

Addis Ababa
University
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College of Social Sciences
Department of Social Anthropology

**The Gurgura Ethnic Identity Controversy in DireDawa Administrative
Region East Ethiopia**

**A Thesis Presented to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Anthropology**

By:-Wegayehu Abebe

July, 2017

Addis Ababa

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr. Thomas Osmond for his advice and constructive comments from the very beginning of the study up to the end of this thesis work. I would also like to thank my mother w/roAsegedechAbebe for her financial support and encouragement to finalize this thesis work. I am very much grateful to my friends for their unreserved moral supports during my fieldwork stay in the research sites.

Furthermore, I would like to thank some of Gurgura people who helped me to meet notable Gurgura elders. Last but not least, I am very grateful to my key informants who provided me with rich information.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment	i
Table of Contents	ii
Abbreviation	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. Background.....	1
1.1 . Description of the Study Area.....	3
1.1.1. Historical Background of DireDawa	3
1.1.2. The Current Dire Dawa	4
1.2 .Statement of the Problem	6
1.3 .General and Specific Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.3.1 General Objective	8
1.4 .Research Questions	8
1.5 . Methods of Data Collection	9
1.5.1 Unstructured Interviews.....	9
1.5.2 Observation	10
1.5.3 Focus Group Discussion	10
1.6 .Selection of the Research Sites	10
1.7 .Significance of the Study	10
1.8 .The Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	11
1.9. Research Experience	11
CHAPTER TWO	13
2.1.Theoretical/ conceptualLiterature	13
2.1.1 Concepts and Definitions on Ethnicity and Identity.....	13
2.1.2Relationship between Identity and Ethnicity.....	15
2.1.3. Ethnicity as Dynamic Phenomena.....	17
2.1.4 Ethnic groups boundaries and their interdependence	18
2.1.5 Identity and Myths of descent	19
2.1.6. Interaction of Language and Ethnicity	19

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks on the Study of Identity and Ethnicity	20
2.2.1 The Primordialist Model.....	20
2.2.3. Circumstantialist/ Instrumentalist / Model	21
2.2.4. Constructivist Model	22
2.3. Empirical Literature	24
2.3.1. Oromo and Somali Relationship in Eastern Ethiopia.....	24
2.3.2. Ethnicity and Identity formation among the Siltie	25
2.3.3. Inter-Ethnic Relations in Diredawa Administration Region	26
CHAPTER THREE	27
3. Population, Geographic area, Livelihood and Genealogical Narratives	27
3.1. Population.....	27
3.2 Geographic Area	28
3.3. Livelihood	31
3.4. Genealogical Narratives	35
3.4.1. Genealogical Roots of the Somali Ethnic Group.....	35
3.4.2. Myths and Historical Narratives of the Gurgura	35
3.4.3. Genealogical Roots of the Gurgura clan.....	37
3.5. Socio-political Structure of Gurgura	39
3.5.1. Geraada: Ascribed Social Status among Gurgura	41
3.6. Religion among Gurgura.....	43
CHAPTER FOUR.....	44
Gurgura Inter and Intra-Ethnic Relationships.....	44
4.1. Historical Background on Gurgura and Oromo Inter-Ethnic Groups Relation	44
4.2. Matrimonial Alliances.....	46
4.2.1. Marriage Practices between Oromo and Gurgura	46
4.3. Intra-Ethnic -Relationship between Gurgura and Issa	48
4.4. I GLF and GLF	50
4.5. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	51
4.5.1. Hera: Gurgura Conflict Resolution Mechanisms vis a vis its Neighbors.....	51

4.5.2. Present Practice of Conflict Resolution among Gurgura and its Immediate Neighbors’	54
CHAPTER FIVE	56
5. Controversial Discourses and Practices of the Gurgura Identity	57
5.1. Oromo Narratives towards Gurgura Identity	57
5.2. Somali Narratives towards Gurgura Identity	58
5.3. Pro-Somali Perspectives of Gurgura	59
5.4. Pro-Oromo Perspectives of Gurgura	62
5.5. Adoption practice among Gurgura	69
CHAPTER SIX	73
6. Post-1991 Political Developments and Gurgura Identity	73
6.1. Political Power Contest in DireDawa Administration	73
6. 2. Current Linguistic Status of Gurgura	77
6. 3. Disagreement over the Designation of Ugaz among Gurgura	80
6.3.1. Gurgura Clan Structure	80
6.3.2. Traditional Election of Ugaz among Gurgura	80
6. 3.3. Current Views of Gurgura Over the Election of Ugaz	82
Conclusion	88
References	

Acronyms and Abbreviations

EPRDF- Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front

IGLF- Issa-GurguraLiberation Front

GLF- GurguraLiberation Front

ESPDP- Ethiopian Somali People Democratic Party

OPDO- Oromo PeoplesDemocratic Organization

CRSO- Catholic Relief Service Organization

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

FDRE- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Glossary ofLocal terms

Wera Soda- (wife givers) a family that has gave woman to man

Herbu Hera- is a promise not to inflict any violence one upon the other based on ritual ceremony

Arkamura- final stage of blood compensation for the conflict between individuals

Demina / Sultan – is a chief leader for a given Gurgura sub-clan

Ugaz – is a chief leader for the overall Gurgurapeople

Geraada – is the owner of land

Aban Gal – is the owner of camels

Hera – traditional governance systemof the Oromo people

Somali Xer (Xer Dessa) - traditional governance system of the Somali people

Hera Gojjo [Garaguracha Hera]-traditional governance system of the Oromo people

Abstract

This study was carried out with general objective of assessing socio-historical dynamics of the Gurgura social institutions in relation to their ethnicity and identity in DireDawa Administrative region, as well as the neighboring dwelling areas in the Oromia and Somali regional states. Specifically, the study intended to explore how the Gurgura express their ethnic identity and how they are perceived by the adjacent societal groups. In addition, this study attempted to investigate the Gurgura relationship with neighboring societal groups in divergent socio-cultural and political settings. By generating empirical data and consulting secondary sources, this study attempted to vividly indicate the ongoing socio-historical dynamics among the various Gurgura institutions in the context of their emic perspectives towards claims and counter of ethnic and identity formations. To undertake this study qualitative research method was used as the sole technique of data collection and analysis. Information pertinent to the study was gathered through unstructured interviews, observation and focus group discussion. Theories of ethnicity and identity such as the ' primordialism', 'instrumentalism' and 'constructivism' were reviewed and used in order to shed light on history, ethnicity and identity formation of the Gurgura society. All these concepts and theories were useful to better understand themes related with this study. As the concepts of ethnicity and identity are complex and dynamically changing, current linguistic status of the Gurgura was used to show diachronic changes and continuities to make comparative analysis among Gurgura community residing across different political, administrative and geographical settings. Findings from this study show that the current linguistic status of Gurgura is dominated by the Oromo language as their mother tongue. Due to the adopted language of Afaan Oromo and cultural assimilation, majority of Gurgura have compelled to be in controversial situation about their ethnic identity. The findings depict that overwhelming majority of Gurgura community speak Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue, while many of Gurgura community speak Somali as their first language. Therefore, recently there is division between Gurgura society as the result of the controversial election of the new Ugaz Hajji Yusuf Ibrahim who merely speak Afaan Oromo. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that there are different perspectives among Gurgura regarding their ethnic identity. Today, majority of Gurgura believe that ethnic identity is based on common origin which depends on patrilineal descent line. While, many of Gurgura community believe that ethnic identity is something acquired based on the existing givens of language, culture, social, political and economic situations, the Gurgura community who are living among Oromo, in the Oromia regional state are claiming their ethnic identity as Oromo. On the contrary, the Gurgura community who are living among Somali in the Somali regional state claim their ethnic identity as Somali. Therefore, recently Gurgura community find themselves in controversial situation about their ethnic identity as the result of their current intermingling with different linguistic, religious and socio-political compositions such as adoption of language, cultural assimilation and ethno-territorialty influences emanating from close interactions with the neighboring societal groups.

Kewords. Ethnicity, identity

CHAPTER ONE

1. Background

The entire Gurgura people used to practice permanent nomadic ways of life. From among the entire Somali sub-clans, the Gurgura people were the first societal group who started a sedentary life and become involved in agricultural activities. And this shift had given them the opportunity to establish close contact with the neighboring (agrarian) Oromo people in the adjacent territories, which consequently resulted in the cultural and linguistic intermingling of the two groups. This incident enabled the Gurgura people to pick-up the Afaan Oromo language as their mother tongue and to engage in crop cultivation much earlier than the other Somali clans who still rely on nomadism as their key livelihoods.

Today, majority of the Gurgura people are living in the eastern part of the DireDawa administration, specifically in rural areas like Belewa, Qalecha, Cortu, Bishanbehe and Biyoawale, where agriculture is dependent on erratic rainfall. The landscape or natural environment is not suitable to agricultural activities. Consequently, they are being affected by recurrent drought which is entirely deteriorating their living conditions from time to time. As a result, they have less production and meager income from agricultural activities, so that many of them are forced to depend on aid.

During Hailelassie's regime, Gurgura people in Hurso area had extensive land holdings where they used to grow different types of fruits such as Orange, Banana, Lemon as well as vegetables. They also generated their income mainly from the sale of fruits. Their strategic location across commercial route enabled them to sell these fruits along the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway line for the passengers of the train. During the 'Derge' regime, their farm lands were nationalized or had been taken away by the government. In 1980, many Gurgura people who were living in Hurso area were displaced from their ancestral land. In other words, the Gurgura people who had extensive fruits farming land in Hurso area were displaced by the Derge regime and forced to evacuate from their ancestral land and move into other areas. Still today, they are persistently claiming for the restoration of lost lands for the cultivation of fruits and other crops. Again recently, although they have developed new cultivable farms and started producing fruits in the

new areas, but the presence of Hurso military training center in their locality is posing a threat to dislodge them from their new farming lands. Now their livelihood is under threat in addition to the risk of eviction from the area. As a result, their livelihood strategy that has been mainly depended upon farming and cattle raising activities shifted into supplementary business activities such as cutting down trees and making charcoal as a means of income.

Gurgura is one of the senior clans of the Somali ethnic group. Gurgura is the first indigenous societal group in the Diredawa region. Geographical proximity and intensive social interactions and relationship with the Oromo people compelled them to abandon their own language and cultural practices. They steadily adopted Afaan Oromo as their first language. Moreover, due to strong inter-marriage alliances with Oromo, many Gurgura are systematically assimilated with Oromo culture and society.

Currently, the Gurgura are associated with persisting controversies around their 'original' Somali or Oromo identity. Gurgura speak Somali and Oromo languages in different areas. Linguistically, for the majority of Gurgura Affan Oromo is often considered as their mother tongue, but there are also many who speak Somali language as their first language. Today, the Gurgura's are grouped either to the Somali or Oromo ethnic groups. As a result, they are in identity construction and reconstruction at different times and situations.

The settlement pattern of Gurgura has dispersed in various areas. Majority of the Gurgura people are living among various ethnic groups or mixed with diverse societal groups in different areas. To be specific, the geographical location of Gurgura is found in different areas of the DireDawa administrative region, Oromia and Somali national regional state. In the Dire Dawa administrative region, Gurgura people are living in the areas of Belewa, Qalecha, Cortu, Ayalegungune, Legadini, Melkakero, Bishanbehe and Biyoawale. In addition, currently, there are several numbers of Gurgura in the eastern and western Zones of Hararghein Oromia regional state particularly in Jarso, Babile, Gelemso, Herna, Measo, Haromaya and Kombolcha as well as in Bale and Arsi Zones of the Oromia Regional State. They also live in Hurso, Ereregota and Fiq areas of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State.

1.1 Description of the Study Area

1.1.1. Historical Background of DireDawa

According to Baldet (1970) until the late 19th c, DireDawa was vast plain inhabited by nomads. People from the plateau of Harar used to come to graze their cattle. Some small villages existed on the hills around the plain, but no people lived in the area that is today called DireDawa(Baldet1970:-).

On January 7, 1887, the armies of Menelik II crushed local resistance at Chelenko and end its hegemonic rule by incorporating it with the emerging shewan authority. Accordingly Imir Abdulahi, the last reigning sultan of Harar, surrendered to the invading forces of Menelik. Ato Mersha went to pitch the Ethiopian flag in Dawale. Then he became the governor of the region and established his headquarters in Gildessa, a town on the Caravan road between Harar and the Gulf of Tajurah. Thus, 1887 was a turning point for the region of DireDawa. Indeed, at that time the region was incorporated into the trading complex of Shoa(Baldet1970:-).

On March 9, 1884, Menelik II granted permission to Mr, Ilg, a Swiss engineer, to build a railroad connecting Djibouti with the White Nile through Harar and Entooto. On April 27, 1896, France gave the permission to cross the territory of Djibouti. On July 7, 1896, MR. Ilg and Mr. Chenfneux a French engineer, formed the society called “Compagnie Imperiale des Chemins de for Ethiopiens” (Baldet1970 :-).

Prior to the construction of the Djibouti railway, the principal Caravan trade route between Addis Ababa and the coast used to pass through Chercher and Harar to Zeila or Tajura. This trade route was serving as the principal route for export and import commodities in Ethiopia. Regarding the journey from interior to the coast Pankhurst said that “The journey from Harar to the coast was by mule or donkey to Gildessa and thereafter by camel, and took 20 to 30 days” (Pankhurst1968:408).

Although the construction of the railway to DireDawa had played a significant effect in boosting up the import and export of commercial activities, it did not immediately destroy the Caravan trade route. Instead, the caravan trade activities increased as camels were more and more needed

to bring supplies to and from the line. In 1905-6, Zeila continued to serve as an outlet for Ethiopian commerce. For instance at Gildessa the camel owners were engaged in a lively tariff war with the competing company (Pankhurst1968:325). Later on, it is undeniable fact that the construction of the Djibouti railway had brought a detrimental effect on Harari trade and shifted into the new railway town of DireDawa(Pankhurst1968:410).

1.1.2. The Current Dire Dawa

Currently, according to the book in 2013 entitled as, “Cultural Diversity in DireDawa”, by Bureau of Culture and Tourism, DireDawa is located 505km away from Addis Ababa in the eastern part of Ethiopia. It was founded in 1885 following the installation of railways that connected Addis Ababa with port Djibouti (Bureau of Culture and Tourism2013:20). According to Statistical Abstract Report by Dire Dawa Bureau of Finance and Economic Development in 2014, urban areas of the Dire Dawa Administration Region constitute 29.24 km² and 1,529.39 km² is the rural area. This means that, 98.12% of the land is rural, and 1.88 % is urban area (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development 2014: 3). The total number of population in Dire Dawa Administration Region is estimated to be above 341, 8345. The administration is divided into 9 urban and 38 rural kebeles. Under the Dire Dawa Administration Region, different ethnic groups have been registered residing in. To mention few are Oromo, Somali, Amhara, Harari, Guraghe, Tigray, Welita and Kimbata. However, the majority of dwellers in the rural kebeles are Oromo and Somali respectively (Bureau of Culture and Tourism2013:21).

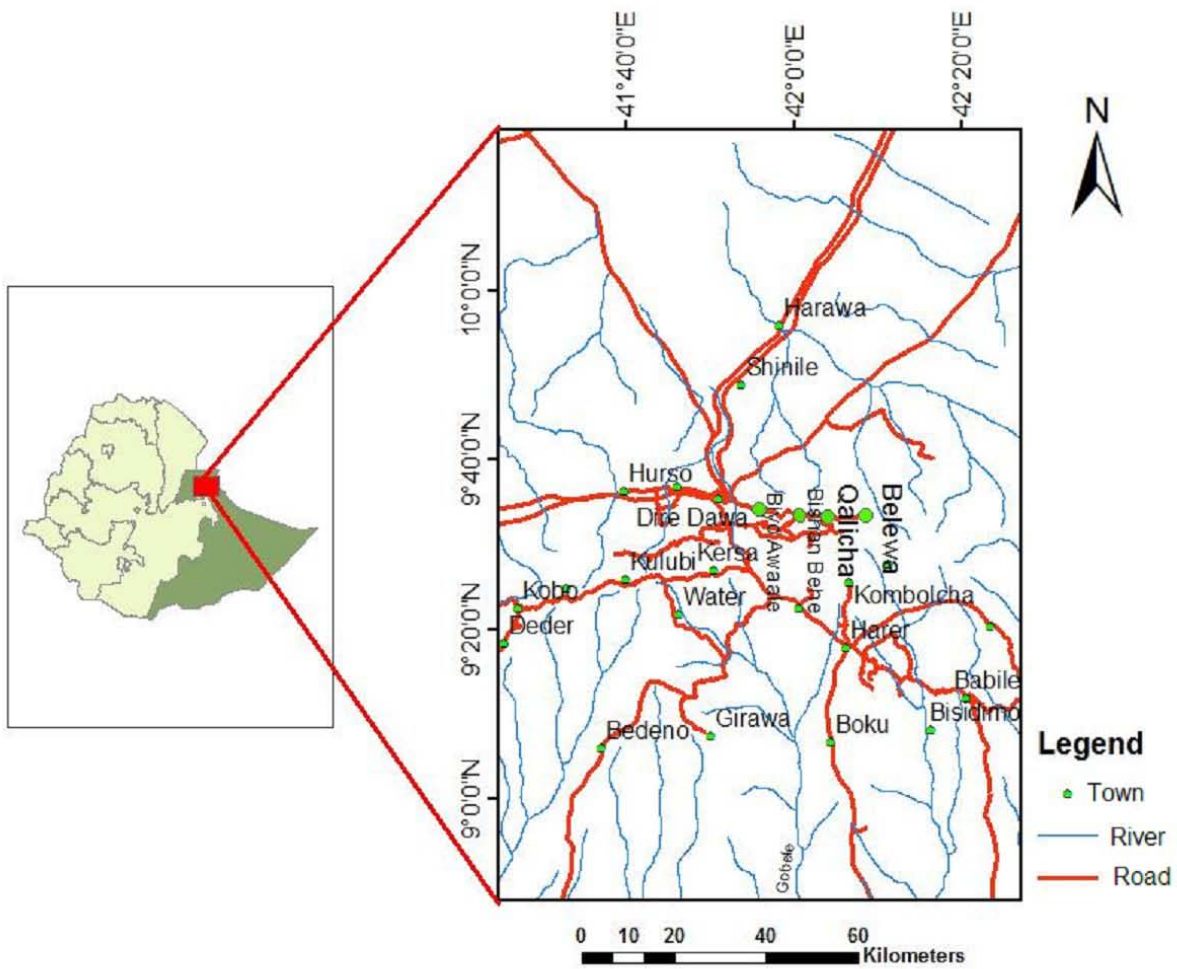


Figure Location Map of the Study Area

1.2.Statement of the Problem

Historically, according to the famous historian Professor Shiferaw Bekele, by the time railway installation from Djibouti reached to Dire Dawa, the indigenous people were estimated to be between 1500 and 2000 in 1903. These people were mainly men from French Somali land and Arabs. In addition there were some Oromo, Gurgura and Amhara (Shiferaw1994:611). This evidence plainly shows that the Gurgura are one of the earliest indigenous people of Dire Dawa. Moreover, Shiferaw mentioned the then different ethnic groups in Dire Dawa and it reads as, “There were several ethnic groups: Afar, Amhara, Gurgura, Harari, Oromo and Somali. Every one of these ethnic groups spoke its language though Amharic was the lingua franca” (Shiferaw1994:613). Also this evidence clearly reveals that the Gurgura people were regarded as discrete ethnic group in the past.

Today, the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups are living both in the rural and urban areas of the Dire Dawa Administration Region since several years ago. Within the two ethnic groups, there are different clans. Among these, the Gurgura are one of the clans said to belong to the Somali ethnic group. However, according to Bamlaku, the Gurgura are a mixture of the Oromo (Nolle) and Somali (Issa) ethnic groups. Certainly, this classification has made controversial the roots of Gurgura ethnic identity.

Moreover, regarding the language of the Gurgura, Henari Baldet said that “people often forget that region of Dire Dawa is settled by Gurgura people whose mother tongue is [Afaan Oromo]” (Baldet1970 :-).

According to my recent preliminary assessment to this study area, Under Dire Dawa Administrative Region, there are various ethnic groups who are residing within the same natural setting sharing common and different features of identity. Although they have ethnic boundary markers of identity which distinguish one from another, there is cultural assimilation which diffuses and dominates one from the others. For instance, the Gurgura have their own unique features but in many cases they have shared language that transcends the ethnic boundary

markers. This means that, most of the Gurgura speak both Oromo and Somali languages that attribute to the notion of conflicting assumption about the ethnic identity of the Gurgura.

For this reason, many people associate them either with Oromo or Somali ethnic group at different times and situations. In other words, although language is one of the boundary markers which distinguish one ethnic group from another, but the majority people of the Gurgura are speaking Oromo language. But the Gurgura claimed their descendant genealogy to Somali. However, contrary to their claim of the Somali identity; they are facing discrimination and alienation by the Somali clans. Chiefly the Issa consider the Gurgura as non-Somali people since they speak Afaan Oromo and share similar cultural practices with the Oromo.

Obviously, peaceful intra and inter-ethnic relations are crucial for the co-existence and tolerance among different ethnic groups. Preliminary assessment of this study shows that there are different ethnic groups in the districts of the Gurgura predominantly Oromo and Issa clan of the Somali. These days, the intra and inter-ethnic relations of the Gurgura are unstable due to frequent conflict among the Issa and Oromo. The reason for the conflict differs from time to time, but it is believed that competition over scarce resources, territoriality and ethnic dimensions are the major sources of conflicts among the Gurgura, Issa and Nolle (Oromo). In relation to this, according to Bamlaku, interethnic and intra-clan conflicts among the Issa and the Gurgura clans over dwindling resources and cattle raiding. Furthermore, there are also administrative boundary conflicts which have political and ethnic dimensions.

However, the intra and inter ethnic relations have not been thoroughly studied yet. In addition, there is no previous study that vividly address the origin of Gurgura and its ethnic identity. Thus, with the objective of filling these gaps, this research is carried out to assess the historical processes and contemporary defining features of ethnic identity formations among the Gurgura and its impact on their relationship with the neighboring societal groups. At the same time, this study attempts to assess the impact of Afaan Oromo language on their identity and relationship with the other neighboring societal groups in their locality. In general, this study fills the gap of information and knowledge on the Gurgura identity by investigating the perception and attitudes of the Gurgura towards their identity and how they are perceived by the neighboring societal groups. It is within this dimension that this study has designed to investigate

the controversial ethnic identity claims of the Gurgura, and attempts to explore the intra and inter-ethnic relations with the neighboring societal groups.

1.3.General and Specific Objectives of the Study

This study encompasses general and specific objectives to be addressed by selected ethnographic tools.

1.3.1 General Objective

To assess Somali \Oromo controversy of Gurgura identity by examining the plural socio-historical and territorialtrajectoriesof several communities in the DireDawa Administrative Region.

In order to realize the above general objective, the study focuses on the following specific objectives;

- To examine the genealogical discourse among the Gurgura to trace their roots and study the overlapping identity formations.
- To explore the Gurgura intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations with Issa and Oromo.
- To describe the livelihood strategies of the Gurgura.
- To investigate how the Gurguraconsider (identify) themselves with regard to ethnic identity and language.
- To investigate the current status of the Gurgura in the Ethno-national olitical arrangement.

1.4.Research Questions

1. What is the historical background of the Gurgura ethnic identity?
2. How the Gurgura ethnic boundary markers are defined (considered) by other societal groups?
3. How is the Gurgura ethnic identity defined during Haileselassie, Derge and Post-1991 federal structure?

4. What is the change and continuity in the maintenance and practice of identity among the Gurgura?
5. How do the Gurgura consider themselves with regard to ethnic identity and language?
6. What are the impacts of cultural assimilation on the Gurgura ethnic identity?
7. How the intra and inter-ethnic relations are defined?

1.5. Methods of Data Collection

This study is carried out using qualitative research methodology along with different techniques of data collection particularly interviews, FGD, and Observation techniques employed during the course of data collection.

The different techniques of data collection are presented in the following sections.

1.5.1 Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured (In-depth) Interview: To obtain more detail information on sensitive issues of ethnic identity, in-depth interviews are carried out with 40 local officials and community leaders (clan leaders, notable individuals and elders) who have rich knowledge on the historical processes and current identity characteristics of the Gurgura. For this process, key informants are identified based on their social status and current interpretation of the Gurgura identity. These interviews include both men and women. Furthermore, 20 in-depth interviews are conducted with ordinary elders, youth and women so as to get more information on their perception and attitudes towards the processes of their own ethnic identity, the characteristics of their current ethnic identity as well as their relationship with the surrounding societal groups.

This approach helps to obtain the views of the people about the impact of their ethnic identity and language on their relationship with the surrounding societal groups. To this end, the researcher was able to establish rapport with indigenous people so as to identify key informants.

Moreover, unstructured interview with 10 key informants from the Issa and Nolle (Oromo) are carried out. This type of interview also helps to gather information about the perception of Issa and Nolle towards the Gurgura ethnic identity as well as their relationship with the Gurgura.

1.5.2 Observation

In addition to unstructured interviews, observation technique is employed in order to observe the distinguishing features of the Gurgura like ritual practices or something unique to them from surrounding societal group. In addition their language, religion, dressing and hairstyles, preferences of food including their livelihood strategies are observed. This facilitated to figure out the unique and common features (boundaries) of the Gurgura as compared to Issa and Nolle (Oromo).

1.5.3 Focus Group Discussion

Seven Focus groups discussion are carried out among the Gurgura, Issa and Nolle (Oromo). Each Focus group discussion comprised of 6-12 persons. The theme of the discussion focuses on the history, ethnicity and identity among the Gurgura including the intra and inter-ethnic relations. Moreover, the discussions focused on the views of Issa and Oromo towards the Gurgura people. FGD helps to crosscheck and supplement the information gathered through other techniques of data collection such as unstructured interviews.

1.6 .Selection of the Research Sites

Main selected locations for intensive fieldwork:

1. Three fields inside Dire Dawa city, known for their historical Gurgura dwellers:

- Magaala close to the Jumu'a Mosque with the several households associated to Ugaz Bu'o
- Lagaa Haree
- Melekajibedu

2. Rural vicinities of Dire Dawa

- Belewa
- Qalecha
- Beshanbehe
- Biyoawale
- Secondary locations for complementary fieldwork:-
- Dire Tayyaara
- Hurso

1.7. Significance of the Study

The findings of the research add more information and knowledge on how identity is constructed and maintained in a social field, where divergent ethnic groups are living together contesting

over resource, territoriality and authority. Moreover, it sheds light on the historical and cultural processes of identity claim and its implications on the relationship with the surrounding societal groups. Therefore this study helps to explore the processes of Gurgura ethnic identity and their interaction with the neighboring community. Furthermore it intends to show the trends of the interplay among different social actors in the study area. Thus, the results of this study will be helpful for governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions to devise better strategies that enable them to mitigate the possible conflicts as well as to create harmonious co-existence among the study subjects.

This study also contributes much in terms of filling the gap of information on the conflicting issues of Gurgura ethnic identity. All concerned people will have clear information on the Gurgura ethnic identity and its impact on their relationship with the neighboring societal groups. In addition, it gives tangible and substantial information on the intra ethnic relations between the Gurgura and Issa, and interethnic relation between the Gurgura and Nollee (Oromo).

1.8. The Scope and Limitation of the Study

The core theme of this research is to address historical background and contemporary ethnic identity characteristics among the Gurgura in the selected urban and rural research sites under DireDawa Administrative Region. This study intends to investigate about the controversial ethnic identity of the Gurgura with a particular emphasis on their perception and attitude towards their ethnic identity. It also identifies the views of the neighboring societal groups towards the Gurgura. Since this study is centered on identifying the problematic conflicting ethnic identity; the findings of this study primarily intend to capitalize on emic perspectives to the study community towards their ethnic identity and relationship with the neighboring societal groups. To this end, all concerned indigenous people particularly elders and local officials are contacted for the purpose of this study.

1.9. Research Experience

This research is conducted in Diredawa Administrative region, Oromia and Somali regional states. This study is carried out based on two phases. The first phase of this study is conducted in the selected urban and rural kebeles of Diredawa Administrative region from March 19-April 19,

2016. During the first phase, a rapport is established with known traditional leaders and educated people of Gurgura community. After an introduction and briefing the intention of the study, I carried out in-depth interviews and FGDs with notable Gurgura elders, youth and. To be more specific, I had established friendly relationship along with some people who helped me to meet different Gurgura elders. Many Gurgura people were willing for interviews and group discussions.

Gurgura people are very humble and kind towards strangers. They positively welcomed the initiative of the study so I won their cooperation during data collection. Moreover, speaking native Afaan Oromo helped me so as to easily approach them and express the intention of my study. In addition, during fieldwork, I used to tell them how and where I grew up especially among Oromo community. I also told them how my family was adopted by Oromo people and the name of my clan is Maya among Oromo community in the eastern Hararghe of Oromia regional state. All these factors of my personal information helped me to won their cooperation and trust. In addition, it helped me to find rich information from the local communities.

However, to deal with ethnicity and identity is the most difficult kind of research because it is so sensitive in having formal interviews with indigenous people. Therefore, the fieldwork that I had carried out among Gurgura was filled up with many ups and downs particularly in terms of getting the emic perspectives of the indigenous people. As we know, Anthropological fieldwork gives more emphasis on emic perspectives so that this study took an extended period of time in terms of gathering data and finding the right interviewees.

The second phase of fieldwork conducted from May12-June 12, 2016. Although I was already able to establish close relationship and rapport with indigenous people, it was so challenging to get appropriate informants since they are living in different areas among various societal groups. Thus I was expected to move into different areas to get the right informants in the research areas. In addition, it was not an easy task to have formal interviews with Gurgura elders to get their emic perspectives towards their ethnicity and identity since they are highly assimilated with neighboring societal groups particularly with Oromo society.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter deals with theoretical and empirical literature review on ethnicity and identity.

2.1. Theoretical/ conceptual Literature

2.1.1 Concepts and Definitions on Ethnicity and Identity

Race, language, and ethnicity were considered as a fusion of physical and cultural traits by the Western Scientists and Anthropologists of the 19th c. However, this trend has been changed based on the Franz Boas research findings that indicate the physical characteristics of a specific group of people are not associated with any particular behavior, culture or language. For Boas one's language or culture is not inherited through biological or genetic transmission. Instead, one acquires his or her language and culture through enculturation by learning the various language, symbols, values, norms, and beliefs in the environment that one is exposed (Boas in Scupin& Decorse 2005:580). Moreover, he contends culture is very imperative for explaining how people behave in different ethnic groups. Since the 1960s, Anthropologists and other social scientists have generally used the term ethnicity or ethnic group to refer to an individual's cultural heritage, which is separate from one's physical characteristics (Scupin&Decorse 2005:580).

The term ethnic is derived from the Greek *ethnos*, which means stock, multitude, crowd and nation. Today it means primarily people (Bolaffi et al 2003:94 in Yasin 2010:17). Therefore, ethnic group can be defined as a group of people who believe sharing one language, particular attachments to kinship, trace common ancestry, having collective memory and history, racial similarity, cultural symbols, and common religion (ibid.). However, ethnicity is defined in several ways by various scholars from different perspectives. Weber stated that, "we shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" (Weber in Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 35). Nevertheless, this trend of definitions currently shifted and an ethnic group became a group of persons distinguished largely by common culture, typically including language, religion, or other patterns of behavior and belief (Cornell&Hartmann2007:9-10). Barth also defined ethnic group as, "a population which is largely biologically self-

perpetuating, shares fundamental cultural values, makes up a field of communication and interaction, has a membership which identifies itself, and is defined by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”(Barth1982:9). Likewise, recently an ethnic group defined as, “a group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and /or by others as a distinct group, which such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics” (Cornell&Hartmann2007: 9-10). Another definition accepts either culture or national origin as the basis of ethnicity, defining an ethnic group as “a group socially distinguished or set apart, by others or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national – origin characteristics”(Feagin& Feagin 2003:8 in Cornell&Hartmann2007:10).

Furthermore, recently, ethnicity has been defined from its objective and subjective perspectives. The objective aspect of ethnicity is about the observable culture and shared symbols of a given group. And it involves a particular language or religious tradition that is maintained by the group that entails specific clothing, hairstyles, and preferences in food. On the other hand, the subjective aspect of ethnicity involves the internal beliefs of the people regarding their shared ancestry. They may believe that their ethnic group has a shared origin, or family ancestry, or a common homeland in the past(Scupin& Decorse 2005:579).

Ethnic group is a collectivity of people who believe they share a common history, culture, or ancestry. Thus, ethnicity is based on perceived differences in ancestral origins or descent and shared historical and cultural heritage (Scupin&Decorse 2005:577).

According toEnloe, ethnicity is most complicated to define because it has composed of many attributes such as language, religion, territory and custom but these are insufficient to identify an ethnic group. Moreover, the cluster of attributes assigned a collective value by a group will vary. A common language is a typical component of the ethnic cluster, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient to distinguish ethnicity(Enloe1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:197). Added to this, ethnicity requires a sense of belonging and an awareness of boundaries between members and non-members, however vague and mutable those boundaries from situation to situation or from time to time (ibid.).

2.1.2 Relationship between Identity and Ethnicity

Although the definition of identity is controversial, according to Malesalic identity is in the mind of an individual particularly in psychology, on the other hand, identity is “collective “ or “social identity” which stands for a group in Sociology and Social Anthropology. He also stressed that identity is a collective phenomenon of group’s sameness but is unstable and fluctuating because it is contingent products of social action. On the contrary, identity means to be different from another group (Malesalic 2006: 15). Moreover, identity is about both similarity and difference. It is concerned with how individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations from other individuals and collectivities. It is the result of agreement and disagreement, an ever-present concern that has occupied humankind since classical times. First and foremost, identity is articulated through relationship among belonging, recognition and difference (Hetherington 1996 in Ferjacques 2003: 8).

On the other hand, “Ethnicity is a social identity characterized by fictive kinship” (Yelvington 1991:168 in Banks 2005:4). For Abbink, ethnicity is about “a cultural interpretation of descent and historical tradition by a group of people, as opposed to others, and expressed in a certain behavioral or cultural style”. It could also be seen as a kind of “expanded, fictive kinship” (Abbink 1997). For Cohen, the term Ethnicity refers to strife between... ethnic groups, in the course of which people stress their identity and Exclusiveness” (Abner Cohen 1969:4 in Banks 2005:4). For Horowitz, “ethnicity is an umbrella concept that “easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers “tribes,” “races,” “nationalities,” and castes.” (Horowitz 1985: 53).

According to Devos, today ethnicity has become an important issue in modern states due to the ethnic inter-penetration as the result of the rising up of social and geographical mobility (Devos 1995 in Romanucci & Devos 1995:16). For Smith, ethnic groups do not lose their ethnic identity though they are dispersed and have lost their home land. Therefore, ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols, but it is not a matter of material possessions or political power both of which require a habitat for their realization (Smith 1986:28).

According to Brass, ethnicity is an alternative form of social organization and identification to class, but it is a contingent and changeable status that, like class, may or may not be articulated in particular contexts or at a particular times (Brass in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:86). According to Premadas, ethnic identity stem from collective group consciousness and a sense of belonging derived from membership in a community bounded by presumed common descent and culture. Therefore, identity can be acquired through membership in various communities based on certain social attributes such as race, language, religion, culture and region (Premadas 1996:10).

Moreover, according to Jenkins, ethnicity is about cultural differentiation, and identity is always dialectic between similarity and difference. Ethnicity is principally concerned with culture-shared meaning, but to a considerable extent it is the outcome of social interaction. Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than culture or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced. Ethnicity as a social identity is collective and individual which is externalized in social interaction as well as internalized in personal self-identification (Jenkins 1997:11).

However, Weber argues that ethnic cultural differences are being characterized by “groupness”, but the existence of a group is not a reflection of cultural difference. However, ethnic groups imply ethnic relations, and ethnic relations involve at least two collective parties, they are not unilateral (Weber in Jenkins 1997:11). Further Weber argues that ethnic groups are what people believe or think them to be so that cultural differences mark groupness, but ethnic identification arises out of and within interaction between groups (Weber in Jenkins 1997:11). Likewise, according to Eriksen, the existence of cultural differences between two groups is not the decisive feature of ethnicity. There may be also some cultural variation within a group without ethnic differences (Eriksen 2010:16). For instance, two distinctive local groups in the New Guinea have different languages, religious beliefs and even technologies, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that there is an ethnic relationship between them (Eriksen 2010:16). Cohen stated that “Contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and not the result of complete separatism” (Cohen 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:83). For the existence of ethnicity two distinctive groups must have a minimum contact with each other, and they must exchange ideas of each other as being culturally different one from another. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, ethnicity is unthinkable because for ethnicity to come about

relationship is a necessary condition. In other words, ethnicity is not a matter of being a group but it is an outcome of relationship (Eriksen 2010:16).

Smith argues “the ‘core’ of ethnicity as it has been transmitted in the historical record and as it shapes individual experience, resides in this quartet of ‘myths, memories, values and symbols’ in the characteristic forms or styles and genres of certain historical configurations of population.”(Smith1986:15). Therefore, according to Smith, if someone wants to understand the unique features of ethnic identities, he or she has to give emphasis on the nature (forms and content) of their myths, symbols, historical memories and central values. In addition, he or she has to look at the mechanisms of their diffusion (or lack of it) through a given population and their transmission to future generations (ibid.).

Smith also explicitly stated that, “the fused and elaborated myths provide an overall framework of meaning for the ethnic community, a ‘myths of descent’, which ‘makes sense’ of its experiences and defines its ‘essence’ ” (Smith 1986:24). Therefore, without ‘myths of descent’ a group cannot define itself or to others, and cannot inspire or guide collective action (Smith 1986:24-25).According to Donald Horowitz “Ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate. Some notion of ascription, however diluted, and affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity.”(Horowitz 1985: 52).

2.1.3. Ethnicity as Dynamic Phenomena

Ethnic identities themselves must be treated as dynamic phenomena, with respect both to their cultural content and to which individuals bear them (Cohen 1984). Boundaries are generally two-way-both groups in a relationship demarcate their identity and distinctiveness vis-à-vis the other (Eriksen 2010:48-49).However, as social, economic, and political condition change, the social boundaries can be changed along various lines, each affecting the character of ethnic identity (Cohen 1984). Ethnicity is at base an ascribed identity like other conscious group identifies, ethnicity must be learned; and it is developed in a specific, changing environment. Even basic identity symbols can be highly mutable (Cohen 1984). To illustrate this, when ethnic groups assimilate with the surrounding population, they experience the far-reaching displacement and

replacement of their identity symbols and groups values. On the other hand, ethnic groups may preserve their distinctive identities in changing environments simply by developing their pre-existing cultural values. In most cases the formation or persistence of an ethnic identity seems to depend on some clear social separation or an inequality of functions, property, or status among groups within the same society who also differ with respect to certain cultural characteristics (Cohen 1984).

2.1.4 Ethnic groups boundaries and their interdependence

Nash said that “where there is a group, there is some sort of boundary, and where there are boundaries, there are mechanisms to maintain them. These boundary mechanisms are cultural markers of difference” (Nash 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 24). Nash also said that “It is the presence of cultural markers of blood, substance, and cult that separates ethnic groupings from other kinds of social aggregates, groups, and entities. But sometimes the members’ basic symbols of ethnicity are not visible, graspable, or available in social interaction.”(Nash 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 25). However, if a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this shows criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion (Barth 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:79). Thus the persistence of ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of interaction which allows the persistence of cultural differences (Barth 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:80). Sherif’s said that, “whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually with another group or its members in terms of their group identification” (Sherif’s 1966:12 in Hailey et al 2010:20). Nevertheless, Wimmer said that, “Barth and his collaborators observed how the boundaries between two ethnic groups are maintained, even though their cultures might be indistinguishable and even though individuals and groups might switch from one side of the boundary to the other” (Wimmer 2008:971).

Banks said that “Barth tried to show that ethnic groups are socially constructed. He claimed that the physical and ideological contents of the group should not be investigated in isolation. Instead, attention should be focused on boundaries of the group” (Banks 2005:12).

The positive bond that connects several ethnic groups in an encompassing social system depends on the complementarities of the groups with respect to some of their characteristic cultural

features. Such complementarity can give to inter-dependence or symbiosis but in the fields where there is no complementarity there can be no basis for organization on ethnic lines. In other words, there will be either no interaction or interaction without reference to ethnic identity (Barth 1996 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996:82).

2.1.5 Identity and Myths of descent

The notion of ‘identity’ relates mainly to a sense of community based on history and culture (Smith 1986:14). In relation to this, myths of descent usually reveal several components and layers of legend. There are myths of spatial and temporal origins, of migration, of ancestry and filiations, of the golden age, of decline and exile and rebirth (Smith 1986:25). Therefore, ethnicity is nothing if not historical communities built upon shared memories. A sense of common history unites successive generations, each with its set of experiences which are added to the common stock, it also defines a population in terms of experienced temporal sequences, which convey to later generations the historicity of their own experiences (Smith 1986:25).

In addition to myths of descent and common memories, ethnic groups are differentiated by one or more elements of ‘culture’ which both help to bind members together and to separate them from outsiders. This means that, it is based on the ‘similarity-dissimilarity’ pattern, where members of an ethnic group are similar in those cultural traits in which they are dissimilar from non-members. The most common shared and distinctive traits are those of language and religion; but customs, institutions, laws, folklore, architecture, dress, food, music and arts (Smith 1986:25).

2.1.6. Interaction of Language and Ethnicity

Language is the backbone of culture and an integral part of ethnic affiliation. It is one of the salient boundary markers between ethnic groups as well as the most overt features of group cohesion. Language is the main instrument for the expression of ethnic identity and the culture of an ethnic group. Certainly, language is one of the elements which may be shared by an ethnic group contributing to social cohesion (Ramahobo 2008:1-6). However, among the Scots, language long ago ceased to play a differentiating and unifying role. Instead, institutions have formed the social bulwark for a continuing Scots sense of ethnic identity (Smith 1986:26-27). Therefore, language is not ethnicity. Some ethnic groups may share a common language, but

have different histories, traditions, food, value systems, view each other as different. Some ethnic groups may have a similar language but due to political, social or economic circumstances and issues of insubordination, they may prefer to distance one from the other by emphasizing elements on which they differ such as tradition(Ramahobo 2008 :1-6).

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks on the Study of Identity and Ethnicity

There are three principal schools of thought on the questions of how ethnic identity is formed or constructed and why it persists: the primordialist, instrumentalist, and the constructivist. Each of them is elaborated in the following sections.

2.2.1 The Primordialist Model

According to Geertz, ethnic attachments are based on assumed kinship and other social ties and religious traditions that are deeply rooted within the individual through the enculturation process. Ethnic affiliation persists because it is fundamental to a person's identity. In this view, as people are enculturated into a particular ethnic group, they form deep emotional attachments to it. Geertz focused on the internal aspects of ethnicity which is the deep subjective "feeling of belonging "to a particular ethnic based on blood ties (Scupin&Decorse 2005:579).

According to the Political Scientist Harold Isaacs, "primordial attachments "stem from the assumed 'givens' " of social existence. The notion of primordial attachments is the idea that ethnic identities are fixed, fundamental and rooted in the unchangeable circumstances of birth (Isaacs1975 in Cornell& Hartmann 2007:51). He also stated eight elements that directly contribute to a person's basic group identity"the physical body; a person's name (both individual and family); the history and origins of the group one is born into; one's nationality or other group affiliation; the language one first learns to speak; the religion one is born into; the culture one is born into; and the geography and topography of the place of birth."(Isaacs1975 in Cornell& Hartmann 2007:51). For Isaacs, ethnic identity is "basic group identity" that "consists of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications that every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place."(Isaacs1975 in Cornell& Hartmann 2007:51).

Moreover, according to Geertz, people's primary attachment is to others who are seen to be of the same 'race' who are the same kinsmen and women, who speak the same language. And a community that has collective past and future that are based on shared experience of region, religion, customs, and culture. Therefore, such communities of custom, kin ties, religion and region are the basis of people's sense of self (Geertz in Fenton2003:80). Geertz also said that," The multi-ethnic populations of the new states tend to regard the immediate, concrete, and.... meaningful sorting implicit in such 'natural' diversity as the substantial content of their individuality" (Geertz in Fenton2003: 80). In connection with this Fenton argues that the word "natural" is a direct indication that Geertz regarding these sources of diversity as something other than organic or biological or unchanging human divisions which command the loyalty of their members in a pre-social way. Therefore, according to Fenton the quotation marks of Geertz suggest this: people may think of these divisions as natural, we know that they are culturally and socially moulded, as well as being grounded in place, language and shared historic experience (Fenton 2003:81). Fenton argues that the primordialists ethnicity involves objective entities with inherent features such as territory, language, recognizable membership, and even a common mentality (Fenton 2003:73).Cohen also stated that, "The primordialist school of thought emphasizes the psychological and cultural force of intense, comprehensive attachments to certain traditional values and symbols which distinguish a group from the rest of the population and which persist in some form despite social and economic development" (Cohen 1984:1033).

2.2.3. Circumstantialist/ Instrumentalist / Model

The scholars in instrumentalism school of thought considered ethnic identity as, "rational choice of an individual to belong him or herself in any group" (Seyoum Y. 1997:25-26 cited in Yasin Mohammed 2010:19).The instrumentalists' view of rational choice that in its maximum level reduces ethnic identification to cost-benefit oriented economic choices(Vayrynen 1999:128 in Yasin Mohammed 2010:18). Moreover, Ray et al (2006:13) argued that, "instrumentalists' regard ethnicity either as a substitute for more basic social forces such as class or colonial domination or as fraud perpetrated by persons with self-serving objectives to exploit mass publics in pursuit of their political and economic ambitions(Rayet al 2006:13 in Yasin

Mohammed 2010:18). Therefore, ethnicity is predominantly a myth propagated by ambitious political actors so as to attain and secure political power by instigating political followers (Yasin Mohammed 2010:18). Brass said that ethnicity is the creation “of elites, who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves” (Brass 1999 in Yasin Mohammed 2010:18). Cohen said that “The circumstantialists or ‘mobilizationists’ see ethnic groups’ defining cultural characteristics as the mutable results of individual and group usage which are shaped by the needs and circumstances of each group”(Cohen 1984:1033).

2.2.4. Constructivist Model

Basically this approach accepts the circumstantialism’s basic idea of fluidity- the idea that identities change in their nature and significance across time and situations, but also it builds on the circumstantialism’s specific factors that derives into identity change. To put it in nutshell constructivists categorically reject the notion that ethnic identity is either a natural or given phenomena or that it is simply a tool that is invoked and manipulated by ethnic entrepreneurs for individual or collective political ends. Rather ethnic identities are enduring social constructions. They are products of human actions and choices (Ray et al. 2006:12 in Yasin Mohammed 2010:19-20). Max Weber who is one of the earliest writers stressed the social construction of ethnic identity , viewed ethnic groups as “ human groups whose belief in a common ancestry, in spite of its origins being mostly fictions, is so strong that it leads to the creation of a community” (Weber in Yasin Mohammed 2010:19-20). For Kasfir ethnic identity is “socially constructed that can also be fragmented and destroyed eventually rather than natural phenomena” (Kasfir 1979:370inYasin Mohammed 2010:20).

Moreover, elites play a pivotal role in the creation and transformation of ethnic communities even under the circumstances of dramatic social change both in modern and post-industrial societies (Brass 1985 in Ferjacques 2003: 6). Therefore, ethnic identity is a process that involves competition, conflict and the manipulation of symbols so as to secure the support of masses and attain political goals (Ferjacques 2003: 6).

According to this model, ethnicity is not simply imposed upon people, but the people accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, and actively defend. Thus, it involves not only circumstances but also active responses to circumstances by individuals and groups, guided by their own preconceptions, dispositions and agendas (Cornell& Hartmann 2007:81). Construction involves both the passive experience of being “made” by external forces, including not only material circumstances but also the claims that other persons or groups make about the group in question, and the active processes by which the group “makes” itself. This means that, the world around us may “tell” us we are distinct, or experience at the hands of circumstances may “tell” us that we constitute a group, but our identity is also a product of the claims we make (Cornell& Hartmann 2007:81). Ethnic construction is not a one time event, but it is an ongoing processes.

It is clear that constructivists and circumstantialists have the same stand on the fluidity and dynamics of ethnicity. The constructivists also accept the critical role of that context plays in collective identification and action (ibid.).Therefore, according to this school of thought, circumstantial factors play a pivotal role in shaping and reshaping ethnic identities but ethnic groups may also use the raw materials of history, cultural practice, and pre-existing identities in order to shape (construct) their own distinctive notions of who they are(Cornell& Hartmann 2007:81).

According to Crawford Young “The constructivist sees ethnicity as the product of human agency, a creative social act through which such commonalities as speech code, cultural practice, ecological adaptation, and political organization become woven into a consciousness of shared identity....The constructivist thus places higher stress on contingency, flux, and change of identity than the instrumentalist and primordialist approaches” (Crawford Young in Udogu 1999).

Generally speaking, the above discussions that are centered on the primordial, instrumentalism and constructivism school of thoughts would be the bedrock of the analysis and interpretation sections of this study. In other words, the above noted theoretical frameworks serve as a general guideline in analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data on the socio-historical dynamics including the processes or characteristics of ethnicity and identity formation among the Gurgura with a particular emphasis on emic perspectives. For ethnographic data on the impact of

bilingualism on their identity, and the intra and inter-ethnic relations, I will employ an information synthesis approach.

2.3. Empirical Literature

2.3.1. Oromo and Somali Relationship in Eastern Ethiopia

Muhyadin (2006) carried out a comparative study on the local conflicts between Somali and Oromo in Maeso and Babile districts to explore the underlying causes of conflicts between the two ethnic groups. For instance, the two ethnic groups (Somalis and Oromo) in Babile district had a long history of cultural and linguistic interactions. As a result, there is cultural integration between the identity groups in Babile because there was a long history of acculturation between different identity groups in the district (Muhyadin, 2006 :--). One of the informants of Muhyadin named Ali explained as follows:

There existed generations –old cultural and linguistic transactions and widespread affinal relationships between the two ethnic groups. These phenomena have resulted in the cross-cultural fertilization and acculturation whereby similarity of many cultural traits, including bilingualism of the overwhelming majority of the people from both groups took place.

However, following the formation of ethnically based regional states in 1991, both Somali and Oromia states started claims and counter claims for the ownership of the district (Muhyadin, 2006:36). Right after 2000, the disputed areas along the borderline between the newly established Somali and Oromia regional states have become source of conflict between the two regional states. Consequently, new political elites who had strong desire to meet their political interests were emerged so as to utilize and exploit the fertile ground of the ethnic and identity differences of the local people by mobilizing them along ethnic lines (Ali, 2005; Shide, 2003 in Muhyadin 2006:32).

At that time, both Somali and Oromo regional states had conflicting ideas over the identity make up of the various communities in Babile district (Shide 2004 in Muhyadin 2006: 36). Because local communities in the district speak both Somali and Oromo languages, but Hawiya and other groups in the district largely speak Oromifa language (Muhyadin 2006: 36-37). In other words, the majority tribes such as Mayo, Maru, Madigan, Hawiya, Akisho and others in Babile district dominantly speak Oromifa language. Based on this evidence, the then Oromia administration officials argued that these people belong to Oromo. On the contrary, Somalis argued that the

tribes in the Babile district originally belong to the Somali ethnic group, and speaking Oromifa language dominance is due to the close interaction with the neighboring Oromo tribes and these become strong only during Hailesilasie and Dergu periods (Shide 2004 ; Ali 2005 in Muhyadin 2006: 37). In relation to this, Muhyadin explicitly stated that, “Local Hawiya elders also tell that most Hawiya local people paused to speak Somali language. But, this was just Hawiya’s strategy to isolate the animal looting and concealed raids they have sustained from their rival Ogaden people who speak only Somali language.” (Muhyadin 2006:37). In general, the two states had conflicting claims over the identity formation of local people in Babile district (Muhyadin, 2006:37).

2.3.2. Ethnicity and Identity formation among the Siltie

During the transitional period, the Siltie political elites were agitating the local people to separate from Gurage ethnic group. Their agitation was primarily based on their distinctive Muslim identity and language from that of the Gurage ethnic group. The earliest stage of mobilization was being characterized by developing local ethnographies and a unified discourse of Siltie identity. In addition, civil society associations were established in order to push for separate ethnic identity (Smith 2007:579-580). In other words, the position of Siltie ethnic group members with regard to their earlier designation as Gurage was unclear. As a result, the Siltie people mobilized to receive status as a separate nationality during the transitional period (Smith 2007: 578).

However, the initial position of the EPRDF was that the Siltie were indeed part of the Gurage ethnic group. Where as the population of Siltie as a whole is more inclined to see them as different. Consequently, they pushed their question of ethnic identity through a process of meetings and petitions to government entities. Finally, the EPRDF government accepted their question and suggested a referendum to be conducted so as to respond their question of ethnic identity. Then a referendum held on 1 April 2001 in the Siltie districts and other places where the Siltie lived resulted in a vote of over 99% for the separation of the Siltie from the Gurage (Smith 2007:582).

The Siltie referendum is an interesting test of some critical assumptions of procedural and institutional models of linguistic and ethnic justice. Critically, it was a peaceful process,

remarkable in light of the tensions surrounding ethnicity and language in Ethiopia /the country (Smith 2007:585).

Nonetheless, these days, many people agree that unequal development was a prime cause for Siltie separation. Welkite, the Gurage zonal capital town was too far away from Siltie districts so that Gurage zonal administration was not adequately addressing the development needs of the Siltie. When the economic development gains did not materialize, resentment built against Gurage leadership, and a sense of distinct Siltie emerged (Smith 2007:579).

2.3.3. Inter-Ethnic Relations in Diredawa Administration Region

According to the book in 2013 titled, “Cultural Diversity in DireDawa”, Under DireDawa Administration Region, there are different ethnic groups such as Amhara, Oromo, Somali, Harari and Guraghe are the principal dwellers in the urban area. However, most of the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups are dominantly living in the rural area. Consequently, several numbers of people have easily familiarized with two or more languages due to frequent interactions they have among themselves. Today many people from different ethnic background are either bilingual or multilingual so this situation has helped them to establish strong relationship among themselves. In other words, most of the people in DireDawa Administration Region are well known by speaking different languages as the result of repeated interactions among various ethnic groups (DireDawa Bureau of Culture and Tourism 2013: 15). Bilingualism or multilingualism has its own advantage during communication among divergent societal groups. Moreover, the official language of the country or region or the medium instruction of education is usually determined /imposed by the central government as the result sub-national groups of people are expected to learn the official language. Therefore, this can be taken as one of the negative effects of bilingualism or multilingualism. In general, bilingualism or multilingualism plays a critical (vital) role in terms of relationship or communication with other societal groups, but it has negative impact on one’s explaining his/ her own identity(DireDawa Bureau of Culture and Tourism 2013:16).

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter discusses on Gurgura population, Geographic area, and Livelihood and Genealogical narratives of the Gurgura people.

3. Population, Geographic area, Livelihood and Genealogical Narratives

3.1. Population

To begin with, the word '*Gurgura*' is both an Afaan Oromo and Somali word where in Afaan Oromo it literally means "selling something". And according to my key informant, Alyie Cheka, the word *Gurgura* is believed to have originally stemmed from the Somali word "*Gurgure*," which literally means "moving from one place to another". "The word '*Gur-gure*' is coined from two Somali words with distinct meanings, '*Gur*' means house and '*Ugure*' means moving from one locality to another along with ones livestock" (Key Informant Interview, May 2016).

In the past, the entire *Gurgura* people used to practice permanent nomadic ways of life. However, according to the interviews conducted with my key informants, from the entire Somali sub-clans, the *Gurgura* people were the first societal group who started a sedentary life and become involved in agricultural activities. This shift had given them the opportunity to establish close contact with the neighboring (agrarian) Oromo people in the adjacent territories, which consequently resulted in the cultural and linguistic intermingling of the two groups. In progress this enabled the *Gurgura* people to pick-up the Afaan Oromo language as their mother tongue and to engage in crop cultivation much earlier than the other Somali clans who still rely on nomadism as their key livelihoods (Interviewed April 2016).

As the result of these long dynamic interactions (juxtapositions), currently it is hardly possible to find a common language among the entire *Gurgura* people. Although language is considered as an identity marker for many societies living in Africa, for the *Gurgura* society language does not serve as an identity marker. This is due to the fact that todayanoverwhelming majority of the *Gurgura* people are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue, which essentially blurred the identity marker of the *Gurgura*.

There are many *Gurgura* people who are living in Eastern Hararghe Zonal Administration of the Oromia National Regional State. The *Gurgura* people who are now living in areas of the Eastern Hararghe Zone are assimilated with Oromo. Thus, it is difficult to identify who belongs to the Oromo or Somali society, unless and otherwise they declare their identity/ethnicity openly.

Likewise, there are quite a large number of *Gurgura* people living in Fiq area of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State. Although they are detached from their group, they have maintained strong relationship with other Somali sub-clans of the Malingure and Ogaden. Consequently, they managed to have kept their cultural uniformity, territorial proximity and linguistic affinity with their kin groups.

On the ongoing process of cultural, linguistic and identity formation (assimilation) one of the key informant named Ahmed Rage said, “*Gurgura* is one of the senior clans of the Somali ethnic group. *Gurgura* is the first indigenous social groups in the Diredawa region. Geographical proximity and intensive social interactions and relationship with the Oromo people compelled them to abandon their own language and cultural practices. They steadily adopted Afaan Oromo as their first language. Moreover, due to strong inter-marriage alliances with Oromo, many *Gurgura* are systematically assimilated with Oromo culture and society. Today, majority of the *Gurgura* are assumed to be living among the Oromo society and engaged in agricultural activities, while the remaining majority of the *Gurgura* population yet depend upon pastoral livelihoods” (Interviewed May 2016).

3.2 Geographic Area

The results of the in-depth interviews clearly depict that the *Gurgura* people predominantly inhabit in the areas located at the eastern part of the Diredawa administrative region, specifically in the areas like Belewa, Qalecha, Ayalegungune, Legadini, Cortu and Melkakero. Currently, there are quite significant numbers of *Gurgura* in Oromia regional state particularly in the areas of Jarso, Babile, Gelemso, Herna, Meso, Haromaya and Kombolcha. Beyond the localities of the Eastern and Western Hararghe Zones, they also live in Hurso, Ereregota and Fiq areas of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State and further spread into the areas of Bale and Arsi

Zones of the Oromia Regional State. Therefore, it is difficult to define the geographical location of Gurgura since they are widely dispersed into vast areas far beyond their ancient spatial settlement. Moreover, in favor of this argument one of my informants named Ahmed Rage mentioned the following point:

The settlement pattern of Gurgura is dispersed into different areas of the two neighboring regional states of Ethiopia, namely Oromia Regional State and Somali Regional State. Currently, we have a significant number of populations of the Gurgura in Oromia region particularly in the localities of Jarso, Babile, Gelemso, Herna, Meso, Haromaya and Kombolcha and equally have large numbers of Gurgura settled in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State particularly in Fiq, Hurso and Ereregota areas. Moreover, quite significant numbers of Gurgura are also living in the DireDawa Administrative Region.

As much divergent opinions and views are reflected among informants on the pattern of mobility and settlement of the *Gurgura* across vast geographic areas, they have interestingly diverse accounts in connection with some important incidents purported in their traditional narratives. Accordingly, an informant from Hurso area, who is notable for his historical knowledge has attested (narrating medieval history) that the prominent historical figure in Ethiopian history who fought against the Christian highlanders and known as *Ahmed Gragn* belonged to *Gurgura* clan. Thus, he alleged, the *Gurgura* people referred him “Ahmed *Gure*,” where the last word “*Gure*” in Somali language means “the left-handed”.

Gurgura is a nick name and meant to be descended from a person called Medhaweyene Dir. As the traditional account retold by one of my informant Medhaweyene Dir had got three children namely Leiela, Ali and *Gurgura* (Ahmed). Ahmed Gure (Gragn), my informant claimed, belonged to Leiela. During his fight with Christian highlanders, *Gurgura* men were incorporated into the military forces of Ahmed *Gure* (Gragn). In relation to this, the other informant named Abeduselam said that, “*Gurgura* people were famous warriors so they were serving as the major fighters of Ahmed Gragn. Although there is no concrete evidence to ascertain which Somali clan Ahmed Gragn belongs, we know that Ahmed Gragn was born at a place called Hubet, a residential area located where at present time inhabited by the *Gurgura* community. To be more specific, Hubet is situated in the vicinity of a rural town called Qalecha which is in the eastern part of the Dire Dawa Administrative Region where the *Gurgrua* community is living”.

In connection to this, one of my informants named Ahmed Yusuf lived in Hurso area, he belonged to Leiola group and traced his descendant to the family of Ahmed *Gure*. Therefore, diverse accounts obtained from the informants have attested that the *Gurgura* are living being dispersed into vast areas found currently within the Somali (i.e. Issa), Afar and Oromia Regional states. This dispersion is related to the alleged fact that *Gurgura* men had been serving as formidable fighters in the major military units of Ahmed Gure in his fight against Christian highlanders. Although Ahmed Gure was able to defeat the Christian kingdom for few years, later the Christian highlanders had defeated and killed him.

After short-lived military success of Ahmed Gagn over the Christian forces, his loyal fighters were compelled to scatter away into vast areas and mixed within different ethnic groups. Accordingly, Ahmed Gure's (Gagn) war was taken by informants as one of the major justification for *Gurgura* people to be dispersed into wide areas and mixed within various ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the other informant named Alyie Cheka in Qalecha rural town said that, "*Gurgura* people are capable of establishing good relationship with different societal groups. In other words, they can easily acquaint themselves with other societal groups. They have positive attitude towards others so that they can easily familiarize themselves with different ethnic groups. That is why they are seen being dispersed into different areas".

Alyie Cheka goes on pointing out that many *Gurgura* people were leading nomadic ways of life. Although most of *Gurgura* are currently involved in agro-pastoral activities, there are still quite a large number of *Gurgura* who are dependent on pastoral livelihoods as subsistence ways of their lives. Unpredictability of climate and scarcity of key resources dictate the pattern of their life forcing them to rely on seasonal and permanent mobility and practice different coping strategies in response to recurrent droughts and disasters.

Therefore, depending on the unavailability of resource and conducive weather condition, the young and able *Gurgura* men move back and forth between their residential site and resource abundant areas. In this way, many *Gurgura* nomads are forced to remain in other areas in quest of resources but they quickly adopt smooth social contact through marriage alliances and social bonds with host community with whom they share common resources and territories

3.3. Livelihood

According to my key informants and field observation, the livelihood strategy of the Gurgura differs from one area to another area. For instance, the livelihood strategies of the Gurgura who are living in the eastern part of the DireDawa administration is entirely relied upon agricultural activities. Although they have few cows, oxen and camels, they are mainly cultivating crops such as sorghum and maize as a means of subsistence.

They are also growing different kind of fruits such as *Mango, Orange, Papaya* and *Menderiene* that are planted along the side of streams. In addition, they have cash crops like coffee and *Khat* and others types of vegetables. Although they are attempting to sell some fruits and vegetables to the market center, they usually earn very meager income from the sales of their horticultural products and thus unable to support their life all throughout the year. In connection with this, Osmail Abedo Chelo of the Qalecha rural town said that, “In the past, we were involved in rearing several numbers of domestic animals but today due to scarcity of rainfall we have few cows, oxen and camels. We also sell the milk of our cows to generate income. Today we are mainly engaged in agricultural activities but we are producing only as a means of subsistence because our land is not fertile and scarcity of rainfall is also widely prevailed in the area” (Interviewed April 2016).

Majority of the Gurgura people are living in the eastern part of the DireDawa administration, specifically in rural areas like Belewa, Qalecha, Cortu, Bishanbehe and Biyoawale, where agriculture is dependent on erratic rainfall. The landscape or natural environment is not suitable to agricultural activities. Consequently, they are being affected by recurrent drought which has entirely deteriorated their living conditions from time to time. As a result, they have less production and meager income from agricultural activities, so that many of them are forced to be aid dependent. During my field work, I have observed that they are regularly receiving aid supplies such as wheat and edible oil from Catholic Relief Service Organization (CRSO).

However, the Gurgura people who are living in Hurso area are typically agro-pastoralists, engaged both in rearing domestic animals and agricultural activities. Nevertheless, there are many Gurgura who are still merely engaged in rearing cattle, goats, sheep and camels. Thus, they

are mainly generating their main income from production of these livestock. The sale of sheep and goats as well as milk and milk products enable them to acquire extra income. But, recently many of Gurgura people have lost their cattle, goats and sheep due to erratic rainfall that exacerbated the recurrent drought in Hurso area. Consequently, the livelihood strategies of many people are shifting into alternative activities like cutting down trees and charcoal production as a means of survival in response to unpredictable changes.

From FGDs and in depth interviews informants contended that, during Hailelassie's regime, Gurgura people in Hurso area had extensive land holdings where they could grow different types of fruits such as orange, Banana, Menderiene, Lemon as well as vegetables. They also generated their income mainly from the sale of fruits. Their strategic location across commercial route enabled them to sell these fruits along the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway line for the passengers of the train. Specifically, women played a great role in selling fruits and generating significant income to supply their livelihood and households. Thus, they were involved in agricultural activities by producing different types of fruits in addition to raising domestic animals. But, during Derge regime, their farms lands were nationalized or had been taken away by the government. Yet, they have been persistently claiming for the restoration of lost lands for the cultivation of fruits and other crops. Recently, although they have developed new cultivable farms and started producing fruits in new areas, the presence of Hurso military training center in their locality is posing a threat to dislodge them from their new farming lands. Now their livelihood is under threat in addition to the risk of eviction from the area. In connection to this, one of my informants Mumed Ibro has clearly explained the situation as follows:

The area with approximately more than 5000 hectares of land that was used for cultivating fruits had been taken away by the Derge regime. As a result, many Gurgura people were forced to move into other areas, particularly to Sodere and Djibouti. However, many Gurgura still remained in Hurso area. We were repeatedly beaten by the military officials and soldiers whenever they found us in our ancestral fruits farming areas. In addition, these days we lost goats and sheep due to unpredictable rainfall caused by climatic changes. Therefore, we are reduced to the status of the poorest of poor and forced to engage in cutting down trees and making charcoal in order to win our daily life. As a result, our livelihood strategy that has been mainly depended upon farming and cattle raising activities shifted into supplementary business

activities such as cutting down trees and making charcoal as a means of income (interviewed May 2016)

Furthermore, the other informant who is named Mohammed Esie, represented his pastoral ways of life in particular and the Gurgura livelihood strategies in general in Ereregota area as follows:

I have 20 camels and 100 goats. My house is Dessa (mobile house), so I am seasonally moving from one place to another following the patterns of the rainfall. . Finally, we stay for a certain period of time in the areas where grass and water resources are available. Therefore; I am generating my income mainly from selling domestic animals even if I am still earning some income from agricultural products. However, there are also pure nomadic pastoralists among Gurgura people in Ereregota areas. This kind of Gurgura pastoralists are known as “Reare Gura” which means pastoralists who are keep on wandering from one area to another area following the pattern of rainfall. Thus, this type of pastoralists are entirely dependent on raising domestic animals and generating their income by selling cattle, goats and sheep including milk and milk products (Interviewed May 2016)

In addition, Abedal Abedi of Ereregota areas consolidated the above view; there are quite a large number of pure nomadic pastoralists in Ereregota areas. There are some Gurgura individuals who possess big crowd of cattle, sheep, goats and camels with rough estimation above three hundred (300 or 400) per household. However, there are also quite significant numbers of the Gurgura people who are living in the Ereregota areas involved in agro-pastoral activities. They are mainly cultivating fruits such as banana, orange, lemon and Menderiene as well as cereal crops like sorghum and maize.

Moreover, according to key informant Hassen Mumed Ali, stated that currently Gurgura people who are living in Kombolcha woreda (Gende Tula Amesur Gende Shenkor) in the Eastern Hararghe Zonal Administration of Oromia Regional State are mainly generating their major income from production of *Khat*. In addition, they are known for producing vegetables such as potatoes and onions and the like. Hassen Mumed Ali further noted that:

We are producing vegetables in our locality. We also produce different kind of crops such as sorghum, maize and Teff but we are mainly making our income by selling *Khat* product which is being locally considered as a cash crop in this area. However, we do not have wider area to cultivate

cereal crops. So, we are mainly using our land for Khat product because we are known for producing export standard kind of Khat. Therefore, honestly speaking, our livelihood is extremely depended on production of Khat (Interviewed May 2016)

In sum, the lifestyle of the *Gurgura* people who are living in Kombolcha area differs from those who are living in the lowland areas. For instance, *Gurgura* people who are living in the high land areas lead sedentary ways of life. They are involved in agricultural activities, but their livelihood extremely depends on *Khat* product. Whereas, *Gurgura* who are living in the lowland areas particularly in Hurso, Ereregota and Fiq are semi-nomads.

3.4. Genealogical Narratives

3.4.1. Genealogical Roots of the Somali Ethnic Group

Shiek Mohammed Siraje is a son of famous Shiek Bekri Sebelo. His father, Shiek Bekri Sebelo, was a popular scholar credited for inventing many new words in Afaan Oromo. I had in-depth interview with Shiek Mohammed Siraje at a rural town called Qalecha. He is eighty five years old and was very much willing to engage in an in-depth interview. According to Shiek Mohammed Siraje, descent line of the Somali ethnic group originated from Mohammed Akadie family line in Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, all Somali people have an Arab origin. Later, they moved into the Zeila port. Initially, they settled at the Zeila port in 500 A.D. and stayed there for about 1000 years. Gradually, they pushed towards the north and settled across the vast land in the region.

Genealogically Gurgura descended from the Somali ethnic group. The Gurgura, otherwise known as Medhaweyene Dir, had originally descended from the Dir sub-branch of the Somali ethnic group. Gurgura is thought to be one of the senior clan from among other sub-clans of the Dir family line.

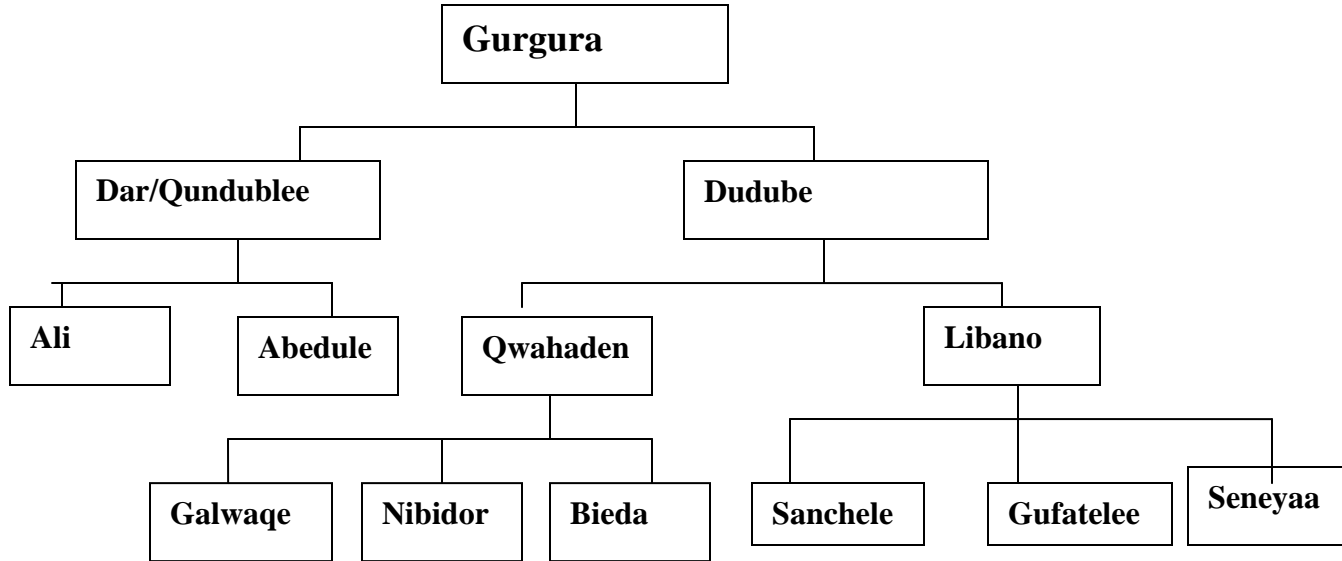
3.4.2. Myths and Historical Narratives of the Gurgura

The finding of this study has revealed the existence of diverse views (myths) among the *Grugura* elders in regards to the genealogical roots of the *Gurgura* people. Therefore, this part presents oral sources on historical narratives and myths that were related with the genealogical roots of the *Gurgura*. Based on the in-depth interview conducted with the incumbent traditional leader (Ugaz) Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru, the *Gurgura* people had first settled in the Zeila port in 1117 A.D. Gradually, they entered Geldisa through the caravan trade route that linked the main trade routes with the Zeila port. Geldisa is located 70 kilometers away from the present day Diredawa town. Their access to the trade routes or their strategic location enabled Gurgura to actively involve in the caravan trade route. In addition, during the installation of the railway they had already settled in the area where the DireDawa town was founded as one of key railway stations.

However, Gerrada (owner of land) Sheik Adem Ali Ibrahim has a different view on the history of the Gurgura and he claimed that the first ancestral father of the Gurgura people, who is named as Gurgura had primarily settled around Mogadishu. After he passed away, he was buried around Mogadishu where the current capital city of the Republic of Somalia is founded. From that moment on the descendants of the Gurgura spread and settled in the Ogaden region at the mouth of the Wabishebele River. Besides, it was not only the Gurgura clan members but people from the other ethnic groups like Afar, Oromo and Hawiya were also living at the mouth of the Wabishebele River sharing scarce resources. As far as the knowledge of my key informant is concerned, shortage of key resources and violent conflict with other competing groups urged them to penetrate deep inside into the Diredawa region. Consequently; they become involved in agricultural activities alongside raising domestic animals. In a nutshell, the first settlers of the Gurgura were semi-nomadic pastoralists who were known for raising cows and camels, specifically those inhabiting in the eastern and western parts of the Diredawa region. Currently, most of them are involved in agricultural activities and they breed domestic animals like goats and sheep (Interviewed March 2016).

3.4.3. Genealogical Roots of the Gurgura clan

Gurgura Clan Structure



Source: fieldwork (April 21,2016).

For Shiek Mohammed Siraje, Gurgura genealogical roots are divided into two main branches: *Dar* and *Dudube*. The first genealogical root of Gurgura is known as *Dar*. The genealogical root of *Daris* listed down in order of priority by Shiek Mohammed Siraje of the rural town of Qalecha as follows: *Shiek Mohammed Siraje, Shiek Bekri Osman odda Adem, Hargayaa, Guyame Adebeka, Anoo, Abedulahi, Mahadari, Ysaqhe, Mohammed Zubeiri, Shiek Sied, Meirawelale, Yusuf, Ogaden, Abeduselam, Kebelella, Ismail, Ibrahim, Ismail Duberti, Abedusemed, shiek Abdulaziz, Ahmed, Hussien, Aliye, Mohammed, Yazid, Amir, Yisaqh, Tariqe, Kahlid, Shedide, Aliye, Mohammed Akadie, Aqele, Abeitalibe, Abedule Mutelibe, and Hashim*. Therefore, this is the genealogical root of *Dar* sub-branch of Gurgura (Interviewed April 2016).

The second sub-branch of the genealogical root of Gurgura is known as *Dudube*. The genealogical root of Gurgura which is known as *Dudube* sub-branch is also listed down by Shiek Mohammed Siraje as follows: *Haji Galwaqe, Qwahaden, Dudube, Gurgura, Medhaweyene, Dir, Erier, Semale, Waride, Lejam, Lidimer, Kamile, Qoweshen, Rhewedan, Nohi, Ismail, Ketir, Sear, Ahmed, Ibrahim, and Mohammed Akadie*. Therefore, according to Shiek Mohammed

Siraje both Dar and Dudube main branches of the Gurgura clan originated from Mohammed Akadie family line of the Arabian Peninsula. Mohammed Akadie was born from Arab family line particularly from Qurashie family in Arabian Peninsula (Interviewed April 2016).

Contrasting to the genealogical account of Shiek Mohammed Siraje, the chief representative of Seneyaa sub-clan of Gurgura in Kombolcha area named Demina Hassen Mumed Ali claimed that the Gurgura is an elder son of the Dir. According to this key informant, the Gurgura people settled in the area after coming through the Zeila port before many years ago. Elaborating on this theme, he said:

We are known as Kush people so we do not trace any genealogical root from the Arab people. We came through the Zeila port along with Oromo people and initially settled around Dire Dawa region, but later on we moved into Kombolcha area. Economically, we used to rely on nomadic pastoralism. However, upon arriving into this area we started settled ways of life as the result of the brotherhood relationship we established with the Oromo. The Gurgura were prominent warriors. Thus, Gurgura sent over 300 fighters to provide military support for Nollee in its fight against Alla. As a result, Nollee gave access to land for Gurgura people as a reward for their military support. Since then, the Gurgura have been leading settled ways of life and consequently engaged in the agricultural activities. In other words, we abandoned a nomadic ways of life and engaged in agricultural activities so that we learned Afaan Oromo as first language (Interviewed June 2016).

Furthermore, Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru also said, “we descended from the Somali ethnic group. However, some people are trying to associate us with Oromo ethnic group for merely we have had strong neighborhood bonds with them. Some people are mistakenly relating us to the Oromo ethnic group, but we were originally descended from Somali people. Gurgura is the name of our ancestral father who was one of the elderly and respected sons of the Dir. Therefore, we are not Oromo” (Interviewed March 2016).

Moreover, the other key informant, Abedi Mohammed Dawe of the Biyoawle rural town said, “ourancestralline islinked to the Somali but we speak Afaan Oromo as our mother tongue language. But it has little impact upon our ethnic identity. We are living together with Oromo as if we were born from the same mother supporting (helping) each other both in times of peace and crisis. Moreover, Gurgura lifestyle and livelihood strategies are similar to Oromo people. If Oromo people encounter any problem, we are always on the side of them in order to overcome their problems”(Interviewed May 2016).

3.5.Socio-political Structure of Gurgura

According to Ahmed Yusuf, who is chief representative for Beida sub-clan of the Gurgura people in Hurso district, the social structure of Gurgura is divided into two main sub-branches: the Dar and Dudube. The first sub-branch is known as Dar. Under the Dar sub-branch, there is also Qundublee sub-branch that constitutes: Ali and Abedule sub-clans. In addition, Qundublee sub-branches has moieties named Orgabe and Diyabe. Orgabe encompasses eight sub-clans and Diyabe comprises eleven sub-clans. In relation to this notion one of the key informant named Demina Mohammed Osmail Omeri from Belewa rural town, noted that Orgabe means Oromo. Accordingly, Orgabe sub-clan is part and parcel of Oromo ethnic group in Belewa rural town of Dire Dawa Administrative Region.

The second sub-branch is known as Dudube. Under Dudube sub-branch, there are two main sub-branches: Libano and Qwahaden. Libano embraces: Gufatelee, Seneyaa and Sanchelee sub-clans. Besides Qwahaden sub-branch encompasses: Galwaqe, Nibidor and Beida sub-clans. Each of these sub-clans has its own chief representative i.e. *Demina or Sultan*. *Demina* is a socially achieved social status and serves as a title of chief for a given Gurgura sub-clan for those who are living in Dire Dawa Administration and Oromia National Regional State. Also, *Sultan* is a socially achieved social position and serves as a title of chief for a given Gurgura sub-clan specifically for those who are living in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State. *Sultan or Demina* is a culturally given social status for officials working as a chief representative and responsible person on behalf of various forms of conflict. In other words, this official manages and resolves disputes within the Gurgura and other neighboring competing societal groups. In addition, *Demina or Sultan* plays key role in regulating the cycles of conflicts and payments made for blood compensation.

Currently, under custody of Ugaz, there are 16 Deminas men who are serving the local people as agent of Ugaz and as chief representatives of their own sub-clan. As mentioned above, *Demin* chiefs who handle conflict cases and blood compensation are named as *Aba Diga*. *Demina* is a responsible person to execute different cases (matters) of blood compensation. For instance, if someone is killed either by somebody within Gurgura-sub clans or neighboring

societal groups, the blood compensation would be executed by *Demina* based on the existing customs and norms of Gurgura.

However, the overall traditional or customary leadership of the Gurgura and its upper hierarchy is controlled by Ugaz. The main headquarter of Gurgura leader is customarily fixed to be in DireDawa town. Under Ugaz, there is Ugaz committee that comprises eight people elected from each of the sub-clans. The Ugaz committee usually conducts meeting at the residence of Ugaz in order to make binding decisions for violent conflicts emerging from inside and outside the Gurgura groups. Furthermore, in the deliberation of conflicts they treat cases coming from individuals, clans, sub-clans and neighboring societal groups. In other words, they usually conduct meeting in order to solve different conflict cases among individuals, sub-clans and neighboring societal groups.

As it is briefly noted earlier, among Gurgura people there are eight sub-clans. Out of these sub-clans, Ugaz is usually elected from the three Libano sub-clans of Gurgura that includes: Gufatelee, Seneyaa and Sanchelee but not from the other five sub-clans of Gurgura. Therefore, the first step is to identify whether there would be candidate from the legitimate three sub-clans or not. Traditionally, the nominated three men for the status of Ugaz and the whole Gurgura people move outside their homes. In the final election, the three nominees were used to stand before huge crowds of people in an open field and stay there until the sun shade comes to one of the three men who were nominated for the status of Ugaz. Then the first man who faced shade in the sun would be automatically elected as Ugaz. After disclose to the entire community, there was public festivity accompanied by traditional dancing and singing throughout day and night.

Regarding the major traditional criteria for the election of Ugaz, Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim has elucidated in the following text:

First and foremost, meeting age limits a man has to be forty years of age and honest to his parents. He has to be well accepted within his families as well as the society in general. However, three nominees' men must be elected merely from the Libano-sub-clans. These three nominees happened to stay in the sun for many days until shade comes to one of the three men. Nevertheless, this kind of traditional practices of electing

Ugaz has been recently changed into modern kind of Ugaz election. Currently, the election of Ugaz has been carried out by taking into consideration the ability of individual. Nonetheless, the elected supposed to be Ugaz still merely from Libano sub-clans. The voters for Ugaz only come out from Qundublee sub-clan because it is assumed a senior sub-clan among Gurgura (Interviewed April 2016).

3.5.1.Geraada: Ascribed Social Status among Gurgura

According to Geraada Sheik Adem Ali Ibrahim of the DireDawa town, the traditional leader Geraada assumes a social status which he inherits from his family. Thus, it is a hereditary position. Geraada in Afaan Oromo language, means “*owner of the land*”. It also means one who had the right to allocate the land under his control (the farm land in the village) for different families based on blood ties or clan. Geraada’s power not only limited to granting land, but may also revoke entitlement. Geraada is considered to be an agent of Ugaz (the overall leader of the people of Gurgura). In short, Geraada is serving as a leader of village and owner of the land. Under the administrative power of Geraada, there were a number of families nearly thirty. These families were expected to obey to Geraada.

The relationship between Geraada and subordinate families compared with the vassal age type between landlord and peasants. The households under the Geraada were also expected to bestow some quintals of crops as tribute during harvest season. In addition, they were expected to provide free labor service to Geraada. However, the farmers under Geraada were fully privileged to produce any kind of crops and raise cattle, camels and goats. With regard to this, Geraada Sheik Adem Ali Ibrahim said, “Farmers living in a village that was administered by my father, Geraada Ali Ibrahim, were fully entitled to cultivate any crops they wish, rear cattle, camels and goats they desire. After my father’s death, I have inherited the title of Geraada from my father but as the functions of the Geraada have already become obsolete, I am now serving simply as an agent of Ugaz. That is why, cases of the villagers or families who are living under the jurisdiction of the Geraada would not be referred to the district without my knowledge, as I am still serving the local people as the agent of Ugaz. They also appreciate and respect me because I do not take their properties and domestic animals for my services” (Interviewed March 2016).

Moreover, I had in-depth interview with another Geraada, Omer Ibro Hassen Robele, who was born in Biyoawale – a village located in eastern part of DireDawa administration. I have visited Omer Ibro Hassen Robele, who is a 130 years old man, for several times to conduct an in-depth interview and generate rich data from him. He was one of my key informants in the study and a famous Geraada in the *Sabean* district of DireDawa town. In the interview I had with him he expressed his unhappiness with the current administration of DireDawa and complained about the land management of the City administration. He has unreservedly stated his dissatisfaction saying:

In the past, the Gurgura people were the rightful owner of the land but their entitlement has been revoked by the current administration of the town. Now, we are evicted from the land of belonging to our ancestors and the city government had taken away our land. The land that had been remained under my possession for many years back has recently been taken away by the government with meager amount of compensation. I had inherited the entitlement of this area from my ancestors and I have been living here for more than 100years. I was the owner of the whole land in the sabean district, but now the city administration has grabbed the land without my will. I have got 21 children from two wives. My first wife was from the Gurgura, while my second wife is from the Oromo”. Asked about his ethnic identity, he has replied “Ani asli Somali” which in Afaan Oromo means ‘I am typically Somali. I am not Oromo ‘(Interviewed May 2016).

As Geraada, Omer Ibro Hassen Robele used to grant land to various people who have different ethnic backgrounds. He was not only giving land to the Gurgura clan members but also to people with diverse ethnic background.

In addition, according to Geraada Omer Ibro Hassen Robele, the vast area of the present day DireDawa town belonged to Gurgura people. Until his tenure, there were 19 Gurgura Geraadas’ in DireDawa region to mention them: Geraada Abedula Hassen, Geraada Adem Mohammed, Geraada Omer Godenie, Geraada Mumed, Geraada Wedai Beri, Geraada Omer Robele, Geraada Abedule Omer Ali, Geraada Ahmed Hassen, Geraada Wareia, Geraada Ahmed Hassen, Geraada Adem Kerisa, Geraada Abedi Hadibe, Geraada Saliebe kore, Geraada Shiek Adem, Geraada Mumed Hamid, Geraada Adem Musa, and Geraada Abedi Teri”. Therefore, this evidence implies that most of DireDawa region was under the control of Gurgura people.

3.6. Religion among Gurgura

The findings of this study asserted that all of Gurgura people are Muslims. They are so firm about their Muslim religion. Religiously, they strictly practice Islamic teachings. In other words, they have strong faith in almighty God (Allah). At their village they conduct daily prayers together, I saw them several times meticulously praying together at the Mosques as well as privately at their houses. At the compound of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim who is Gurgura leader, there is arranged room that serves as praying quarter for the people who come from nearby and distant Gurgura dwelling areas.

Moreover, according to my key informants, there are quite a number of religious leaders like *Sheikas* and *Deressa* among Gurgura people who play vital role in ensuring the persistence of Muslim religion. In addition, Gurgura people who are living in Kombolcha area have strong faith in Allah (God). Even I saw them building a new modern mosque in Kombolcha area. Each household contribute money on monthly basis for the construction of the Mosque. In other words, they have had strong cooperation besides maintaining their faith, constructing mosques and supporting each other economically.

Furthermore, from FGDs and interviews I realized that there are known communal prayers for fertility, better productivity during harvest time and whenever scarcity of rainfall occurs in their living areas. They are used to praying whenever they meet together at different times and places especially on occasions like weeding ceremony. They also conduct *Wedaja* which means praying for God either for the sick person to get relief from his pain or they conduct *Wedaja* following the death of someone.

Generally speaking, according to Shiek Osman, Gurgura people's commitment to live by proper observance of Islamic norms and values enable them to have modest relationship with other ethnic groups because they have strong faith (religion) in God (Allah) so that they distance themselves from engaging in cattle raiding as well as stealing properties from another ethnic group. Their Muslim religion is playing supreme paramount role in terms of uniting them with Oromo as well as other neighboring societal groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter discusses on ethnic relationship between Gurgura and Oromo. It deals with the relationship between Gurgura and Issa people. It also discusses on traditional Conflict resolution mechanisms among Gurgura.

Gurgura Inter and Intra-Ethnic Relationships

4.1. Historical Background on Gurgura and Oromo Inter-Ethnic Relation

According to Mohammed Osmail Omeri, with whom I had an in-depth interviews at a rural town called Belewa, the famous leader of the *Gurgura* people was a man called *Geirsa*, who was born around Babile. *Geirsa* had strong military power that enabled to control Bisidimo and Erere areas. Later, *Geirsa* renamed himself as Abedula and expanded his territory into Ejersagoro area, where he had a place named after him that is now referred to as Gara Abedula. The informant relying on oral sources narrated Abedula had been living in the area designated as Gara Abedula. And at that time, Nollee, Jarso and Alla Oromo sub-group were fighting among each other for territorial expansion. Humbena was the then leader of Nollee group and his force routed by the (at the hands of) Alla group at kerie Bechi. Following this victory, the triumphant Alla succeeded controlling extensive territories from the vanquished Nollee, which includes the present day Cortu kebele in the eastern part of DireDawa. In the meantime Humbena, the then leader of Nollee, called for the support of *Gurgura* after his defeat at kerie Bechi. Then after securing the support of Gurgura, the Nollee combined their forces and fought against Alla.

In the combined warfare, Alla forces were defeated and retreated to Garamuleta areas, which in the present day found in the Eastern Hararghe zone of Oromia Regional State. Consequently, as reward for this military alliance the leader of Nollee, Humbena, gave extensive territories to the *Gurgura* people. As the tradition has it, Humbena had a brother whose name was Nagnaa Nollee. Then many oxen were slaughtered and Gurgura were traditionally adopted into the family of Nagnaa Nollee. In the course of time, the brotherhood relationship strengthened between Nagnaa Nollee and Gurgura (Specifically Qundublee sub-clan).

Supporting this notion / oral source Mohammed Sied of the Melkajebedue area said:

The pushing factor that forced the Gurgura to leave their homeland and settle in the present locality was the deadly war fought between the Nollee and Alla sub-clans of the Oromo for territorial expansion. First Alla defeated Nollee and secured dominance over the Nollee group. Alla took the upper hand over the Nollee. This forced Nollee to request the support of Gurgura in the fight against Alla. At that time Gurgura were famous for their warrior disposition and had supported the Nollee in the fight against Alla. At the end, Alla people were defeated by the joint forces of Nollee and Gurgura. Subsequently, Nollee who were the first settlers in the area had granted Gurgura freedom of access to land in an exchange to the military assistance they had offered, which in turn, had helped them to establish strong brotherhood relationship between the two groups (Interviewed May 2016).

In the post war periods, they made oath of allegiance not to fight with each other and promised to restrain from inflicting any violence performing the ritual known as “Herbu Hera”. In addition they determined to consolidate their relationship through marriage alliances. In the course of times, the Gurgura people who are living in the eastern part of DireDawa and eastern Haraghe Zone of the Oromia regional state gradually started speaking Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue.

Gurgura people who are specifically living in the eastern part of DireDawa adopted Oromo language as their mother tongue and adopted Oromo cultural practices. Therefore, currently they are seen being assimilated with the Oromo people and lost their ancestral Somali language as well as their original cultural practices. Today *Gurgura* people who are living in the eastern part of DireDawa have become all Oromo in terms of the language they are speaking and culture they are practicing, but without losing insight of their genealogical roots that connected to the Somali ethnic group with whom they claimed to be related through patrilineal descent line.

However, most of the Gurgura mothers are from the Oromo ethnic group due to historical or social relationship and marriage alliance between Gurgura and Oromo people. This means that Gurgura people who are living in the eastern and western parts of DireDawa are dominated by Oromo language and cultural practices. Nevertheless, Gurgura people who are living in the Somali National regional state are still dominantly speaking Somali language as they have managed to maintain their original cultural practices.

4.2. Matrimonial Alliances

Based on the findings of this study, Gurgura people are observed in establishing marriage relationship along with different ethnic groups. In addition, they also frequently formed marriage relationship within Gurgura sub-clans as well as from various ethnic groups. Thus, marriage relationship among Gurgura is carried out both in the aspect of endogamous and exogamous types of marriage. However, exogamous marriage is widely practiced among Gurgura people rather than endogamous marriage. In other words, they mainly established exogamous kind of marriage with various ethnic groups.

4.2.1. Marriage Practices between Oromo and Gurgura

Focusing on the marriage ties between Oromo and *Gurgura* groups Shiek Mohammed Siraje who lives in the rural town of Qalecha stated, “We have strong marriage ties /bond with Oromo people. For instance, the mother of my father, Zeineba Wedai Gelmo (Obera), is from Oromo, and my mother, Kedija Wedai Haro (Obera), is from Oromo. Therefore, both grandmother and mother were from Oromo who belonged to Obera sub-clan of Afrenqello. Although now I trace my genealogical root from *Gurgura* based on patrilineal descent line, I was born from both *Gurgura* and Oromo. Therefore, I have both Oromo and *Gurgura* identity” (Interviewed April 2016).

On this point Ferarro clearly stated patrilineal descent group as, “In societies with patrilineal descent groups, a person is related through the father, father’s father, and so forth. In other words, a man, his own children, his brother’s children (but not his sister’s children), and his son’s children (but not his daughter’s children) are all members of the same descent group” (Ferarro, 2006:244). Therefore, interviews and FGDs results indicated that Gurgura society usually trace descent based on patrilineal line. Although Gurgura society has mixed identity with Oromo people, they trace their descent groups based on patrilineal line. As the result, now many of them claim to be related with Somali ethnic group based on father line.

Furthermore, Geraada Shiek Adem Ali Ibrahim who lives in Gende Geraada district in DireDawa town said that, “due to the long persisted relationship and interaction we have similar cultural practices with Oromo people. We lost our ancestors language (original language of Somali) as the result of strong marriage alliance and relationship between Gurgura and Oromo (Nollee) for many years. In other words, most of the Gurgura men have married Oromo women. As a result we learned Afaan Oromo as first language and unknowingly we abandoned our ancestors’ language of Somali” (Interviewed April 2016).

Moreover, Shiek Mohammed Siraje further explained:

In the past, Nollee were defeated by Alla, and then Nollee had asked Gurgura for military support. Then, Gurgura had sent 300 soldiers to give military support to Nollee in its fight against Alla. The combined Gurgura and Nollee forces had defeated the invading Alla. Consequently, Alla was forced to retreat to Garamuleta areas. As a result, Nollee had ceded extensive territories for Gurgura as a reward for the supportive role it had played in the fighting wedged against Alla. This way Gurgura had the chance to settle in this area. Spirit of brotherhood established between Nollee and Gurgura had begun with the solidarity Gurgura had shown to Nollee. Gurgura men married to Nollee women. Consequently, we have become parts and parcel of Oromo ethnic group and our mothers have become Oromo. Their alliance in war had led Gurgura and Nollee clans to live together interspersing into the border areas of their respective territories”(Interviewed April 2016).

To emphasize this relationship the *Gurgura* say “*Eysomone kenya Oromo tehe*” or “*Akakone Kengna Oromo tehe*” which means “our uncles and aunts have become Oromo. Thus, we have become Oromo and eventually lost our ancestral language, which is Somali.” However, my informant has commended the relation saying “*Akesiti Oromoyenie Ha Oromoyenu Gossa Chewa keisaitie Edemene*” “*Gossa Chewa Hera Bereda Kekebu Kiesa Edemene,*” by which he means “let us be Oromo, we joined into the best ethnic group that has best traditional governance system. So, we did not lose anything by joining into Oromo ethnic group”.

In addition, Mohammed Osman Yusuf who is one of the members of the Ugaz committee said that, “We are free to marry women from different ethnic background. Nevertheless, we most

often establish marriage ties with Oromo women as much they do as with women from the *Gurgura*. Therefore, we have prevalent cases of marriage relationship with Oromo people. Although Issa men marry *Gurgura* women, we do not marry that much Issa women” (Interviewed April 2016).

Afrahan Abedulahi Buh said that, “despite the fact that we have no genealogical root with Oromo people, there has been long established marriage relationship with them. Many *Gurgura* men have married to Oromo women. Likewise, many Oromo men married to *Gurgura* women. It is a known fact that *Gurgura* had been providing military support for Nollée in their fight against Alla. Based on the rite called Herbu the two groups had promised not to fight with each other, which in turn has further strengthened the spirit of brotherhood between *Gurgura* and Nollée. In addition Nollée and *Gurgura* has also made consensus to pay blood compensation together in cases where according to the tradition a wrongdoer who belongs to both groups may be required to do so” (Interviewed May 2016).

The marriage alliance has also consolidated the social relationship between Nollée and *Gurgura* up to the present time i.e. *Wara Sodaa* (wife-givers), which in Afaan Oromo means “*Gurgura* man has married to Nollée woman”. Likewise, Nollée men have married to *Gurgura* women. In other words, *Wara Sodaa* (wife-givers) means a family that has gave a woman to a man. In addition, Osmail Abedo Chelo said that, “Oromo and *Gurgura* are brothers so that we have good relationship with Oromo. We have a common religion Islam -“Isomafi Sodda” ‘welfuna” (Interviewed April 2016). To sum up, although *Gurgura* people are free to marry from different ethnic groups, they have strong marriage alliance with Oromo people rather than other societal groups.

4.3. Intra-Ethnic -Relationship between *Gurgura* and Issa

According to Abeduselam, the Hailelassie regime used to give special treatment for Issa people in DireDawa town specifically right after the independence of Djibouti in 1970. Hailelassie had strong desire to incorporate Djibouti into Ethiopia. Therefore, the Hailelassie regime was deliberately giving special advantage for Issa people in DireDawa town because there were many Issa people in Djibouti. So, the Hailelassie regime wanted to incorporate Djibouti into Ethiopian

territory. Although the land of the present DireDawa town was under the control of Gurgura, the Hailelassie regime used to give special advantage for Issa people at the expense of Gurgura people in order to achieve the incorporation of Djibouti into Ethiopian territory.

Moreover Abeduselam said that, “For instance, Hafeteissa district in DireDawa town was given to Issa people by Gurgura Ugaz Buh because the wife of Ugaz Buh was from Issa people. Hafetissa was given as a market place whereby different sheep and goats were sold. Today, there are a number of Issa houses in Hafetissa. Recently, Hafeteissa is being occupied by Issa people. Thus the vast areas of DireDawa town were originally belonged to *Gurgura* people. However, right after the independence of Djibouti in 1970, Issa people were able to occupy many areas in DireDawa town because they had strong link with Issa people in Djibouti. Even now they are economically supported by Issa people in Djibouti. That is why; they are holding the highest political position in DireDawa Administration than Gurgura people. Recently, there is fierce political competition among Oromo, Gurgura and Issa in DireDawa Administrative Region. Therefore, due to the political competition between Somali and Oromo ethnic groups, we are forced to accept anyone who comes to the status of Mayor from Somali ethnic group” (Interviewed April 20, 2016).

According to Abeduselam, *Gurgura* and Issa people have been fighting against each other over resources and territorial expansion for many years in the past. As a result, these days, Gurgura and Issa people dislike each other as the result of frequent conflict in the past. Due to repeated fighting between *Gurgura* and Issa, there are many *Gurgura* people who do not want to associate themselves with Somali ethnic group as the result of unremitting conflict between Issa and Gurgura.

According to Mohammed Osmail Omeri, Issa and *Gurgura* were even recently fighting each other over territorial expansion and cattle raiding. He said that, “Issa people killed two *Gurgura* men, and *Gurgura* also killed three Issa men so that we are paying blood compensation for them. Likewise, they are also paying blood compensation for us” (Interviewed April 21, 2016).

According to Ahmed Rage, *Gurgura* and Issa are brothers who descended from Dir genealogical root of Somali. *Gurgura* is known as Medhaweyene Dir, and Issa is also known as Modobe Dir.

Therefore, *Gurgura* and Issa are descended from the same Dir genealogical root of Somali. In the past, *Gurgura* and Issa were fighting each other over territorial expansion, grazing and water resources. Even today, there are different kinds of conflicts between *Gurgura* and Issa but they are attempting to settle these conflicts based on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. On the other hand, these days, *Gurgura* are working together with Issa people in SDEPA party. In other words, they are actively participating together in the political, social and economic domains in order to enhance the living standards of the Somali people.

Regarding the relationship between *Gurgura* and Issa in Ereregota areas Abedal Abedi said that, “Issa people are our neighbors and sometimes we are fighting each other for grazing land, water resources as well as cattle raiding. Even these days, Issa people killed one person from *Gurgura* and we are going to receive blood compensation in the coming month. Issa people in Ereregota areas perceive *Gurgura* as Somali, but if they consider as Oromo people, we will fight them” (Interviewed April 21, 2016).

4. 4. IGLF and GLF

According to Abedusalam, the *Gurgura* and Issa people are brothers. He categorized *Gurgura* as senior and Issa as junior. Based on this, the two societal groups in the past were able to establish IGLF (*Issa-Gurgura Liberation Front*), but Issa people had become dominant in IGLF. As a result, the *Gurgura* has established a different front known as GLF (*Gurgura Liberation Front*). Finally, these two liberation fronts were able to establish the present ESPDP (Ethiopian Somali People Democratic Party) in Hurso area.

In addition, according to Mohammed Yusuf, during the transitional period of EPRDF, IGLF was established by 24 people, 12 people from Issa and 12 people also from *Gurgura*. At that time, Issa people became head for IGLF, but *Gurgura* people became vice president of IGLF. Further, Issa people became head for the military soldiers and camp. Moreover, Issa people became head for financial department. All the highest positions were being occupied by the Issa people so we were disappointed. Finally, we decided to separate from Issa because we were dominated by the Issa people. Then we established *Gurgura Liberation Front/GLF*. We informed to the transitional government of EPRDF about the establishment of *Gurgura Liberation Front/GLF*, but EPRDF

government asked us the reason for the separation from Issa people. We informed to EPRDF government that we were dominated by the Issa people in IGLF. At the end, the transitional government of EPRDF allowed us to open our office in Addis Ababa and DireDawa. Then we officially launched our work. We were also allowed to have one Gurgura representative in the parliament. Then we assigned Abedulaziz Ahmed as the representative of Gurgura in the parliament. I was also nominated as vice representative of Gurgura in the parliament. Thereafter, Abedulaziz Ahmed officially started his work as a representative of Gurgura. At that time, Abedulaziz was fluent in Amharic language. As a result, the parliament officials preferred to work with him. Consequently, Abedulaziz was also elected as vice chairperson of the Ethiopian Electoral Board Commission during the transitional period of EPRDF government.

Moreover, Mohammed Yusuf explicitly explained the reason for the separation from IGLF as follows:

GLF military soldiers separated from IGLF, and we organized our military soldiers and camp. Abedulewehab shiek Abedule wale was the head for GLF and military camp. Although we separated from IGLF, we didn't have the intention to separate ourselves from the Somali people. For instance, Silti people separated from Guraghe because they have their own unique language and defined geographical area. However, Gurgura people speak either Somali or Oromo as the first language. In addition, we are living in dispersed areas among the people of Afar, Oromo and Somali. Gurgura people who are living among Oromo organized under Oromo political organization in Oromia regional state. On the other side, Gurgura people who are living among Somali people organized under Somali political organization in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State. Therefore, we didn't have the intention to organize ourselves as a separate ethnic group because we do not have our own unique language and defined geographical territory (Interviewed May 2017).

4.5. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

4.5.1. Hera: Gurgura Conflict Resolution Mechanisms vis a vis its Neighbors

The *Gurgura* people have had a customary institution known as *Hera*. The Gurgura people of traditional governance system (Hera) are affiliated with Oromo Hera. It is framed on the basis of Oromo Hera. Hera is a customary governance system in which the traditional customs and rules are applied to resolve conflict arising among the broader *Gurgura* people. To put it differently, conflict resolution mechanism helps to solve disputes occurring among individuals belonging to different sub-clans of the *Gurgura* as well as neighboring societal groups. In other words, Hera

helps to mitigate problems arising between or among individuals coming from rivaling clans. For instance, whenever someone from a certain sub-clan inflict bodily injuries upon someone who belongs to another sub-clan. Parties or individuals suffered injury would present this case to the council of elders. Subsequently, the claimant takes his case to the attention of the notable elder and explains the encounter that flared-up the conflict and resulted in the fight with other Gurgura sub-clan. Then the Council of Elders thoroughly investigate the case and the level of damage thereof to finally pass verdict.

In the process of mitigation, Elders Council on its part attempts to crosscheck whether the allegation has occurred or not. They thoroughly investigate the case interrogating the accused if intentionally committed the alleged bodily injuries or not. If the offender admits his criminal action, immediately elders pass decision upon the guilty person to slaughter a sheep for physically injured person as blood compensation. If the injury is serious, the offender would be ordered totake careslaughtering a sheep until the injured is proven to be recovered. This act can be taken as first stage of blood compensation.

Afterwards, the victim would be asked whether he has got a relief from his pain or not. If he gets a relief, the offender again would be requested to slaughter the second sheep. This step and decision is taken as the final and binding form of blood compensation. This stage is known as Arkamura. Arkamura is considered as a last stage of conflict resolution between two individuals in conflict. Then, a person who has inflicted bodily injuries will never be asked for additional blood compensation. However, if the criminal was unable to slaughter the second sheep and some months or years later the victim passed away, then the death of the person could be considered as being resulted from the bodily injury. If this happens, the clan members that the criminal belongs to are expected to pay full blood compensation either in cash or in kind by head of cattle for the deceased person's clan members or families following his death.

Thus, Herbu Hera is a decisive form of conflict resolution whereby individuals make confession whether they have committed the alleged crime or not. For example, if an individual is killed by an outsider and if a murderer denied his criminal action, the two clans call upon three neutral elders belonging to other sub-clans to investigate the case and give final solution for the conflict.

To this end, there is a traditional confession which is known as Herbu Hera. Herbu Hera is a practice in the context of confession usually carried out at a culturally identified site distant from villages and roads. It should also be far away from cattle and herders. If the accused killer persists on denying the murder, the elders' council resorts to ritual performance of Herbu Hera. This ritual is highly dreaded, as the curse is believed to bring enormous damage concealing the blood of the deceased person. Finally they dig the ground with opening hole and put fire on it. Following this, the suspected clan members carry water with pottery on their back and pour it into the hole.

The implication for this is that if we made this criminal action, let our ancestors' spirit dismiss us from the earth and so forth. The ritual is usually carried out in the presence of clan leaders named Demina and Boku. However, many of the *Gurgura* people if they made confession of denial knowing that they committed the crime, they believe that right after Herbu Hera bad fortunes will happen to them. So, most of the time they prefer to admit their guilty action instead of denying it. Thus, besides verbal confession they prefer to pay the required blood compensation for the wrong doings they committed.

Moreover, according to *Gurgura* Hera, if somebody has threatened another person with a knife, it would essentially be considered as a homicide attempt. Hence, a person who has made such false attempts by threatening someone with knife would be expelled or suspended from *Gurgura* villages for about a year. Thus, this kind of temporal social outcasting punishment is not common among other neighboring societal groups of *Gurgura*.

The value of Hera (Customary Conflict Resolution)

Regarding the value of customary conflict resolution Ahmed Yusuf in Hurso area said:

For instance, if I kill somebody, all my clan members would pay a sum of money as compensation. Then I will be set free from prison center. They do not put me in prison center, I will be free as long as my clan is able to pay the blood compensation either in kind or cash. Of course, according to the government legal system if somebody has killed someone, he /she will be put under the legal custody and the ease to be treated only through legal court of the state. However, the two sides of clan elders are allowed to present an appeal to handle the matter using

customary institution to end the cycle of retaliation through blood compensation. In other words, a clan that has lost somebody and a clan that has killed someone come together to discuss on blood compensation. Then they take case from legal system and start dealing based on the traditional rules and regulations, they reach at the consensus not to kill each other and the blood compensation will be paid for the deceased families (clan members). The two sides of clan elders produce written accord and sign an agreement which confirms the consensus of the two clans based on traditional rules and regulations of blood compensation. Thereafter, elders from both clans submit their agreement document to legal court or the police office. At the end, the killer will be set free from the prison center (Interviewed May10, 2016).

4.5.2. Present Practice of Conflict Resolution among Gurgura and its Immediate Neighbors'

With regard to the current conflict resolution mechanisms or social relationships of the Oromo and *Gurgura* people who are living in Hurso area, Ahmed Haji, the chief representative of the Galwaqe sub-clan in Hurso area, said, "In accordance with the *Garaguracha* Hera [Oromo Traditional Governance System], whenever someone has killed a person outside of his sub-clan, all members of the offender's clan are expected to pay 52 oxen. However, the Somali Xer will reward about 77 camels for the family of the deceased in the form of blood compensation. Although there are differences between *Garaguracha* Hera and Somali Xer, decisions of payment for blood compensation in cases involving persons from *Gurgura* and Oromo are based on *Garaguracha* Hera. Despite the disparity of two "Hera" cases involving persons who belong to either the Oromo or *Gurgura* group, would be rewarded with the same amount of payment for blood compensation. For instance, if a *Gurgura* man has killed someone from Oromo, members of the *Gurgura* clan are expected to pay 52 oxen. Likewise, if an Oromo man kills someone from *Gurgura*, Oromo clan members are expected to pay 52 oxen. This reflects the long existed social relationship and cooperation between *Gurgura* and Oromo.

However, if a man from Issa kills someone from *Gurgura*, Issa clan members are supposed to pay 77 camels based on Somali Xer system. Xer Dessa, which means a traditional blood compensation governance system for those who are moving from one area to another area. This practice belongs to the Somali people and blood compensation for killing someone is about 77 camels. On the other side, *Hera Gojjo* (*Garaguracha Hera*) belongs to Oromo people who are

leading settled ways of life in the eastern Hararghe area. Based on Hera Gojjo blood compensation for killing someone is about 52 oxen.

Furthermore, if someone has lost the left eye either from Gurgura or Oromo, the equivalent blood compensation will be about 15 cattle. Similarly, if someone has lost the right eye either from Oromo or Gurgura, the blood compensation will be 16 cattle. If someone has lost the right hand or leg either from Oromo or Gurgura, the blood compensation will be about 15 cattle. If someone has lost the left hand or leg either from Oromo or Gurgura, the blood compensation will be about 16 cattle. On the other hand, if someone has lost the right or left eye either from Gurgura or Issa, the blood compensation will be about 25 cattle. Likewise, if someone has lost the left or right hand or leg either from Gurgura or Issa, the blood compensation will be about 25 cattle.

Moreover, Gurgura and Oromo people have strong mutual cooperation with regard to blood compensation in certain areas particularly between Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura and Mucha sub-clan of Nollée in Hurso area. On this point Ahmed Haji said that, “For instance, yesterday I paid blood compensation for Alla sub-clan of Afrenkello. This is because a man from Mucha sub-clan of Nollée killed a man from Alla sub-clan of Afrenkello. Though we are Gurgura, we paid blood compensation for Alla jointly with Mucha sub-clan of Nollée”.

Likewise, if a Gurgura man has killed someone from other clans, Mucha sub-clan of Nollée also in turn share blood compensation along with Gurgura since they have this kind of social relationship, interaction and mutual cooperation upon blood compensation between Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura and Mucha sub-clan of Nollée in Hurso area. In favor of this idea Ahmed Haji also explicitly stated that, “The major reason for this joint cooperation is in order to simplify the burden of blood compensation that comes upon one of the clans so that this kind of mutual cooperation would minimize the burden of blood compensation”. On the cross-clan social support practice he added, “*Nuti Gurgura-Mucha Wejin tekuma qebena*”. Literally this means Galwaqe Sub-clan and Mucha sub-clan of Nollée have unity upon blood compensation. Therefore this reflects the long persisted brotherhood relationship, interaction and cooperation between Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura and Mucha sub-clan of Nollée in Hurso area.

In addition to Mucha sub-clan of Nollee, Gurgura have brotherhood relationship with Alla sub-clan of Afrenkello in Hurso area. To this end, both Gurgura and Alla clans bought an ox that cost about 13,000.00(thirteen thousand) birr. Then, they slaughtered an ox and the hide of the ox was tied up between two boys (one from Gurgura and the other from Alla). Thereafter, Gurgura and Alla brotherhood relationship has been recently heralded for the whole local people in Hurso district.

The Gurgura and Oromo people have strong brotherhood relationship in multifaceted domains of life in Kombolcha area. However, the way they pay and receive blood compensation is separately carried out in Kombolcha area. Regarding this Mumed Hassen said that, “The way we pay and receive blood compensation merely as a clan of Gurgura. The Gurgura people do not mix up with the Oromo clans in paying and receiving blood compensation. For instance, if an Oromo man has killed someone from Gurgura, the Gurgura receive blood compensation from Oromo people. Likewise, if a man from the Gurgura has killed someone from the Oromo people, the Gurgura people would pay blood compensation for Oromo clan members. This means that, Gurgura and Oromo pay and receive blood compensation in a separate manner, but it is based on Oromo Hera (Traditional Governance System of Oromo)”.

Therefore, the way Gurgura and Oromo pay and receive blood compensation in Kombolcha area is carried out in a separate manner. The blood compensation of Gurgura is not mixed with Oromo sub-clans in Kombolcha area. I was so surprised by this information because I was expecting mutual cooperation upon blood compensation payment in Kombolcha area akin to Hurso area. Gurgura blood compensation is not jointly paid with Oromo sub-clans in Kombolcha area although they are living among Oromo people and in the territories of Oromia regional State. The findings of this study indicate Gurgura and Oromo people who are living in Hurso area have joint cooperation in paying and receiving blood compensation, but the way Gurgura people pay and receive blood compensation is separately conducted in Kombolcha area.

CHAPTER FIVE

In this chapter, the Oromo and Somali narratives towards Gurgura ethnic identity and the Gurgura narratives towards their own ethnic identity is discussed thoroughly.

5. Controversial Discourses and Practices of the Gurgura Identity

5.1. Oromo Narratives towards Gurgura Identity

According to the findings of this study, most of the Oromo people perceive the Gurgura people as parts and parcel of Oromo ethnic group because majority of the Gurgura people speak Afaan Oromo and adopted Oromo cultural practices. In relation to this, I had interview with Muktar Abedule and explicitly explained his personal view towards Gurgura people as follows:

Gurgura people are our brothers. They have the same language and cultural practices with Oromo people so I prefer to call them Oromo rather than Somali (Interviewed April 2017).

In addition, I had in-depth interview with Mohammed Ibrahim from Oromo ethnic group who is vice chairperson for Melkajebedu Kebele. He clearly explained his personal view towards Gurgura people as follows:

Gurgura and Oromo have strong marriage relationship. So today it is difficult to distinguish one from another between Oromo and Gurgura. Therefore, we consider Gurgura people as part of Oromo ethnic group because they are adopted by Oromo people (Interviewed April 2017).

Moreover in an in-depth interview with Hamza Haso Nimer (Oromo) who lives in Biyoawale area, he plainly explained his personal view towards Gurgura as follows:

Oromo and Gurgura people are living in this area as if they were born from the same father and mother. Gurgura people are our brothers. We have strong marriage alliance with Gurgura people. We have the same language and cultural practices. They are adopted children (illma) of

Oromo people. Today the ethnic identity of Gurgura is Oromo (Interviewed April 2017).

Moreover, according to my informal interviews that I had carried out with Oromo people in DireDawa town, Oromo people are blaming Gurgura people for denying Oromo identity. Regarding on this one of my informants who is Oromo said that, “Gurgura people have similar language and cultural practices with Oromo society so that they can be grouped as Oromo rather than Somali but today many of them are denying their Oromo identity. Many Gurgura people in Diredawa Administrative region prefer to associate themselves with Somali ethnic group but their lifestyle and language is similar with Oromo society, so more likely they are Oromo rather than Somali”(Interviewed April 2016).

5.2. Somali Narratives towards Gurgura Identity

According to the findings of this study, some of Somali people consider Gurgura people as part of Oromo ethnic group rather than Somali. Others also consider the Gurgura people as part of the Somali ethnic group. Regarding this, I had in-depth interview with Remedan Sied Gulede about Gurgura ethnic identity and he said:

During dry season, Gurgura pastoralists move into Oromo territories and some of them remain there by establishing marriage relationship with Oromo people. As a result, the children of Gurgura learned Afaan Oromo. They grew up among Oromo so they have become Oromo but genealogically they are from the Somali ethnic group(Interviewed April 2017).

Furthermore, I had in-depth interview with Abedula Musa. He explicitly told me about Gurgura ethnic identity as follows:

Gurgura and Issa are brothers because genealogically both descended from Dir sub-branch of the Somali ethnic group. Gurgura people are genealogically Somali. Therefore, we know Gurgura as part of the Somali ethnic group(Interviewed April 2017).

5.3. Pro-Somali Perspectives of Gurgura

Regarding the origin of the Gurgura to the Somali ethnic group, key informant from the Hurso area, Mohammed Ahmed said, “Our ethnicity and identity is Somali and thus we are not Oromo but we are neighbors to Oromo people, we have close relationship and interaction with the Oromo people. We Gurguras’ belong to the Somali ethnic group” (Interviewed May 2016).

Moreover, Abedurezak explained Gurgura’s ethnic identity discourse in the following way:

The Gurgura people are not Oromo and we have no genealogical root that links us with Oromo. The origin of Gurgura does not belong to Oromo ethnic group. If one finds Gurgura people claiming “we are Oromo,” then they simply say that for the sake of establishing peaceful co-existence with neighboring societal groups. Otherwise, they would not deny their genealogical root that traces back to Somali ethnic group (Interviewed May10, 2016)

Similarly, Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru said, “*Oromo wejin welfuna obolieuma kebena aketekoti wejin jerachu jera,*” which literally means, “It is undeniable that we have strong marriage relationship with Oromo people and living together as one people”. He also said: “*Yokijebeni meli nuti oromo meti nuti illman Dir Somali,*” by which he means, “we have strong marriage alliance and brotherhood relationship with the Oromo people, but we are not Oromo rather we originally descended from the Somali clan of Dir”(Interviewed March 2016).

Furthermore, Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru also said, “we descended from the Somali ethnic group. However, some people are trying to associate us with Oromo ethnic group for merely we have had strong neighborhood bonds with them. That is why, some people are mistakenly relating us to the Oromo ethnic group, but we descended originally from Somali people. Gurgura is the name of our ancestor who was one of the elderly and respected sons of the Dir. Therefore, we are not Oromo” (Interviewed March 2016).

According to Emic primordialist conception relying on Geertzian notion the actors’ belief that ethnic identity is a natural part of “the givens of social existence”. For emic primordialists, the

reference point for inclusion or exclusion from an ethnic group is common origin. Besides, belonging is framed in biological terms (Dereje, 2011:13). Accordingly, there are many Gurgura people who believe that ethnic identity is ascribed through birth. In connection with this, one of Gurgura elders named Alyie Cheka contended, “All Gurgura people had originated from Somali ethnic group. Gurgura is one of the senior sub-clans of the Somali ethnic group. Thus, we are tracing genealogical root based on paternal family line” (Interviewed May2016). According to this outlook, belonging to Gurgura people is determined based on common origin which is traced through patrilineal descent line.

Similarly, Horowitz argued, “Ethnic identity is relatively difficult for an individual to change....Group origins is intergenerational, ongoing, and independent of its present members. Ethnic identity is established at birth for most group members”(Horowitz 1985: 52). Thus according to the primordialism school of thought every individual has his or her own identity which is fixed at birth and this identity is shared with his or her members. Horowitz also said that, “Most people are born into the ethnic group in which they will die” (Horowitz 1985: 55).

Moreover, according to the findings of this study, most of my key informants of Gurgura who are living in DireDawa town consider their group as one of the senior sub-clans of the Somali ethnic group although they are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo and adopted Oromo cultural practices. In favor of these claims Geraada Shiek Adem Ali with whom I had in-depth discussion argued:-

We are not Oromo but we are Somali although we primarily speak Afaan Oromo. This happened due to the long established relationship with Oromo people. Thus we lost our ancestral language (original language of Somali). Of course, Gurgura and Oromo (Nollee) used to establish strong marriage ties for many years. Accordingly, most Gurgura men married to Oromo women as a result we learned Afaan Oromo language but we are not Oromo. So, we are Somali. “Gurguruma kenyaa Nu Demitan” which means ‘it is up to us to be Gurgura’ ‘Hati Kengna Oromo tati Akesiti Afaan Kengna Kenduran Kebenu Akesiti Nura Fechati’ in translation, ‘our mothers are Oromo as a result we lost our Somali language’. However, we are not Oromo, we are Somali.” (Interviewed April 10, 2016)

In addition, an in-depth interview administered with Gurgura scholar Ahmed Rage at the University of DireDawa supported this view. I had an in-depth interview with him at his home located at Legahare area. By the time I arrived at his home, he was sitting along with four Somali men from Ogaden and Issa sub-clans of Somali ethnic-group. Immediately, Ahmed Rage informed them about the purpose of my study and they appreciated my initiative for investigating on Gurgura history and identity. Instantly, the guests inquired, “What is the ethnic identity of Gurgura? Are Gurgura people ethnically Somali or Oromo?” To brainstorm this view I replied, “Gurgura is Somali.” my response triggered further question, “Are you sure?” My answer was “your question might be answered with the findings of this study”. Then I continued my in-depth discussion (interview) with Ahmed Rage who stated:

Gurgura is one of the senior clans of Somali ethnic group. However, due to intensive social interaction and relationship with Oromo people, many Gurgura had abandoned their original language and cultural practices. Instead, they adopted /learned Afaan Oromo as their first language. Nevertheless, Gurgura people are not Oromo. It has no genealogical root from Oromo. Although most Gurgura mothers are from Oromo ethnic group, Gurgura is linked to Somali based on patrilineal line. The origin of Gurgura does not belong to the Oromo ethnic group. If there are Gurgura people who are claiming as, ‘we are Oromo’ they are simply saying it for the sake of mutual co-existence with neighboring societal groups but they do not deny their genealogical belonging with Somali because our origin is traced based on patrilineal descent line” (Interviewed May 10, 2016).

To sum up, according to Ahmed Rage, the lifestyle of a certain society most likely change as long as the political, social and economic situations are changing, but the genealogical root of a society will always remain intact.

According to the view stated above, I have learned that belonging to Gurgura societal group is based on blood ties which is traced through patrilineal descent line. Although they have adopted Oromo cultural practices and Afaan Oromo has become their mother tongue, they trace their genealogical root based on patrilineal descent.

5.4. Pro-Oromo Perspectives of Gurgura

Nevertheless, some Gurgura people do not accept their ethnic identity as Somali. Rather they prefer to associate themselves with Oromo ethnic group. During the course of data collection in DireDawa town, I met a Gurgura man named Abedusalam who is residing in Australia. He explained his ethnic identity as follows:

I was born in Gende Nagaroo in Belewa area among Gurgura community. Although I am proud of being a member of Gurgura societal group, I do not accept what some other Gurgura people are saying 'Gurgura' is Somali. I believe that Gurgura is Oromo. In my view, the historical relationship between Gurgura and Oromo had occurred before many hundred years ago so Gurgura people have become Oromo" (Interviewed April 12, 2016).

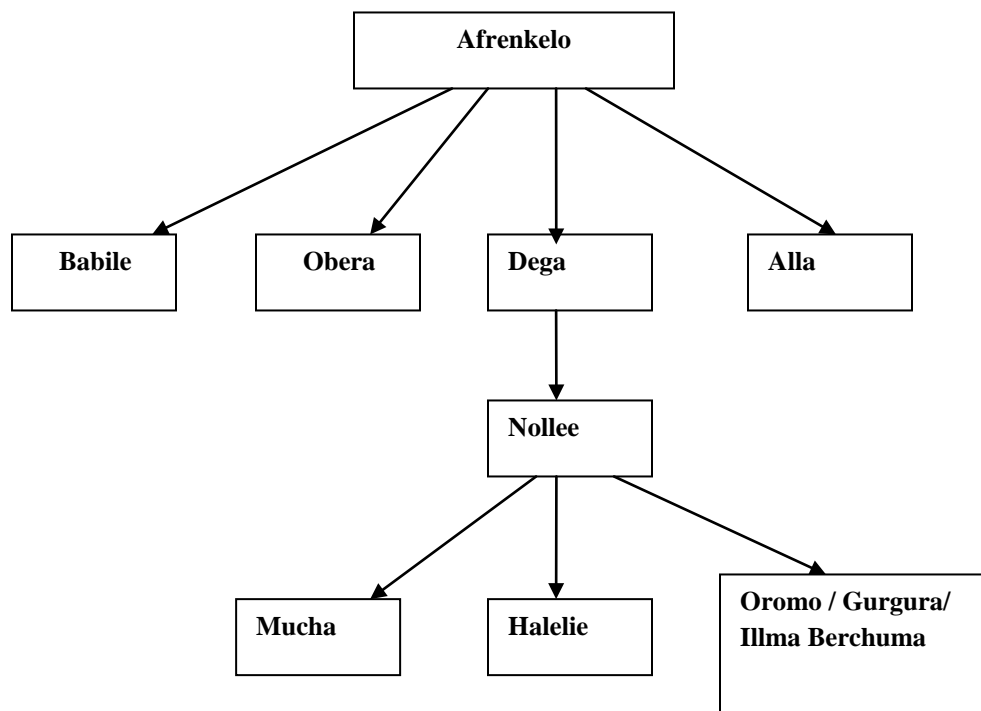
On the same day, I met relatives of Abedusalam who came from Belewa rural town (Gende Nagaroo village) specifically to conduct *Wedaja* (Praying for Allah) at the new building site of Abedusalam in DireDawa town. So, I asked the relatives of Abedusalam about their ethnic identity and they explicitly stated, "We are Gurgura-Oromo". From these informal interviews, I have observed that there are Gurgura people who claim their ethnic identity as Oromo rather than Somali.

According to Abedurehman Aliye who was my key informant, Gende shenkor village in Kombolcha area used to be owned by Nollée. As a result of the Gurgura military support in the fight against Alla, Nollée had given freedom of access to land for Gurgura people. Abedurehman Aliye explicitly stated his view in Afaan Oromo, "*Leftikune KenNollée Daha- Nolléen lefe kenereti Nuqubesisa- Nolleetu Gurgura Illma Nugode asiti Nuqubesise.*" Which is translated as, "this area used to belong to Nollée so we were allowed to live in this area by Nollée people because we are '*Ilmaa Berchuma*' (adopted children by Nollée people)". Then, Gurgura and

Oromo had reached at the consensus not to fight each other based on traditional ceremony known as Herbu Hera which means an oath not to fight each other.

According to key informants, Gurgura people who are living among Oromo in Kombolcha area consider themselves as Oromo especially as *illmaa* (adopted children) among Nollee. During in depth and FGDs discussion, I asked Gurgura elders how they link themselves with Oromo people and they stated that, “Oromo ethnic group is divided into two: Borena and Barentu. Kelloo has descended biologically from Barentu. Kelloo has four children: Babile, Obera, Dega and Alla. To be more specific, Dega has three children: Nollee, Jarso and Hume. Nollee also has three children: Mucha, Halelie and Oromo. Because of these, we belonged to Oromo which is the sub-clan of Nollee. Although we do not deny our genealogical root Gurgura, now we belong to Nollee under Oromo sub-clan” (Interviewed June 2016). In short, according to my key informants, now Gurgura people in Kombolcha area consider themselves as *ilmma* (adopted children by Nollee). They explicitly said in Afaan Oromo, ‘*Gosti Kengna GurguraSebeni Kegnamo Oromo Dahe*’ which means ‘our clan is Gurgurabut our ethnicity is Oromo’. The following figure depicts how Gurgura elders in Kombolcha area link themselves with Oromo ethnic group.

Afrenkelo clan Structure



According to Ahmed Rage in DireDawa town, since world is in continuous dynamic phenomena, the cultural practices as well as language of a certain society might change. As long as political, social and economic situations are continuously changing, the cultural practices and language of a given society might be change as well. It is clear that a given society has to accommodatemultifaceted changes in political, social and economic domains within and surrounding societal groups. By doing so, the existence of a certain society would be ensured. Today every part of the world is being affected by globalization. Globalization is a worldwide phenomenon. Therefore, *Gurgura* people are parts and parcel of globalization a worldwide changing phenomena so that *Gurgura* people are struggling to have good relationship with

neighboring societal groups so as to ensure their sustainable co-existence by having smooth relationship with neighboring societal groups. So, that is what is happening now among *Gurgura* people. *Gurgura* people have to be flexible with the ever-changing political, social and economic domains in their dwelling areas.

For Barth, ethnic relations are changeable in different multiethnic societies. Although ethnic groups would maintain boundaries like language to mark their identity, people may modify and shift their language and identity in different social interactions. Barth has emphasized on how people could identify the different elements of their ethnicity and repress those elements and characteristics in various circumstances for economic, political, or other practical interests. He also asserted that ethnic boundaries are continually being revised, negotiated, and redefined according to the practical interests of actors. In this view, ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging but is instead fluid and contingent, as people intentionally define, and redefine their ethnicity to respond to their immediate basic needs (Barth in Scupin& Decorse 2005:580). Furthermore, ethnic traits will vary from one historical time to another, and group identity may shift from one generation to another (Scupin& Decorse 2005:580).

Ethnic identity is constructed but it has no end because the interaction is continuous, and it involves all the processes through which identities are made and remade, from the initial formation of a collective identity through its maintenance, reproduction, transformation, and even repudiation overtime (Cornell& Hartmann 2007:83). According to this model, “construction ” means that ethnic identities are not deeply rooted in nature, but they are situational, results of particular events, relationships, and processes that are themselves subject to change(Cornell& Hartmann 2007:81). According to this approach ethnic identity is situational, variable and negotiable (Jenkins, 1997:50).Therefore, ethnic identities are built, rebuilt and sometimes dismantled over time (Cornell& Hartmann 2007:ibid.).

According to my fieldwork in Kombolcha area, I met many *Gurgura* people and carried out in depth interviews and FGD. Based on the in depth interviews and FGD, nowadays *Gurgura*’s consider themselves as Oromo rather than Somali. In relation to this, Abedurehman Aliye said, “*Hera Oromoti Asiti bulu Jera*’. Translated as, *Gurgura* people in Kombolcha area are governed based on traditional governance system of the Oromo (*Aba Geda*). For him, even the

genealogical root of Gurgura is linked with Oromo ethnic group. In the course of our discussion, he told me about his personal experience regarding ethnicity and identity. He stated his opinion as follows:

For instance, one day I went to Ereregota in Somali regional state where many Gurgura who claim their ethnicity as Somali are available. Then Gurgura-Somali people asked me about my clan then I told them that, 'I am Gurgura specifically 'seneyaa'. Again they asked me about my ethnicity and I said 'Oromo'. After that they said to me, 'you grew up and still live among Oromo. That is why you are telling us that you are Oromo but you are Somali so please come to us and use your ancestor land' (Interviewed June 2016).

Barth's ethnicity paradigm is based on Emic constructivism, but his ideas of flexibility and manipulation contain elements of rational choice, in so far as he assumes that actors are self-interested and often seek to maximize 'utilities' (Hechter and Kanazawa 1997:194 in Dereje Feyissa, 2011:13). This is evident in his concept of identity switching: individual actors change their ethnic identity in order to tap into the resources of other ethnic groups. Positive bonds may be established between ethnic groups on the basis of complementary differences (Barth 1969: 18-20 in Dereje Feyissa, 2011:13-14). Inter-ethnic relations based on complementary differences may create especially favorable conditions for identity switching on the part of individuals.

In relation to the above, my key informant who is named Ismail Mume (Jaele) in Hurso area said that, "we have been living in this area along with Oromo people for many years. Therefore, we are the same people with Nolllee. Gurgura and Nolllee are the same people. It is not only marriage alliance but also we have the same ancestor with Nolllee. Now if I want, I can belong myself either to Nolllee or Gurgura because both Nolllee and Gurgura are the same people to me. I trace my kinship line either to Nolllee or Gurgura because both Nolllee and Gurgura are one and the same for me." From this interview, it is observed that there is favorable situation for switching identity among Gurgura individuals.

In addition, according to Jemale Abedurehman in Kombolcha area, if someone asks us about our clan, we tell him / her that we belong to Gurgura people. However, if you ask us about our ethnic identity; we tell that we are Oromo. '*Gosti kengna Gurgura Sebeni Kengna Oromo Dahe*' which means 'our clan is Gurgura, but our ethnicity is Oromo'.

In the past, Gurgura ancestors used to speak Somali language but no one among the Gurgura people who are now living in Gende Shenkor village of the Kombolcha Woreda of the eastern Hararghe Zonal Administration of Oromia regional state speaks Somali language. Long processes of assimilation, interaction and geographical proximity facilitated culture sharing and adoption of the dominant cultural trait. Accordingly, the Gurgura embraced Afaan Oromo as their first language for many years. Sotoday they adopt similar cultural practices with Oromo fostered by the strong brotherhood relationship established between the two that eventually made difficult to distinguish one from the other. Abedela Mumed Ali has the following to say about the *Gurgura* people living in Gende Shenkor village:

We cannot deny the fact that our genealogical root stretches to the Gurgura. However, due to the strong brotherhood relationship we have with Oromo people; our ethnic identity has shifted into Oromo. We have the same cultural practices with Oromo people. We have also long-lived marriage alliance with Oromo people. Oromo people usually opt to marry with Gurgura women as much as we marry Oromo women. So, we have strong marriage alliance with Oromo people (Interviewed June 2016).

Hassen Mumed Ali (Demina for Gurgura people in Kombolcha area) further explained regarding their ethnicity and identity as follows:

We identify ourselves as Gurgura, for we cannot deny the fact that our genealogical pedigree goes back to the Gurgura. Oromo people also recognize that our origin is from Gurgura. Certainly, we are recognized as member of the Gurgura clan, but currently if someone asks us about our ethnicity, we tell him that we belong to Oromo ethnic group. These days, we are living according to the traditional customs or cultural practices of Oromo so that we prefer to associate ourselves to Oromo ethnic group rather than Somali ethnic group (Interviewed June 2016).

Supporting this idea Mohammed Osman Yusuf in Meleka Jebedu area also said that, “Certainly, since we were born and grew up among the Oromo people, we have all embraced the values, cultural practices and livelihood strategies of the Oromo people”.

Today, there are well over 500 *Gurgura* households in Gende Shenkor village of the Kombolcha area. These days, they have become integrated with Oromo ethnic group. One of my key informants, Abedela Mumed Ali, who lives in the Gende Shenkor village of Kombolcha area said

that, “Today we are recognized not only as *Gurgura* but also as Illma Berchuma among Oromo (Nollee). Oromo people in this area consider us as one of senior sub-clans of Nollee. We do respect each other” (Interviewed June 2016).

In the social hierarchy, according to Hassen Mumed Ali, *Gurgura* consider Oromo as Angafaa, senior among others, in the ritual performance and customary practices. There is also “Herbu Hera” a rite that forbids one who solemnly make an oath from inflicting violence against the other. This oath restricts members from perpetrating any violence against another group or individual. In other words, Herbu Hera is an oath that prohibits fight against each other. In addition Hassen Mumed Alisaid that, “Due to the stated factors and long-lived relationship and interaction, we have become part of the Oromo ethnic group and these days one may opt to run both for the national or regional level election as one may wish being free to elect and be elected enjoying the same right as any member of the Oromo people. We are not marginalized by the Oromia regional state” (Interviewed June 2016).

Since their arrival in the locality by their ancestors, they have had received good treatment like other fellow Oromo people. Informants witnessed they enjoyed equal access to different opportunities indiscriminately. This means that, structurally they benefited from different opportunities from Oromia regional state the same as Oromo people residing in this area. With regard to political participation, they elect and being elected as kebele leader the same as Oromo people so they did not face any difficulty being *Gurgura* and live among Oromo people (Interviewed June 2016).

Moreover, Ms Afrahan Abedulahi Buh said that, “Majority of *Gurgura* people turned into Oromo. For instance, *Gurgura* who are living in Kombolcha area have become Oromo. There are also *Gurgura* who belonged to Qundublee sub-clan that have similar cultural practices with Oromo people in the eastern part of DireDawa; specifically in the areas of Belewa, Qalecha, Cortu, Beshanebehe and Biyoawale. If someone asks them about their ethnicity, they claim their identity as *Gurgura-Oromo*. Whereas, *Gurgura* people who are living in Hurso and Eregota areas are typical Somali nomads. Their lifestyle is the same as the Somali people” (Interviewed June 2016).

Furthermore, Afrahan Abedulahi Buh was explaining about Gurgura Ethnicity and Identity as follows:

Gurgura people who are living particularly in Belewa and Qalecha rural towns have the same language and cultural practices with Oromo because they are assimilated with Oromo people. Gurgura people in the stated areas adopted the cultural practices of Oromo because they are assimilated with Oromo. We were supposed to promote our own cultural practices instead of promoting the cultural practices of our neighbors. So, this is our mistake. As a result, we lost our original cultural practices. Instead, we adopted Oromo cultural practices. In other words, we gave up our own original cultural practices and adopted the cultural practices of our neighbors. Whereas, other Gurgura people who are living in Hurso and Ereregota areas have Somali cultural practices (Interviewed June 2016).

According to Mohammed Yusuf (Member of House of Peoples Representatives of Ethiopia), Gurgura people who are living in Oromia regional state particularly in the areas of Herna, Deder, Haromaya and Kombolcha are saying, 'Our ethnic identity belongs to Oromo'. It is clear that, Gurgura people are using land resource in Oromia regional state. In order to benefit from the developmental programs/ activities in Oromia regional state, they are expected to belong themselves to Oromo political organization. Therefore, Gurgura people who are living in Oromia territories are saying, 'we are Oromo', it is for political and economic advantages. However, whenever they have blood compensation issue, they belong themselves to Gurgura and pay blood compensation along with other Gurgura people who are living in different areas.

Generally, during fieldwork for this study, on ethnicity and identity discourse, I have observed that the main boundary marker between Gurgura and Oromo is the genealogical history of identity construction. Otherwise, there are no boundary markers between Gurgura and Oromo that distinguish one from the other particularly in terms of language, culture, religion and region especially for Gurgura people who are living in the eastern part of DireDawa region and Oromia regional state. In other words, Gurgura and Oromo have common language, culture, religion and region. However, they have different genealogical history of identity construction.

5.5. Adoption practice among Gurgura

Abeduselam claimed Gurgura community as the earliest indigenous people who settled in DireDawa region. Also they are the first societal groups who have made the first contact and social interaction with Oromo society. It is a fact that there are good cultural practices among Oromo such as Gudificha and Mogassa. Based on this culture of Oromo, many Gurgura people were being adopted by Oromo people. They were intermingled with Oromo society and culture through social process. Because of this, Gurgura who are living in the nearby villages of Oromo in the eastern part of DireDawa are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo. Besides, they have strong inter-marriage relationship with Oromo and they are almost mixed with Oromo people. As a result, these days, those who are living in the eastern part of DireDawa have mixed identity with Oromo people (Interviewed April 2016).

Constructivism is an approach based on an understanding of ethnicity and nationhood as products of human thought and action (Yeros 1999:1 in Dereje Feyissa, 2011:12). In this view, ethnicity is the product of a social process rather than a cultural given, made and remade rather than taken for granted, chosen depending on circumstances rather than ascribed through birth (Wimmer 2008:971). Emic constructivism, the actors' belief that ethnic identity is acquired and that ethnic membership is open to all on the basis of cultural competence (Dereje Feyissa, 2011:12).

Fekadu Adugna said that, "Adoption (gudifeacha, in Oromiffa) is the most common practice in Oromo culture. It formally incorporates, and in fact assimilates, individuals as well as groups into Oromo community" (Fekadu, 2004:54). Likewise, there is an adoption practice among Gurgura people. In relation to this idea, one of my key informants named Ahmed Haji, Chief for Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura in Hurso area explained his personal experience of adoption practice among Gurgura people as follows:-

For instance, an Oromo man who originally belongs to Jarso sub-clan told me that he wanted to be adopted by me. Accordingly, I accepted his request and informed to Gurgura elders. Thereafter, I arranged a traditional ceremony among the Gurgura society so as to declare his official adoption. To this end, I called upon notable elders from Gurgura and Issa. As a ritual practice, I slaughtered a sheep. Next, the pieces of hides and skin of the sheep tied up in the hand of my blood son and a boy who is being adopted as one of my children. Following this event, an elder person climbed up a tree

and had officially declared the adoption of a boy by saying like this, “Gurban Delethe Somali Daha Galwaqe Weregumero”. This means that, ‘From this day onwards, a boy is adopted who would be considered as Somali; he belongs to Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura under the family line of Weregumero. Right after this declaration to the local people, we cut the hides of the sheep that had been tied up between my blood son and an adopted boy. From that day onwards, an adopted boy has got all the necessary full-fledged rights that are equal to my blood son. Then the adopted boy would be considered as one of the children of my family. Thereafter, he is entitled to inherit the properties that belonged to the family that adopt him. An adopted boy originally belongs to Jarso sub-clan. However, if this adopted boy kills somebody from another clan, it is not Jarso sub-clan that is responsible for the payment of blood compensation, but it is Galwaqe (Gurgura sub-clan) that is mainly responsible for the payment of blood compensation on the side of adopted boy. Similarly, if this adopted boy is killed by somebody from another sub-clan, it is not Jarso sub-clan that would receive the blood compensation, but it is Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura(Interviewed June 2016).

Therefore, according to my key informants, adoption practice is not only bounded to Oromo society, but it is a common cultural practice among Gurgura although it is not widely practiced like Oromo.

Moreover, according to my key informants, Mohammed Sied who is currently living in Melkajebedu area he was traditionally adopted as one of Gurgura clan members although he is originally from Amhara ethnic group. Now he is seventy six years old man. He has been living in Melkajebedu area for about sixty years. He worked as a chief administrator of Gurgura Woreda in the past regime. During EPRDF regime he also worked as a president of court in the Shinile Zonal Administration of Somali regional State. Therefore, anyone from any ethnic background can be incorporated into Gurgura societal group based on traditional adoption practice of Gurgura society.

From the interviews stated above, I learned that anyone can be adopted as a member of Gurgura. They follow constructivist approach. Ethnic identity among Gurgura is not restricted based on blood ties. It is open for anyone who wants to be incorporated into Gurgura society, and this implies that how Gurgura society is open and pursue constructivist approach, and their identity is not merely bounded to kin based ties. In short, Gurgura people who are living in the eastern and western parts of Dire Dawa administrative region have common set of traditions in terms of language, religion and region along with Oromo people in the stated areas. In other

words, Gurgura and Oromo have common language, religion and region, but they have differences in terms of genealogical history and place of origin. In addition, today Gurgura and Oromo have the same kind of houses, wearing styles, food, weeding and so forth. Moreover, they have the same kind of livelihood strategies. In general, I prefer to talk about the similarity of Gurgura and Oromo rather than the dissimilarity in the eastern and western parts of DireDawa administrative region.

However, Gurgura people who are living in Hurso area have their own distinctive features of identity from that of the neighboring societal group of Oromo. Although they have regular contact with Oromo, they speak Somali language as mother tongue. Gurgura people who are living in Hurso area have Dessa (mobile houses) which are different from Gojjo houses that settled people live in. This infer Gurgura as agro-pastoralists. They are also well known as mobile pastoralists who are locally named as Reare Gura which means pastoralists who always keep on moving from one area to another area in search of water and grazing resources.

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter discusses on political power contest among Oromo, Gurgura and Issa people. It also discusses on current linguistic status of Gurgura and disagreement over designation of Ugaz.

6. Post-1991 Political Developments and Gurgura Identity

6.1. Political Power Contest in DireDawa Administration

As I have learned from the FGDs, in the pre - 1991 period there were no political competition and contestation over state provided resources, services and opportunities among the Gurgura, Issa and Oromo. However, contest among them gradually outbreak in recent period, Gurgura, Issa and Oromo are competing for political power especially for the mayor position in Diredawa Administration.

For instance, Issa people who merely speak Somali language do not want Gurgura man who only speaks Oromo language to hold the mayor position. In other words, today the Somali people who speak only Somali language do not accept Gurgura man who only speaks Afaan Oromo to hold mayor position in the name of Somali ethnic group. Linguistically, Issa group demands the real representation of Gurgura man, thus they challenge the one who merely speaks Oromo language. Further Mohammed Osman Yusuf who is one of the members of Ugaz Committee has strengthened this idea. He stated that:

Although we are currently incorporated into Somali ethnic group, but speaking Oromo language dominantly has brought negative repercussion on political power sharing in the leadership positions of Diredawa Administration. Although we belonged to the Somali ethnic group, speaking Oromo as the mother tongue has immersed us in disadvantageous position in the domain of political arena.

Owing to this misconceived perception the other sub-clans of Somali ethnic group failed to consider us as original Somali ethnic group. In addition, due to intensive marriage relationship between Gurgura and Oromo, we are not considered as original Somali people. Due to these and other factors we are not equally treated like that of other sub-clans of the Somali ethnic group (Interviewed April 2016).

According to Mohammed Osman Yusuf in Melkajbedu area, right after the coming of EPRDF regime, we are deprived of the right to rule or govern the land we used to administer in the past. We were mistreated by EPRDF transitional government. For instance, even the Harari people who are less in number than Gurgura are recognized as a regional state, but Gurgura which is the largest community is forgotten by EPRDF government. “*Nema Gende Kegna Bulchu Enqebene Nubulchu Jira*” translated as “Currently, we are forced to be governed by the people who are not fully entitled to govern us”. “*Somali Keisa Itiedemu Keygna Itikisari*” This means that, we did not benefit that much by the incorporation of Gurgura into Somali ethnic group because we are not considered as pure Somali people. As a result, we are deprived the right to rule or govern Diredawa region as we used to in earlier times.

In addition, Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru said that, “During Hailelassie’s period, we were recognized as *Gurgura* woreda as far as to the present territory of Kersa in the eastern part of Oromia regional state. We used to have our own administration known as *Gurgura* woreda. But these days, we are under DireDawa Administration along with other ethnic groups. Even if, the wider area of Dire Dawa fall within *Gurgura* territory, we are denied higher positions in administration structure of DireDawa” (Interviewed March 2016).

In relation to this, Alieye Cheka (Chair person for Ugaz Committee) also said that:

In the past, DireDawa was under Gurgura people known as *Gurgura* Woreda. However, these days, Dire Dawa is under the federal government administration. So, we need to administer Dire Dawa like the previous time. In other words, Dire Dawa region should be fully under the leadership of *Gurgura* people but these days Issa people who settled after *Gurgura* in this area are playing the leading role as mayor of Dire Dawa Administration but *Gurgura* who are the earliest settler in this area have lower official positions as compared to other Somali clans as well as Oromo

ethnic group. We were supposed to be mayor but we didn't get the chance to be a mayor. Therefore, our question has to be addressed by the central government (Interviewed May 2016).

Furthermore, Mohammed Osmail Omeri in Belewa rural town said that, "In the past, we were recognized as Gurgura Woreda during Hailelassie and Derge regimes. During the transitional period of EPRDF, we were on the verge to gain recognition independently; however the Gurgura elders who represented Gurgura people in Addis Ababa were not active in the processes of gaining recognition as an independent state of Gurgura. The Gurgura elders who were assigned to present the case of Gurgura were not active in terms of defending the case of Gurgura to the concerned central government. As a result, we were simply incorporated (included) into Somali ethnic group, and DireDawa has become under federal government administration. These days, Issa and Oromo people have got better political positions in DireDawa Administration. Today we are marginalized in the political administration of DireDawa, but we were supposed to hold the highest position in DireDawa Administration since we are the first indigenous people in this area. DireDawa area was under the control of Gurgura. These days, we have no political privileges to rule (govern) DireDawa Administration as compared to Issa and Oromo ethnic group" (Interviewed April 2016).

According to Ms Afrahan Abedulahi Buh, Gurgura have less political position in DireDawa Administration as compared to other Somali sub-clans. Gurgura political officials are themselves weak in terms of defending their political power share in DireDawa Administration. These days we are dominated by Issa people who entered into DireDawa region after Gurgura by paying tax. In the past, DireDawa was under the control of Gurgura people but these days it is dominated by Issa people. Today power belongs to Issa people due to their link with Djibouti state. Economically, Issa people are in a better position than Gurgura due to financial support from Djibouti state. As a result, they are repeatedly holding the mayor status in DireDawa Administration. Therefore, if the power of Issa continues in this way, the position of Gurgura will be at lower level. In other words, in the past Issa people had low political position in DireDawa Administration but today Issa people are holding the highest position in DireDawa Administration. Furthermore, in the past, Issa people were permitted to enter into DireDawa Region by Borale Sersere who was a Gurgura man" (Interviewed May 2016).

As I have observed from interviews, today the power of Gurgura has declined due to the upper hand position of Issa people in DireDawa Administration, and Gurgura officials are also weak in terms of defending and holding their political power share in DireDawa Region. In the past they had their own political administration known as Gurgura Woreda. Later on it was changed into Issa-Gurgura Aweraja that was set up during Hailelassie regime. This had happened due to the energetic effort of Ugaz Hassen of Issa people. Ugaz Hassen of Issa had strengthened the power of Issa and renamed Gurgura Woreda as 'Issa-Gurgura Aweraja'. At that time, Ugaz Buh who was the leader of Gurgura was sick.

According to Ahmed Yusuf, during the Hailelassie regime there was Gurgura woreda. Thenduring Derge regimeit became Issa-Gurgura Aweraja.Now Gurgura woreda has dissolved and being incorporated into the present Diredawa Administration. In other words, Gurgura Woreda was dissolved into Diredawa Administration because of the federal system. However, even now as Gurugura we have the highest seats in DireDawa Administration. This means that, Gurgura as Somali ethnic group has the highest seats in DireDawa Administration. Therefore, we are represented in Diredawa Administration as Somali ethnic group.

As I have observed from indepth interviews, Out of the Somali ethnic group seats, Gurgura has the highest seats in DireDawa Administration but they have never hold the mayor position. At present, there is always competition between Somali and Oromo ethnic groups in DireDawa Administration. The mayor position is taken by either Oromo or Somali ethnic groupsconsecutively. Issa people have become mayor several times even if Gurgura people restricted them from competing among Somali sub-clans considering the fiercecompetition between Oromo and Somali ethnic groups. As a result, they are forced to accept whoever comes to the status of mayor in the name of Somali ethnic group (Interviewed May 2016).

Moreover, Abedusalam was explaining the major factors for DireDawa to be under federal government. He said that the political influence of OPDO is at the highest level in DireDawa Administrative Region, this is also another factor for DireDawa to be governed by multiple political groups. These are the main factors that forced the central government to make

DireDawa Administration under multiple political groups. Therefore, these days, DireDawa is administered by OPDO and ESPDP political groups (Interviewed April 2016).

Finally, Abeduselam said that, “ Of course,we want to rule DireDawa, we want to restore the previous Gurgura Woreda, but our main concern is how to eradicate the deep rooted poverty among *Gurgura* people. I am worried about realizing the benefit of *Gurgura* from developmental activities and programs. Since these people are indigenous to this area, I want them being benefited from the developmental activities. It is a fact that most *Gurgura* people who are living in the rural areas depend their living upon poor rain-feed agricultural practice. So, we are focusing on how to improve the living status of *Gurgura*. We are the poorest of poor so we need to enhance our economic and political participation of our indigenous people both at regional and federal levels. Yet the political participation of *Gurgura* is at lower level so we need to maximize our participation in the political and developmental activities both at regional and federal levels. Even as Somali ethnic group, our political participation is at a very low level so we need to enhance our political participation at national level” (Interviewed April 2016).

6. 2. Current Linguistic Status of Gurgura

These days, language plays a very decisive role in terms of identifying and defining a given societal group. But sometimes language is not sufficient criteria to determine the ethnic identity of the society like Gurgura because there is no a certain language that represent the overall Gurgura society. It is a fact that today overwhelming majority of Gurgura society speaks Afaan Oromo as their first language. In this case, Afaan Oromo has become mother tongue particularly for Gurgura who are living in the eastern and western parts of Diredawa region including in the Oromia regional state. On the other hand, Somali language is the mother tongue for those who are living in the Somali national regional state particularly in Husro, Ereregota and Fiq areas. But they speak either Afaan Oromo or Amharic language in addition to their first language i.e. Somali.

As I have observed from the interviews, *Gurgura* who are currently living in different areas are speaking diverse languages such as, Oromo, Somali, Arabic, Harari, Afar and Amharic. For instance, those who are living in Hurso area are speaking three languages: Somali, Oromo and Amharic but their first language is Somali. However, there are *Gurgura* who only speak Afaan

Oromo in the eastern part of DireDawa region specifically in the areas of Belewa, Cortu, Qalecha and Bishanbehe including Kombolcha area in the Oromia regional state of eastern Hararghe Zonal Administration. There are also some *Gurgura* who only speak Amharic in DireDawa town. My key informants justified the reason for learning diverse languages and they said that, “We learned these diverse languages due to unlimited and open social relationship and interaction we have established with various ethnic groups. We do not violate others right, rather we respect others right so that we can easily establish harmonious co-existing relationship with other societal groups. That is why, we learned these different languages”.

Moreover, my key informants have explained further on how *Gurgura* people become multilingual specifically those who are living in Hurso area. They have stated different factors for learning diverse languages. The first reason, they are patient and tolerant about other people. They are always capable of establishing positive relationship with other societal groups. Furthermore, *Gurgura* who were moving into different areas as nomad were able to establish good relationship with other societal group so simultaneously they learn new language in addition to their first language. Thus, *Gurgura* people are always moving from one area to another area in quest of grazing land and water resources. Thus, if the environment is conducive for their domestic animals, they are most likely to remain there and practice settled ways of life along with different societal groups.

For this reason, *Gurgura* people who are moving from place to place in different areas have become bilingual or multilingual. It is clear that the nomadic ways of life is one of the major factors for *Gurgura* to be dispersed into different areas. Therefore, many of them quickly familiarized different languages of the various ethnic groups. At the same time, they have learned another language in addition to the one they speak as their mother tongue. The *Gurgura* are very kind and humble people so that they can easily establish good relationship and interaction with other societal groups. Consequently, they have learned various languages in the areas wherever settle and interact with different societal groups.

However, the *Gurgura* people who are living in Gende Shenkor village of Kombolcha Woreda under Eastern Hararghe Zonal Administration are merely speaking Afaan Oromo. Regarding their current linguistic status, I had in-depth interview with Demina Hassen Mumed Ali:

Nowadays we are primarily speaking Oromo language but it is an undeniable fact that our ancestors who were nomads used to speak Somali language. Nevertheless, today since we are leading settled ways of life along with neighboring Oromo we have learned Afaan Oromo as the first language. Therefore, these days, no one speaks Somali language among us(Interviewed June 2016).

Moreover, I had in-depth interview with Ms Afrahan Abedulahi Buh in DireDawa town regarding on the current linguistic status of *Gurgura*:

Language does not represent the overall ethnic identity of *Gurgura*. Though we speak different languages, it has no negative impact upon our ethnic identity. Speaking different languages has no serious effect upon our ethnic identity. For instance, there are Oromo people who are living in Wollo area, but they speak Amharic as their first language. Therefore, the case of *Gurgura* language is similar to Oromo people in Wollo area within Amhara regional State (Interviewed May 2016).

In addition, Ahmed Rage said that, “Language does not represent the ethnic identity of *Gurgura* society. Language is simply learned for the sake of communication and relationship with other societal groups. For instance, there are Somali people who were born and grew up in Canada but they only speak English language but they do not lose their genealogical root of Somali” (Interviewed May 2016).

However, according to the Ethiopian constitution, to define a given society’s identity it needs unique language and delimited geographical area among others. These are elements that a society must fulfill as the necessary condition or criteria for a group to be an ethnic identity. But the current status of language and geographical location of *Gurgura* contradict with the stated criteria in the Ethiopian constitution. Today, there is no given language that represents (identifies) the overall *Gurgura* people. Overwhelming majority of *Gurgura* are speaking fluently Afaan Oromo as their first language. On the other hand, some of them are also primarily speaking Somali as

the first language. Further, the geographical location of Gurgura is dispersed into different areas and there is no certain language that represents the overall Gurgura society.

As the findings of this study, it is very difficult to define Gurgura as separate ethnic group because now there is no defined geographical area and language for Gurgura that enable them to meet the stated criteria in the Ethiopian constitution.

6. 3. Disagreement over the Designation of Ugaz among Gurgura

6.3.1. Gurgura Clan Structure

It is a known fact that the Gurgura clan structure is divided into two main branches-Dar and Dudube. Under Dar sub-branch, there is Qundublee that includes Ali and Abedule sub-clans. The members of these sub-clans are mainly living in the eastern part of Diredawa region. Under Dudube, there are two sub-branches: Libano and Qwahaden. Libano includes: Gufatelee, Seneyaa and Sanchelee. Qwahaden also includes: Galwaqe, Nibidor and Bieda. In short, Gurgura people have eight sub-clans.

6.3.2. Traditional Election of Ugaz among Gurgura

Among Gurgura people there is a traditional father known as *Ugaz* who is a leader for the overall Gurgura people. I had in-depth interview with the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru about the processes of the traditional election of Ugaz. He explained as follows:

Ugaz is usually elected in accordance with the existing traditional customs and rules of Gurgura. Ugaz is merely elected among Libano-sub branch. Under Libano sub-branch, there are three sub-clans: Gufatelee, Sanchelee and Seneyaa. However, it is only Qundublee sub-clan that has the authority to give vote during the election of Ugaz. This means that, vote is not from the rest of five sub-clans of Gurgura(Interviewed April 2016).

As I have learned from in-depth interviews and FGDs, the traditional election of Ugaz used to be carried out according to the traditional customs and rules of Gurgura society. Three men would be nominated for the status of Ugaz out of the three sub-clans of Libano: Gufatelee, Sanchelee

and Seneyaa. The nominated three men stay in the sun for several days until shade comes to one of the three nominees. Thus the first man who faced shade in the sun out of the three nominated men would be elected as Ugaz. Regarding the major traditional criteria for the selection of nominees for the election of Ugaz, the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru also explained as follows:

First and foremost, a man has to be forty years old and honest to his parents. He has to be accepted within the families as well as the society in general. However, the nominated three men would be elected merely from Libano-sub-clans. The three nominated men stay in the sun for many days until shade comes to one of the three men. In other words, the final election of Ugaz is used to be determined by the natural phenomenon which means the three nominated persons were expected to stay in the sun. Thus the first man who faced shade in the sun out of the three nominated men would be elected as Ugaz. Subsequently, there is a feast and dance right after the new Ugaz is identified. Nonetheless, Ugaz is still merely elected from Libano sub-clans. The vote for Ugaz only comes out from Qundublee because it is senior sub-clan among Gurgura (Interviewed April 2016)

In addition, Ugaz Hajji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was explaining about the advantages and disadvantages associated with the position of Ugaz as follows:

Ugaz is being recognized as the father of the whole Gurgura people. The status of Ugaz has no payment either in cash or kind for his provision of service. But traditionally each sub-clan usually contributes one sheep to Ugaz and keeps them in a certain area for the purpose of rearing. This is simply done so as to enrich the wealth status of Ugaz. However, this kind of contribution has not been practiced during my reign (Interviewed April 2016).

Moreover, first and foremost, Ugaz has to believe in almighty God. A person /man who have become Ugaz is expected to treat all Gurgura people (elders, youth, men and women) equally. Ugaz is not a simple status, but it has strong link with the state. Ugaz has to work hand in hand along with governmental institution (Interviewed April 2016).

Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was explaining about how he was elected as *Gurgura* Ugaz as follows:

I have been serving the people of Gurgura as a chairperson of Ugaz Committee during the period of Ugaz Gedide. Then Ugaz Gedide passed away and I became chief representative for the overall Gurgura people following the death of Ugaz Gedide. Then I became Ugaz (the overall leader of Gurgura) at the age of 85. I was elected by Qundublee sub-clan in the presence of 15,000 people at a place called Qalecha rural town (Interviewed April 2016)

As opposed to the above, I had in-depth interview with Ahmed Rage about the traditional election of Ugaz and he stated that:

Traditionally, before Ugaz is elected, Council of elders who are the representatives of each sub-clan carry out meeting in order to identify appropriate candidates based on traditional norms of Gurgura. First and foremost, these elders try to check over whether there is a potential candidate from Gufatelee sub-clan or not. Or they propose for Gufatelee sub-clan members to come up potential candidate for the status of Ugaz. Always the first priority used to be given for Gufatelee sub-clan. If and only if there is no any potential candidate from Gufatelee, these elders look for other alternative candidates either from Seneyaa or Sanchelee sub-clans. Accordingly, these elders discuss and pass decision on the potential candidates for the status of Ugaz. The election of Ugaz is used to be carried out based on the stated ways. However, the current Ugaz has been elected in contrary to the traditional election of Gurgura. Therefore, the present Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru is not recognized by half sub-clans of Gurgura especially by Qwahaden. Thus, today, we have no Ugaz as the overall leader of Gurgura. So we are planning to elect our own Ugaz in the near future in accordance with the traditional customs and norms of the Gurgura (Interviewed May 2016).

6. 3.3. Current Views of Gurgura Over the Election of Ugaz

Gurgura people in Hurso area belonged to Qwahaden sub-branch which is comprised of Galwaqe, Nibidor and Beida sub-clans. According to Ahmed Yusuf, nowadays, the traditional election of Ugaz has changed into modern kind of election. Now they prefer to focus on ability and consider the capability of individuals in terms of leading the whole Gurgura people in terms of expressing the problems of a clan to the concerned government officials. Ugaz has to be an educated man who takes the responsibility of the whole Gurgura clan. Generally speaking, now the election of Ugaz should not be merely bounded to Libano sub-branch that includes: Gufatelee, Seneyaa and Sanchelee sub-clans (Interviewed May 2016).

Moreover, Ahmed Yusuf said that, “The election of Ugaz was based on hereditary lines/ family lines. These days, Ugaz should be elected from any sub-clans of *Gurgura* who is capable in defending and explaining the overall *Gurgura* problems to the concerned government entities. The present Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was elected with the support of half sub-clans of *Gurgura* particularly Qundublee that includes: Ali and Abedule. Therefore, we are against his election because he was elected without consulting Qwahaden sub-clans that includes: Galwaqe, Nibidor and Beida. In short, we were not informed about the steps of his election” (Interviewed May2016).

On the other hand, Mohammed Yusuf who is representative of the Somali people in the Ethiopian parliament said that, “I accept the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim as *Gurgura* Ugaz because he is not only well recognized by his own people but he is well known as *Gurgura* Ugaz by the government. He was already chief representative for *Gurgura* people following the death of the previous Ugaz Gedide. Now he has become Ugaz. As long as he is well recognized by the government, I recognize him as *Gurgura* Ugaz” (Interviewed May2017).

Zeineba Hamedide, one of my key informants in Hurso areas was also explaining about the current election of ugaz as follows:

We had Ugaz who was named Gedide Abedulahi Buh, but he passed away before five years ago. The current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru doesn't represent the whole sub-clans. He was elected by half sub-clans of *Gurgura* (Qundublee). All sub-clans have not agreed upon his election as *Gurgura* Ugaz. We do not recognize him as *Gurgura* Ugaz. He was elected without consulting all concerned *Gurgura* sub-clans like Qwahaden. We know that half of *Gurgura* people who are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo elected Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru. Thus we are still planning to elect a new leader of *Gurgura*. In the past, whenever *Gurgura* Ugaz was elected, all chief representatives of sub-clans used to discuss on the election of Ugaz. All *Gurgura* sub-clans pray together under acacia trees. There was traditional singing and dancing but the current Ugaz was elected without these rituals (Interviewed May2016).

As I have observed from in-depth interviews and FGDs, these days, there is a serious contradiction between *Gurgura* people who are primarily speaking Oromo and Somali languages. There are many *Gurgura* people who are speaking Oromo chiefly, there are also several numbers of *Gurgura* who are mainly speaking Somali language. Of course, there are different factors for the contradiction over the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru. To mention few: Haji

Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was assigned as a chairperson for Ugaz committee right after the death of Ugaz Gedide but not as Ugaz. He speaks only Afaan Oromo so he doesn't represent the overall Gurgura people. During his election, all sub-clans of *Gurgura* were not informed about the processes of the election.

According to Mohammed Osman Yusuf in Meleka Jebedu area, we were peacefully living together with different sub-clans among *Gurgura* in this area. However, these days, upon the election of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru as the overall leader of *Gurgura* (Ugaz), there is division between those who merely speak Afaan Oromo, and those who only speak Somali language. In other words, *Gurgura* who speak only Afaan Oromo are in favor of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru but those who merely speak Somali language are against his election as Ugaz. In this case, they said that Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru knows only Afaan Oromo so that they questioned how he is going to communicate and settle the conflicts among the local people and present problems to the top officials of the Somali regional state (Interviewed May2016).

As I have learned from interviews, Ugaz is merely elected from Libano sub-clans that include: Seneyaa, Sanchelee and Gufatelee. However, most of Gurgura Ugaz had been elected from Gufatelee so it seems based on hereditary line. Ugaz used to be elected mainly from Gufatelee. Up to now, 52 men were holding the status of Ugaz from these 50 were elected from Gufatelee. One was elected from Sanchelee, and the other one was elected from Seneyaa sub-clan. It is only in the absence of a potential candidate from Gufatelee that Ugaz would be elected either from Seneyaa or Sanchelee sub-clans. Thus, these days there is disagreement over the election of Ugaz. Some of them argued that the present Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru is elected from Seneyaa sub-clan while there was a potential candidate from Gufatelee sub-clan.

Further Ahmed Rage continued explaining plainly about the election processes of the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru and stated:

Right after the death of Ugaz Gedide Abedulahi Buh, Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was elected as president of the Ugaz committee but not as Ugaz (leader of *Gurgura*). After four years, we heard that Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was elected as Ugaz without being informed about the processes of his election to the half sub-clans of *Gurgura*. Moreover, *Gurgura* political officials in DireDawa Administration were involved in the processes of traditional election of Ugaz by providing strong support for Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru and at the same time by excluding half sub-

clans such as Qwahaden. Therefore, the current Ugaz is elected by the support of *Gurgura* political officials and only Qundublee sub-clans. He was elected at a place called Qalecha in the eastern part of DireDawa region. Frankly we were only informed about Dowa (Praying for Almighty God) to be held in Qalecha rural town. Initially *Gurgura* who were gathered for Dowa (praying for Almighty God) declared the election of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru as Gurgura Ugaz. This kind of election was absolutely contrary to the traditional election of Ugaz (Interviewed May2016).

As I have learned from interviews, Gurgura political officials in DireDawa Administration have interfered into the election processes of Ugaz. They divided Gurgura into two parts on the basis of primary languages of the people who are dispersed into different areas. On one side there are Gurgura who are only speaking Afaan Oromo, and on the other side there are Gurgura who are only speaking Somali language. Thus during the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru, it was only those who speak Afaan Oromo were invited to attend the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru, but those who merely speak Somali language were excluded from the election of Ugaz. In general, Gurgura political officials in DireDawa Administration were playing the major role in dividing Gurgura into two parts based on their primary language in order to gain political profit at the expense of Gurgura people.

Moreover, Ms Afrahan Abedulahi Buh said:

Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was elected merely by the support of Qundublee sub-clan of *Gurgura*. He invested a lot of money in order to get the support of Qundublee sub-clan of Gurgura. Whenever there is a potential candidate from Gufatelee for the position of Ugaz, Ugaz should not be elected either from Seneyaa or Sanchelee. Up to now, 52 men were holding the status of Ugaz, and all of them were from Gufatelee sub-clan. Now the present 53rd Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was being elected from Seneyaa while there was a potential candidate for the status of Ugaz from Gufatelee. Even if there was a potential candidate from Gufatelee, Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was elected as Ugaz. Elders' council recently has nominated Imade Abedule Qeyo for the status of Ugaz from Gufatelee sub-clan(Interviewed May2016).

Further, according to Ahmed Rage, Qwahaden sub-clans have the authority to approve the newly elected Gurgura Ugaz. However, the approval authority of Qwahaden sub-clans has been denied upon the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru.

However, Gurgura political officials do not accept what others are complaining against the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru. Regarding this, one of Gurgura political officials named Musa Taa Ibro said that Gurgura chiefs from each eight sub-clans were gathered and attempted to search for a potential candidate from the Gufatelee but they did not find any potential candidate who will take over the leadership position of Ugaz from Gufatelee. Finally, these elders decided to elect Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru as the overall leader of Gurgura.

Moreover, according to Musa Taa Ibro, the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru was serving as a chairperson of Ugaz committee during the period of Ugaz Gedide. He was also serving as chief representative of Gurgura for about four years since the death of Ugaz Gedide. Qundublee sub-clans have the authority to put on *Imame* over the head of the newly elected Ugaz because Qundublee is a senior sub-clan of Gurgura. This ceremony is usually carried out based on '*Gurgura Dua*'. This ceremony in Somali language is known as '*Alimisar*'. This is what happened at Qalecha rural town. This way, the present Ugaz was elected in accordance with the existing traditional rules and regulations of *Gurgura*. Nevertheless, *Gurgura* political officials did not deny their strong support for Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru.

According to Abeduselam, Some of Gurgura had also specific interest in the election of Ugaz. They had strong desire to have a leader of *Gurgura* who only speaks Somali language. Whereas, many of *Gurgura* sub-clans had strong desire to see a man who only speaks Afaan Oromo to hold the status of Ugaz. For Abeduselam, it is not a matter of speaking either Somali or Oromo language but it is enough if a man has *Gurgura* background and meets the required traditional criterias for the election of Ugaz. Therefore, the election of Ugaz should not only rely upon the kind of languages a man speaks. It should be taken into account whether a man is responsible or not in terms of handling or resolving the conflict that arises out of the community. In other words, it is enough to assess whether a man is accountable or not in terms of handling or resolving conflict based on the traditional governance system /traditional institutions of *Gurgura* Hera.

According to in-depth interviews that I had with Mohammed Osman Yusuf in Meleka Jebedu area, they had 52 Ugaz (leaders) among *Gurgura* in the past. It can be said that all of them were primarily speaking Somali language. However, the present Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru only speaks Afaan Oromo. That is why, many of the Qwahaden sub-clan members refused to accept

him as their leader. After a long struggle and discussion among *Gurgura*, they have elected Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru as their leader.

Since 1905 most of *Gurgura* people are mainly speaking Afaan Oromo because they are assimilated with Oromo people. That is why they are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo. Currently, they are living with Oromo and share the same cultural practices with Oromo people.

These days, there is division among *Gurgura* people upon the controversial election of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru who only speaks Afaan Oromo as the overall leader of *Gurgura* (Ugaz). Nevertheless, *Gurgura* who merely speak Somali language were not happy with his election as the overall leader of *Gurgura*. In other words, Qwhaden sub-clan is against the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru because they questioned his real representation in presenting various problems or cases to the top officials of Somali regional state.

In general, those who are primarily speaking Afaan Oromo refused to accept the complaint of other sub-clans and they have elected Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru as the overall leader of *Gurgura*. Those who are in favor of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru argued that, “This is our first opportunity to elect Ugaz who only speak Afaan Oromo so we do not want to lose this chance, and it should be our turn to elect Ugaz who merely speak Afaan Oromo. All of *Gurgura* Ugaz in the past used to primarily speak Somali language”. So they defended other *Gurgura* sub-clans like Qwahaden who are against Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru, and they have elected him as the overall leader of *Gurgura* although he speaks only Afaan Oromo.

To conclude, the main reason for the division of *Gurgura* over the election of ugaz is based on the different primary languages (mother tongues) that the *Gurgura* society are speaking in different areas. Today overwhelming majority of *Gurgura* society speaks Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue, while many of them speak Somali language as the mother tongue.

These days, according to my key informants, the current Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim is elected among *Gurgura* -Oromo particularly Qundublee sub-clan of *Gurgura* because they primarily speak Afaan Oromo like Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim.

Today, *Gurgura* people who are primarily speaking Somali language as their mother tongue are against the election of Ugaz as Haji Yusuf Ibrahim particularly Qwahaden who primarily speak Somali language as their mother tongue. Therefore, the division is based on the primary

languages that the Gurgura society are speaking in different areas. This reality has depicted that how Gurgura ethnic identity is under threat because of the primary languages they are speaking in different areas. These days, this has brought negative implications upon the unity of Gurgura people following the division of Gurgura society over the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim.

Conclusion

This study primarily dealt with the genealogical roots of Gurgura. So according to the findings of this study, the genealogical root of Somali ethnic group is divided into two: Dir and Darode which originated from Mohammed Akadie family line in Arabian Peninsula. Dir and Darode were born in Mecca from Mohammed Akadie family line especially from Qurashie societal group. Accordingly, Gurgura people originated from Arab people. Initially, Gurgura settled into Zeila port in 500 A.D. and stayed there for about 1000 years and then moved into the southern and northern direction of the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, according to some key informants of this study, Gurgura people originated from Kush family line so it has no genealogical root of Arab people.

The clan structure of Gurgura is divided into two sub-branches: Dar and Dudube. Under Dar sub-branch, there is Qundublee that includes: Ali and Abedule. Under Dudube sub-branch, there are Libano and Qwahaden sub-branches. Under Libano, there are: Gufatelee, Sanchelee and Seneyaa sub-clans. Under Qwahaden, there are: Galwaqe, Nibidor and Beida sub-clans.

Among Gurgura, there is a traditional father known as Ugaz. Ugaz is merely elected from Libano sub-branch that includes: Gufatelee, Sanchelee and Seneyaa. Ugaz is considered as the overall leader of Gurgura society. Under Ugaz, there is Ugaz committee that comprises eight people on behalf of sub-clans. Each sub-clans of Gurgura has chief leader known as either Demina or Sultan. Demina is achieved social status which is prominent among Gurgura Afaan Oromo speakers. Sultan is also achieved social status which is well-known among Gurgura Somali language speakers. Anyways either Demina or Sultan stands for blood compensation and is responsible person for any cases or different conflict cases that arises out either among Gurgura or with neighboring societal groups.

Furthermore, this study dealt with livelihood strategies. The livelihood strategies of Gurgura who are living in the eastern part of Diredawa region are entirely relied upon agricultural activities. However, the landscape or natural environment is not suitable for agricultural activities due to environmental degradation in the areas. Consequently, they have been affected by recurrent drought which entirely deteriorated their living conditions from time to time. As a result, they have less production and meager income from agricultural activities so that several of them are living in the worst conditions of life.

However, Gurgura people who are living in Hurso area are typical agro-pastoralists. In other words, they are involved in both raising domestic animals and agricultural activities. But recently many Gurgura people have lost their cattle, goats and sheep due to erratic rainfall that has exacerbated the recurrent drought in Hurso area. As a result, the livelihood strategies of many people who are living in Hurso area are shifting into cutting down trees and making charcoal as alternative means of income in order to ensure their survival.

In addition, this study has dealt with the historical inter-ethnic relationship between Gurgura and Oromo that had commenced before many hundred years ago was the result of Oromo sub-group conflict over territorial expansion found in present-day in the Eastern Hararghe Zone of Oromia Regional State. In other words, the initial contact between Gurgura and Oromo had occurred as the result of the conflict over territorial expansion between Oromo sub-group particularly between Nollée and Alla sub-clans of Afrenkelo. First, Alla defeated Nollée and snatched away Nollée territories. Fearful of Alla, Nollée called the support of Gurgura who were known warriors at that time. As a result, Gurgura welcomed the call and supported Nollée in the fight against Alla. The combined forces of Nollée and Gurgura fought against Alla. Then Alla defeated and retreated into Garamuleta areas. Because of the military support of Gurgura for Nollée in the fight against Alla, Nollée had given freedom of access to land for Gurgura. Since then, the brotherhood relationship between Nollée and Gurgura has strengthened and become stronger and stronger. In addition, they have a promise not to inflict in any violence one upon the other based on traditional rite known as Herbu Hera.

Further, this study has dealt with marriage system of Gurgura. Gurgura follow both endogamous and exogamous kind of marriages. This means that, there is marriage within the group of

Gurgura, but also they are usually married with neighboring societal group of Oromo. They have strong marriage ties with Oromo people. As a result, most of the Gurgura mothers have become Oromo. Gurgura people call Oromo people '*wara soda*' which means 'wife givers'. In other words, *warasodaa* means that Gurgura man has married to Nollée woman'. Likewise, Nollée man has married to Gurgura woman. To be very specific, *wara soda* 'wife givers' means a family that has gave a woman to a man. Oromo people also consider Gurgura as *Illmma* which means "adopted children".

Furthermore, this study has also dealt different views of indigenous people regarding on Ethnicity and Identity of Gurgura. For instance, Gurgura people who are living in Hurso area are claiming their ethnic identity as Somali. Whereas, Gurgura people who are living in Oromia regional state particularly in Kombolcha area are claiming their ethnic identity as Oromo. Therefore, the view of Gurgura towards their ethnic identity differs as their primary languages differ in different areas. In addition, half of Gurgura society has a primordialist perspective which means belonging to Gurgura society is based on common origin, language, religion and region particularly for those who are living in Hurso area. Whereas, majority of Gurgura especially those who are living in Oromia regional state believe that ethnic identity can be acquired based on the existing context of language, culture, political, social and economic situations. In short, Gurgura people who are living in Oromia regional state claim to be related with Oromo ethnic group. However, Gurgura people who are living in the Somali regional state claim to be related with Somali ethnic group.

Currently, Gurgura societal group speak different languages, but it differs from one area to another area. Gurgura people who are living in the eastern Diredawa region and Oromia regional state only speak Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue. Whereas, Gurgura people who are living in Hurso areas are multilingual. This means that, they speak Somali, Oromo and Amharic, but Somali language is their mother tongue.

Based on the differences of mother tongue languages, these days, there is division among Gurgura society upon the controversial election of new Ugaz Hajji Yusuf Ibrahim who merely speak Afaan Oromo. The ethnic identity of Gurgura is also under threat as the result of the division of Gurgura society upon the election of the new Ugaz. Because majority of those who

primarily speak Afaan Oromo are in favor of the new Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim, but those who primarily speak Somali language are against the election of Ugaz Haji Yusuf Ibrahim.

This study has also dealt with current conflict resolution mechanisms of Gurgura with the neighboring societal groups. According to Garaguracha Hera (Traditional Governance system of Oromo), when someone kills a person outside of his sub-clan, all members of the offenders' clan are expected to pay 52 oxen. However, Somali Xerwill reward about 77 camels for the family of the deceased as blood compensation. Although there are differences between Garaguracha Hera and Somali Xer, decisions of payment for blood compensation in cases involving persons from Gurgura and Oromo are based on Garaguracha Hera. For instance, if a Gurgura man kills someone from Oromo, members of the Gurgura clan are expected to pay 52 oxen. Likewise, if an Oromo man kills someone from Gurgura, Oromo clan members are expected to pay 52 Oxen. However, if a man from Issa kills someone from Gurgura, Issa clan members are expected to pay 77 camels based on Somali Xer.

Moreover, this study has depicted that the specific consensus and cooperation regarding on blood compensation between Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura and Mucha sub-clan of Nollee in Hurso area. For example, if a man from Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura kills someone from another clans, Mucha sub-clan of Nollee also pay blood compensation along with Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura. Likewise, if a man from Mucha –sub-clan of Nollee kills someone from another clans, Galwaqe sub-clan of Gurgura pay blood compensation along with Mucha–sub-clan of Nollee.

Among Gurgura people, there is traditional father known as Ugaz. Traditionally, Ugaz is usually elected based on the existing traditional rules and norms of Gurgura society. To be very specific, Ugaz is usually elected from Libano-sub-branch of Gurgura clan that includes: Gufatelee, Seneyaa and Sanchelee sub-clans. But most of the time Ugaz used to be elected from Gufatelee sub-clan. The election of Ugaz used to be carried out based on hereditary lines but currently most of Gurgura people prefer to elect Ugaz depending on the ability (capability) of individuals rather than based on hereditary lines. Recently, Gurgura people elected a new Ugaz named Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru but the election was so controversial because majority of Gurgura people who speak Afaan Oromo are in favor of the new Ugaz. While, Gurgura people who primarily speak Somali language are against the election of the new Ugaz. They questioned the real

representation of Haji Yusuf Ibrahim Boru because he speaks only Afaan Oromo. Therefore, due to these factors, there is contradiction and division among Gurgura society. According to the finding of this study, although Gurgura's society division is due to the controversial election of Ugaz, the major reason for the division is the different primary languages that the Gurgura society are speaking in different areas.

To conclude, the main boundary markers between Gurgura and Oromo is genealogical history of identity construction. Otherwise, there are no boundary markers between Gurgura and Oromo that distinguish one from another particularly in terms of language, culture, religion and region especially for Gurgura who are living in the nearby areas of Oromo people in the eastern part of DireDawa region and in Oromia regional state. In other words, Gurgura and Oromo have common language, culture, religion and region specifically in the eastern part of DireDawa region and in Oromia regional state. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other unless they openly express about their ethnic identity.

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