

**A SURVEY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE AWI AGAW  
PEOPLE (CA. 1769-1995)**

**M.A. THESIS**

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**HARAMAYA UNIVERSITY, HARAMAYA**

**A Survey of Socio-Cultural History of the Awi Agaw People (Ca. 1769-  
1995)**

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of History and Heritage Management,  
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**M.A. Thesis**

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**Haramaya University, Haramaya**



## STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author was born in November 1983 E.C in Amhara Region in Awi Zone of the Ankäśä Guagesa *wäräda*. He attended primary, secondary and preparatory schools found at Agäw Gimjabét town. He joined Jimma University in 2001 E.C and graduated with a BA degree in History and Heritage Management in 2003 E.C. Immediately after graduation, he joined Haramaya University to study Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) and graduated in 2005 E.C.

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## ACRONYMS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ANAZ  | Awi Nationality Administration Zone               |
| ANRS  | Amhara National Regional State                    |
| AZCTB | Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau               |
| BGNRS | Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State         |
| CSA   | Central Statistics Agency                         |
| EC    | Ethiopian Calendar                                |
| EPRD  | Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| FDRE  | Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia           |
| ONRS  | Oromia National Regional State                    |
| NALA  | National Archives and Library Agency              |

## KEY TO TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

### I. Seven Sounds of the Ethiopic alphabet are represented as follows:

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. ቤ = Bā | 5. ቤ = Bé |
| 2. ቡ = Bu | 6. ብ = Be |
| 3. ቢ = Bi | 7. ቦ = Bo |
| 4. ባ = Ba |           |

Regarding the sound of the 6<sup>th</sup> letter indicated above, it must be noted that the “e” will be suffixed to the letter only if the letter is vocalized or stressed. Otherwise it will not be required at all. As a general rule also, the “e” is not required to stress when the sixth form is the last letter of word.

Example: መምህር = Mämher  
ብድር = Bedder

### II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

- |        |        |
|--------|--------|
| ሸ = Š  | ዠ = ZH |
| ቸ = CH | ጸ = J  |
| ኸ = Ĥ  |        |

### III. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

- |       |        |
|-------|--------|
| ቀ = Q | ቐ = Ts |
| ቆ = Č | ቆ = P  |
| ጠ = Ṭ |        |

### IV. Germinations should always be indicated by doubling:

Examples: ክበደ ተሰማ = Käbbädä Täsämma

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## ***A Survey of Socio-Cultural History of the Awi Agaw People (Ca. 1769-1995)***

### **ABSTRACT**

*This thesis investigated the socio-cultural history of the Awi Agäw people (ca. 1769 to 1995). The year 1769 is taken as the landmark in the socio-cultural history of the Awi Agäw people because it marked the onset of the socio-economic and political predicaments that the country faced nationally and regionally. The socio-economic and political crisis of the country had also significantly affected the socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people. The year 1995 is also a turning point in the history of the Awi Agäw people due to the establishment of the Awi Nationality Administrative Zone which marked a new period in the self-autonomy and reassertion of the socio-cultural identity. The main objective of the thesis is to show predominantly the socio-cultural dynamics and lesser extent intercultural relations of the Awi Agäw people with the major regional and national political developments from 1769 to 1995. This thesis indicated that the centralization of the regional and national political power had further shaped the socio-cultural aspects and inter-cultural relation of the Awi Agäw people. The socio-cultural history comprises broad issues; however, this thesis does not encompass the entire socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people due to time and financial constraints. The main sources of this thesis come from published and unpublished documents, and archival and oral sources. The thesis argued that the socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people have shown a great transformation due to regional and national political developments and peoples' interaction which continued for several centuries.*

*Key words: Agäw, Awi, Interaction, Integration, Social, Culture*

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Geographical and Historical Background of the Study

##### 1.1.1. Geographical Background of the Study

The Awi Agäw people mainly live in the Awi Nationality Administration Zone (from now wards written as, ANAZ) of the Amhara National Regional State (from now wards written as, ANRS) at present time. The ANAZ is one of the three autonomous nationality zones (the other two are Wag Hemra and Oromia special Zones) in the ANRS. It is alternatively called Agäw Awi Zone and located in the south-western part of the ANRS. Some others live in Mätäkäl Zone of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (from now wards written as, BGNRS), Q'wara and Aläfa *wärädas* of West and Central Gondar Zones of Amhara National Regional State.<sup>1</sup>

The name Mätäkäl is said to have derived from one of the Seven Agäw Houses. According to some written sources, it is also the name of a mountain with 7000-feet found in the Mandura *wäräda* of BGNRS. However, the informants noted that there is no mountain with the name Mätäkäl in the area. The West and Central Gondar Zones Awi Agäws have previously been called Kunfäl Agäws.<sup>2</sup> The name kunafal originated from Kumpal the appellation used to refer the Agäws of Jawi district.<sup>3</sup>

The territorial limit of Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl had been restructured based on the nature of the national political developments and power of regional rulers several times.<sup>4</sup> Historically both Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl were parts of Gojjam province. The western part of Mätäkäl

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<sup>1</sup> Alemayehu Erkihun, "State and Ethnic Interaction in Mätäkäl and Agäw Meder: The Case of Awi and Gumuz during the 20<sup>th</sup> century," (MA Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2012), pp. 1-3

<sup>2</sup> Taddesse Tamrat, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1988), p11; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "The Gumuz in the Lowlands of Western Gojjam: The Frontier in History 1900-1935," *Africa*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1995), p. 54; Sewenet Sheferaw, "Awi Tourist Guide," (Injibara, 2015), p.34; Informants: Kassahun Engeda and Biadegelegn Mulluneh.

<sup>3</sup> Siegbert Uhlig, eds., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica Volume 3 He – N* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), p. 456.

<sup>4</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic....", pp. 1-3.

was incorporated into Gojjam in 1889 and integrated into Agäw Meder until its separation in 1948.<sup>5</sup> In 1948, Mätäkäl was separated from Agäw Meder and became an independent administrative sub-province of Gojjam until the early 1990s. It was the largest sub-province of Gojjam covering almost half of the entire region.<sup>6</sup>

The administrative structure of Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl was largely reorganized after the downfall of the *Derg* Regime. The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took most *wärädas* of Mätäkäl (Mandura, Dangur, Debat, Guba, and Wämbärä) from Gojjam and placed them under the newly established BGNRS. After this rearrangement, the administrative capital of Mätäkäl was shifted from Chagni to Pawi. Since the end of 2000, the capital of Mätäkäl Zone once again has been shifted to the Gilgel-Beles which is located at a distance of 546 km from Addis Ababa. In the meantime, Pawi and Bullen were upgraded to *wäräda* levels. Accordingly, Mätäkäl is currently divided into seven *wärädas*, namely, Bulen, Dangur, Dibate, Guba, Mandura, Wämbärä, and Pawi. The Awi Agaw people live primarily in Dangur, Mandura, and Dibate *wärädas* together with other peoples.<sup>7</sup>

Most parts of the former Agäw Meder and Guangua *wäräda* of Mätäkäl have been placed under the ANAZ of the ANRS.<sup>8</sup> Some areas of the Qolla-Däga Dämot from Gojjam, and Q'udara and Aläfa from Gondar have also been placed under the Agäw Awi Zone.<sup>9</sup> The ANAZ is bordered in the north by the West and Central Gondar and on the northeast, east and southeast by the West Gojjam Zones of ANRS; and in the south by the Oromia National Regional State (ONRS) and in the west by the BGNRS.<sup>10</sup>

The total area of the Agäw Awi Zone is about 857886 square kilometers<sup>11</sup> which accounts for 5.1% of the total areas of the ANRS.<sup>12</sup> Initially, it was divided into five *wärädas*, specifically Guangua, Bänja Šekudäd, Ankäšä Guagesa, Dangela, and Fageta Lakoma. Later, Jawi has

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<sup>5</sup> Abebaw Assefa, "A History of Mätäkäl Muslims since 20<sup>th</sup> century," (MA Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Abdussamad, "The Gumuz in the Lowlands...", p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Abebaw Assefa, pp. 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 1-3; Informant: Alemerew Dubala.

<sup>10</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 1-3; Informant: Bimerew Alemerew.

<sup>11</sup> Bezuneh Assefa, "A Historical Survey of Awi People," (BA Essay in History, Dilla University, 2016), pp. 1-5.

<sup>12</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 1-3.

upgraded to *wäräda* level with the increasing importance of the area for resettlement and political bases. Next, the people of Guagesa Šekudäd, Zigäm, and Ayo Guagesa demanded the promotion of their areas to *wäräda* level and their demand was accepted and the number of *wärädas* rose to nine. Accordingly, the Agäw Awi Zone is currently divided into nine rural *wärädas* and three autonomous towns (Chagni, Dangela, and Injibara) and having a total of twelve *wärädas*.<sup>13</sup>

Injibara is the administrative capital of the Agäw Awi Zone which is found at a distance of 447 km and 118 km northwest of Addis Ababa and south of Bahir Dar towns respectively. It is located at 10°30' to 11°30' north latitude and 36°30' to 37°00' east longitude in Bänja *wäräda* at an elevation of 2560 meters above sea level. Injibara served as the administrative capital of Bänja and Ankäšä Guagesa *wärädas* until 1967. It continued to serve as the only capital of Bänja *wäräda* since the capital of the Ankäšä Guagesa *wäräda* has been shifted to Agäw Gimjabet as of 1967.<sup>14</sup>

The Agäw Awi and Mätäkäl Zones have three types of agro-ecological zones. These are highland, temperate, and lowland which is traditionally classified as *däga*, *wayena däga*, and *qolla*, respectively. As compared to Mätäkäl, much of the Agäw Awi Zone has a *wayena däga* agro-ecological zone which covers 72% of the total area. The *däga* and *qolla* ecological zone cover 17% and 11% of the total areas of the zone, respectively. The average altitude of this zone is 2300 meters above sea level.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, many areas of Mätäkäl have *qolla* agro-ecological zone which makes up 75% of the total area with an altitude below 1500 meters above sea level. The *wayena däga* and *däga* climatic zones account for 24 % and 1% with altitudes between 1500-2500 meters above sea level and 2500 meters above sea level respectively. Accordingly, most of the Agäw Awi Zone has a moderate climatic condition

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<sup>13</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “YäAwi YäFäräs Gugges Festival Tarikawi Dara Ena Akababär Hunéta,” (Addis Ababa, 2018), pp. 1-5.

<sup>14</sup> Alemneh Melese, “A Historical Survey of Agäws of Gojjam to 1941,” (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Alemayehu, “State and Ethnic...”, p. 6; F DRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “YäAwi YäFäräs ...,” pp. 1-5.

which is suitable for the cultivation of different cereal crops. In contrast to this, most of Mätäkäl is a hot area infected by malaria and other tropical diseases.<sup>16</sup>

The Agäw Awi and Mätäkäl Zones receive rainfall regularly. The Agäw Awi Zone receives an annual rainfall of 800-2700 millimeters from May to September. The annual temperature of the zone is 15-24 degrees centigrade.<sup>17</sup> Mätäkäl Zone also receives an average rainfall of 1607.8 millimeters from May to October regularly.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes, it becomes irregular due to the deforestation of the environment following the resettlement program of the 1980s. The annual temperature of the zone is between 16.2-32.5 degrees centigrade.<sup>19</sup>

The Agäw Awi and Mätäkäl Zones have different land features. As compared to Mätäkäl, Agäw Awi Zone is a mountainous area. It has several mountains such as Fudi, Gizirihi, Gämbahä, Sanbu, Worie, Gämkan, Doram, Ziwili, Wnasi, Kar, Miramir, Şaşşal, Sähusi, and others. The lowest place of the zone is found in Jawi *wäräda* that shares borders with BGNRS.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, much of Mätäkäl Zone has lowland and undulating plains. The highest peak of Mätäkäl Zone is Bälayä Mountain which is found in Dangur *wäräda* with an elevation of 2731 meters above sea level. Mätäkäl has also other mountains such as Demtu, Gumgum, and Sänki. The lowest place in Mätäkäl Zone is the Dura depression which is found along the border of Sudan and has an altitude of 600 meters above sea level.<sup>21</sup>

The source indicates that Mätäkäl and Agäw Awi Zones covered with thick forest until 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Portuguese priest Francisco Alvarez visited Ethiopia in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and stated that the western part of Gojjam up to the source of Blue Nile was covered with thick forests. Similarly, James Bruce, the Scottish traveler who visited Ethiopia in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century provided information on the dense vegetation cover of these area. Until these days, the Agäw Awi and Mätäkäl Zones have endowed with various

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<sup>16</sup> Abebaw Assefa, p. 7; Ayenew Fenta, “A History of Ankäşa *Wäräda* (Western Gojjam), 1935-1991,” (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “YäAwi Yä Färäs ...”, pp. 1-5.

<sup>18</sup> Alemayehu, “State and Ethnic...”, pp. 1-3.

<sup>19</sup> Yntiso Gebre, “Differential Re-establishment of Voluntary and Involuntary Migrants: The Case of Mätäkäl Settlers in Ethiopia,” *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 23, No.1 (2002), p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Alemneh, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Alemayehu, “State and Ethnic...”, p. 3.

specious of trees like bamboo, incense, gum, and eucalyptus. It is from the bamboo tree that the Awi Agäw people make basket, umbrella, and other household utensils.<sup>22</sup>

The Agäw Awi and Mätäkäl Zones have great water resource and drained by several rivers. The most important rivers are Ardi, Bäläs, Fatäm, Ayo, Dandini, Kulanti, Zingini, Ankuri, Šuri, Gimari, Sangši, Missini, Hošši, Gudär, Tenbel, Aman, Alältu, Dindär, Durra, Qarsa, etc. They join each other at different points and flow to the Abbay (Blue Nile) River. These rivers have great importance for conducting irrigation for the people of the area. The Agäw Awi Zone also has two creator lakes i.e. Zengäna and Tereba which are located at 5 km south of Injibara and 8 km southwest of Agäw Gimjabét towns respectively. These Lakes have not been well exploited despite the high potential for their recreational purposes and for developing fishing economy.<sup>23</sup>

The Agäw Awi Zone is endowed with other various natural, cultural, and historical resources, and attraction centers. Some of the natural attraction centers of the Agäw Awi Zone are the fall of Tesiki in Dangela; Dondor and Garčo in Guangua and Fagn in Guagusa Šekudad *wärädas*, and Iläla natural forest in Guangua *wäräda*. It has also several mineral springs of water like Ura, Čeränta, and Senko mineral spring waters that are found in Guangua, Guagesa Šekudad, and Ankäšä Guagesa *wärädas* respectively. The local people have used these mineral waters as a treatment for various human and animal diseases.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the Agäw Awi Zone has several natural caves that run underground from 10 to 15 km with entrance and exit points being located in different directions. Some of these are Dangula, Gišawi, and Bénin in Ankäšä Guagesa, Nana in Fageta Lakoma, Kambo in Guangua, and Addis Aläm in Guagesa Šekudad *wärädas*. The gates of these caves are not easily identified and made accessible to outsiders. As a result, they were used as safe havens for bandits and political mutineers at different times.<sup>25</sup> According to sources, many church

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<sup>22</sup> Abdussamad, “The Gumuz in the Lowlands ...”, pp. 54-55; Tsega Endalew, “The Oromo of Wänbärä: A Historical Survey to 1941,” (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 1997), p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Alemneh, pp. 1-3; Abdussamad, “The Gumuz in the Lowlands ...”, pp. 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> Amhara Region Culture and Tourism Bureau, “Aymollo-78<sup>th</sup> *Sebtbét* Agäw Horsemen Association Festivity,” (Bahir Dar, 2018), pp. 2-8; Ayenew Mamo, “State and Society in Agäw Meder, 1935-2005,” (Ph.D. Dissertation in History, Addis Ababa University, 2018), p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

heritages such as parchments, scripture, silver and gold crosses and *Tabot* (Ark) were secretly kept and maintained in these caves during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia.<sup>26</sup>

The Agäw Awi Zone has also several old monasteries such as Wälätä Pétrós, Zurzur Kidana Meherät, Segädi Mika'el, Kassa Debre Tseon, Gum Eyasus, Gämbahä Mariam, Mulä Täklä Häymanot, Egizharia Mariam, Agäw Gimjabét Mariam and etc. Most of these monasteries were established during the Gondarine period. They host precious heritages which have historical and cultural significance.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the Agäw Awi Zone, the establishment of churches and monasteries in the present-day Mätäkäl Zone was started during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was due to the absence of deep evangelization activities and the resistance made by the Gumuz people against the expansion of Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

The most widely spoken languages in the Agäw Awi Zone are (Agäw) Awgni and Amharic languages. However, Gumuz is also spoken in some localities. Mätäkäl is culturally diversified than the Agäw Awi Zone because it is not only inhabited by the Agäw and Gumuz but also by the Oromo, Šinaša, Amhara, and others.<sup>29</sup> The majority of the people of the Agäw Zone which account for 94.4% are adherents of Orthodox Christianity. This is followed by Islam which has only 4.5% of adherents. Protestantism, indigenous practices, and followers of other beliefs make up 0.2%, 0.4%, and 0.5% respectively.<sup>30</sup> The majority of the non-Gumuz inhabitants of Mätäkäl, which make up 54.49% are adherents of Orthodox Christianity, while 20.31% are adherents of Islam, 17.65% follows indigenous beliefs, and 6.36% Protestant Christianity.<sup>31</sup> The majority of the Gumuz of Mätäkäl Zone practices indigenous belief systems.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the total population of the Agäw Awi Zone which is reported by different sources shows some inconsistency. According to the 2007 census data conducted by the Central

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<sup>26</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 1-3; Informant: Bekebel Tamer.

<sup>27</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "YäAwi YäFäräs...", pp. 1-5.

<sup>28</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*; Sewenet, pp. 34-35.

<sup>30</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Awi, Sidama and Gujje Oromo Indigenous Administrative System," (Addis Ababa, 2006), pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Amhara Region Culture and Tourism Bureau, pp. 2-8.

<sup>32</sup> Binayew Tamrat, "Center Periphery Relations: the Case of Benishangul Gumuz," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (2014), pp. 2-12.  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311694123>.

Statistical Agency (CSA), the zone has a total population of 1220316, of whom 598880 (49.1%) were men and 621436 (50.9%) were women.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, a report by the ANRS Economic and Finance Development Bureau in the same year shows that the total population of the Agäw Awi Zone was 1198756.<sup>34</sup> Based on the CSA conducted in 2007, the total population of Mätäkäl Zone was 201521. Thus, the Mätäkäl Zone is less populous than Agäw Awi Zone, although it is larger than the latter in the territory.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Amhara Region Culture and Tourism Bureau, pp. 2-8.

<sup>34</sup> Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau, “BäAwi Behérasäb YäTämäzägäbu Gezufenät Yäléläčäw Keresoč,” (Injibara, 2016), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Yintso, “Differential Re-establishment ...”, p. 32.

### Map: Relative Location of Agäw Awi Zone

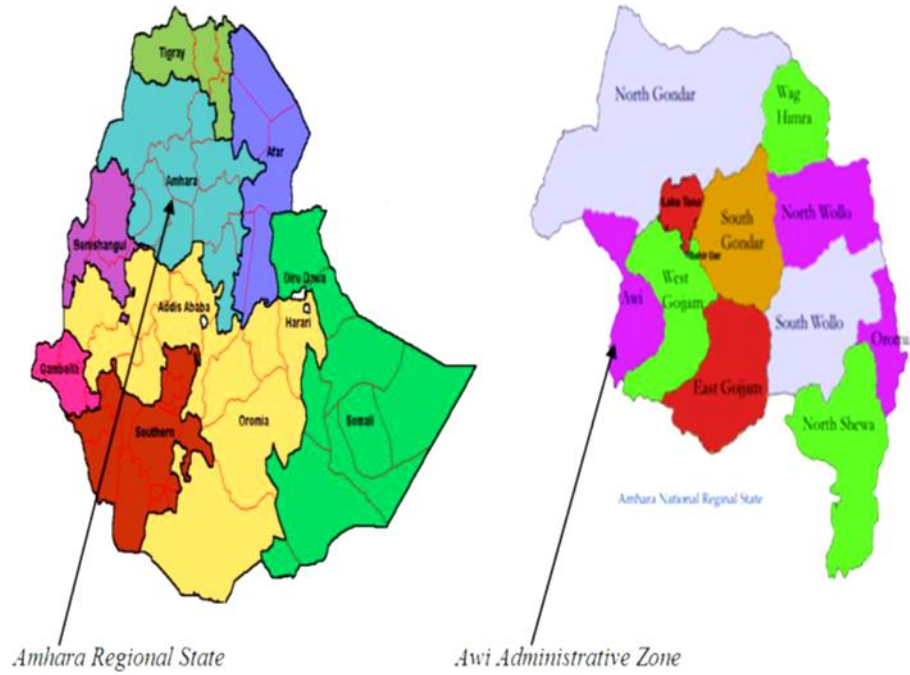


Figure 1: Administrative Map of Ethiopia and Amhara Region Source: Amhara National Regional State, web site (<https://www.google.com/search?q=new+amhara+region+map&tbm>)



Figure 2: Administrative Map of Agäw Awi Zone, Source: Amhara National Regional State, web site (<https://www.google.com/search?q=new+amhara+region+map&tbm>)

### 1.1.2. Historical Background of the Study

Ethiopia is a country of diversity harboring various religions and nations, nationalities, and peoples with unique socio-cultural practices. In Ethiopia, there are more than eighty nations, nationalities, and peoples who maintained a different degree of socio-cultural interactions for many centuries.<sup>36</sup> As cited by Woolbert, Carlo C. Rossini who contributed a great in the study of the history and culture of Ethiopia described Ethiopia as a "museum of people" due to such a socio-cultural diversity of its people.<sup>37</sup>

Ancient and medieval documents that those are on the Ethiopian history in the form of Greek and Ge'ez inscriptions give a general picture of Ethiopia with its considerable socio-cultural diversity. The Adulis inscription inscription of the Aksumite period, the first substantial historical document of Ethiopia gives a long list of peoples. Some of these peoples are Agamé, Agazian, Ségéné, Angabé, Awa, Aniné, Laziné, Bégas, Métiné, and Athagaus. Ezana's victory proclamation also shows that Aksum had defeated Meroe and brought several peoples under its socio-cultural, economic, and administrative systems.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the chronicles of the medieval emperors and kings of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and hagiographies indicated the existence of varied socio-cultural groups in Ethiopia.<sup>39</sup>

The Agäw are one of those peoples who are widely mentioned in the literature of Ethiopian studies from the Aksumite time to the present day. They are also one of the most ancient inhabitants of Ethiopia, specifically, the northern and central highland plateau of the country. Before the coming of Semitic speakers, the Agäw were said to have dominated and controlled

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<sup>36</sup> Wondimagegn Kidane, "Function Of Funeral Dirges and Interpretation of Death in Kaficho Lamentation Poetry," (MA Thesis in English Literature, Addis Ababa University, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Gale Woolbert, "The Peoples of Ethiopia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1936), pp. 340-344; Tadesse, "Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of Gafat...", pp. 121-122.

<sup>38</sup> Fesehe Yaze, *The Five Thousands Years History of Ethiopia: From Noh to the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front* (Addis Ababa, 2003 E.C), pp. 140-143; Tadesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw ...", pp. 5-8.

<sup>39</sup> Tadesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw ...", pp. 5-8.

the region from the south of Märäb and Bäläs Rivers extending as far as Jäma River, in North Šäwa; the edge of a plateau; and Täkäzé River to the east.<sup>40</sup>

The Agäw were first mentioned in the historical sources in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in the Adulis inscription of the Aksumite period copied by Cosmas Indicopleustes in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The inscription refers to a people called "Athagaus" or "Athagaous", perhaps from Greek, Ad Agäw, meaning "sons of Agäw."<sup>41</sup> They were also mentioned in the inscriptions of Ezana and Käléb in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. Moreover, Cosmas Indicopleustes comprised in his book, the *Christian Topography* that the major gold trade route passed through the region of "Agau" to mean Agäw. According to him, the area referred seems to have located east of the Tekeze River and south of the Semien Mountains.<sup>42</sup>

The successive rulers of the Aksumite kingdom expanded southwards to incorporate Agäw regions of Abärgäle, Sälwa, and Bora since Ezana's rule. As a result, the center of Agäw resistance was shifted to the most inaccessible region of Wag and Lasta in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Moreover, the active expansion of Christianity into the Agäw regions of Wag-Lasta began during the reign of Käléb in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. By then, these regions became integral parts of the Aksumite territory. An increasing number of Agäw also made to adopt Semitic speech and participated in the economic, political, and military affairs of the Aksumite state. Those who resisted and adhered to their original belief, Judaism and "paganism" fled from north to south and south-west direction along Täkäzé River.<sup>43</sup>

The Agäw people are said to have played a vital role in the ancient and medieval political, economic, and socio-cultural history of Ethiopia. They were also said to have very active in creating and innovating new ideas and technologies. In particular, the Agäw played a crucial role in the rise and development of the Aksumite state. The role of the Agäw in Aksumite civilization could be noticed from the etymological meaning of the word Aksum which is derived from the Agäw word "Ahu" to mean "water" and the Semitic word "šum" to mean "chief" which together referred to "chief of water." It seems acceptable that the Agäw

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*; Melaku Fenta, *Awaho: YaAgäw Tarikawi Darra Andemitta Ena Yatemekehet Politika Tägedärote* (Addis Ababa: Biocola Printing Press, 2017), p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Tadesse, *Church, and State in Ethiopia: 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 5-20.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*.

contributed the basic word "water", while the politically dominant Semitic speakers gave the administrative term "*šum*" to give Aksum.<sup>44</sup>

The Agäw intermarried with the Aksumite court and served in the various government bureaucracies including the military and political activities. By exploiting these advantages and the internal and external problems of the kingdom as an opportunity, the Agäw took over state power and established their own dynasty, i.e. Zagwe dynasty. At the same time, the cultural, political, and religious center of the kingdom shifted south to the Agäw district, first Adefa and then Roha which was renamed Lalibela after the name of one of the well-known kings of the dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

The exact date of the establishment of the Zagwe dynasty is obscure due to lack of sources. This period is shrouded in mystery i.e. even the number of kings and the year of their reign is doubtful. Some sources give the names of eleven kings with contradictory reigning years. Similarly, other sources give only five lists of kings with different reigning years. According to Carlo Conti Rossini, the second is more likely true. Rossini argued that the first Zagwe ruler came to power between 1135 and 1137. His argument is based on a letter received by the Patriarch of Alexandria John V shortly before 1150 from the unnamed king of Ethiopia who asked for a new bishop because the existing officeholder was too old and would not endorse the new dynasty.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Zagwe rulers were, on the whole, much more religiously inspired than the 'Solomonic' rulers, they had met strong resistance from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Tigray and Amhara ruling families. This was because the ruling families of both regions and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church accused Agäw as "illegitimate rulers" who did not trace their origin from Solomonic families. Lastly, the internal problems of power succession that coupled with external opposition led to the downfall of the Zagwe dynasty in 1270.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup> Taddesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Tekeste Negash, "The Zagwe Period re-interpreted: Post-Aksumite Ethiopian urban culture," *Published Online* (2008), pp. 8-13.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

dominance of the Agäw declined after the downfall of the Zagwe dynasty. Most of them also were absorbed into Semitic speakers. Others who continued to resist assimilation were forced out of their original settlements and dispersed into different areas. This process was started before the decline of the Zagwe dynasty.<sup>48</sup>

As a result of their dispersal over an extensive territory for a long time, a single proto-cultural and linguistic group, Agäw was divided into several language dialectic families. Accordingly, Agäw is a generic name denoting the different Agäw dialectical groups who now live in different territories. Different scholars who produced a vast literature on Ethiopian history provided different lists of Agäw people. For example, Adhana mentioned seven sub-groups of the Agäw specifically Belén, Qemant, Betä-Isra'el, Kunfal, Awi, Hamir, and Himtana. On his part, Gamst offered eight lists of Agäw groups which are Awi, Qemant, Kunfal, Hamir, Belén, Damot, Hamta, and Fäläšä. Aläqa Tayé also listed three groups of Agäw namely; Lasta Agäw, Damot Agäw, and Halul Bägos Agäw. Furthermore, Bender mentioned the existence of twelve Agäw groups, but he does not list them by their names.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, the Awi Agäw people are one of the Agäw subgroups. They are referred to by different names in different sources. Some sources referred to them as Damot Agäw. However, this region is inhabited by Amharic speakers these days. They have also been referred to as Gojjam Agäw after the name of the province until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some others referred to them as "Awka" and "Awawa" which is the plural form of the Awi in Awgni language. Other writers also referred to them as "Awiya" which means son of the Awi. In my view, the accurate name of the Agäw of Gojjam is Awi Agäw as the people mostly prefer to call themselves by this name. It is also used to distinguish them from other branches of the Agäw peoples.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> James Quirin, "Caste and Class in Historical North-West Ethiopia: Beta Israel (Falasha) and Kemant, 1300-1900," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1998), pp. 197-198.

<sup>49</sup> Aeqa Taye, *Abyssinian History* (Asmara: Swedish Mission, 1992), pp. 26-27; Desalegn Amsalu, "History, Memory, and Victimhood among the Kumpal Agäw in Northwest Ethiopia," (Ph.D. Dissertation in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, 2016), pp. 67-70; Ayenew Mamo, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 39.

There are different contradictory views regarding the settlement history of Awi Agäw people. The first view describes that the sections of Agäw moved from Wag/Lasta and settled in Gojjam after the downfall of the Zagwe dynasty. It is supposed that they settled in Gojjam to protect themselves from the attack of the restored “Solomonic” dynasty. The second view is related to the power struggle amongst the Agäw ruling families. According to this view, Harbe fought with his younger brother, Lalibela over political power. Lastly, he was said to have given up his power to Lalibela and moved to Gojjam with his seven sons. Latter, these seven brothers became the founding fathers of the present-day Awi Agäw.<sup>51</sup>

The third view asserts that the pressure and influence of the Aksumite rulers on the socio-cultural life was a factor for the settlement of the Agäw in Gojjam. The Aksumite influence was accompanied by the Semitization process and continuous raids which gradually led to the split and evolution of various Agäw sub-groups. According to this view, the Agäw moved and settled in the present-day Gojjam to escape from the pressure of the Christian kingdom between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>52</sup> The researcher supports this view because it has better evidence supported by various circumstantial explanations than other views.

The last and widely accepted view is based on a local tradition which indicates that the seven Agäw brothers moved from Wag/Lasta southwards for hunting purposes. In the course of their hunting expedition, they had discovered a region endowed with natural resources. Later, they expected that the new region would be suitable for life than their original home and decided to go back and return with their families. Accordingly, they brought their families and first settled in the present-day Injibara area. After this, they were said to have called the region "Agäw Meder" meaning "The Land of Agäw."<sup>53</sup> (See **appendix-I**.) The names of the seven brothers who believed to have reached "Agäw Meder" and established permanent settlement are Ankiši, Banji, Azäni, Mitikili, Zigämi, Chari, and Kwakiri. The local tradition also maintains that there was a second group of population movement of the Agäw from

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<sup>51</sup> Taddesse, “Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...”, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Temesgen Gebeyehu, “Gojjam (Ethiopia): Peopling, Christianization, and Identity,” *African Identities*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2016), p. 259.

<sup>53</sup> National Archive and Library Agency (hereafter NALA), 17. 2.338.02: The letter which was written by the Agaw Mider bälbats of Dangela for Emperor Haile Selassie to announce the size of the land and their holding system since antiquity; Nibret Arega, "A History of Agäw Gemjabét Town from Its Early Foundation to Present," (BA Essay in History, Jimma University, 2012), pp. 22-25.

Wag/Lasta into Gojjam under the five leaders, namely, Tumhi, Dangya, Chaji, Bil (Bälayä), and Guagesi, who came on hearing comfortable condition that the first group enjoyed in their new area.<sup>54</sup>

The above views provide no complete data on the exact date of the settlement of Awi Agäw people in their present-day territory.<sup>55</sup> However, it seems quite plausible that their existence in the region goes back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> As stated above, the 6<sup>th</sup> century account of Aksum written by Cosmos Indiocopelutus revealed that the governor of Agäw was in charge of caravan trade that was directed to the gold producing region situated along the Ethio-Sudanese borders. Accordingly, the caravan trade probably passed through Agäw Meder which was settled and controlled by the Agäw people. Besides, the works of Tadasse, Sergew Hableselassie, and other writers indicate the presence of Awi Agäw in the present areas long before the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup>

The Agäw dialects which form closer groups are divided into two branches: the first consists of Belen, Hamtana, and Qemant, while others comprise Awgni and Kunfal languages. The Awi Agäw dialect (Awgni) is broadly different from Hamtana, the Agäw dialect of the Wag area. This basic dialectical difference with the Agäw dialect of their origin indicates a long period of separation that goes back to the period before the Zagwe dynasty.<sup>58</sup>

The earliest dwellers of Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl were said to have been the ancestors of Gumuz who were later pushed westwards into inhospitable areas of the Abbay (Blue Nile) River. The westward expansion of the Awi Agäw was halted because of the inhospitable climate of the area. Their movement and expansion into Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl seem to have been completed between the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>54</sup> Abdussamad, "The Gumuz in the Lowlands...", pp. 53-67; Melaku Mengest, *Yä Awi Hizb Ačir Tarik* (Addis Ababa: Goh Printing Press, 1999), p. 84; Abeje Birhanu, *A History of Banja Wäradä from its foundation to 1991*, (BA Essay in History, Debre Markos University, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Tadasse, *Church and State...*, pp. 25-26; Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1972), pp. 239-273; Siegbert Uhlig, eds., *Encyclopaedia Volume 1 A-C* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> Tadasse, *Church and State...*, pp. 25-26; Sergew, pp. 239-273.

<sup>58</sup> Sergew, pp. 239-273; Abeje, pp. 6-7.

They had become powerful in Dambiya and areas east of the headwaters of the Dondar, Bäläs, and Dura Rivers by the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup>

### 1.1.2.1. Early Evangelization Attempts of the Awi Agaw People

Christianity became the official religion of Aksum with the conversion of Ezana in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> It introduced into the Agäw regions of Wag and Lasta during the reign of King Käléb in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the tradition of church construction reached its peak in the ancient Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia during the Zagwe dynasty. The monolithic eleven rock-hewn churches were also carved out of a single rock during this dynasty.<sup>61</sup>

There are two contradictory views regarding the Christianization of the Agäw of Gojjam (Awi Agäw) people. The first view claims that the Awi Agäw moved southward from Wag/Lasta and settled in the present territory against the pressure of the Semitization and Christianization process. Until they converted into Christianity, the Awi Agäw people had been worshipping indigenous beliefs and following Judaic traditions. Although its attempt was started in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Christianization of the Awi Agäw people could succeed in the second half 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Based on the available evidence it seems plausible that the Agäws of Gojjam (Awi Agäw) people settled in the present-day region before their conversion into Orthodox Christianity.<sup>62</sup>

The second view, which is widely supported by the Ethiopian Orthodox church sources shows that the Awi Agäw people were devoted adherents of Orthodox Christianity before they settled in the present territory. However, they are said to have abandoned practicing Christianity after their settlement in the new territory. In the absence of priests, they returned to their earlier practices of Judaic tradition and indigenous beliefs.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Taddesse, *Church, and State...*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>60</sup> Wudu Tafete, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Ethiopian State, and Alexandrian Sea: Indigenizing Episcopacy and Foreign National Identity, 1926-1991," (Ph.D. Dissertation in History, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, 2006), p. 1; Abeje, pp. 7-8.

<sup>61</sup> Taddesse, *Church, and State...*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>62</sup> Taddesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", p. 12; Melaku Fenta, p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Kibret, *YäItyopya Orthodox Betäkerstian Märäja*, (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 2007), p.25.

The Awi Agäws were first mentioned during the reign of Amdä-Tsiyon (1314 -1344) in the tradition of the first attempt of evangelization by the founder of the Island monastery of Kebrän Gäbre'al in Lake Tana, Abba ZäYohannes. He came into conflict when he started preaching Christianity on the southern banks of the Lake which was settled by the Awi Agäw people. The conflict with Abba ZäYohannes was aggravated after the killing of the Serpent that was worshiped by the ruler of Awi Agäw. Lastly, the ruler of Agäw, Jan Chuhay captured and detained Abba ZäYohannes on Amadamit Mountain in central Gojjam until Amdä-Tsiyon sent his troops and released him. Moreover, Jan Chuhay lost his life, while he was fighting with the Amdä-Tsiyon troops.<sup>64</sup>

The process of the evangelization of the Awi Agäw was consolidated after the incorporation and integration of Eastern Gojjam into the Christian state and society. The Eastern Gojjam (Gojjam proper) was incorporated and integrated into the Christian Kingdom (Empire) in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Despite these first activities, the Awi Agäw people's resistance against the evangelization of Christianity continued until their complete incorporation and integration in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>65</sup>

#### **1.1.2.2. Incorporation of the Awi Agaw into the Christian Kingdom (Empire)**

Until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the territorial settlement of the Awi Agäw people had been larger than today. Charles Beke and Trimingham indicated the largeness of the Awi Agäw people settlement areas. In Particular, Charles Beke expressed that during the medieval period seventy-five percent of Gojjam was inhabited by the Agäw people. Similarly, Trimingham noted that Agäw people lived beyond Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl in other areas of Gondar and Gojjam provinces during the same period.<sup>66</sup> According to the chronicle of Amdä-Tsiyon, the settlement of the Awi Agäw people extended from the southern bank of Lake Tana as far as

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<sup>64</sup> Tadesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", p. 12. Jan Chuhay was an important name of the rulers of Mätäkäl since 14<sup>th</sup> century for several centuries.

<sup>65</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 23-27.

<sup>66</sup> Ayenew Mamo, p. 12.

Mt. Amadimit and beyond. Moreover, it was a resourceful region that attracted the interest of the Christian state and society.<sup>67</sup>

The campaigns for the conquest of Awi Agäw people were carried out in two stages. The first stage of the campaign lasted from the beginning of the reign of Särsä Dengel (1563 – 1597) to the end of Susenyos's reign in 1632. This campaign was conducted for about six decades. Within these six decades, the bloody campaign was conducted in two directions. The first was through Q'uara and Aläfa via Bäläs River deep into Mätäkäl lowlands, while the second was conducted through Lake Tana by crossing the Abbay (Blue Nile) River into the fertile land of Agäw Meder.<sup>68</sup> Särsä Dengel marched with his huge army through Q'uara and Aläfa into the extremely hot basin of the Bäläs River as far as Mount Bälayä and returned through Awi Agäw district of Achäfar. The king also led his forces into Achäfar where he crushed strong Agäw resistance. Moreover, he moved further into Mätäkäl as far as the Dura River and returned through Ankäšä district. Särsä Dengel took some Gumuz as slaves and Agäw cattle during his return journey from this campaign to his base.<sup>69</sup>

After Särsä Dengel, Susenyos (1607-1632) continued the expedition into Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl areas. In 1613, he conducted campaigns through Aläfa into the hot lowlands of Dängur, Gäjige, and Bure. He lost many of his soldiers because of the stiff resistance organized by the local Agäws in Bure. After the 1620s, he was unable to continue military campaigns due to the outbreak of the bloody religious civil war that diverted his attention towards internal religious and political problems.<sup>70</sup>

The second phase of the expedition into Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl lasted from the beginning of the reign of Fasilädäs (1632 - 1667) to the end of Iyäsü's reign (1682-1706). Fasilädäs initiated campaigns to penetrate deep into remotest places of Agäw Meder and conducted frequent campaigns into Azäna and Zigäm in 1635. He also made a campaign to Dangela, Ankäšä, and Zigäm in 1636, while those areas of Zigäm and Mätäkäl in 1640. Again he campaigned to Mätäkäl as far as Bälayä in 1641 and Ankäšä in 1646 and 1650. Fasilädäs

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<sup>67</sup> Melaku Mengest, pp. 90-91.

<sup>68</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic...", pp. 23-27.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

conducted the last military expedition into Agäw Meder in 1661 after which he introduced the *rest-gult* landholding system.<sup>71</sup>

The most extensive and successful campaigns into Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl were made by Yohannes I (1667 - 1682). His campaign was different from that of his predecessors in its intensity and an unprecedented degree of success. Unlike his processors, Yohannes realized that the military operations only would not be enough and then he started evangelization activities. Thus, Abunä Tätämqä Mädihin who was one of the leading monastic leaders was assigned by Yohannes to evangelize the Agäw of Mätäkäl.<sup>72</sup> Accordingly, Yohannes brought the whole Awi Agäw districts under the control of the Christian state except Zigäm.<sup>73</sup> The process was completed with the incorporation of Zigäm by Iyäsü in 1706. The real drive behind Iyäsü's incorporation of Zigäm was to control Gumuz territory.<sup>74</sup>

Some Awi Agäw rulers had a special relationship with the kings of Gondar both during the campaign and after the incorporation into the Christian state and society. Among them, the rulers Kwakira had access to the royal courts of Gondar early. The chief of Kwakira named Libso Kwakira was killed while he was fighting on the side of king Yohannes's campaigns of 1669 against his people.<sup>75</sup> Jan Chuhay of Mätäkäl was the other ruler who had a special link and became a valuable ally of the Christian kings. Yohannes sent Jan Chuhay against the neighboring Gumuz in April 1682. Moreover, Iyasu I sent important state prisoners to Mätäkäl for their safety in the house of Jan Chuhay in 1692. Jan Chuhay was also entrusted with the important responsibility of looking after the royal retinue and provisions whenever the army crossed the Abbay (Blue Nile) River during the king's famous campaigns against the Gumuz and Oromo in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Taddesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", pp. 15-18.

<sup>73</sup> Abdussamad, "The Gumuz in the Lowlands ...", pp. 11-16.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Taddesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", pp. 15-18.

<sup>76</sup> Shambel Muluneh, "A History of Teregi Town from Its Foundation to Present," (BA Essay in History, Debre Markos University, 2013), p. 4.

The Awi Agäw rulers were become major intermediaries between the Gumuz of the Mätäkäl interior and central state due to the crucial position which they attained by the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Gondarine kings used Awi Agäw rulers as middlemen to control the resources of the Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl and enslave the Gumuz people. To ensure this, the local Awi Agäw rulers were equipped with modern weapons and richly rewarded for their alliance.<sup>77</sup> Since the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl served as important economic bases for Gondarine rulers. Gondarine rulers collected primarily cattle, butter, and honey from Agäw Meder and gold and slave from Mätäkäl through Awi Agäw local rulers. Any disaster that had happened in Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl was considered as the calamity of Gondarine rulers and people.<sup>78</sup>

The relationship between the Awi Agäw rulers and Gondarine rulers had deteriorated after the assassination of Iyasu I on order from his son, Tekle Haymanot in 1706. Jan Chuay of Mätäkäl who was an ally of Iyasu I conspired with Amdä-Tsiyon of Gojjam to take revenge on Täklä Häymanot. Amdä-Tsiyon who proclaimed himself king at Yibaba moved to Mätäkäl where he was warmly welcomed by Jan Chuhay. Amdä-Tsiyon fought Tekle Haymanot and was defeated at the battle of Qäbäro Meda. Jan Chuay was also defeated and killed in the same battle. The death of Jan Chuhay changed the nature of the relationship between the Awi Agaw rulers and Gondarine kings to become hostile temporarily.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, the power of the Gondarine monarchy declined in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This situation increased the growing influence of the Awi Agäw rulers in the local and national socio-cultural, economic, and political affairs. Furthermore, the Awi Agäw rulers started to demand tax from Gumuz for their benefit rather than submitting to the Gondarine kings, though, not extensive as earlier.<sup>80</sup>

During the *Zämäne Mäsäfent* (1769-1855) Gojjam was divided into three regions which had been fighting each other for supremacy and territory. These regions were Gojjam proper (Eastern Gojjam), Damot, and Agäw Meder. Besides, Agäw Meder was a battleground

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Tadesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw"..., pp. 15-18. Amdä Tsiyon was the ruler of Gojjam during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*; Abebaw Assefa, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Abebaw Assefa, p. 21.

between the lords of Gojjam and Bégémeder at the end of this period. Kenfu Hailu of Dämbiya and Tädälä Gwalu of Gjjam proper fought against Kassa Häylu of Q'udara at the battle of Injibara. The former two were defeated in the battle and fled to Abbay Valley. The national and regional political condition of *Zämänä Mäsafent* was disturbed and reformed the pre-existing socio-cultural systems of the Awi Agäw people.<sup>81</sup>

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

The study of the socio-cultural history in Africa is the least studied theme although the rich oral traditions and linguistic sources abound. Until the 1960s, the societies with no written alphabet were portrayed as “a people without history” by European historians. However, this attitude has shifted following the independence of African states. After the independence, the most important sources for the study of illiterate society like oral traditions and linguistic data has begun to use as a major source in the study of African history in general and that of Ethiopian history in particular.<sup>82</sup>

Like any other African peoples, there is a lack of published literary sources that deal with the history of Agäw people. Authors like Trimmingham (1952), Murdock (1959), Simoons (1960), Gamst (1969), Tadasse (1972), Sergew (1972), and others who tried to reconstruct Ethiopian history inevitably referred the Agäw as one of the indispensable groups in the ancient and medieval history of the country. However, they did not make a comprehensive study and provide a detailed analysis of their history and culture. As indicated in the background of the study, the Agäw people divided into various dialectic groups. Nevertheless, there is no complete study that is conducted in different Agäw groups. Therefore, we do not have a detailed historical study on the different Agäw groups.<sup>83</sup>

The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 has brought a paradigm shift in the study of Ethiopian history. Many historians have made great efforts to re-interpret the history of various nations,

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<sup>81</sup> Maserasha Worku, “YäAgäw Gemjabét Kätäma Tarikawi Amäsararät,” (Agäw Gimjabét, 2009), pp. 5-6; Ayenew, “A Short History...”, p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Jan Vansina, “Ethno-History in Africa,” *Ethno-History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1962), p. 78.

<sup>83</sup> Desalegn, “History, Memory, and Victimhood...”, pp. 1-3.

nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia based mainly on oral traditions.<sup>84</sup> However, the Agäws in general and Awi Agäws, in particular, have not been much benefited from this historical development. There are only very few historical publications that deal directly with Awi Agäw people.<sup>85</sup> Even these few historical publications focus primarily on political history. Generally, there is an utter dearth of scholarly works that deal with the socio-cultural history of Awi Agäw people. Therefore, the study attempted to narrow this historical lacuna through the survey of the socio-cultural history of the Awi Agäw (ca. 1769 to 1995).

### **1.3. Scope of the study**

As stated above, the Awi Agäw people are said to have moved from Wag/Lasta and settled in Gojjam between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the regions south of Lake Tana and southeast of Q'uara district which include the present-day Agäw Awi and part of West Gojjam and West Gondar Zones of the ANRS and Mätäkäl Zone of the BGNRS were settled by the Awi Agäw people during the medieval times.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the focus of this study is on the survey of the major socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw and interactions with their neighbours (ca. 1769 to 1995).

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

The study may have a paramount significance for various individuals and institutions. It will be used as a base for any scholars who want to conduct further study on Awi Agäw people. Besides, the study may serve as an input for policymakers and culture and tourism bureaus and other institutions that are interested in Awi Agäw people. Moreover, the study can be used as an important input in revealing the socio-cultural history of Awi Agäw people. Furthermore, this study will fill in the historical knowledge gaps on the socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people.

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<sup>84</sup> Tesema Ta'a, "The Place of the Oromo in Ethiopian History: 2003 OSA Conference Keynote Address," *Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 11, No.1 (2004), pp. 1-15.

<sup>85</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic Relation among Awi and Gumuz, North Western Ethiopia since 1974: A Shift from Hostile to Peaceful Co-Existence," *African Journal of History and Culture*, 7(2), No. 989E3A249796 (2015), pp. 65-70.

<sup>86</sup> Temesgen, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Siegbert Uhlig, eds., *Encyclopaedia Volume I A-C*, p. 142.

## **1.5. Objectives of the Study**

### **1.5.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the proposed research is to document the socio-cultural history of the Awi Agäw people and interactions with their neighbours (ca. 1769 to 1995).

### **1.5.2. Specific Objectives**

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the major socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people specifically language, traditional music, indigenous beliefs, horsemen association, horse plow tradition, social stratification, indigenous administrative institutions, marriage system, funeral, and burial system.
2. To examine the consequence of incorporation and integration of the Awi Agaw into the Christian state and society in their socio-cultural aspects.
3. To analyze the patterns of relationships that the Awi Agäw people had with the Gumuz, Oromo, and Šenaša peoples.

## **1.6. Research Questions**

The study attempted to address the following basic research questions:

1. What were the major historical developments that affect the socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people?
2. How the process of incorporation and integration into the Christian state and society affected the socio-cultural life of the Awi Agäw people?
3. What kinds of relationships that the Awi Agäw people had with the Gumuz, Oromo, and Šenaša peoples?

## **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

As any research work has its limitations, this study has some limitations. This study was conducted at the time when the entire situation of the country is in the crisis. As a result of

this and other security-related problems, the researcher was unable to travel to the remotest areas to collect relevant sources. Besides, the research topic is very sensitive in Ethiopia at this time. Some individuals and institutions were suspicious of the topic that it has political affiliation with some or other political groups and hesitated to support and provide the researcher with appropriate sources. Lack of finance was also another challenge that prevents the researcher from fully exploiting various sources. The budget allotted for this research was not enough to cover all expenses of the study.

## **1.8. Research Design and Methodology**

### **1.8.1. Research Design**

This study was conducted based on qualitative research approach. It is based on the fact that the research objectives intended to achieve in this research are required not to measure individual responses. Instead, it is oriented towards discovering issues and understanding their meaning through analysis. Accordingly, the reason why the researcher employed the qualitative approach as the research approach is the nature of the research objectives. Qualitative research approach is also the most popular and widely used research approach in the field of history.<sup>88</sup>

### **1.8.2. Research Methodology**

A historical study requires the extensive collection and critical analysis of the available primary and secondary sources on the theme under study. Accordingly, this study was conducted based on a systematic collection of data from various sources. The extensive library-based works were done to collect data from published and unpublished documents like BA essays, MA thesis, Ph.D. dissertation, books, articles, manuscripts, magazines which deal with the history and culture of the Awi Aäw people. These documents were collected from the Addis Ababa University (AAU) and Haramaya University (HU), Debre Markos University (DMU), Bahir Dar University (BDU), and Injibara University (IU) and also from the Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau and Injibara Public Library. The collection of secondary

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<sup>88</sup> Samuel Bekele, "A History of Chäncha Wärädä," (MA Thesis in History, Haramaya University, 2014), p. 14.

literature helped the researcher to analyze the study. It also helped the researcher to obtain sufficient background knowledge on the theme of the study.

This study is also based on archival documents collected from the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA) in Addis Ababa. The archival documents obtained from Debre Markos University Archive Center were not relevant for this study. The attempt to collect archival documents from the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) remained futile because the documentation section was shifting its materials to a new building and it was not accessible to researchers for the time being. The researcher was not able to visit IES due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in the country. Many of the archival documents that are found in NALA also related to administrative issues. Nonetheless, the researcher systematically employed some documents related to the theme of the study.

An oral interview was another useful source for this study. Oral sources were collected from the knowledgeable elderly informants of different *wärädas* found in Agäw Awi Zone. Key informants were selected based on their master of the subject under the study. The selection of knowledgeable informants was made by the recommendation of the community, friends, and family based on their knowledge of the particular theme of the study. The researcher also got the chance to make an informal interview with the professors of history at Debre Markos who conducted the study in the themes related to the Awi Agäw people. Thus, oral sources were extensively used in order to cross-check written documents. Besides, the linguistic data were collected and used for this study. Furthermore, some pictures related to the theme of the study were collected from various sources and examined systematically.

### **1.8.3. Data Analysis**

The data collected from primary and secondary sources were carefully selected, cross-checked, and interpreted for the study. The comparison, cross-checking, and critiquing of the data helped the researcher to avoid biases in the sources. The interview guidelines were categorized into themes to effectively exploit major socio-cultural practices and interactions of Awi Agäw people. Sometimes, the researcher used audiovisual material to record all necessary information effectively. Thus, the interview transcript with the summary of keywords, highlights, and full audio records. The use of oral sources and variety of written

materials produced by different individuals and institutions was crucial in the survey of the socio-cultural history of Awi Agäw people.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. MAJOR CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE AWI AGAW PEOPLE

#### 2.1. Introduction to Culture

Different scholars have defined culture in different ways. Hence, there is no unanimously accepted definition of culture. Much of the difficulties derived from the usages of the term in the various fields increasingly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the definition of culture has changed from time to time. For instance, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Edward Burnett Tylor (British anthropologist) defined culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as the member of a certain society.<sup>2</sup>

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn also defined culture as an aspect of the society consisting of speech, knowledge, beliefs, customs, art and technologies, ideals, and rules learned from elders, and added to it.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the inherited, acquired, and accumulated views, outlooks, and feelings of the society manifested in material and spiritual needs are elements of culture. Culture is learned and shared and passed from one generation to the next generation through the acculturation process. It is also dynamic which changes through times.<sup>4</sup>

As stated in the background of the study, the Agaw people are one of the ancient inhabitants of northern and central Ethiopia. They had an important role in the socio-cultural history of the country. The Agaw who accepted Christianity during Axumite time remained in the north and integrated into the Tigrean and the Amhara society from Axumite period onwards. The others who resisted Christianity and maintained their original culture escaped from north to

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Spencer Oatey, *What is culture? A compilation of Quotations: Global PAD Core Concepts* (2012), pp. 1-3. <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; KC Alexander and KP Kumaran, *Culture and Development: Cultural Patterns in Areas of Uneven Development* (New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1992), pp. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander and Kumaran, pp. 1-4.

south and south-east direction along the Tākāzé River and settled in Wag and Lasta, and gradually moved to other areas.<sup>5</sup>

The Agäws who had moved due to the pressure of the assimilation process of the Aksumite Kingdom (Empire) and settled in the scattered regions were divided into different dialectic groups. One of these groups is the Awi Agäw. The most rigorous attempt to incorporate the Awi Agäw people into the Kingdom (Empire) was started during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This process was completed in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since the incorporation, the culture of the Awi Agäw had been intermixed with the Christian Amhara society. Thus, the integration process of the Awi Agäw people into Christian Amhara society continued until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The instruments of integration were the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the socio-cultural and political policy of the state. As a result, the Awi Agäw people have shared several cultural aspects, particularly with the Gojjam Amhara Christian society.<sup>6</sup> Despite the intensive acculturation for several centuries, the Awi Agäw have maintained some of their cultural elements like language, cultural music, indigenous beliefs, horsemen association, horse plow tradition, and other cultural aspects until this day.<sup>7</sup> These are the issues that are primarily examined in this chapter.

## **2.2. Agäw (Awni) Language and Traditional Music**

### **2.2.1. Agäw (Awni) Language**

In addition to denoting the people, Agäw is a common linguistic name for the central Cushitic languages of the Afro-Asiatic language super-family. It is one of the languages which were widely spoken in the northern and central half of Ethiopia and Eritrea during the ancient time. The Agäw language had been intermixed with the Ethio-Semitic languages of their neighbors for several centuries. The fusion of Agäw with the Semitic language began before the rise of

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<sup>5</sup> Atsbha Gebreegziabher *et al.*, “Sustaining Ethiopian Heritage Sites: The case of Gemate Burial Site in Dejen,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 1603001 (2019), P. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Taddesse, “Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...”, p. 10-15; Melaku Fenta, p. 49.

the Aksumite state. This process resulted in the integration of a large number of the Agäw people into Tigrīna and Amharic speaking Christian society.<sup>8</sup>

The linguistic fusion between the Ethio- Semites and the Agäw languages resulted in lexical and morphic influence on each other. The Agäw language influenced Ge'ez morph syntactically and lexically. There is also a lexical influence of the Agäw language on the Amharic language. Accordingly, the Agäw language is the major linguistic substratum of the Amharic language. The Amharic language is said to have been created through the fusion of Ge'ez with that of the Agäw language.<sup>9</sup>

Different Agäw dialects are spoken in some areas of Tigray, and the Amhara Regional States of Ethiopia as well Eritrea until these days.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Agäw dialects are spoken in the Cushitic areas surrounded by Semitic speakers. The Bilen Agäw dialect is neighbor to the Tigre language, while Himtana, Awgni, and Qemant dialects are geographically neighbors to speakers of the Amharic language. Himtana and Qemant dialects are also neighbors of the Tigrīna language. As a result, there are plentiful Agäw lexical cognates with the neighboring Semitic languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea.<sup>11</sup>

Until the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Agäw (Awgni) language had been spoken in Gojjam proper (Eastern Gojjam). It began to be replaced by Amharic with the establishment of "Solomonic" rule in Gojjam proper since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This opened the way for the subsequent evangelical activity by the church against "pagan" Agäw who were the early settlers of the area. This was followed by a large scale settlement of the Christian Amhara settlers who came from Šäwa and Amhara (South Wollo). The settlers brought with them their Semitic culture and Christianity into the Agäw people. The evangelical activity of the church and the

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<sup>8</sup> Paul D. Fallon, "Coronal Ejectives and Ethio-Semitic Borrowing in Proto-Agäw," *Selected Proceedings of the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, eds. Ruth Kramer, Elizabeth C. Zsiga, and One Tlale Boyer (Cascadilla Proceedings Project: Somerville, 2015), pp. 72-75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; Alemu Alene, "The Use of Indigenous Knowledge for Management of Crop Production Constraints: The Case of Awi Community in Ankäša Guagesa Wārāda," (MA Thesis in Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, 2008), pp. 21-22.

<sup>10</sup> Kjetil Tronvol, "Ethiopia: A New Start," *A Minority Right Group (MRG) International Report* (Minority Right Group, 2000), p. 7; Federal Research Division, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," *Series of Profiles of Foreign Nations*. (Library of Congress, 2005), p. 2. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Grover Hudson, "A Comparative Dictionary of the Agäw Languages," Review of David Apple Yard, *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2013), pp. 227.

settlement of the large number of Christian Amhara people in the region brought about the gradual transformation of Gojjam proper (Eastern Gojjam) from the dominantly Agäw speaking to an Amharic speaking province.<sup>12</sup>

The names of most areas of the Eastern Gojjam still bear Agäw names which supports that Gojjam proper was settled by the Agäw speakers until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The place names such as Agäw Badma (Agäw Ruin), Agäw Märét (Agäw Land), Agäw Wäša (Agäw Cave), Agäw Beret (Agäw Barn), Agäw Kab (Agäw Wall), Agäw Minch (Agäw Spring), and Agäw Amba (Agäw Hill) that are found in many parts of the Gojjam proper as far east as Enäbsé and Enäsé and in the west as far as Mačakäl show that there was a strong Agäw presence in Gojjam proper. The settlement of Amhara in this region involved both confrontation and alliance between the early and the new settlers.<sup>13</sup>

The districts of Gojjam proper i.e. Enäsi, Enäbsi Särmeder, Goncha, Enarji Enawga, Šäbäl Bäränta, and Enämay were the first to be influenced by the Amhara expansion and settlement processes. The Amhara who first settled in these areas seem to have increased in number, and gradually expanded into the western districts of the region namely Awabäl, Däbay Tälätgen, Anädäd, Gozamen, Mächakäl, Senän, and Mottä. Until these days, there are the sayings which elucidate the process through which the Agäw language was replaced by the Amharic language. The most popular saying runs as follows:

| Amharic             | English  |
|---------------------|--|
| አገው ሲነቀል ጨዋ ሲተከል::  | When Agäws were displaced, Amhara were brought to settled.         |
| አገው ሲሰደድ አማራ ሲለምድ:: | When the Agäw migrated, the Amhara adapted locality. <sup>14</sup> |

The Agäw people of Gojjam proper were not only displaced but they were also intermingled with the new settlers. In Dejen *wäräda*, particularly, in Minji locality, an Agäw man named Del Ared was said to have remained in the area and married an Amhara woman named Wäjät.

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<sup>12</sup> Abebaw Ayalew, “A History of Painting in East Gojjam in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: A Study of the Second Gondärine Style of Painting,” (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 2002), pp. 3-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Temesgen, pp. 257-259.

He begot children named Kurar, Minji, and Jirie that are used as appellations of localities in Dejen *wäräda* till this day. The term Minji means "grass", Kurar to mean "refusal", and Jérie means "son" in Agäw (Awngi) language. Above all, the inhabitants of these localities trace their descent to the Agäw who were the early settlers of the area.<sup>15</sup>

There was also another wave of population movement into Gojjam which affected its linguistic composition further from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the region received many migrants who spoke different languages from various regions of the country. The influx of many linguistic groups, particularly, Amharized Damot, Oromo, and Šenäšä into the region transformed its linguistic composition and diversity.<sup>16</sup> The population movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century opened up the way for the displacement of Awi Agäw people and they were intermixing with new groups of people. Particularly, the Amharized Damot people who settled in Gojjam began to assimilate the pre-existing Awi Agäw into Amhara culture and language. They also pushed them farther to the west. In their turn, the Awi Agäw pushed the Gumuz farther into the hot and inhospitable Abbay (Blue Nile) River.<sup>17</sup>

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Agäw (Awngi) language had been spoken as far as the region of Lake Tana and the source of the Abbay (Blue Nile) River. According to Charles Beke, the western part of Gojjam was inhabited by the Agäw speaking communities during medieval times. Similarly, Trimmingham notes that the Agäw language was spoken in the Agäw Meder as well as other regions of Gondar and Gojjam during the same time.<sup>18</sup>

The Awi Agäw south of Lake Tana were exposed to assimilation with the incorporation and establishment of churches in the area between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As has been stated in the first chapter, some Awi Agäw rulers had close relations with the ruling families of the Gondarine state by the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This also paved the way for the

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<sup>15</sup> Atsbha, pp. 9-15.

<sup>16</sup> Temesgen, pp. 257-259; Siegbert Uhlig, eds., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica 2 D-Ha* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), pp.78-79.

<sup>17</sup> Temesgen, pp. 257-259.

<sup>18</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 8-15; Richard Pankhurst, *The People of Africa: The Ethiopian History* (London: Black Well Publishing, 1998), p. 78; Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, Samuel Johnson (trans.) (Lond: Sir John Hawkins, 1788), p. 110.

introduction of Amharic language into Agäw courts and market places and ensuing linger of Agäw (Awigni) language in the house.<sup>19</sup>

The linguistic identity of Gojjam was further transformed with the new political developments that happened in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the *Zämänä Mäsäfent*, Agäw Meder was a target for the expansionist ambitions of the regional lords of Gojjam and Yeju lords. As the royal authority of Gondar declined during the late 1760s and 1770s, the local ruling houses, which became independent from central control, emerged throughout the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. During this period, Gojjam was divided into three regions which had been fighting each other for supremacy and territory as stated earlier. These were Agäw Meder, Damot, and Gojjam proper.<sup>20</sup> (See appendix-II.)

Until the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Agäw Meder and Damot had waged incessant wars against each other. At the beginning of the *Zämäne Mäsäfent*, Damot was ruled by Fasil, who was the son and the successor of *Däjjazmač* Woréñña, an Oromo chief. Thus, Fasil brought his mother's relatives from Wälläga and Gendä-Bärät and defeated his rival lords and kings. Moreover, Fasil continued the tradition of stationing the Oromo soldiers in the Awi Agäw area which had been started by Gondarine rulers.<sup>21</sup>

The stationing of the Oromo in the Awi Agäw area was known as Oromo *serri* i.e. the stationing of the Oromo soldiers. It was intended to acculturate the Awi Agäw people and make them loyal to the Christian rulers. In this process, the Damot districts of Talian Lejambära, Säkäla, Wombärma, Jäbi-Tahenan, Aswa-Gudära, and Šekudad were stationed by Oromo *serri* and gradually they were assimilated into Amharic speaking Christian society. Similarly, the regions south of Lake Tana such as Mecha, Ačäfär, Yelmana, and Dénsa which

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<sup>19</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 8-15; Abdussamad, "The Gumuz in the Lowlands...", pp. 58-59.

<sup>20</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 9-8; NALA. 63.1.29.02: The document was written by the unmentioned individual on the foundation of the Agäw Gemjabét Mariam monastery.

<sup>21</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 9-8; James Bruce, *Travel to Discover the Source of the Nile selected and edited with an introduction by C.F. Beckingham* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1964), p. 130.

were settled by Oromo *serri* were transformed into Amharic speaking Christian society since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

The conflict between Agäw Meder and Damot reached its peak with the death of *Ras Häilu* the Great of Gojjam in 1795. The lord of Awi *Däjjazmač* Elias and *Däjjazmač* Zäwdé of Damot relentlessly fought over territory in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the meantime, *Däjjazmač* Gwalu of Gojjam proper who was another rival of *Däjjazmač* Zäwdé Damot allied with Elias and defeated *Däjjazmač* Zäwdé at the battle of Dämbächa in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> After he was defeated at the battle of Dämbächa, Zäwdé fled to Wälläga and reinforced his power to avenge his enemies. He returned with the large Oromo cavalry and conducted the surprise attack against *Däjjazmač* Elias immediately. As a result, Zäwdé easily defeated Elias and began to administer Agäw Meder. However, Zäwdé was defeated and captured by *Ras* Gugesa, the guardian of the King of Kings at Gondar in 1810 due to his refusal to accept Yajju supremacy.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the ambition of the rulers of Damot to expand into Agäw Meder briefly stopped until the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, Agäw Meder enjoyed peace and stability under its ruler, *Azzaž* Négédu for about thirteen years. However, in 1823 the other lord of Damot, Goshu Zäwdé opened war against the Agäw Meder to expand his territory.<sup>25</sup>

Until Goshu Zäwdé entered into conflict with his son and the governor of Gojjam proper, *Däjjazmač* Biru Goshu, the Awi Agäw people under *Azzaž* Negédu and his successor *Azzaž* Wossän Tässäma had been fighting against him to defend their territories. The Awi Agäw rulers once again also began conflict with Tädla Gwalu, the lord of Gojjam of proper who wanted to bring Agäw Meder under his control in the late 1850s. The rulers of Awi Agäw, *Azzaž* Märša Négédu asked and secured support from Tewodros II and severely wounded and defeated Tädla at the battle of Batta in 1863. After the battle of Batta, *Fitawrari* Dori, the ruler of Damot attempted to invade Agäw Meder to expand his territory.<sup>26</sup> In 1867/68, the son

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<sup>22</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp. 9-8; Habtamu Mengistie, “Land Tenure and Agrarian Social Structure in Ethiopia, 1636-1900,” (Ph.D. Dissertation in History, University of Illinois, 2011), pp. 140-143.

<sup>23</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp. 9-18.

<sup>24</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp. 9-8; Bezazew Gelaw, “A History of Chgni Town to 1974,” (B.A Essay in History, Addis Ababa University, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Ayenew Mamo, pp. 21-25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 3: Ethiopia at the Time of Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868), Source: Richard Pankhurst, *The People of Africa: The Ethiopian History*.

Trade was another important factor for the cultural and linguistic reconfiguration of the Awi Agäw people. Agäw Meder was one of the important trade centers of North-Western Ethiopia at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dangela and Agäw Gemjábét were important market centers of the region during these periods. Dangela was the main center of slaves who were captured from Gumuz and south-western Ethiopia by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a vital place of interaction among the different linguistic and cultural groups. The majority of the slave dealers were Amharic speaking well to do individuals from Bägémeder and Gojjam areas. Thus, Amharic becomes the language of the market and business transaction which resulted in its expansion into the different areas of Awi Agäw, particularly, Dangela and its surrounding areas.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Amharic has been used as the literary language of Ethiopia since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The customary writing of the chronicles has been changed from Ge'ez to Amharic and Amharic obtained widespread recognition in different areas.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Amharic has achieved considerable prestige in Agäw Meder when it became the language of the administration and education since the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>32</sup> Amharic was made the language of instruction in elementary schools in the 1950s.<sup>33</sup>

The ability to speak Amharic language was considered a sign of an educated and modern person during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conversely, the Awgni (Agäw) language was given the low status by the government and society.<sup>34</sup> The decision to abandon one's language always

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<sup>30</sup> Informants: Solomon Deresa, Habtemariam Alemnew, and Bellew Admasu; Abdussamad, "Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz, Ethiopia: Border Enclaves in History, 1897-1938," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1999), pp.439.

<sup>31</sup> Jan Zahorík, "Debating Language Policy in Ethiopia," *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2009), pp. 81-85.

<sup>32</sup> Taddess, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw...", p.15-10.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Zahorík, pp. 81-85; Bekalu Atnafu, "The medium of instruction in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: Kotebe Metropolitan University Case study," *African Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 8, ISSN 1916-7822 (2019), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Abiyu Chanyalew, *A History of Agäw People from the Old Testament to EPRDF*, (Injibara, 2011), p. 75.

derives from a change in the self-esteem of the speech community. According to informants, some parents of the Fageta and Dangela *wärädas* of the Agäw Meder had not been speaking Agäw language with their sons and daughters, particularly after the 1950s. They were said to have used their language, while their sons and daughters were outside of their home. As a result, some of these areas were transformed into Amharic speakers, for at least two generations. The Amharic vocabularies have many loan words of Agäw origin due to its widespread expansion into Agäw areas.<sup>35</sup>

Since the 1980s and 1990s, the dominance of Amharic has opposed because of its predominance in educational and administrative sectors that exemplify economic and political domination by the Amharans. Particularly, the Eritrean, Oromo, and Tigray elites have strongly opposed the dominance of Amharic in their areas. Above all, the FDRE government declared in the 1995 constitution that all nations, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia have the right to preserve, use, and promote their language and history.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the peoples of Ethiopia have encouraged using and promoting their language in their areas. The Agäw (Awni) language has also used as the language of instruction in schools of its speaking areas. Today, the Agäw (Awni) language is spoken as the first language in Agäw Awi Zone in Zigäm, Ankäšä Gugesa, Ayo Gugesa, Bänja, and Guangua *wärädas*. It is also spoken in some sub-districts and vicinities of other districts of this zone and Mätäkäl Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. The Kunfal dialect, which is a branch of Awni except for some differences, is also spoken in the Agäw Awi Zone; Jawi *wäräda*, and West and Central Gondar Zones of Q'wara and Aläfa *wärädas* respectively.<sup>37</sup>

### **2.2.2. Traditional Music**

Traditional music is one cultural aspect of society. Each nation, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia has its unique traditional music and dance styles. The traditional music and dances provide an opportunity for the manifestation of cultural expressions and ethnic diversity of nations, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia. Moreover, traditional music plays a vital role in

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Abagaz, Habtemariam, and Bellew.

<sup>36</sup> Waldemlak Teshale, "A Historical Survey of Culture of the Awi People," (BA Essay in History, Mekelle University, 2014), pp 1-143.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Asmera Moges and Kasse Birasew.

cultural and social activities such as wedding ceremonies, hunting, farming, harvesting, rituals of birth, and puberty. It also promotes cohesiveness amongst society.<sup>38</sup>

Like other nations, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia, the Awi Agäw people have unique traditional music and dance that shows their entire socio-economic and cultural life. The traditional music and songs of the Awi Agäw highly interlinked with the social and cultural milieu and life cycles of the society. It plays a crucial role in the different socio-economic and cultural occasions such as wedding ceremonies, hunting, farming, harvesting, rituals of birth, and public holidays as any other Ethiopian society.<sup>39</sup>

According to sources, the traditional music of the Awi Agäw has passed through similar historical development with that of language. Thus, the Awi Agäw traditional music was dominant in all of their ancient settlement areas before the expansion of the Christian Kingdom (Empire). Nevertheless, the expansion of the Christian Kingdom (Empire) into their settlement seems to have affected their traditional music more than that of language. As a result, many of the Awi Agäw who could not understand the Amharic language inclined towards adopting Amharic traditional music and dance. This shows also the high degree of interaction and integration between the Agäw and Amhara peoples.<sup>40</sup>

The cultural music of the Awi Agäw has started to dwindle with the expansion of Amhara culture largely with the establishment of multifaceted relations among the Agäw and Amhara peoples since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the socio-cultural and economic interaction between Amharic and Agäw speaking peoples of Gojjam become frequent and smooth with the unification of Gojjam proper, Damot, and Agäw Meder that the dominant group imposed its socio-cultural practices. The cultural exchange reached its apex during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In these ways, the Amhara traditional music came to dominate the traditional music and dancing of the Awi Agäw people. Today many

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<sup>38</sup> R.N. Pati1 *et al.*, “Cultural Rights of Traditional Musicians in Ethiopia: Threats and Challenges of Globalisation of Music Culture,” *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2014), pp. 315-316.

<sup>39</sup> Shewaye Sewnet, “Practices and Challenges of Promoting Major Tourism Destinations in Awi Administrative Zone,” (MA Thesis in Tourism Development and Management, Addis Ababa University, 2019), pp. 46-47.

<sup>40</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-15; Informant: Asmamaw Bellew.

Awi Agäw societies perform almost similar traditional music and dancing with the Amharas of Gojjam neighbors. Thus, the interaction and integration of the people created a platform for the adoption of Amhara music and dance by the Awi Agäw people.<sup>41</sup>

The *Derg* period witnessed distinctive developments in the traditional music of nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia. During the Ethio-Somali war (1977-1978), the patriotic song of different Ethiopian peoples was broadcasted through Ethiopian Radio to promote the national sentiment of the troops. At this juncture, Mentamer Abäbä played Agäw (Awgni) music entitled *Murawi* which inspired the Ethiopian troops to fight the enemy. *Murawi* is an inspirational term in Awgni which refers to "oust your enemy" and then "return to your family". Moreover, the people of Ethiopia were encouraged to preserve, promote, and show their cultural values including music and dance styles during the *Derg* period. Accordingly, Abuné Abäjé who was a member of *Giš* Abbay cultural team releases audio music in Awgni for the first time in the history of the Awi Agäw people.<sup>42</sup>

The fundamental change has witnessed in the production of the music of the nation, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia since the 1990s. The government has encouraged all nations, nationalities, and peoples of the country to promote and show their music and other cultural aspects. Moreover, the FDRE has started a program of "Ethiopian Music Day" and patronized the traditional music of the country honoring famous singers, composers, traditional and modern dancers along with organizations supporting the music of nations, nationalities, and peoples.<sup>43</sup> The Awi Agäw traditional music has also received wide recognition throughout the country especially following Asmamaw Bäläw's release of the first Awgni audio and VCD music *Tasekasimbawa*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Belle Asante, "Community Engagement in Cultural Heritage Management: the case studies of Museums in Harar and Addis Ababa Ethiopia," (Ph.D. Dissertation in Area studies, Kyoto University, 2008), pp. 20-21; Tsigereda Siyoum, "History of Radio Ethiopia from 1974 to 2000," (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 2019), pp. 31-35; Informant: Asmamaw Bellew.

<sup>43</sup> R.N. Pati *et al.*, p. 321; Hailu Mideksa, "The Discursive Construction of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Day by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation," (MA Thesis in Journalism, Addis Ababa University, 2015), pp. 1-3.

<sup>44</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-15; Informant: Asmamaw.

Furthermore, the Awi Agäw culture team was organized with the establishment of the Awi Nationality Administrative Zone in 1995. It was organized with the full support of the zonal administration to teach its people and entertain the society with their culture, indigenous knowledge, values, history, and other related aspects through cultural music and dance using their language. The team was organized by gathering individuals who were experts in indigenous knowledge to show and preserve the society's traditional ceremonies, social status, songs, and dance and the community's general way of life.<sup>45</sup>

The Awi Agäw culture team became popular after the publication of its first album called *Entewawek* no. 1 through audio and VCD that used to promote different cultural attraction sites and natural land features of the Agäw Awi Nationality Administrative Zone and attracted the attention of various artists in the country. The team is well organized and has initiated the people to participate in development activities by using arts as instruments of mobilization of the people. Moreover, it has brought socio-economic benefits to the local communities by creating employment opportunities.<sup>46</sup>

In spite of difficulties the Agaw people had faced throughout history they tried through different mechanisms to maintain their music from dying. The original cultural music and dance of the Awi Agäw are practiced mainly in Zigäm, Guangua, Chara, and Jawi areas these days. Particularly, *asurite* and *fifi* are distinctive cultural music of the Awi Agäw people performed in Zigäm and Jawi *wärädas* respectively. The exact date of the beginning of *asurite* is unclear but it is related to the New Ethiopian Year and the miracles of Saint Rufa'el and Yohannes according to the doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. *Asurite* is celebrated during the last two days of *pagume*, the 13<sup>th</sup> month in Ethiopia. It marks the end of the summer season and the beginning of the autumn season and the New Year.<sup>47</sup>

The term *asurite* means *inquṭaṭäš* (New Year) in Agäw (Awgni) language. The whole age groups (young and old) participate in *azurite* play; however, it is celebrated predominantly by young girls and boys. During the *asurite* holiday, the girls and boys dress in new white cloths

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<sup>45</sup> Shewaye, pp. 46-47; Informant: Asmamaw.

<sup>46</sup> Zigäm Wäräda Culture and Tourism Office, *Asurité Ba'el Yämikänawänu Kewänéwoč* (Keläje, 2011), pp. 1-5; Informants: Habtemariam and Asmamaw.

<sup>47</sup> Zigäm Wäräda, *Asurité Ba'el...*, pp. 1-5.

and meet in the nearby village all taking cultural food (*abezi*), and drink (*talla*). They eat *abezi* and drink *talla*, a local beer by moving to *angocha* tree which is used for the celebration of the holiday. After eating and drinking, they uproot *angocha* tree and play *asurite*.<sup>48</sup>

As indicated above, *fifi* is also a unique cultural and historical music of the Awi Agäw (Kumpal Agäw) of Jawi. According to oral tradition, the Kumpal Agäw were oppressed and exploited by the Ethiopian Christian rulers. They were exposed to different types of taxations and punishments. They were also asked to give as offer a beautiful young daughter as tax during one of the unknown harshest Christian rulers. When the exploitation became worst, they decided to take action against exploiters by killing tax collectors of the Christian rulers.<sup>49</sup> After they killed tax collectors, the Kumpal Agäw attempted to flee from the retaliation of Christian rulers. Unfortunately, as they moved a short distance, they found a river that overflows along their route which handicapped their journey. As a result, they were sandwiched and captured by the Christian rulers and faced harsh retaliations. This memory is elaborately and reproduced by oral narratives and the annual commemorative ritual through *fifi* music that is performed annually from July to September. The *fifi* festivity is concluded with the celebration of *Mäskäl* (true cross finding) holiday. The name *fifi* means in Agäw (Awgni) language "move out" hence they said to call each other when they flee by saying, *fifi*.<sup>50</sup>

The Awi Agäw traditional music has been used to show the different cultural, social, and historical episodes as discussed above. As informants indicated, the Awi Agäw music is divided into three based on the nature of tunes and melodies. These are *monija* that is played with a slow beat by sitting, *kassemba* is played by standing with a slow beat, and *gollima* is also played by standing but with speedy beats.<sup>51</sup> All three types of music have been played in a circular routine and using different musical instruments such as drums, and trumpets. The drum and trumpet enrich songs, which would not be as interesting to listen to without them. A piece of animal hide is stretched over each end of the drum, thus forming a membranophone.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Desalegn, "History, Memory, and Victimhood...", pp. 1-5.

<sup>50</sup> Informant: Asmamaw; Desalegn, "An Ethnographic Introduction to the Kumpal Agaw," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 49 (2016), pp. 45-48. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44786167>.

<sup>51</sup> Zīgām Wārāda, *Asurité Ba'el...*, pp. 1-5; Informants: Habtemariam and Asmamaw.

Trumpet which is made locally from metal is typically the manifestation of the music of the Awi Agäw people.<sup>52</sup> The dancing style of Awi Agäw is characterized by body movement below the waist that is a very attractive and highly popular dance even among other Ethiopian societies. The dance brings the dancer into a role as a story-teller, who then expresses with his or her body the culture and life of the society.<sup>53</sup>

The other important cultural aspect related to music is dressing style. The cultural music of the Awi Agäw people is accompanied by appropriate dressing styles. The women dress a cotton cloth with *janno natala*, while men dress *wanchiri* trouser with *janno natala* and hold *chira* made of horsetail. The women wear also lots of ornaments around their neck and arms and hold an umbrella made locally from a bamboo tree.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.3. Indigenous Beliefs

Although the Awi Agäw people are adherents of Orthodox Christianity these days, they had been practicing indigenous beliefs and Judaic traditions before their conversion into Orthodox Christianity.<sup>55</sup> The Agäw people were said to have worshiped *zar* spirits. Even though the original reverence has varied across place and time, the worship of *zar* spirits is known amongst other religious and ethnic groups of Ethiopia. The *zare* spirit is known by different names among the people of Ethiopia. It is called *darö* amongst the Gonga, *yaro* amongst the Kafficho, *jara* amongst the Hadiya, *jar* amongst the Belén, *sar* amongst the Somali, and *zar* amongst the Amhara and Tigray. The Christian Amhara and Tigray use the term *zar* in the same way as the Agäws. This seems to have been due to the Agaw interaction and integration with the Amhara and Tigray that led to the adoption of *zar* spirits by the Amhara and Tigray from their Agäw neighbors.<sup>56</sup>

There are two types of sources about the indigenous belief of the Awi Agäw people. The first and widely known among scholars is a written source that explains that the Agäw, in general,

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<sup>52</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, “YäAwi Hezeb Bähelawi Gäšetawoç,” *A Paper Presented in the Awi Culture Symposium* (Injibara, 1996), pp. 58-63.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Asmamaw.

<sup>54</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Informant: Asmamaw.

<sup>55</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-54.

<sup>56</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Informants: Bitawesh and Kassahun Engeda.

and the Awi Agäw, in particular, were worshiping the sky-god and indefinite number of spirits dwelling in springs, caves, rivers, lakes, hills, trees and mountains. The Awi Agäw people are also said to had been worshiping serpents.<sup>57</sup>

Over time, they began to concentrate on *zar* worship through elaborate systems of rituals and practices amongst several spirits. Accordingly, a large number of “pagan” priests emerged as mediators between spirits and ordinary people. The “pagan” priests were believed to have possessed the skill of direct communication with the spirits. Moreover, they were thought to have full powers over rain, drought, famine and epidemics, death, and life.<sup>58</sup> The *zar* spirit was known by different names like *kwali* and *s’ahasivi* amongst the Awi Agäw people. The *zar* spirit was believed as the source of life and nature and the supreme power of the universe. It was said to have dwelt in caves, rivers, lakes, hills, trees, and other objects.<sup>59</sup>

The second sources are oral traditions which explain that the Awi Agäw people had been worshiping a supreme deity called *debane* (sky god) before their conversion to Christianity. It was believed that *debane* was purely the source of life and nature and the supreme power of the universe.<sup>60</sup> According to informants, the reverence of *debane* gradually showed alteration and modification and *zar* spirit emerged from the worship of it. As they noted, *debane* had to visit a certain family in ancient times. While visiting the family, *debane* had asked a certain mother to show him all her children. Unfortunately, she concealed the beautiful children and showed less beautiful ones. As a result, *debane* punished this mother by cursing her concealed offspring to become invisible and appear in unexpected times and influence human beings. The children shown to him were said to have been blessed and they become the forefathers of human beings.<sup>61</sup>

The cursed offspring were said to have been transformed into *zar* spirits and dwelt in caves, rivers, lakes, hills, trees, and mountain, and begun to influence other human beings. They were believed to have the power of injuring people's health, causing death, and damaging

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<sup>57</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Tadesse, “A Short Note on the Traditions of Pagan Resistance to the Ethiopian Church, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1972), pp. 141-146.

<sup>58</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Bitawesh Tamer, Kassahun Mengest, and Makurew Engeda.

<sup>60</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Informants: Bitawesh, Habtemariam, Makurew, and Tamer Yemar.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

property. Moreover, they were believed to have possessed the power to invisibly throw a spear and hurt people.<sup>62</sup> It was impossible to expel the *zar* spirits but it was believed that they could be appeased through preparing various foods and drinks, slaughtering of animals, and dressing special clothes. The appeasement was performed either regularly or periodically and communally or privately. Regular appeasement was performed at home by preparing *kollo* and making coffee at mid-day, the time when the *zar* spirits were said to have moved out of its abode and roam in the vicinity.<sup>63</sup>

Periodic (monthly or annually) appeasement was performed near springs, caves, rivers, lakes, hills, and trees where the *zar* was believed to have resided. It was performed through the slaughtering of animals. The slaughtered animals were expected to be colorful and attractive to satisfy the demand of the *zar* spirits. The evidence must be left in the place where the appeasement was taken place; springs, caves, rivers, lakes, hills, trees, and other physical features. The placation was believed to protect bestows from illness, and other influences of *zar* spirits.<sup>64</sup> Besides, the people were expected to offer proper veneration, while they passed through big trees, hill, falls, rivers, and mountains. For instance, if one was crossing these natural features carrying a food or drink, he/she should dispense some onto it. This was done as the premier gift to the spirits that were believed to have dwelt in these features. Besides, he/she should taste some to prevent possible influence believed to be caused by the spirits dwelling there.<sup>65</sup>

As indicated above, the *zar* spirit was believed to have dwelt in trees, hills, fall, rivers, and other physical features. As a result, the Awi Agäw people were worshiping under trees, hills, falls, rivers, and mountains found in different areas. Accordingly, they were performing elaborate practices and worships at Zängäna and Tereba Lakes, and the Abbay (Blue Nile), Bäläs, Dura, Ayo, Kulänti, Gudär, Fätäm, Ašär, Zingini, Aman, and other rivers. The hill of Sänbu in Dangela, Fudi in Ankäšä, Zirihi in Bänja, Mämäte in Qolla Damot, and Abola Negus

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<sup>62</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Informants: Bitawesh, Arega Fentahun, and Kassahun Engeda.

<sup>63</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Informants: Arega and Meheratu Wude.

<sup>64</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57.

<sup>65</sup> Desalegn, "History, Memory, and Victimhood...", pp. 67-70.

in Addet were other sites where the *zra* worship and practice was carried out by the Awi Agäw people in earlier times.<sup>66</sup>

The falls of Tiski in Dangela, Dondor in Guangua, and Fagn in Guagusa Šekudad were also worshipping sites of the Awi Agäw people of the areas. The people who live around Zängäna and Tereba Lakes believed in the existence of *zar* spirits even to these days. They believed that drinking water from lakes without offering gifts would expose them to the influence of *zar* spirits. Several household utensils are said to have been discovered at these worshipping sites. The people living near these sites are said to have heard sounds of the drum and other traditional musical instruments at night and in the mid-day times. Thus, they were slaughtering cattle in the sites and place pieces of meat to satisfy the demand of *zar* spirits in the earlier times.<sup>67</sup>

The Awi Agäw people who had been practicing the indigenous beliefs and Judaic custom put up stiff resistance against the evangelical activities of Christianity until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even after they accepted Christianity, the Awi Agäw people did not stop practicing indigenous beliefs and Judaic customs. They continued to worship pre-Christian spirits that were believed to have dwelt in places like springs, caves, rivers, lakes, hills, and trees.<sup>68</sup>

Until the downfall of Emperor Hail Selassie, the state had been patronizing the establishment of Churches in Ethiopia. The medieval churches in Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl were established through the support of the state. The early churches in the Agäw Meder were established by Yohannes I (1667-1682) in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His successor, Iyassu I (1682-1706) consolidated the process and established several churches in Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>69</sup>

The protection and patronage of the state offered to the expansion of the church decreased after the decline of the royal supremacy in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the

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<sup>66</sup> Alemneh, pp. 45-57; Desalegn, "History, Memory, and Victimhood...", pp. 41-45.

<sup>67</sup> BäAgäw Gemjabét Primary and Secondary School, *Yägäw Béhérsab Tarikawi Amätat* (Agäw Gemjabét, 1994), p. 18; Informants: Kassahun Engeda and Meheratu.

<sup>68</sup> Wudu, pp. 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> Taddesse, *Church, and State...*, p.27; Informants: Habtemariam and Bellew.

evangelical activity in the initial period was not intensive to spread Christianity deep into the whole of the Awi Agäw territory. As a result, there was the resurgence of the indigenous belief amongst the Awi Agäw people in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even after the revival of the royal power in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, adherence to Christianity and practicing indigenous beliefs has continued side by side amongst Awi Agäw people.<sup>70</sup>

*Ras Häilu II* (1911-1935), the son and successor of *Negus Täklä-Häymanot* of Gojjam sent officials to Agäw Meder to stop the practice of indigenous beliefs which he considered harmful traditions. However, the practice of indigenous beliefs was largely continued until the *Derg* regime. During the *Derg* regime, the sites of indigenous beliefs were destroyed and trees were planted in the place. Accordingly, the previous worshiping sites were turned into centers of the green campaign that was started in 1979.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 4: Angnagna Spring, Source: Taken during field work at Ankesha *wäräda*

Although the practice of indigenous beliefs is not as strong as before, the worshiping of *zar* spirits has not been completely ceased among the Awi Agäw people. The *zar* spirits are still

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<sup>70</sup> Bägäw Gemjabét, *Yägäw Béhérsab Tarikawi*..., p. 18; Informants: Habtemariam and Arega.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

believed to inhabit in some sites. The Awi Agäw people of Ankesha *wäräda*, Mangä-Tankošä *qäbälé* believe in the existence of the *zar* in Angnagna spring.<sup>72</sup>

## 2.4. Horse Plow Tradition and Agricultural Productivity

A horse has played an important role in the socio-cultural and economic life of society in the different parts of the world. It has been used for transporting people for commercial, military, and other purposes. In the developed parts of the world like North America and Europe, the role of horses is limited to recreational purposes these days. Ethiopia has almost half of the horse resources of Africa.<sup>73</sup> In Ethiopia, horses have been used as draft power, pack, riding, and other purposes. The horse-drawn cart is the common means of transportations in the urban areas of Ethiopia where modern transport service is absent or does not satisfy the needs of the people.<sup>74</sup> The horse occupies the prominent position amongst the Awi Agäw people who used it for different purposes. The Awi Agäw people keep three types of horses. These are *bazira* (female horses) that are kept for breeding horses and mule (by hybridizing with a donkey); *sanga* that is used for riding and recreation, and *mengaji* that are used for farming and transportation purposes.<sup>75</sup>

Plowing using the horse is a distinctive cultural aspect of the Awi Agaw people. The Awi Agäw people were said to have started the tradition of plowing with the horse in the 1880s and 1890s. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the condition of peasants was the worst in northern and central Ethiopia in general, Agäw Meder in particular. They experienced trouble from regional political violence and cattle disease. The render pest epidemic killed a large herd of cattle in Agäw Meder in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>76</sup>

The death of large heads cattle was followed by famine. The people who had large herds of cattle were left without cattle. The death of oxen which had been used for plow also resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural activity. The loss of oxen was said to have enforced the Awi

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<sup>72</sup> Informant: Bitawesh and Alemerew Dubala.

<sup>73</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development: Towards initiating horse tourism in Awi Zone, Northwestern Ethiopia," *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No.1735116 (2020), pp. 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Bimrew Asmare and Zemenu Yayeh, "Assessment on the Management of Draft Horse in Selected Areas of Awi Zone, Ethiopia," *Agriculture & Food Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2017), pp. 1-8.

<sup>75</sup> Informants: Fentahun Desta, Asmamaw, Meheratu, and Shetu Guade.

<sup>76</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp.35-38.

Agäw people to use the horse for the plow. Thus, the Awi Agäw people are said to have started to use horses for plowing.<sup>77</sup>

However, the use of the horse for plowing could not entirely check the fall in agricultural productivity. This was because horses were too weak to be used in the plateau areas. As a result, plowing with the horse was said to have decreased when the people brought cattle from the southern regions and started breeding to use for the different purpose. Accordingly, the people resumed the old tradition of plowing with oxen and gradually stopped using horses for plowing. Although plowing with the horse was ceased, some people resumed using horses for plowing during the fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935/36.<sup>78</sup>

The Italian force led by General Achille Strace controlled Bahir Dar on 24 April 1936. Shortly, the entire Agäw Meder was brought under the Italian rule. Some men from the Ankäšä *wäräda*, particularly, Fafa locality collaborated with the invaders. This created indignation amongst the patriots of other areas of Agäw Meder. Lastly, the Patriots were said to have burnt the house of collaborators and looted their oxen and other properties.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, most of the Italian collaborators in the Fafa locality were left without oxen and cattle. They were left merely with the pack animals like horses and mules. At this juncture, the local elders who had the experience of plowing with the horse during the great famine taught these people how to plow with the horse to save their life. Since then people are said to have resumed plowing with the horse to save their live.<sup>80</sup>

The tradition of plowing with horses as a distinctive tradition of the Awi Agäw was shown when the Gojjam province hosted the cultural show in Dangela in 1978. It was intended to introduce the culture of the Awi Agäw to other people of Gojjam. This, in turn, contributed to the dissemination of the horse plow tradition into different areas. Farming with the horse has become desirable and widespread due to different reasons. First, the horse is faster than oxen to plow large tracts of land within a day. Second, the price of the horse is cheaper than oxen

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*; Abdussamad, “Peasant Conditions in Gojjam during the Great Famine 1888-1892,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 20 (November 1987), pp. 5-12. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41965948>

<sup>78</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp.35-38.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Kasse, Fentahun, and Habtemariam.

and hence poor people can afford to buy it. Third, the horses consume all types of grass without selection in the fields. Therefore, the plow with the horse is economical in all aspects.<sup>81</sup> The advantage of plowing with the horse is praised by the people through the following sayings.

| Amharic               | English  |
|-----------------------|--|
| በፈረስ ያረሰ ልቡን አደረሰ።።   | One who plows with the horse<br>attains his goals.         |
| የበሬን ምስጋና ወሰዳው ፈረሰ።፣  | The praise made to horse oxen is now<br>reserved for horse |
| ከጋላው ተነስቶ ቀድሞ በመድረሱ።። | As the horse running behind<br>arrives early               |



Figure 5: Plow with Horse, Source: Alemu Alene, Horse culture & Tourism in Awi Zone

At present, the tradition of plowing with the horse is known in all *wärädas* of the Agäw Awi Zone. Particularly, it is commonly practiced in areas with the highland agroecology such as Bänja, Fageta Lakoma, Ankäšä Guagesa, and Guagesa Šekudad *wärädas*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp.35-38.

<sup>82</sup> Alemu, “Horse culture & tourism development...”, p. 9; Informants: Fentahun and Kasse.

## 2.5. Horsemen Association and Role of Horse

Ethiopia has a long history of using a horse for different purposes. The chronicle of Amdä-Tsiyon (1314-1344) described that the king gained the victory against his enemies fighting on the horseback. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Oromo horse horsemen were used in many parts of Ethiopia. This perhaps indicates that the practice of naming noblemen after their horse horsemen was started by the Oromo people. It is supposed to have spread into northern Ethiopia through Gondar in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The use of horse names by the noblemen became extensive in northern Ethiopia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>83</sup>

The nobility, kings, and emperors of Ethiopia had strong and beautiful horses that were used for transportation during travel, fighting enemies, and hunting activities. The nobility, kings, and emperors were also called after their horse name in Ethiopian history. Particularly, the modern Emperors of Ethiopia were alternatively called by their horse names. For instance; Tewodros II (1855-1868) was called by his horse name *abba tatteq* (arm yourself), Yohannes IV (1871-1889) by *aba bazbez* (one who defeated and plunder his enemies), Menilik II (1889-1913) by *abba dañaw* (one who judges or prevails over others) and Haile-Selassie I (1930-1974) *abba takel* (one who bring all the other under his direct control). Therefore, the tradition of calling Emperors by horse names in Ethiopia was continued until the downfall of emperor Haile-Selassie.<sup>84</sup>

The Awi Agäw people are said to have a long history of using a horse to fight their enemies. Some source indicates that the Awi Agäw cavalymen constituted their army in their fight against the Damot and Šenäša people who settled in Gojjam by the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>85</sup> Other sources also describe that the Awi Agäw people used cavalymen to fight the Gondariane rulers who led a campaign to incorporate their region in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the campaign against Gondarian kings, the Awi Agäw were said to have mobilized about 400

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Pankhurst, "The Early History of Ethiopian Horse-Names," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde, Bd. 35, Afrika-Studien I* (1989), pp. 197-206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40733033>.

<sup>84</sup> Krista Mehari, "Throne Names, Pen Names, Horse Names, and Field Names: A look at the significance of Names Changes in Political sphere," *Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Ethiopia: Sacred Traditions Visual Culture, SIT Study*, (2007), pp. 10-11. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse\\_name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_name).

<sup>85</sup> Waldemlak, p. 23.

cavalrymen. Substantial information is available on the participation of organized Awi Agäw horsemen together with other Ethiopians at the battles of Sär Wuhä and Mätämä against the Sudanese, and Adwa against the Italian invaders. The Awi Agäw people used horses in these battles for transporting warriors, provisions, and injured men in the battle.<sup>86</sup> (See appendix IV.)

The Italians opened the second war against Ethiopia almost forty years after the battle of Adwa to avenge their shameful defeat. The Awi Agäw patriots joined the war and launched fighting against the invaders with other Ethiopian people. During this time, they used horses primarily to exchange information and transport important provisions for the patriots. Besides, the individuals who had rifles used to fight on horseback against their enemies. Accordingly, the horses played a vital role in the transportation of provisions, exchange of information between patriots, and fighting against the enemies. Thus, the Agäw Meder patriots brought a heavy loss on the Italians using their horses.<sup>87</sup>

Following the withdrawal of the Italians from Ethiopia in 1941, the Awi Agäw patriots established “*Yägiorgise Färäsäña Mahebar*” or Saint George’s Horsemen Association to commemorate the liberation of Ethiopia and the role of horses for the victory. It was originally founded at *awräjä* (sub-province) level by thirty-two members. Its membership was open only to the patriots. Emperor Haile-Selassie returned from exile via Agäw Meder and acknowledged the establishment of horsemen association by the Agäw patriots.<sup>88</sup>

A short time after its establishment, the association is said to have been renamed "Seven House of Agäw Horsemen Association" and re-organized itself to embrace all districts. Accordingly, its membership has been opened to all men including those who were not patriots.<sup>89</sup> The people of Bahir Dar *awräjä* had participated in the association until Bahir Dar was detached from Agäw Meder and became an independent sub-province of Gojjam in 1956.

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<sup>86</sup> Melaku Fenta, p. 108; NALA, 17.2.338.01: The petition which was written by the *sebetbet* Agäw *balbäts* for Emperor Haileselassie against their misrepresentation in the local affairs.

<sup>87</sup> Ayenew, “A History of Ankäša...”, pp. 33-35.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Makurew and Solomon.

<sup>89</sup> Informant: Tilaye Ayenew and Kasse.

The Agäw Horsemen Association further re-organized itself from *awräjä* to *qabäle* levels by *Grazmač Aläm*, *Grazmač Käbbädä*, and *Grazmač Negussé* in 1963.<sup>90</sup>

Since its establishment, the Awi Agäw Horsemen Association has provided legal recognition and support from the government bodies.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, the government has been benefitted from the association in different ways. The higher government officials and distinguished guests who visited the area have been escorted by the Agäw Horsemen Association at different times.<sup>92</sup> For instance, the Agäw Horsemen were said to have escorted Emperor Haile-Selassie during his return into Addis Ababa from exile via Agäw Meder. Similarly, Mengistu Hailemariam and his deputy Wole Chekole were escorted by the Agäw Horsemen Association while they were visiting the peasants' cooperatives in the area.<sup>93</sup> The Agäw Horsemen Association members were also recruited as soldiers during the 1977 Ethio-Somalia war and played an important role in defending the country.<sup>94</sup>

The Awi Agäw Horsemen has continued escorting the government officials and distinguished guests to these days. For instance, the high government official including the former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, his deputy Demeke Mekonnen and other federal and regional government officials were escorted during the inauguration of Injibara University. The public holidays, demonstrations, and watershed developmental activities are also escorted by horsemen these days.<sup>95</sup>

The Awi Agäw horsemen association has its own rules and regulations. Any type of conflict between members of the association is resolved at the *qabäle* and *wäräda* levels. The issue of conflict is taken into the general assembly only when the case is beyond the capacity of *qabäles* and *wärädas*. It is not permissible to take the cases of conflict to the formal court without the knowledge of the general assembly.<sup>96</sup> The association is administered by an assembly of ten members who are elected by direct vote to serve for four years. Each *wäräda*

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<sup>90</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 33-35.

<sup>91</sup> Informant: Tilaye.

<sup>92</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development...", p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Informant: Tilaye.

<sup>94</sup> Informants: Demelesh Aderaw, Makurew, and Solomon.

<sup>95</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development..."; Informant: Tilaye.

<sup>96</sup> Informants: Makurew and Solomon.

has a sub-association led by an assembly of three members that serve for five years. General assembly in which all members from all *wärädas* take part is organized annually on *ter* 23 after the celebration of the anniversary of the association and they discuss the development of the association and societal issues.<sup>97</sup>

The Awi Agäw horsemen association was initially established to acknowledge the role of horse and horsemen during the Ethio-Italian war of the 1935/36-1941 and commemorate the liberation of Ethiopian from Italian invasion. However, by now it undertakes different activities. The association plays a vital role in conflict resolution, and promotes peace and solves social problems of the society. Moreover, it composes dirges and escorts burial ceremony the deceased members; and accompanies the bride and bridegroom during their marriage ceremony and the *arks* during their annual holidays. Besides, the association undertakes different horse shows during this holidays.<sup>98</sup>

The association is becoming the typical manifestation of the culture of the Awi Agäw people these days.<sup>99</sup> The anniversary of the association is held every 23<sup>rd</sup> of *tir* (January 30) within all *wärädas* through the shift system. As indicated by the association leader and the zone's cultural development team leader, both male and female 18 years and above can be members of the association these days. The association currently comprises more than 53221 members from all *wärädäs* of the zone.<sup>100</sup>

Besides horse, the horsemen need to have the various apparatuses for him like *alänga*, *zäng*, *gambalé*, *säriyan*, *gäša*, and *kote*. They also decorate their horses with the *korča*, *legome*, and *gelase*. After the end of escorting the Ark (*Tabot*) during the annual celebrations, the horsemen of the respective parish undertakes horse shows like *segeriya*, *dängalasä*, *šemeṭ*, and *gugis* through praising of the horse. Some of the horsemen songs which praise horse are locally titled as “*sängaw Abäba*”, “*sängaw aymolo*” and “*yasängaw géta*”. The horse show is also carried out during the anniversary of the horsemen association by praising the patriots

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Zemenu Bires, “Challenges and Prospects of Community Based Ecotourism Development in Lake Zengena and its environs: North West Ethiopia,” *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2017), p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Amhara Region Culture and Tourism Bureau, pp. 9-11; Informant: Tilaye.

and horse in front of the spectators who come from the whole *wärädas*. The pseudo fight that has also been conducted is said to have the symbolic meaning of how they fought and achieved victory in the battle against Italians.<sup>101</sup>

To show the pseudo fight, the two horsemen pairs themselves. One of the horsemen holds a *gäša* and the other holds *zängs*. The game starts from the same line at the same time. The *gäša* holder adjusts for *zäng* holder who is to hit his *gäša*. The game continues between all horsemen turn by turn within two rounds. A horseman who hits *gäša* successfully by *zäng* within two rounds became the winner of the game.<sup>102</sup> The various cultural food and drinks are prepared by the *wärädas* which is entrusted to host the anniversary or parish where annual celebration of the *ark* is held. Although the participation of men is also high, women play a vital role in the preparation of food for the guests. At the end of the ceremony, the guests sit according to their age and title status in the field and enjoy food and drinks.<sup>103</sup>



Figure 6: Awi Agäw Horsemen, Source: Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau (AZCTB)

Generally, the Awi Agäw people had their distinctive cultural aspects before their incorporation and integration into the Christian state and society. The cultural assimilation of

<sup>101</sup> Alemu, “Horse culture & tourism development...”, pp. 6-8.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Demelesh, Tilaye, and Kasse.

<sup>103</sup> Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau, pp. 4-5; Informants: Demelesh, Tilaye, and Kasse.

the Awi was intensified following the political development of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The process reached its height after the consolidation of the state centralization process during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The centralization of the political and socio-economic system of the state during the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed some cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people. As a result, a large number of Awi Agäw had been absorbed into the dominant Amhara culture to the extent that many of their cultures, if not all, are not practically distinguishable from Amhara neighbors. Despite the several centuries' of cultural integration, the Awi Agäw people maintained some of their unique cultural aspects.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. MAJOR SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE AWI AGAW PEOPLE

#### 3.1. Introduction to Social Aspects

Social history is a sub-field of history that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It developed as a reaction to the older fields such as political history, diplomatic history, history of great men, and great ideas that emphasize the role of elites neglecting the great masses of society. Unlike these fields, social history is concerned with changes and continuities in the social aspects of society over a long period.<sup>1</sup> Sociologists define society as a group of people who share common social aspects such as values, behaviors, and lifestyles.<sup>2</sup>

Social aspects are the foundations for society. The peoples of the world in general, Ethiopia in particular have maintained strong and cohesive social aspects since ancient times. Like many nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia, the Awi Agäw people have their distinctive social aspects.<sup>3</sup> Social aspects are highly related to cultural issues and cannot be seen as entirely separate from the cultural aspects of society.<sup>4</sup> Some of the major social aspects of the Awi Agäw people discussed in this chapter are social stratification, indigenous administrative systems, marriage practice, burial and funeral ceremonies.

#### 3.2. Social Stratification

Social stratification refers to manners and patterns of social divisions within a group of people whereby the different subgroups are given differential access to and utilization of power and resources in society. According to sociologists, all societies manifest at least some level of social stratification with unequal access to and possession of power and resources. The manner and characteristics of social stratification differ from society to society. In traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Paula S. Fass, "Cultural History/Social History: Some Reflections on A Continuing Dialogue," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2003), pp. 39-46.

<sup>2</sup> Puja Mondal, "Social System: Meaning, Elements, Characteristics, and Types," *Article shared online*, p. 5. <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/sociology/social-system>.

<sup>3</sup> Abebe Demoz *et al.*, "Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms among the Kembata Society," *American Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2015), p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander and Kumaran, pp. 1-4; Informants: Makurew and Alemerew Kassa.

society, the basic standard for social stratification is birth into a certain group, gender, and age, and livestock resources.<sup>5</sup> The livestock resources, particularly, camel and cattle have had an important position in the social status of the traditional Ethiopian societies like among the Afar, the Borena Oromo, Karayu Oromo, and Somali and within many others.<sup>6</sup>

Among the Awi Agäw people, the social status of an individual or a group had been based on the number of cattle wealth before the introduction Christian Amhara culture in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Individuals and their families who owned a large number of cattle enjoyed higher social status than others. To boost their social status publically, the owners of large cattle had been organizing an especial ceremony annually. All members of the community were invited to participate in the ceremony.<sup>7</sup> Then, the wealthiest individual washed his hand and bathed their body with milk to demonstrate the extent of his cattle resource.<sup>8</sup> As Ayenew stated, Jerome Lobo described this circumstance as follows:

....They [Agaws] have a very particular custom which obliges every man that has a thousand cows to save every year one day's milk of all his herd and take a bath with it for his relations, entertaining them afterward with a splendid feast. This they do so many days each year as they have thousands of cattle; so that, to express how rich any man is...<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of the socio-economic and political system of the Christian Kingdom (Empire) transformed the social stratification of the Awi Agäw people. After the introduction of the *rest* system into Agäw Meder during the Gondarine period, social status started to be associated to access to land and the number of cattle among the Awi Agäw people. The society of the Christian Kingdom (Empire) of Ethiopia had been divided into four social

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<sup>5</sup> Zerihun Doda, "The Ethno-history and Culture of Ṭambaaro, Southwest Ethiopia," *Report to Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State Council of Nationalities*, (Hawassa, Council of Nation Nationalities, 2010), pp.52-53.

<sup>6</sup> Yossef Tadesse *et al*, "Camel and cattle population dynamics and livelihood diversification as a response to climate change in pastoral areas of Ethiopia," *Livestock Research for Rural Development*, Vo., 25, No. 9 (2013), pp. 1-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ayenew Fenta, "Society and Environment in Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia, the 1880s to 1990s," (Ph.D. Dissertation in History, Addis Ababa University, 2018), pp. 62-63; Jerome Lobo, p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> Ayenew, "Society and Environment...", pp. 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

hierarchies: the nobility, the landlords, the artisans, and the slaves during the feudal period.<sup>10</sup> This type of social stratification strengthened in the Awi Agäw with the establishment of strong central control after Adäl Tässäma brought the whole Gojjam under his control in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup>

The nobility comprised of the ruling classes and higher ecclesiastical officials, who had *gult* as well as *rest* rights and occupied the top in the social hierarchy. They had controlled wide areas and people. The landlords consisted of clergymen, military and peasants who had *rest* rights, based on their descent and referred to as *balabäts*. Capital in the form of oxen was also the basis of social stratification in Awi Agäw society. The landlords who had oxen and more land enjoyed better social and economic status than those who have no oxen and small *rest* owners. The third category constituted artisans who did not have the *rest* right. The last category constituted of the slaves. The artisans and the slaves were found at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The military achievement was the means of upward mobility for the *balabäts*. In most cases, the social mobility from the lowest to the highest social positions was not allowed for the artisans and the slaves. Therefore, birth matter a lot rather than achievements for these categories.<sup>12</sup>

As stated above, the people who descended from certain founding fathers were recognized as *balabäts* and got access to *rest* rights. The founding fathers that defended their *rest* and pressed successful claim were highly respected because this was considered as protection of ancestral *rest* (hereditary) rights of the family. On the other hand, the handicraft workers and slaves, who did not descend from a founding father, had no right to get access to the *rest* land and they were considered as having no founding fathers. They could not intermarry with the *balabät* family. Moreover, they were not allowed to take political positions or to serve the

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<sup>10</sup> Getachew Senishaw, "Household Access to Farmland and Socioeconomic Status: The Case of Wonqa Qäbäle, Gozamin Wäradä (Eastern Gojjam), Amhara Region," (MA Thesis in Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, 2003), pp. 107-114.

<sup>11</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on Frontier Mätäkä (Ethiopia), 1898-1991* (History, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), pp. 107-108.

<sup>12</sup> Getachew; pp. 107-114; Abdussamad, "Peasant Conditions in Gojjam...", pp. 1-5; Informants: Terekegn Kebede, Seleshi Abeleneh and Abebaw Atenaf.

church as priests or deacons. These sections of the society were marginalized in all dimensions and assumed the lowest social spectrum in the social hierarchy.<sup>13</sup>

The 1975 land reform of the *Derg* regime transformed the traditional and old social structure of the Ethiopian society in general and that of the Awi Agäw people in particular. The land reform was not immediately and effectively implemented throughout the country. Thus, it was not immediately and effectively implemented in Agäw Meder due to stern opposition from the remnants of the old regime and previous landlords.<sup>14</sup> The land reform was effectively implemented only in 1978 when all rural land was nationalized thereby abolishing the old inequitable social relations. Regardless of their previous social position, the land reform gave 'equal' access to farmland to all residents of the rural community. Accordingly, the handcraft workers got access to land as a member of society. Moreover, they were elected as committee members of the peasants' associations. Accordingly, the handcrafts enjoyed 'equal' access to farmland, and political position institutionally.<sup>15</sup>

Although the economic and political status of the handcraft workers improved institutionally after 1978, the community continued to look down upon them. Handcraft workers still hardly intermarry with the families of the previous *balabäts*. Sometimes, the educated classes and poor *balabät* families intermarried with the handcrafts workers but this was not accepted socially and culturally. The intermarriage of individuals from the families of the previous *balabäts* with those that came from handcrafts was considered as "deformation of heredity." The children born from handcrafts families and parents with different background family were believed to die out at their infancy.<sup>16</sup>

After the land distribution of 1978, the former "bureaucrats" and "feudalist" suffered a shortage of land and became land renters from those female households and elderly men who lacked labor or capital. Before the land reform, they had the right to decide the type of crop

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<sup>13</sup> Getachew; pp. 107-114; Informants: Terekegn, Seleshi, and Abebaw.

<sup>14</sup> Ayenew Mamo, pp. 248-249.

<sup>15</sup> Informants: Terekegn, Seleshi, and Abebaw Atenaf; Wibke Crewett *et al.*, "Land Tenure in Ethiopia Continuity and Change, Shifting Rulers, and the Quest for State Control," *CAPRI Working Paper 91* (International Food Policy Research Institute: Washington, DC, 2008), pp. 12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2499/CAPRIWP91>.

<sup>16</sup> Getachew, pp. 107-114; Informants: Terekegn, Seleshi, and Abebaw.

cultivated in their agricultural fields. Nevertheless, after 1978 the right to decide the type of crop sown shifted to the land renters. Thus, the prestige of the *balabäts* who had previously possessed a large size of the land was eroded gradually.<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, the social stratification and prestige that was based on the possession of agricultural land was curtailed after land reform and its effective implementation in 1978 among the Awi Agäw people. By then, the criteria of social prestige started to be active participants in social affairs and defending the interest of the community. As informants strongly noted, the socially honorable individuals are those who have stood for the interest of the community at expense of their interests, serve the community as a mediator, work hard, and manage their household properly and honestly and those who do not need money from others since the 1980s.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.3. Indigenous Administrative Institutions and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

The indigenous administrative institutions are bodies of governance that are established for self-administration by indigenous people depending on their particularities. It is based on a holistic philosophy and guided by the unwritten customary laws, traditions, and practices that are learned through practice and oral teaching of elders in the community. The indigenous administrative institutions are established based on the principles of peace, solidarity, and harmony by society. Throughout the world, traditional societies have their indigenous administrative institutions before they are dominated and eroded by the modern ones. However, the indigenous administrative institutions continue to play an important part in the administrative life of traditional societies in different ways until these days.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Yonas Berhe, "An Assessment of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism of Mezard in Rural Alamata *Woreda*, Tigray National Regional State, Ethiopia," (MA Thesis Development Studies, Mekelle University, 2012), pp .1-3; Abrham Genet, "Vendetta case and oath based indigenous conflict management in Jawi district, Northwest Ethiopia: A symbolic ritual perspective," *Journal of African Studies and Development*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2019), pp. 23-25.

The indigenous administrative institutions have their advantages and disadvantages. The cost-effectiveness, flexibility, participatory, and social fabric oriented nature are some of their advantages whereas the prevalence of sexism and the absence of commonly accepted rules are some demerits of indigenous administrative institutions amongst the Awi Agäw people. The nation, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia have their indigenous administrative institutions. The Awi Agäw people also have their indigenous administrative institutions throughout history. They have preserved their social fabrics which encourage peaceful co-existence amongst themselves and other societies.<sup>20</sup>

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Awi Agäw people had been governed based on their indigenous administrative institutions and systems. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has been substituted in part by the Ethiopian Christian state administrative systems. The Awi Agäw people were brought under the direct control of the Christian Kingdom (Empire) particularly when the Gondarine rulers stationed Oromo soldiers' in Gojjam and used them to break the resistance of the Awi Agäw people. The stationing of the Oromo soldiers in Awi Agäw settlements was consolidated with the decline of royal authority in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the administration of the Awi Agaw based on the central state institutions was enhanced with the growth of the power of the ruling house of Gojjam in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By then, the central state has partly enforced its administrative structures including the conflict resolution system amongst the Awi Agaw people.<sup>21</sup>

Despite such direct intrusion of the Christian state in the socio-cultural, economic, and administrative life of the Awi Agäw people, the indigenous administrative institution has continued to function side by side with the state-based administrative institution and system. Among the many, *gutep* (office of elders), *ahutabla* (head of irrigation scheme), and *kemkatabla* (head of cattle) are the most well-known and widely practiced indigenous administrative institutions of the Awi Agaw people. Sometimes, *gutep*, *ahutabla*, and

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<sup>20</sup> Ajanaw Alemie, "Roles of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms for Maintaining Social Solidarity and Strengthening Communities in Aläfa district, North West of Ethiopia," *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018), pp. 1-2; Abebe Demoz *et al.*, p. 230; Informants: Terekegn, Seleshi, and Nega Tesfaye.

<sup>21</sup> Bezawit Mulugeta, "Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution Mechanism among the Inhabitants of Guangua and Debat'e Wäradas," (MA Thesis in Linguistics, Addis Ababa University, 2012), pp. 75-76.

*kemkatabla* substituted one another in discharging social and administrative responsibilities of the society.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3.1. *Gutep* (Office of Elders)

Like the conflict resolution mechanisms of other Ethiopian people, *gutep* (office of elders) has been practiced amongst the Awi Agaw people since immemorial time in the absence of the modern administrative systems. *Gutep* is equivalent to *šemgelena* of the Amharic version in Awi Agaw people. Besides other responsibilities, *gutep* has played an important role in settling civil, and criminal, individual, and collective conflicts among the Awi Agaw people. An individual who serves in the mediation and reconciliation process has the title of *šumagili* in Awi Agaw people. Although there is no socially agreed age limit to be called *šumagili*, most of the time, it designates an elderly man whose age range between fifty and seventy years.<sup>23</sup> *Gutep* was also an appellation of place where the *šumagili* meet to discuss the communal issues before the establishment and expansion of churches amongst the Awi Agaw people. After the expansion of churches, *šumagili* gathered at churches to discuss conflict and other communal issues. To some extent, the *gutep* describes a meeting place of *šumagili* until these days.<sup>24</sup>

Among the Awi Agaw people, *gutep* is alternatively known as *wulsämi*. It is said to have been adopted after the beginning of modern education and writing in the 1940s. *Wulsämi* derived from two Amharic words "*wule*", meaning "contract" and "*sämi*", to mean "listener" which refers to listeners of the contract between two or more parties. Accordingly, *wulsämi* implies the enhancement of the *gutep* system with the introduction of text as validation of contract between parties to the agreements. It was mainly used in the *gutep* process of marriage among the Awi Agaw people. Later, it has started to refer all services of *gutep* which involve textual contracts in the society.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bezuneh, pp.18-19; Informant: Tamer.

<sup>23</sup> Wondyrad Asmamaw, "The Practice of Indigenous Conflict Management Systems in a Multiethnic Society: The Case of Shemgelena in Guangua and Dibate districts of Mätäkäl Area, Ethiopia," *Paper presented 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference on Culture, Social Mobility, Governance, and Development*, (Bahir Dar, Bahir Dar University, April 24-25, 2014), pp. 7-8; Informants: Tamer and Alemerew Dubala.

<sup>24</sup> Informants: Bekebel and Arega.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

As in other societies of Ethiopia, the Awi Agäw people are respectful of *gutep*'s remarkable functions and its fair and critical decisions in the society. *Gutep* has a prestigious status and its decisions are not easily and simply refutable.<sup>26</sup> *Šumagili* (elders) have been elected through the participation of the community. *Gutep* is partially democratic because women are not allowed to participate either to elect or to be elected directly. Although women are excluded from direct participation, *šumagili* is elected based on personal qualities like oratorical skills, popularity and knowledge in the society. The numbers of *šumagili* are usually three, although it might constitute five or seven sometimes.<sup>27</sup>

The regulation which *šumagili* use is known as "*yäbat hägär heg*" or "law of the fatherland." The "law of the fatherland" is based on the religious and cultural systems of society. Like the rule of the indigenous administrative institutions of other people, "*yäbat hägär heg*" of the Awi Agäw has a set of principles created and developed by the elders who involve in it. The "law of the fatherland" is not static but flexible. Whenever socio-economic and political changes appear in the society, the "law of the fatherland" has changed in the way that is compatible with the existing internal and external alterations.<sup>28</sup>

In the history of the Awi Agäw people, *gutep* has played a vital role in mediating inter and intra-cultural disputes. As stated in chapter two, the Awi Agäw and Damot rulers had been fighting for supremacy and territory from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The role of *gutep* in mediation and resolution of the Awi Agäw-Damot conflict was vital and well-remembered in the oral tradition of the society. The death of *Ras Hailu the Great* who had established the ruling house of Gojjam and temporarily brought together the three regions (Gojjam proper, Agäw Meder, and Damot) in 1795 intensified the rivalry between the Agäw Meder and Damot rulers.<sup>29</sup>

The conflict between Agäw Meder and Damot was resolved through the mediation of *gutep* (office of elders) from both sides in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mediation was held around the present-day Tilili town along the bank of the Fätäm River. According to

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Getaye Amsalu, *A History of Ayo State Farm from its Foundation to 2013*, (BA Essay in History, Debre Markos University, 2013), pp. 13-14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*; Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 33-35.

informants, the Awi Agäw elders were suspicious of mediation with the Damot representatives. As a result, among the total of nine Awi Agäw representatives, eight of them remained behind and only one was sent to the mediation place. After the discussion ended peacefully, the eight individuals who had been behind came out and joined Agäw representatives. The Damot representatives who were surprised by the situation were said to have called the Awi Agäw representatives as “Nine hearted Agäw.”<sup>30</sup> After this event, the Amharic speakers are said to have called Agäws traditionally as follows:

| Amharic               | English  |
|-----------------------|--|
| አገው ልቡ ዘጠኝ፣           | The Nine Hearted Agäw;   |
| ስምንቱን አኑሮ በአንዱ አጫወተኝ። | Concealed the rest eight and while speaking me with one. <sup>31</sup> |

Besides the role of elders, *Negus* Tākelä Häymanot played an important role in ending this long-lasting conflict between the regions of Gojjam in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He defeated his rivals and brought together three of the traditional rival regions (Gojjam proper, Agäw Meder, and Damot) under his administration through mediation of *šumagili* (elders). Although the direct conflict ended in these ways, it had brought a long-lasting social crisis among the society. Accordingly, there was mutual distrust and suspicion between the Agäw Meder and Damot people for several years.<sup>32</sup>

The Awi Agäw *šumagili* (elders) also played an important role in mediating and resolving conflict that had happened in Mätäkäl resettlement area between the Gumuz and the settlers in the 1980s. The Ethiopian government relocated many people from drought-affected and overpopulated areas of the country to Mätäkäl during the mid-1980s. However, the project was disliked by the Gumuz who were the earlier settlers of the area. As a result, the conflict emerged between the earlier settlers and new settlers in the resettlement area. During this time, the Awi Agäw *šumagili* mediated the conflict by using their longstanding relationship with the Gumuz people.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ayenew Mamo, p. 27; Informants: Bellew and Solomon.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12.

The Mätäkäl resettlement area was part of the Mätäkäl Zone of the BGNRS until the 1990s. The resettlement area was recognized as Pawe Special District administratively answerable to BGNRS, bypassing the Mätäkäl Zone due to aggravation of the conflicts between the Gumz and the settlers in the early 1990s.<sup>34</sup> The friendly relationship that was established between the Awi Agäw and Gumuz peoples after the revolution of 1974 has also become hostile. As stated in the first chapter, most of the former Mätäkäl *awräjä* put up under the newly established BGNRS, and Gumuz have been empowered in the local affairs since the 1990s. As a result, the Awi Agäw people started to be regarded as new settlers and deprived of their political, socio-economic, and cultural rights that they had enjoyed in the previous times. The period also witnessed new forms of conflict between the Awi Agäw and Gumuz that led to the forceful eviction of the Awi Agäw from the Mätäkäl. However, *šumagili* or elders have worked hard every time to make peace in the society. They have gone even into remote places by risking their lives to settle disputes.<sup>35</sup>

The *šumagili* has also a long history of mediating and resolving vendetta and intra-cultural conflicts among the Awi Agäw especially in Zigäm and Jawi *wärädas*. The vendetta occurred when conflict caused homicide. It was established and developed based on the socio-cultural and psychological structure of society. A person whose family member was murdered and did not take revenge on members of the murderer's family is look down by society. As a result, a man whose family member is killed by another person must avenge the killer to maintain his masculinity and dignity in society.<sup>36</sup> The vengeance is accomplished by killing a murderer or one of the family members. The paternal lineage is preferred for vendetta because the maternal family is believed to be not appropriate for vengeance.<sup>37</sup>

After vengeance, the *šumagili* start the process of mitigating the clash through performing the complex cultural ceremony. For example, in Jawi *wäräda*, the elders and the families of two conflicting parties go to a river taking an ox and two needles, and members of the conflicting family sit on the opposite banks of the river. Then, the elder starts mediation by explaining the whole process of murder and bloodshed and the necessity of ending enmity. After the elders

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<sup>34</sup> Yintso, "Differential Re-establishment ...", pp. 31-35.

<sup>35</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12.

<sup>36</sup> Abraham Genet, pp. 21-27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Worku Birru, Habtemariam, and Makurew.

conducted the detailed discussion, the two men are selected from the two parties and grip a knife together and slaughter the ox brought for mediation sacrifice. Immediately after the slaughter, they cut the tongue and mouthful one another which symbolizes that they become brothers from this time on. They also cut the piece of tongue and throw it into bushes that represent if they initiate revenge against one another after this time; God throws them like this tongue into the bushes. After this ceremony, one of the elders thrust the needle into a green tree which signifies that let God cool the vendettas like this needle. The other two elders' also together break another needle, which implies, that one who defies resolution shall be broken like this needle.<sup>38</sup>

The governments of Ethiopia from Haile Selassie to FDRE attempted to stop personal vendetta and to end homicide completely. However, it has not been stopped until now due to the socio-cultural and psychological structure of society. The elders are discouraged from being involved in the mediation of murder cases before it is examined by the formal judicial body these days. Instead, they are encouraged to hand over murderers to formal government bodies. Accordingly, the role of elders concerning murder case is limited to advising people not to engage in such criminal activities.<sup>39</sup>

Amongst other Awi Agäw people, *gutep* has also an indispensable role in mediating and resolving local disputes. The judicial cases are brought to *gutep* in two ways. First, if one of the conflicting parties appealed to the community, then, the communities require the parties to select *šumagili* who assists them to settle their cases. The direct interference of *šumagili* is the second way. This is done especially when the case is serious. They do this to avoid the aggravation of the conflict through revenge. After this, they start pleading families of the victim for reconciliation. In serious conflict cases, *šumagili* discusses the case with priests. The priests carry an ark and present when the families of the victims are asked for reconciliation. Accordingly, the church has also played an important role in the indigenous conflict resolution activities of the Awi Agäw people.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Informants: Bekebel and Arega.

When *šumagili* starts settling any disputes, they carefully listened to the disputants starting from the litigant and discuss the case at length. The witnesses are called to testify when the disputants failed to agree in the process of their conflict. But the witnesses are neither forced nor imposed any sanctions if they refused to testify voluntarily. Instead, *šumagili* searches for other methods.<sup>41</sup> When the accused persons denied the charges brought against them, the accusers appeal *šumagili* to order him to swear an oath according to the tradition of the society. If someone who did wrong pledges an oath by denying his acts, it is believed that this would bring the curse on himself and his whole family. Traditionally, it is also believed that ill fate will happen to the life and property of the family.<sup>42</sup> Among the Awi Agaw people, if someone takes an oath by shutting the door of the church on false grounds, it is believed that God closes his life like that door. It is also performed by uprooting the grass which signifies that God uproots his life like that grass if he swears falsely.<sup>43</sup>

After the detailed discussions, the *šumagili* declare its decisions to the disputant parties. The judgment includes compensation for accusers which varies across time and space and ranges from the simple apology to financial compensations.<sup>44</sup> Before 1935, the compensation for serious criminal cases like murder and the severe physical injury was money; for moderate cases like theft and minor injury, accuse compensated the accuser by giving a sheep and a bar of salt respectively. According to informants, the compensation for both serious and moderate criminal cases has become money due to the relatively widespread of paper money and also for small cases to a bottle of *areqé* after 1935.<sup>45</sup>

Sometimes criminals are ordered to carry a stone and prostrate before the victims as a token of apology. In return, the victim lifts the stone from the shoulder of the wrongdoers and throws it onto the ground to show his acceptance of apology from his heart and mind.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “Awi, Sidama...”, pp. 25-30.

<sup>42</sup> Informants: Bekebel and Arega.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Worku and Kassahun Engeda.

<sup>44</sup> Informants: Bekebel and Arega.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “Awi, Sidama...”, pp. 25-30.

two parties are also made to step over a gun which symbolizes the promise that they should not engage one another in fighting after this time.<sup>47</sup>

The decision of *gutep* was seemed irreversible among the Awi Agäw people until 1940s. The attempt of Haile Selassie to formalize the administrative and judicial institutions throughout the country interrupted due to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935. Thus, the appeal to the formal government court against the decision of *gutep* was not transpired among the Awi Agäw people before 1940s.<sup>48</sup> By the 1940s, Haile-Selassie's government consolidated centralized administration by re-organizing administrative units. The newly re-organized administrative units started to interfere in the local socio-economic and political affairs which were previously run by the elders.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, the Awi Agäw people started to take the judicial and administrative cases that need decisions from formal institutions through the new administrative hierarchy by the 1940s. The *čeqa šum* (village headman) was the lowest administrative official entitled to see and settle administrative issues under the jurisdiction of his territory. Any case which could not be settled by his capacity was transferred to the *atbia dañña* a (parish headman), *meseläné* (district headmen), *awräjä* (sub-provincial governor), and *takläy gezat* (province governor) respectively. The right to give the last and final decision was vested to the emperor constitutionally.<sup>50</sup> (See appendix-V.)

Irrespective of the broader recognition throughout Ethiopian society in general and Awi Agäw people in particular, the role of the elderly started to be substituted by the formal institutions since the 1950s. It was because the Imperial regime was engaged in the extensive codification and improving the existing laws to formalize and modernize legal systems. However, *šumagili* institution still played an important role in the social issues of the society. Moreover, they acted on behalf of the community and defended their interests against the new local

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*; Ayenew Mamo, pp. 147-152.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Ayenew Mamo, pp. 147-152; NALA, 17.1.11.1.13: The petition which was written by the Ankäša *wäräda*, particularly Temho and Fafa *bälbats* for Emperors Haile Selassie against the mistreatment of local officials.

authorities. Thus, the community delegated the *šumagili* to appeal against the exploitation of the local officials for higher administrative bodies.<sup>51</sup>

According to informants, the role of *šumagili* was also taken over by the peasant association and *qäbälé* tribunals during the *Derg* period. During this time, local issues were the jurisdiction of the peasant associations and *qäbälé* tribunals, whose members were elected by members of the association and *qäbälé* dwellers respectively. The tribunals of peasant associations had jurisdiction over several small criminal cases, including intimidation, violation of one's privacy, and association regulations. They had also jurisdiction in settling disputes concerning money borrowing and conflicts between peasant association members, and other associations. Thus, the role of *šumagili* was limited to specific social matters such as marriage arrangements and disputes related to it.<sup>52</sup>

The roles of *šumagili* re-emerged in the 1990s throughout the country. The new government recognized the role of elders and as a result, the local administrations took some initiatives to strengthen and enhance the position of the *šumagili* in the society. In the border areas of Gumuz-Awi Agäw, a seal and badge were prepared for *šumagili*. Such reinforcing measures of the local administration are envisioned to ensure the continued functioning of *šumagili* as one alternative indigenous conflict management systems.<sup>53</sup>

Although *gutep* has the tremendous function in maintaining peace and security among the Awi Agäw people, the power to enforce its decisions is very limited due to the absence of formal systems. The only way of enforcing its decisions is by imposing social sanctions like prohibiting the attendance of cultural and social festivals and preventing community members from cooperating with those disobedient people. If someone declines to implement the decisions, there are no other ways of enforcement and this is one of the challenges to the practice of the *gutep* among society. The absence of formal decision enforcement mechanisms also lessens the value, role, and status of the institution within the society. Besides, *gutep* has no formal payments for their service. However, the disputants are expected to entertain them with food and drinks. Particularly, those who are sentenced as convicts are expected to

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<sup>51</sup> Ajanaw, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ayenew Mamo, pp. 147-152; Informants: Tamer and Arega.

<sup>53</sup> Wondyrad, pp. 15-20.

slaughter a sheep, a goat, or an ox to entertain *šumagili* in their house. Accordingly, there is less possibility of corruption by elders.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 7: Awi Agäw *Šumagili*, Source: AZCTB

### 3.3.2. Water and Cattle management techniques of Awi Agäw people

#### 3.3.2.1. Ahutabla (Head of Irrigation Scheme)

It is known that Ethiopia is endowed with abundant water resources. However, the high water potential of the country for irrigation, electricity, and other purposes has not yet been exploited well due to economic and political reasons.<sup>55</sup> In the highlands of Ethiopia, irrigation practices have been in use for producing subsistence food crops since ancient times.<sup>56</sup> It is also believed that the traditional irrigation system has been practiced as part of the ancient agricultural practices among the Awi Agäw people. Thus, the Awi Agäw people are accustomed to exploiting water resources for irrigational purposes. They are said to have first started the traditional irrigation agriculture by using surface irrigation methods in the Fageta

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Seleshi Bekele, *et al.*, "Water Resources and Irrigation Development in Ethiopia," *Water Management Institute*, Vol. 78p, Working Paper 123 (2007), pp. 1-5; Solomon Habtu and Kitamura Yoshinobu, "Traditional Irrigation Management in Betmera-Hiwane, Ethiopia: The Main Peculiarities for the Persistence of Irrigation Practices," *Journal of Mountain Science*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2006), pp. 139-140.

<sup>56</sup> Gebremedhin Gebremeskel, "Irrigation in Ethiopia-Review," *Journal of Environment and Earth Science*, Vol. 5, No. 15 (2015), p. 145; Amare Hailelassie *et al.*, "Institutions for irrigation water management in Ethiopia: Assessing diversity and service delivery," *International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)*, Working Paper 17 (2016), p. 1.

Lakoma *wäräda*, particularly, in Endawuha *qäbälé* over the Gudär River. Later, the traditional irrigation agriculture was expanded to the whole drainage areas of the Awi Agäw.<sup>57</sup> The practice of irrigation assisted farmers to produce crops, besides rain-fed farming in highland areas. Moreover, it supported farmers to overcome the consequence of crop failure that resulted from the shortage of adequate rainfall.<sup>58</sup>

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ruling families of Gojjam had engaged in irrigation schemes. Particularly, the ruling families initiated large private irrigation schemes in Agäw Meder drainage areas. For instance, *Ras Hailu II* (1905-1935) had large scale private irrigation estates in Ankäšä *wäräda*, particularly, in Awadä and Manjä area. Awadä and Manjä parishes were prominent traditional irrigation centers in the area. The local peasants were involved in the cultivation and harvesting crops in these irrigation schemes of the royal family. The produce was also collected in big granaries built in the Agäw Gimjabét town, and Awadä, and Manjä parishes.<sup>59</sup>

Modern irrigation in Agäw Meder started during the *Derg* regime with the adoption of the green revolution in the 1980s. The *Derg* regime patronized the utilization of water resources for irrigation purposes throughout the country. It also supported and encouraged the use of rivers in Agäw Meder for irrigation purposes. Thus, the *Derg* regime carried out irrigation along the Zingini and Guchiske Rivers which found in Ankäšä Guagesa and Guangua *wärädas* respectively.<sup>60</sup>

The FDRE has also promoted the utilization of irrigation to increase agricultural productivity. It initiated small scale irrigation schemes over the Zingini, Dondor, Tenbele, Fätam, Ardi, and other rivers that are found in Agäw Awi Zone. As informants noted, the beginning of irrigation agriculture has contributed to the cultivation of different crops twice a year. Accordingly, the livelihood of the people has improved through irrigation these days.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development...", pp. 61-62; Informants: Tamer and Arega.

<sup>58</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development...", pp. 61-62.

<sup>59</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Awi, Sidama...", pp. 1-12; Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Awi, Sidama...", pp. 1-12; Informants: Tamer and Arega

<sup>61</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Awi, Sidama...", pp. 1-12.

The institution of irrigation has important roles in ensuring equitable distribution of water among users and sustaining the operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems. The Awi Agäw people started the traditional irrigation water management system with the expansion of traditional irrigation methods. The people who settled around the same irrigation system select and assign a local chief called *ahutabla* (head of water) to ensure equitable distribution of water among users and for sustainable operation and maintenance within the hydraulic boundaries of the irrigation system. The heads of water are selected on the initiative of the farmers. *Ahutablas* are selected based on their knowledge, oratorical skill, and popularity among society.<sup>62</sup> They were expected to be acquainted with the knowledge of traditional time reckoning based on the shadow before the introduction of modern watches.<sup>63</sup>

The operation and maintenance of water flow for irrigation has been carried out at the end of the Ethiopian rainy season among the Awi Agäw people. *Ahutabla* gathers members in his irrigation system to discuss the operation and maintenance of water flow for irrigation when the raining season ends. All those members who engaged in the irrigation agriculture are expected to work and provide supplies during the digging of irrigation canals. If they declined to participate and break the rules, *ahutabla* punishes them based on the traditional rules. The type of punishment varies across time and space. Before the 1940s, the punishment was in kind because paper money was not widespread in the time. With the expansion of paper money since the 1940s, the punishment was changed into cash. The money collected in the form of penalty has been used to purchase necessary materials for the operation and maintenance of irrigation schemes and to buy *areqé* (strong local alcoholic drink) for the members during works.<sup>64</sup>

During the *Derg* regime, *ahutabla* advanced into the committee of water which consisted of a chairman, deputy, and other members. The committee had administered one hundred to two hundred members of farmers. After the *Derg*, the Awi Agäw people resorted to the previous individual-based traditional irrigation water management system. However, the size of members administered by one *ahutabla* reduced to fifty and twenty-five households. At this time, the government is giving high attention for irrigation for enhancing the food security

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<sup>62</sup>FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “Awi, Sidama...”, pp. 1-12; Informants: Nega and Tamer.

<sup>63</sup> FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism, “Awi, Sidama...”, pp. 25-30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

situation in the country. Currently, therefore, efforts are made to involve farmers progressively in various aspects of small-scale irrigation systems. Moreover, the government is helping *ahutablas* to ensure equitable irrigation water share between farmers.<sup>65</sup>

Besides ensuring the fair share of water between farmers and facilitating the operation and maintenance of the irrigation water flow, *ahutabla* has the responsibility to settle disputes that happens between farmers. However, *ahutabla* has no capacity other than social punishments to endorse its decisions. This is due to the absence of formal mechanisms to endorse its decisions. This deters the decision-making processes and the implementation of traditional rules for irrigating water use among the Awi Agäw people. The recurrent conflict that occurs between farmers said has been the manifestation of *ahutabla's* administrative inefficiency. This could also bring to the termination of his administrative period. Women are not allowed to elect and be elected as *ahutabla*. This is due to the lower status given to women in decision-making processes socially.<sup>66</sup>

The conflict may happen between farmers over irrigation water use. As informants stated, the cause of the conflict between the upper stream irrigation and lower stream irrigation system is over the diversion of water and theft. On the other hand, the conflict occurs between farmers in the same irrigation blocks due to issues related to fair water sharing and diversion time. The time of water diversion was the major source of conflict between farmers until the expansion of modern instruments of measuring time. The source of the income for operation and maintenance of irrigation canals is a fee collected from the members of the hydraulic boundaries of the irrigation systems in different ways. It is collected in the form of contribution and penalty from the convicted members of the irrigation system.<sup>67</sup>

### **3.3.2.2. Norrätabla (Head of Cattle)**

James Quirin stated that ‘the Agaw were among the most culturally creative people in Africa, credited with the development of the region as a center of plant domestication, animal husbandry and plow agriculture.’<sup>68</sup> The Awi Agäw people have a long history of keeping

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<sup>65</sup> Informants: Worku, Nega, and Tamer.

<sup>66</sup> Informants: Biadegelegn and Kassahun Engeda.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> James, p. 197.

goats, sheep, mules, horses, donkeys, oxen, cows, and other domestic animals. Moreover, they are known for their knowledge of cross-breeding animals. The Awi Agäws are one of the peoples widely recognized for the cross-breeding of a mule from donkey and horse in Ethiopian history.<sup>69</sup>

The Awi Agäw people domesticated animals for various purposes as a source of food, using dung to improve soil fertility, a raw material for local industry, cash, fuel, draught power, etc. The Awi Agäw people kept a large number of heads of cattle which provided various functions to the people in earlier times.<sup>70</sup> Cattle were reared as a source of livelihood and prestige in the Awi Agäw societies. As indicated in the social stratification of the society, the possession of large numbers of cattle signified the highest social and economic status of the individuals among Awi Agäws in the earliest times. To boost their social and economic status, the owners of numerous cattle organized a special ceremony annually. All members of the community were invited to participate in the ceremony.<sup>71</sup>

The Awi Agäw people are also said to have paid cattle in the form of tribute to the state during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are said to have paid tribute in cattle to the Gondarine monarchs.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the Awi Agäw people are stated to have paid one hundred thousand heads of cattle between 1696 and 1697 to the Gondarine rulers. The amount of tribute in cattle was determined based on the number of cattle possessed by individuals. As compared to the previous period, the number of cattle paid for Gondarine monarchs decreased due to the socio-economic and political crisis of the *Zämänä Mäsafent* (1769-1855) in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, one hundred to one thousand five hundred cattle were paid for Gondarine monarchs in the 1770s.<sup>73</sup>

As a society whose livelihood highly dependent upon cattle, the Awi Agäw people have developed their traditional cattle management system. However, there is an inconsistency between informants on the time when the traditional cattle management system began among

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Biadegelegn and Kassahun Engeda.

<sup>70</sup> Abraham Assefa and Abeba Hailu, "Ethiopian Indigenous Cattle breed's Diversity, Distribution, Purpose of Keeping, and their Potential threats," *J.Bio.Innov*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (2018), pp. 77-79.

<sup>71</sup> Informants: Tamer and Arega; Ayenew, "Society and Environment...", pp. 62-63.

<sup>72</sup> Bezunah, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ayenew, "Society and Environment...", pp. 62-63.

the Awi Agäw people. According to some informants, the cattle had not been strictly managed among the Awi Agäw people in early times. Instead, they were left in the forests without keepers and inspected by the people only on some times. The people took cattle to the village when they had wanted cows and oxen for milking and plowing respectively. According to their view, the tradition of managing cattle was started with the commencement of crop cultivation outside villages. After the expansion of planting crops outside the village, the Awi Agaw people started to manage cattle not to destroy their harvests. Other informants opposed this view and asserted that there has been the tradition of managing cattle amongst the Awi Agaw people since early times.<sup>74</sup>

Despite this, however, the Awi Agäw people have a long history of managing cattle communally. The people who live in the same village have established an association called *gudi* (village) to manage cattle. The *gudi* member, in turn, selects a *norrätabla* or head of cattle. The *norrätabla* also is known as *lamras* among the Amharic and bilingual (Agäw and Amharic) speaking community of Awi Agäw. Similar to *šumagili* and *ahutabla*, *norrätabla* has selected based on his oratorical skills, knowledge, and popularity in society. He is entitled to manage cowshed, employment of *abalami* (cowherd) and *arbach*i (calf hender), resolve the dispute between members, and coordinate annual ceremony (*chafe*) for cattle. Besides, he was managing *gudi* members to feed *abalami* in their house turn by turn and pay a salary for him. Unlike *abalami*, *arbach*i was live with his family and collected milk from all *gudi* members every Sunday in return for his service. The responsibility *norrätabla* in connection with *abalami* and *arbach*i ceased with the disappearance of *abalami* and *arbach*i due to the socio-economic development of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as discussed below.<sup>75</sup>

Until the 1940s, the cattle had been barn in the public fields. Later, the people started to barn cattle in the agricultural fields of *gudi* members for their manure to improve soil fertility. The dispute between *gudi* members increased after the transfer of cattle barn from the public to the private agricultural fields. This was because the *gudi* members had been disagreement on the amount of manure that they used to improve soil fertility.<sup>76</sup> The usage of cattle manure in the private agriculture fields declined during the early 1970s due to the widespread lawlessness

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<sup>74</sup> Informants: Bellew, Solomon, Tamer, and Arega.

<sup>75</sup> Informants: Tamer, Arega, and Molla Meseret.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

and cattle theft. During these times, most people started to keep cattle in their respective backyards. However, some *gudi* joined each other to strengthen their power and defend bandits and continued to keep cattle in the fields. The *norrätabla* facilitated the merging of the different *gudi* members during this time.<sup>77</sup>

The 1975 land reform brought the change in the traditional cattle management systems of the Awi Agäw people. It reduced the socio-economic inequality which was based on the landholding system. After the implementation of land reform in the Agäw Meder in 1978, the large cattle grazing fields were nationalized and became cooperative farm centers.<sup>78</sup> In these ways, it became difficult to manage huge heads of cattle as before.<sup>79</sup>

The land reform of the *Derg* regime reduced the class distinction within the society. Thus, people no longer wanted to engage in *abalami* and *arbach* as they become members of peasants' cooperatives and got access to land for the cultivation of crops. As a result, the system of keeping cattle turn by turn (*norrä kello*) was started by the *gudi* members. The *norrätabla* organized and managed the proper functioning of this new system among the *gudi* members. The Awi Agäw people are practicing *norrä kello* until these days.<sup>80</sup>

After the 1990s, the pasture land shortage has become acute amongst the Awi Agäw people. It has been aggravated after the rural land distribution decree of the ANRS.<sup>81</sup> As a result, the people reduced the number of their cattle and began to keep only a few in their grazing lands. Moreover, the tradition of managing cattle by *norrä kello* disappeared in some areas. Thus, by now the role of *norrätabla* is limited to organizing cattle rituals (*chafe*) in these areas<sup>82</sup> Among the Awi Agäw people, July five and eight are celebrated as the ritual days of cattle. This ritual ceremony is locally called *chafe*. On this day, all cattle of the *gudi* members are gathered and blessed by the elders. Most of the time a sheep is slaughtered during the ritual ceremony and its blood is sprinkled over all cattle. The *norrätabla* are also selected in these

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Ayenew Mamo, pp. 61-63.

<sup>79</sup> Informants: Tessema Mekonnen, Tamer, and Fekadu Endalew.

<sup>80</sup> Informants: Tessema and Anget Bezuneh.

<sup>81</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic...", p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Informants: Tessema, Tamer, and Fekadu.

days. The management term of *norrätabla* depends on his leadership quality and recognition by the members.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.2. Marriage System

Marriage is a common social practice throughout the world.<sup>84</sup> Marriage is the contractual agreement between men and women involving the combining of their labor and property to establish a new household and family. It creates not only the new family but also the new linkage between two different descent families.<sup>85</sup> Marriage is the base for perpetuation and continuity of society. It is established based on the social and cultural system of society. In Ethiopia, different types of marriage are practiced based on the diverse traditional, cultural, and religious settings of the different ethnic groups of the country.<sup>86</sup>

In some societies of Ethiopia in general and Awi Agaw people in particular, marriage is not only the contractual relationship between men and women in front of a civil servant or a priest but also the relationship that is established traditionally.<sup>87</sup> The intermarriage within the seven generations of the maternal and paternal lines is prohibited among the Awi Agäw people. Also, intermarriage is prohibited with the "marginalized groups" such as weavers, blacksmith, tanners, potters, and other "despised" cultural groups because of their social and cultural differences. Although intermarriage with the Gumuz and Šenäšä who are considered traditionally as "despised" is not accepted, the Awi Agäw people intermarry with the Amhara who are their cultural and geographical neighbors.<sup>88</sup>

The concubinage was widely practiced amongst the Awi Agäw people in the earlier time. The concubinage refers to a contract between man and woman whereby the man undertakes to pay a woman a fixed monthly or annual salary either in money or grain in return for the time she spent with him and performed all tasks expected of a wife. It could be terminated based on the

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Zuzanna Augustyniak, "Marriages in Ethiopia," *Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures*, No. 43, ISSN. 0860-4649(2009), p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Waldemlak, pp. 17-20.

<sup>86</sup> Alex Minichele *et al.*, "Interreligious Marriage: Social and Religious Perspectives," *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol-3, Issue-6 (2017), pp. 355-357.

<sup>87</sup> Zuzanna, pp. 26-27.

<sup>88</sup> Informants: Tessema and Anget.

conditions on the part of either side. In the case of a man's death, the woman has no right to inherit his property. However, the children born from *wushima* are eligible for the inheritance of their father's property.<sup>89</sup>

Before the 1970s, the concubinage was widely practiced by the wealthiest individuals and chiefs among the Awi Agäw for economic and social reasons. Economically, it was to use the land of *wushima* wives. Socially, having the concubine was considered as the manifestation of being rich in the society. The reversal of the pre-existing economic and social status of many men has resulted in the decline of the concubinage since the 1970s. The economy of those wealthy individuals declined with the land reform and this made it difficult to support *wushima* wives. After this period, concubinage has no longer considered as the manifestation of being rich in society.<sup>90</sup>

However, the religious (*yähaymanot*), and traditional (*bahelawi*) marriages have been socially and culturally accepted marriages amongst the Awi Agäw people.<sup>91</sup> The religious marriage has mostly practiced by the religious fathers amongst Awi Agäw people. It has celebrated in a church accompanied by the elaborate ceremony with blessings of religious leaders. The difference in the ethnic background does not apply in religious marriage. In the religious marriage, divorce is impossible theoretically. The dissolution could be permitted by the church for only special cases. The widowers might remarry except priests who are expected to become a monk and live in monasteries.<sup>92</sup>

The most ancient and widely practiced type of marriage in Ethiopia in general and the Awi Agäw people, in particular, is the traditional marriage or *bahelawi gabečča* system. This type of marriage is arranged through *šumagili* amongst the Awi Agäw people. Priests may be present in the traditional marriage but there is no ritual ceremony conducted in the church, unlike the religious marriage. In traditional marriage, there is the possibility of divorce. However, violation of the oath may result in punishments by elders. The negotiation took

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<sup>89</sup> Zuzanna, p. 28.

<sup>90</sup> Waldemlak, p. 17; Informants: Yazew Zeleke, Tessema, and Yenet Fenta.

<sup>91</sup> Waldemlak, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Waldemlak, p. 17.

place when the couple divorced voluntarily and agree on the protection and support made to their children and the division of property.<sup>93</sup>

During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, marriage below the age of ten was the widespread practice amongst the royal family of the Christian Kingdom (Empire) of Ethiopia. The children of the ruling elites were widely engaged in early marriage with notable families as means of creating political alliances. Early marriage among the royal family continued during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, marriage was conducted between the daughter of Menelik II, Zewdetu who aged six with the son of Yohannes IV, Areya whose age was seven. Similarly, the daughter of *Ras* Hailu of Gojjam, Seble Wängel was married to Menelik's grandson *Lij* Iyasu at an early age. Early marriage was also the widespread practice among the common people of the Amhara and later introduced to the Awi Agäw society.<sup>94</sup>

Until their incorporation in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the gradual expansion of Amhara culture, the Awi Agäw people had no tradition of arranging marriage below the age of ten. According to informants, marriage was arranged among the Awi Agäw people between the age of 13-15 for boys and 10 -12 for girls. But after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, marriage below the age of ten was introduced to the Awi Agäw society. The Awi Agäw, particularly, those who were neighbors to the Amhara adopted marriage at an early age. In some areas like Ačäfär, children at the age of four to five years were married for different reasons. In this case, a banquet was prepared by both families. After marriage, the couple stayed with their respective parents and considered each other as siblings until they reach the age of maturity.<sup>95</sup> When they become mature and ready to establish their home, they were provided with supports from parents of both sides. Accordingly, the boy's parents provided flour, salt, butter, spices, pepper, tools, and equipment for farming practices. Similarly, the girl's parents provided Kitchen utensils like *ensera*, *meṭad*, *seféd*, *mossob*, and *calabash*.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Informants: Abebaw, Seleshi, and Terekegn.

<sup>94</sup> Berihun M. Mekonnen and Harald Aspen, "Early Marriage and the Campaign against It in Ethiopia," *In Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, (Trondheim, 2009), pp. 101-103.

<sup>95</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>96</sup> Informants: Abebaw, Seleshi, and Terekegn.

Although it was in the proper age than the marriage practices of the Amhara society, the marriage among the Awi Agäw people was an early marriage. Like the Amhara society, the vast majority of the Awi Agäw people conform to early marriage to secure their own and their children's future, raise their family's status, and ensure a daughter's virginity. Particularly, the girls who did not marry at the age of 10 to 12 years were insulted as *qumoqär* (one who remained unmarried) in the society. The large family size, scarcity of land, and religion were other factors that pushed and pulled early marriage. The arrangement of the early marriage for getting access to more land has declined since the late 1970s.<sup>97</sup>

Among the Awi Agäw people, wives were searched from distant areas that took travel of several days. This was because the peoples of the surrounding areas belong to the same descent family. Besides, the tradition of looking for wives from the distant place was intended to establish the friendship with families located at a distance. The establishment of marriage with families located far away was important because the people wanted to have a house of resting place whenever they traveled far place for trade and other purposes.<sup>98</sup>

The practice of early marriage continued without condemnation in the Awi Agäw society until the 1940s. It was started to be criticized by teachers and students only after the opening of modern schools in the area in the 1940s and 1950s. Moreover, the government introduced the decree which prohibited early marriage in the post-liberation years. The most radical action of Haile Selassie's government on early marriage was the restriction of the minimum age of marriage to 15 for girls in the revised constitution of 1955. Despite such attempts, the practice of early marriage continued widely until the downfall of Haile-Selassie.<sup>99</sup>

After the downfall of Haile-Selassie, the *Derg* regime started to take radical measures against the tradition of early marriage. Accordingly, early marriage was made illegal and it declined throughout the country in the 1980s.<sup>100</sup> In the early 1980s, president Mengistu visited Agäw Meder and highly criticized the tradition of early marriage. The government continued radical moves and established a committee to mitigate harmful practices including early marriage.

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<sup>97</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, "Early Marriage in Northern Ethiopia, Reproductive Health Matters," *An International Journal on sexual and reproductive health and rights*, Vol. 4, ISSN: 0968-8080 (1994), p. 35.

<sup>98</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Abebaw, Seleshi, and Terekegn.

<sup>100</sup> Informants: Solomon, Bellew, Abebaw, Seleshi, and Terekegn.

This committee opened a branch in Agäw Meder, Dangela to coordinate activities for mitigating early marriage in the area.<sup>101</sup> The *Derg* also restricted the minimum age of marriage by law to 15 for girls and 18 for boys. Early marriage below the age of ten also lost its social and economic base due to the land reform of 1975.<sup>102</sup> As a result, it declined greatly in the Awi Agäw society.<sup>103</sup>

In the FDRE Revised Family Code of 2000, the minimum age of marriage is raised to 18 for both boys and girls. The law prohibits marriage below the age of 18 on the ground that they should attend school than marrying at an early age. When they reached 18 and above, they can decide whom to marry. The New FDRE Criminal Code Article 627 penalizes those who are guilty of sexual activity with a child below the age of 13 years for imprisonment from 13 to 25 years. Sexual abuse of the child between the age of 15 and 18 also results in imprisonment for 15 years.<sup>104</sup>

Due to the national developments stated above, the tradition of early marriage has declined amongst the Awi Agäw society since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it continued to be arranged by parents without the knowledge and choice of marriage partners. The parents selected wives for their boys carefully based on different standards. The backgrounds of the family like social and economic status and religious affinity were the major standards for selecting a wife. Moreover, the blood relationship of the proposed couple must be beyond seven generations.<sup>105</sup> The importance of the social and economic status of the proposed wife family was described in the local Awgni tradition as follows:

| Amharic                    | Awgni  |
|----------------------------|--|
| ጁኪቲ ዘሀ ክቸዳ<br>ጉባላ ሁና ሂይስቲ! | In the middle honorable relatives<br>a deformed girl could marry! <sup>106</sup> |

Searching for the wife is the responsibility of the boy's family. After checking the maturity of their boy, the family informs his relatives to search for a good girl. After relatives got the

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<sup>101</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>102</sup> Informants: Solomon and Bellew.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Berihun M. Mekonnen and Harald Aspen, pp. 9-15; Informants: Solomon, Bellew, and Abebaw.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

good girl, the boy's family sends *šumagili* to the boy's family to ask for marriage. Before they directly give the response, the girl's family informs *šumagili* to give them time and come back another day. This is to collect information about the background of the boy and his family and discuss the issue with their relatives. If they are pleased with the boy and his family, they give positive responses to *šumagili*.<sup>107</sup>

After the response of the girl's family, *widgni* (process in which both parents discuss marriage) was carried out by selecting *šumagili*. In the *widgni*, the two families are expected to disclose the gifts they wanted to offer to the proposed couples accordingly. The boy is also expected to offer dowry for a girl's family as per the tradition of the society. If there is disagreement on the payment of dowry, the *šumagili* interfere and settle the difference. In exchange (*kisemi*) marriage which took place when a boy and girl arranged the marriage with the same family, there was no need to pay dowry. This type of marriage consolidates solidarity between the families of the marrying boys and girls. The exchange marriage is said to have adopted by the Awi Agäw from the Gumuz and Šenäšä peoples.<sup>108</sup>

After the end of the *widgni* process by deciding the date of the wedding and other issues, the girl's family invites *šumagili* for festivity. Then, both sides began to prepare themselves for the wedding ceremony. Starting from the eve of the wedding day, the boy and the girl to be married get the nickname bridegroom and bride respectively. Most of the time wedding is carried out on Thursday and Tuesday in May and April when the people are relatively free from the hard work and feasting months. A wedding that is held in other dates is traditionally considered as the wedding of "despised" society.<sup>109</sup>

All extended and close families involve in the wedding ceremony by contributing grain, money, and other items based on their wealth status.<sup>110</sup> On the wedding day, the bridegroom is expected to select the best men (*mezê*) numbered from fifty to twenty who escorts him to take the bride. Before he went to the bride's house, the bridegroom carries local beer called *defdef* by *šewa* and the best man carries him and rotates three times from right to left around

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<sup>107</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 9-21; Informants: Aderaw Yalew, Nega, and Anget.

<sup>108</sup> Abeje, pp. 29-30.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*; Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau, "BäAwi Behérésäb...", p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Abeje, p. 30.

*muqäça* (mortar). Then, the bridegroom drops the *şewa* with a beer into the mortar and the best men hit the *şewa* in the mortar. This tradition is done as a good wish to secure good luck for the bridegroom to get a virgin of the bride.<sup>111</sup>

When the best men reached the vicinity of the bride's residence, they send two best men to meet with the bride's family and make necessary adjustments. Then, the bride's family goes and takes the bridegroom and best men to the house. Once they entered the house, the escorts of the bridegroom provided with different drinks and foods. Thus, the best men enjoyed cultural food and drinks and played songs until they leave the house of the bride. Finally, when the escorts, the bride, and the bridegroom leave the bride's home, there is a mock fight between the family of the bride and the escorts for the sake of fun.<sup>112</sup>

The best men also play songs and enjoy cultural food and drinks outside the home of the bridegroom after they returned from the bride's home. After they enjoyed and played, they call on a priest and two well-known *şumagili* with the bridegroom's mother. Then, the bridegroom and the bride together with their escorts enter the home and sit on the side of the door on a white mat. Then, the *şumagili* bless them and the mother of the bridegroom swears an oath to treat the bride as her daughters.<sup>113</sup> When the oath-taking ceremony is completed, the family of the bridegroom gives a sheep and the couple spent in a special class known as *çaguli*, which is covered by white cloths. The escorts and the family of the bridegroom together with neighbors as well as relatives play songs throughout the night time.<sup>114</sup>

A wedding is one of those social occasions which is escorted by the horsemen amongst the Awi Agäw people. The bridegroom is taken to the bride's home on horseback with another horse that is used to take the bride to his home. After the end of the ceremony at the bride's home, the couples have moved up on two horses separately and continue their journey into the bridegroom's home. The songs by the horsemen in wedding ceremonies are titled locally as "*eyawlega shebo*", and "*mushiraw abeba*." The couples together with some men once again

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Abeje, pp. 30-37; Informants: Solomon, Bellew, Abebaw, Seleshi, and Aderaw.

<sup>113</sup> Abeje, pp. 30-37; Informants: Worku, Nega, and Anget.

<sup>114</sup> Abeje, pp. 30-37; Informants: Aderaw, Solomon, Bellew, and Seleshi.

go to the bride's family after three days. This is done as a sign of honor to the girl's family for she was being virgin.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 8: Traditional Wedding of Awi Agäw, Source: AZCTB

### 3.3. Burial and Funeral System

The way the burial ceremony is conducted is embedded in larger and well-articulated aspects of the culture of the society.<sup>116</sup> Burial rite varies based on the belief and customs of society. Each society has its unique ways to deal with death and the dead body. The Agäws of Gojjam (Awi Agäw) has also a unique way of performing the burial ceremony.<sup>117</sup>

The Awi Agäw people are said to have a long history of constructing burial sites. The Gemate burial site, which is found in East Gojjam at about 18kms southwest of Dejen town, is believed to have been constructed by the Agäw people who were the earlier settlers of the area. It had served as the religious and burial site for several years. The Gemate burial site is

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<sup>115</sup> Alemu, “Horse culture & tourism development...”, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> Nimrod Grisaru, “Bereavement Customs, Grief and Rituals among Ethiopian Immigrants to Israel,” *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2008), P. 111.

<sup>117</sup> J. Abbink, “Funeral as Ritual: An Analysis of Me'en Mortuary Rites (Southwest Ethiopia),” *Istituto Italiano per L’Africa e l’Oriente*, Anno 47, No. 2 (1992), pp. 222.

unique and uncommon in other Gojjam areas. This is because the bodies buried by putting one over the other being separated by a kind of wood and thick layers of mud.<sup>118</sup>



Figure 9: Gemate Burial Site, Source, Atsbha's Article, Gemate burial site

Abečekil, Aduck, and Gelgäl Sänbu are the other sites which are believed to have been the burial places of the Awi Agäw people before their conversion to Christianity. Abečekeli burial site is located in West Gojjam Zone of South Ačäfär *wäräda*, particularly, in Abečekeli *qäbälé*. There is a lack of data regarding the Abečekeli burial site but it is supposed to be the burial place of pre-Christian Awi Agäw people. According to oral traditions, the name of the site has an Agäw (Awgni) version which means "let me buried with my father."<sup>119</sup>

Aduk burial site is located in Bänja *wäräda*, particularly, in Ambi Mariam *qäbälé*. Some local traditions indicate that Aduk was the mother of the seven houses of Agäw. It is believed that she was buried in the natural forest found in the Čeranti Mountain that borders on the former Bänja and Ankäšä *wärädas*. People who pass along the Aduk burial site put stone customarily.<sup>120</sup> The purpose of putting stone is to protect themselves from the curse of Aduk

<sup>118</sup> Atsbha Gebreegziabher *et al.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>119</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic...", pp. 18-19

<sup>120</sup> Informants: Ayenew Fenta and Wolde Mekonnen.

by securing her burial site from the destruction of animals. Any archaeological study has not yet conducted on this burial site and there is a lack of sources.<sup>121</sup>

The Gelgäl Sänbu burial site is found in Dangela *wäräda*, particularly, in Gayeta *qäbälé*. A scientific team that constituted men from national, provincial and sub-provincial levels visited the site and discovered the different household tools in the 1980s. In recent times, the Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau conducted an archaeological excavation in the different places of Gelgäl Sänbu. Similarly, the Dangela *Wäräda* Culture and Tourism Office together with staffs from Dangela secondary schools discovered artifacts. These artifacts are kept in the Dangela *wäräda* culture and tourism office.<sup>122</sup>

There are two contradictory views regarding the belongingness of the Gelgäl Sänbu burial site. Some informants explained that Gelgäl Sänbu was the burial site of the pre-Christian Awi Agäw people.<sup>123</sup> Others argued that it was the burial place of the Gumuz people who were the early settlers of the area. Linguistically, Gelgäl Sänbu burial seems to belong to the Gumuz people because Sänbu means "father" in the Gumuz language. The artifacts discovered from the Gelgäl Sänbu site also show Gumuz burial tradition and further strengthens that this burial site belongs to the Gumuz people. The local tradition also shows the settlement of Gelgäl Sänbu by the Gumuz people until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>124</sup>

In the Awi Agäw tradition, the deceased was buried in the forests before the expansion of Christianity and the subsequent establishment of churches. This was because they had been worshiping spirits believed to have dwelt in the forests and other physical features. Still, the unbaptized children are buried in the forests under big trees in the Awi Agäw society. The pre-Christian Awi Agäw buried household utensils with the deceased because they believed in life after death. It is also said that the Awi Agäw buried more dead bodies in a single hill to protect them from decomposition and destruction by animals.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic ...", pp. 18-19; Informants: Wolde and Ayenew.

<sup>122</sup> Alemayehu, "State and Ethnic ...", pp. 18-19; Informants: Yehalem Demeke and Alemerew Ejegu.

<sup>123</sup> Informants: Yehalem and Alemerew Ejegu.

<sup>124</sup> Informants: Asmamaw and Nega.

<sup>125</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 26-30.

The Awi Agäw people had also their unique lamentation tradition known as *wawajay* in earlier times. In the *wawajay* tradition, the mourners cry by forming the circle when lamenters come from outside. After they wailed in such a way for certain minutes, both sides come together and show their grief by hugging each other. This process continues until the end of the burial ceremony. The most important utensils of the dead person were taken and placed at the place prepared for dirge. If the deceased person was a man, the farming tools and *wancha*, wands, and hide were taken into the place reserved for wailing to signify that he had been the respected and strong man in the community. On the other hand, when a woman died, *mossab* and *ensera* were displayed to signify that she had been the skilled woman in the community. Besides, the lamentation was conducted in Agäw (Awni) language praising poetically the dead person for his good relationship and his status.<sup>126</sup> For instance, the sons and daughters compose the following poems when they wail for their mothers:

| Amharic      | Awni  |
|--------------|---|
| ክምስታውዳስ ገብዳ  | Not to be enslaved by others                    |
| ኩሌ የካላይ ችብዳ! | give me food in my hands please! <sup>127</sup> |

This type of lamentation ceremony is still practiced in some areas of the Agäw Awi Zone, particularly, in Zegäm and Guangua *wärädaas*.<sup>128</sup>

The burial and lamentation tradition of the Awi Agäw has been transformed after the expansion of Christianity and the subsequent establishment of the churches. After the establishment of churches, the deceased's body has started to be buried in the church like any other Ethiopian Orthodox Christian society. According to informants, the Christian Amhara lamentation tradition was expanded into many areas of the Awi Agäw during the reign of Haile-Selassie. Thus, the burial tradition of most of the Awi Agäw people is similar to the Christian Amhara society these days. They followed the strict rule of the burial ceremony. The corpse is washed for purification and the clothes of the deceased are delivered to the family. The body is also wrapped in shrouds called "*mekafenja*" a cloth made of white cotton.

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<sup>126</sup> Informants: Asmamaw, Yehalem, and Alemerew Ejegu

<sup>127</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>128</sup> Informants: Asmamaw and Nega.

The Confessor father and other priests are expected to perform ritual ceremony first at home and then at the graveside.<sup>129</sup>

Like in the *wawajay* tradition, the death of a beloved one is informed to the surrounding society by trumpet i.e. wind blowing instrument of the society. As soon as the news of death is received, the surrounding society starts gathering at the deceased home. The family of the deceased is also expected to inform the death of the person to all relatives and fellows. The death of the beloved is informed to his/ her distant relatives and fellows by messengers. Until the gathering of all the distant relatives and fellows, the corpse stays in the home. The lamentation is also performed in the home of the deceased from two to three days until the arrival of distant relatives and fellows. It starts in the morning from 5:00 AM up to 9:00 AM and in the afternoon from 4:00 pm up to 6:00 pm. After the distant relatives and fellows are gathered, the corpse is taken to the church for the final burial ceremony.<sup>130</sup>

The lamentation continues in the church with elaborate ceremonies. The family and relatives of the deceased cry and wail loudly calling out the name of the deceased and beat their chests with their hands. The wailers are experienced individuals of the community who are introduced to the Amhara wailing system these days. They wail by praising the dead poetically. The verses of praise vary based on the biography of the deceased person. The lamentation continues long hours, particularly, if the deceased is a young, religious father, and local elder.<sup>131</sup>

In the Awi Agāw society, the horse was said to have used only to escort the burial ceremony of wealthy individuals in earlier times.<sup>132</sup> Since the 1940s, however, the burial has been escorted by the horsemen, if the deceased is a member of the horsemen association. When the head of the horsemen association, *Agafari* commands the horsemen to make funeral chants, they encircle the whole mourners including families of the deceased and his relatives, and make funeral chants and praising the deceased, turn by turn, and reminding the patriotic and other deeds of the deceased. The funeral chanting that conveys different messages are organized for

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<sup>129</sup> Shetu Ayen *et al.*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>130</sup> Informants: Solomon, Bellew, and Selleshi.

<sup>131</sup> Teshale Worku, "The Value of Culture among the Awi People," (BA Essay in Sociology, Bahir Dar University, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>132</sup> Alemu, "Horse culture & tourism development...", p. 7.

the patriots, fathers, mothers, horsemen, prominent individuals, and brave farmers. Some of the horses are decorated with clothes of different colors decoration known as *lofisa* on their back and head and stand in lamentation place.<sup>133</sup>

The young men of the deceased community have the responsibility to dig the burial site, and preparing the casket for the burial of the deceased body. After the end of the ritual ceremony of the church for the deceased known as absolution or *fetehate* and blessing by father confessor, the deceased is buried in the location of his testament or in a place that is meaningful to the family such as near to burial of his ancestors. During this time, the whole attendants and his family bitterly express their grief. The burial ceremony is concluded through reading the biography of the deceased person. Finally, the wailers returned with the family to be served with coffee, *areqé* (local alcoholic drink), *kollo* (roasted grain), and *nefero* (boiled grain) in the home of the deceased person.<sup>134</sup>

A funeral is a significant event that involves the community amongst the Awi Agäw people. The community contributed grain to help with the funeral expenses of the deceased family who are members of the *Idir* association in rural areas. Neighbors and relatives also make a regular visit and stay with the bereaving family overnight to ensure that the deceased family is not alone. The funeral ceremony continues for several weeks and months and any remaining distant relatives and associates arrive to offer their condolences.<sup>135</sup>

During the death of family members, women, in particular, shave their hairs, scratches their faces, wear black and dirty clothes, and avoid decorative clothing and jewelry. Similarly, men do not shave their hairs and also wear a black hat and clothes for several weeks and months. The magnitude and the duration of the funeral is based on the age and the social and economic status of the deceased person. The funeral of a child is less ceremonial and lasts few weeks, while the funeral of a young, religious father and local elder is elaborate and lasts at least to *täzkar*, a major commemorative feast for a dead person in the 40<sup>th</sup> day.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Informants: Yazew and Yenet.

<sup>134</sup> Informants: Asmamaw, Solomon, and Bellew.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Informants: Yazew and Yenet.

The social aspect includes several issues that link with the social issues of society directly or indirectly. Social stratification, indigenous administrative institutions, marriage, and burial practices, and ceremonies are the major social aspects of the Awi Agäw people. The national and regional socio-economic and political development of the Ethiopian Christian state have transformed the social aspects Awi Agäw people since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This process was consolidated during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and reached its peak during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the social aspects of the Awi Agäw are not much distinctive from the Christian Amhara people these days. It does not mean that the social practices of the Awi Agäw that are evident today are of Amhara social practices in entirety. There are some social practices unique to the Awi Agäw people. Some others are the blends predominantly with Amhara and in some extent with other peoples.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. AWI AGAW'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE NEIGHBORING PEOPLES

#### 4.2. Introduction to Awi Agäw Interactions with the Neighboring Peoples

Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl are inhabited by the various cultural groups, particularly, Agäw, Gumuz, Šenaša, Oromo and Amhara. The Awi Agäw people have a long-standing and multifaceted relationship with the Gumuz, Šenaša, Oromo, and Amahra peoples.<sup>137</sup> The historical relationship between the Amhara and Awi Agäw people is discussed in the preceding chapters directly or indirectly. Thus, this chapter surveys the relationship between the Awi Agäw with the Gumuz, Oromo, and Šenaša peoples.

#### 4.3. The Awi Agäw and Gumuz Peoples

The Gumuz are said to have been the earlier settlers of Gojjam, who had been pushed into less favorable lowlands of the Abbay (Blue Nile) valley by the relatively powerful Awi Agäw people for several centuries. Despite their expulsion from the highlands into the lowlands of the Abbay (Blue Nile) valley, James Bruce and Charles Beke had witnessed the presence of Gumuz in the central parts of Gojjam, particularly, in the Agäw Meder and Damot in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Gumuz live in the lowlands of the Agäw Awi Zone, particularly, in Zigäm, Jawi, Guangua and Ayo Guagesa *wärädas* to these days.<sup>138</sup>

The available written sources reveal that the Agäw and Gumuz have a long history of relations characterized by both hostility and friendship. The relationship between the Awi Agäw and the Gumuz was characterized by the old "patron-client" type until the 1970s. The Aksumite rulers were interested in the trade that passed through the Gumuz lands and they assigned Agaw chiefs to protect trade routes and collect tribute by the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The kings of Aksum received the gold from the Gumuz through their Agäw

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<sup>137</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic Relation...", pp.65-70.

<sup>138</sup> Tsega, "Inter-Ethnic Relations...", pp. 16-17.

representatives. The settlement of the Awi Agäws in Gojjam further strengthened the relationship between the Agäw and the Gumuz peoples.<sup>139</sup>

There is a controversial woman named Aduck in the tradition of the Awi Agäw and the Gumuz peoples. Some oral tradition describes that Aduck was Gumuz's spiritual and political woman who first welcomed and received the seven houses of Agäw into the present territory. She was said to have played a vital role in the division of the land among the original seven houses of Agäw. When Aduck was getting old, the seven houses of Agäw treated her properly until she died. Moreover, they all congregated when she died and buried her in the border area of Ankäša and Banjä *wärädas* particularly, in Ambi Marriam *qäbälé*.<sup>140</sup> In other traditions, she is believed to have been the mother of the seven houses of Agäw moved with them to the new areas.<sup>141</sup>

As a result of the Oromo population movement and war of Imam Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia shifted its capital from Šäwa to the Lake Tana regions in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This development significantly affected the fate of the Awi Agäw and their relation with the Gumuz neighbors.<sup>142</sup> After the shift of the capital to the Lake Tana region, the Awi Agäw and Gumuz became no longer remote to the Christian state. They were brought under the control of the Christian state after long and protracted campaigns. By then, the Awi Agäw chiefs were assigned by the Gondarine kings to administer and collect tribute from the Gumuz people.<sup>143</sup>

The Awi Agäw chiefs' control over the Gumuz declined in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was due to two national and regional developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First, the Gondarine kings were not willing and able to assist the Awi Agäw chiefs in their tasks. They were not willing to provide aid to the Awi Agäw chiefs because their relationship was not friendly after the assassination of Iyassu I in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the Gondarine kings were incapable of assisting the Awi Agäw chiefs due to the overall crisis of the second

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<sup>139</sup> Sergew, pp. 28-37.

<sup>140</sup> Informants: Worku, Habtemariam, and Makurew.

<sup>141</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic ...", pp. 30-37; Informants: Fekadu and Worku.

<sup>142</sup> Taddesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw,"...pp. 16-17.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*; Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša *Wäräda*...", pp. 35-38.

half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, the Awi Agäw chiefs were busy fighting with their rival regions of Gojjam from the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>144</sup>

From 1896 and 1898, *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot of Gojjam made a campaign into the lowlands bordering Ethiopia and Sudan. Then, he conquered the Gumuz chiefdoms that were found between the Agäw Meder and Bäläs River in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to the Gondarine kings, *Negus* Täklä-Häymanot and his son *Ras* Häilu (1901-1935) assigned and assisted the Awi chiefs to administer and collect tribute from the Gumuz people. Like their predecessors, the Awi Agäw chiefs carried out extensive slave raiding and imposed a heavy tax on the Gumuz people. This reached its peak after the appointment of *Fitawrari* Zäläqä Liqu (1905-1935) to administer the Gumuz. He raided and enslaved Gumuz throughout the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though Ethiopia had issued an edict against slave trade in 1924, it did little to stop the enslavement of the Gumuz people by their Agäw-Amhara neighbors.<sup>145</sup>

Accordingly, the raiding and enslavement of Gumuz by the Agäw and Amhara military classes was continued until the Italian invasion of 1935. Besides the enslavement, they had a negative view for the socio-cultural systems of the Gumuz people. Thus, the Awi Agäw and Amhara neighbors called them "*shankilla*" to mean "dark-skinned" lowlanders who did not attract the attention of the chroniclers except in the time of slave raids.<sup>146</sup> The Agäw and Amhara portrayed the Gumuz as an "uncivilized" and "primitive" society. As a result, they exploited their resources and enslaved them for a long time.<sup>147</sup>

The Gumuz people were unable to withstand the raiding and enslavement by their Agäw - Amhara neighbors. This was because the Agäw and Amhara possessed relatively better weapons. As a result, the Gumuz moved to the Ethio-Sudanese borders and took self-seclusion to defend themselves from raiding activities. They also developed a sense of hatred

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<sup>144</sup> Tadesse, "Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agäw,"...pp. 16-17; Informants: Worku, Habtemariam, and Makurew.

<sup>145</sup> Abdussamad, "Trading in Slaves ...", pp. 41-45.

<sup>146</sup> Alemayehu, "Mapping the Socio-Cultural Landscape of the Gumuz Community of Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia," *African Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. 7(2), No. 08B3B6F56037 (2015), pp. 211-221.

<sup>147</sup> Maru Siyoum, "A History of Resettlement in Mätäkäl since 1974," (M.A Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2010), pp. 3-4.

towards the Agäw and the Amhara peoples. The killing of the Amhara and Agäw was considered a great success by the Gumuz people.<sup>148</sup>

The Gumuz also launched a series of revolts against the Awi Agäw chiefs between the 1940s and 1960s. Immediately after the liberation from the Italian rule, they protested the continued practice of covert slavery and heavy taxation of the Awi Agäw chiefs and the continued patron-client relations. The protests were expressed through setting fire on the Agäw houses and crops, killing tax collectors and cattle keepers, and harassing people.<sup>149</sup>

The direct insurgence of the Gumuz against the Awi Agäw people started in 1944 after the death of Zäläqä Beru, a prominent Awi-Agäw chief. They refused to accept the order and pay tribute to the Awi Agäw chiefs. The uprising reached its peak when Lemcha, a self-appointed Gumuz rebellious chief organized a series of attacks against the Awi Agäw people in the early 1960s. During the revolt of the 1960s, the government had assisted the Awi Agäw chiefs to control Gumuz rebellious. The Awi Agäw chiefs who were supported by the government took brutal action and disarmed the Gumuz rebels. Besides, the government established a garrison town to keep peace in the area.<sup>150</sup>

The collapse of Haile Selassie's regime brought a change in the relationship between the Gumuz and the Awi Agäw. It ended the old patron-client or ruler subject type of relationships which lasted for several centuries. The *Derg* abolished the political rights provided to the Awi Agäw over the Gumuz and promoted Gumuz elders in local affairs. The programs of the *Derg* like development through cooperation, a campaign of literacy and adult education brought the people together and facilitated peaceful co-existence.<sup>151</sup> The *Derg's* resettlement program of the 1980s also brought a sense of sympathy between these peoples. Since both of them opposed resettlement fearing that it would result in the dispossession of land and deficiency of access to other common resources. However, the Awi Agäw elders mediated the conflict between Gumuz and settlers with the initiation of the government in the 1980s.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Maru, pp. 3-4.

<sup>149</sup> Alemayehu, "Mapping the Socio-Cultural...", pp. 215-221.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Biadegelegn.

<sup>151</sup> Alemayehu, "Mapping the Socio-Cultural...", pp. 215-221; Informant: Biadegelegn.

<sup>152</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12.

The change of the relation from being hostile to a peaceful one brought about a multifaceted interaction and cooperation between these peoples. The people from both sides established social and economic bonds through what was called the *wädäje* (friend) system. By this system, the Awi Agäw used the land of Gumuz for agriculture and the grazing of their animals. Besides, they rented Gumuz land for equal sharing of the produce. The Gumuz also adopted the practice of agriculture from the Agäw through this system. Both the Awi Agäw and the Gumuz also established closest relations for the development of their mutual benefits through friendship. Thus, they visited each other's houses either during feasts or difficult times. The Gumuz were invited by their Awi Agäw friends during public holidays and social and religious festivals such as Easter, New Year, *Mäsqäl* celebrations, Christmas, wedding, and other minor festivities.<sup>153</sup>

The *wädäje* (friend) interaction could develop into the *mijim* relationship. *Mijimi* is a Gumuz word that means best friend and it indicates the climax of interaction and relationship that was established through *wädäje*. The *mijim* ceremony was conducted by the slaughtering of animals by both sides. During this ceremony, both sides sprinkled blood while swearing an oath in front of the selected elders from both sides by underscoring not to break relationships throughout their generations. Accordingly, the succeeding generations on both sides continued to keep the *mijim* interaction even after the death of the original parents. As compared to *mijim*, *wädäje* was not a long-lasting friend relationship. It could be easily ended based on the condition of either side.<sup>154</sup>

The Awi Agaw people have also widely practiced *angua saहुgni* or breastfeeding within their community. *Angua Sahugni* is an Agaw phrase which means breastfeeding referring to the adoption of a "son" by "father." They have also used *angua saहुgni* to strengthen their relationships with other peoples. In particular, the Awi Agäw people have practiced *angua saहुgni* with the Gumuz people. The adopting individual is acting as a "father", while the adopted one is to be seen as a "son" and cooperating socially and economically.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Abebaw Assefa, p. 4.

<sup>154</sup> Wondim Tiruneh, "Dynamics of Inter-Ethnic Relations, Peaceful Co-Existence, Conflicts and Peace Building Mechanisms between the Gumuz and Non-Gumuz Communities (1961-1974)," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture, and Religion*, Vol. 38, ISSN 2422-8443 (2018), pp. 18-20.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Worku, Wolde, Yazew, Tessema, and Yenet.

The Awi-Gumuz relation was highly visible and applicable in the market areas. For instance, when the Gumuz brought gold, cotton, and oilseeds to the nearby markets such as Zigäm, Goha, Mäntawuhä, Mandura, Chagni, Dibaṭé, and other; in return for which Awi Agäw merchants exchanged with their products such as clothing, salt, sugar, coffee, and other related items. The Gumuz of the Agäw neighbors speak Agäw (Awgni) language and vice versa and carried out business transactions.<sup>156</sup>

Although the Awi Agäw and Gumuz have had such a long history of interaction, they remained distinctive in various socio-cultural practices.<sup>157</sup> Unlike the Awi Agäws who are adherents of Orthodox Christianity,<sup>158</sup> the majority of the Gumuz of who are neighbors to the Agäw practice indigenous beliefs. Some others are adherents of Islam and Protestant Christianity.<sup>159</sup> The Gumuz strongly associate repeated happening of deaths, drought and famine, and other natural calamities with the anger of indigenous spirits.<sup>160</sup> The burial tradition of the Gumuz is different from the Awi Agäw people. Unlike the Agäw who bury the deceased in the church, Gumuz buried the deceased persons in the backyard because they believed that the deceased has a chance to communicate with his/her relatives through spirits.<sup>161</sup>

The nutritional tradition of the Gumuz people is different from the Agäw and other highlander neighbors. There is less restriction in the selection of food amongst the Gumuz people. Unlike the highlanders whose staple food is *injära* with stew, the main food of Gumuz is sorghum. It is used for cooking porridge (*nga*) and brewing beer (*kea*). The Gumuz people also hunt wild animals, such as duikers and warhogs, and gather honey, wild fruits, roots, and seeds. The Gumuz believed that the absence of restrictions on the nutritional system helped them to

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<sup>156</sup> Dagnachew Ayenew, "Relative deprivation: An explanation to the inter-ethnic conflict in Mätäkäl Zone, North Western Ethiopia, since 1991," *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2018) pp. 1-14.

<sup>157</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic Relation...", pp.65-70.

<sup>158</sup> Daniel, pp.25

<sup>159</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12.

<sup>160</sup> Informants: Kassahun Engeda and Biadegelegn.

<sup>161</sup> Informants: Bimerew, Kassahun Engeda, and Biadegelegn.

maintain their body balance and protect them from any diseases. They criticize highlanders for the food taboos.<sup>162</sup>

In border areas, intermarriage between the different cultural groups is common. However, it is hardly noticeable between the nearby Awi Agäw and the Gumuz people. This is because the intermarriage with other society is restricted in Gumuz culture. Besides, the Awi Agäw and other highlanders are not interested in inter-marriages with the Gumuz due to variance in the food, religion, psychological makeup, and other cultural characteristics.<sup>163</sup>

The Gumuz are largely depended on the traditional medicinal plants in the treatment of diseases. They prefer traditional medicine for their health rather than getting medical treatment at modern health centers. The Gumuz traditional medical healers believe that the plant species grown-up along the banks of the Dura and Abbay (Blue Nile) rivers are useful to treat various human diseases.<sup>164</sup>

The post-1990s relationship between the Gumuz and the Awi Agäw has been studied by different researchers. Alemayehu Erikhun studied the relationship between the Gumuz and the Awi Agäw peoples. In his study, Alemayehu indicated the consolidation of the friendly relation between the Gumuz and the Awi Agäw after the political development of the 1990s. According to him, this was due to the consolidation of individual bonds that developed earlier and the problem of land scarcity among the Awi Agäw people. As a result of land scarcity, the Agäws needed relation with the Gumuz more than ever before. Thus, they have rented land from the Gumuz for an equal share of the harvests. The mutual crop sharing has reduced the dependency of the Gumuz on the hunting of wild animals.<sup>165</sup>

Dagnachew Ayenew is another researcher who studied the relationship between the Gumuz and Awi Agäw peoples. In contrast to Alemayehu's view, Dagnachew noted that the post-1990s administrative rearrangement made by the EPRDF reengineered a disagreement between the Gumuz and the Awi Agäw peoples. The government's concession of absolute autonomy to Gumuz who recognized as indigenous in the newly created Mätäkäl Zone of

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<sup>162</sup> Alemayehu, "Mapping the Socio-Cultural...", pp. 215-221.

<sup>163</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12; Informants: Habtemariam, Kassahun Engeda, and Biadegelegn.

<sup>164</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12.

<sup>165</sup> Alemayehu, "Inter-Ethnic ...", pp. 30-37.

BGNRS produced dissatisfaction among the Awi Agäw people. As he outlined, the Agäw were deprived of not only political and economic benefits but also social and cultural rights in the post-1991 periods in the area.<sup>166</sup>

This study supports Dagnachew's view. As informants strongly and sometimes emotionally stated, this period witnessed new forms of conflict between the two groups that range from boundary conflict to forceful eviction of the Awi Agäw people. As they noted, the Awi Agäw people are disintegrated into two different regions i.e. BGNRS and ANRS. The Awi Agäws people of the BGNRS are denied the constitutional right to exercise their language. Moreover, they faced discrimination in employment and educational opportunities.<sup>167</sup>

#### **4.4. The Awi Agäw and Oromo peoples**

The settlement of the Agäws in Gojjam predates that of the Oromo people. The Oromo moved into Gojjam from the north via Gondar and from the south via Wälläga crossing the Abbay (Blue Nile) river. They seem to have settled in northern Gojjam during the reign of Särsa Dengel (1563-1597) in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The settlement of the Oromo in the northern parts of Gojjam is said to have intensified during the reign of Susenyos. Susenyos had special connection with the Oromo of northern Ethiopia in his early life. He was captured in his youth by the Oromo in a battle. Susenyos learned the Oromo language and grew up in the Oromo culture. Later, he joined his relatives in exchange for Oromo captives. After the death of Särsa Dengel in 1597, Susenyos returned to his Oromo friends escaping from the assassination attempt of his rivals who feared that he would ascend to the throne. He fought many battles with the help of Oromo soldiers against the Gonadrine kings after which he took over the throne.<sup>168</sup>

After he rose to the throne in 1607, Susenyos stationed two Oromo regiments, Ilmana and Denssa in the northern parts of Gojjam. Thereafter, the successive Gondarine kings continued to station the Oromo soldiers in different areas of the Agäw Meder as lords (*balabats*) and chiefs. This, in turn, destroyed the traditional defense (*chäwa*) system of the Christian state.

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<sup>166</sup> Dagnachew, pp. 2-5.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Habtemariam, Kassahun Engeda, and Bimerew.

<sup>168</sup> Fikre Tolossa, "Nobles of Oromo Descent Who Ruled Ethiopia," [Ethiopian Review.com](http://EthiopianReview.com) (1992), pp. 1-5.

The *chäwa* were soldiers of the Christian state who were stationed in Agäw Meder and other areas to make the people loyal and pay tribute. Even though some of them were recruited from the local people, most of the *chäwa* were brought from Christian territories.<sup>169</sup>

Gradually, the Méča, Ilmana, and Denssa districts of northern Gojjam were entirely supervised and administered by the Oromo generals and chiefs. The political, military, and cultural influence of the Oromo in Agäw Meder was consolidated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>170</sup> Ayenew Fenta explains that 'to force the Awi Agäw people to pay tribute, the Ethiopian state, stationed Christian forces in Agäw Meder. Particularly, Susenyos and Fasilädäs were actively engaged in stationing new forces in Agäw Meder.<sup>171</sup>

Ayenew Fenta states that the invasion of Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl by the Oromo has mentioned by different writers. Ašmä Giyorgis indicated that during the reign of Susenyos (1607-1632) the Oromo occupied the districts of Mätäkäl, Gongga, Dangur, Ankäša, Čara, Dangela, Kwakira, and other Awi Agäw areas. During this time, the governor of Gojjam *Ras Se'elä Krestos* provided military assistance to the Awi Agäw and defeated the Oromo and expelled them from Agäw Meder by the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>172</sup>

*Aläqqa Täklä-Iyäsus* also stated that Susenyos placed Oromo soldiers in Gojjam, Damot, Mätäkäl, and Banjä. Susenyos was said to have been responsible for allowing Oromo to settle on church lands to strengthen control in the areas.<sup>173</sup> The political, military, and cultural influence of the Oromo in the northern part of Gojjam continued until the end of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Awi Agäw and the Oromo of northern Gojjam gradually lost their cultural identity. Thus, the Awi Agäw and the Oromo of the Méča, Ilmana, and Dénssa districts were largely transformed into the Amharic speaking Christian society. Both of them have to count back many generations to come across their respective names.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*; Temesgen, pp. 260-261.

<sup>170</sup> Temesgen, pp. 263-265; Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", pp. 10-11.

<sup>171</sup> Ayenew, "A History of Ankäša...", p. 10.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>174</sup> Tsega, "Inter-Ethnic Relations...", pp. 107-108, Informant: Wolde.

Gojjam was also one of the regions which had been affected by the Oromo population movement and expansion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Several Oromo groups also crossed the Abbay (Blue Nile) River and settled in the different parts of the Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>175</sup> Some of the present-day Agäw (Awgni) speakers of Bälayä are said to have been the Oromo of Arsi who were intermingled with the pre-existing Awi Agäw people. They had originally come under the leadership of a man called Gurach and settled amidst the Awi Agäw people. Later, they further expanded and occupied the area which is currently known as Jawi named after the Oromo clans. The other chief named Amuru also led and settled the Oromo into Azäna, Zigäm, and Segadi areas.<sup>176</sup>

Some groups of the Oromo also settled in Wänbara coming from Wällälga, particularly, Bojjii, Gidamii, and Najjo at different times. They were mainly handcraft workers like weavers and blacksmiths who had limited access to agricultural land. The limited right to use agricultural land is said to have forced them to move into the fertile land of Wänbara. The early movers established a resting site in the eastern part of Wänbara and conducted an expedition further northwards. The large scale Oromo settlement in Wänbara occurred during the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>177</sup> In these ways, the Oromo established dominance in the Wänbara district. After their dominance in the Wänbara, they continued their expansion into the Awi Agäw inhabited areas. Nevertheless, their attempt to expand beyond the Dura River was stopped by the Awi Agäw people. The territorial dispute between the Oromo and the Awi Agäw continued until the incorporation of the region by *Negus* Täklä Häimanot of Gojjam in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>178</sup>

The Oromo continued their ancient process of assimilation after their settlement in Mätäkäl areas. Since their early days of contact, they have developed mechanisms for establishing relationships with the non-Oromo people. Through these mechanisms, the Oromo established relations with the Awi Agäw people. The *michuu* institution, which is originally derived from an Oromo tradition, is practiced among the Awi Agäws who live as their neighbors. It was started in the early years of the Oromo settlement in Mätäkäl. The *michuu* is a reciprocal bond

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<sup>175</sup> Tsega, "Inter-Ethnic Relations...", pp. 27-29.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*; pp. 27-29.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*.

of friendship and a traditional basis for solving conflicts among different people. It is also a life and property security institution, which establishes the free movement of people. The *Michuu* institution is used among all the inhabitants of Mätäkäl as a mechanism of conflict resolution and reconciliation according to their traditional practices.<sup>179</sup>

The Oromo of Bälayä, Zigam, and Guangua were transformed into the Agäw (Awni) speaking Christian society due to the long period of intermarriage and multifaceted co-interactions. As it happened in Northern Gojjam, they retained only Oromo names going back to a few generations. Some of the Agäw speakers in Bälayä, Zigäm, and Guangua claim their Oromo identity. Moreover, several Oromo place names in the different parts of Gojjam like Ilmana and Denssa, Mecha, Tulluta, and Mankusa may represent the transformation of the Oromo into the Amharic and Agäw (Awni) speaking Christian society. In the areas north of the Abbay River, the Oromo kept their linguistic and cultural identity only in Mätäkäl, particularly, in Wänbara until these days.<sup>180</sup>

#### **4.5. The Awi Agäw and Šenaša Peoples**

According to local traditions, the ancestors of Šenaša originally came from the Biblical Canaan. Their forefather is said to have left the country in search of pasture land to Egypt and lived in Egypt for a certain time. From Egypt, they are said to have been forced to move into the Horn of Africa due to land factors.<sup>181</sup> They reached Šäwa where they settled but later they were forced to move into Gojjam and adjacent territories south of the Abbay River due to population movements. They claim that their founding father was Shao, who begot Ashinao, Assibo, Boro, and Gongo. Shao was said to rule Šenaša in Šäwa for about two decades before they were dispersed on both sides of the Abbay River and formed the Omotic kingdom of Gongga in the southwestern territories. They moved and dispersed up to Gondar and western Wälläga, where they were assimilated into the Amhara and the Oromo respectively.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Bezawit, p. 77; Informant: Habtemariam.

<sup>181</sup> Aeqa Taye, pp. 11-12.

<sup>182</sup> Tsega, "Inter-Ethnic Relations...", p. 107-108; Abebe Ano, "The Šenaša Relation with other Gongga People," *Science, Technology & Arts Research Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2012), pp. 115.

Similar to the Agäw, Gonga is a general term representing the different cultural and linguistic societies. The Gonga language belongs to the Omotic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. It is divided into southern, central, and northern Gonga language sub-families. The southern Gonga sub-family comprises Kaffa, Shaka, Boša, and Hinnaro languages which are spoken in south-western Ethiopia in the vicinities of the Gojjeb River. The central Gonga is represented by the language of Anafillo which is spoken in western Wälläga south of the Abbay River. On the other hand, the northern Gonga refers to Šenaša language.<sup>183</sup>

The Šenaša who live north of the Abbay River, Wällälga were separated from the main body of the Gonga kingdom, which stretched up to the kingdom of Kafa in the south because of the Oromo expansion and the political and demographic changes that swept the country in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After the settlement of Oromo south of the Abbay River, some Šenaša people moved into Gojjam to take refuge and they increasingly settled north of the Abbay River up to Mätäkäl areas.<sup>184</sup>

The Šenaša people south of the Abbay River were already dominated by the Oromo people, while those living to the north of the Abbay River were victims of the different forms of exploitation by the Ethiopian Christian rulers through their Awi Agäw representatives. Thus, pushed by the Oromo settlement and the continuous raids of Ethiopian Christian rulers, the Šenaša living on both sides of the Abbay River lost their independence by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were also pushed from Gojjam (Damot and Agäw Meder) into Mätäkäl and settled in the Dangur, Guba, Wänbära, and Dibate districts. Unlike other areas, it is only in Mätäkäl that the Šenaša kept their cultural and linguistic identity.<sup>185</sup>

In Damot and Agäw Meder (including Guangua), the Šenaša lost their linguistic and cultural identity. They were transformed into Amharic and Agäw (Awgni) speaking Christian society. The name Guangua which is one of the *wärädas* in the Agäw Awi Zone today comes from Šenaša language. According to informants, Guangua was one of the areas inhabited by the Šenaša people. Besides, the localities in this and other districts of the Agäw Awi Zone were

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<sup>183</sup> Tsega, "Inter-Ethnic Relations...", p. 20-21.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, 107-178.

<sup>185</sup> Mengistu Geremew, "A History of Wänbära Wäräda, 1941-1991," (MA Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2016), pp. 7-8.

named in Šenaša language. Some examples of these are Weleta, Degera, Giram, Šašena, Askuna, and Areja. In all these localities the Šenaša people were entirely transformed by accepting tradition, customs, and language of the Awi Agäw.<sup>186</sup>

Like the Gumuz, the Šenaša had both hostile and friendly relations with the Awi Agäw people. They were exposed to slave raiding and taxation of the Agäw chiefs appointed by the Christian state. As a result of slave raiding and displacements, they retreated into inhospitable lowlands of the Abbay River. Moreover, the Šenaša were assimilated into the Oromo who crossed the Abbay River and settled in the Mätäkäl during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Schuver, a traveler who visited Gojjam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century described that Šenaša fortified their villages in an inaccessible cliff to protect themselves from invaders.<sup>187</sup>

The relationship between the Šenaša and Awi Agäw people changed after the downfall of Haile Selassie. As it was the case with the Gumuz, the old patron-client pattern of relationship was ended when the *Derg* promoted Šenaša to participate in the local affairs. The Šenaša and the Agäw were also united with the Gumuz against government resettlement of the several thousand people in the fertile lowlands of Mätäkäl in the 1980s. This was because they saw the resettlement as a threat to their livelihoods.<sup>188</sup>

The Šenaša are said to have the knowledge and wisdom of using different plant types for medicine and “magical” activities. They used plants found in the valleys of the Dura and the Abbay Rivers and those in the forests for different medical purposes. Some Šenaša herbalists have a traditional medical center in Chagni and other areas. Thus, the Šenaša medical herbalists are visited by the Awi Agäw people for health and magical issues. Sometimes, they are negatively portrayed as witchdoctors by the Awi Agäw people.<sup>189</sup>

There is no recorded conflict between the Awi Agäw and the Šenaša people in history. However, both the Agäw and the Amhara accuse Šenaša of having involved in the entire developments in Mätäkäl since the 1990s. First and foremost, they are said to have

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<sup>186</sup> Bezawit, p. 65.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*; Tsega, “Inter-Ethnic Relations...”, p. 20-21

<sup>188</sup> Binayew, pp. 2-12; Bézäwit, p. 65.

<sup>189</sup> Informants: Habtemariam, Kassahun Engeda, and Biadegelegn; Abraham Genet, “Indigenous Herbal Medicinal Knowledge among the Šenaša,” *Global Scientific Journals*, Vol. 6, Issue 9 (2018), p. 65.

championed in the rearrangement of Mätäkäl in the newly established BGNRS. Secondly, they are blamed for instigating Gumuz against the Agäw and the Amhara by creating rhetoric of victimhood that they were oppressed and exploited by these people.<sup>190</sup>

Generally, the Awi Agäw people have a long history of socio-cultural, economic, and political relationships with the neighboring peoples. They had a long period of contact with the Gumuz that predates the Oromo and Šenaša for several centuries. After the incorporation into the Christian state, the Awi Agäw chiefs served as intermediaries between the Gumuz and the central state until the 1970s. The appointment of the Awi Agäw chiefs over the Gumuz was stopped and the Gumuz elders were promoted in their respective areas after the 1970s. Moreover, the Gumuz people were recognized as the natives of Mätäkäl and granted a complete autonomy with the Šenaša in Mätäkäl since the 1990s. The relationship between the Oromo and the Awi Agäw started with the garrisoning of Oromo soldiers by Gondarine kings and large scale Oromo settlements in different parts of Gojjam between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The multifaceted contacts between the Šenaša and the Awi Agäw have also been established since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the Awi Agäw people have maintained a different degree of contact with their neighbors who influenced their social and cultural practices. The Awi Agäw people were not only influenced by the socio-cultural practices of others but also shared their languages and cultures to neighbors.

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<sup>190</sup> Informants: Habtemariam, Kassahun Engeda, and Biadegelegn.

## CONCLUSION

The Agäw people are one of the ancient Cushitic peoples of Ethiopia. They speak the Agäw language, which belongs to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language super-family. The Agäws had been single proto cultural groups; however, they split into sub-cultural groups after their dispersal over an extended territory. The four sub-groups have strong sentiment with the cultural and historical proto Agäw identity. These are northern Agäw (Belén), western Agäw (Qemant), eastern Agäw (Himra), and southern Agäw (Awi).

Therefore, the Awi Agäws people are one of the strong claimants of the proto-Agäw historical and cultural identity. The oral traditions and written documents associate the original home of the Awi Agäws to north-central Ethiopia. The historical sources provide various causes for the movement and settlement of the Awi Agäw people in the new area. The Awi Agäws (Agäws of Gojjam) had maintained their autonomous status until they were incorporated by the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom (Empire) in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Until the incorporation and gradual integration into the Christian Kingdom (Empire), the Awi Agäws people had their distinctive socio-cultural aspects from Christian society. However, the socio-cultural aspects of the Awi Agäws started to transform with their incorporation into the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom (Empire) in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The process of the socio-cultural interaction and integration between the Awi Agäws and Christian Amhara society advanced particularly due to the political development of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was further strengthened when the three regions of Gojjam were brought together in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The socio-cultural transformation of the Awi Agäws reached its highest stage with the attempts of the central government to centralize, modernize, and introduce uniform economic and political systems during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the several centuries of interaction and integration processes, the socio-cultural practices of the Awi Agäw were eroded as they became more integrated into the Amhara society. Thus, these days the socio-cultural integration of the Agäw and the Amharas in Gojjam reached the levels where one is indistinguishable from the other except some cultural practices that endured to this day.

Besides the Amhara, the Awi Agäw have had a long history of interactions with the Gumuz, Oromo, and Šenaša peoples. They have established and maintained different degrees of interactions with these cultural groups in many aspects of life like political, social, economic, and cultural arenas. Their relations with neighbors have been characterized by friendship and hostility. The interactions of the Awi Agäw with the neighbors have restricted to some aspects, unlike the Amhara with whom they are highly integrated and share many cultural practices if not all.

The survey of the socio-cultural history of the Awi Agäw people helps us understand how the several centuries of national and regional socio-economic and political developments and interactions with other peoples formed and reformed their social-cultural aspects. The study could also show how the national and regional historical developments and peoples interactions resulted in the socio-cultural blending of the Awi Agäw people and other Ethiopia peoples. The nature and degree of the relationship have determined the level of their socio-cultural blending with other peoples.

## GLOSSARY

*Abba*: A common title used for elderly persons refereeing to the “father”

*Agafari*: A protocol official who serves as superintendent of banquets

*Atbia Dañña*: A low-level administrator who was acting as judges

*Ato*: A common title used for adult men and equivalent to English mister for adult males

*Awräjä*: It was the largest administrative division next to the province

*Azurite*: Traditional music of Awi practiced in Zigäm to mark the beginning of the New Year

*Balabät*: A person who is descended from the founding ancestor and had a right to get access to *rist* land in pre-1975 Northern Ethiopia

*Birr*: The basic monetary unit of Ethiopia

*Čeqa Šum*: A lowest administrative official before the 1975 Land Reform which bridged the *gultä gäž* with the people

*Däjjazmač*: It was a high title that follows *Bitwoded* in precedence. It originally referred to as "a gatekeeper"

*Derg*: The military of government of Ethiopia which ruled from 1974-1991

*Fifi*: Kumpal music with ritual performance and narration of the story of exodus

*Fitawrari*: is a noble title ranked after *Dejazmach* formerly a military one, meaning "Leader of the vanguard"

*Injera*: A traditional pancake made of *teff* and or other cereals

*Kollo*: A roasted grain made of maize, barley, wheat, and other crops

*Kwali*: A kind of spirit which is believed to cause danger unless properly revered

*Meseläné*: A political appointee who rules in the name of the Emperor

*Mäskäl*: A cultural and religious celebration of the Finding of the True Cross

*Mossob*: A large basket made locally in which food is served

*Negus*: The highest non-royal title ranks after *Ras* in precedence

*Qäbälé*: The lowest administrative unit which has been established since 1975

*Ras*: The title, during the Imperial period, immediately below the king

*Rest*: land as well as land use right through inheritance in pre- 1975 in Northern Ethiopia.

*Sahasivi*: A spirit that would cause danger if not worshipped properly

*Šumagili*: Elderly who mediate conflicts between family members, relatives, and villagers.

*Ṭakläy Gezat*: The largest administrative division (province) during Haileselassie

*Tala*: Traditional alcoholic drink which is made of locally

*Wäräda*: An administrative level above the *qäbälé* and below the zone

*Woizero*: A common title used for adult women and equivalent to English miss for adult females

*Zämänä Mäsafent*: Era of Princes (1769-1855) when there was no strong central government.

*Zone*: An administrative unit above the *wäräda* and below the region

APPENDIXCES

Appendix -I

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ግ ስ ታ ወ ቫ

የዓ አገበባ ዘክም ነገደ ይሁፃ  
ለኢትዮጵያ ብርሃን ግብር ስራ አስተግሪ ነቢይ ሰጥርያ  
ገርግደ ገገው ነገሥት ተፃግኖ ጋይላ ሥላሴ ስሞ አገዛዝበላር ዘኢትዮጵያ ፤  
ለኢትዮጵያ ብርሃን ገርግደ ሆይ

1ኛ. ከመልካኙ ዓፄ ስም አገው ደበበ አዳል፤ 2ኛ. የአባቲ ስም አገው አዳል ጌዬሉ  
3ኛ. የናቲ ስም አገው ጥረነሽ አገገፃ 4ኛ. የአዲሱ ልክ 72ተኛ ከጋት 5ኛ. ግርግር አገ  
ረ አገው ደድ ከፍል አውራጃው ፃገገል 6ኛ. ሥረዋ አርቫ 7ኛ. ዘረ አገው አግረ ከርስቲያን  
8ተኛ. ሃይማኖቱ እርቶይከባደ ተጭይ 9ኛ. ሄገነቲ ኢትዮጵያዊ የሆነው አገገ አገሰተኛ ዲህያ  
ለገርግደ ገገሆይ ከዚህ የተጠቀሰው ፍረ ጉዳይ 1ኛ. አሁን በዘመን በድልድ  
ል ባርታ ስለ አታላቀው በአገዛዝ በከብር ጉጭ ጠቅላይ ገዛት ጭስጥ የሚገኘው ገቢት አገው  
ደድ የተባለው አገር ገቢት አገው ደድ የሚሰጠው ምክንያት አገሠሁ 7 አገውኙ የተባሉ አባ  
ታችን ጥንት ላስታ አገው በቀጣ አገው የገ ገነቲ በተባለው አገር በተፃግኖ ደ ሄልክ ዘመነ ግ  
ገገሥት ነገደ አዳል ተብሎ ተተሰረው ሀዘብ ተከፍለው ጭተው በዚህ ቦታ ተሠረበት ተብሎ የሚ  
ገረው ዘመነ 4575 ዓተ ዓለም ገገው በተፃግኖ ደ ሄልክ ዘመነ ግገሥት ነው ተብሎ ቢነገር  
አገበግለገ በአባታችን አስከ አኛ የአቀጣጣ ታሪክ አስከዚህ ድረስ ነው በዚያን ቀንና ዘመን  
ጭረን አሁን አኛ አለገበት 55 ዓተ ምሕረትዘመነ ቢጥር 1880 ከጋት ይጠይቃል፡፡

2ተኛ አገሠሁ 7ተ አገገኛ የተባሉ አባታችን በዚህ ቀንና ዘመን ጭተው በዚህ ቦ  
ታ ተሰጥተው ጭረን ጥበብ ምገግ ምገግ አገረን አቀጣጣ አውረው አባረው በባረው ከተሰጡ  
ት በጋላ ያቀትን አገር ጭረተን በሰምነት ልክ በ7 ከፍል ተከፍለውታል ተከፍለውም በደምበር  
በደምበር ለይተው ሲአበቱ የከፍል የከፍል አገረውን አቀጥኛ የሆኑት በየሰጡት 1ኛ. አገክ  
ቫ 2ተኛ. ባገኛ 3ኛ. አዛና 4ኛ. ዚገም 5ኛ. ጭተክል 6ኛ. ጣረ 7ኛ. ባክረ 8ኛ. የጣረ  
ከፍል ንግሥት 9ኛ. ይገገል የንግሥት ገገ ተብሎ ተሰይሞ በየሰጡት ሲጠረ ይፍረል ስለዚህ  
ገቢት አገው ደድ የሚሰጠው ምክንያት አስከዚህ ድረስ ነው ነገር ገን በጠቅላላው ገቢት አገ  
ው ደድ ስለ ተባለ በጭስጥ በጭስጥ በከፍል በከፍሉ ከፍ ከፍ ያለ አገር አለበት በሰም በስ  
ው ይዘረዘራል፡፡

3ኛ. በሰም በሰጡት ልክ አገ ከፍል ከተሰጠውም በጋላ በየከፍል አገረውን 1ኛ  
ደ ስለ ግገሥትም ገብር አክረረል አገገምቸን ዘገቡ 2ተኛው ለጭረት የተላኩ ልክ ታውቶ ስለ  
ተከተላቸው ሀዘብ በአርስት አገገደለደል ዘገቡ 3ተኛው ስለ ከፍል ጭረታቸው ልክ አገገታው  
ሲሉ የከፍል የከፍል ጭረታቸውን ለምሳሌ ከሰላሌ አስከ አዲስ አበባ አልፎ አረቢ ባሌ በረኛ  
ቢዳም ገፍ ጭላም ገረውን ከምባታ 2ተኛ ከሰረር አስከ ጭላጋ ለጭት ጭላ ገግ ሆር ኦር ጉድ  
ረ ጭላጋ ትቢ ጭላ ተብሎ በሰም ዘርዘር ከ2ኛ የበዛ አገር በአዲስ ቀጥ አገቡ ተለካው ልክ ተ  
ላይ አስለከተታል አስለከተታል የከፍል የጭረታቸው የተላኩ ልክ ከታውቶም በጋላ በዚህ ልክ ለ  
ነገው ገገም ነፍ ጭርና ሌላ ሌላም ልዩ ልዩ የሆነ ትረረት ጭረ የበዛ ገብር ገብረውበታል የ  
የላኩ ስም ገን ከሙሉ ተብሎ ተሰይሞ አስከ ዛረ ድረስ በዚህ ስም ከሙሉ አየተባለ ሲጠረ ይፍረ  
ል ከሙሉ ግለት ገርገግ በሸፍ ሲሆን የላይ ጭም የጋቫ ጭረት አገደ ግለት ነው ጭረት 1 ገ  
ው 4ኛ. የላኩ ሲለክ የጭረት ልክ በ50 ጭት 1ኛ. ጭረት ጭተ 10 ጭት 7 2ተኛ. ጭ  
ረት ጭተ 11 ጭት 8 3ኛ. ጭረት ጭተ 12 ጭት 9 ጭት አገደዚህ ሆኖ የተለካ ገ ቢ  
ት

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Appendix -I

አገው ወረተ የተለካ ቀላይ ነው ስለዚህ የገቢት የአገው ያደር ወረተ የቀላት ልክ የገገት ወዘ  
 ገቡ አባቶቻችን ቢገቡም ተሾሙ ቢከሰገቡም የነበሩ 70-80-90 አስከ 100 አወት አድራ  
 የቀዳ ሆኑ በለው በየጊዜው አገደ ታል ገምህርት ከልባችን አስተገባገ ድረስ ለጋራው አገደ  
 ነገሩን ሲያገ ለጠቅላላው ሲያገ ይሸውም በወታታሥ 19497 ከሙሉ ነው በዘርዘር ሲያገ 1ኛ አ  
 ገከቫ የተባለው 385 380 2ኛ. ባገኝ የተባለው 2097 3ኛ. አሁን የተባለው 2500 4ኛ.  
 ዚገም የተባለው 2500 5ኛ. ወተካል የተባለው 2500 6ኛ. ሣረ የተባለው 2500 7ኛ. ሁ  
 ኩረ የተባለው 1800 8ኛ. ገምጌ የሣረ ገጥ የተባለው 900 9ኛ. ደገገላ የገምጌ ገጥ የተ  
 ባለው 900 ስለዚህ ገቢት አገው ያደር በጠቅላላው ሲያገ 19497 ከሙሉ ነው የሚከሰገው ያከ  
 ገያተ አስከዘሁ ድረስ ነው ቀላይ በተዘረጋ ጊዜ ገን 20.000 ከሙሉ ይጠይቃል፡፡

5ኛ. ስለዚህ አሁንም በዚህም የጥድ የማዕለክተው ፍረ ጉዳዩ አሁን በቅርቡ ተገ በኢትዮ  
 ስያ ብርሃን በገርማዊ ገገው ነገሥት በቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ ዘመነ ወገሥት የገቢት የአገው የ  
 ከሙሉው ልክ አገዳፍ በ34ና 35 ዓ.ም በታዘዘ ነው አጥቼ መሠረት ሲሆን በቀደሙ ቢገቡም  
 ተሾሙ ቢከሰገቡም የነበሩ በነገሩንና አነሁት አባቶቻችን በአቀዳት ወዘገብ ልክ 11497 ኩ  
 ወሉ ተላቶ አልተገኘም በጣባባት ተገናኝቶ ሰይጣኛ የቀረ ከሙሉ በድምር ሲያገ 11872 ከሙሉ  
 ዘ ገም 10000 ቀሪ አለበት በዘርዘር ሲያገ ነገ፤

1ኛ. አገከቫ በተባለው 1 ወረዳ 5 ዎክኑል 100 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 3800 ከሙሉ  
 ሲያገ አሁን 2550 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ 1150 ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 2ኛ. ባገኝ በተባለው 3 ዎክ  
 ኑል 72 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 2ኛ 97 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 1275 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ 822  
 ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 3ኛ. ሣረ በተባለው 1 ዎክኑል 32 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 2500 ሲያገ  
 አሁን 888 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ አሁን 16 ዎቶ ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 4ኛ. ሁኩረ በተባለው 1 ዎክ  
 ኑል 32 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 1ኛ 800 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 700 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ 11 ዎ  
 ቶ ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 5ኛ. ገምጌ የሣረ ገጥ ለተባለው 1 ዎክኑል 19 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ  
 900 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 200 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ 700 ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 6ኛ. ደገገላ የገም  
 ጌ ገጥ በተባለው 1 ዎክኑል 18 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 900 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 200 ከሙሉ  
 በቻ ተጽኖ 700 ከሙሉ አልተገኘም ስለዚህ 1ኛ. ለደገገላ አውረጃ ገዛት ከፍል በቻ 13 ዎክ  
 ኑል 288 272 ደብር ውስጥ ያውም በወታታሥ 6822 ከሙሉ በፍጹም ያልተገኘ ከ41 ዓ.ም አስ  
 ከ 54 ና 55 ዓ.ም ያልተገባበት ወገሥት ያላውቀው ትርፍ ወረተ በጣባባት ተገናኝቶ የቀረ  
 አለበት ይህ ገን ገዎቹ ባይገቡ ባይለካ በፍጹም አይገኝም በወፍራም መሰላ ታሸጋል 2ተኛም አ  
 ሁን በዘመን ገዕዝ አገደ ገገው አውጭ አገደ አገጣቡ አገደ ተባለው ከ7 ቤት አገው ወደ ሁለ  
 ት በተዘረለው ወተካል አውረጃ ተብሎ በተዘረለው 1 ወረዳ ጸ 3 ዎክኑል 1ኛ. ወተካል በተባለ  
 ው 1 ዎክኑል ለጥና ጭፍ 44 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 2500 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 900 ከሙሉ  
 በቻ ተጽኖ 16 ዎቶ ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 2ኛ. ዚገም ለተባለው 1 ዎክኑል 32 ደብር የገገት ወ  
 ዘገቡ 2500 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 900 ከሙሉ በቻ ተጽኖ 16 ዎቶ ከሙሉ አልተገኘም 3ኛ. አ  
 ዛና በተባለው 1 ዎክኑል 31 ደብር የገገት ወዘገቡ 2500 ከሙሉ ሲያገ አሁን 900 ከሙሉ  
 በቻ ተጽኖ 16 ዎቶ ከሙሉ በጣባባት ተገናኝቶ ሰይጣኛ የቀረ 4800 ከሙሉ ወገሥት ያላውቀው  
 ከ41 አስከ 54 ና 55 ዓ.ም ያልተገባበት አለበት ስለዚህ በ7 ቤት አገው ያከር ውስጥ ይ  
 ገኛበታል ለወፍራም የሚገኝ ሲያገ አገጥ ያስደስታል አለፈውም ከተባለ ይጠይቃል ለወፍራም በዚ  
 ሁ በተገኘው ልክ 19497 ከሙሉ ተላቶ ገባሩን ይቀጥላል ያስጠባናል፤

1934 ና 35 ዓ.ም ከሙሉ አገዳፍ በታዘዘ ነው አጥቼ መሠረት በተገኘውና ከ41  
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*Handwritten signature*



Appendix -I

ከፀ ኢየሁዳኛ ጸደቀው በወቅቱ ከገባበ ለገጠ ገጠም ኢየሁዳኛ በግጥም ፈቃድ ከየተደለደለ በግጥም ተፈቅዶ የጸና የከፍል የከፍል ኦርቶዶክስ ከላዎጥም 2ኛ. ም ልጅ የልጅ ልጅ የሆነ ኢትዮጵያ ለምለጃ አገራችን ለምለጃ ባገኛችን ያለ 1 1 ገጠም አድራ ጭሳ አቃውንት ነገር በየጊዜው ልጅ የልጅ ልጅ ይዞ በር ይገራል ኦርቶዶክስ ያስፈረሰ አገሯ ኦርቶዶክስ ከያዘው ነበር አገደዘው አገደ ዛሬው ዘመን ልጅ በግጥም በቃወክ ተገር ከሙሉውን ኢየሁዳኛ በግጥም ነበር አገደዘው ከፊ አያ ጸፈ አያሰጸፈ ዘለግሎ በየጊዜው ሲለካ ይኖራል ተብሎ ሲነገር አገገጠውን አገሯ ከአባቶቻችን የተባባሰውን ከሁን በኛ ጊዜ ለገጠ ገጠም ኢየሁዳኛ ለጋላ ቀን ለልጅ ልጅ የሚተላለፍ ሀውልት አገሰረሳቸው ኦርቶዶክስ አናጽናላቸው ከላሎ የጸና ኦርቶዶክስ ከላዎጥም 2ኛ. ስተት 3ኛው ከሁን በቅርቡ ቀን በኢትዮጵያ በርሃናችን በገርግዶ ገጠ ገጠም በተቃራኒ ጋይላ ሥላሴ ስሞ አገደዘው ሲር ዘመነ በግጥም 97 ቤት የአገው ዎድር ከሙሉ አገደደገና በ34 ና 5 ዓ.ም በቃዘነው አ የጅ ሙረት ሲጸፍ በደብር በደብረ 3 3 ወይም 5 5 ሸግገሌ በተራራው ከኢየሁዳኛ ትገቢ ጎል ተኖረ ይቃተ በሰምነት ሙረትን በገጠው ኢየተላከው ኢየተከፈሉ የከፍል የከፍል ሙረታቸውን የሚትር ልክ በግጥም መዝገብ ቤት ኢየክሰውዘገቡ አርጥብ ደረቀን በገጥኛ ኢየሰገው ተገጥኛ የገው ተውገ ገጠ ለግጥም በዘሁ ከፍል ኦርቶዶክስ የሙረት ነበር ኢየከፈሉ የገጠረበትን ካርኔ ለየረባቸው ኢየተቀቡ ኦርቶዶክስ ያጽኦገ አገደደገውን ረገታ የደባ ገበያ በራው በ10 ቀገው በ20 አገደ ተባለው አገደ ሙረብ ኢየሸፈኑ አገደ አገተላል ኢየደፈኑ የአገሌ ደብር በበካ ከሙሉ ይህንን ያህ ላል ኢየሱ በዎጽ ብቻ አሰጸፈት አገሯ ሙረት ኢየተላከ ኦርቶዶክስ ያጽኦገ አላሎ ኢየሀይገ ወ ልዩ ገብረ ኦሙ አገደ ተባለው 9ኛ. ከሁገም በቅርቡ ቀን 3ኛ በግጥም ለሀዘቡ አጅን አዘ ፕ ስለሆነ ለጊዜው ኢየተበደር ገገገገን አገደገውን አስበውልን የባገክ ብር ብድር ቢል ከልን ስለ የሰትና ላም በራ ፈረሰ በትሎ በገ ናዩል የኦርቶዶክስ ሙረት አለኝ ነው አገሯ ወለድ አገ ዩ አሰይዘ 10 10 ብር የሚበደር 1 1 ቃገ 50 50 ሜትር ሙረት የከፍል ኦርቶዶክስ አለኝ የሚል 1 በው ስለ ታጣ 97 ቤት የአገው ሀዘብ በፍጹም የባገክ ብር ብድር አላገገም ይህም ከፍ ባለ ሙረት ነው።

10ኛ. ገርግዶ ሆይ ከዘህ በላይ በተለከተው አስከ አስር አገተጽ የተጸፈውን ጉዳይ በብርሃን ልቦናዎ ከአውዛዙኦች በጋላ በላይ አገደ ተጸፈው በአባቶቻችን ሥሀተኛ ጉድለት የተነባ 97 ቤት የአገው ዎድር ሀዘብም 4575 ከተ 9ሎ ጌምር ከሁን አስከ አኛ አለነበት 1955 ዓ.ም 1880 ዓመት አስፈላጊ ሲኖር ባለ በወል መበል በሀገረ ልግድ በመስጫት በበረራ በተለዎ ዎ ዎ ሙረትም በግጥም አጅ ተከብረ ተገኝታ ለዘለግሎ ትኖረለች በግጥም አጅ ተገኝታ ለውና ጊ የሚሰረዳ ሙረት አገህ በዘሁ በውስጣችን ተወላጅ የሆነ በረገታ በረገታችን በጭቅነት ሹት ኢየተሸገን አገረን በናስተገደረው ሁሉ ጭታ ሹ ግለት ለምሳሌ የገጠም ተቀጣሪ የግጥም ተላላ ቢ የግጥም 9ኛ ግለት ነው አገሯ በዘሁ በጭቅነት ሹት ዎከገገት ኦርቶዶክስ ነኝ ለግለት በፍ ሹም አይቻል አያሰይዘኝ ስተት ነው አገር ያለ ጭታ ሹ ወታደር አለ አለታ ቤተክርስቲያን ያለገ በዘ ኦድር አያውቅ ስለዘህ የተለዎ ዎ የሀገረ ልግድ ሹት ነው አገሯ በጭቅነት በተለዎ ዎ ሹት ኦርቶዶክስ ሲኦጸና አይቻልም ስለዘህ የገቢት የአገው ሀዘብ በሙሉ አገደዘው በተለዎ ዎ በረገታ በረገ ታችን በዘሁ በውስጣችን ተወላጅ የሆነ አገደተለዎ ደው በየጊዜው በግጥም ጭታ ሹም በግጥም ተቀጣ ግሪ 9ኛና 3 3 ሸግገሌ በተጨማሪ አግካፊነት የኦርቶዶክስ ሙረት አርጥብ ደረቀን ኢየተከፈለ በራውን ኢየወረረ የገብርና አቃውን ኢየክሰናገገ ሲኦርቶዶክስ በበላበት የግጥም የሙረት ነበር ያውም አገ ደ ኦርቶዶክስ ሙረት በጭታ ሹም 9ኛ ትገቢ ጎል ተኖረ ተቀ ተባለ ተገጥኛው አጅን ከሆነ



Appendix -I

ሀ)

ሲገባር በበላበት ሲከፈል ይኖረል አገሪ 2ኛም የገቢት የአገው ምድረችን ወረቀ  
 የላዩ የተባበሩት የተለካው ሲሆን ታቦቱ የተተለሰበት ሰበካው የተለየ ሲሆን በዚህ ቦታ በገ  
 ሰበካ ይህ ፈሰሰ ፈርሳ ፈርሶ ወገኗል ተባርቶበት ሲገኝ ይህም በሩገታው የተሸጠው የወገንነት ተ  
 የባባሪ የኛው ነው ለጊዜው ተጠያቂው 3ኛም በዚህ ቦታ በተረው በተሸጠበት ለገቢ ለወጪ በው የአ  
 ፔ የሰ የባሪ የወባረርያ ቦታ ከሩይ ሰፍ ይህም ጭቃኛው ነው አገሪ ገርጫ ይህ ስለዚህ የገ ቢ  
 ት የአገው ምድር ህዝብ በውሉ በረሰ በአራሱ በአሣር በአገጠተ በወህ በውረተ የሚሰጠበት ለገቢ  
 ለወፍ የአፔ የሰ የሚተርበት በአራሱ ገባር ከሰሩሪ አርቦ የሚሰላበት ሲገኝ ጊዜው ወለዩ አገዩ ከ  
 ስጦዘ 10 10 ብር የሚወገድበት ፈጽሞ ሲገኝ ለውጥ ለጊዜው ችግሩን የሚስወገድበት ከ  
 ገቢን ለህዝቡ ተረ ባላገር ታላላቆች የተከበረ ወረባ ገዢ ምክትል ገዢ የሆኑ ወገንነት ያወቃቸው  
 ወይም በዚህ በረት ተከባት ከከፍት የወረሱት ወይም በሀብታቸው የገዙት ለወይረኛው ለልጅ የሚወ  
 ሮሱ ተከተባ ቦታ ታላሁነ በሀገር ቤት የከፍል አርስት በፍጹም 1 1 ታፋ 50 50 ጫት ወረት  
 የላገም የለቸው ሀብት ነው አነዚህ ከፍ ከፍ ባለ ጫሪግ የደረሱ ሀብታም የሆኑ የሀብት አርባ  
 ቸው በረገሬ ጊዜ ለልጅ ልጅ የሚተላለፍ የከፍል አርስት የላቸውም የገቢት አገው ምድር ወረት  
 9575 ኦተ የላም ፔሮ ኦሁን 1955 ዓ.ም 1880 ኦተ በወገንነት አፔ ለውኖሪ በዚህ በ  
 ላይ በተባረው ወረቻ ኦስት ነው በጣለት ተከረካሪ ሲገኝ በባቶኩት መሠረት ወብተ ከሚቀደበት ቢ  
 ት ተርቢ ለከረከርበት በፈርጫ ኦረጋገጣሉሁ ኦሙልካች ቨታ ይህን ኦፖል ጋይሉ።

ይህንንም ዘገፔ ስለዚህ ገርጫ ለኢትዮጵያ ብርሃን ሆይ

1ም ነገር የገቢት የአገው ምድር ህዝብ በአራሱ በረሱ በአሣር በአገጠተ በወህ በውረተ የሚሰጠ  
 በት 1 1 ታይ 50 50 ጫት ወረት የከፍል አርስት የሌለው ህዝብ በረሰ በረሱ ገባር አርስት  
 ገ አኩቶ ለየረሱ ቱር ሂ ምስክር የገባረበት የሚተባበሩበት የከፍል አርስት ወረት የሌለው ህዝብ  
 ደብረና ደብረ ይጣላሉ በበው ሽምብረ አገደ ተሰለው ለወይረት የተደጉ አባቶቻችን ኦስበውልገ ለል  
 ፔ ልዩ አገረተላለፍ ሲሉ ሀውልት ያልበረረላን አርስት ያላገደላን አሁን በጣን ወረት ነው በአ  
 ሮስት ከርከር ሀብታችንን የምገወርበው ገብታችንን የምገደከው ተዘህ ተደም አርስት አለገ ጫ  
 ትን ተረም ደብው ስናቦታ ልዕል አገዚህንሰሴር በጫደል ተበት በበረው ቸር ነት ለኢትዮጵያ ብርሃን ወሪ  
 ኦስተጫሪ ነገሩ ሰፍርያም አድርጉ በሰጠን በገናናው ገም በገርጫ ደ ገሠ ነገሥት በተገጫ ደ  
 ይለ ሥላሴ ዘውደ ወገንነት ያልተደለደለ ያልተከረረ ነው ወረት ያላገናነው አርስት በጣንኛው ዘውደ  
 ጫን በተባለ ገም ልናገኘው ይቻላል ለወገንነታችን ኢያላከትን አርስት ያላገደላን ጫት የተሸለ  
 ወሰሉ ይታዩኛል አገሪ

በአራሱ በአራሱ ገባር በረሰ በረሱ በአሣር በአገጠተ በወህ በውረተ የሚሰጠ  
 በት በረሰ በረሱ የገባረበተገካር ሂ የሚተባበሩበት የከፍል አርስት የሌለው በው በሰም ዘፄ አየረ  
 ጫሪ ኢትዮጵያ ደ ህዝብ ከሆነ ኢትዮጵያን አገሩን ኢየላተት ወይት ይደርባል አኔ አገሉ በዚህ ቦታ  
 ተወላጅ ነገ አያቲ ቀጭ አያቲ ሰፍርበት ነበረና ልተሐን በጫባባል ከርከር ኢየተጸሉ ሀብታቸው  
 ገ ስለ ጫርሱ ገብታቸውም ስለ ጫርከው ወስሪያ ቤትም ስለሚከደከው በወች ገርጫ ይህም በጫ  
 ኖኛው ገም የተደለደለ አርስት ነው አነጫጫ የተባሉ አባቶቻችን ለጋላ ቀን ሲሉ ኦስበውልገ ያደ  
 ጫን አርስት ነው የአርባ ወረት ነው አገሪ በዚህ በረት አርስት አለገ ለጫለት አያሰደፍርም አ  
 ሮስተኛው ወገንነት ነው አገሪ በፍጹም አርስት የላገም በዚህ ከርከር በተባበሩበት የአርባ ወረት  
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 ወረት ሲገውት 1ኛ ወረት 2ኛ ወረት 3ኛ ወረት ተባሉ አገሪን በገ ቤት አገው በምድረ ጉም አ

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### LIST OF INFORMANTS

| No | Name              | Title      | Age | Date of Interview  | Place of Interview | Remarks   |
|----|-------------------|------------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1  | Abagaz Baze       | <i>Ato</i> | 78  | 16/02/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera           | He was born and grew up in Dangela (Chara), and later moved into Injibera as a teacher. Abagaz has a good knowledge of the expansion of Amharic and the decline of the Agäw language.   |
| 2  | Abebaw<br>Atenaf  | <i>Ato</i> | 63  | 07/04/2013 E.C.    | Dangela<br>(Chara) | He is native of Dangela <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, Chara sub- <i>wäräda</i> . Abebaw explained the indigenous administrative institutions, social structure and marriage and funeral practice of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 3  | Abera<br>Mekonnen | <i>Ato</i> | 57  | 10/03/2012<br>E.C. | Tilili             | Fortunately, the researcher meets Abera in Tilili town, while going to collect data from Guagesa <i>wäräda</i> culture and tourism office and discussed social, economic and political issues of the areas informally. At the time of our discussion, the researcher asked questions related to the study. Indeed, Abera provided interesting information about the relationship between the Damot and the Awi Agäw people. |

|   |                    |            |    |                    |                      |  |
|---|--------------------|------------|----|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| 4 | Abera Tamer        | <i>Ato</i> | 53 | 17/04/2012 E.C.    | Ankäšä               | Abera was born and grew up in the border of the former Agäw Meder and Damot regions of Gojjam. He provided not less important information in the relation between the Awi Agaw and Damot people; and marriage and funeral practice of Awi Agaw people.   |
| 5 | Aderaw<br>Yalew    | <i>Ato</i> | 63 | 07/02/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera             | He was born and grew up in Agäw Meder, particularly, in Banjä <i>wäräda</i> . Aderaw has good knowledge of the traditional marriage of the Agäw people.  |
| 6 | Alemerew<br>Dubala | <i>Ato</i> | 78 | 23/03/2012 E.C     | Ankäšä               | Alemerew is a famous elder in Ankäšä Guagesa <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in Manjä qäbälé. Alemerew provided good information on the history of the Agäw Gemjabét when the researcher was conducting a BA essay before eight years. The researcher also interviewed Alemerew on the structure administrative structure of the Agäw Awi Zone. Thus, he provided not less important information on the present-day administrative structure of the Agäw Awi Zone. Moreover, Alemerew well explained the history of elders a good way. |
| 7 | Alemerew<br>Ejegu  | <i>Ato</i> | 74 | 27/04/2012 E.C.    | Dangela<br>(Kwakira) | He is native of Dangela <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, Sänbu vicinity. Alemerew   |

|    |                   |            |    |                    |                   |  |
|----|-------------------|------------|----|--------------------|-------------------|--|
|    |                   |            |    |                    |                   | has a good knowledge of the socio-cultural interaction of Amhara and Agäw and the transformation of Agäw into Amharic speakers. He has also a good knowledge of the tradition of the Gelgäl Sänbu burial site.   |
| 8  | Alemerew<br>Kassa | <i>Ato</i> | 94 | 15/02/2012         | Ankäšä            | Alemerew explained the horse plow tradition of the Awi Agäw people. He also provided important information on the marriage and funeral practice of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 9  | Anget<br>Bezuneh  | <i>Ato</i> | 91 | 25/03/2012<br>E.C. | Banjä<br>(Ledäta) | Anget is a famous elder in Bänjä <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in Ledäta Abbo qäbälé. He explained about the social history of the Awi Agäw people. Moreover, he provided good information on the beginning of the tradition of horse plow amongst the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 10 | Arega<br>Fentahun | <i>Ato</i> | 78 | 24/02/2012 E.C.    | Ankäšä            | He is the son a son of <i>Beläta</i> Fenathun Yesmaw, who was one of the notable persons in Ankäšä <i>wäräda</i> . As the son of a notable father who was engaged in many national and provincial issues, he is familiar with the local and national history of the Awi Agaw people. Particularly, he is knowledgeable in explaining indigenous administrative institutions, marriage, and funeral |

|    |                |            |    |                    |              |  |
|----|----------------|------------|----|--------------------|--------------|--|
|    |                |            |    |                    |              | practices of the Awi Agäw over different periods.  |
| 11 | Asmamaw Bellew | Artist     | 51 | 01/04/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera     | Asmamaw Bellew is a teacher and an artist who has been contributing to the development of the Awi culture. Artist Asmamaw has a good knowledge of the general socio-cultural aspect of the Awi Agäw people. Particularly, he well explained the historical background on the development of the cultural music of the Awi Agäw people. |
| 12 | Asmera Moges   | <i>Ato</i> | 98 | 23/04/2012<br>E.C. | Šendi        | He was one of the founders of the Šendi town in the present-day west Gojjam and knows more about the relationship between the Damot and the Awi Agäw people. Asmara provided valuable information on the historical process of the decline of the Agäw language in the area.   |
| 13 | Ayeneu Fenta   | <i>Dr.</i> | 41 | 15/05/2012         | Debre Markos | Ayeneu has been teaching at Debre Markos University. He conducted his study from BA to Ph.D. on the Agäw Meder and Mätäkäl areas. He provided important data on many themes of this study. Moreover, Ayeneu provided initial information on the history of Abečekeli burial site.  |
| 14 | Bekebel        | <i>Ato</i> | 56 | 05/02/2012         | Agäw         | Bekebel has been working as a teacher  |

|    |               |            |    |                 |          |  |
|----|---------------|------------|----|-----------------|----------|--|
|    | Tamer         |            |    | E.C.            | Gemjabét | in the Agäw Gemjabét secondary and preparatory school. His father, Tamer Desta was a very knowledgeable elder on the tradition of the Awi Agäw people, and Bekebel shared essential data that he got from his father. He has also a good knowledge of the social history of the Awi Agäw people.   |
| 15 | Bellew Admasu | <i>Ato</i> | 93 | 19/02/2012 E.C. | Injibara | Bellew was born and grew up in Dangela. He grew up with his grandfather and studied about the history and culture of the Awi Agäw people. He is well versed in the tradition of <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw people. Besides, Bellew provided relevant data on the marriage and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people. Moreover, he gave good information on the tradition of the relationship between the Damot and the Awi Agäw people. Furthermore, his explanation of the expansion of Amharic and the decline of the Agäw language satisfied the researcher. As he explained, his grandfather was not good at speaking Amharic but communicates through translators. He used this as an illustration of the decline of the Awgni (Agäw) language. |
| 16 | Biadegelegn   | <i>Ato</i> | 76 | 03/02/2012      | Chagni   | Biadegelegn served as soldiers of the  |

|    |                     |                |    |                 |               |  |
|----|---------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|---------------|--|
|    | Mulluneh            |                |    | E.C.            |               | <i>Derg</i> regime in Gumuz areas. He provided essential data on the history of the relationship between the Awi Agäw and their neighbors. He explained also the transformation of the Awi Agäw marriage and funeral practice from time to time.   |
| 17 | Bimerew<br>Alemerew | <i>Ato</i>     | 45 | 18/01/2017      | Injibara      | Bimerew worked as a speaker in the zonal council of the Awi Nationality Council and head of Ankäša Guagesa <i>wäräda</i> . He provided worthy data on the formation and structure of the Awi Nationality Administrative Zone. Bimeräw has also knowledge of the entire developments in the Mätäkäl areas since the 1990s.  |
| 18 | Bitawesh<br>Tamer   | <i>Woizero</i> | 67 | 24/02/2012 E.C. | Ankäša        | Bitawesh was born in the border areas of the former Agäw Meder and Damot sub-province and moved into Ankäša (Fäfa) <i>wäräda</i> through marriage. Bitawesh is well acquainted with the tradition of the relationship between the Agäw Meder and Damot people. Her families in law were known for practicing indigenous beliefs, and she explained this practice and its decline through time. |
| 19 | Demelesh<br>Aderaw  | <i>Ato</i>     | 73 | 26/04/2012 E.C. | Bänjä (Bätta) | Demelesh is the son of a patriot during the Fascist occupation of Ethiopia and   |

|    |                     |                    |    |                    |          |  |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------|----------|--|
|    |                     |                    |    |                    |          | active member of Agäw Horsemen Association. He has a good data on the historical development of the Agäw Horsemen Association. Demelesh has also provided valuable information on the social and cultural aspects of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 20 | Fekadu Endalew      | <i>Qés</i>         | 81 | 27/02/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera | Fekadu Endalew is one of the well-known elders in Injibera. He has a good knowledge about marriage and funeral practice of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 21 | Fentahun Desta      | <i>Ato</i>         | 93 | 23/04/2012<br>E.C. | Ankäšä   | He was born and grew up with his grandfather in Ankäšä <i>wäräda</i> . He described traditional cattle keeping and horse plow tradition of the Awi Agäw people. Fentahun also has a good knowledge of the tradition of these people.   |
| 22 | Habtemariam Alemnew | <i>Liqä khenat</i> | 53 | 04/02/2012<br>E.C. | Zigäm    | Habtemariam is a famous Orthodox father and elder in the Agäw Awi Zone. He was one of the elders selected by the Awi Zone to present a request for the establishment of a university in Injibara for the federal government authorities. Moreover, he is knowledgeable about the general tradition of the Awi Agäw people. Particularly, he gave vital information |

|    |                  |            |    |                    |                 |  |
|----|------------------|------------|----|--------------------|-----------------|--|
|    |                  |            |    |                    |                 | on the history of the relationship between the Awi Agäw and their neighboring people.  |
| 23 | Kassahun Engeda  | <i>Ato</i> | 83 | 04/02/2012<br>E.C. | Zigäm           | He was born in Ankäšä but currently living in Zigäm <i>wäräda</i> . Kassahun knows about the culture of Zigäm Agäw and their indigenous conflict management system. Moreover, he provided good information on the history of the relationship between the Awi Agäw with the Gumuz and Šenäš peoples.   |
| 24 | Kassahun Mengest | <i>Qés</i> | 92 | 26/04/2012<br>E.C. | Bänjä (Bätta)   | Kassahun studied Ethiopian Orthodox church education in different areas of Gojjam and Gondar. He provided good information about the general tradition of the Awi Agäw people. Particularly, he is well versed in the widespread practice of Jewish tradition and indigenous beliefs until these days. |
| 25 | Kasse Birasew    | <i>Ato</i> | 63 | 12/03/2012<br>E.C. | Bänjä (Dängiya) | Kasse is a member of the <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw Horsemen Association and a knowledgeable elder on the foundation and organization of the association. He explained the expansion of the Amharic language and the decline of the Agäw language during the reign of Haile Selassie.                         |
| 26 | Makurew          | <i>Ato</i> | 95 | 24/02/2012         | Ankäšä          | He is a famous elder in Ankäšä   |

|    |                  |                |    |                        |                  |  |
|----|------------------|----------------|----|------------------------|------------------|--|
|    | Engeda           |                |    | E.C.                   |                  | <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in Manjä <i>qäbälé</i> . Makurew provided good information on the indigenous administration institutions, marriage, and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 27 | Meheratu<br>Wude | <i>Qäsise</i>  | 79 | 12/03/2012<br><br>E.C. | Banjä<br>(Čäwsä) | Mehratu studied the Ethiopian Orthodox Church education in Gojjam and Gondar and currently he is serving as a priest of Chawsä Mika'ele Monastery. He has a good knowledge of the tradition of horse plow and the prevalence of indigenous belief amongst the Awi Agäw people.   |
| 28 | Molla<br>Meseret | <i>Agafari</i> | 77 | 05/02/2012<br><br>E.C. | Agäw<br>Gemjabét | Molla was born and grew up in Ankäšä <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in <i>Sostu Gemjabét qäbälé</i> . He was a herdsman at an early age and provided important data on the traditional cattle management system of the Awi Agäw people. Moreover, Molla provided relevant information on the practice of <i>šumagili</i> , marriage, and funeral among the Awi Agäw people. |
| 29 | Nega<br>Tesfaye  | Auto           | 85 | 05/02/2012<br><br>E.C. | Agäw<br>Gemjabét | He is one of the active elders in Agäw Gemjabét. Nega is knowledgeable on the language and social aspects of the Awi Agäw people.  |

|    |                  |            |    |                    |                 |   |
|----|------------------|------------|----|--------------------|-----------------|---|
| 30 | Seleshi Abeleneh | <i>Ato</i> | 72 | 07/04/2013<br>E.C. | Dangela (Chara) | Seleshi Abeleneh is a native of Dangela <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, Chära sub- <i>wäräda</i> . Seleshi explained the indigenous administrative institutions, social structure, and marriage and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people.   |
| 31 | Shetu Guade      | <i>Ato</i> | 77 | 07/05/2013<br>E.C. | Ankäšä          | Shetu was born and grew up with his grandfather in Anäkäšä <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in Manjä <i>qäbälé</i> . He well explained about the horse plow tradition of the Awi Agäw people. Shetu also provided valuable data on the marriage and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people.                        |
| 32 | Solomon Deresa   | <i>Ato</i> | 97 | 19/02/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera        | Solomon was born and grew up in Zigäm <i>wäräda</i> and currently living in Injibera. Sälämon is a famous elder in the Awi Zone today. Moreover, he has a good knowledge of the general tradition of the Awi Agäw people.   |
| 33 | Tamer Yemar      | <i>Ato</i> | 93 | 24/02/2012<br>E.C. | Ankäšä          | He is a farmer in the Ankäšä Guagesa <i>wäräda</i> , particularly in Manjä <i>qäbälé</i> . At an early age, he was a herdsman and knowledgeable on the history of traditional cattle management amongst the Awi Agäw society. Tamer has also provided good information in the history of the funeral and marriage |

|    |                  |            |    |                    |                 |   |
|----|------------------|------------|----|--------------------|-----------------|---|
|    |                  |            |    |                    |                 | practice of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 34 | Terekegn Kebede  | <i>Ato</i> | 80 | 07/04/2013<br>E.C. | Dangela (Chara) | He is a native of Dangela <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, Chara sub- <i>wäräda</i> and explained the marriage and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people. <i>Ato</i> Terekegn also provided god information on the transformation social structure amongst the society.   |
| 35 | Tessema Mekonnen | <i>Ato</i> | 98 | 26/04/2012<br>E.C. | Bänjä (Bätta)   | He was born in Ankäšä and moved to Bätta after marrying the daughter of a notable family. Tessema offered important data on the marriage and funeral practices of the Awi Agäw people.  |
| 36 | Tilaye Ayenew    | <i>Ato</i> | 63 | 15//02/2012        | Injibara        | Tilaye Ayenew is head of <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw horsemen association. He provided relevant data on the foundation, development, and organization of <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw horsemen association.  |
| 37 | Wolde Mekonnen   | <i>Ato</i> | 87 | 13/01/2012         | Injibera        | Wolde has been working as a librarian in Injibara public library. He has a very good knowledge of the tradition of the <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw. As he was grown up with his grandfather, Wolde knows the political and social development in Agäw Meder during the <i>Zämänä Mäsafent</i> . Thus, he explained about the garrison of Oromo soldiers in Agäw |

|    |                |            |    |                    |                   |  |
|----|----------------|------------|----|--------------------|-------------------|--|
|    |                |            |    |                    |                   | Meder areas. He is different from other informants by his endeavor of dating events. For a researcher, he is a ‘good library’ on the history of the Agäw Meder area.   |
| 38 | Worku Birru    | <i>Ato</i> | 97 | 26/04/2012<br>E.C. | Bänjä (Bätta)     | He is one of the famous elders in Bänjä <i>wäräda</i> , particularly, in Bätta <i>Ambi qäbälé</i> . Worku shared good information on major changes and continuities in the practices of the elderly from Haile Selassie to the present. He has also a good knowledge of marriage and the funereal system of the Awi Agäw over different times. |
| 39 | Yazew Zeleke   | <i>Ato</i> | 95 | 26/03/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera          | Yazew is a famous elder in Injibera and who makes blessings during big events that are hosted in Injibera. Moreover, Yazew is one of the knowledgeable elders on the tradition and culture of the Awi Agäw people.   |
| 40 | Yehalem Demeke | <i>Ato</i> | 74 | 27/04/2012 E.C.    | Dangela (Kwakira) | Since 2011, he has been working as a guard of the Säbu protected forest. Moreover, Yehalem has worked with the different institutions and individuals that carried out an archaeological and geological study on this site. Thus, he is knowledgeable  |

|    |             |            |    |                    |          |  |
|----|-------------|------------|----|--------------------|----------|--|
|    |             |            |    |                    |          | about the tradition of Gelgäl Sänbu burial site.   |
| 41 | Yenet Fenta | <i>Ato</i> | 98 | 26/03/2012<br>E.C. | Injibera | Yenet is one of the old age fathers and elders in Injibara today. Although he failed to discuss the detailed issues about the subjects due to age, Yenet provided essential data in the tradition of the <i>sebtbet</i> Agäw people. He also attempted to explain about the socio-cultural practice of Aw Agäw people. |