



**MADDA WALABU UNIVERSITY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE  
MANAGEMENT**

**A HISTORY OF ADABA WOREDA, 1941-1991**

**M.A. THESIS**

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**BALE-ROBE, ETHIOPIA**

**A HISTORY OF ADABA WOREDA**

**A Thesis Submitted to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
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**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
History and Heritage Studies**

**By: - Teshome Bedasa**

**Advisor: Bijiga Gerba (Ass. Prof)**

**OCTOBER, 2024**

**BALE-ROBE, ETHIOPIA**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that thesis entitled “*A History of Adaba Wereda, 1941- 1991*” has been carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of Bijiga Gerba (Ass. Prof). The thesis is original and has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma to any university or institutions.

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Date

Signature

**Teshome Bedasa**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entities “*A History of Adaba Wereda, 1941- 1991*” submitted to Madda Walabu University, College of Social Science and Humanities, School of Graduate Studies Department of History and Heritage Management, School of Graduate Studies, and is a record of a research work carried out by Mr. Teshome Bedasa, under my guidance and supervision.

Therefore, I hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institutions for the award of any degree or diploma.

*Advisor’s Name:* Bijiga Gerba (Ass. Prof)

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*Date* \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVAL SHEET**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Teshome Bedasa on the title of “*A History of Adaba Wereda from 1941- 1991*” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in History and Heritage Management Studies, complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

**Approval Sheet for Board of Examiners**

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## Glossary

### Afaan Oromo terms

- Abbaa -----father, master of a ceremony/ religion.
- Abbaa Gadaa -----Prime Councilor, Master of Gadaa period, Gadaa leader
- Abbaa muudaa -----father of anointing
- Aadaa ----- custom, tradition or, sometimes, culture.
- Aaddee ----- title of respect for women
- Aanaa -----relative, close kin
- Araddaa /ardaa -----minimal lineage, land nearby settlement unit
- Baddaa -----high altitude
- Badda- daree ----- mid altitude
- Balbala -----door, lineage
- Gabbara ----- dowry
- Gadaa -----An Oromo indigenous, traditional socio-political system through which the Oromo society exercise self-governance
- Ganda -----village
- Gosa ----- clan
- Gumaa -----blood money
- Odaa ----- a sycamore tree chosen for the performance of religious rituals as well as political actions
- Qaalluu ----- Oromo religious leader: He leads ritual performances and prayers, anoint the participants as a religious piety.
- Seera ambaa -----The traditional Law of Oromo Society
- Warra -----extended family

### Amharic terms

- Abyot ----- revolution
- Alaqa ----- head of church, a learned priest.
- Awuraja ----- sub-provinces of Ethiopia before 1991.

Balabbat ----- hereditary owner of rest land; or is an appointee at district level by the state to serve as subordinate land administrator or local land lord.

Balambaras ----- ‘head of the amba’ a low level administrative title.

Bäsha ----- derivative of the Turkish ‘pasha’ for low level government official

Tissegña ----- Gäbbar farmers, who landowners used to evict them at any time (equivalent to smoke).

Dajäzmäch----- a higher warrior title of the Amhara .

Därge ----- committee.

Fitäwräri ----- a warrior title literally means “leader of the vanguard army.”

Gäbbar----- tribute paying peasants either in kind or many

Gašha ----- unit of land measurement, equivalent to 40 hectares

Geber ----- agrarian tribute, invariably paid in kind, tax

Grazmačh ----- a warrior title of the Amhara, literally means “left leader”.

Hibretesebawinet ----- Ethiopian Socialism

Qäbälé ----- the lowest administrative structure in a district, a sub-country (the post-1974 name for villages).

Kiflä Hägäre----- province

Läm ----- cultivated land.

Läm Täf ----- semi-cultivated land

Qägñazmačh ----- a warrior title literally means “right leader”, or commander of the right.

Maderia ----- land granted to officials.

Mälkegña ----- literally rifle men

Mikitil Wäräda ----- the post- 1941 sub-district.

Näftagña ----- from neft, ‘refile’, name given to emperor Menilek’s warrior of northern origin, who later settled in the south

Nägadras ----- head of merchant, later chief government official in charge of the collection of customs.

Negus ----- King

Ras ----- ‘head’, the highest traditional title next to negus.

Rist ----- a lineage system of land ownership, giving usufruct right to the claimant; in the 20th century, and rist assumes the meaning of absolute private property.

Sefar ----- encampment, settlement, quarters.

Siso ----- one third.

Täf ----- uncultivated land

Wäräda ----- district.

Zemacha ----- campaign

## **ACRONYMS/LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS**

AWAO: - Adaba Woreda Administration Office

AWFO:- Adaba Woreda Finance Office

HSF: - Hunte State Farm

MWHEPS: - Melka Wakena Hydroelectric Power Station

PA: - Peasant Association

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## Preface

This study is a historical survey of Adaba Wäräda from 1941 to 1991. The year 1941 is taken as a landmark since it saw the restoration of Emperor Hailä Silassié I to power and the beginning of the process of invigorated centralization in the country. The year 1991, on the other hand, saw the end of the Därg regime and its highly centralized political structure. The major purpose of the thesis is to reconstruct the political, economic and social history of the district in the period mentioned above. In general, the history of districts in the Ethiopia historiography is still at its infancy. This thesis, seeks to fill the gap in the historiography of the local history of Adaba woreda. The thesis had three chapters. The first chapter provided highlights on the geographical setting of Adaba woreda that include the socioeconomic and political developments of the district before 1941. It also described the historical heritages found in the woreda and the historical background of this woreda to 1941. The second chapter focused on the administrative history of the district from 1941 up to 1991 that included the the formation of Adaba woreda, Administrative and Political History of Adaba Woreda, 1941-1974, and Administrative and Political History of Adaba Woreda, 1974-1991. Whereas, chapter three deals with the socio – economic history of the district (1941-1991). This chapter was briefly described the economic history and the socio-religious history of the district during the past fifty years ago.

The historical data used in the thesis consists of three kinds of sources. The first category was the reviewed literatures written on similar issues. The second categories of sources used in the work are primary written sources those include manuscripts and archival sources found at the current culture and tourism office of Adaba woreda and finance office of the district. Thirdly, the data was gathered from oral information of knowledgeable personalities who live in the direct. The majority of the body of this study was a combination of archrivals and oral information gathered through interview.

The overall data were collected during my field work from February, 2014 up to June, 2014. However, the researcher has faced several problems while conducting this study. Firstly, there were very little archival documents available in the district in an organized way. Some documents were in hands of individuals and the officials did not have willingness to show the

documents for the researcher. But the researcher has utilized them after exhaustive negotiation with the help of his friends and the personnel of the archive's office. In specific the researcher could not obtain documents from the Melka-Wakena Hydroelectric power station and Hunte state farm, thus, only the information collected through the interview was presented in this study.

Finally, the researcher would like to state that, this study was no comprehensive study due to the above mentioned problems and others. However, the researcher hopefully claimed that his modest contribution may be of great interest and importance to others who want to conduct further research on the district on the baseline of this study.

## **ABSTRACT**

*The objective of this study was to reconstruct A History of Adaba Wereda from 1941- 1991. Both primary and secondary sources were used in this study. Sources gathered from different angles were cross checked and analyzed qualitatively. To this end, the work was arranged in four parts. The first part presented the geographical setting of Adaba woreda that included the socioeconomic and political developments of the district before 1941. It also described the historical heritages found in the woreda and the historical background of this woreda to 1941. The second part focused on the administrative history of the district from 1941 up to 1991 that included the formation of Adaba woreda, Administrative and Political History of Adaba Woreda, 1941-1974 and from 1974 – 1991, whereas, third part described the socio –economic history of the district (1941-1991). This chapter was briefly described the economic and the socio-religious history of the district during the past fifty years ago. The fourth part presented the concluded ideas of the briefly described in the three chapters of this study. To this end, the administrative restructuring of the Empire Hailesilassie during post –liberation period was not accepted by the Arsi-Oromo of Adaba district because of the complicated bureaucracy of the period at the beginning of 1960s, the peasants in Adaba district raised conflict. The impact of land reform of the Derge effectively abolished the traditional institutions of rist and gult, and took over the control of land and redistributed through Peasant Associations (PA). Other achievements of the Adaba district were the foundation of Hunte State Farm and Melka Wakena Hydroelectric Power Station projects those emerged in two consecutive years. Based on the conclusions the researcher recommended that, the government should clearly identify their request and give suitable response to them to keep peace and stability, the government should secure the individual farmland and provide mechanization farming to improve the productivity of the peasants, the wereda administrators, the culture and tourism office of Adaba district and the Adaba town municipal collaboratively work on this issue to have written evidences on the history of the district.*

*Key words: - Adaba woreda, Administrative restructuring, Land reform, peasant associations.  
Socio-economic, socio-religious*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Geographical and Historical Background of Adaba Wereda

#### 1.1.1. Geographical Setting of Adaba Wereda

Adaba, the geographical unit of the study area, is found in the West-Arsi zone of the Oromia Regional State. Obtaining sufficient information regarding the geographical milieu of places and events is crucial for such historical research. It is, thus, imperative to provide readers of this thesis with an overview of the geographical and historical background of the area under study.

Adaba Wereda is located in southern Ethiopia, 100 km and 344 km from Shashemene and Addis Ababa, respectively. This Wereda was formerly found under *Genale Awuraja* until 1991. Before this year, the province of Bale was divided into five *Awurajas* (*sub-provinces*) these were *Genale*, *Mendeyu*, *Wabe*, *Dello* and *Elkere Awuraja*. *Genale Awuraja* by itself had four woredas, namely, *Adaba Wereda*, *Nensebo Wereda*, *Kokosa Wereda*, and *Dodola*. At the same time, *Dodola* was the capital of *Genale Awuraja* until the downfall of the Derg regime. After the Derg government was eliminated in 1991, *Awurajas* also were evacuated from the structure of the country because of decentralization, and each *woreda* could be directly administered under the province Bale<sup>1</sup>.

Since 2006, Adaba founded in the eastern tip of the West-Arsi Zone of Oromia Regional State it has been in West-Arsi Zone of Oromia Regional State. It is one of the sixteen *woredas* of West-Arsi Zone. Adaba is also the name of the administrative town as the *woreda*. It is surrounded by Bale Zone in the North - East, East and in the south, *Dodola Wereda* in the West and *Arsi Zone* in the North. In the case of absolute location, this *woreda* lies between 6<sup>0</sup>40'11"N to 7<sup>0</sup>23'49"N latitude and 39<sup>0</sup>19'29"E' to 39<sup>0</sup>46'11"E longitude. The *woreda* also covers a total area of 2173 km<sup>2</sup>, and it has 22 rural and 5 urban kebeles<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Kefa, et al., 2015. Adaba District Socio-economic Profile,

<sup>2</sup> Adaba Wereda Administrative Office, 2022, Annual Report



livelihood. In the regard to soil, the soil is volcanic in origin, mainly from alkali basalt and tugs and generally of well-structured silt or clay-loam of more than one-meter depth on the gentle slopes, in the valleys and depressions. Therefore, the soil types of the town have made it favorable for cultivating various crops and growing vegetations for relief of life of the households in the town and around it.

### **1.1.3. Climate and Drainage**

The study area experiences a highland climate which is influenced by the Bale Arsi high lands. Rainfall depends on the prevailing winds, which are controlled by the seasonal fluctuation of the inter-tropical convergence zone, but modified by local relief. Rainfall of the study area is bimodal, with the main rainy season occurring between July and September. The dry season Lasts from November to February, followed by the short rainy season during the months of March and April. From the weather records of 2010-2014E.C, the average annual rainfall of the study area is 1300 mm. The temperature ranges from 15-28<sup>0</sup>C (Adaba Agricultural Office, 2019). 15% of the rain occurs during Belg (the small rainy season of the region during March to April), whereas; 85% of the rain occurs during ‘kiremt’ or summer season (the main rainy season of the region during July to September). The district is, therefore, to a large extent characterized by favorable climatic conditions of the weyanadega<sup>4</sup>.

### **1.1.4. Topography**

The topographic landscapes of the study area includes rugged, made up of mountain chains and categorized in to two parts; the northern part with an average elevation of 2,400m .a.s.l. is devoid of tree vegetation and intensively cultivated with barley and wheat, Whereas, the southern and eastern half is mountainous with a maximum elevation of 3,800 m .a.s.l. covered by degraded forests<sup>5</sup>. Most of the slightly disturbed forest patches are located in inaccessible areas such as valley bottoms, and along river banks and ridges. The southern part of the study area is a source of important perennial and intermittent rivers, which flow northwards to the river WabeShebele and to the Genale-Dawa

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<sup>4</sup> Adaba Wereda Agricultural Office, (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Asrat, et al., 1997

drainage basin to the south. The mountain parts cover 31.15% of the total land coverage of the woreda, Plain, rough surface, and others accounts 26.67%, 22.47%, 19.71% respectively<sup>6</sup>.

The soil is volcanic in origin, mainly from alkali basalt and tugs and generally of well-structured silt or clay-loam of more than one-meter depth on the gentle slopes, in the valleys and depressions. It is generally shallow on slopes and on top of hills whereby rocky outcrops are regularly observed (Girma, 2005). Due to the nature of the topography, overgrazing, deforestation and population pressure the soil of the region is highly degraded.

## **1.2. Historical Background of Adaba Woreda**

### **1.2.1. Socio - Economic Settings**

The total population of Adaba Woreda projected in 2014 from 2007 house and population census using 2.9 % of growth rate, was 208,759 and the total household size of Adaba Woreda is 23,195(AWAO, 2022). The majority of the inhabitants were Muslim, with 84.39% of the population, while 14.46% of the population practiced Ethiopian Orthodox and other Christianity<sup>7</sup>.

The main source of livelihood for the majority of the people is subsistence farming. The major crops grown mostly are wheat, barley, teff, beans and peas during and after the rainy season. The minor crops grown in the woreda are check pea, beans, ‘*guaya*’, cabbage seeds and oilseeds. As (Meseret, 2009) stated, crop rotation is practiced in this area every year and farming is not only done for subsistence but also to create income. The farmers also do livestock herding, specially, in the southern mountainous savannah, which is an important contribution to their livelihoods; the importance of livestock grows with rising altitude. It is observed that the livelihood of the majority of the people is dependent on mixed farming, which constitutes crops production and animal husbandry<sup>8</sup>.

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6 Adaba Woreda Agricultural Office, 2019, pp. 6-7

7 Ibid, PP. 8

8 Meseret, 2009

Since Adaba Woreda experiences a highland climate. Rainfall depends on the prevailing winds, which are controlled by the seasonal fluctuation of inter tropical convergence zone but modified by local relief. Rainfall in the study area is bimodal, with the primary rainy season between July and September (*Ganna*). The dry season (*Bona*) lasts from November to February. It is followed by the short rainy season during March and April (*Arfaasa*) and the Woreda is, therefore, characterized mainly by favorable climatic conditions of the intermediate agro-climatic zone (*Badda- area*). As the Woreda has enough rainfall and moisture for agricultural production, people's lives in the Woreda are permanently settled. Similarly, as there are enough streams and rivers in their vicinity, the community's movement from place to place in search of grazing areas and water for their cattle is minimal, except for the movement from rural to urban areas for better living standards.<sup>9</sup>

The elevation of the Woreda ranges between 2000 and 2380 meters above sea level. The highest point in this Woreda is Mount Darkina; other notable peaks include Mount Doda and Mount Gamma. Most rivers are tributaries of the Wabe-Shabelle River, including the *Meribo, Leliso, Furuna Melka, Ashiro, and Wacho Kora*. A survey of the land in this Woreda shows that 16.9% is arable or cultivable, 23.3% pasture, 52.2% forest, and the remaining 7.6% is considered swampy, mountainous, or unusable.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.2.2. Historical Heritages of Adaba District**

There are three major historical places that can support the tourism features of the district. The one and the most attractive place and usually visited by youths of the district on weekend is the Hebo Fountain which is found to the south-west direction of Adaba town. It was natural fountain of Meribo River and it is separated in to two as shown on the photo below; the photo at the left is the smaller fountain and the photo at the right side shows the bigger fountain. The pool was constructed near to this fountain for fish breeding by foreigner came from France. However, the fish breeding was stopped after this person left the area.

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<sup>9</sup>Adaba Woreda Agriculture Office Annual Abstract, 2022 ( page, 2)

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 2022 page, 3

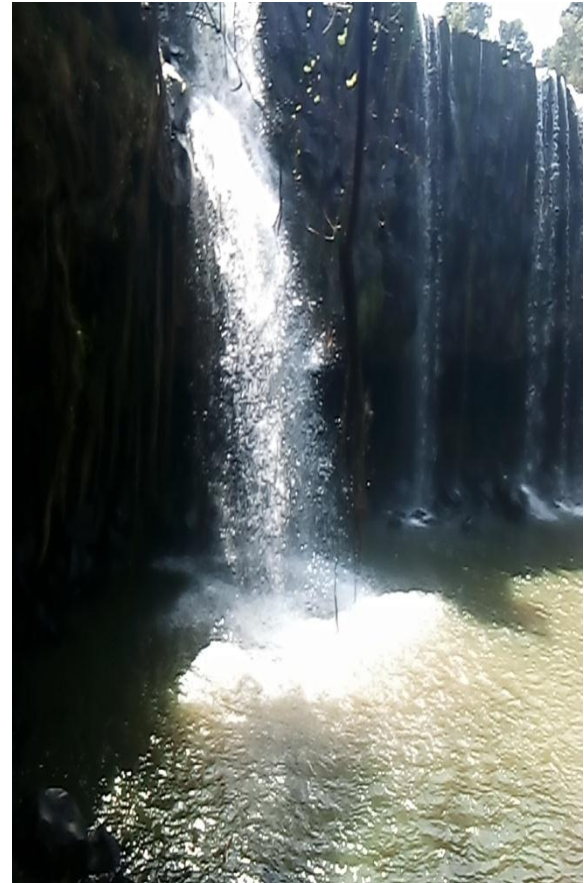


Figure 2: The Hebo Fountain, photo of the researcher, 20/08/2016 E.C.

The other historical place is the big gorge of *Hadha Barite* or *Qilee Hadha Baritee* and this gorge is about 40 meters deep and found 15km far from the town in Koma village. The name of the place was derived from a woman named *Hadha Barite* (Berite's mother) failed in to the gorge because of the conflict raised between the two wives of their husband. As the ancient story told us, it was in 1956 EC the two wives of Abdulkadir Genemo raised conflict on the distribution of the farmland given by their husband. The son of the second wife pushed *Hadha Barite* (Berite's mother) when they reached the gorge to kill her and protect her owing the land. However, she failed in the gorge and injured, she came out from that gorge on the next day. Since then the gorge is called as *Hadha Barite* (Berite's mother) and it is visited by local and foreign tourists<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Informant, Ato Jemal Defo



*Figure 3: Image of the Kile Hadha Barite (Berite's mother Gorge) the photo taken by the researcher on 21/8/2016 E.C.*

The third attractive place and is being visited by different people come from different places is the Dam of Melka Wakena Hydroelectric Power Station.



*Figure 4: Malka Wakena Hydroelectric Dam, Photo taken by the researcher, 23/8/2016E.C.*

To sum up, since Adaba wereda has huge historical background on the administrative restructuring and land reform there is entirely no written documents available in this area and none of the scientific studies covered the Oromo ethnic group live in West Arsi specifically live in Adaba wereda between the period of 1941 up to 1991.

Therefore, the researcher is interested to study the history of Adaba from 1941 - 1991 and land reform that was held during the revolution of Derge regime in our country and in Adaba wereda in specific. This study aimed to assess the overall history of the district in West Arisi from 1941 to 1991 using descriptive research design with qualitative research approach.

### **1.2.3. Historical Background of Adaba Woreda to 1941**

#### ***1.2.3.1. The Oromo Territorial Expansion***

According to oral traditions, wars and population movements marked the sixteenth century of the history of the Horn of Africa. The largest population movement and expansion of the period was, however, that of the Oromo. It had great consequences, which fundamentally changed the pre-existing social conditions in the Horn. In this section, we shall mainly deal with the Oromo population movement and expansion in the sixteenth century<sup>12</sup>.

Different suggestions have been made on the causes of the Oromo population movement and expansion. Nevertheless, it is believed that human, natural and demographic factors must have combined to effect the movement. The wars and disturbances of the second half of the fifteenth and the early years of the sixteenth centuries, in the Horn must have put pressures on the Oromo. The growth in the number of their cattle might have led them to seek for grazing lands in different directions. The search of grazing land for their cattle could be a factor for the movement. Therefore, the combination of the factors resulted in a dramatic and large-scale population movement of the Oromo people in the sixteenth century<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Teshome Amenu, 2008. The rise and expansion of Islam in Bale of Ethiopia: Socio-cultural and political factors and inter- religious relations, page, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, page 27-28

The Arsi identify their relationships in three other principal ways. The first is *aanooma* (relation through descent or parentage). The second is relation through affinity or marriage. These two types of identifying relations together indicate the people's system of classifying *Worrooma* (family relationship). The third and the broadest form of relationship is *Arsoomaa* (Arsi hood), and it refers to the cultural homogeneity and the *aaloo* (the customary code) of the people. Arsihood provides the people with an identity that cuts across allegiances base on moiety and from explanation of patrilineal relationship of the Arsi Oromo, I can mention that this strong relationship among the Arsi is serving, as a pivotal for any decision of an individual be a religion or other socio-cultural aspects<sup>14</sup>.

The historical settlement of Oromo in Adaba *woreda* was the result of the territorial expansion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, according to different literatures reviewed, Oromo is the largest ethnic nation in the eastern part of Africa that lived for millennia keeping their culture, values, and norms, which follow the egalitarian political systems-*Gadaa*<sup>15</sup>. They occupy a land that extends from northeastern Ethiopia to east central Kenya and from Sudan in the west and Somalia in the east.<sup>16</sup> The Oromo speak a common language. This language is categorized as eastern Cushitic<sup>17</sup>. The Oromo, according to Gemechu, is divided into five major groups: the *Tulama* and the *Maccaa*, the *Sabboo* and the *Goonaa*, the *Raayyaa*, and the *Azebo*, the *Sikkoo* and the *Mandoo* and the *Ituu* and the *Humbannaa*.<sup>18</sup>.

According to the findings of different scholars, the original homeland of the Oromo people is somewhere in Bale. For example, Eike Haberland and Hassen tell us that the original home of the

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<sup>14</sup> Teshome Amenu, 2008. The rise and expansion of Islam in Bale of Ethiopia: Socio-cultural and political factors and inter- religious relations

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> I.M. Lewis, 1975. "The Cushitic Speaking Peoples, A Jigsaw Puzzle for Social Anthropology," Collogue International Suy Les Langues Couchitigues Et Les Peoples Quiles Parlent, Paris; Center National De La Recherché Scientifique, PP.76.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Getachew Raggasa (2006). "A Historical Survey of Chilalo Awraja,

Oromo had been in the cool highlands of Bale around Madda Walabu<sup>19</sup>. It seems a reliable truth that the Oromo are the single largest ethnic group both in Ethiopia and the horn. Despite statistical differences, a substantial number of historians, anthropologists and other authorities also agree that the Oromo people are one of the most numerous peoples in Africa. There are conflicting traditions as to why the Oromo left their original home land, Madda Walabu<sup>20</sup>.

The military colonies had acted as mighty dam, which minimized the overflow of the Oromo flood. The breakup of the dam at the most critical time was equally disastrous to both the Muslims and Christians. Before the Christian kingdom fully recuperated and re-established its military colonies in the southern provinces, the migrating Oromo dislodged what was left after the jihadist wars and thwarted new attempts at settlement. The regions that had been sparsely populated before the jihad were left empty by the shifting of population during the jihad. This explains why the Oromo quickly overran considerable areas in a short time. .At the time of the sixteenth-century movement, the Oromo people were divided into two major sections: *Borana* and *Barentu*.<sup>21</sup>.

*Machicha* (Macca) and *Arsicha* (Arsi) in different directions. In contrast to the above idea, I.M. Lewis emphasizes that the movement of Arsi was part and parcel of the Oromo expansion which was dictated by ritual and military expedition against enemies and a search for fresh land which accommodates swiftly growing population. In whatever direction and for whatever reasons the Oromo might have left their original home. Again as mentioned above different research results confirm that the first Arsi Oromo settlement was as the present day Bale.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of the fact that, the Arsi Oromo constituted one of the largest Oromo groups, however, their origin and early history is not sufficiently studied. The bulk of scholarly works together with paucity of coherent oral traditions telling their past made the reconstruction of the original history of Arsi

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<sup>19</sup>Mohammed Hassan, 1994. *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*. Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, p.4

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 5-6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 7

<sup>22</sup>I.M. Lewis, 1975. "The Cushitic Speaking Peoples, A Jigsaw Puzzle for Social Anthropology," *Colloque International Sur Les Langues Couchitiques Et Les Peuples Quiles Parlent*, Paris; Center National De La Recherché Scientifique, PP.79-80.

Oromo very problematic. According, to the contemporary works of some scholars, the Arsi Oromo constituted the majority and the dominant people who played a leading political, social and economic role in the Arsi and Bale land from the 16th century Oromo population movement to the advent of the Šawan conquest in the last quarter of the 19th century<sup>23</sup>

According to Asmerom (1973:9), Borana Oromo still practices almost all of the Oromo culture, social institutions, political arrangements, traditional laws, and belief systems. The Oromo belong to the Cushitic language family from the Afro-Asiatic super family of language, which extends over the horn of Africa and is the single largest ethnic group<sup>24</sup>. The Oromo share a common cultural heritage and speak the same language (Afan Oromo) or Oromo, written in Latin script, with a slightly different dialect. They are followers of the religions of Islam, Christianity, and *Waaqeffannaa*, the indigenous Oromo religion. Among the Oromo in general and the Arsi in particular, there were and still are indigenous moral institutions and practices of conflict settlement. The Oromo people settle disputes through indigenous institutions developed through long years of experience.

As Mamo (2006) notes, the Oromo people solve most of the problems of human relations through their own institutions, moral systems, and mechanisms outside of the state structure. In the Oromo community, there are several indigenous moral institutions for dispute resolution. There are such Gadaa systems as an umbrella concept, *jaarsummaa*, *Qaalluu* system or decision of spiritual leaders, *Gumaa* system, *Siiqqee* institution, *Waaqeffannaa*, *Irreechaa*, *Moggaasaa*, *Guddifachaa*, *Marabbaa*, *Medhichaa*, *kakuu*, *Buttaa* etc<sup>25</sup>.

According to Desta, the name “Arsi” was not well-known in written sources prior to the 19th century. It is not clear when it was first adopted as the name of this group of the Oromo in written documents. According to Katabo, the name Arsi (Arse) started to be used before the 16th century Oromo expansion.<sup>56</sup> Supporting Katabo, Braukampar; comments that “...the formation of Arsi as a separate Oromo ethnic entity most probably started in the 1570s”. However, the reason why Abba

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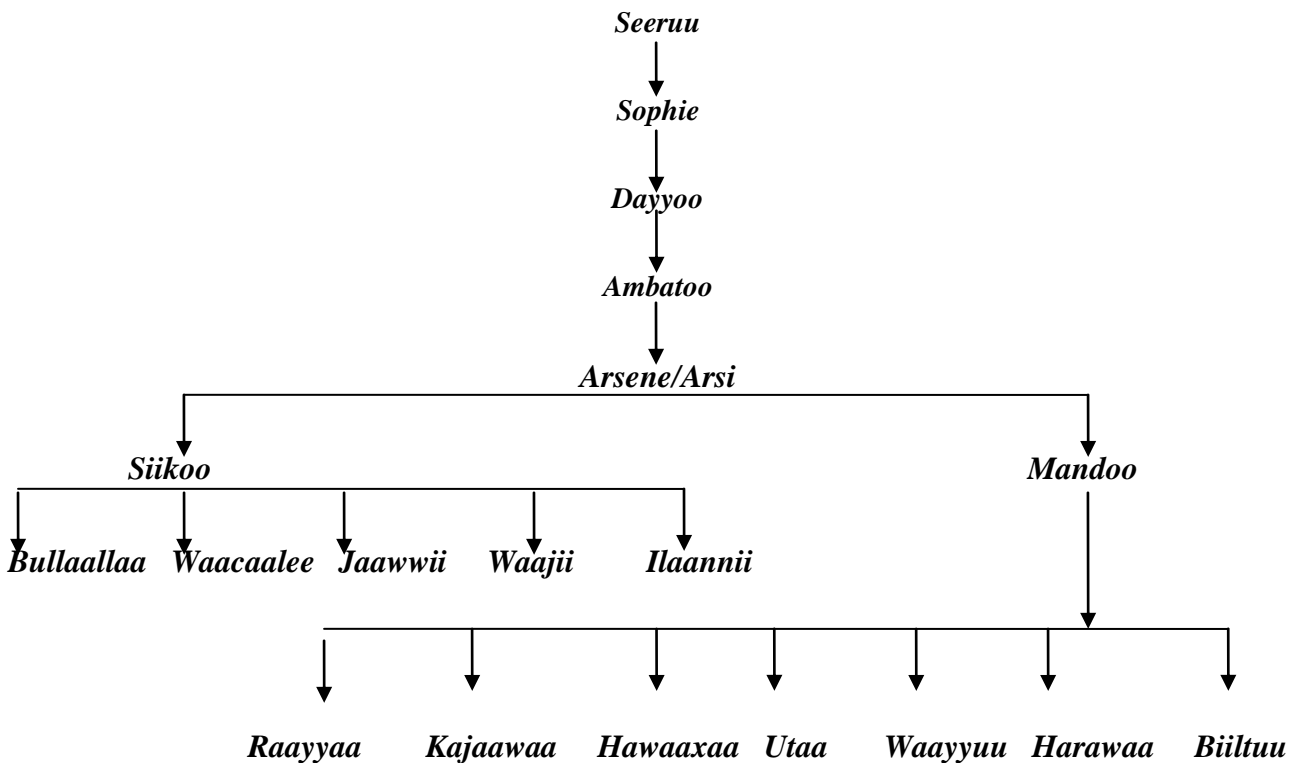
<sup>23</sup>Desta, 2013, A history of Kofele wereda, pp. 20

<sup>24</sup>Ibid

<sup>25</sup>Ibid

Bahrey and Trmingham did not include the Arsi Oromo genealogical trees is a mystery<sup>26</sup>. However, Benti Mekonen has indicated in his journal the Arsi Oromo genealogical tree as follows:

**Diagram 1.** Genealogy of Arsi-Oromo Patrilineage



Source: Benti Mekonen Abdisa, *Arsi Oromo Descent and Indigenous Moral system in Ethiopia*, 2021, page 1628, Vol. 6, Issue 7

Each clan member efficiently specifies the lineage that belongs to that particular clan. Some even specify lineages other than their clan. This is because the rule of marriage strictly requires this knowledge. Inter-clan relationships and cohesion among Arsi are solid. 'Arsooma' being an Arsi is a welcoming feature and a cohesive force. At a larger structure, the Arsi clans living in the research site have not been separated from one another<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup>Desta, 2013, pp. 22

<sup>27</sup>Ibid

According to the Arsi oral tradition, a man called *Arse* had begotten two sons, *Sikko* and *Mando*. They, in turn, had 12 sons, of which *Mandoo* 7 sons had called *Torban Mandoo*. *Sikko* had five sons called *Shanan- Sikko*. These twelve sons are "fathers of all Arsi living in Arsi and Bale"<sup>28</sup>. The Arsi people in Adaba Wäräda belongs to Siko and Mando branch of Arsi Oromo. According to the informants, *Raayyaa* and *Kajawaa* clans of Mando branches are found in West Arsi. They belong to *Baarentummaa* or Barentu (one of the two big moieties in to which the Oromo are divided; the other being Boorana). The Arsi Oromo mainly inhabit the present day Arsi, Western Arsi, Bale and part of eastern Šhawa zones. Therefore, they stretched far beyond the physical boundaries of present day Arsi region, Bale, southern Šhawa and to some extent the former Sidamo district.<sup>29</sup>

The Arsi Oromo in Adaba district speak Afaan Oromo. They have descended from a single individual called Arsie. "Arsi" as the name of the ancestral father was given to the clan's ancestor who lived seventeen generations ago.<sup>30</sup> This tradition also shows that, the name Arsi is derived from the ancestral founding father called Arsi (Arsie) who had two sons: Sikko and Mando. They in turn gave birth to five and seven children respectively. It was further stated that these twelve sons of Sikko and Mando were the forefathers of the current Arsi Oromo groups. Descendants of these people seem to have dispersed in the region of Bale, Šhawa and Sidama.<sup>31</sup>

Kinship system is another form of social organization. The Oromo describe their genealogy beginning from the largest kinship system, *Gosa*, which is subdivided into moiety, sub moiety and *Qomoo* (clan)<sup>32</sup>. These subdivisions have lower-order branches of kinship known as *Mana* (lineage), *Balbala* (minor lineages), and *Warra* (minimal lineage or extended family). Ethnographic research

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid

<sup>29</sup>Destä, 2013, A History of Kofele Woreda from 1941 – 1991, pp. 21

<sup>30</sup>Almaw Kifle, 1999. "A History of Arsi - Sidama Conflict 1935-1974", (Unpublished B.A. Thesis", Addis Ababa University, p.3

<sup>31</sup>Gemechu J. Geda. "Pilgrimages and Syncretism: Religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia." The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies' Dissertation Submitted To University Of Bayreuth, September 2013, Bamberg, Germany.

<sup>32</sup>Assefa 2012

among the Arsi Oromo also reveals the kinship structure from the family to the clan as *mana/warra* (family/extended family), *sradha* (minor lineage), *balbala* (lineage), and *gosa* (clan)<sup>33</sup>. The Arsi Oromo is believed to be a descendant of Barentu, one of the two significant moieties of Oromo. They have elaborate moiety systems and kinship structures organized along paternal genealogy. Arsi is subdivided into two major moieties called *Sikko* and *Mando*. They consist of several lineages, and they trace descent from a common ancestor without any difficulty.

### **1.2.3.2. Administrative History of Adaba Woreda before its incorporation into the Modern Ethiopian State**

Before Menilek's conquest of the southern region and the expansion of Islam into Arsi, both in the second half of the 19th century, the Arsi social life was dominated by kinship units or moiety clan lineage structure and popular Gadaa system (the egalitarian; socio-political organization).<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the social life of Arsi Oromo was dominated by both structures before the second half of the 19th century. Each of these social structures will be discussed as follows:

The first social structure of the Arsi Oromo was the moiety clan lineage structure. The moiety clan lineage structure or kinship organization of the Arsi follows the thread of genealogy. According to this structure, Arsi (Arse) had two sons: Sikko (senior who had five sons) and Mando (junior who had seven sons). Later on, Mando became and claimed senior and Sikko became junior based on their agreements on the Gadaa laws.<sup>35</sup>

The descendants of Sikko crossed the *Wabe Shebelle* River in the 16th century and settled in today's Arsi. The descendent of Mando on the other hand largely remained behind and still in Bale while a significant number of them settled in western Arsi, southern Šhawa and parts of Sidamo. The Arsi in these areas have closer cultural, religious and social ties among themselves. This was because of

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<sup>33</sup>Hirut 2000: 62- 65; Mamo 2006:

<sup>34</sup> Abbas Haji, 1982. "A History of Arsi 1980-1935", pp.7-10, 66.

<sup>35</sup> Informants, Addee Mekiya Jemal, Ato Kelil Kasim

their similarity in cultural setup, religion and socio political organization and their common descent of the lineage.<sup>36</sup>

The Oral traditions commonly agree that the Arsi belong to Baarentuu group of the Oromo division. Mando Arsi Oromo consists of a number of lineages and they trace descent from common ancestor without any difficulty. Each clan member can easily mention his own lineage. Some members of Arsi can even specify lineages which were not in their own clan. This was because the rule of marriage strictly requires this knowledge. ‘Arsooma’ (being an Arsi) is a welcoming feature and a cohesive force and as a result, inter-clan relationship and cohesion among Arsi were very strong. Accordingly, the Arsi clans living in Adaba had not been separated from one another. Because of socio-economic factors, there has been continuous re- crossing of the Wabe River by the moieties of Sikko and Mando. As a result, many sub-clan of Mando such as Raayyaa, Kajawaa, Qoomaa, Say’imannaa, Weegee and others live in Arsi. Similarly, the Allujaana and Sole of the Sikko descendants live both in Arsi and Bale.<sup>37</sup>

#### **1.2.4. Adaba Woreda from Menelik’s Expansion to the Italian Occupation (1880s-1936)**

Before 1941 most people livelihood in this area was cattle breeding rather than crop production, thus, they moved with their cattle to the pastoral place during winter season. Therefore, there was no *woreda* administrative structure organized by the empire Minilik II. However, the administrative units were mostly established on the basis of their historical background. Various minor chiefs in all parts of the empire were appointed to be governors of their respective region, but denying autonomous status. The 1942 national order, however, did not come to effect in Bale province until 1944 since Adaba was not restructured as a *Woreda*.<sup>38</sup>

The Šhawan incorporation of the Arsi Oromo by Menilek II had generally great impact on the Arsi Oromo of Adaba area. But, before directly entertaining this issue it is vital to see Menilek’s conquest

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<sup>36</sup> Abbas Hajji, 1991. “A History of Arsi 1980-1935”, p.1; Abdurrahman Kabeto, 1991. “Allo- Arsi: The Institution of Customary Laws in the Upper Wabe Shebele Region”, p. 4; Ketebo Abdiyo. 1999. “A Historical survey of Arsi, 1910–1974”, p.16.

<sup>37</sup> Abdurahman Kebeto, 1991. “Allo Arsi...,” pp. 4-5

<sup>38</sup> Informant, Ato Mindaye Tefera,

of Arsi. The incorporation of Arsi was started with a series of campaigns that Menilek undertook from 1882 onwards, in fact aimed at acquiring control over land and the trade resources to strengthen his power and expand his sovereignty.<sup>39</sup> The Arsi Oromo in today's Arsi resisted the subjugating forces of emperor Menilek. It took the emperor six solid years to conquer the Arsi who used to fight with spears and shields. Fighting expanded in the nineteenth century when the Šhawan king mobilized troops to gain control of the land and to draw tribute from Arsi. The Arsi offered furious resistance, as a result emperor Menilek settled a number of soldiers in the area, placing heavy burden on the Arsi. Many Arsi men were forced to labor for the military men living in the garrisons. The last decisive battle between Arsi Oromo and Menilik's force took place in 1886.<sup>40</sup>

Once Menilik succeeded in defeating the Arsi, he established the feudal system called the *Mälkegña* a system in which, Menilik's soldiers were given the authority over the people and that each clan was required to provide annual taxes (in kind) that were paid to the different landlords. Furthermore, Menilik realized that there were no many Arsi forces to resist occupation and he used land grants to convince northern farmers to settle there. They brought the plough and seized the fertile area. Following Menilek's conquest of the late 19th century other groups of the people mainly the Amhara and the Šhawa Oromo moved to Arsi land and later become inhabitants of the region.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, it was historical fact that in the process of the establishment of modern Ethiopia and in the process of the incorporation, the two poles of reaction were evident; peaceful submission and armed resistance. Things were not easy for Menilik to incorporate Arsi people, though he deployed a sizeable and an organized army as aggressors. After armed resistance, many autonomous areas submitted to Menilik's soldiers one after another. The incorporation ensured Menilik's steady source of revenue to strengthen his political and military position; especially during and after the battle of Adwa, 1896.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mohammed Hassen, 2006. "A Historical Survey of Arbagugu", pp.10-12, Katabo Abdiyo, 1999. "A Historical Survey of Arsi...", p.1, Abbas Haji, 1982. "A History of Arsi...", pp.12-14

<sup>40</sup> Bahiru Zawude, 2005. A History of Modern Ethiopia- 1855-1991, p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Katebo Abdiyo, 2010. "The Political Economy of Land and Agrarian Development in Arsi...", P.4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

To do this, the government introduced a form of indirect rule in which clan chiefs were given the title of *balabat* and entrusted with the responsibility of collecting taxes, and settle disputes although land remained under the ownership of the clan. In return, the *balabats* were given vacant land. Moreover, after Menilik's conquest of Arsi, the *balabat* institution was introduced to the area. Following this the *balabats* were recruited from the local people and served as a communication channel between the administration and the local people. In return the central government recognized their economic privileges.<sup>43</sup>

Along with the spread of feudalism in southern Ethiopia, Emperor Minilik unified the various political units in southern Ethiopia between 1875 and 1898, both through the use of force and by peaceful means. Following this Menilik set up an administrative system suit to better control and enhance exploitation.<sup>44</sup> The enlargement of the state multiplied the opportunities for appointment and greatly increased the size of the northern ruling class, and vastly expanded its landed possession and has transformed the northerners into a class of land owners in the southern province as well. Thus feudalism in southern Ethiopia created *chisseгна* (gäbbar farmers those landowners evict them at any time). The major cause for the emergence of the *chisseгна* was the new land tenure system. Under this system land was divided into three parts. Two thirds of the land was put under the control of the state while the remaining one third was allocated to the traditional rulers and the indigenous population.<sup>45</sup> After 1945, being stimulated by government land grants and improvements in the road system made during the Italian occupation the process of migration increased. By 1965, there were many people who came from the north living in Arsi as small-scale landowners and tenants.<sup>46</sup>

Coming to Adaba, Menilik's soldiers had totally controlled the hinterlands of Adaba area around the 1890s and in the first decade of the 20th century according to the oral information and archives

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<sup>43</sup> Bahiru Zawude, 2005. A History of Modern Ethiopia- 1855-1991, p. 65

<sup>44</sup> Teshome Kebede, 1982. "Some Aspects of Feudalism in Ethiopia", Edited by Sven Rubenson, in the proceedings of the seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund,

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pp 117

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, pp 118-120

collected from the district. People of the area acknowledged Menilik's over- lordship and paid tribute after the above mentioned year.<sup>47</sup>

Generally, Menilik's conquest seems to have brought a radical transformation in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of Arsi Oromo. This was true for the Arsi Oromo of Adaba district. For instance the Oromo Gadaa institution was destroyed and replaced by aggressive Shewan administration. Churches began to be built for new settlers in the region, for instance, the San George church in the Hako village was built in this year. The local people were turned into gäbbars with payment of heavy tributes which all of them seem to have antagonized the Arsi Oromo with the new settlers.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the Arsi Oromo trace their relationships in three principal ways<sup>49</sup>

The first is Aanooma which is relationship through descent or parentage. The second relation is through Soddooma which is the tie of relation through affinity or marriage. These two types of identifying relations together indicate the people's system of classifying Warrooma (family relationship). The third and the broadest form of relationship is Arsoomaa (Arsi-hood), which refers to the cultural homogeneity and the Aaloo (the customary code) of the people. Arsi-hood provides the people with an identity that cuts across allegiances based on moiety. From the explanation of patrilineal<sup>80</sup> relationship of the Arsi Oromo, I can mention that this strong relationship among the Arsi is serving, as a pivotal factor in any identity of an individual be it religion or other socio-cultural aspects. This was also shared by Hussein Bedasa as he appropriately explains as follows

The Arsi developed the concept of Arsoomaa (Arsihood). This was an expression of unity, integrity, solidarity and interdependence among the Arsi. Arsoomaa was not only a norm and social value, but an obligation to be fulfilled by each member of the Arsi tribes for whatever asked in the name of Arsoomaa, he could be provided with food, shelter and get protection against whenever he went both in Arsi and Bale<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Informant, Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>48</sup> Informants, Ato Hussien Bedasa, and Addee Yeshiwork Kifle

<sup>49</sup> Ibid,

<sup>50</sup> Informant, Ato Shubisa Geletu

In general, the settlement pattern of the Arsi of Adaba district was based on the kinship organizations that have clan identity, which covers a larger area as compared to the lowest social unit that is *mana*. From the point of settlement pattern, they are organized in a cluster for mutual help in work and other social values. This tradition is almost similar all over the whole district. Clan identity was an important factor in any socio political and economic life of the Arsi Oromo in Adaba district. It is the clan member that supports their kinsmen during marriage, bereavement, paying blood compensation (*gumaa*) and helping the poor.

In addition, the coming of Menilik's soldiers to the district had brought far-reaching social changes in Arsi marriages. For instance, before the coming of Amhara settlers in the area there was only one type of marriage which was practiced among the Arsi Oromo that was "Gabbara or Jinfuu Dhabachu" meaning bride wealth marriage. According to Baxter and the information collected from the district until 1890s all the marriages by the Arsi Oromo in Adaba district was accompanied by bride wealth. However, the conquest of the area by Menilik's forces and the famine of 1888-1892 throughout the region had brought economic and social collapse. There were no cattle which were given as a bride wealth. Baxter said that there was no proper marriage without bride wealth.<sup>51</sup>

The second social organization of the Arsi Oromo was the *gadaa* system. Before and during the period of their movement, the Oromo had their own political, economic, social and religious institutions. For political, economic and social purposes, the Oromo were organized into the *Gadaa* system. The *gadaa* system is a system in which *gadaa* classes succeed each other every eight years providing military, political, social and cultural leaderships for the Oromo nation.<sup>52</sup> *Gadaa* is the guiding rule and central to the socio-political system of Arsi Oromo of Kofale before the second half of the 20th century. According to Asmarom Legesse, the Arsi Oromo practiced the *gadaa* system when they reach their present site. In addition he had made field survey in Arsi in 1961 to collect data on their *gadaa* system and their kinship system. He recommends that the *gadaa* system of Arsi

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<sup>51</sup> P.T.W Baxter, Jun Hultin and Alesandro Truilzi (ed.),1996. "Being and Becoming Oromo...", pp.185-188.

<sup>52</sup> Asmarom Legesse, 1973. *Gadaa: The Three Approaches to Study African Society*. New York, United States of America: The Free Press, Macmillan, page, 34-36

Oromo lacked continuation during his observation. According to him *gadaa* officers were known, but it was not clear when or where the next transfer of power would take place<sup>53</sup>.

Supporting this idea, oral informants from the district remember *gadaa* as an institution of their ancestors and recognize that the system was the source of Oromo seera (laws). According to them it was part of their day to day social life. Particularly, traditions collected from the district shows the survival and preservation of some of the past *gadaa* practices which still dominate their daily life. The major reason for the survival of the *gadaa* tradition in the district seems to be related with the late and slow infiltration of Islam in Adaba area as some elders from the district<sup>54</sup>

The Arsi Oromo in Adaba district like the rest of their relatives in Arsi did not setup a state of their own. Instead, they continued to be governed by the *gadaa* institutions. However, their *gadaa* practice has some unique features which differ from other Oromo communities. It seems that these unique features are partly the result of the dispersal of the Arsi Oromo over vast areas and the resultant intermingling with other communities.<sup>55</sup>

#### **1.2.5. Adaba during the Italian Occupation (1936-1941)**

Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 from the northern and southern directions. The major purpose of their aggression was to establish vast colonial empire in East Africa and to revenge the Italian defeat at the battle of Adwa in 1896 by Ethiopia.<sup>56</sup> The Italians had arrived and occupied the area probably around 1938 following the exile of emperor Häilasillassiè. The response of the Arsi of Adaba district to the Italian aggression became one of the controversial issues. The majority of them accepted the Italian with great excitement and gave them warm acceptance. Therefore, people's reaction towards them was optimistic in the area. They established their center named Mission sefer (Mission area) near Adaba town in Furuna village for the purpose of residence, military training and education in

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, page 37

<sup>54</sup> Informants, Jemal Defo and Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>55</sup> Abbas Haji, 1982. "A History of Arsi 1980-1935", pp. 9-11.

<sup>56</sup> Bahru Zewde, 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia 1955-199, p. 158.

Adaba town. Immediately, after their arrival, the Italians had brought socio-economic and political transformation in the area contrary to the earlier administration.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, the Italians had broken the power of local Amhara balabats. This resulted in political structure in which the Amhara could not have the opportunity of getting complete dominance over their tenants. According to Baxter, the Arsi Oromo in Adaba area found the Italian governance as much less repressive as that of the Amhara and other ethnic group. This occurred because; the Italians abolished *Asrat* collection and *näftagña* system in the area. The power of balabats to collect taxes from peasants was weakened and peasants regained their land and freely ploughed it without any tax until 1941. The other achievement of the Italians in Adaba was that, contrary to the former period, different infrastructural activities were carried out in the district, among which the construction of Shashemenne - Bale road which pass through the district and the Adaba Secondary school can be mentioned as good examples.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> P. T. W. Baxter, 1978. "Ethiopia's Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo", *African Affairs: A Quarterly Journal of the Royal African Society*. Published by: *Oxford University Press on behalf of The Royal African Society*. Page 27

<sup>58</sup> Informants, Ato Kelil Kasim,

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF ADABA WOREDA (1941-1991)

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the formation of Adaba wereda, the administrative and political history of Adaba from 1941 – 1991. It is divided into sections. The first section deals with the formation of the district, the second section discussed the administrative and political history of the district from 1941-1974, and the third section discussed about the administrative and political history of the district from 1974- 1991.

#### 2.2. The Formation of Adaba Woreda

The formation of Adaba wereda was traced us to the year 1949/1942 E.C at the Imperial system of Hailesillase in the late 19th century. According to the informants, Adaba town was founded in 1903 E.C but it has got the wereda level of administration after forty years. The former ethnic group founded this place is Hadaba of Arsi Oromo and thus, the place is called as Adaba by taking the name of this ethnic group as indicated on the above.

In another way, Adaba town obtained township status and independently structured in 1911 near to *Kidanemihiret* church next, the town developed to the west of the church and has got the formation of the current status. This was realized through common interest and pressure of the urban dwellers and the growth of trade in relation to the market place<sup>59</sup>. At that moment Bale was one of the *awrajas* of Hararge *tekilay gizat* and Adaba was *mikitul wereda* having about 162 thousand hectars. *Fitawrari* Kebede Kasa was appointed as the first administrator (mayor) of the Adaba *mikitul wereda* during this year. However, during the reign of Häilasillasiè, the people of Adaba were politically and

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<sup>59</sup>Shitahun et al, 1990. The History and Development of Adaba Senior High School; (Amharic Version, Unpublished Document), pp. 10

socially marginalized, because the majority of administrative workers and government employees came from other places.<sup>60</sup>

Up on the foundation of the town in 1911, the market place was formed in Furuna rural kebele near the church of *Kidanemiret* by the willingness of the town administrator *Fitawrari Kassa Kebede*<sup>61</sup>. The marketing activity during those years was taken place by bartering system of exchange of the materials for the majority of people live around the town. For instance, when the woman wants to buy coffee and she had butter, simply she give her butter and buy coffee from the seller or the vice verse was true for a long period. Some people have used beads of hands as a money to buy goods and others have used bar salt (*amole*) to buy and sell their commodity<sup>62</sup>. The market place was changed to the center of the town following the growth of the town and the population to the west direction of the town before the coming of the derge regime.

In addition, the district have got dry weather road in 1940/41, as the road from Shashemene to Goba, which crossed the district was constructed by the Italian the in this year and the people of the Adaba town have got electric light in 1973. Hence, the dwellers of Adaba town have got electricity supply in 1973 generated from the diesel generator bought by the contribution of the dwellers. However, the church San George was established in 1896 in Hako rural village whereas, the mosque found in Adaba town was founded in 1913. Moreover, concerning the education system of Adaba wereda, teaching alphabets of Amharic language, counting numbers and religious context was begun in the church *Medahinalem* by priests of the church. People of any religion have sent their children to church and they have got the primary knowledge since there was no modern school in the area that time. The modern education however started in the post liberation period; specifically in 1942.<sup>63</sup>

The complicated bureaucracy of the period increased the level of administrative injustice. The structural system of the administration made the governors responsible to officials at the next higher level of the administrative hierarchy. Thus, in the *wäräda* administrative structure, there were

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<sup>60</sup>Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Addee Nesriya Jemal

<sup>61</sup>Informants, Ato Mindaye Tefera, Ato Hussein Beker

<sup>62</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera.Shubisa Geletu and Jemal Defo

<sup>63</sup> Ibid,

various agencies stationed and in *meketel wäräda* like Adaba. These include *wäräda* and *meketel wäräda* courts, treasuries, the secretaries, etc. Each agency performed specific duties assigned to it by the central ministries. But sometimes the government agencies in Adaba *wäräda* performed functions out of their specific duties due to the complex nature of the bureaucracy. The wereda's Administrator had full authority to make any action without permission of anybody<sup>64</sup>.

### **2.3. Administrative and Political History of Adaba Woreda, 1941-1974**

The fascist Italian forces were defeated by the combined forces of Ethiopian patriots and the British military forces. Leading the victorious combined Ethiopian patriots and British force, Haile Selassie I entered into Addis Ababa on May 5, 1941. The restoration of imperial power marked the end of Fascist rule in Ethiopia<sup>65</sup> When Haile Selassie was restored to power, the reality of Ethiopia was not as it had been before the year 1935. The emperor inherited a country whose administrative framework had been laid down like western colonial powers to some extent. That administrative framework was evident from the structure and administration systems in various sectors such as military, financial, educational and administrative sectors<sup>66</sup>.

The administrative structure made right after the Italian evacuation, the coming of Emperor Häilasillassiè (the second phase, 1941-1974) from abroad after the interruption of his rule for five years brought new governmental structure. Administratively, before the 1935-36 Italian invasions, there were 34 administrative units in Ethiopia. Each unit was a kind of state within a state, under the authority of the emperor. One of the first political blows he inflicted upon the regional nobility was to liquidate the territorial classification of the *gäbbar* system and reorganized it anew. To this end in 1942, Ethiopia was reorganized in to twelve provinces, *täkläy gizats* (governorates- generals)<sup>67</sup>. This

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<sup>64</sup>Informant, Jemal Defo

<sup>65</sup>Daniel Gemechu, "A Nation in Perpetual Transition: The Politics of Changes in Administrative Divisions and Subdivisions, in Ethiopia" Papers in Proceeding of 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (1994), pp. 96-97;

<sup>66</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Shubisa Geletu and Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>67</sup> Teshale Tibebe, 1995. *The Making of Modern Ethiopia, 1896-1974*. Lawrenceville, New Jersey, The Red Sea Press, Inc., p. 115.

was not to mean the administrative unit of the country had changed, but the power of the regional notables was highly reduced and the traditional power base of the nobility *balabats* was destroyed.

For the next thirty years or so he ruled Ethiopia with a firm hand, becoming increasingly autocratic as the years went by. With a strong, centralized government, the provincial governors lost considerable power<sup>68</sup>. Even though the administrative system was modernized and bureaucratized relatively in these years as discussed below, the official role of the *balabats* was substantially reduced. The *gäbbar* system was introduced in a new form, and tribute and corvee labor were replaced by taxes that went to the central administration. The *balabats* had the job of collecting taxes, and this was a period characterized by corruption and exploitation, as many *balabats* took bribes, appropriated land, and generally abused their power<sup>69</sup>.

To this end, the Emperor introduced a series of legislations starting from 1942. As part of the centralization attempt, the imperial government was interested to establish a uniform local administration system throughout the country. In fact, the Haile Selassie's government wanted to forge its influence to the peripheries. For this purpose, all governors were centrally appointed. The period between 1941 and 1974 was marked by the announcement of successive policies that aimed at centralize administration in the country and consolidate the absolute power of Emperor Haile Selassie I<sup>70</sup>.

In addition; the effect of enemy's divide and rule policy which had deepened the rift between northerners and southerners were not easily uprooted from the minds of some south eastern local elite. Thus, in order to restore peace and stability in Bale and in Adaba *Woreda* in specific, Haile Selassie administration resorted to the use of local institutions like the *Gadaa* system together with modern bureaucratic institutions since he didn't the *Gadaa* system's knowledge of traditional dispute settlement mechanisms, traditional system of governance and also it has unique attributes of

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<sup>68</sup> D. Donham, 1985. *Work and Power in Maale: Ethiopia*. New York: Columbia

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, Informant Mindaye Tesema, Ato Jemal Defo

<sup>70</sup> Alebrto Sabachi, *Ethiopia Under Mussoloni; Fascism and Colonial Experience* (London: Zed books, 1985), pp. 212-213

leadership that fulfills special social needs of a community unlike modern political institutions of the emperor.<sup>71</sup>

The new political reality meant that there was a massive decrease in their freedom and autonomy and a degree of exploitation that had been unknown in their recent past. During the early period of the Imperial regime restoration to the recent period Bale province was one of the *taklay-gizats* reorganized by the regime. The province was boarder by Arsi province to the north, Sidama provice to the west, and Hararge province to the east. Moreover, after the return of the emperor from exile and the restoration of the imperial rule, Adaba town continued to serve as district capital<sup>72</sup>. The Imperial period was thus marked by much turbulent change in the lives of the people of the Adaba district

The administrative units were mostly established on the basis of their historical background. Various minor chiefs in all parts of the empire were appointed to be governors of their respective region, but denying autonomous status. The complicated bureaucracy of the period increased the level of administrative injustice. The structural system of the administration made the governors responsible to officials at the next higher level of the administrative hierarchy. Thus, in the *wäräda* administrative structure, there were various agencies stationed in *wäräda* and *meketel wäräda* like Adaba. These include *wäräda* and *meketel wäräda* courts, treasuries, the secretaries, etc. Each agency performed specific duties assigned to it by the central ministries. But sometimes the government agencies in Adaba *wäräda* performed functions out of their specific duties due to the complex nature of the bureaucracy. The *wereda's* Administrator had full authority to make any action without permission of anybody<sup>73</sup>.

The 1942 national order, however, did not come to effect in Bale province until 1944 since Adaba was not restructured as a *Woreda*.<sup>74</sup> However, in 1944 on *wards* the Adaba was restructured as

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<sup>71</sup>Mulugeta Ashenafi 2020. A Historical Survey of Robe Wereda, from 1941-1991; Arsi Zone of Oromia Regional State. Pp. 15

<sup>72</sup>Informants: Guye and Abdulkedir

<sup>73</sup>Informant, Jemal Defo,

<sup>74</sup> Informant, Hiko Dalu

woreda containing about 16 small village boarderd by Dodola *woreda* to the west, Nensebo *woreda* to the south, Agarfa *woreda* and Dinsho *wereda* to the east and Arsi zone to the north in which Wabe – Shebele River separated them.<sup>75</sup>

Before 1941 most people livelihood in this area was cattle breeding rather than crop production, thus, they migrate with their cattle to the pastoral place during winter season. Therefore, there was no administrative structure organized by the empire Minilik II. However, the administrative units were mostly established on the basis of their historical background. Various minor chiefs in all parts of the empire were appointed to be governors of their respective region, but denying autonomous status.

As clearly described on the above, Adaba town has obtained township status and independently structured in 1911 but it have been taken about thirty years to be recognized as woreda. In 1944 *Fitawrary* Kebede Kasa was appointed as the first administrator (mayor) of the Adaba *wereda* during this year. As soon as he came to the Adaba he organized the *wereda* administrative office and police station. His authority did not have limitation because he can collect tax, he can order any farmer to bring whatever he want, and he can penalize an individual did not pay the tax in prison and any decision of him was the ultimate and unchanged<sup>76</sup>.

Therefore, in Adaba *woreda*, the 1941 land grant and taxation reform of the country, which abolished corvee labor and payment of tax in kind was not made practical because of the balabats in the area habituated the previous *gabbar* system. The local officials led by Fitawurari Kebede Kasa continued exploiting the labor of the local people as their own property. The lands of the balabats were farmed by peasants /tenants for free or small benefits of sharecropping of one-third crop. The peasants presented gifts in kind. Their wives rendered different kinds of house services. Moreover, local officials abused government revenue which was collected from the people in the form of land tax<sup>77</sup>. In the district it was difficult to see anything at all that the population had gained from their incorporation in the Ethiopian Empire. To the people it seemed that all they got in return for taxes and exactions were yet more officials to extract more taxes and exactions and bribes. Therefore,

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<sup>75</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera and Jemal Defo

<sup>76</sup> The informant, Shubisa Geletu,

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

there was no any complain raised on the decision of the officials and the balabats by the peasants so that they accepted all things as the decision of decent<sup>78</sup>.

Concerning the political history of Adaba *woreda*, the peasants began reflecting their dissent attitude in Hailessilassie regime due to complains on the small amount of benefit they received from the agricultural outputs. They have broken the plough equipments of the balabats, they fired the heaps of collected crops and finally some of them killed the balabats and moved to forest and they become rash<sup>79</sup>. However, the officials led by *Fitwurari* Kebede continued to exploit the peasants with the supporting policemen and soldiers (nech-lebash) of the regime and they dammed the movement of the peasants for a while. The administrator during this time has established the first modern elementary school (now Adaba secondary school) in 1942 with one professional teacher assigned from the Bale province and one priest in the building constructed by Italian. Then he continued to expand this school year to year to reach grade one up to four<sup>80</sup>.

#### **2.4. Administrative and Political History of Adaba Woreda, 1974-1991**

The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution ended the power of Emperor Häilasillassiè. It also brought lasting changes in the political and economic landscape of Ethiopia by making an end to the so-called Solomon dynasty<sup>81</sup>. The *Derge* (committee in Amharic) introduced the 1975 Land Proclamation with the objective of abolishing landlordism in Ethiopia, and redistribution of the most important economic asset- land among the ordinary people. None of the Ethiopian regions and society remained unaffected by the revolutionary turmoil of the period<sup>82</sup>. However, because of their relative organization of the military and the absence of well-organized political party of the masses, the

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<sup>78</sup> The informant, Jemal Defo

<sup>79</sup> Informants, Kedir Dulla, Workineh Wondimu

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Baharu Zewde, 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, p.420

<sup>82</sup> Roberto Cigna, 1982. The Ethiopian Revolution: Its Present Stage of Development, in the Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, pp.523-534.

initiative to force the emperor to step- down and take power was undertaken by the military on September 12, 1974 and the *Derge* was established<sup>83</sup>.

During the time of the imperial regime different peasant rebellions were used to be made against local landlords in a disorganized and scattered manner posing no significant challenge to the landlords, let alone the government. But expression of discontent was common. Even some of the tenants sought to kill the landlords when they were evicted from their tenancy. This type of resistance was being expressed by the landless section of the community in Adaba *wereda*<sup>84</sup>.

On the other hand, the landlords with their tenants were protested the *Derge* government and goes to Somalia because of their land was taken by Proclamation No.31 of 1975 (A Proclamation to provide for the public ownership of Rural Lands)<sup>85</sup>. This movement was written on different books with having ‘Movement of Bale Peasants’; and this movement were organized and led by Haji Abdulahi Genemo and others from Adaba (the new Hejira bank was opened in Adaba town in the current year in order to remind this name). Then, this resistance in a wide range organized by General Wako Gutu and the movement was supported by the government of Somalia on giving the logistics and weapons for them to attack the derge regime up to 1982<sup>86</sup>. The conflicts of the peasants and their questions were overwhelmed by the military derge regime<sup>87</sup>.

This proclamation did not only abolish the former feudal relations of production between the landlord and the peasant, but it also completely abolished the commercial agriculture from rural Ethiopia. According to this proclamation “All rural lands shall be collective property of Ethiopian people and no person or business organization or any other organization shall hold rural land in private ownership”. Hence, the proclamation gave only the right of use of land and clearly stated in Article 5 that “No Person may sell, exchange, mortgage, lease or otherwise transfer his holding to

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<sup>83</sup>Baharu Zewde, 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, p.229

<sup>84</sup>Informants, Addee Halima Nesru, Addee Mekiya Kemal; Addee Yeshiwork Kifle,

<sup>85</sup>Desta Roba, 2013. A History of Kofele wereda from 1941-1991, pp. 70-73

<sup>86</sup>Informant, Ato Jemal Defo, 30/8/2016E.C.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid

another”.<sup>88</sup> On 20 September 1974, the military government declared its manifesto clarifying its aim to build *Hibretesebawinet* or Ethiopian Socialism, whose goal was “equality, self-reliance, and the dignity of labor, the supremacy of common good and the indivisibility of Ethiopian unity”. The military government also made clear its determination to work for the people of Ethiopia under the slogan of “Ethiopia *Tikdem*” (Ethiopia first).<sup>89</sup>

The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, which broke out suddenly, ended the power and authority of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Opposition to the imperial government broke out in February 1974. Teachers, taxi drivers, urban dwellers and soldiers were involved in the riots. There were no Ethiopian regions and society that was not affected by the revolutionary turmoil of the period. However, the initiative to force the emperor to step-down and take power was taken by the military. This was because of their relative organization and absence of political party to take the responsibility of providing effective leadership. On September 12, 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed by a military group who called itself the *Derge* (committee). The military who assumed power established a government called the *Derge*, which means committee in Amharic.<sup>90</sup> The *Derge* introduced radical reforms like that of the 1975 Land Proclamation.

The main objective of the Land proclamation, which ended landlordism in Ethiopia, was to redistribute the most important economic asset, the land and political power among the ordinary people. When land and other private property were nationalized, the process was not peaceful. The *Derge*, who encouraged class struggle, ordered the peasants to confiscate the property of landlords through violent actions. The assumption of power by the *Derge* and its radical reforms led to instability though out the country. In Adaba *Woreda* also the transfer of power was followed by

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<sup>88</sup>Roberto Cigna, 1982. The Ethiopian Revolution: Its Present Stage of Development, in the Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, pp.523-534.

<sup>89</sup>Edmond J. Keller, 1981. Ethiopia Revolution, Class and National Question, African Affairs, 80(321), pp. 519-549

<sup>90</sup>Baharu Zewde, A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991 (London: James Curry pp.236, 229, 233-4.

lootings harassments of the previous officials. For instance, many *balabats* of the *wereda* were killed by *Shambel Ali Mussa* who was a member of *durge* and he was the Administrator of Bale province<sup>91</sup>.

Based on this manifesto, the new military government started introducing the most radical political and economic reforms. Among these reforms, the 1975 land proclamation was the most important one. The proclamation ended the private ownership of land and abolished the practice of serfdom. The end of serfdom and corvee together with land nationalization had great significance in dismantling the structure of the old feudal government whose administrative and economic structure has been based on land –peasant- landlord relations.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, in the country where the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture, the proclamation also had great significance by dismantling the political economy of the feudal government. The reform created great excitement among the population of the country who were victims of both the harsh measures of land lords and economic hardships of the imperial period. This was why the *Därg* obtained a wider support from the peasants.

The government builds its argument on the premises of social and historical justice that is based on two principles: (1) justice understood as egalitarianism – guaranteeing every farmer in need of agricultural land equal rights of access to such land, and (2) historical justice – granting tenure security to the Ethiopian farmer’s who had experienced land deprivation and land expropriation through different mechanisms during the imperial era.<sup>93</sup>

The land reform gave the peasantry in the south a vested material interest in the Ethiopian state as well as a political interest in the Derge regime. The majority of the Arsi in Adaba district accepted the Land Reform Proclamation of 4 March 1975 with great struggle of the Darg with politically and with military power. Since the proclamation directly concerns the land owners, they were fully protested the system and they agitated the peasants and the youth for they support the violation of the *balabats*. Therefore, the people in Adaba district were not simply accepted the land reform

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<sup>91</sup>Informant, Ato Tesfaye Dinku

<sup>92</sup>Dessalegn Rahmato, 1982. “Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia: A brief Assessment”, p.172.

<sup>93</sup>Wibke Crewett,1 Ayalneh Bogale, and Benedikt Korf, 2008. Land Tenure in Ethiopia, pp. 1-3

proclamation and the proclamation by itself has brought many of youth to migrate from the *wereda* to other places in the country and to cross the border of the country<sup>94</sup>

As the *Darg* had encouraged class struggle and ordered the peasants to confiscate the property of landlords through violent actions, the nationalization of land was neither easy nor peaceful. The land proclamation also aimed at replacing the old *balabat* based structure and reinstating the new administrative system of the *Darg*. Thus, the new proclamation declared the establishment of peasant associations. According to this proclamation, every 30-40 *Gašha* was organized in to one peasant association which was governed by an elected committee<sup>95</sup>. Following this fourteen Peasant Association were established in Adaba district during the *Darg* regime.

For the next fifteen years or so the Derge government ruled Ethiopia and embarked on a process of development and transformation that would affect even the most far-flung of its peoples. Soon after the Revolution all universities and secondary schools were closed, and the students were sent out into the countryside to teach the socialist values of the new government. In another way in order to tell the people about the essence of the new reforms, the military government mobilized the students under *Edget Behibret Zemecha* (development through cooperation campaign) program<sup>96</sup>. The *Zemecha* students heralded the end of serfdom and private ownership of land. As a result more than 30,000 peasant associations were established all over the country so as to fill in the administrative gap created after the downfall of Hāilasillassiè and to dismantle the office of local *balabats*. Attempts were also made to fight illiteracy. Moreover, the overall administrative framework of the new government was laid down by the *Zemecha* students.<sup>97</sup>

Generally, in Adaba *wereda* with a greater or lesser degree of sensitivity the *Zemecha* students gathered the local people together and told them to change their lives. The role of the *Zemecha* students was to nationalize land, build schools, bring basic health, education and modernize

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<sup>94</sup>Informants, Derartu Alemu, Shubisa Geletu,

<sup>95</sup>Informants, kelil Kasim, Dessalegn Rahmato, 1982. “Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia: A brief Assessment”,” p.173

<sup>96</sup>Baharu Zewde, 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, p.240.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid, pp. 241 - 243

peasantry. This involved the abolition of all religious practices except Orthodox Christianity and Islam, including all traditional practices that were deemed to be exploitative or hierarchical.<sup>98</sup>

Up on the derge established in 1974, the Adaba town and the district were politically changed in its dimension and structure. One report written in Afan –Oromo found in Adaba woreda finance office indicated that:

*“Magaalaa Adaabbaa bara 1903 naannawa yeroo ammaa Kidaana Miratitti ergaa hundeeffamtee boodaa naannawa sana bishaan waan hin jirreef bakka ammaa jirtuuttii baraa 1924 tti jijjiramtee erga dhaabbatee baraa 1946 tti haayyama mana qopheessaa argattee. Haaluma kanaan saarviisiin waligalaa magaalattii Bara 1952 tti adeemsifameen Bara 1954 tti pilaanii magaalaa argattee tajaajila manneen ijaarsaa, kennaa lafa manaa gaggeessaa erga turtee boodaa bara 1974 tti maqaa bulchinsa magaalaa Adaabbaa argattee tajaajilaa kan jirtuudha<sup>99</sup>”*

“Up on the foundation of Adaba town in 1911 around the Kidanemiret church, since the place lacks sufficient water source, the town reconstructed on the place the town founded by now in 1932. Then in 1954, the town recognized by the government giving township certificate. Though, the Adaba town continues providing different types of services while the master plan was provided in 1962 so that the residents obtained the land for house building on the basis of the plan. Then, the town has got the name *Adaba Administrative Town* in 1982 to provide full administration and management for the residents” (Translated by the researcher).

According to the report of Kefa and others, the foundation of the Adaba town was in 1911(1903E.C) near the church of *Kidanemiret* but it was changed to the current place in 1932 (1924E.C) because of lack of water in the former place and the town obtained the municipality certificate in 1954 (1946 E.C). Adaba town has got the town plan and then it succeeded to give house building service for the residents till 1982 (1974E.C). Since then the town has got town administration or municipality and is being leading by mayor up to now.

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<sup>98</sup>Informants, Jemal Defo, Shubisa Geletu

<sup>99</sup> Kefa, et al., 2015 Adaba district socio-economic profile

The main road of dry season constructed during Hailessilase by Italian that connected Shashemene and Bale – Robe through Adaba had brought the awaking of the town. The travelers went from Bale to the capital city and Shashemene have been stopped in the town and consumed in the restaurants. Thus, Adaba town was a station for travelers to take their breakfast and this has made the town to open many restaurants and to settle different ethnic groups in the town rapidly<sup>100</sup>. The Adaba town was radically changed when the Melka-Wakena Hydroelectric station was founded in 1990 by the interest of Mengistu Hailemariam. Many people from different tips of the country had come for job seeking including the foreign professionals (Russian and Yugoslavia) from socialist countries since Ethiopia followed the socialist ideology in the derge regime<sup>101</sup>.

In this regard, the number of urban dwellers rapidly increased and the Adaba town expanded in all direction with compacted shape during the derge. Different ethnic groups such as Amhara, Wolayita, Gurage, Silte, and others were settled in this town following the economic growth of the town since the buses crossed the town were the sources of income for the residents of the town. The majority of the Shewa –Oromo had come from the northern part of Ethiopia also were settled in three kebeles of Furunna, Ejersa and Weshaa abundantly during this regime<sup>102</sup>. Recently the town has covered 1288.7 hectares by including the farmlands founded in the surroundings of the town<sup>103</sup>.

## **2.5. Social Interaction History of Adaba Woreda (1941-1991)**

In the past half century ranging from 1941-1991, Adaba *Woreda* was a home of Arsi Oromo, Shewa Oromo, Gurages (Christian Kistanies and Sebet-Bet-Gurages, Muslim Gurages which comprised of Muslim Sebet-Bet-Gurages, Silte and Welenie) and Amhara as well as few other ethnic groups such as Wolayita, Dorze and others. Consequently, the *Woreda* is characterized by specific kinds of inter-ethnic social interactions that were characterized by peculiar features and interrelationships though

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<sup>100</sup> Informant, Hussien Beker

<sup>101</sup> Informant, Tesfaye Dinku

<sup>102</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera and Jemal Defo

<sup>103</sup> Kafa, et al, 2015 Adaba district socio-economic profile

inter-ethnic interactions and interrelationships with the rest ethnic groups were limited to some aspects of socio-economic activities only<sup>104</sup>.

In the context of Adaba inter-ethnic social interactions and interrelationships were beyond the description of the above context. Because, there were no religious or other ethnic differences bounded the social interactions of different ethnic groups and different religion believers to live together without any complains during those periods. If there was any disagreement occurred through the interrelationships of the community, social institutions such as elders conflict resolutions had responsibility to solve the problem incurred without differentiation and separation as well as without any discrimination belongs to the the disagreed people.<sup>105</sup>

The reforms that followed the return of Haile Selassie I from emigration and creation of unitary centralized administrative system, led to appointment and deployment of non-Oromo officials as governors of Adaba *Woreda* from the central government. As a result, Gurage and Amhara officials and/or governors were appointed as governors and deployed to the *Woreda*. Those governors attracted and pulled their relatives and ethnic groups to the *Woreda*. Eventually, the numbers of Gurages and Amharas started to rise and rise that resulting in increasing the ethnic diversity of the peoples living in Adaba *Woreda* even though prior to the arrival of Shewa Oromo, Gurages and Amhara and were starting living in this *Woreda* (before 1941), the earlier inhabitants of Adaba *Woreda* were Arsi Oromo. According to some local informants, the Shewa Oromo led by Fitawurari Kebede Kassa started settling in the *Woreda* preceded by the Amhara ethnic group; but a large number of Oromo peasants came to the area during the Great famine to rescue their cattle and other animals.<sup>106</sup> It is argued that a group of people consisted of Shewa Oromo flocked to this *Woreda* and the surrounding regions after they realized that the Arsi Oromos who were essentially cattle keepers didn't take tracts of land for individual uses.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera and Jemal Defo

<sup>105</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Shubisa Geletu and Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p.25;

<sup>107</sup> Ketebo 1999: 22.

However, it found difficult and impossible to get knowledgeable elders that have know-how on how, why and who initially came and settled among the Shewa Oromo groups in Adaba *Woreda* for the first time; where they inhabited, how they acquired lands for settlement; and from which specific locations and areas of Shewa they came. Based on local informants' recollections indicate that the Gurage came to the region after the Amhara and Shewa Oromo came to the region and already settled in Adaba *Woreda*.<sup>108</sup>

Gurages that were attracted and came to the *Woreda* that had no governmental posts and works started to engage in trading and waverling socio-economic activities after they settled in the town. The male *Gurages* and Dorze concentrated on trade like sewing clothes, merchandizing of goods and commodities, in cattle trading, *Abujede* and similar clothes selling and waverling activities and those weavers who produced *shemma* cloth for the surrounding people while the females undertook trading salts, spices, coffee and *Alella*. However, a few of them were agriculturalists. In order to promote the financial resource needs of the new comer Gurages and enable them meet their needs for the same ends, the earlier comer Gurages used to collect money weekly for the late comer Gurages through what is known as *equib* for commercial activities undertaking they often engaged in and the new comers would repay the money collected for them after they were established; and again, the new comers used to collect money for those whom they preceded to enable them meet their financial resource needs for undertaking trading, waverling and merchandizing socio-economic activities and

they would repay the money collected for them after they get established; and ad infinitum.<sup>109</sup>In addition to this, a marriage alliance between Arsi Oromo *Belabats* and Gurages as well as Shewa Oromo and Amhara is said to have cemented the relations between these ethnic groups. As only a few Oromos lived in urban areas of the Adaba *Woreda* compared to other Semitic ethnic groups, it seemed that the urban areas of the *Woreda* were delimited as residential areas of Amhara, Gurage and Silte ethnic groups including Worji from Oromo ethnic group.<sup>110</sup> Informants argued that the possible reasons for presence of only a few Arsi-Oromos in urban settings could be the fact that they were wondering in search of pastor, fertile agricultural lands and water for their cattle as they were

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<sup>108</sup> Informant, Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>109</sup> Informants: Ato Mindaye Tefera; Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>110</sup> Informants: Ato Mindaye Tefera, Ato Jemal Defo

predominantly pastoralists at the earlier times. Consequently, most of the Arsi Oromo and Shewa Oromo used to live in rural *Kebeles* of the *Woreda* instead of urban areas<sup>111</sup>.

They usually came to urban areas like Adaba town twice per week with their agricultural produces and products of animal husbandry. The congregations of rural families usually gathered at the heart of the town which was located just below the *Worke Zaf* who used to come from all directions and the surrounding rural *Kebeles*. Urban dweller Gurages, Amharas, Silte and others used to buy agricultural produces and the products of animal husbandry from the rural agriculturalist and pastoralist Oromos and the former ones also served as resting places for their animals and themselves. These interactions and interrelations gradually resulted in closer ties and eventually developed to love one another. Consequently, mutual benefits for all ethnic groups emerged following closer interactions and interrelationships. For example, this could be substantiated by the fact that the agriculturalist and pastoralist Oromos living around Robe town reportedly bring their seasonal produces and products for those urban dweller non-Oromo ethnic groups with whom they eventually developed closer ties and interrelationships and the later ones also served as resting places for the former ones.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned mutual benefits, the Oromo ethnic groups were benefited from the Semitic ethnic groups as the media of instruction in schools and medium of communications in courts established by the governments was Amharic language since their closest Semitic counterparts helped them in translating the orders, messages, appointment dates and similar ones told at the courts for them. These and similar interrelationships among them became strengthened from day to day and gradually led to cultural exchanges, widening of inter-ethnic marriages and smoothening minor inter-ethnic conflicts or clashes mainly between Amhara and Arsi Oromo for pastoral lands. Such interactions and social interrelationships resolved Arsi- and Shewa-Oromos problems of communicational barriers at the courts established by the central governments.<sup>113</sup> Regarding the preference of urban areas as residential places by non-Oromo ethnic groups, an informant said that they were primarily engaged in non-agricultural and non-pastoralism types of socio-economic

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<sup>111</sup> Informants Ato Kedir Dula, Ato Tesgfaye Dinku, Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Informants: *Ato Hussien Beker*

activities like trades, wavering, merchandizing and similar activities as compared to the Arsi- and Shewa-Oromos.<sup>114</sup>

However, Amhara ethnic groups that started to live in Adaba *Woreda* as a result of governmental settlement programs were primarily engaged or involved in agricultural activities and animal husbandry like the Arsi Oromo and the Shewa Oromos. The predominantly pastoralist Arsi Oromo gradually learned the importance of leading settled (sedentary) life and undertaking agricultural activities.<sup>115</sup>

Local informants argued that the reasons for the tolerance of earlier inhabitants of the *Woreda* for the late comers such as Gurages, Shewa-Oromos, Worji – Oromos, Amhara and Silte's settlement in the *Woreda* was that the cultural practices of Oromo like *Harma Hodha* and *Gudifacha* were an inclusiveness social and cultural practices. Moreover, the wedding and burial ceremonies of Oromos and new comers found to share some similarities besides the fact that the new comers and settlers were living in their homelands in areas adjoining the Oromo ethnic group. In relation to this, for instance, the Gurages lived with the Seden Soddo Oromos in closer boundary to one another; the Amharas and Silte ethnic groups too with other members of the Oromos. Still there were inter-ethnic marriages between the Oromos and the Gurages, the Amharas and the Oromos while the new comers to Adaba *Woreda* were living in their homelands therefore, there were strong ties among these ethnic groups and hence it resulted in inclusiveness cultural practices and tolerance of the Oromos not to resist and enter into conflicts with the late comer ethnic groups<sup>116</sup>.

All ethnic groups, the earlier or the late or new comers, usually used to participate in social associations commonly called *idir* that collect money monthly to save aside for the time of crisis such as death, natural disasters, wedding ceremonies, and so on.<sup>117</sup> According to the local informants' verbal account, inter-ethnic social interrelationships and interactions among different ethnic groups have been resulted the socio-economic and cultural changes in Adaba *Woreda*

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<sup>114</sup>Informants: Ato Mindaye Tefera, Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup>Informants: Ato Mindaye Tefera, Ato Shubisa Geletu.

inhabitants. For instance, *Doro Wat* which is a well-known cultural food among Amhara, *Kitifo* that is highly associated with Gurage, and *Ganfo, Shekaka, Dhanga and Chechabsa* that are traditional (or cultural) food items of Shewa- and Arsi-Oromo are accustomed and started to be prepared by most major ethnic groups residing in the *Woreda*.

There are good experiences and cultural or traditional practices and lifestyles sharing among these ethnic groups as can be reflected from clothing patterns, house building and construction, wedding ceremony, singing and dancing, engagement in different socio-economic activities that were formerly practiced and exercised by one or two ethnic groups only. Consequently, wearing/clothing styles, celebration of wedding ceremony, housing styles, and many more that were initially reflecting and expressing specific socio-ethnic groups have changed in such a way that they no more describe and express the identity of the original practitioners due to the cultural, social and customs intermingling through the long way they have lived together in the *Woreda*.<sup>118</sup>

Another and perhaps, the most important socio-economic change that accompanied the settlement of new comers in the *Woreda* was the introduction of plough cultivation and some crops such as wheat, teff, sorghum, maize, bean and peas which has been unknown in the surrounding. Another important contributions of the new comers was in the area of trade. The Gurage ethnic group which had quite a good experience in trade largely expanded trade in the region and they spread trade beyond the surrounding regions of Adaba. In the second decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Oromo of Arsi, the Gurage, some Amhara, Shoa Oromo and a few Arsi Oromo of the region began to make contact with commercial centers in areas found as far as *Bale, Wolayta, Sidamo* and *Shewa*<sup>119</sup>.

Ethnic relations can be considered in various ways in different parts of the world. The relationships could be either positive or negative. The negative aspect of ethnic relations however, could be conflict among them. The Arsi Oromo and the Shewa Oromo had longer period of contact relatively than other ethnic groups in Adaba *Woreda*. Arsi Oromo live in close contact with the Shewa Oromo who inhabited the high land area. They enter into conflict with the Shewa Oromo due to raids and eviction. The Arsi Oromo threaten the Shewa Oromo by telling them that they could bring drought,

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

call locusts and send rats to destroy their crop using their traditional medicine. Therefore, due to these disagreements sometimes conflicts were created between them<sup>120</sup>.

There were also constructive relations between the two ethnic groups. They have trade contacts specifically in textile and perfumes smuggled from Somalia. Since the Arsi Oromo were well known in trading textile and perfumes they sold it to the other ethnic groups and thus trade developed positive relations and interaction among them.<sup>121</sup> During the time of ceremonial celebration of *Mesqel* and Epiphany there are also cultural ties among the two ethnic groups. Since the festival was conducted in the new year of September and January, both the Arsi Oromo and Shewa Oromo youngsters sung songs after the sun set in front of the house of each ethnic group separately. Thus, these give an opportunity to the youngsters to select girls for marriage. In the district also; the Arsi Oromo and the Shewa Oromo have practiced similar marriage culture. Thus, both Arsi Oromo and the Shewa Oromo practiced marriage of a widow in which she gets married to the brother of her deceased husband. It is known as *dhaaluu*(Afan Oromo word). The main aim of the *dhaaluu* is to safeguard children and properties of the deceased husband.

The Oromo *michu* (heartily friends) institution started in the initial period of the Oromo settlement in Adaba *Woreda*. It is stated that in the district the *michu* (or *sayiba* ) institution which was practiced between the Oromo and the Shewa Oromo gradually stretched to the community of the settlers in creating close relations<sup>122</sup>

From various traditional institutions important inter-ethnic relations emerged in the district. In the area inter-ethnic marriage among the Arsi Oromo, the Shewa Oromo, the Gurage and the Amhara people were practiced. Moreover, there was close contact between the Oromo and the Arsi Oromo that gradually directed into integration among them. Since the initial period of their contact, the Oromo had developed various methods to adjust and live with the societies of the *Woreda*. While they began to live with different communities they made cultural and political rearrangements,

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<sup>120</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Mindaye Tefera, Ato Tesfaye Dinku

<sup>121</sup> Informants. Ato Shubisa Geletu, Ato Hussien Beker

<sup>122</sup> Informants, Ato Mindaye Tefera. Ato Tesfaye Dinku, Ato Wondimu

among this one is the *Luba baasa* institution<sup>123</sup>. *Luba* means-freed, circumcised while the suffix *baasa* means to set or to make so that *Luba baasa* may be translated as-to set free or to make free. This system was used to assimilate the non-Oromo settlers mainly to incorporate the Arsi Oromo people in the district. In the case of *Luba baasa* it is not mainly applicable to the Shewa Oromo of the district rather they were greatly treated by the *Michu* and *Harma Hodha* institutions<sup>124</sup>.

With the exception of a few rural populations who kept the cultural traditions intact, most of the inhabitants of Arsi Oromo in Adaba *Woreda* were assimilated to the Oromo culture through *Madhicha*<sup>125</sup>. Unlike to *gudifecha* which is giving their son to Oromo *michu* to build up the relationship between other ethnic groups with the Oromo, the process of *madhicha* is being Oromo. Various types of symbolic rituals were used in the adoption process. The representative of adopting clan placed *Medhicha*, a freshly cut off from the limbs of sacrificial bulls, on the wrists of the representatives of adopted clan. Then two representatives cut their respective thighs, took some blood which they mixed together. This form of adoption mainly depended on the interest of the group to be adopted in which it brought an entire change into the Oromo ethnic identity. After completing this process, food and drinks were provided at the presence of *Abba Bokku* (father of the scepter) who assured the adoption process<sup>126</sup>.

Through this institution the non-Oromo in Adaba got equal protection and right with the Oromo. On the other hand, those who opposed adoption were ignored and discriminated in the social interactions. For instance, it is impossible for them to sale their grain at the market. Moreover, there was also a pressure from the community to be adopted. In general, intermarriage was allowed between the adopted community and the Oromo which gradually brought complete assimilation because marriage facilitates the assimilation process. In the district almost many of the Arsi Oromo people were assimilated in this manner<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> *Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Kedir Dula, Ato Hussien Beker*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>127</sup> *Informants, Ato Workineh Wondimu, Ato Kedir Dula*

Additional, but not as much incorporative, time-honored disagreement of avoiding methods of adoption by the Oromo is *Harma Hodha*. It ought to be known that the Oromo devised these mechanisms to evade conflicts among the communities with whom they lived. *Harma Hodha* (suckling the breast) is a method that brought a parent-child association. A formal procedure is conducted and the "son" sucks the honey mixed with milk and dabbed on the breast (or in most cases the thumb) of his "father". This ceremony highlights the nurturing aspects of the relationship. The practical aspect is in fact one of client ship where the son expected some material assistance in return for the political and economic support he will give to his father<sup>128</sup>. In spite of plans at assimilation and finally at incorporation among the various ethnic groups in Adaba there were ethnic disagreements and clashes between the Shewa Oromo and the Amhara, on one hand and the better organized highland inhabitants like, the Arsi Oromo on the other side. Arsi Oromo people had a tradition of hunting and killing<sup>129</sup>.

As a result of economic factors there were conflicts in Adaba *Woreda*. The inhabitants of high land areas, the Arsi Oromo and the Shewa Oromo sought to hold the area endowed with resources mostly pasture and water sources. As compared to the Shewa Oromo the Arsi Oromo was more experienced and has skills in keeping cattle and rearing them. Prior to the ritual, elders met and talked about the matter honestly. Clan members and conflicting groups including both sexes who come together and avoided conflict peacefully. They condemned the clash and embrace a friendly celebration as a sign of sociability. Here, the most significant thing in the traditional method of conflict resolution is those of unconventional issues which are freely heard<sup>130</sup>.

Moreover, the Adaba *Woreda* and its neighboring communities have long established mechanism of dealing with matters of insecurity in the region. They have also institutions which performed peace making active activities in this *Woreda*. These peace making processes has been preceded by institutions like *jarsumaa*, *dherito* and *chafe*. Abolishing traditional institutions, which played significant role in peace making processes during the imperial government, had negative implication for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Moreover the post 1975 harassment on the

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<sup>128</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>129</sup> *ibid*

<sup>130</sup> *ibid*

individuals who perform these ceremonies seriously affected the continuation of these institutions as well<sup>131</sup>.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY OF ADABA WOREDA (1941-1991)

#### 3.1. Economic History

In the ancient time small numbers of people live in Adaba depending on animal raring. There was no town and market place in the area. The former ethnic group founded this place is Hadaba of Arsi Oromo and thus, the place is called as Adaba by taking the name of this ethnic group. This ethnic group now abundantly lives in Bucha-Rayya village to the south direction of Adaba town. According to the informants, the foundation of Adaba town was in 1911/1903 E.C. and it was restructured as wereda in 1949. During the early period of the Imperial restoration, the present day Adaba *Woreda* was part and parcel of Genalle *Awraja*. The *Awraja* consisted of five *Woredas*; namely *Nensebo*, *Kokosa*, *Dodola* and *Adaba Woreda*.<sup>132</sup> During then, Dodola town served as capital town of the *Awuraja* until the fall of the derge in 1974.

In the previous periods most people live in this area live with the cattle breeding with small harvesting of barley and wheat for their subsistence of livelihood. However, Haile Selassie's economic reform intended to end the *naftegna-gabbar* system through the privatization of the land. Accordingly, many *gabbars* were transformed to independent taxpaying peasants. Of course, in some places like Adaba *Woreda*, where land was held privately, privatization of the land had no immediate socio-economic significance as compared to the end of unpaid labor service. One of the great achievements of the imperial economic reform in Adaba *Woreda* and Ethiopia at large was, therefore, the abolition of corvée or unpaid labor service. In 1942, the imperial government issued a decree directing the empire into a new administrative system. According to this proclamation cited in

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<sup>131</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Kedir Dula

<sup>132</sup> Cohen J & Koehn P Ethiopian provincial and municipal government; Imperial patterns and post-revolutionary changes (1980)

Mulugeta's study<sup>133</sup> the country was divided into fourteen *Teqlay Gezat* (Governorate Generals), one hundred and three *Awrajjas* (provinces), five hundred and five *Woredas* (districts) and nine hundred and forty nine *Mikitl Woredas* (sub-districts).

The 1942 decree has some modification in the study of Bisrat's study that stated the Ethiopian empire was divided into 12 *awrajjas*, 60 *wärädas*, 339 *wäräda meslanés* and 1176 *meketel-meslanés*.<sup>134</sup> This structure of the country was also confirmed by the study of Alula Yohanis.<sup>135</sup> According to the study of Bisrat the decree of June 28, 1946 amended the administrative regulation of 1942. Accordingly, *awrajjas* were given the appellation of *Täqlay – gezats* while the weredas were raised to the status of *awraja*. Likewise, the *wäräda meslanés* were designated *wäräda gezats* and the *meketel meslanés* became *meketel wäräda gezats*<sup>136</sup>

Haile Sillassie's economic policies were aimed more at improving the extractive capabilities of the state than at development. Between 1941 and 1961, the emperor revised tax laws several times in an effort to increase the amount of state revenues<sup>137</sup>. Haile Sillassie government declared the 1941 land grant and taxation reform. This proclamation was the first radical measure which legalized the payment of tribute in cash. The proclamation also classified the land ownership into *rist*, government land, *maderia* and Simon land. According to this proclamation, land tax depended on the fertility of the land and the number of people settled on it. For this purpose, the proclamation classified the land into *Lem* (fertile), *Lem-Tef.* (semi-fertile) and *Täf* (infertile) the tax of which would be 15,10,5 Ethiopian birr per *gašha* respectively according to the Land Tax Proclamation of 1941<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup>John Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1972), pp.289-290.

<sup>134</sup>Bisrat, 2011. A History of Humbo Wereda from 1941 – 1991; Addis Ababa University, pp. 24

<sup>135</sup>Alula, 2011. A History of Dembecha Wereda to 1991, Addis Ababa University, pp. 65

<sup>136</sup>Ibid, pp. 27

<sup>137</sup>Destä, 2013, A History of Kofele Wereda

<sup>138</sup>Getachew Raggasa, 2006. "A Historical Survey of Chilalo Awraja, pp.23-41. Bahiru Zewde, 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, p, 192. Informants Shubisa Geletu, 13/08/2016 and Bariso Kabeto, 25/19/2016.

Land tax in Adaba district was not uniform. Like other parts of Ethiopia, land was classified based on the fertility and the number of settlers. According to this arrangement, the eastern (Hako) area of the district was categorized under *Lem* while the areas around the town of Adaba to the south direction were classified as *Tef*. The transitional area which lies between the town and northern part was considered as *Lem-Tef*. Since 1941 land tax proclamation, which abolished corvee and tribute in kind, people in the district started paying 15, 10, and 5 birr per *gašha* (about 40 hectares) for *Läm*, *Läm Täf* and *Täf* respectively. Together with the land tax, church tithe, educational tax and health tax were paid by each farmer<sup>139</sup>. Information collected from the district and written evidence shows that there are 28 *balabats* in the district. The majority of these *balabats* were Arsi Oromo. Based on their holdings these *balabats* paid regular taxes which were calculated per *gašha* as mentioned above. Later on the reviewed 1944 Land Tax Proclamation raised this amount.

The 1944 land tax proclamation was the continuation of the 1941 land tax proclamation except the increase in amount of tax and the transfer of church tithe to be paid by land user together with land tax. In this proclamation land tax per *gašha* was increased to 50, 40 and 15 for *Lem*, *Lem -Tef* and *Tef* respectively. The proclamation also declared that church tithe should be paid in lieu of land tribute. The justification for this was its administrative cost effectiveness. Later on in 1947 and 1959 education and health taxes were introduced respectively and increased burden on the tax payers<sup>140</sup>.

For instance, the conquest of Arsi Oromo by the *Šhewan Amhara* resulted in long term consequences in their land holding system. Their lands were divided into *gašhas* and were mostly given to *Šhawan balabats*. Economically, their traditional transhumant and semi-nomadic mode of pastoral life was so tightly restricted, and that it was impossible for the Arsi to pursue nomadic way of life in the district after their conquest. Like in most African countries, access to land had economic and even political significances in Ethiopia. Land ownership or access to land has traditionally meant power and privilege<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>139</sup>Eshetu Chole, 1982 . “Towards A History of the Fiscal Policy of the Pre Revolutionary Ethiopian State 1941-1974,” Paper Presented for the East African History Conference (Nazerath: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1982), p. 242.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid, PP. 234-261.

<sup>141</sup>Edmond J. Keller, 1981. Ethiopia Revolution, Class and National Question, African Affairs, 80(321), pp. 519-549.

### 3.1.1. Land Tenure System, 1941-1991

The Ethiopian empire accommodated a land tenure system that is described as one of the most complex compilations of different land use systems in Africa. The terminology that has become the commonly used classification of the pre-revolutionary land tenure types does not reflect this plethora of local land tenure systems but refers mainly to the imperial administrative classification. It is commonly distinguished between communal (*rist*), grant land (*gult*), freehold, or sometimes referred to as private (*gebbar tenures*), church (*samon*), and state (*maderia, mengist*) tenure regimes.<sup>142</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive and commonly accepted definition of these different types of land tenure so that rather different land tenure relations are summarized with one term. These differences are significant. The most central terms used to explain Ethiopian land tenure systems, such as *gebbar*, have had differing meaning across space and time in some regions of the country and during different time periods, at times opposite to its use in official tax nomenclature. However, the latter was frequently adopted by scholars of the Ethiopian land tenure system. Contradictory interpretations are also found for the term *rist*, which the majority of writers denote it as collective property, but which is also described as “rigorously individualistic”.<sup>143</sup>

Different land tenure systems were usually associated with a spatial distribution between the North and the South or, put differently, the central core and the periphery of the Ethiopian empire.<sup>144</sup> Generally, the literature describes land tenure in the northern periphery as an “ancient communal” tenure system of *rist* where occasionally renting and sharecropping occurred. The historical “southern” land tenure regimes are delineated as a mixture of private land tenure, “pastoralist” communal regimes, and government tenure which were strongly affected by an exploitative tax and tribute system (*gult*) that Northern settlers had imposed on the indigenous population.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>Wibke, et al., 2008. Land Tenure in Ethiopia, pp. 7-10

<sup>143</sup>Aberra Jemberre. 2000. An Introduction to the Legal History of Ethiopia: 1434-1974. Münster, Hamburg, London: LIT-Verlag. Cited by Wibke, et al., 2008. Pp. 7-10

<sup>144</sup>Wibke, et al., 2008. Land Tenure in Ethiopia, pp. 7-10

<sup>145</sup>Ibid, pp.7-10

According to the evidences of different literatures the need to control and utilize land and other natural resources has been the main cause for the Abyssinian's occupation of the Oromo and their homeland, Oromia<sup>146</sup>. The rulers of the Ethiopian Empire were also accused of using the land tenure as an instrument of oppression, dispossession and political and economic marginalization of the Oromo people. For instance, the Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) institutionalized an oppressive land tenure system in which the Oromo peasants were reduced to *gabbars* (tenants) of the State and the handful privileged groups known as *balabats* (landlords)<sup>147</sup>.

Although the military socialist Derge regime nationalized the rural land in 1975 and distributed it to the tillers (Ethiopia, 1975), it exploited the Oromo farmers and pastoralists by restricting their economic freedom under the guise of promoting the communism.<sup>148</sup> During the reign of Haile Sellasie, clan ownership of land was abandoned and a new tenure system was introduced. According to the new tenure system, four hierarchical levels of land administration were formed at the local community levels namely: Balabat, Burka, Madabaa, and Minizir that shaped the land tenure system<sup>149</sup>

In 1975, the socialist *Darg* regime that had overthrown the imperial regime of Haile Selassie profoundly altered the agrarian structure and the mechanisms of access to land. The “Public Ownership of Rural Land Proclamation” nationalized all rural land and set out to redistribute it to its tillers and to organize farmers in cooperatives, thereby abolishing exploitative landlord-tenant relations so pertinent under the imperial regime. Even though, with the defeat of the military socialist derge regime of Mengistu in 1991, the dissolution of farm collectives took place rapidly, there was limited change with regard to property rights to land – to the disappointment of many international donor agencies. In principle, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia did not question state ownership of land<sup>150</sup>. In its declaration on economic policy in November 1991 (Transitional

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<sup>146</sup> Gnamo, 2014, Hassen, 2002

<sup>147</sup> Markakis, 1974.

<sup>148</sup> Jemma, 2004, Hassen, 2002

<sup>149</sup> Teshome Kebede, 1982. “Some Aspects of Feudalism in Ethiopia”, Edited by Sven Rubenson, in the proceedings of the seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund,

<sup>150</sup> Hussein Jemma 2001, Kassa Belay and Manig 2004, Yigremew Adal, 2001

Government of Ethiopia 1991), it announced the continuation of the land policy of the *derg* regime. The new constitution of 1995 approved and confirmed the state ownership of land in Ethiopia (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1995).

Land policy, the real source of power in imperial and contemporary Ethiopia, remains at the center of a controversial policy debate. The debate has largely been carried out along two antagonistic arguments concerning property rights to land. The Ethiopian government continues to advocate state ownership of land whereby only usufruct rights are bestowed upon landholders. The usufruct rights exclude the right to sell or mortgage the land. This, the government asserted, was to protect the rural peasants from selling off their land to wealthy individuals leaving them landless and without source of livelihoods. The government builds its argument on the premises of social and historical justice that is based on two principles: (1) justice understood as egalitarianism – guaranteeing every farmer in need of agricultural land equal rights of access to such land, and (2) historical justice – granting tenure security to the Ethiopian farmer's who had experienced land deprivation and land expropriation through different mechanisms during the imperial era<sup>151</sup>.

The government's position that emphasizes the social function of land is challenged by advocates of a privatization of property rights – most prominently, the Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA), some political parties in opposition to the current regime, and a number of donor agencies. These tend to argue that state ownership of land prevents the development of a land market, discourages farmers to invest on land, and thereby holds down land productivity as well as encourages unsustainable land use practices. The debate has been described as being politicized and ideological<sup>152</sup>.

Overall, this imperial history of conquests of autochthonous ethnic groups and a certain regional and temporal variation in imperial governance modes of these newly conquered areas resulted in a diversity of land tenure systems across the country and in Adaba *wereda* in specific<sup>153</sup>.

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<sup>151</sup> Wibke, et al., 2008. Land Tenure in Ethiopia, pp. 1-3

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, pp. 5

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, pp 9

A redistributive land reform in 1975, which only transferred usufruct rights to the rural peasantry, ensured some form of continuing state ownership. As a consequence, in the last three decades since the derg took power, the Ethiopian state and its local representatives have been the dominating force in the highland areas in defining access, distribution, and tenure terms of user rights. This legacy has weakened or largely crowded out not only the remains of customary institutions, but also the imperial land use institutions, which were superimposed on the diverse traditional land holding systems. Furthermore, there is no real “go back-to-customary-rules” type of perspective, since the pre 1975 land tenure system under imperial rule has been widely conceived as unjust among the rural peasantry as much as among the more progressive urban elites: land was concentrated in the hands of absentee landlords, tenure was highly insecure, and arbitrary evictions posed serious threats to tenant farmers<sup>154</sup>.

### 3.1.2. Rist Tenure

The *rist* system was a kind of corporate ownership system based on descent that granted usufruct rights – the right to appropriate the return from the land. In the *rist* system, all male and female descendants of an individual founder or occupier were entitled to a share of land. The allocated usufruct rights did not refer to a specific plot of land, and, since it was often difficult for rights claimants to trace the pedigree to an ancestral landholder, harshly competitive bargaining over access to land occurred. Claims to land were usually accepted or rejected by the representative of the *Rist* Corporation who consulted other members of the kinship group.<sup>155</sup>

*Rist* rules aimed at maintaining continuity in the possession of land to both individually operated and clan lands that is why *rist* rights holders usually lacked the right to sell their share outside the family, mortgage, bequeath or transfer it as a gift as the land belonged to the descent group, not the individual. It continuously endangered the security of an individual’s effective rights to use a specific plot of land and encouraged fragmentation and successive reduction in individual plot size during

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<sup>154</sup> Aberra Jemberre 2000, Cohen and Weintraub 1975, Dessalegn Rahmato 1984, Hoben 1973, Joireman 2000, Pausewang 1983.

<sup>155</sup> Hoben, A. 2000. Ethiopian Rural Land Tenure Policy Revisited. Presented at the Symposium for Reviewing Ethiopia’s Socio-economic Performance 1991-1999, Addis Ababa, pp.26

this time.<sup>156</sup> At the same time, it sustained and privileged the majority of the rural peasantry with direct access to land through its distributive role and guaranteed that the bulk of the land was under peasant control.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, the farmland in Adaba *wereda* still controlled by the family members of *balabats* of that period and peasants lived on that land. Only a small amount of parcels were redistributed for landless farmers in different years since then.

### 3.1.3. Gult and Rist Gult

Superimposed on the *rist* system was a type of fief right that required the *rist* holding peasants (or those who held other types of traditional land rights) to pay tribute and taxes in cash, kind, or labor to landlords— this was called the *gult* right). *Gult* rights were also vested to organizations, in particular the Orthodox Church.<sup>158</sup> Even though most scholars consider *gult* to be a right to land, it has also been characterized as a right to the manpower of the peasants living on the land. *Gult* was usually linked to an office, and while the *gult* lords had a number of duties towards the crown such as administration, maintenance of security in the region, and military services, they also had the right to oversee other administrative personnel in the granted area. *Gult* rights were not inheritable or not necessarily hereditary, and since formal land ownership was vested in the state, the *gult* right could be withdrawn by the crown at any time, although this did not happen frequently.<sup>159</sup>

In Adaba *wereda*, the Ortodox churches found in different rural areas holded wider farmland by *gult* system and still the land is being administered by the church as well as by the praists of the

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<sup>156</sup> Atakile Beyene. 2004. Land Tenure and its Challenges to Agricultural Development: A Case Study of a Smallholder-Farming System in Tigray, Ethiopia. In Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy, Volume II Seyoum, A. et al., eds. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, page 56

<sup>158</sup> Cohen, J. M. and D. Weintraub. 1975. Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution. Assen: Van Gorcum.

<sup>159</sup> Bereket Kebede. 2002. 'Land Tenure and Common Pool Resources in Rural Ethiopia: A Study Based on Fifteen Sites'. African Development Review/Revue Africaine de Développement 14 (1): pp. 113

concerned church. Moreover, the administration body of Haile Silasie easily can take risk as they are officials of the regime.<sup>160</sup>

### 3.1.4. Gebbar or Private Property Rights

There is some confusion in the literature regarding the meaning of the terms *gebbar* and the existence of private property rights during the imperial rule. Prior to an administrative reform in 1941, the term *gebbar* - which existed in the center but was then transferred to the conquered South – characterized “tribute-paying peasants”<sup>161</sup> who were controlled by *gult* lords or local elites (*balabbat*), and suffered from burdensome tributes and services to be delivered to these authorities.

The literature identifies two processes that led to the emergence of private property in Ethiopia. First, after the return of Emperor Haile Selassie from exile in 1942, land tenure (what is referred to as ‘freehold’) was granted to selected individuals such as soldiers and civilian victims of the Italian occupation. Second, a tax reform in 1941 defined the land for which tax had been paid to the government as the property of the taxpayer. As a consequence, taxpaying *gebbars* became the legal owners of their land.<sup>162</sup>

The term *gebbar* was henceforth used to refer to private property during the Ethiopian Empire. All land, for which no tax had been paid to the government (or put differently - land for which land lords had pocketed tax payments made by farmers, instead of forwarding it to the government), was converted into government land thereby depriving pastoralists of their communal rights. This tax reform limited the influence of the local landlords and abolished all *gult* and *rist gult* rights, including those of the Orthodox Church. The farmers therefore were no longer required to pay tribute to the local overlords, but directly to the representatives of the Ethiopian crown.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Informant, Ato Jemal Defo

<sup>161</sup> Donham, D. 1986. Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History. In *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia. Essays in History and Social Anthropology* D. Donham and W. James, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 38

<sup>162</sup> Ibid,

<sup>163</sup> Wibke, et al., 2008, pp.7-10

The tax reform increased tenure security, in particular for rist rights holders in the North who had paid land tax and at the same time improved the situation of a class of taxpaying peasants in the South Overall, these reforms, even though poorly implemented, meant the juridical recognition of some kind of private property rights for individual rights holders, including ownership rights.<sup>164</sup> However, many peasants had, under the tribute system imposed on them, lost their land or had lived on the land of the new class of taxpaying *gebbar* owners. In addition, many landlords had registered formally as taxpayers and thereby deprived those farmers of their land rights. These farmers then became tenants who practiced sharecropping. Sharecropping demanded from the tenant to deliver a large share of up to half of the produce to the landlords to maintain the right to use the land for subsistence production. The tenant was also subject to arbitrary demands for gifts and labor services. Some authors claim that sharecropping relations differed between the Norths as the contracts had been of less exploitative character than in the South.<sup>165</sup>

### **3.1.5. The 1975 Land Reforms and its Consequences**

On 4 March 1975, the “Provisional Military Administrative Council” also known as the *derg* (the council) – after it had overthrown the imperial regime of Haile Selassie, announced an agrarian reform program known as Proclamation No. 31/1975 “Proclamation to Provide for the Public Ownership of Rural Lands.” This proclamation declared all rural land to be the property of the state [Article 3] – without any compensation to previous rights holders – and prohibited all tenancy relations [Article 4.5]. The Proclamation provided the legal basis for the distribution of usufruct rights to a large number of rural families who had been working under exploitative tenancy contracts for a small group of landlords. The reform hence implemented the “land to the tiller” approach that was popular in the 1970s<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>164</sup>Pausewang, S. 1991. New Rural Institutions Built on Tradition? Ethiopian Peasants Need a Democratic Reconstruction. *Sociologica Ruralis* 31(2/3): 184-98.

<sup>165</sup>Aberra Jemberre. 2000. An Introduction to the Legal History of Ethiopia: 1434-1974. Münster, Hamburg, London: LIT-Verlag.; Hussein, J. 2001. The Debate over Rural Land Tenure Policy Options in Ethiopia: Review of the Post1991 Contending Views. *Ethiopian Journal of Development Research* 23 (2): 35-84.

<sup>166</sup>Haile Kebret. 1998. Land Reform: Revisiting the Public versus Private Ownership Controversy. *Ethiopian Journal of Economics* 7 (2): pp. 45-64. Mengistu Woube. 1986. Problems of Land Reform

The *Darg* justified the land reform program on two principles: (1) historical justice – to overcome the exploitative character of imperial agrarian relations; and (2) justice as egalitarianism – providing each farm family with equal access to cultivation land according to their needs. The Proclamation made a number of provisions. Farmers were not allowed to transfer their usufruct rights by sale, mortgage, or lease, and bequeathing of allocated usufruct rights was limited to primary family members like spouse and children upon death of the rights holder. The plot size per family was restricted to a maximum of 10 hectares, and the use of hired agricultural labor was prohibited [Article 5].<sup>167</sup>

The reform was the first uniform tenure system imposed upon Ethiopia as a whole. Considering the difference in agrarian relations that had existed in the North and South prior to the reform, the changes were more radical for tenant cultivators (and landlords) in the South than for rist rights holders in the North. In the rist system, land distribution had already been relatively.<sup>168</sup>

The *Darg* has brought about major changes in organizational structures and institutions in order to implement “agrarian socialism”,<sup>169</sup> including the quest for collectivization of small-scale farms and the establishment of state farms. The state thereby effectively abolished the remains of traditional institutions of *rist* and *gult*, and took over the control to distribute access to land through Peasant Associations (PA). Membership in Peasant Associations was established as the central element of the state’s rural bureaucracy and became obligatory for all farmers. The leadership of the Peasant Associations was entitled to expropriate land from the landholders and distribute it equally among its members, which made the collectivity of the members of the Peasant Association proprietors of the

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Implementation in Rural Ethiopia: A Case Study of Dejen and Wolmera Districts. Uppsala: Kulturgeografiska Institutionen vid Uppsala Universitet.

<sup>167</sup>Mengistu Woube. 1986. Problems of Land Reform Implementation in Rural Ethiopia: A Case Study of Dejen and Wolmera Districts. Uppsala: Kulturgeografiska Institutionen vid Uppsala University.

<sup>168</sup>Mengistu Woube. 1986. Problems of Land Reform Implementation in Rural Ethiopia: A Case Study of Dejen and Wolmera Districts. Uppsala: Kulturgeografiska Institutionen vid Uppsala University.

<sup>169</sup>Joireman, S. 2000. Property Rights and Political Development in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Oxford: James Currey.

land. In the initial phase of the reform, especially in the South, a considerable proportion of the rural peasantry supported land redistribution.<sup>170</sup>

Officially, peasants should enter APCs at their free will, but some authors report more forceful implementation of cooperatives. Still, in 1984, only two percent of Peasant Association members were engaged in APCs, and the productivity of cooperatives remained significantly lower than that of small-scale producers.<sup>171</sup> Regardless of the weak economic performance of collectivization, “the single most important feature of the revolution” was the mass organization in the rural areas and the capture of the peasantry into a system of state control.<sup>172</sup> During this period, farm families in Adaba district had particularly insecure effective rights to individual plots, although they had a general entitlement to an undefined share of the Peasant Association’s land endowment.<sup>173</sup>

The formation of Peasants Associations was one of the most significant typical features of land reform. After the revolution the case of peasants in Ethiopia in general and that of Adaba *Woreda* in particular was given due attention by the authorities of the new regime. As a result, the state started to form peasant organizations under Peasants Associations all over the country.<sup>174</sup> Based on the decree issued to implement the reorganization of rural areas about 23 Peasants Associations (PAs) were established in Adaba *Woreda* and majority of the peasants were registered to be members of their respective *Kebele* Peasants Associations.

In most cases, the dividing lines among the Peasant Associations were geographic features such as valleys, rivers, trees on plain lands and mountains. Even though the 1975 land reform proclamation

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<sup>170</sup>Alemneh Dejene. 1987. *Peasants, Agrarian Socialism, and Rural Development in Ethiopia*. Boulder, London: Westview Press.

<sup>171</sup>*Ibid*,

<sup>172</sup>Clapham, C. 2002. *Controlling Space in Ethiopia*. In *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After* W. James, D. L. Donham, E. Kurimoto and A. Triulzi, eds. Oxford: James Currey.

<sup>173</sup>Informants, Mindaye Tefera, Adde Zalewiya H/Simeno

<sup>174</sup>Steven Davies, *The Political Economy of Land Tenure in Ethiopia*, (PhD Thesis: University of St Andrews, 2008), p.137-138; Siegford Pausewang, *Peasant, Land and Society---*, p.105; Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1989), pp. 11-13.

conceived the formation of Peasants Associations, it was proclamation No. 71 of 1975 that provided a legal recognition for their institution which was strengthened throughout the country. Here, the major goal of the introduction of Peasants Associations by *Dergue* was to monopolize the rural area of the country.<sup>175</sup>

Based on this proclamation, the most important administrative bodies of the PAs were the General Assembly, the Defense Committee and the Executive Committee. Among all these organs, the General Assembly was the main decision making body of the PAs. It generally, appreciated that the main objective of the new government was aborting the system of feudalism which eventually endangered some of the beneficiary groups of the society specially the landlords<sup>176</sup>.

According to the informants, an individual farmer was compulsory member of a collective of a Peasant Association controlled only a limited bundle of rights he or she had access, withdrawal rights, and possibly management rights, but the latter depended on decisions and interferences of the Peasant Association. Such farmer can be classified as a claimant. If the farmer was not affected by redistribution programs, he (and in few instances, she) also held some very limited exclusion rights in that the farmer could distribute access and withdrawal rights between heirs. However, authorities accepted only close relatives as heirs<sup>177</sup>. The analysis of Wibke, and others indicated that the revolutionary system of tenure replaced the pre-revolutionary functions of landlords as overlords and tribute collectors by a system of state control, where Peasant Associations and APCs played the central role. The power of the associations was based on their right to distribute land. With the usurpation of the Peasant Association by the central rulers, they became effectively an instrument of the derge rulers to control and govern the peasantry<sup>178</sup>.

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<sup>175</sup>Siegford Pausewang, p.105; Marina Ottaway, *The Ethiopian Land Reform: From Political Change to Economic Development*, In *Proceedings of the Eight International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, II, (May, 1989), p. 389.

<sup>176</sup>Alämneh Mäläse, *Peasants, Agrarian Socialism and Rural Development in Ethiopia*, (London: West View Press, 1987), p. 54.

<sup>177</sup> Informants, Ato Workineh Wondimu and Ato Hiko Dallu

<sup>178</sup> Wibke et al, 2008

Overall, the derge regime failed to increase agricultural productivity with its agrarian reforms. At the same time, the 1975 Proclamation ensured that a much larger number of rural farm families received access to land. Tenure security under the Darg was clearly limited<sup>179</sup>. As scholars studied about the land reform in Ethiopia, points out that it constituted a marked increase in tenure security for former tenant cultivators in the South who became Peasant Association members with an entitlement to land. Sources of insecurity included the redistribution of land (for example, due to establishment of cooperatives or population growth), forcefully implemented producer co-operatives, which required peasants to pool their land, and compulsory resettlement<sup>180</sup>.

In many of the villages of Adaba woreda, the initial redistribution occurred within the first five years after the proclamation. During this period, farm families had particularly insecure effective rights to individual plots, although they had a general entitlement to an undefined share of the Peasant Association's land endowment. Broadly speaking, landless, wage laborers, tenant cultivators, and poor, powerless rist rights holders are often considered as the winners of the derge reforms; however, we also need to note that bribery of officials was a regular practice to ensure that the better-endowed farmers would get access to a better quality or a larger parcel of land<sup>181</sup>. Losers of the reform were the gult and rist gult lords as well as peasants with gebbar rights.

Up on the time of the imperial regime different peasant rebellions were used to be made against local landlords in a disorganized and scattered manner posing no significant challenge to the landlords, let alone the government. But expression of discontent was common. Even some of the tenants sought to kill the landlords when they were evicted from their tenancy. This type of resistance was being expressed by the landless section of the community in Adaba wereda<sup>182</sup>.

On the other hand, the landlords with their tenants were protested the *Darge* government and goes to Somalia because of their land was taken by Proclamation No.31 of 1975 (A Proclamation to provide

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<sup>179</sup> Dejene Aredo 1999, Dessalegn Rahmato 1994, although Hussein Jemma 2001

<sup>180</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato (1984)

<sup>181</sup> Fekade Azeze (2002).

<sup>182</sup> Informants, Adde Halima Nesru, Adde Mekiya Kemal, Adde Yeshiwork Kifle

for the public ownership of Rural Lands)<sup>183</sup>. This movement was written on different books with having ‘Movement of Bale Peasants’; and this movement were organized and led by Haji Abdulahi Genemo and others from Adaba (Hejira bank was opened in Adaba town in the current year in order to remind this name). Then, this resistance in a wide range organized by General Wako Gutu and the movement was supported by the government of Somalia on giving the logistics and weapons for them to attack the *durge* regime up to 1982. The conflicts of the peasants and their questions were overwhelmed by the military *durge* regime<sup>184</sup>.

Until 1974, people were expected to pay tax on the basis of their livestock and fertility of land. In the same way, the amount of tax paid by the inhabitants of the *Woreda* increased through time and the local peoples of the area were unable to pay it. People in Adaba *Woreda* seriously opposed such land tax reforms directly through peasants’ revolts and indirectly by resisting forces imposed on them to pay tax revenue. In response, the government and its officials forced the people to accept the land tax reform using the *Mikitil Woreda* governor’s propaganda to pay the tax urgently by informing them the consequences of not obeying the orders/commands as well as by frequently informing and re-informing the peasants. According to their propaganda, peasants who were in this district could assure their land as their own property if and only if they could pay tax for it<sup>185</sup>.

Moreover, In 1960s, the peasants in Adaba district raised conflict with the administration due to the unfair distribution of farmland and they went to the boarder of the country to join the Genral Wako Gutu warriors and the conflict dispute up to the end of the empire till the dispute continued up to the emergency of *durge*. Their aim was for the liberation of Oromo people as a whole. Later on, this struggle for liberation of Oromo people was defeated by the military government of the *durge*, however, the leaders of this struggle went to Somalia and founded the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) during this period.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, this struggle was one of the factors to the down fall of the

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<sup>183</sup>Desta Roba, 2013. A History of Kofele wereda from 1941-1991, pp. 70-73

<sup>184</sup>Ibid

<sup>185</sup>Informants, Ato Shubisa Geletu, Adde Zalewiya H/Simano

<sup>186</sup>Ibid

*durge* regime and the foundation of Ethiopian People Republic of Democratic Federation (EPRDF) in 1991.<sup>187</sup>

### **3.1.6. The Bale Peasant Rebellion**

The Bale peasant revolt had deep-rooted social, religious and political causes. One of the major problems was the land policy and heavy taxation. This had led to serious land shortage in the region. Moreover, it was the 1963 land re-measurement and tax-reform in the region that precipitated the upheaval. When they were compelled to pay tax arrears on the extra lands, the landlords put the burden of extra tax on the cultivators. Under the pretext of tax default, the bureaucrats began to expropriate the peasants, turning them into tenants. The Orthodox Church leaders leased clan or tribal lands to outsider, claiming that it was church lands. Because of the oppositions of the Arsi Oromo in Bale against successive Abyssinian emperors, the Amhara called Bale “*ya shefta Ager*”, which literally means “region of rebels.” The animosity between the Christian central government and the local Muslim pastoralists continued<sup>188</sup>.

Most of the time as the informants mentioned, when the Bale peasant rebellion written on different historical books, the peasants of Adaba were not included in this story, however, the peasants from Lajo, Hako, Weshu and their surroundings were rebelled firstly in an organized way but later they were organized by Haji Abdulahi Genemo from Weshu kebele and moved his armed and nonarmed soldiers to Angetu to join with General Wako Gutu. Majority of those soldiers had got the weapon from Somalia and returned to struggle up on the derg<sup>189</sup>.

Until about the end of 1963 and the beginning of 1964, the Oromo struggle for liberation from the Amhara dominancy was, however uncoordinated. Yet, in the early of 1965, Bale became under the leadership of General Waqo Gutu started his organized resistance against Haile Sellassie’s regime. The first rebel action took place on 8 February 1965, when a small force overran the town of Oberso (Mana Hangetu district), destroying the only Orthodox Church and burning official documents. The Orthodox Christian settlers fled to Mena and NegeleBorana. Three days later, Waqo Gutu with 250

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid

<sup>188</sup> Teshome Kebede, 1982

<sup>189</sup> Informant, Ato Hasen Beker

rebels besieged the town of Bidre. The resistance continued for three years. Through the mediation of some people, Waqo Gutu submitted on 28 March 1970. Waqo returned to Somalia in 1975. In 1989, he founded the United Oromo Liberation Front (UOPLF) to fight against the Dergue regime. He joined the transitional government of Ethiopia in 1991 but Waqo left it talks in 1992, claiming he had been betrayed by TPLF. In 2000, he formed the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) fighting for the right to self-determination of the Oromo and led as chairperson<sup>190</sup>

### **3.1.7. History of Agriculture**

According to Arsi Oromo oral tradition, their main food was milk, meat and butter and their cloth was well-prepared skin leather. Therefore, they were semi-pastoralists depending mostly on their animals and their products for survival. However, Abba Bahrey, Ethiopian monk of the 16th Century, recorded that it was during this time that agriculture became supplementary and barely which was unfamiliar in the culture became the holiest crop. This deviates from the oral belief that the Oromo were not only pastoralists but also cultivators. Probably what might have been true was that they had small farming with extensive animal husbandry. Nevertheless, craftsmanship and trade had not been encouraged by the Arsi people because it was taken for granted that it was the occupation of the non-Arsi or the castes<sup>191</sup>

Thus, in the area under study, the main feature of economic activity was mixed farming. The intensively cultivated crop was barley and wheat that were used as cash crops. In fact, barley and wheat were both sources of cash and items of consumption in the district. Barely was also considered as the holiest crop. Therefore, Adaba district provided the most convenient site for these items, and especially barley, to be marketed and exported to the surroundings<sup>192</sup>.

Agriculture supported the livelihood of Arsi Oromo in Adaba district during the regime of Emperor Häilasillassiè. They grew barley and kept stock. Moreover, cattle thrived better in Adaba during the dry season, because there was always water nearby, but vegetables like cabbage and potatoes produced in very less amount during those years. The highlands of Adaba district produced more

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<sup>190</sup> Teshome Kebede, 1982

<sup>191</sup> Ibid

<sup>192</sup> Informants, Ato MIndaye Tefera, Ato Kedir Dulla

milk (and hence butters), barley and honey as a cash crop. But the method and nature of agriculture was traditional in nature during Emperor Häilasillassiè. Therefore, this sector of the economy was not well developed in the district because of absence of infrastructures likeroads in the area. This was partly because of the inaccessibility of the district during the imperial period except a few Italian made dry weather roads that crossed the Adaba town and connected with Addis Ababa. However, the district had no road which could facilitate the movement of investors from and to the area until 1980s.

Definitely, the Arsi Oromo had engaged in animal husbandry. For the Arsi Oromo of Adaba, animal husbandry plays an important role. Besides cultivation of crops, the weather condition of Adaba district was suitable for cattle husbandry. So animal husbandry was the main source of their economy. Moreover, the Arsi in Adaba district attached greater social and economic values to their animals. As Haber land put it, the life of an Arsi Oromo particularly that of women is highly attached to the possession of animal products. Moreover, in the past and even at present the only source of income for Arsi women was butter. According to my informants, cattle's were highly valued in Adaba. The area around Adaba was an open space fully covered by grass that served the surrounding population as grazing field for their livestock. This was mainly because of the mode of life of the people which was predominantly dependent up on breeding domestic animals<sup>193</sup>.

During these periods there was large grassland and uncultivated land (*tef* land) that any individual could plough and cultivate it. Therefore, the newly deployed peasants of Showa Oromo obtained farmland for their crop production and excess land to build their home and settled permanently. Nonetheless; the main economic activity of the area was livestock herding along with cultivation of the crops like barley and wheat. The presence of locust and heavy rain has challenged this sector of the economy<sup>194</sup>.

During the early imperial period especially in the 1940s, most of the Adaba *Woreda* highlands and lowlands were covered with various kinds of natural forests. The district has different forests and grass types. The natural forests were mainly composed of Coniferous forest types such as Juniper *Procera-Tid* and *Kosso* are abundant. There are various indigenous tree species in the *Woreda* such as

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<sup>193</sup>Informants, Ato Jemal Defo, Ato Workineh Wondimu, and W/ro Asha Muhammed

<sup>194</sup>Ibid

*Wanza (Cordia Africana), Bisana(Crotonmacrostachys), Yeferanji tid (Cupressus lusitanica), Yebesha tid (Juniperus procera), Birbira (Milletia ferruginea), Zigiba (Podocarpus falcates), Shola (Ficus sure), Warka (Ficus vasta), Nech Baher Zaf (Eucalyptus australyna) and Qey Baher Zaf (Eucalyptus camaldulesis).*

Moreover, *Yeweyra zaf (Ejersa)* was the more abundantly found in the wereda near Adaba town that is why the name of one kebele nominated by *Ejersa kebele* but it was eliminated by Shewa Oromo settlers. However, it is essential to point out that such trees are experienced in Adaba *Wereda* in very limited numbers. Majority of the indigenous tree species have been significantly reduced as a result of frequent cutting of forests for crop cultivation, wood for fuel for making charcoal, and for the building of houses and fences and Shewa Oromo settlers<sup>195</sup>.

The presence of dense forests at the top of the *Duro, Berenda* and other mountains found at the south tip of *Adaba wereda* and elsewhere also facilitated the development of perspiration not only for the *Woreda* but also for the surrounding lowlands as well. The sufficiency of rainfall together with long established culture of soil and water conservation enabled *Adaba Woreda* farmers to produce sufficient grain for consumption. The *Woreda* has been self-sufficient in food production in those days as stated by one of my informants<sup>196</sup>. Generally, life had been very simple for those who till the land, raise cattle and keep bee heaves so that Adaba was known by natural honey cultivation from Bale province<sup>197</sup>. However, the crop production of Adaba district was increased year to year in the derge regime that caused deforestation in the area for the expanded farmland as a result it decreased the bee heaves and honey cultivation<sup>198</sup>.

### **3.1.8. Trade**

In addition to agriculture and animal husbandry the people in Adaba district were engaged in trade. Three new trade routes emerged in *Adaba Woreda* in the post-liberation period. The first was the

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<sup>195</sup>Informants, Ato Hiko Dallu, Ato Mindaye,

<sup>196</sup>Informants: Ato Negash Hiko; Ato Kifle Mogas;.

<sup>197</sup>ibid

<sup>198</sup> Ibid

bulls and oxen exporting route that was *Adaba-Angetu-Somalia*, *Adaba-Kofele* and *Adaba –Gedeb Hasasa -Adama*<sup>199</sup>. The second one was the export of honey to shashemene and Addis Ababa and the third trade route was Shirka- Bokoji – Assela that was used to export butter. On the other side, woven clothes such as buluko, dresses and other type of clothes were imported from Wolayita and Addis Ababa, salt was from Elkere (Afer salt) but Adaba had no significant export item except livestock, honey and butter<sup>200</sup>.

According to Baxter stated that there was bartering system within Arsi of Adaba district. In 1968 and 1969 he had observed the market of Adaba, and the presence of bartering system among Arsi women in the town. According to him, Arsi women who were engaged in exchanging the contents of sacks of barley, in numerous petty transactions, for small parcels of butter brought in by some other Arsi women. The butter receiver then sold the butter to male traders who had come especially from Shashemene. The common name for this transaction was kurree bitachuu; kurree means the name of the lid of a milk container. Bitachuu means “to buy for one self”. It also means “to receive for one self-one thing in exchange for another thing”. However, it was not known when the act of Kurree bitachuu was started in Arsi-Oromo ethnic group.

The Arsi Oromo in the district asserted that a grazing land on the outskirts of the present Adaba town had been used as an occasional trading site by the relatively long distance traders those had been crossed the town and gone to the capital city of the country, though not for local exchange, the town was used as a trading site and assembly point for the traders because of its water, grazing and central position<sup>201</sup>.

In the 1960s, the Arsi – Oromo in Adaba district were much more tied to the market economy, and were much more restricted in their movements. According to my informants, there was no significant number of Arsi Oromo in the trade sector during the imperial period. But, by the end of 1960s, the market was completely out of Arsi hands and firmly under the control of the non- Arsi<sup>202</sup>. In 1962,

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<sup>199</sup>Informants, Ato Kemal Gameda, Ato Hussien Bedasa

<sup>200</sup>Informantss, Hussien Beker, Ato Jemal Defo and Ato Hussien Bedasa

<sup>201</sup> Henock Kifle, 1970. A Plan for Resettlement of Tenants at Asasa from Gobe First Phase.

<sup>202</sup>Informants, Ato Mindaye, and Ato Shubisa Geletu

Adaba town offered its service as a market center as well as being headquarters of the district. It was also found on the main all weather roads from Shashemene to Bale and on the busy pilgrim route from Jimma to Dire Sheik Hussein<sup>203</sup>.

The main road constructed by Italian (1936-1941) that connected Addis Ababa and Bale – Robe crossed Adaba town has made the merchants come from Bale either on horseback or vehicles take rest for a day or more because of the difficulty of the road to travel more kilometers. Thus, they pay money to get food and bed services to the dwellers and the people crosses Adaba town come from Jimma and Wello to celebrate Dire Sheik Hussein also take rest in Adaba town since the majority of them go there on foot pay for the consumed services. This occasions continued till 2010 the high was reconstructed with asphalt concrete. Therefore, Adaba had better opportunity to develop comparing with Dodola town, even before the construction of the asphalt road was completed the cross-country buses had been selected to spent the night in Adaba town rather than Dodola town<sup>204</sup>

On the other hand, Adaba town was a station for travelers went from Bale to the capital Addis Ababa and Shashemene to take their breakfast and this has made the town to open many restaurants and to settle different ethnic groups in the town rapidly<sup>205</sup>. Moreover, the Melka-Wakena Hydroelectric and the Hunte state farm had brought significant growth and development of the Adaba town and the woreda at large. This in turn has brought people from different tips of the country to come for job seeking<sup>206</sup>. The complicated movement of people from place to place and settling on the favorable place since Adaba was favorable of weather condition and geographical settings, as mentioned on the above, the trade system was completely out of Arsi –Oromo hands and firmly under the control of the non- Arsi settled in Adaba.

In this regard, the number of urban dwellers rapidly increased and the Adaba town expanded in all direction with compacted shape during the derge. Different ethnic groups such as Amhara, Wolayita, Gurage, Silte, and others were settled in this town following the economic growth of the town since

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<sup>203</sup> Informant, Ato Kelil Kasim,

<sup>204</sup> Informant, Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>205</sup> Informant, Hussien Beker

<sup>206</sup> Informant, Tesfaye Dinku

the buses crossed the town were the sources of income for the residents of the town. The majority of the Shewa –Oromo had come from the northern part of Ethiopia also were settled in three kebeles of Furunna, Ejersa and Weshaa abundantly during this regime<sup>207</sup>. Recently the town has covered 1288.7 hectares by including the farmlands founded in the surroundings of the town<sup>208</sup>.

### 3.1.9. Craftworks

Different types of craftworks were introduced in Adaba district following the mixed ethnic groups arrived in the district. For instance, weaving was introduced in the district by people mainly came from Wolayita and Dorze ethnic group, welding also introduced by Gurage and Showan Oromo, but pottery was done by every ethnic groups who had skill to do different home materials<sup>209</sup>. The Adaba *Woreda* earthen clay workers or potters were excellent in the production of *Masero*, *Mited*, *Jebena*, *Ensera* and *Gan*. According to one of my informants, *Shekla –tera* -the market place where these earthen clay products were sold and traders of the earthen clay products were the major reason for movement of various ethnic groups to Adaba town. He also added that the earthen clay products served as exchange commodity (i.e., equivalent to the present monetary values) since they served as tools for bartering marketing system at then.<sup>210</sup>

Earthen clay workers and traders as well as some craftsmen who came from other regions and settled in Adaba *Woreda* like Tanners and Blacksmiths that were looked down by local farming populations before 1960 since their attitudes were somewhat altered after the 1960 and more emphasis given to revolt against the emperor than conflicting with these craftsmen. The contempt of other ethnic groups towards craftsmen and earthen clay workers and traders together with the long established imposition by the society which prohibited them from owning farmlands, forced craftsmen and earthen clay workers to search other options. In the meanwhile, those people who engaged in craftworks were marginalized by the community and as a result the craftwork did not develop in this area. The community did not give their females to marry them and they did not take females of the

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<sup>207</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera and Jemal Defo

<sup>208</sup> Kafa, et al, 2015 Adaba district socio-economic profile

<sup>209</sup> Informant, Jemal Defo

<sup>210</sup> Informants, Mindaye Tefera and Jemal Defo

marginalized for marriage<sup>211</sup>. The post-1941 socio-economic reforms had great impact on the life of Adaba *Woreda* craftsmen, earthen clay workers and traders of earthen clay products. The administrative reforms of Haile Selassie which resulted in the prevalence of peace and order in the region contributed for the expansion of trade in this *Woreda* in particular, and the surrounding areas in general.<sup>212</sup>

Together with the safe flow of people, goods and ideas, Adaba *Woreda*'s effective incorporation into the wider Ethiopian political economy created additional market for Adaba *Woreda* local products like *Masero* (pot), *Mited* (plate like earthen clay product used for making injera), *Jebena*(item used to make coffee), *Ensera*(kitchen ware used to fetch and store water) and *Gan* (kitchenware used for brewing *Tella*). Moreover, the expansion of the use of cash as a medium of exchange in trade increased the flow of goods and the number of people who were engaged in this sector<sup>213</sup>.

## **3.2. Socio-Religious History**

### **3.2.1. Traditional Religion**

According to scholarly works and Oral traditions of the Oromo elders, the Oromo people believe that the original religion from which all other religions are derived is the religion of the Cush who were used to belief in one Supreme Being. This Cushitic religion is maintained by the Oromo till today which is known as 'Waaqeffannaa' – believe in one Waaqa (God). One of the evidences is that the Oromo were worshipping one God (Waaqa) long before the introduction of Christianity and Islam. Therefore, Waaqeffannaa is believed to be as old as the age of the first created Oromo. Cush is believed to be the source of human race, religion and civilization of the world. The place where Cush inhabits is also believed to be the source of human race. Accordingly, the Cush was the first people who start to believe in one Waaqa (God). This implies that the original religion of the world was the religion which was practiced by the Cush – i.e. Waaqeffannaa religion<sup>214</sup>.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid

<sup>212</sup>Informants: *Ato Jemal Defo*; *Ato Kifle Mogas*;

<sup>213</sup> Ibid

<sup>214</sup> Unguree, T. *Waaqeffannaa: Amantii Duudhaa Ganamaa*, 2015:15

Oromo is the largest among other ethnic groups of Ethiopia, and inhabited the vast areas of land in the country.<sup>215</sup>

Among the areas where the Oromo people have been living for centuries is West Arsi in general and Adaba district in particular. The Arsi Oromo established their settlement in the area by accommodating the other ethnic groups into their culture, political organization and values through guddifachaa system<sup>216</sup>. For more than many centuries, the indigenous religion of the Arsi Oromo has been humiliated by successive central governments of Ethiopia<sup>217</sup>. Historically, before the introduction of other religions, the Oromo, the Arsi Oromo live in Adaba believes in one Waaqaa. Accordingly, the people of Adaba subscribe to one God who has a supernatural power. The believers in Waaqa say that there are spirits called Ayyaanaa. Among the believers, the person who possesses the spirit is named as Qaalluu.<sup>218</sup>

The indigenous religion was the dominant religion for centuries on the Oromo lands, and used to shape the ideology of the people as per their indigenous ways. The oral information has indicated that many people in Adaba district were the followers of this indigenous religion. But, the indigenous religious practices of the Oromo under the Gadaa system have been declining from time to time among the Oromo societies in different areas of the Oromo land including in the study area<sup>219</sup>.

The followers of this religion are called waaqefataa. The practice of waaqeffataa (followers) is waaqeffannaa. Waaqeffannaa is an act of asking and blessing Waaqa. The religion has been with the society since time immemorial and has been at the core of its life and work. Practices of the Oromo religion have been hindered since the introduction of other religions. As has been attested by many scholars, the most antagonistic Ethiopian rulers towards Oromo religion, the Gadaa system and qaalluu institution were Emperor Hayile Sillase and the Darge<sup>220</sup>. Following the influences of the

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<sup>215</sup> Tasama, 1980; Mahamed, 1990

<sup>216</sup> Ibid

<sup>217</sup> Tesema 1986; Aseffa 1987; Wayessa 2000

<sup>218</sup> Addisalem and , KR Rajani (2018)

<sup>219</sup> Informants, Ato Jemal Defo; Ato Hasen Beker; Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>220</sup> Asmarom ,1987; Lemmu ,1971; Holcomb ,1993; Dinsa ,1975; Sisay ,1992 ; Bartel, 1983

Haile Sillase and the Derg rules, the expansion of Islam and Christian religions also the determinant factors for the decline of the waaqeeffannaa religion in Adaba wereda<sup>221</sup>

## **Waaqa**

There are controversies on the equivalent English translation of the word ‘Waaqa’, which is usually approximately translated as God. Different authors suggest different meaning of the term, which they believe better explain the character and attribute of the meaning of the original term ‘Waaqa’. There are two types of Waaqa: with the capital “W” (Waaqa) and the small “w” (waaqa). The former is used to mean “God”, “Supreme being”, “Divinity” or “Undifferentiated Being” while the latter is used to mean the vault of the “sky”. However, some scholars mistakenly understood Waaqa (with capital “W”) as having two meanings – the sky and God. Gragg and Tilahun Gemta and Desta Alemayo Kenea, for example, stated that Waaqa (with capital “W”) refers to “the sky as a physical object on the one hand and God on the other”<sup>222</sup>

Bartels also argued that Waaqa had double meanings. It means either the sky (the vault of the sky as we see it) or God. However, with regards to the later meaning of Waaqa he argued that Waaqa comprises more than God, Supreme Being, Creator and ruler of the universe in western sense. Waaqa comprises of “countless particular manifestations of Waaqa in this world, particularization of his creative work which are conceived as beings. Hence, the word ‘divinity’ will often be a better translation than ‘God’”<sup>223</sup>.

## **Ayyaana**

Ayyaana is what systematize the Oromo religious and philosophical thought and oral tradition. It is a unique juxtaposition of the religious and philosophical tradition, ethnicity and identity which make up the essential dimension of Oromo culture. Ayyaana has different meanings in Afaan Oromo (the Oromo language) which are used in different senses under different contexts. Ayyaana, on the one

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<sup>221</sup> Informants, Ato Kedir Dula; Ato Jemal Defo

<sup>222</sup> Geda, G. J., *Pilgrimages and Syncretism: A religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia*, Kenea, D.A. Safuu: The Indigenous Oromo Moral System, 2015: 16

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

hand, means holyday/festival, fortune/luck, and ayyaana, on the other hand, refers to sprit (sprit possession). The later meaning of ayyaana is intended for the purpose of this article. Moreover, Megersa stated that ayyaana has both core and peripheral meanings. The core meaning of ayyaana refers to that by and through which God (Waaqa) creates anything and everything. Ayyaana is in fact both that which causes something to come into being and becomes that which it has caused. Ayyaana is, therefore, that which exists before and after, that which it causes to come into existence. There are also several peripheral meanings of ayyaana. Most of these peripheral attributes of ayyaana have been acquired through interaction with Christianity, Islam and other belief systems which the Oromo world has interacted<sup>224</sup>.

During the Empire Haile Sillase period, there were different kinds of ceremonies held by women and men separately and together along the side of Frunna Melka River. They pray and ask Waaqa to give them rain if the dry season affected their cattle. Most of the time as soon as they pray, the rain would be rained and their cattle had water to drink and the grass will grow for grazing<sup>225</sup>. Moreover, the people in Adaba *wereda* perceive every living creature including the mountains, streams; living trees and others have their own ayyaanas. However, it may flee from a sinner, a dead and dry wood. It flees away from a person who breaks safuu. In Waaqeffannaa religion, Ayyaana plays the role of St. Merry, Michael, etc. in Christianity and Mohammed in Islam plays<sup>226</sup>.

The Oromo live in this area also had believe on as there is ayyaana called maaram, who is a guardian of fertility. She is responsible to guard or take care of what Waaqa created. The Waaqeffataa women in Adaba pray by saying “O God give me a child, O maaram, care for me when I am pregnant, help me in delivery and protect me with my child after delivery”. Unlike Christianity’s conception of Mary as virgin and giving birth to Jesus without losing her virginity, Maaram’s conception is not associated with sex matters and discussing about her virginity is safuu<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Megersa, G. The Oromo world-View: *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 12, Numbers 1 & 2, 2005:69

<sup>225</sup> Informants, Ato Mindaye Tefera; Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>226</sup> Bokku, D.D. Oromo wisdom in black civilization, 2011: 126

<sup>227</sup> Ibid

Different religions are formed not because there are different Gods, but because there are different ayyaanas. Different religions have their own ayyaana and being oneself means to respect one's own ayyaana. Daadhii, in his book 'Duudhaa', described how individuals and all other creatures have their own ayyaana using football team as an example. Football teams train well by their coach before the match. But we see the teams praying before the game starts. The question here is how the two teams pray to one God, who is equal for both teams, for a victory? To which team should God listen? If He listens to one team and enables the team to win, then he is biased. This is what we call ayyaana<sup>228</sup>.

The individuals are not praying to God for God does not favor one and disfavor the other. Rather they are praying to their ayyaana. They are asking their ayyaana for a victory. That is why the Oromo says 'while God is for all and ayyaana is personal'. The ayyaana of individuals vary from person to person. The ayyaana of one team may be stronger than the ayyaana of the other team depending on the truthfulness and love of the team for each other. Therefore the team which is strong physically and plays well and also has a strong ayyaana wins<sup>229</sup>.

Christianity and Islam have influenced the Arsi-Oromo of Adaba *wereda* view of the indigenous religion and religious terminologies which did not originate from Oromo language. There are some words like fal {a} (Omen) which is introduced to Oromo world view from either Amharic or Arabic. Moreover, the notion of setana/sheytaana (an Oromo word for devil) is also believed to have been borrowed from other religions, mainly Islam and Christian. Setana/sheytaana is the superhuman evil powers. The people of Adaba as mentioned on the above they still consider the Waaqeeffanna, thus they participate on the Irrecha ceremony held in the villages of Ejersa and Furunna kebeles. The participants are from the Christian and Muslim but they pray, singing a song of the ceremony and finally they perform the ceremony respecting the guiding principle ordered by the Abba Geda elected in the *wereda* level<sup>230</sup>. As well as in case of *Ayyaantuu*, women of hadha siinqee have an authority to

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid

<sup>229</sup> Geda, G. J. Pilgrimages and Syncretism: A religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia,

<sup>230</sup> Informant, Ato Mindaye Tefera

celebrate the ceremony (*ayyaneffachuu*) during the Irrecha of Oromo people held in the study area and they go to the Bishoftu town for this festivity<sup>231</sup>.

In some traditional African religions, morality is associated with obedience and disobedience to God regarding the way a person or a community lives. According to Feyyisa, for example, there is the concept of virtue and vice in Waaqeffannaa which is termed as safuu and cubbuu respectively. Safuu is the “to do list” to serve waaqa achieve his kaayyoo (goal) and in our personal and earthly life while Laguu is “not to do list” or the taboo. So we can refrain from doing such activities diverting us from kaayyoo waaqaa. Cubbuu (sin) is both not doing the safuu and doing the laguu. Therefore, Waaqeffannaa religion helps in shaping the life of its followers in such a way that they refrain from doing what is not worth doing and doing what is good and desirable<sup>232</sup>.

In Waaqeffannaa though there is the concept of Cubbuu (sin) in their consciousness, there is no concept for hell or condemnation after death. We all experience the consequence of our trespasses regarding the safuu (virtue) and laguu (vices) expected from us during our life time. There is no suffering from the consequences of cubbuu after death. We will live further after death as ekeraa (in the form of soul or spirit) with our father, Waaqa, without any possibility of punishment in the hell. This implies that the consequence of our cubbuu is not losing eternal life, but suffering in the earthly life. Therefore, the concepts of safuu and cubbuu are the two important moral concepts in the Oromo religion and philosophy through which Oromo worldview can be expressed<sup>233</sup>.

They are the concepts that mark individual’s behavior towards the creator and the creation. They are the ethical principles of how individuals need to act and behave towards others. They are the ethical principles that dictate individual’s rights, responsibilities and obligations. They teach individuals the right way of acting and doing things. We cannot view the Oromo society outside of Safuu. It has a special place and part of their daily activities. It is the law that creates smooth relationship between

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<sup>231</sup> Informants, Ato Mindaye and Ato Jemal Defo

<sup>232</sup> Ibid

<sup>233</sup> Haberland (1963:561) cited in Geda, G. J. *Pilgrimages and Syncretism: A religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia*,

creator and creatures, man and man, and man and other creatures. If Safuu is broken, the relationships will be disturbed<sup>234</sup>.

There were different kinds of conflicts raised through the interrelationship between Oromo people and also with other ethnic groups in Adaba wereda. These conflicts were happened because of some immoral behaviour (Sefu is broken) of some people reflected. For instance, if property of someone robbed by the thief; cattle stolen; the farmland of an individual illegally overlapped or completely taken by powerful individuals and other causes of conflicts have been solved by the institution of elders or *Jarsummaa* in Adaba. In Adaba wereda each and everything can be solved with win win reconciliation system and the people quarreled equivalently managed by the justice given by the elders<sup>235</sup>

### 3.2.2. Waaqeffannaa Religion

“Waaqeffannaan waan haraas, waan har’aas miti! Waaqeffata ta’uun ofta’uudha; ofta’uun heera uumaati!”<sup>236</sup>. Waaqeffannaa is neither a new thing nor a thing of recent phenomenon! To be Waaqeffataa is to be oneself; to be oneself is of natural (Translated by researcher).

Etymologically Waaqeffanna is derived from Afaan Oromo (Oromo language) word ‘Waaqa’, which literary means God, the creator of the universe. Hence, Waaqeffannaa means believe in one Waaqa. It is the way of Waaqa. It is a traditional belief of the Oromo people which pass down from generation to generation through their forefathers along with its various rituals related to it. The source of Waaqeffannaa religion is, therefore, one Waaqa. It is surrendering oneself to Waaqa and respecting the law of Waaqa<sup>237</sup>.

Waaqeffannaa is believed, worshipping and thanking only one Waaqa and being governed by the laws of God. It means peace, aseptic and gracious. God is the beginning and the end. Nothing exists

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid

<sup>235</sup> Informant Ato Mindaye Tefera

<sup>236</sup> Unguree, T. Waaqeffannaa: Amantii duudhaa ganamaa, 2015:19

<sup>237</sup> Zitelmann, T. Oromo religion, ayyaana and the possibility of a sufi legacy, vol. 12, numbers 1 & 2, 2005: 81

before God and nothing comes after Him. There is no truth without God. Nothing is greater than God and even competes with Him. He cannot be seen or touched. The Oromo belief the existence of Waaqa through observing of his works “such as the presence of various seasons, rain, sun, darkness, growing of crops, existence of water bodies, mountains, trees and other living things”<sup>238</sup>.

Waaqeffannaa is the religion of Cush (Kush) families. The source of Waaqeffannaa religion is Waaqa Tokkicha (one God). Haroo contends that Waaqeffannaa is the eldest and sources for other religions. In Waaqeffannaa God is symbolized by the black color. The black color signifies power, purity and beauty. This can be indicated in Oromo saying ‘Waaqni Gurraacha Garaa Garbaati’ which can literally be translated as “black God with an ocean-belly”. Geda summed it up as follows:

*“This is mainly because the Oromo associate black with fertility because they believe that the fertile soil and rain clouds are black in color. Additionally they associate black with the unknown and thereby something deserving respect. They also equate their dark skin colour with that of Waaqa. In a metaphorical reference to his wisdom, patience, tolerance, and mercifulness, Waaqa is described as having a see-belly. This belly also provides rain, which brings enough grass for animals and cereals for his people”<sup>239</sup>.*

Waaqeffannaa is the religion of peace. As such, it does not intervene in the religions of others. The Waaqeffataa respects the religions of others as equally as he wants his religion to be respected by others so as to live harmoniously and peacefully with the followers of other religions. They never try to hassle or preach others to attract them to their religions. One can be Waaqeffataa by his own will and live in it with freedom. They believe everyone has the right to follow the religion of his choice by his own will. In Waaqeffannaa there are different thanks giving ceremonies. Among these are Ifaanoo, Irreecha and Birboo. Ifaanoo is a thanksgiving ceremony which is celebrated once every year in the month of September by lighting the torch (gubaa gubuu). It is celebrated thanking their God for letting them through the dark summer (rainy season) to sunny spring season (booqa birraa).

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<sup>238</sup> Geda, G. J., Pilgrimages and syncretism: A religious transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia,

<sup>239</sup> Geda, G. J., Pilgrimages and syncretism: A religious transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia

This thanks giving ceremony has different names in different places such as ayyaana Ifaa, ayyaana Gubaa and ayyaana mucucoo. Birboo is celebrated on January 1st as a new year marking the ups and downs that the followers of Waaqeffannaa have been through<sup>240</sup>.

Unlike Christianity and Islam, Waaqeffannaa does not require the construction of religious houses for the veneration of Waaqa or for His thanksgiving. Rather the Oromo travel to “natural Physical bodies such as rivers, lakes, forests, and mountains, which they believe are created by Waaqa himself” to thank their Waaqa and for prayer<sup>241</sup>. Therefore, the Arsi-Oromo of Adaba, from long years ago, they gone to the river like Melka Furunna for asking the Waaqa what they want and in their mind with full confidence as they got what they asked<sup>242</sup>.

On the other hand, the expansion and consolidation of Islam also affected Oromo tradition, Oromo traditional religion and religious practices in Adaba district. Particularly the expansion of Islam in Arsi, who were practicing the Oromo traditional religion and religious practices and traditions, were greatly influenced. Temam Haji-Adem explained the influence of the Arsi Oromo by Islam expansion as “some factions of Arsi Oromo even started to claim that they are Muslims instead of Oromo, especially until the collapse of the Ethiopian empire in the 1970s”. He further contends that “many Arsi Oromo who embraced Islam also dropped their Oromo names and started to pick Islamic and Arabic names”<sup>243</sup>.

The conclusion given by Addisalem and KR Rajani stated that the traditional religion in general and Waaqeffannaa in Particular also plays the role of accommodating culture in such a way that during Waaqeffannaa holiday celebration (called Irreecha), for example, the Oromos get together from different walks of life regardless of religion, political outlooks and geographical boundaries. Thus, a lot of people go to the celebration of Irreecha from Adaba year to year.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid

<sup>241</sup> Ibid

<sup>242</sup> Informant, Ato Shubisa Geletu

<sup>243</sup> Ibid



Source: Adaba woreda culture and tourism office, 2024

*Figure 5: Photo of Hadha Siinqee before going to Irreechaa celebration of 2024*

Even when the Oromo pragmatically adopt another religion and became Christians or Muslims, they remained true to their own conception of Waaqaa, God. Waaqeffannaa is not only a religion, but also a culture. It is the symbol of Oromummaa. Irreecha celebration is concrete evidence where millions of Oromo are gathered at Hora Arsadi, Bishoftu regardless of political and religious backgrounds. Unfortunately, religious wise, most of the attendees are the followers of Christianity and Islam. They sing and chant proudly for attending the Irreechaa festivity. That is why when the Oromo pragmatically adopt another religion and became Christians or Muslims, they remained true to their own conception of Waaqaa, God<sup>244</sup>. The basic difference between different religions including Waaqeffannaa is not with regards to the God (Waaqa) they believe, rather the difference lies with the Ayyaana that they believe in and pray for. All religions believe in one Supreme Being (i.e. God). There is no religion which has two or more Supreme Beings. However, the religions compete with regards to their Ayyaana stating that their Ayyaana is superior and right. The Oromo does not have many Ayyaanas as that of Christianity and Islam.

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<sup>244</sup> Addisalem Bekele Gemedal , Professor KR Rajani, 2008

Moreover, the target of the emperor and the Dargue regimes was to dismantle social, political, economic institutions and indigenous religion of the Oromo and in doing this shapes them according to their ideology. The way Ethiopia rulers in the past run the businesses of religion and politics appear to have taken the style of what the proverb “Two birds with one stone”. It means that the emperors of Ethiopia expanded their territory in one hand and religion on the other. The rulers of Ethiopia agreed with new petty regional as well as local leaders as a means of religious expansion in the times when religion and the state had no demarcation. Through this technique, for instance, the Orthodox Church flourished and established their base in different places across the nation. Beyond suppressing Gadaa system, past regimes indirectly led to the destruction of the shrines where the rituals were performed and the material culture used by the followers of this religion; that have also led to terrifying of the followers of as it also included deny them the right to worship<sup>245</sup>

### **3.2.3. Orthodox Christianity**

The coming of Orthodox Christianity to Adaba district has direct link to Menilek’s conquest. Following this situation the soldiers and their respective nobility begun to construct their residential houses, which were located presently to the east of the town near Medanalem Church. Thus, Orthodox Christianity was introduced to Adaba people during the Emperor Minilik II era that was traced us to 1896. In this year the first Orthodox Church named as Saint George was established in 1896 in Hako rural village by the people came from north part of Ethiopia specifically Amhara ethnic group. This village was founded as a town during that period 46km far from the Adaba town but because of lack of infrastructure and far from the main road of Bale to Addis Ababa it lacks its township and regained its township before ten year from now so that Hako recognized as a town since then<sup>246</sup>.

Next to this church, Kidanemiret church was originated in 1909 in Furuna village by the Shewa Oromo those were migrated to this place. Following the foundation of this church the Adaba town was first established in this area but the town was shifted to the west because of the place did not have sufficient water or river of dry season. Up on the town shifted to the current place between Wachokora and Leliso rivers, Medanalem church was founded at the center of Adaba town near

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<sup>245</sup> Daniel, 1984.

<sup>246</sup> Informants, Ato Mindaye Tefera and Ato Tesfaye Dinku

Wachokora River in 1930<sup>247</sup>. The settlers who came from different directions of the country have made Christianity to be expanded in different kebeles of Adaba woreda. Then after, about ten churches were established in Adaba wereda.

#### **3.2.4. Islam**

When the exposition of the Oromo Worldview, Islam has transformed some fundamental concepts associated with the traditional religion. Some of the fundamental changes in the core of the Oromo culture or perception of the people have taken place. Before their conversion to Islam, the Arsi Oromo believed in Waaqaa (God in Oromo) who created and sustained everything in the heavens and the earth. Then, the term „Waaqaa“ has now become synonymous with Allah who refers to the creator. The concept of Waaqaa originally includes countless particular manifestations of Waaqaa in this world, particularization of his creative work which are conceived as beings. With establishment of the mosques, prayers in traditional sacred places are replaced by (salat) prayers at the mosque and got new Islamic orientations. People began to label the traditional religious practices as backward“ and something, which contradict the commandments of Allah<sup>248</sup>.

In the process of change, traditional prayers were Islamized and were renamed as Islamic (Sheik Hussein, Sof Umar, etc). As part of the traditional religious practices, prayers were held for rain, fertility and well-being of cattle, for the well-being of the family and the general community (gosa), either on a mountain, riverside or under a tree. On such occasions, the Qallu of the Oromo (the traditional religious leader) led prayers. Now, imams or sheikh“ at Mosques replace the traditional religious leaders-the Qallus. As an example in Bale, the Muslim sheiks are now often called Qalluu. Additionally, the weakening of the Gada System is consequently the result of the change in faith or the process of conversion<sup>249</sup>.

Since the rise of Islam at Mecca in the 7th century, the Aksumites had been losing their ancient ports and Islands to the increasingly dominant Muslim merchants of the Red sea. They gradually

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid

<sup>248</sup> Geda, G. J., Pilgrimages and syncretism: A religious transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia

<sup>249</sup> Ibid

made a number of local converts to Islam. Until the tenth century, it is very clear that these local Muslims were few in number and their activities in the Ethiopian region were purely commercial in character. After the tenth century, however, their number began to grow and many Muslim settlements were established. This historical development was particularly true of the port of Zeila, which was becoming the most important commercial outlet for the Ethiopian region. The Arabic written sources give us the clue that Islam was introduced as early as 13th Century appears to be a time of pioneer phase in the Islamization in Bale<sup>250</sup>.

There is no evidence to mention the right time when the Islamic religion was introduced in Adaaba woreda. However, since Adaba was one of the districts of Bale and Islamization in Bale was introduced as early as 13th Century there were Islam followers in this century. Moreover, the expansion of Islamic Religion was started with the foundation of Nur Mosque in 1913. During this period the people came from Jimma were the basis of the existence this religion in Adaaba. However, the Arsi-Oromo live in Adaba were under the indigenous religion of Oromo people that is *Waaqqeeffannaa*. The majority of *Waaqqeeffannaa*/Wakefena/ followers have been changed to be Islam following the foundation of the above mentioned mosque in Adaba town<sup>251</sup>.

According to my informants Islamic religion was not simply expanded as currently we observed. Because of the small number of the followers pray of Friday /Salat of Juma/ was not held for many years in this mosque. However, the religious leaders have used different kinds of mechanisms beside teaching the doctrine of Islam. They have been provided lunch ceremony on Fridays to attract many people and they obtained successes on maximizing the believers and then Juma Solat was continued based on the Islamic doctrine<sup>252</sup>.

Based on the evidence of Teshome study that stated as we see the constructions of several mosques in the countryside where there were no mosques before, especially along the main roads of Bale areas. According to my observation, there are 12 mosques in Robe, 4 mosques in Dodola, 4 mosques

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid

<sup>251</sup> Informants, Ato Kedir Dula and Ato Jemal Defo

<sup>252</sup> Informants, Ato Shubisa Geletu and Ato Kedir Dula

in Adaba. The other strategy is that they send well-trained preachers to different areas of Bale. According to my informants, several sheiks were sent from Asasa town<sup>253</sup>

Hence, Islamic religion by now was well expanded throughout the wereda, For instance, more than ten mosques have been built in the town only. The buildings of mosque in each kebele of Adaba woreda were dramatically increased including the followers. As a result, the majority of residents of Adaba wereda are followers of Islamic Religion. According to the document found in Adaba administrative office 90 percent of the population are Islam.<sup>254</sup>

### **3.2.5. Protestantism**

It is not clearly known the existence of Protestantism in Adaba wereda but it is believed that it was introduced in 1964 E.C following the missionary came from Denmark established health center in Furuna village and then teach their religion for those came to the clinic. With the coming of the Derge regime most of the protestant believers were either taken to prison or forced to migrate to other places since the Derge regime ideology did not permit any religion. This action of the Derge regime did not eliminate the Protestantism from this wereda rather they become strong believers and gained many followers. The expansion of Protestantism was boldly known with numbers of believers after the downfall of the Derge regime and quickly built church in different places of the wereda. Recently the different types of protestant churches were built in the town and in some villages of Adaba wereda.<sup>255</sup>

### **3.2.6. Social Services and Infrastructural Developments in the Woreda**

#### **3.2.6.1. Modern Education**

The contribution of church for emerging modern education in 1938 was the base of establishment of modern school in Adaba town. Hence, the current Adaba high school was founded in 1938 with having the teachers of church within hut that was built by the community and grade one and grade two

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<sup>253</sup> Teshome Amenu, 2008. The rise and expansion of Islam in Bale of Ethiopia: Socio-cultural and political factors and inter- religious relations

<sup>254</sup> Adaba wereda administrative office, 2023

<sup>255</sup> Informants, Ato Shubisa Geletu, and Ato Mindaye Tefera,

were opened in this year. Before the establishment of Adaba Primary school in 1938, an individual called *Memire Gebreyohannis Kasa* started teaching modern and religious education simultaneously Adaba town<sup>256</sup>. However, with the request of the community one professional teacher whose name is *Degefa Feleke* was assigned by Capitan *Demise Amberbir* who was the administrator of Bale *awraja*, as a director of this elementary school and continued to teach Amharic and Mathematics<sup>257</sup>.

Generally, the developmental activities in the district during the second phase of Emperor Häilasillassiè's rule were promising and considered as a base for the present infrastructure and social service provision in Adaba district. To mention some of them, the district got the first elementary school in 1938, clinic by missionary of England at Furuna kebele in 1954 other three elementary schools were built in Lajo, Hako and Bucha kebeles in 1960s

### **3.2.6.2. Transport and Communication**

Although Adaba was used as the capital of the *Woreda*, it didn't have its own master plan. The expansion of its territory and population resulted in the necessity of placing the town under Municipality administration, which was done since March, 1972.<sup>258</sup> Generally, infrastructural development like roads, schools and others were recent phenomena in Adaba district. According to oral information collected from the district, there were attempts to expand roads and other infrastructural activities in the area prior to the 1950s for instance; the Italians built road which crossed the district that connected Bale to the capital Addis Ababa. When Häilasillassiè returned to power, he discovered that the Italians had more than fulfilled the road building schemes he had embarked upon in the early 1930s. Moreover, Häilasillassiè's idea of modernization revolved around the education, but during his reign he provided education for the children of the nobility and more or less ignored the poor and subordinate ethnic groups. Despite this he was above all concerned with developing enlightened personnel necessary to carry out modernization and to transform his feudal

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<sup>256</sup> Shitahun and others 1990. The History and Development of Adaba Senior High School; (Amharic Version, Unpublished Document), pp. 10

<sup>257</sup> Shitahun et al, 1990. The History and Development of Adaba Senior High School; (Amharic Version, Unpublished Document), pp. 10

<sup>258</sup> Informant, Ato Jemal Defo,

empire into the modern state. He supported school building, employed school teachers and admonished his people to send their children to school<sup>259</sup>.

In addition, the people of Adaba town got water supply and electric light in 1980 with Diesel Generator beside the foundation of Melka Wakena Hydroelectric project constructed on the Wabe-Shebele river dam. However, before that the district has got dry and wet season road in 1938 that was constructed by Italian, as the road from Shashemene to Goba, which crossed the district was constructed in this year.<sup>260</sup> So that people use bus and other vehicles for transportation from the district to Shashemene or the capital Addis Ababa. Therefore, Adaba district was able to undergo more educational and infrastructural developments in the second phase of emperor Häilasillassiè's rule compared to the first phase of the emperor and the Italian period.

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<sup>259</sup>Horold G. Marcus, 1994, "Hailassellassie's Development Policies and Views (1916-1960)": in the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, V. I, 1994, Paris,

<sup>260</sup>Informant, Jemal Defo,

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study was entitled as “A History of Adaba woreda, West Arsi Zone of Oromia Regional State (1941- 1991)’. In this regard the researcher has provided about twenty-two interview questions for purposively selected key informants from community elders live in different villages of the district to answer prior designed basic research questions such as; ‘What are the major dynamics on administrative structure in Adaba Woreda from 1941 to 1991?’, ‘What was the 1975 Land Reform impact on the formation of Adaba Woreda?’ and ‘What were the impacts of administrative restructuring and land reform on Adaba woreda from 1941 to 1991?’ Since the objective of this study was to describe a history of the study area the researcher has employed descriptive method of research design. The data collection tools of this study were in - depth interview and document analysis. Accordingly the findings obtained from the analysis of the collected data were presented as follows.

The history of people lives in Adaba wereda is in line with the movement of the large Oromo people as a whole so that it is essential to promote the movement of Oromo ethnic group first and then the establishment of this wereda. Because Arsi-Oromo sub ethnic group is the origin for this area to settle at the first time in the history. According to the informants, *Raayyaa* and *Kajawaa* clans of Mando branches are found in West Arsi and in Adaba wereda in specific. Before Menilek’s conquest of the southern region and the introduction of Islam into Arsi, both in the second half of the 19th century, the Arsi social life was dominated by kinship units or moiety clan lineage structure and popular Gadaa system (the egalitarian; socio-political organization). Therefore, the social life of Arsi Oromo was dominated by both structures before the second half of the 19th century before its incorporation into the Modern Ethiopian State

Most people the livelihood of most people in this area was cattle breeding rather than crop production before and after 1941, thus, th

ey migrate with their cattle to the pastoral place during winter season. Therefore, there was no administrative structure organized by the empire Minilik II. Generally, Menilik’s conquest seems to have brought a radical transformation in the socio- economic, cultural and political life of Arsi Oromo. This was true for the Arsi Oromo of Adaba district.

Moreover, the response of the Arsi of Adaba district to the Italian aggression became one of the controversial issues. The majority of them accepted the Italian with great excitement and gave them warm acceptance. Therefore, people's reaction towards them was optimistic in the area. Immediately, after their arrival, the Italians had brought socio-economic and political transformation in the area contrary to the earlier administration. The power of balabats to collect taxes from peasants was weakened and peasants regained their land and freely ploughed it without any tax until 1941. The other achievement of the Italians in Adaba was that, contrary to the former period, different infrastructural activities were carried out in the district, among which the construction of Shashemenne - Bale road which pass through the district and the Adaba Secondary school can be mentioned as good examples.

Haile Selassie's administration has used local institutions like the *Gadaa* system together with modern bureaucratic institutions to restore the peace and stability in Bale and in Adaba *Woreda* in specific. However, this method has not stopped the struggle of Oromo people for their liberty from the rule of the empire.

At the beginning of 1960s, the peasants in Adaba district raised conflict with the administration due to the unfair distribution of farmland and they went to the boarder of the country to join the Genral Wako Gutu warriors and the conflict dispute up to the end of the empire till the dispute continued up to the emergency of *durge*. However, the *derge* effectively abolished the remains of traditional institutions of *rist* and *gult*, and took over the control to distribute access to land through Peasant Associations (PA) in Adaba district. During this period, farm families in Adaba district had particularly insecure effective rights to individual plots, although they had a general entitlement to an undefined share of the Peasant Association's land endowment.

During the time of the imperial regime different peasant rebellions were used to be made against local landlords in a disorganized and scattered manner posing no significant challenge to the landlords, let alone the government. This type of resistance was being expressed by the landless section of the community in Adaba wereda. On the other hand, the landlords with their tenants were protested the *Durge* government. This movement was written on different books with having 'Movement of Bale Peasants'; and this movement were organized and led by Haji Abdulahi Genemo and others from Adaba. The conflicts of the peasants and their questions were overwhelmed by the military *durge* military force. . The majority of the Arsi Oromo in Adaba district were not simply accepted the land reform proclamation and the proclamation by itself has brought many of youth to

migrate from the *wereda* to other places in the country and to cross the border of the country. After the revolution the case of peasants in Ethiopia in general and that of Adaba Woreda in particular was given due attention by the authorities of the new regime. Based on the decree issued to implement the reorganization of rural areas about 23 Peasants Associations (PAs) were established in Adaba Woreda

The *Dergue's* development policy was manifested in the fields of road construction. These roads have a long lasting significance in promoting the economy of the district and changing the socio-economic status of some Adaba Woreda inhabitants. Initially, the *Dergue* officials attempted to construct feeder roads which linked each peasant association with the capital of the district. However, the Hunte state farm has contributed a lot on road construction that was connected the Weshu kebele to the state farm and crossed to Alola kebele in 1979.

Melka Wakana Hydroelectric Power Station was the other big project for the country and for Adaba district in specific that has made Adaba town to be more developed in economy. The socio-economic development of the people in Adaba was awakening significantly through the income delivered by the workers of this project. The majority of youth was recruited in this project during those years and has changed their livelihood. Moreover, after the production of electric power the station has distributed the electric power for four kebeles nearby founded to the station such as Fonshe, Gededo, Hunte State Farm andn Robe Gerjeda (found in Arsi province) without any cost. The station also has built elementary school and clinic to serve the surrounding community with education and the health center.

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## Appendix

### Key Informants Participated in this Study

R.No	Full Name	Sex	Age	Education level	Date of Interview
1	Ato Mindaye Tefera	M	76	Elementary	26/08/2016 E.C
2	Ato Hussein Beker,	M	80	Illiterate	27/08/2016 E.C
3	Ato Jemal Defo,	M	65	Masters	30/08/2016 E.C
4	W/ro Asha Muhammed,	F	49	Elementary	30/8/2016 E.C
5	W/ro Nesriya Jemal	F	35	Degree	25/8/2016 E.C
6	Ato Tesfaye Dinku,	M	48	Degree	30/8/2016 E.C
7	Ato Hiko Dallu	M	70	Secondary	21/8/2016, E.C
8	W/ro Halima Nesru	F	38	Elementary	22/8/2016 E.C
9	Ato Bariso Kabeto,	M	42	Secondary	05/9/2016. E.C
10	Adde Zalewiya H/Simeno	F	85	Illiterate	01/09/2016 E.C
11	Ato Shubisa Geletu,	M	48	Diploma	13/08/2016 E.C
12	Ato <a href="#">Negash Hiko,</a>	M	32	Secondary	<a href="#">02/09/2016 E.C.;</a>
13	W/ro Zubeyda Haji Abdi	F	30	Secondary	01/09/2016 E.C
14	W/ro Zalika Abdurkadir	F	56	Certificate	03/09/2016 E.C
15	W/ro Yeshiwork Kifle	F	49	Elementary	03/09/2016 E.C
16	Ato Hussien Bedasa,	M	35	Elementary	29/8/2016 E.C
17	Ato Kelil Kasim,	M	45	Elementary	18/8/2016 E.C
18	W/ro Meymuna H/Kasim	F	44	Illiterate	20/08/2016 E.C
19	W/ro Derartu Alemu	F	36	Elementary	23/08/2016 E.C
20	W/ro Mekiya Kemal	F	47	Elementary	03/09/2016 E.C