the local politics and civil service none or minimum?
- b) Is there anything that you are doing to increase their participation in the future?
- c) Compared with other ethnic groups, how do you evaluate the Kumpal economic welfare?
- d) Is there anything that you are doing to increase their participation in the future?
- e) How does the development intervention in this area affect the Kumpal? Are there unique programs designed to maximize the Kumpal benefit from the intervention?

2. FGD Guide

2.1. Introduction

My name is Desalegn Amsalu. I am a doctoral student at Addis Ababa University. The reason why I came to this community is to study the culture and history of the Kumpal. In particular, the title of my research is "History, Memory, and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in Northwest Ethiopia". I came to discuss with you some questions since I was told and learnt from my introduction with you that you have a good knowledge regarding some issues. For the success of this study, I seek your cooperation. If you do not like to mention your name during the interview or do not want to be mentioned in the study, your identity will be kept anonymous. You can also withdraw from the discussion at any stage of our conversation. But I would like to remind you that your participation in this discussion is important for the completion of my study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

[] Agree to participate in the discussion [] Do not agree
(Put a tick mark as appropriate)

Date of interview_____

Place of interview_____

2.2. Profile of FGD Discussants

1	Date of interview	
2	Place of interview	
3	Name of informant	
4	Age	
5	Sex	
6	Educational status	
7	Marital status	

8	Occupation	
9	Other information	

2.3. FGD Guide Questions

- a) What are the changes witnessed in the condition of the Kumpal after 1991?
Changes of any kind?
- b) If there are changes, do they make the Kumpal condition better than what it was before 1991? Why or why not?
- c) If there are no changes or if the changes are not significant, what do you think is the reason?
- d) What do you think are the prospects in the Kumpal future?

APPENDIX II

PROFILE OF CITED INFORMANTS³⁰²

S. No	Name of informants	Sex	Age at the time of interview	Date of interview	Place of interview	Type of participation	Remark	Ethnic origin (K: "Kumpal"; NK: "Non Kumpal")
1	Abebe Seyoum	M	34	03/03/2013	Fändäk'a	II ³⁰³	officer (Head, Government Communications Office)	NK
2	Abdella Yosuf	M	50	26/05/2013	Fändäk'a	II	Amhara	NK
3	Abera Tebikew	M	57	27/10/2013 28/09/2013 25/11/2013	Alu-K'urand	KI	elder	K
4	Abich Workineh	M	51	02/03/2012	Alu-K'urand	II	elder	K
5	Abjew Kebede	M	70	07/03/2012 08/03/2012 10/03/2012 09/03/2012	Bagusa Maariam	KI	elder	K
6	Addisu Birle	M	34	23/03/2012	Fändäk'a	II	official (Soil Fertility Protection Officer, Fändäk'a Woräda Office of Environmental Protection)	NK
7	Agide Ayal	M	55/56	26/02/2012 26/03/2013	Fändäk'a	II	elder	K
8	Alemkere [Father's name not obtained]	M	28	27/03/2013	Fändäk'a	FGDP	teacher (primary school)	K

³⁰² Only those informants who are cited in the study are listed here. There are a more number of informants and FGD participants who have participated in the study than are listed here. They were not cited because their information has not been used or was used only generally.

³⁰³ II refers to interview informant; KI refers to key informant; and FGDP refers to FGD participant

9	Andinet Memihir (Pseudony)	M	28	18/05/2012	Bambluk Kābāle	FGDP	teacher (primary school)	K
10	Andualem [Father's name not obtained]	M	41	07/03/2012 223/09/2013	Fāndāk'a	II	official (Head, Jawi Woreda Education Office)	NK
11	Arega Cherinet (Pseudony)	M	39	8/3/2009	Sewatamp	II	Amhara	NK
12	Asebe Alelign (Pseudony)	M	41	12/03/2012	Fāndāk'a	II	Youth	NK
13	Asru Abitew	M	90	24/03/2012 02/03/2012	Alu K'urand	KI	Elder	K
14	Asres Belay (Pseudony)		68	27/03/2013	Fāndāk'a	II	Elder	K
15	Atikilt Demeke	M	60	10/02/2012 12/03/2012 13/03/2012 28/03/2012	K'wara	KI & FGDP	Elder	K
16	Ayal Tessema (Pseudony)	M	43	17/07/2013	Fāndāk'a	II	Elder/youth	K
17	Ayele Almaw	M	46	30/3/2013	Fāndāk'a	II	Official (Acting Chief Adminsitrator, Jawi Worāda)	K
18	Belete Asres (PseudonyNK)	M	72	22/03/2012	Fāndāk'a	II	Elder	NK
19	Belew Takele	M	75	28/03/2012 27/03/2012	Fāndāk'a	KI	Elder	K
20	Debasu Kebede	M	45	05/03/2012	Bagusa Mariam	KI	elder	K
21	Dese Belay	M	44	30/3/2013	Fāndāk'a	II	official (Head, Jawi Worāda Council, Office of the Speaker)	K
22	Desta Anley	M		28/02/2013		II	official (Head, Jawi Worāda Office of Trade and Transport)	NK
23	Edilu Yihun (Pseudony)	M	24	10/07/2012	Fāndāk'a	II	Student	K
24	Enyew	M	77	02/03/201	Alu K'urand	II	Elder	K

	Asres			2				
25	Getahun [father's name not obtained]	M	25	27/03/201 3		FGDP, II	teacher (Jawi General Primary School)	K
26	Getachew Alemu	M	27	13/02/201 2	Bambluk	II	official (Manager, Bambluk K'äbäle)	NK
27	Getachew Tilahun	M	34	10/03/201 2	Fändäk'a Bagusa Mariam	FGDP, II	Teacher (Principal, Digul General Primary School)	NK
28	Getahun Simachew	M	25	22/02/201 3	Fändäk'a	FGDP	teacher (primary school)	NK
29	Getahun Besufekad (Pseudony)	M	27	27/02/201 2	Fändäk'a	II	official, Jawi Woräda	K
30	Getinet Mitiku	M	20	25/02/201 2	Fändäk'a	II	student	K
31	Getiye Nure (Pseudony)	M	44	13/02/201 2	Alu K'urnd	II	Elder/youth	NK
32	Kassech Yimer	F	80	23/02/201 3	Alu K'urnd	II	Woman	K
33	Kassim Hussen	M	90	20/02/201 2	Alu K'urand	II	Amhara	NK
34	Kehulu Belay (Pseudony)	M	39	23/04/201 2	Fändäk'a	II	official (Jawi Woräda)	NK
35	Kehulu Yawukal (Pseudony)	M	47	17/03/201 2	Fändäk'a	II	Amhara	NK
36	Koyew Malede	M	57	12/03/201 3 12/05/201 3 27/03/201 3	Fändäk'a, Wobo K'äbäle	KI	official (Chairman, Wobo K'äbäle)	K
37	Melese Tezana	M	31	01/03/201 2	Alu K'urand	II	Amhara	K
38	Mkwe Alex (Pseudony)	M	37	12/05/201 3	Providence, USA	II	Miscellaneous	NK
39	Mengist Atalele	M	75/7 6	08/02/201 2 21/03/201 2 01/03/201 2 01/03/201 3	Alu K'urand Käbäle	KI	elder	K
40	Mirkuz	M	21	25/02/201	Fändäk'a	KI	student	K

	Yismaw			2				
41	Mohammed Ahmed (Pseudony)	M	47	16/05/2012	Fändäk'a	II	Amhara	NK
42	Molla Million	M	42	03/03/2012 02/03/2013	Burji Kåbåle (BGNRS)	II	Youth	K
43	Muluken Awoke (Pseudony)	M	27	18/03/2012	Fändäk'a	II	teacher (primary school)	NK
44	Muluken Azeze (Pseudony)	M	36	20/03/2012	Fändäk'a	II	official (Jawi Woråda)	NK
45	Nigatu Wasse	M	47/48/49/50	01/03/2010 01/03/2012 12/02/2012 25/02/2012 29/02/2012 23/02/2012 01/03/2013 13/03/2012 21/03/2012 24/03/2012 26/03/2012 16/04/2013 11/06/2013 10/09/2013 27/09/2013 28/09/2013	Alu K'urand ; Fändäk'a	KI; FGDP	elder	K (sometimes claiming he is NK from the side of one of his parents)
46	Paula Gary (Psydonym)	F	27	20/10/2014	Bayreuth, Germany	II	Miscellaneous	NK
47	Sewagegn Shiferaw	M	37	05/06/2010	Fändäk'a	II	official (Head, Jawi Culture and Tourism Office)	NK
48	Senait Wondo (Pseudony)	F	31	22/05/2012	Fändäk'a	II	teacher (primary school)	NK

49	Sileshi Ferede	M	46	23/01/2010 28/02/2012 28/02/2012	Fändäk'a	KI	elder	NK
50	Tagele Ambaw	M	75	20/03/2012	Fändäk'a	II	elder	K
51	Tata Gashu	F	37	02/03/2012	Fändäk'a	II	Woman	K
52	Tashu Desta	M	77	25/03/2010	Alu K'urand	II	Elder	K
53	Temari Gobeze	M	18	07/05/2012	Fändäk'a	II	student	K
54	Tesema Derib	M	75	04/03/2012 06/03/2012	Bagusa Mariam	II	Elder	K
55	Tilahun Wondimu	M	56	04/06/2010	Fändäk'a	II	Amhara	NK
56	Tiruneh Behailu (Pseudony)	M	47	19/03/2012	Fändäk'a		official (Jawi Woräda)	NK
57	Yalemken Derebe	M	29	22/02/2013	Fändäk'a	II; FGDP	teacher (Primary school)	K
58	Yemiamrew Jorgi	M	37	24/06/2013	Addis Ababa	II	Miscellaneous	NK
59	Yibeltal Mengist	M	57	23/2/2013 06/03/2012	Alu K'urand	II	Elder	K
60	Yinesu Gedif	F	39	25/02/2013	Java (BGNRS)	II	Woman	K
61	Yusuf Mohammed	M	60	25/05/2013	Fändäk'a	II	Amhara	NK
62	Zelege Kefale	M	31	30/3/2015	Fändäk'a	II	Official (Head, Jawi Woräda Amhara National Democratic Movement Office Communications)	NK
63	Zerihun Asres	M	27	24/03/2012	Fändäk'a	KI	official (Jawi Woräda Culture and Tourism Office)	NK