



**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE
MANAGEMENT**

**THE OROMO OF GOMMAA, SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA, A
HISTORY: 1880s -1991**

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DECEMBER, 2021

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF JIMMA
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Abstract

This thesis deals with “The Oromo of Gommaa, Southwestern Ethiopia: A History 1880s to 1991.” The decade 1880s was an important landmark in the history of the Oromo of the entire Gibe region given that it was the time when they were conquered by king Menelik of Shawa. The year 1991 was also a crucial period in Ethiopia given that it witnessed the end of the Derg regime and the establishment of a federal system of administration. The purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the political, economic, social and cultural history of the Oromo of Gommaa from the 1880s to 1991. The thesis is produced through the collection and analysis of data from both primary and secondary sources including oral sources, archival materials and historical documents, published and unpublished materials such as books, journals, articles, theses, manuscripts, and official documents of pertinent offices, etc. While most of the archival sources were mainly collected from municipality of Aggaaro and Jimmaa towns, the greater part of the published and unpublished materials was obtained from Jimma University and to some extent from Addis Ababa university. Key-informant interview and in-depth interview were used to gather information from knowledgeable persons in the various qebeles of Aggaaro and Gommaa districts. The data analysis was conducted by using both descriptive and narrative techniques that include analyzing, comparing, checking and counterchecking what the literature say about the history of Oromo of Gommaa with the one which the local people believed to be their history. The findings of the thesis largely consolidated the earlier works. Yet, there are some minor deviations from the earlier works on some of the specific details, which can be seen in the main body. Due to lack of unanimity of both oral and written sources on the issue of how the kingdom of Gommaa was founded, it is difficult to give a definitive answer on whether the kingdom was founded peacefully or through wars. But the finding of this thesis established, beyond a doubt, that there were wars between the various Oromo clans of Gommaa before and/or on the eve of state formation, and Abbaa Bookee had either a direct or an indirect role in the formation of the kingdom of Gommaa. It seems that the effort to reconcile the warring factions might have ultimately led to the emergence of the kingdom of Gommaa through a peaceful process. In the 1880s, the Gibe region fell under king Menelik of Shawa. Following the Shawan direct rule over the Gibe states but Jimmaa, since 1886, a new socio-economic and political system was imposed up on the local people, who were reduced to gabbärs. The gabbärs paid regular tribute and also give free labor services to the imperial settler soldiers/the näftäñña and even to the Church. With the introduction of the qalad system, the gabbärs further deteriorated to landless and insecure tenants. The Shawan conquest had also affected the social and cultural life of the local community. When the Fascist Italian forces invaded the country and occupied Gommaa, the majority of the local people did not regard them as invaders. In the post-liberation period, the people of Gommaa suffered a lot under the imperial rule, most of them were landless tenants until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution which ended feudal land tenure and gave them the right to use land to the landless.

Preface

This thesis studies about Gommaa district of Jimmaa zone with the principal objective of examining the history of the Oromo of Gommaa from the 1880s to 1991. The various works produced before did not specifically and adequately address the history of Oromo of Gommaa, particularly during the Haile Selassie and the *Derg* regimes. In some cases, the earlier works have even presented conflicting facts and/or contradictory narrations on some of the most important issues pertinent to the history of the people under the study. For instance, Guluma and Mohammed didn't agree on how the Oromo kingdom of Gommaa was created, the founding leader of the kingdom, and its formative period, just to mention some. The need to fill these gaps necessitated the conduct of the current study, which may clarify the various misunderstandings and conflicting narrations in the earlier studies, and thereby add to the existing knowledge. To this end, the researcher used data from both primary and secondary sources. Information from oral sources, archives, manuscripts, published and unpublished written sources were used in this thesis. While the written sources mainly theses, were largely obtained from Jimma university and Addis Ababa university, information from oral sources were gathered from the various urban and rural *qebeles* of Gommaa and Aggaaroo districts as well as the districts of Geeraa and Guumaa. Similarly, archival sources from Aggaaro and Gommaa districts as well as Jimma zone administrative office were also used in this thesis. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted through narrations as well as comparing and contrasting or checking and counter-checking

The thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter begins with the geographical and physical setting of Gommaa district, and then attempts to shed light into the expansion and settlement of the Maccaa Oromo in the Gibe region, the nature of their contact with the earlier inhabitants of the region, the political and economic history of Gommaa Oromo which include the political and administrative organization of the kingdom of Gommaa. the kingdom's relations with the neighboring Oromo kingdoms of the region. The kingdom's defense organization, its land tenure system and the various economic activities of Gommaa Oromo were also part of this chapter. The second chapter has two parts: the first part investigates the religious history of the Oromo of Gommaa. It begins with the demographic profile of the study area, social organization of the Oromo of Gommaa as well as the ethnic interaction; their traditional religion, the introduction of Islam and Christianity into Gommaa. The second part analyzes their cultural history, particularly their traditional food, marriages practices, their methods of indigenous

knowledge transfer and their indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution. The third chapter focuses on the history of Oromo of Gommaa from the Shawan conquest in the 1880s to 1974, including the socio-economic, political and cultural impacts of the conquest on the local people, and also their history during the Italian occupation as well as in the post-liberation period from 1941-1974.

The fourth and final chapter explores the history of Gommaa Oromo from 1974-1991. Under this chapter the reaction of Gommaa Oromo to the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, and the subsequent reforms of the *Derg* regime; the various rural institutions created and programs undertaken to promote the government's policy of socialism etc., were addressed. The history of Oromo of Gommaa in the immediate aftermath of the *Derg* regime is also briefly assessed.

Lack of adequate archival sources in Gommaa district and Aggaaro Municipality has been by far, the major challenge for the researcher. Most of the archives there, particularly those before the 1974 revolution were ~~are~~ destroyed and even the remaining ones are in bad shape. In some cases, the researcher had to copy parts of archives by hand, while the other parts were missing. The prevalence of Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge in the collection of data from oral sources. Even many of the collected traditions failed to be specific about chronology and suffered from distortion of events. Despite all these setbacks, however, the writer has made the utmost effort and attempted to reconstruct the socio-economic, political and cultural history of the Oromo of Gommaa from the 1880s to 1991. In doing this, he attempted to show how the Oromo of Gommaa have changed over time in light of the changing political, economic, and social circumstances. Yet, the researcher does not claim to have carried out a comprehensive research on the topic. Hopefully, he might get another opportunity in the future to conduct a thorough inquiry into the history of Oromo of Gommaa within the framework of the broader Gibe region. The researcher also hopes that the current thesis might be helpful as a point departure and/or as a reference for the students of history, researchers, the local population and others who might wish to conduct further study of the district, its peoples and the Oromo people in general.

Acronyms

- APDM — Amhara People’s Democratic Movement, the former EPDM
- EPDM — Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement
- EPLF — Eritrean People’s Liberation Front),
- EPRDF — Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
- OLF — Oromo Liberation Front
- OLM — Ogaden Liberation Movement
- OPDO — Oromo People’s Democratic Organization
- PA — Peasant Association
- PCs — Producers’ Cooperatives
- SCs — Service Cooperatives
- SIM — Sudan Interior Mission later renamed as Society of International Missionaries
- SNNPR — Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State
- TGE — Transitional Government of Ethiopia
- TPLF — Tigray People’s Liberation Front
- UDA — Urban Dwellers’ Association
- WPE — Workers’ Party of Ethiopia

Key to Transliteration

I. Transliteration of *Afaan Oromo* Words

1. All words of Oromo origin are spelled according to the writing and reading system of Oromo alphabet, *Qubee*. Oromo has basically five short and five long vowels.

Short vowels	Long vowels	Examples
A	aa	<i>baddaa</i> → High land
e	ee	<i>Bubbee</i> → Wind
i	ii	<i>Miidhaa</i> → Injury/Damage
o	oo	<i>Obbolaa</i> → Brothers
u	uu	<i>Raafuu</i> → cabbage

2. The length of a vowel may result in a change of meaning.

Example: *Rafu* → sleeping *Raafuu* → cabbage

3. A sequence of more than two vowels is possible only if separated by glottal (').

Example: *Ba'aa* → Burden

4. Oromo consonants (phonemes) are stressed (geminated) by doubling similar phonemes.

Example: *Qaalluu*- a ritual expert in the Oromo traditional religion

5. There are five paired phonemes that are formed by two different consonants. These are: *ch*, *dh*, *ny*, *ph* and *sh*. Of these, *dh*, *ny* and *ph* have sounds different from the English consonants.

dh: voiceless, dental, implosive as in 'dhaaba' (organization) or 'dhadhaa' (butter).

ny: voiceless, palatal, nasal- as in 'nyaata'-(food) *sanyii* (clan).

ph: voiceless, bilabial, ejective, stop-as in 'qopphee'-(preparation).

Moreover, (c), (q) and (x) have different sounds from the English consonants.

c: as in *caffee*-assembly.

q: as in *qaawwaa*-coffee.

x: as in *xumura*- end.

II. Key to Amharic Transliteration

1. The seven sounds of the Ethiopian/ Amharic alphabet are represented as follows;

1stቤ= Ba

5thቤ= Bé

2ndቤ= Bu

6thቤ= Bi

3rdቤ= Bi

7thቤ= Bo

4thቤ= Bä

Regarding the sixth form in the above list, it must be noted that the “i” will be suffixed to letter only if the latter is vocalized or stressed. Otherwise it would not be required at all. As a general rule also, the “i” is not required when the sixth form is the last letter of a word as in ብድር / *Biddir/loan*; ተቋር / *Tikur/ black*

2. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows

ሸ= sh

ዠ= Z

ቸ= ch

ጀ= J

ኸ= ñ

3. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows

ቀ= q

ፀ= Ts

ጠ= t

ጰ= p

ጨ= ch

4. Gemination should always be indicated by doubling e.g. Kabbada.

5. General examples

ፀዮን———*Tsi'on*

ፊታዊራራ———*Fitäwräri*

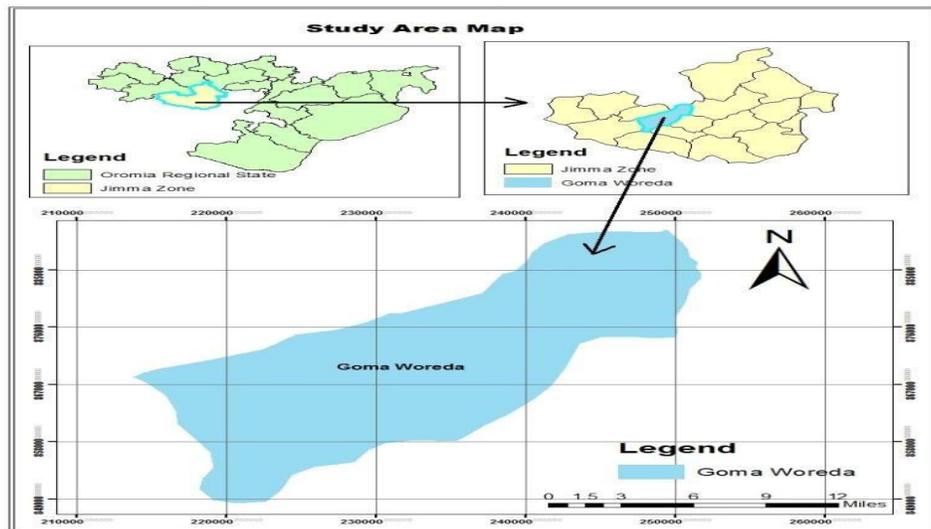
ደጃዝማች———*Dajjämäch*

ቀኝዝማች———*Qañäzmäch*

አዊራጃ———*Awräjjä*

to the south-western direction and 45 km from Jimmaa town to the west.²As part of Jimmaa Zone, Gommaa district borders on the south by Saqqaa Coqorsaa, on the southwest by Geeraa, on the northwest by Saxxammaa, on the north by the Dhedheessaa River which separates it from the Illubabor Zone, on the northeast by Limmu Kosa, and on the east by Mannaa. The administrative boundaries of Gommaa district had dwindled since 2006 when the town of Tobbaa was separated from Gommaa and put under a separate district of Guumaa. Moreover, Gommaa district was separated from its ancient capital, Aggaaro town which also became a separate district in the same year. Bashaashaa, Coocee, Geembee, and Limmu Shaayee are among the towns in Gommaa district.³ The astronomical location of Gommaa district is 7 to 7°58’N latitudes and 36° to 36°38’ east longitude. The territory of Gommaa district covers a total area of 93, 657.22ha.⁴

Figure 2. The Current Map of Gommaa district



Source: Gommaa district Administrative Office, 2019.

Agro-ecologically, Gommaa district is divided into three climatic zones highland (*baddaa/dagä*) 8%, mid highland (*badda daree/Woinadagä*) 88% and lowland (*gammoojjii/qollä*) which

² Deressa Debu, “Historical Ecology and Ethnography of Gibe-Gojab and Dhidheessaa Triangle (From 19332010)” (Ph. D. Dissertation, Department of History, A.A.U, 2018), p.52.

³ Laurent Bossolasco, *A study case on Coffee (Coffee Arabica L.) Limu Coffee* (Addis Ababa, 2009), p.21; Dagm Alemayehu, “A History of Coffee Production and Marketing in Limmu Awräjjä 1900-1991” (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University,2016), p.38; Gommaa *Woredä* Administrative Office, 2019.

⁴ Aman Seifudin, “Islam and the Muslim Community of Gomma: A Historical Survey (1886-1974)” (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, A.A.U, 2006), p. 21.

constitute 4%. This means, most of Gommaa (about 96 per cent) is categorized as mid-highland. The district of Gommaa has a subtropical climate, diversified physical landscape and is characterized by large differences of elevation. It has an average altitude of 1500-1700 meters above sea-level; however, some points along the southern and western boundaries have altitudes ranging from 2229 to 2870 meters. The annual rainfall of the district is between 1600 mm and 1800 mm. March to April characterizes the small rainy season (planting time for major crops) and the big rainy season extends from June to October. The mean annual temperature varies between 12.67⁰ c and 29.10⁰ c, with an average yearly temperature of 20⁰ c.⁵

Gommaa district has an abundant water resources, with its drainage pattern comprising a number of intermittent and perennial rivers. The major perennial rivers in the district are Tamsaa, Daggawajjaa, Aweetu, Dhedheessaa, Yaacii, Chessache and Malkaa Yiddaa, and the small streams such as Birgedele, Tijjee, Qoree, Bulbula and Abbaa diggaa that are the tributaries of the larger ones and are within Abbäy River Basin. Although the available land and water resources offer high potential for irrigation development in Gommaa, the present utilization level is very poor. Gommaa district has also abundant subsurface or underground water.⁶

The district has both natural and planted forests, woodlands, bushes and grass lands etc. Currently, Gommaa has about 2209.2 hectares of natural forest and 2296.1 hectares of manmade forest cover. These vegetation cover represented 2.3% - 2.5% of the total area of the district.⁷ The major forest tree species in Gommaa district include: *Albiziaschimperiana* (Ambabessa/sassa), *Acacia Albida* (Laaftoo/Girar), *CrotonMachrostachyus* (Makaanisa/Bisana), *CordiaAfricana* (Waddessa/Wanza) and *Miletia ferugnia* (Bosoka/Tikur enchet). These are essential for coffee because they provide coffee trees with shade and humus. Based on the nature of their livelihood, the local people are being involved both in the conservation of the forest resources or in destroying them. For instance, those who needed coffee shades and also for the extraction of honey are conserving the forests while others who wanted additional farm lands are doing the opposite. Current trends indicate that over exploitation as well as expansion of farming lands are the major threats to forest

⁵Aman Seifudin, p.21; Endalu Kakaba, "A History of Gomma District, Jimma Zone: 1941-1991" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2019), p.1.

⁶ Ayelech Tadesse, "Market Chain Analysis of Fruits for Gomma Woreda" (M.SC Thesis, Haramaya University, 2011), p.22; Gommaa *Woredä* Agricultural Office, 2019.

⁷ Gommaa *Woredä* Agricultural Office, 2019.

resources in Gommaa. Though there is no wildlife conservation area in Gommaa, the forest resource of the district is said to be inhabited by a variety of wild animals including lion, leopard, colobus monkey, grivet monkey, olive baboon (*Colobus guereza*), spotted hyenas (*Crocuta crocuta*).⁸

1.2. Historical Background of Oromo of Gommaa

Both oral and written sources indicate that the Gommaa Oromo and that of the entire Gibe region belonged to the Tuulama-Maccaa branch of the Booranaa confederacy (one of the two big Oromo confederacies).⁹ The Maccaa and Tuulama Oromo had a common *Caffee* (assembly) at Odaa Nabii in Fatagär (near the present town of Dukam, about 30 kilometers east of Addis Ababa), where they stayed under a common government until their separation.¹⁰

The Maccaa Oromo were latter divided into two confederacies known as the Afre and the Sadachaa. The Afre (confederacy of the four) comprised the Hoko, Tchalliya, Gudru, and Liban, while the Sadachaa (confederacy of the three) encompassed the Obbo, Suba, and Hakako. The Maccaa separated from their Tuulama counter-parts and established their own central *caffee* at Odaa Bisil (or Tuutee Bisil), located in the upper Gibe basin between Gedo, Bilo and Gibe River or in today's Western Shawa in the 1580s. During the *Gadaa* Muudanaa (1610-1618), the two Maccaa groups fought each other and this led to the dissolution of their common *Caffee*. While the

⁸Yared Kassahun, "Environmental Impact Assessment of coffee pulping stations in Mana and Gomma Woredas of Jimma zone, Ethiopia" (M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Environmental science, Addis Ababa university, 2008), p. 23.

⁹ Mohammed, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, pp. 44-63; Tesema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the mid-16th Century to the early Twentieth Century" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986), pp.47-48; Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu....", p.19; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture", p. 67; Abraham Alemu Fanta, "Ethnicity and Local Identity in the Folklore of the South-western Oromo of Ethiopia: A Comparative Study" (Ph. D. Dissertation, VU University Amsterdam, 2015), pp. 43,89; *Seenaa Aanaa Gommaa, Waajjira Aadaa Fi Tuurizimii Aanaa Gommaatiin Qopha'ee*, 2020, pp.11-12.

¹⁰ Mohammed, pp. 18-24; Ketebo Abdiyo, *Abba Jifar II of Jimma Kingdom. 1861-194: A Biography* (Jimma University, 2012), p.7; Tesema, "The Political Economy ...", p. 23; Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethno-National Conflict 1868-2004* (Trento, Asmara 2005), p. 22; Eric, K. Knutson, *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kaallu Institution Among the Macha [Oromo] of Ethiopia* (Gothenburg,1967), pp. 172- 173.

Afre moved to Wallaga and Illubabor, the Sadachaa expanded to the Gibe region.¹¹ There is a general consensus among most of the scholars that the Oromo arrived in the Gibe region at the end of the sixteenth and/or the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. When they arrived, they came into contact with the different Omotic communities of the region such as Ennarya, Kafa, Bosha (also known as Garo), Gumar and Yam. The kingdom of Ennarya is ~~was~~ said to be the most powerful of the Omotic states.¹²

The Sadachaa are said to have begun to expand towards the Gibe region mainly in the direction of Ennarya during the period of Harmuffaa *Gadaa* (1562-1570). But Ennarya managed to resist the Oromo penetration for more than a century until it was finally conquered by the Limmu clan of Maccaa Oromo at the beginning of the eighteenth century or about 1710. This led to Ennarya's disappearance as a political entity. Its rulers crossed the Gojeb river and took refuge in the kingdom of Kafa, while the majority of its population and also of Konch and Bosha remained on their land, and assimilated into the Oromo.¹³ This being said, however, Tesema suggested two contradictory time lines about the period when the Maccaa Oromo conquered the kingdom of Ennarya. First, he mentioned, "The people of Ennarya had put up a stiff resistance against the Maccaa Oromo incursions at first. Between 1550-1570, however, Ennarya was conquered by the Limmu branch of Maccaa Oromo and was thereafter named Limmu-Ennarya."¹⁴

This evokes that the Oromo attack against Ennarya began at about 1550 and by 1570 they succeeded in conquering it. It is not clear whether this is his real conviction or a genuine mistake, but it is erroneous, to say the least. Yet, the period between 1550-1570 coincided with the one when the Oromo, as stated above, commenced their expansion towards the southwestern part of Ethiopia during the period of the Harmuffaa *Gadaa* (1562-1570). Thus, Tesema's time line better fits the beginning of the Oromo invasions of the region than its end. Yet, though controverting his

¹¹ Mohammed, pp.24-25,42-45, 62-63; Tesema, "The Political Economy ...", pp. 47-48; Guluma, "Gommaa", p.19; Guluma, "Land,", p. 46.

¹² Mohammed, pp. 27 & 42; Guluma, "Gommaa", p. 21; Guluma, "Land,", pp. 43-45; Lewis, Herbert S. *Jimma Abba Jifar: An Oromo Monarchy. Ethiopia 1830-1932* (Madison & Milwaukee, 1965), p.25.

¹³ Mohammed, pp. 47, 81; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture and Society...", p.52.

¹⁴ Tesema, "The Political Economy of western central Ethiopia....", p.38.

own claim above, he rightly suggested that the Oromo settlement in most of the Gibe region and western Shawa was complete by the turn of the seventeenth century.¹⁵

The elders of Gommaa reported that their ancestors settled there peacefully because the majority of the former inhabitants had already left the area. Thus, the Oromo landed almost on a vacated land, with few remnants of the Omotic people whom they call Kafa. Hence, the name Kafa came to denote all non-Oromo settlers of the region who integrated with the Oromo, a tradition similar to the one collected from the region by other scholars.¹⁶ However, several historical documents established, beyond any doubt, that the Oromo settled in the Gibe region, either by displacing or subduing the Omotic people (of Ennarya).¹⁷

The oral traditions came up with two different versions about the origin of the name Gommaa. One says it was named after Gommol or Abbaa Gommol, a man who was a king over the area back in 1742 E.C. The other version says it is named after a man called Gommochaa who came from Booranaa and settled on the land.¹⁸ However, there is no proof as to which one of the two versions is true or whether anyone of them at all is true. Even though the mentioning of the year 1742 E.C. (1749/50 G.C.) in the first version seems blurred, the year, as we shall see in the next pages, falls into the reign of Abbaa Manno (r.1735-1775), the first king of Gommaa.¹⁹

¹⁵ Tesema, "The Political Economy of western central Ethiopia....", pp.53-54, 78.

¹⁶ Informants: A/Milkii, A/Nagaa & A/Macaa; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p. 22; Aman, P. 9; Lewis, A [Oromo] Monarchy, p.38.

¹⁷ Mohammed, pp.27 & 42; Tesema Ta'a, *Political Economy of an African Society in Transformation: The Case of Macha Oromo* (Ethiopia) (Berlin, 2006), p.39; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.1.

¹⁸ *Waajjira Aadaa Fi Tuurizimii Aanaa Gommaatiin Qopha'ee*, 2020, pp.11-12.

¹⁹ Guluma, "Gommaa and....", pp. 52-66; Guluma "Land, ...", pp. 69-70; Aman, p.15.

1.3. Political History of the Oromo of Gommaa up to the 1880s

Before the emergence of monarchical governments, the various Oromo clans of the Gibe region are said to have been governed by the *gadaa* system,²⁰ which governed the totality of Oromo socio-economic, political and cultural life.²¹

After they settled in the Gibe region, the various Oromo clans created a separate *gadaa*/ritual center at Bakkee Hullee (also known as Odaa Hullee), found in Omoo-Naaddaa district of today's Jimmaa zone. The representatives of all the clans of Jimmaa Oromo hold a council of elders at Odaa Hullee and declared different rules (*seera tumaa*) that became the common law for all of them. Odaa Hullee continued to serve as a common *gadaa* center of the Oromo of the Gibe region, a fact also confirmed by the traditions from Gommaa.²² Thus, the various Oromo clans of the Gibe region had a common government until their separation.

Sources depicted that in the later days, the various Oromo clans of the region established their own independent *gadaa* centers or *caffee* assemblies. This was also true for the various Oromo clans of Gommaa which used to live under separate *gadaa* governments and yet had established a common *gadaa* center at Tuma Seeqaa.²³ The Oromo of Gommaa continued to be administrated by the *gadaa* system until the system itself declined mainly due to the incessant wars between various Oromo clans and the emergence of powerful war leaders (*Abbaa Duulaas*). These war leaders were able to defy the *gadaa* leaders and thereby declare themselves hereditary leaders *mootiis* (kings) of the Gibe states.²⁴

²⁰ Guluma, "Land,....", p.47; Deressa, "Agro-Ecological ...", pp.10-14; Deressa, "Historical Ecology ...", pp. 26-28; Ketebo, pp.5-9; Informants: Sh/Kadir Hassan & Sh/Nasir Jemal.

²¹ Asmerom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (Collier-Macmillan Limited, New York: Free Press, 1973), p.8; Asmerom, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System* (Asmara, 2000), p. 121; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p.27.

²² Guluma, "Land,....", p.47; Deressa, "Agro-Ecological ...", pp.10-14; Deressa, "Historical Ecology ...", pp. 26-28; Informants: Sh/Kadir Hassan & Sh/Nasir Jemal.

²³ Mohammed, p.94; Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu ...", pp. 32-37, 52-66; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture and", pp.67-70; Anteneh Wasihun. "A Religious History of the Kingdom of Gumma, Southwest Ethiopia (Ca. 1855-1970s)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2018), p.22; Informants: Sh/Kadir & Sh/Nasir.

²⁴ Mohammed, p.82; Asafa, *Oromia...*, pp.22-25; Endalkachew Lelisa, "A Historical Survey of Coffee Production and Marketing in Jimma and Limmu Awraja, 1800-1991" (M.A. Thesis, Jimma university, 2013), p.7.

This means, in the Gibe region the decline and collapse of the *gadaa* system was mainly the outcome of internal factors, not an externally imposed phenomenon, though some external factors such as the rapid expansion of Islam, the spread of commerce, as well as their interaction with the neighboring non-Oromo peoples etc, were also believed to have contributed to the further decline of the system.²⁵ Thus, the waning of the *gadaa* system among the Gommaa Oromo was mainly linked with the gradual coup from within by the powerful *Abbaa Duulaas*.

1.3.1. The Emergence of the Kingdom of Gommaa

The issue of state formation in the Gibe region has widely been studied. However, the existence of significant differences and/or contradictory narrations between the works of Guluma Gameda and Mohammed Hassen, on the specific conditions under which the kingdom of Gommaa was created necessitated a brief reconsideration of this issue once again.

To begin with, both authors agreed that the emergence of states in the Gibe region were the results of internal factors, mainly the beginning of agriculture and the subsequent class differentiations. Yet, Mohammed stressed that the Gibe monarchies were created through wars.

According to him, “all the Gibe states were the creation of war leaders. War made the Gibe kings, and all of them made war the prime business of their administration.”²⁶ By implication the kingdom of Gommaa was created through war, Part of my informants supported this view and stated that there were intense wars between various *abbaa duulaas*/war lords which culminated with the victory of one of them, who helped in creating the kingdom of Gommaa.²⁷ But, with the detail coming after a paragraph or two, Guluma unequivocally rejected Mohammed’s assertion. Instead, he pointed that the kingdoms of Gommaa and Jimmaa were created through peaceful process, a view shared by the other half of my informants, and Tesema particularly with regards to Jimmaa.²⁸

²⁵ Guluma, “Gommaa...”, pp. 32-37,44-49; Mohammed, p.94; Knutson, pp.182-183; M. Abir, “The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Ennarya and Jimmaa in the first half of the Nineteenth Century” *Journal of African History, Vol. I, II*, (1965), pp. 93, 126.

²⁶ Mohammed, p. 93.

²⁷ Informants: *Sh/ Kadir Hassan & Sh/ Nasir Jemal*.

²⁸ Guluma, “Gommaa ...”, pp.56-57; Guluma, “Land, ...”, p. 67; Tesema, “The Political Economy of...”, p. 87; Informants: *Shabuddin M. & Mohammed A/Dagaa*.

Similarly, Mohammed suggested that the core of the state of Gommaa was founded by a certain Abbaa Bookee who, after being elected a leader by the *gadaa* assembly, violated the traditions of power transfer under the system and made himself a hereditary leader. He fought for and controlled all the land between Yaacci and Dogaye,²⁹ a view also agreed upon by Aman and part of my informants.³⁰ Abbaa Bookee was said to have died without uniting the region of Qottaa with Gommaa and was succeeded by his son Abbaa Manno, also known as Odaa Allayyoo (r.ca. 1820-1840) who became the first king of Gommaa with its capital at Sayyoo, the main commercial center.³¹

On the other hand, Guluma refuted Mohammed's description of A/Bookee, saying that he was neither a warrior nor a *gadaa* leader, but a respectable member of the Awalani clan who was probably a religious man spending most of his time making prayers. Guluma argues that the various Oromo clans of Gommaa who used to live under separate *gadaa* governments came to realize their weaker position in contrast to their more organized Omotic neighbors. Hence, they decided to form a common government. Accordingly, they gave the responsibility of choosing a mootii (king) to the leaders of the nine major clans-namely, Awalani, Jidda, Ennangea, Bedina, Jarso, Arfeti, Wacho, Naggade Abba Chasso and Dagooyye. The nine clan leaders agreed to consult with Abbaa Bookee whose non-involvement in political maneuverings made him popular in the area. They went to his residence and requested him to appoint one of his sixteen sons as their leader.³²

On the refusal of the first fifteen, Abbaa Manno (Odaa Allayyo), his youngest son, was appointed as the first king of Gommaa. A/Manno (r.1735-1775) assumed power at the age of forty and then ruled for forty years after which he was succeeded by his son, Abbaa Bagiboo (r.1775-1805). With this, the Awalani dynasty ruled Gommaa right from the start of the kingdom until it was conquered by the imperial forces of Shawa in the 1880s.³³ Thus, for Guluma the kingdom of Gommaa was the outcome of peaceful/voluntary association of the Oromo clans so as to create a united front

²⁹ Mohammed, pp.109-110.

³⁰ Aman, p. 14; Informants: *Sh/* Kadir Hassan & *Sh/* Nasir Jemal.

³¹ Aman, p.15; Mohammed, p.110; Deressa, "Historical ...", p.36; Informants: *Sh/* Kadir & *Sh/* Nasir.

³² Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", pp. 52-66, 230; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture and ...", pp.67-70.

³³ Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", pp. 52-66, 230.

against their common foe. Therefore, it is not clear whether the kingdom of Gommaa was founded peacefully or through wars.

My informants who agreed to Guluma's view of peaceful process of state formation in Gommaa, added a new element to it, saying that before state formation, there were indeed wars between various Oromo clans who fought over scarce resources and this required the conciliatory role of Abbaa Bookee whom, they said, was a well-respected member of the Awalani clan. It was only after he, Abbaa Bookee, reconciled them that the leading members of the various clans agreed to create a common government that could enable them enjoy a fair and lawful utilization of resources. Thus, the clan leaders asked Abbaa Bookee to appoint one of his sons as a *mootii* and Abbaa Manno became the first king of Gommaa.³⁴ This means that state formation in Gommaa was sought mainly to end conflicts over resources. In other words, in Gommaa, the *mootummaa* (government) was formed to oversee the fair utilization of resources rather than creating a common front against the Omotic neighbors, as stated earlier by Guluma. For that matter, Guluma himself was indicating a similar view when he writes "At first, the decision [to form a *mootummaa*] was taken to stop the growing deterioration of the unity and strength of the clans through continued fission of the tribal groups and increased feuds over the fertile agricultural lands."³⁵ Anyhow, assuming both views (of Guluma and the informants) are right, it seems reasonable to conclude that, as the immediate cause for state formation in Gommaa, the need to end tensions over resources and enhancing the unity of the Oromo clans outweighed the threats from their Omotic neighbors.

Mohammed indicated that all the Gibe states emerged sometime after 1800, and particularly the kingdom of Gommaa was founded around 1820, a view also shared by Tesema, and Workineh.³⁶ This means that the kingdom of Gommaa had a life span of less than seventy years before its conquest by the Shawan forces in the 1880s, as we shall see in the latter sections.³⁷ However, Guluma and my informants including even those who shared Mohammed's view on the creation of the kingdom through war, disagreed with his claim above. Guluma stated that the kingdom of

³⁴ Informants: Shabuddin Mohammed and Mohammed A/Dagaa.

³⁵ Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", p.57; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", p. 70.

³⁶ Mohammed, p. 86; Tesema, "The Political Economy of", p. 84; Workineh kelbesa, *Traditional Oromo Attitudes Towards Environment* (OSSREA: Addis Ababa,2001), p.9.

³⁷ Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.155; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture, ...", p. 142.

Gommaa was founded in the middle of the eighteenth century or around 1735, a view also shared by Jaenen.³⁸ This shows a significant time gap of almost a century between the timeline suggested by Mohammed and Guluma as a formative period of the kingdom of Gommaa.

The traditions collected by Guluma, and also by the present researcher revealed a list of eight kings who ruled the kingdom for a period of nearly one hundred fifty years.³⁹ Similarly, the informants rejected Mohammed's assertion that Abbaa Manno ruled Gommaa for twenty years from ca. 1820-1840.⁴⁰ Instead, they stated that the king ruled for forty years and was succeeded by his son, Abbaa Bagibo, who ruled Gommaa for twenty five years.⁴¹ Thus, the kingdom of Gommaa seemed to be older than the one stated by Mohammed, and perhaps it might have emerged in the first half of the eighteenth century, possibly between the 1730s-1750s.

By the same token, Guluma also indicated that the kingdom of Limmu-Ennarya emerged in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (c.1785),⁴² a view that not only makes the kingdom of Gommaa the first Oromo monarchy in the Gibe region, but also nullifies the long held historical narration that Limmu Ennarya was the earliest Oromo kingdom in the region. For instance, Mohammed wrote that "Limmu-Ennarya was the first Oromo monarchy in the Gibe region owing to the fact that the Limmu Oromo were the first whose mode of production was transformed from pastoralism to one in which mixed farming was dominant."⁴³ Likewise, unless it is a genuine mistake, there seems to be two inherent problems with Guluma's statement which reads, "the Omotic kingdom of Ennarya disappeared in the early seventeenth century and in its place the Oromo monarchies of Gommaa, Limmu-Ennarya, Jimmaa, Guumaa and Geeraaa emerged in the eighteenth centuries."⁴⁴

³⁸ Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p. 66; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp. 69-79; Jaenen, Cornelius J, "The [Oromo] of East Africa, South-western Ethiopia" *Journal of Anthropology*. Vol. 12, No. 2 (University of New Mexico, 1956), p. 177.

³⁹ *Ibid*; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/* Nasir & Mohammed; see also appendix-III.

⁴⁰ Mohammed, p.110.

⁴¹ Informants: Shabuddin Mohammed, *Sh/* Nasir Jemal & Mohammed A/ Daga.

⁴² Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p. 67.

⁴³ Mohammed, pp.100-101.

⁴⁴ Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", p.80.

First, it contradicts his own and other scholars' statement that the kingdom of Ennarya resisted the Oromo incursion for more than a century until the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ Secondly, it puts the formative period of all Gibe states in the eighteenth century, something which is repudiated by recently conducted studies on the former kingdoms of Guumaa, Geeraa and Jimmaa. For instance, Ibsa claimed that the kingdom of Geeraa was founded in the 1830s; while Deressa, and Anteneh pointed that the kingdom of Guumaa emerged as a unified state in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Informants from Geeraa and Guumaa also confirmed this view.⁴⁶ Even the kingdom of Jimmaa was founded in the nineteenth century as indicated by some written sources.⁴⁷

In general, lack of unanimity of our sources didn't allow us to make a definitive conclusion as to whether the kingdom of Gommaa was founded peacefully or through war, something which indicates that studying the process of state formation in Gommaa is an unfinished business. Nevertheless, at least two conclusions can be made based on what has transpired so far. First, whatever the reasons may be, there were wars between the various Oromo clans of Gommaa on the eve of state formation. It seems that the efforts made to reconcile the warring factions might have ultimately led to the emergence of the kingdom of Gommaa through a peaceful process. Secondly, be it a *gadaa* leader or a respected member of the Awalani clan, Abbaa Bookee had either a direct or an indirect role in the rise of the kingdom of Gommaa.

1.3.2. Administrative Organization of the Kingdom of Gommaa

The Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe region have had many commonalities in their system of administration. The *mootii* (king), had supreme administrative, military and judicial authority. The kings used gold rings as the insignia of royal power and gold earrings, silver bracelets, and an umbrella as symbols of royal authority, which indicated the strong Omotic influence.⁴⁸ The Gibe kings also used other royal emblems including a special double headed or double bladed spears,

⁴⁵ Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", pp.50-52; Mohammed, pp. 47, 81.

⁴⁶ Ibsa Hurrisa, "A History of Geeraa Oromo (1830s-1974)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2014), p. 24; Deressa Bayisa, "A Historical Survey of Guumaa Oromo State, 1800-1880s" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2013), p.15; Anteneh, p.14; Informants: *Obbo* Jemal Negawoo & *Obbo* Farid A/Boor (Guumaa); *Obbo* A/Bulgu A/Booraa & *Obbo* A/Simal A/Foggii (Geeraa).

⁴⁷ Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p.41; Yonas, "A Historical", p.4; Mohammed, p.159.

⁴⁸ Mohammed, pp. 89, 93-99; Guluma, "Gommaa and", p.68; Lange, *The History.....*, pp. 28-39.

symbolizing their power. These spears were given to the kings' messengers and emissaries, locally known as *Lammii* or *ergamttuu*, when they were going out on special government mission such as delivering messages from one Gibe state to the other. Someone who holds this spear was recognized as the king's envoy, both locally and abroad.⁴⁹

Guluma rightly said that the Gibe kings didn't claim divine origin, but he wrongly remarked their recent emergence as the probable reason for them not to do so.⁵⁰ As pointed by my informants, it was rather the tenets of Islam that prevented the kings from claiming divine rights,⁵¹ a concept they could, otherwise, have easily copied from their Omotic neighbors, had it not been for Islam. Despite his supreme authority, the king of Gommaa is said to have been like any ordinary man and was available to people in public and/or accessible to the rich and poor alike. He would be there if and when anyone of his subjects wanted to contact him both for private and public affairs,⁵² which means the king's royalty was not subjected to any kind of social restrictions.

Being at the top of the political hierarchy, the *mootii* of Gommaa was assisted by councilors known as *qoppo* (council), headed by an official with the title of *abbaa qoppo* (father of solution/tactics). The *abbaa qoppo* was responsible for advising the *mootii* in making government decisions on important matters like issues of war and peace, enslavement, the imprisonment or death penalty served for criminals as well as the appointment and dismissal of officials at provincial levels. He also held some executive power.⁵³ This shows that the *Qoppo* had been a very influential force in the administration of the kingdom of Gommaa.

Regarding the kings' prerogatives, several scholars claimed that the Gibe kings had absolute power enabling them to take whatever action they wished against their officials and their subjects. They could appoint/transfer and promote/demote officials, and also confiscate the properties of their subjects or even sentence them to death.⁵⁴ However, parts of these claims seemed to be inaccurate,

⁴⁹ Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", pp.72-74, 116; Deressa, "Historical Ecology...", p.33; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p. 169; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir Hassan & Sh/ Nasir Jemal*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp.130-131.

⁵¹ Informants: *Sh/ Kadir Hassan & Sh/ Nasir Jemal*.

⁵² *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", p.130; Deressa, "Historical ...", p.30.

⁵³ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", pp.117-118; Mohammed, pp.96-97.

⁵⁴ Mohammed, p. 91; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p. 81.

at least, in the kingdom of Gommaa, where, as Guluma pointed, the king, in consultation with the *qoppo*, appoints or dismisses the *Abbaa Qoros* (provincial governors) as he deems it necessary.⁵⁵ This gives the impression that unless he got the approval of the *qoppo*, the *mootii* of Gommaa could not appoint officials of his own choice, which means he was not an absolute king. Deressa, and my informants also hold a similar view. Other than affirming Guluma's claim above, the informants also added that the only exception in this regard was Abbaa Reebuu (r.1830-1856),⁵⁶ whom we shall discuss in brief detail under the next few pages. Guluma, and my informants further added that the *qoppo* of Gommaa were able to overthrow and deport two kings who refused to accept their advice.⁵⁷ Thus, it is evident that the *qoppo* in Gommaa used to act as a check and balance against the *mootii's* power.

Although all Gibe kingdoms had established a hereditary monarchy with succession in the primogeniture line (first born), more often succession was marked by a power struggle. Due to this the death of the incumbent king, as indicated by both written and oral sources, was not made public until the ascendancy of another king. This tradition may be inherited from the former kingdom of Ennarya, where the election of a successor, as Lange stated, immediately preceded the public announcement of the death of an *Hinnario tato*,⁵⁸ meaning the king of Ennarya.

If the other sons challenged the succession of the eldest son, they were exiled to the neighboring Gibe kingdoms so as to maintain the stability of the state.⁵⁹ Here, the mechanism used by the Gibe states to avoid potential power struggle among the members of the royal family was a reminiscent of the medieval Christian kingdom of Ethiopia which is reported to have created the royal prison of Amba Gishen, where the relatives of the reigning king were detained so that they may not challenge his power.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Guluma, Gommaa and Limmu....", p.119.

⁵⁶ Deressa, "Historical", p.31; Informants: *Sh / Kadir H & Sh / Nasir Jemal*.

⁵⁷ Guluma, "Gommaa and....", p.119; Guluma, "Land,", p.142; Informants: *Sh / Kadir H & Sh / Nasir J*.

⁵⁸ Informants: *Sh / Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*; Mohammed, p. 99; Deressa, "Historical", p.30; Lange, p.47.

⁵⁹Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir Mohammed*, p. 99; Deressa, *Ibid*, p.30.

⁶⁰Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia from 1270-1527* (Oxford the Clarendon Press, 1972), pp.275-276.

The kingdom of Gommaa, like all others in the region, was organized into various administrative units such as *Qoros*, *Gandaas*, *Lagaas* and *Jigaas*. The *qoros* (provinces) were the largest administrative units governed by officials with the title of *Abbaa Qoros*. According to Deressa, “the kingdom of Gommaa had seventeen *qoros*,” out of which he mentioned nine: “Balfoo, Baqqoo, Booree, Coocee, Daalachoo, Googgaa, Kaasoo, Odanno and Seejjaa.”⁶¹ Archival sources after the 1940s not only added four more *qoros* to his list (Ginjoo, Wadawa, Qottaa, and Daaruu) but also divided Booree and Coocee into two parts with both having attributes/qualifiers- Greater/Smaller Booree/Coocee. To these the traditions added the *qoros* of Urache and Yaacii thereby bringing their number to seventeen,⁶² which means the kingdom of Gommaa had many *qoros* under its administration.

The king of Gommaa appointed the *abbaa qoros* from the predominant clans of the *qoros/provinces*, but one has to have merits such as warrior like qualities, good achievement in battle field, knowledge of public affairs and etc., to be appointed as an *abbaa qoro*.⁶³ The fact that appointment to office was based on ability and achievement rather than descent not only indicates some influence of the *gadaa* system, but also elucidates that even the king’s relatives may not be appointed if they lack the necessary leadership qualities.

The *abbaa qoro* was responsible for maintaining law and order in his province; disseminating orders from the *mootii* to the lower officials; collecting taxes, and also defending his province from enemy attack. He had also some judiciary powers to address minor cases like theft and disputes over land rights in his provinces, but big cases like murder or other violent crimes were beyond his jurisdictions.⁶⁴ In return for his services, he was rewarded (by the *mootii*) in many ways: including gifts of slaves, horses and cattle as well as piece of arable land to be cultivated by slaves.⁶⁵ The fact that the *abbaa qoros* were partly paid in land grant revealed the existence of feudal elements. The *qoros* were divided into various *Gandaas* (villages) that were governed by the *Abbaa Gandaas*

⁶¹ Guluma, “Gommaa”, pp.117-118; Deressa, “Historical Ecology”, pp.33-35; Tesema, “The Political Economy ...”, pp .97-99; Mohammed, pp. 96-97; Informants: *Sh / Kadir & Sh / Nasir*.

⁶² Informants: *Sh / Kadir & Sh / Nasir*; Aggaaro Municipality archival center -File no 93/00.

⁶³ Guluma, “Gommaa....”, pp.117-118; Deressa, “Historical”, pp.33-35; Informants: *Sh /Kadir & Sh / Nasir*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp.121-122; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*.

(village governors), who collected tribute, recruited soldiers, guarded the border of the kingdom and administered justice.⁶⁶

The local traditions, collected by Guluma and the present researcher revealed the existence of other administrative hierarchies below the *Abbaa Gandaas*. These were low-level officials like *Abbaa Lagaas* and *Abbaa Jigaas*. While the *Abbaa Lagaas* ruled over portions of a village called *Lagaas*, the *Abbaa Jigaas* governed far smaller administrative units below the *Lagaas* known as *Jigaas*.⁶⁷ This means that the *Gandaas* (villages) were further divided into smaller administrative units called *Lagaas* and *Jigaas*, which makes the *Abbaa Jigaas*, the lowest level of officials. All of these low level officials were recruited by the *Abbaa Gandaas*, and they aid him by performing various kinds of duties. For instance, the *Abbaa Lagaas* assist the *Abbaa Gandaas* in the performance of his official obligation in his *gandaa*, communicating information from the court to the community. He, along with the *Abbaa Jigaas*, also heralds the death of someone, organize funeral ceremony and supervise the digging of graves. Other low-level officials such as the *Abbaa Waamee* (caller) and *Abbaa Labsee* (announcer) proclaim and execute the orders that came from *Abbaa Gandaa*.⁶⁸ Thus, next to the *mootii*, the *qoppo*, *Abbaa Qoros*, *Abbaa Gandaas*, *Abbaa Lagaas* and *Abbaa Jigaas* filled the ladder of the administrative hierarchy in the kingdom of Gommaa.

The other officials in all Gibe states, which performed various state functions but didn't have any specific territorial jurisdiction, were the *Abbaa Duula* (war leader); *Abbaa Mizaan* (a treasurer and minister of foreign affairs); the *Abbaa Keellaas* (fathers of the gate and defense) who served as the commanders of the guards at each gate in state defenses; the *Abbaa Daangoo*, (an immigration chief who controlled those entering and leaving the country); *Abbaa Funyoos* ("the father the of rope," also known as *Abbaa Buusii* or tax judges), who were responsible for counting the house holders, imposing and collecting tributes, and serving as messengers or intermediaries between higher officials like *Abbaa Qoros* and the king; the *Lammii (ergamttuu)*, the king's envoy and also ambassadors who had diplomatic impunity while in office and perform various diplomatic activities including negotiating peace after the end of hostilities; and the *Abbaa*

⁶⁶ Guluma, "Gommaa....", pp.121-122; Workineh, p.9.

⁶⁷ Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*; Guluma, "Gommaa....", pp.123-124; Deressa, "Historical ...", pp.32-33.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa....", pp.123-124; Deressa, "Historical ...", pp.32-33.

Masaraa (father of the palace, the king's chief of staff responsible for maintaining and funding all financial expenses in the palace).⁶⁹

Finally, there were free farmers, *qubsiissa* (tenants), *ogeesaa* (artisans), and slaves who were at the bottom list of the social pyramid, and it was their labor and produce that helped maintain the social pyramid.⁷⁰ Presumably, the political organization of the Gibe states had also a social dimension and the whole system was sustained by the labor of the free peasants and slaves.

1.3.3. Foreign Relations and Defense System of the Kingdom of Gommaa

According to my informants and Guluma, Geeraa was the only state of the region with which the kingdom of Gommaa had peaceful relations for a long time.⁷¹ Gommaa's relationship with Limmu was also relatively peaceful, except few incidents of conflicts between them. This was due to the strategic location of Gommaa on the trade routes connecting Limmu-Ennarya with Kafa. Thus, when hostility occurred between Jimmaa and Limmu, the latter used the route through Gommaa and Geeraa as an alternative means to communicate with kafa. However, in the 1830s, Abbaa Bagibo of Limmu is said to have proposed the cooperation of the other Gibe states to partition Gommaa among themselves, on the pretext that its king, [Abbaa Raagoo (r.1805-1830)] had insulted him. But Abbaa Bagibo's real intention was to control the trade route passing through Gommaa. The people of Gommaa averted war by exiling their king to Geeraa and enthroned another king. The new king was able to negotiate peace with Limmu-Ennarya.⁷² Nevertheless, the oral traditions told a different story and indeed the four Gibe states came to conquer Gommaa, forcing the dignitaries to remove the king from power and then invaded its territory, but all of them were beaten by the immense sacrifice of the people of Gommaa.⁷³ At another time the two states fought each other but the war ended with a victory for Gommaa.⁷⁴

However, both oral and written sources made it abundantly clear that the most serious threat to Gommaa's survival came from the kingdom of Jimmaa which made all efforts to its ability to

⁶⁹Informants: *Sh/Kadir & Sh/Nasir*; Workineh, p.9; Deressa, "Historical", pp.32-33.

⁷⁰ Mohammed, pp.96-97; Asefa, *Oromia & Ethiopia....*, p. 23; Informants: *Sh/Kadir & Sh/Nasir*.

⁷¹ Guluma, "Gomma...:", p. 86; Informants: Misku Abbaa Booqaa, Tadelech C & Hindii Kamal.

⁷² Guluma, "Gomma...:", p. 78.

⁷³ Informants: Misku A/Booqaa, Tadelech cimdeessaa & Hindii Kamal; Endalu, p.11.

⁷⁴ Guluma, "Gomma...:", pp. 78-79.

control Gommaa and thereby dominate the trade routes passing through its territory.⁷⁵ The story of Gommaa's hostile relationship with Jimmaa was largely talked about in the local traditions than in written documents. This is evident from the story of the king of Gommaa named Abbaa Bagibo (r. c 1775-1805), who, being on his death bed, is reported to have said the following to his people:

*'Gaafa'n du'e Abbaa koo biratti nan qabarinaa bakki qabarii kootii Bulbuloo akka ta'un barbaada. Maalif jennaan Jimmaa daangaa ballifachuuf nutti duulaa waan jiruuf, yoo hammam as siqullee, qabarii koo tarkaanfatee waan hin deemneef jennaan qabriinkoo kan abbaa kootii bira taa'ee kabajamuu irraa BulBulootti Daangaa ta'ee biyyaa ha'eegu' jechuun waan dhaammataniif, Bulbuloo bakka amma bataskaanni Gabreelii argamu sanatti qabaramani.'*⁷⁶

'When I die don't bury me beside my father. I want my cemetery to be in Bulbuloo. Because Jimmaa was expanding its territory at our expense. But no matter how much it (Jimmaa) got closer to us, I am sure it won't bypass my graveyard and take our territory. Thus, instead of being buried beside my father and get venerated/honored, I would rather prefer my dead body to lie at Bulbuloo and defend the boundary of our kingdom.' Thus, he was buried in Bulbuloo, at a place where the church of St-Gabriel is standing.

The significance of the story lies in that it illuminates the hostile relations between the two kingdoms, and also symbolizes the strong conviction of the rulers and the people that one may not cross the graveyard of another to take what belongs to the deceased person. It also tells that, even though Gommaa's boundary extends to Geembee, the ruler wanted Bulbuloo to be the last line of defense of his kingdom. This brings us to the defensive system of the Gibe states. Oral and written sources attested the existence of a 'no-man's' land or buffer zone called *moggaa* in between each Gibe state, where each kingdom built its own defense system by digging ditches (*bero*).⁷⁷

The four *Keellaas*/gates, connecting the kingdom of Gommaa with its neighbors were protected by the state's cavalry army commanded by titled officials known as *Abbaa keellaas*, keeper of the gates. Unseen guards or invisible spies locally known as *gaadduu/qeetoo* on the frontiers of each state also monitored the entry and exit of people to and fro the kingdom and report to the authorities if they found out any unusual circumstances around the border areas. The *kellaa* on the frontier with Jimmaa was the most guarded of all while the one with Geeraa was almost left

⁷⁵ Guluma, "Gommaa...", pp. 84-86; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii K.

⁷⁶ *Wajjira Aadaa fiAggaaroo*, p.2; Informants: Shabuddin, Sh/ Nasir & Mohammed.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", pp.125-126; Mohammed, p. 97; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy...*, p. 169; Deressa, "Historical Ecology...", p.32; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii K.

open,⁷⁸ something revealing the hostile and peaceful relations Gommaa had with Jimmaa and Geeraa respectively.

Whenever an enemy approach was detected, a signal for war was made by beating a special drum, *gonno*, used only for this purpose. In Gommaa, Geeraa and Jimmaa, the signal for war was given by titled officials known as *Abbaa gonno*, and/or *Abbaa Mallattoo* in Guumaa and Limmu. Once that signal was made, the call for arms was transmitted to everybody in the kingdom within a short period. All able bodied persons, except the elderly, the bee keepers, civet cat hunters, and the *wattaa* (hunters and foragers), were expected to defend the kingdom and failure to do so may result in severe punishment including the confiscation of property and enslavement of the entire family.⁷⁹ Traditional weapons such as spears, shields and even knives were among the main types of weapons used by the army of the Gibe states,⁸⁰ which depicted their vulnerable position in the face of an adversary armed with modern weapons.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the kingdom of Gommaa was ruled by its most famous king, Abbaa Reebuu (r. 1830-1856), who is said to have consolidated the kingdom through his many innovative measures such as the construction of roads that connected the capital, Sayyoo, with the borderlands so as to facilitate communication within the kingdom and to strengthen its border defense.⁸¹ The local traditions portrayed Abbaa Reebuu as a competent ruler and a strong champion of Islam and Islamic education. His road construction as well as his enthusiasm and encouragement for the spread of Islam in Gommaa were the two most important legacies of Abbaa Reebuu. He not only encouraged trade and cultivation of coffee, but also strengthened the defense of Gommaa by effecting the construction of deep and impregnable ditches in strategically important places including Geembee. He was also remembered for abolishing the traditional and inhumane practice of enslaving the king's subjects who were accused of crimes like thefts as well as political dissensions.⁸² Yet, the traditions revealed that Abbaa Reebuu had

⁷⁸ Guluma, "Gommaa ...", pp.125; Deressa, "Historical", pp.32-33; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 72-73; Deressa, "Historical....", pp.32-33; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.74; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

⁸¹ Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", pp. 84-85.

⁸² *Ibid*; *Waajira Aadaa fi Tuuriizimii Aggaaro*, p.3; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii Kemal.

unwittingly contributed to enslavement of people through one of his decrees which reads as follows:

*'Namni umuriin isaa waggaa 8-80 kan jiru hundi hojii misooma–mootummatti akka hirmaatu. Akkasumas daangaa fi nageenya biyyaa eeguudhaaf akka boobba'u. Namni hojii misoomaas ta'e eegumsaa biyyaa irraatti hin boobbaanee garba ta'a, warri isaas kan midhaan daaktuu taati,' jechuun labsii baasani. Nammoonni hojii hinjaallanee waan turaniif, labsii isaan baasani kun Gommaan keessatti Nammoonni akka gabromanif sababa ta'e ture.'*⁸³

'Any person between the age of 8-80 should take part in the government's development activities and also help in ensuring the peace of the kingdom and defend its boundary. He who refused to do so will be enslaved and his wife will be forced to grind cereals and make flour.' Since there were lazy people who didn't like to do things, the decree of Abbaa Reebuu became a pretext to enslave people in Gommaa.

Furthermore, the traditions say that Abbaa Reebuu had reserved for himself, some sort of personal/veto power by which he could either enforce his decision despite the opposition from the *qoppo*, or override the one made by the *qoppo*. For instance, when he ordered the members of the council to enforce his decision to get the people plant coffee on their private lands, members of the *qoppo* are said to have used various excuses not to execute his order. Abbaa Reebuu who recognized that the season for planting coffee was running out, forcefully effected his above stated decree, which, as pointed by Guluma, was enforced by intimidating members of the *qoppo* with confiscation of their lands and loss of their positions in the kingdom.⁸⁴

In 1859, the king of Jimmaa called Abbaa Reebuu (r.1854-59) set out to annex Gommaa. When he advanced towards Gommaa expecting easy victory, he was met by the combined forces of the other four Gibe states which allied against him. Yet, he engaged in fighting with them and was finally killed at the hands of one of his own men who scarified him so as to make peace with the four kingdoms. He was succeeded by an old man named Abbaa Bookaa (r.1859-1861), a brother of Abbaa Jifaar I, who reconciled with the four Gibe kings.⁸⁵

⁸³ *Waaajira Aadaa fi Tuuriizimii....*, p.3; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii Kemal.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp.3-4; Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", pp.109-110.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*; Lewis, *An Oromo...*, pp.42-43; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

⁸⁶Guluma, "Land, Agriculture ...", pp.111-112; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

However, in the 1870s, Jimmaa made a very shrewd move that enabled her to acquire the important coffee forest of Geembee from Gommaa. Even though, Geembee had once been the property of Gommaa, it was an unsettled frontier land (*moggaa*) between Gommaa and Jimmaa. Abbaa Gomol, the king of Jimmaa, got his subjects build houses on the land of Geembee. The houses were built at a night time by using old building materials so as to give the houses an image of old settlements. When the houses were discovered, Gommaa asked Jimmaa to dismantle them but the latter refused to relinquish. The rulers of the other three Gibe states who intervened as mediators turned down Gommaa's claim of ownership and decided that the land should remain under Jimmaa's control, saying that 'without a settlement built on it, land belongs to God.'⁸⁶ In other words, Gommaa's claim was made invalid given that it had no settlement built on the land. In the 1870s Jimmaa, emerged as the most important political entity in the region and was able to attract more merchants and thereafter, Gommaa was no more a target of Jimmaa's aggression.⁸⁷

1.4. Economic History of Gommaa Oromo up to the 1880s

1.4.1. Land Tenure System

The Oromo of the Gibe region had a communal land holding system based on the *qabiyyee* institution. *Qabiyyee* (possession) was a piece of land claimed by the first occupants of a new land, whose rights to the land was fully recognized by the late comers. The *qabiyyee* land and its resources belonged to the clan as a whole, and conflict over the land was settled by clan assembly.⁸⁸ This means, the *qabiyyee* land was the exclusive possession of the early Oromo settlers of the Gibe region and was communally owned and used by the occupying clan. The late coming Oromo clans could either expand into unoccupied lands and secure their own *qabiyyee* or settle on the *qabiyyee* holders' land as *qubsiisaa* (settlers, tenant) on condition that they accept any obligations imposed up on them by the *abbaa lafaas* (landowners).⁸⁹

Presumably, the emergence of *qubsiisaa* as a land holding system had brought disparity in the size of land possessed by the first settlers and late comers, which in turn seemed to have altered their social relations. The problem was further aggravated by the Maccaa traditional practice of

⁸⁶Guluma, "Land, Agriculture ...", pp.111-112; Informants: Misku, Tadelech & Hindii.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Guluma, "Gommaa ...", pp.39-44,131-134; Guluma, "Land,", p. 62; Mohammed, pp. 118-124.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Land.....", pp.63-64; Mohammed, pp. 118-124; Lewis, *An Oromo.....*, p.50.

primogeniture (first born) in which the eldest son (*angafaa*) of a family inherited the biggest portion or two-thirds of his father's land and cattle, and the second son was given two-thirds of what was left, and the situation goes on and on until nothing was left to be given. This excluded the junior sons and female members of the family from inheritances of their fathers' property and thus, they were forced either to work for their eldest brother or if they refused, they should move to distant places and claim unoccupied land. In the later days, with an increase in population, the *qabiyyee* institution became ineffective in settling disputes over land ownership between individual and/or group claims.⁹⁰ Seemingly, the combined effect of Oromo inheritance tradition, shortage of agricultural and pasture lands led to further dispersion of Oromo clans in search of vacant land. Consequently, at their Hulle assembly, the Jimmaa Oromo devised new sets of rules to legalize the ownership of land. Accordingly, the Hulle assembly recognized the right of the *qabiyyee* holders and decided that women, craftsmen and *naggadee* would not have the same right as that of the descendants of the early *qabiyyee* holders.⁹¹ Apparently, the Hulle assembly indicated a slow but real shift to private ownership of land in contrast to the *gadaa* values.

The rise in human and cattle population as well as the shift in Oromo mode of life to sedentary agricultural economy resulted in more land use. This, coupled with the advent of private ownership of land intensified the competitions and hostilities and even open wars among the various Oromo clans of the Gibe region. In these wars however, the victors spared the *maasii* (cultivated land) of the vanquished, and instead expropriated their extensive non-cultivated lands. This enabled the victors to own vast land.⁹² Thus, the defeated groups were restricted to their *maasii* which apparently aggravated the economic stratification.

Following the emergence of the Gibe states, the first rulers claimed the ownership of all the unoccupied forest and pasture lands and thus, through popular consent or through force, they took over large tracts of lands. In addition to this, the Gibe kings also appropriated the lands of those whom they accused of committing crimes, this in turn made them the biggest landowners (*Abbaa*

⁹⁰Guluma, "Gommaa ...", pp.39-44; Tesema, "The Political....", pp.44-46, 55; Deressa, "Agro-Ecological....", p.12.

⁹¹ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Land.....", pp. 63-64; Tesema, "The Political....", pp.44,57; Deressa, "Historical...", p.14.

⁹²*Ibid*, p.41; Guluma, "Land.....", p. 61; Mohammed, pp. 119-121; Tesema, "The Political....", pp. 44-46, 55.

lafaas) in the region. The kings settled their slaves and other landless people on their vast lands.⁹³ This is also confirmed by my informants who reported that the *mootii* of Gommaa was the biggest landowner (*Abbaa lafaa*) to be followed by the nobility, and the free peasants with their plots of lands. The latter were required to work on the extensive lands of the kings and also join the king's army in times of war. Below the free peasants were the *qubsiisaa* (late arrivals/tenants) who were required to provide labor and services to their landlords, and also perform other tasks similar to the free peasants. The *qubsiisaa* who lived on king's land provided him free labor services twice a week. At the lowest level, there were slaves who were the property of wealthy landowners on whose land they worked and lived. The slaves accomplished the major part of the work on the royal estates. Thus, free peasants, tenants (*qubsiisaa*), and slaves work on the royal estates, and it was their labor and produce that helped maintain the social pyramid.⁹⁴ This illustrates the high level of class differentiation between the wealthy minority and the majority poorer classes of the region.

1.4.2. Agriculture

1.4.2.1. Farming and Animal Rearing

The Gibe region is said to be naturally endowed by a very fertile soil, an ideal climate and rich water resources favorable for agriculture. It is said that the kingdom of Gommaa was the smallest of all the Gibe states but it occupied agriculturally very rich land that grows all kinds of crops at a relatively limited cost or without toiling too much. Thus, the foundation of economy of Oromo of Gommaa since earlier times, seemed to have been agriculture. The mid highland (*badda daree/Woinadagä*) is the most dominant agricultural area in Gommaa district. The main crops produced in the district are cereals such as maize, *teff* (*Eragrostis teff*), sorghum, *enset* (*Ensete ventricosum*), barley, finger millet, cotton, oil seeds, peppers, varieties of beans and peas, coffee, lemons, and vegetables. Moreover, *caat/khat*, fruits, avocados and spices are also among the most important crops that are widely cultivated in Gommaa district both in the past and present. But grain and coffee were and, still are the chief sources of Gommaa's agricultural wealth.⁹⁵

⁹³ Guluma, "Gommaa...", p.133; Mohammed, pp. 119-121; Informants: Fikru Hordofa & Ahmed A/Garo.

⁹⁴ Mohammed, pp. 121-124, 96-97; Informants: Fikru Hordofa & Ahmed A/Garo.

⁹⁵ Mohammed, pp. 116, 144; Guluma, "Gommaa...", p. 47; Agricultural Office of Gommaa *woredä*.

The agricultural system in Gommaa is predominantly subsistence oriented and is mainly rainfall dependent except in few parts of the district closer to rivers that are also using irrigation. The people of the area use ox- plough technology. My informants reported that the king of Gommaa and other officials of the royal *masaraa* (palace) obtained most of their provisions from the vast royal estate. The royal estate was worked up on by the free peasants and the *qubsiisaa*, and slaves who produced various kinds of food crops, cash crops, as well as animal husbandry.⁹⁶

Both Endalu and my informants attest the existence of two cropping seasons, for food crops, in Gommaa. The first is the one in which the local people cultivate crops such as maize, sorghum and *teff* around their homesteads during the rainy season. The other cropping season is called *bone* (from *bona*, an Oromo word-dry season). Maize, tomatoes, potatoes and other vegetables are produced during the dry season mainly by using irrigation and/or in swampy areas.⁹⁷

Before talking about cattle rearing, it is important to discuss the production of coffee, the major cash crop in Gommaa and in the entire Gibe region. It is said that Gommaa was a place that was once full of wild coffee forests even before the people didn't fully realize the economic significance of the crop.⁹⁸ Gommaa is said to be the largest coffee producing district in the Gibe region as well as one of the highest coffee producing areas in the country.⁹⁹

The local traditions considered Coocee as the birth place of coffee. According to the traditions, a legendary shepherd named Kalid discovered coffee around 1000 years ago on a small hill called *kattaa Mudhugaa* in Coocee Guddaa *qebele* of Gommaa district. The government of Oromia regional state has recognized Coocee as the birth place of coffee Arabica, and built a coffee museum in Coocee, at *Kattaa Mudhugaa* on the very spot that the herder Kalid is believed to have founded his goats behaving in an unusual manner presumably after eating the bright red bean that grew in the forest, an incident that led to the discovery of coffee.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Informants: Fikru Hordofa & Ahmed A/G; Agricultural Office of Gommaa *woredä*.

⁹⁷ Endalu, p.23; Informants: Fikru Hordofa & Ahmed A/Garo.

⁹⁸ Guluma, "Land, Agriculture ...", p.91; Informants: Fikru A & Hafiz A/G.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.7; Guluma, "Gommaa", pp. 49-50 & 84; Mohammed, p.116.

¹⁰⁰ Informants: Fikru Abdissa, Hafiz A/Giddii, Alemayo Tolasa & Ahmed A/Garo.

However, the Oromia regional government's recognition of Coocee as the origin of coffee is being strongly contested by the state and government of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPR), specifically the Kafa Zone which made a similar claim and built a coffee museum in its capital at Bonga, as a part of its efforts in seeking recognition both at national and international levels.¹⁰¹ Mohammed's notes seemed to have indirectly buttressed kafa's counter claim against Gommaa. He argued that coffee did not naturally grow in Gommaa, Jimmaa and Guumaa, and as a result the rulers of these kingdoms made it a part of their government policy not only to encourage their peasants to plant coffee, but also they themselves were involved in coffee production on their extensive plantations.¹⁰² Be it Coocee or Kafa, it seems undisputable that coffee originated in the southwestern part of Ethiopia.

The people of Gommaa used to collect coffee beans from the wild forests, when their king named Abbaa Reebuu (r. 1830-1856) ordered everyone to plant coffee on his private lands. He also urged those who built their houses beside the street/ highway to plant coffee in front of their houses. On the order of their king, the people of Gommaa planted coffee on their private lands and the outcome was that Gommaa became one of the leading coffee producers in the region.¹⁰³

Two things can be said here: first Abbaa Reebuu was the king of Gommaa who, a century and a half ago, ordered the formal cultivation of coffee in the kingdom; and secondly, it was the Gibe kings, not the land owners or the peasants, that took the lead in the cultivation of coffee. With more detail on coffee production coming under chapter three, lets shift our attention to cattle rearing, which, as indicated by Mohammed, was the second major economic activity in the Gibe region after farming. It was very widely practiced both as source of wealth and part of the Oromo cultural heritage. Mohammed further described that animals were reared in the Gibe region for various

¹⁰¹ Informants: Fikru Abdissa, Hafiz A/Giddii, Alemayo Tolasa & Ahmed A/Garo; See Appendix-IV.

¹⁰² Mohammed, pp.121-122.

¹⁰³ Informants: Alemayo & Ahmed A/G; *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, p.3; Guluma, "Land,,," p.97; Guluma, "Markets, Local Traders and Long-Distance Merchants in Southwestern Ethiopia during the Nineteen Century" (Proceeding of the 8th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, A.A.U Press 1987), p. 383; Mohammed, p.115.

purposes: Oxen for ploughing, cows for milk, and goats and sheep for meat which constituted the wealth of the local peasants.¹⁰⁴

There were areas of grass lands in Gommaa which supported a large cattle population and enabled the peasants to raise cattle, sheep, goats, horses, mules and donkeys. According to Agricultural Office of Gommaa *woredä*, currently dairy and poultry production, animal fattening, sheep and goat production are also widely practiced in the *woredä*.¹⁰⁵

1.4.2.2. Bee-keeping and Civet Cats/Musk

The other vital branch agricultural activity performed by the Oromo of the Gibe region including Gommaa, is said to be bee keeping and/or production of honey. Honey had a high demand mainly in the royal *masaraa* (palace) where it is said to have been consumed by the *mootiis* and dignitaries both as food and also used for the preparation of the alcoholic drink locally known as *Daadhii*.¹⁰⁶ According to informants, honey was and, still is produced twice a year based on seasonal cycling of flowering plants after which the types of honey are identified as: *Damma Tuufoo* and *Damma Eebicha*. The former is produced when yellowish flowers called *tuufoo* bloom in the months of October to mid-December, and is used both for personal consumption and also for sale. *Damma Eebicha* is named after a plant called *Eebicha* which has bitter tastes and aromatic flower. It is regularly produced during the dry seasons from January to May. It was and, still is the most famous of all types of honey produced in the Gibe region. Bee keeping was also the sources of *gagaa* (wax) which was largely used for the purpose of lighting the royal *masaraa*.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the honey produced by the ordinary people was used for personal consumption and for sale, whereas, the one produced on the royal estate was consumed in the *masaraa*.

Musk is said to be the other product of the Gibe region which was produced from civet cats. The Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe region including Gommaa were the sources of musk. Individual civet cat hunters and the royal estates were involved in the production of musk. The civet cat farms were expensive to maintain, but for the kings, who maintained civet cat farms in the royal estates, it was

¹⁰⁴ Mohammed, p. 129.

¹⁰⁵ Informants: Fikru Abdisa & Hafiz A/Giddii; Agricultural Office of Gommaa district, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*; Mohammed, pp.117-118; Deressa, "Historical Ecology and....", p.185.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*; Mohammed, p.117.

a very profitable business.¹⁰⁸ The civet cats were captured from the dense forest in the region, kept in cages and regularly fed. Once they were domesticated, they become the source of the precious trade material, the musk, collected from the hidden part of their body every eight days or every fifteen days. The collected musk was then put into horns and sold to the caravan merchants. Musk was also used by the local people of the Gibe region for its medicinal value. Elders said that until recently there were wealthy individuals who were engaged in civet cat farming in their compounds and produced musk.¹⁰⁹

1.4.3. Handicraft Technology/Local Industry

Oral and written sources demonstrated that handicraft technology/ local industry was one of the economic activities of the Gommaa Oromo though its role is limited when compared with the other sectors.¹¹⁰ The Oromo term used as the collective name of artisans and craftsmen is *ogeeyyii* or *ogeessaa* (skilled ones) comprising various occupational groups such as blacksmiths (*tumtuu*), carpenters and tanners (*faaqii/ duugduu*), potters (*fugaa*), beehive makers and bee keepers (*gaagurtuu*), basket makers (*hodhitu/ dhoftuu*), and the hunters and foragers (*wattaa*). They were organized according to their respective professions and each had its own leader or chief who is said to be responsible for overseeing that each artisan had contributed his time and/or product for the king. For instance, the chief of the potters was called the *Abbaa qoro fuugaa*, while the chief of the black smiths was known as the *Abbaa qoro tumtuu*.¹¹¹

The black smiths in Gommaa were engaged in making agricultural and household implements like sickles (*haamtuu*), *maarashaa* (ploughshare), knife (*billaa*), axes (*qottoo*), spears (*eeboo*), swords (*goraadee*), *luugama* (bridle or the metal part of harness for horses and mules), and various kinds of jewels and/or Ornaments. The tanners/*faaqii/duugduu* engaged in leather works produced *gaachana* (shield) and *alngaa* (whips) out of Buffalo hides, *qalqalloo* (honey and/or butter container), *kophee* (shoes), *Itillee* (bed sheets), *Kallee doogaa/Sijaajaa-* (prayer mats), *Siree*

¹⁰⁸ Informants: Fikru Abdisa & Hafiz A/Giddii; Mohammed, p.123; Dheressa, "Historical ...", p.182.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*; Mohammed, *Ibid*; Dheressa, *Ibid*, p. 182.

¹¹⁰ Mohammed, p.130; Informants: A/Nagaa A/J, A/Milkii A/Diko & A/Macaa A/Raagoo.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*; Lambert. Bartels, *Oromo Religion, Myth and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia. An Attempt to Understand* (Berlin, Dietrich, 1983), p.182; Deressa, "Historical....", p.127; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.127; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p. 97; Informants: A/Nagaa A/J, A/Milkii A/D & A/Macaa A/R.

(bed), *Makkaddaa* (pillow) *Qabattoo* (belt). They also produce a long leather strip called *teepha* (rope), mostly used for tying goods on the back of pack animals.¹¹²

The weavers (*Shammanee/woyyaa dhooftuu*) produced cloths of various kinds such as *Bullukoo/gaabii* a large and thick rectangular sheet/ cloth that is often used as a traditional cloth mainly for older men; *wandaboo*/ a loose dress for older women; *Sabbata* (ribbon) a narrow and long belt which older women used to tie around their waist, and sometimes used as a money pocket, *Qomee* (robes and cloaks) mainly for religious leaders mostly during prayers/special ceremonies. The beehive makers (*gaagurtuu*), produced *gaagura*/ honey barrels, a cylindrical object made of bark, bamboo, and hung in trees. In Gommaa, pottery as an occupation is the exclusive domain of women who use *suphee* (clay soil) to produce various kinds of household utensils such as *xuwwee* (cooking ware), *eelee* (a flat and round shaped clay griddle used for baking *injera/qixxaa*), *Jabanaa* (kettle), *shiinii* (cups), and *Uuroo/okkotee* (water jar).¹¹³

The women basket makers (*dhoftuu*) also used tainted grass called *migira* and produced *gundoo* (plate like utensil made from grass), *mosoobii* (plate like material made from grass and used to preserve bread, and also various kinds of colorful and eye-catching furniture like *mudaay* which, in most cases, are used for their aesthetic/decorative value than their services in households. The ability to make such furniture is often regarded as a quality of woman-hood/skillful women, potentially getting a good husband.¹¹⁴ Basket making is perhaps the only crafts which is regarded with a high esteem among the local community. Despite playing indispensable role in the economy of the former Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe region, the *ogeeyyii* were ostracized by both the nobility and the rest of the population,¹¹⁵ something that seemed to have contributed to the less development of the craft industry.

1.4.4. Trade

Mohammed illustrated that the Gibe region was one of the major trading centers with which the medieval Christian kingdom was trading since the time of Yikuno Amlak. Although the trade of

¹¹² Informants: A/Nagaa A/Joobir, A/Milkii A/Dikoo &A/Macaa A/Raagoo.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Informants: Tadelech Cimdeesaa & Hindii Kamal.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the region was briefly disrupted during the Oromo expansion, it resumed after they settled in the region and embarked on mixed farming. Thereafter, the Oromo needed the market centers to exchange their agricultural and animal products for other necessary commodities such of the caravan traders, and therefore, they began to give protections to the market centers, caravan traders, and trade routes. Following the emergence of the Gibe monarchies, the leaders of these states gave a significant attention to the trade of the region which became one of their chief sources of income.¹¹⁶ It appears that mutual economic interests of the Gibe rulers and the caravan merchants visiting the Gibe region necessitated the smooth conduct of the trade and thereby its revival.

The long distance trade of the Ethiopian region was dominated by the *Jabarti*, the Muslim traders from the northern Ethiopian region, who linked the peoples of the Gibe region and the northern regions together for centuries. By intensifying their trade with Limmu-Ennarya, the *Jabarti* traders are said to have unwittingly contributed to the emergence of their Oromo counterparts and rivals in the Gibe region-the *Afkaalaa*, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁷ However, while the *Jabarti* traders visited the region only once or twice a year due to the rainy season, the *Afkaalaa*, regardless of the weather conditions, were engaged in brisk trades all the year round in the Gibe region, linking important market centers of the surrounding areas with local and inaccessible markets.¹¹⁸ Thus, it clear that the *Afkaalaas* were busy all the year round in the trade of the Gibe region.

Despite the crucial importance of the caravan trade to the region's economy, however, the free flow of the trade was sometimes affected by security problems, mainly caused by the constant war fought among the Oromo states themselves, and also against other neighboring peoples. Yet, the trade could revive by the good will and protection of kings since it was the chief source of income to consolidate their power.¹¹⁹ Thus, it is possible to conclude that the success and/or failure of the trade of the region may be impacted by the attitude of the kings towards the trade.

¹¹⁶ Mohammed, p. 133-134.

¹¹⁷ Donald. N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of Multi-ethnic society* (Second Edition Chicago and London, 2000), p. 42; Mohammed, pp. 134-139; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp. 113-116.

¹¹⁸ Mohammed, pp. 134-139; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp. 113-116.

¹¹⁹ Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu....", pp.70-71, 98.

The caravan merchants were expected to offer gifts to the kings in return for the kings' protection. The merchants used to provide gifts to the kings of Gommaa on two different occasions. First, when they arrived in Gommaa, the king welcomed them and provide them with camping sites in the merchant village, closer to the *masaraa*. The merchants reciprocated by providing the kings with gifts locally known as *harkafuudhaa*, literary meaning greetings through shaking hands, but denoting that the merchants greeted the kings with their hands full of gifts. Secondly, the merchants offered special gifts, locally known as *gumata*, to the kings of Gommaa at the time of important religious or cultural festivities at the royal palace.¹²⁰ This means that the Gibe kings and the caravan merchants had a mutual commercial interests which seemed to be strengthened through the investment made by both sides.

In addition to the kings' protection, the merchants organized themselves into groups and appointed their leaders known as *Nagadras* (head of merchants). They carried firearms for defensive purpose against burglars and/or bandits.¹²¹ This depicted that the merchants themselves had their own mechanisms of overcoming the various kinds of security problems, though it seemed that their safety could not have been ensured without the good will of the people through whose lands they passed.

All trading activities in the Gibe region were highly organized and under the close supervision of the kings and their officials such as the *Abbaa Mizaan* (father of the balance or chief of the treasury), *Abbaa Keellaa* (father of the gate) and *Abbaa Gabaa* (father of the market).¹²² Among them, *Abbaa Miizaan* was the most influential official who led the whole business of trade in each state of the region and hence, the appointment of someone to the office was based on certain criteria including knowledge of trade and experience in business matters, organizational capacity, and the ability to handle traders and deal with their problems. Thus, the *Abbaa Miizaan* was appointed by the king only from among successful and able traders. In addition to leading the whole business of trade in each state, the *Abbaa Miizaan* had also the combined functions of treasurer and minister for foreign affairs. He supervised the king's treasury, accounts, store houses, private domains and royal workshops. As a foreign minister, he was also responsible for relations with foreigners and

¹²⁰ Informants: A/Nagaa A/J, A/Milkii A/D & A/Macaa A/R; Mohammed, p.145.

¹²¹ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa....", pp. 98-100; Guluma, "Land,", p.117.

¹²² Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu....", pp. 143-145; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture and ...", p.124.

foreign merchants and he supervised the markets and merchant villages. Under him, there were two groups of officials who were entrusted with maintaining law and order in the market places and collecting customs dues at the entrance gates. These business officials were the *Abbaa Gabaa* (father of the market) and *Abbaa Keellaa* (father of the gate). The *Abbaa Gabaas* had many responsibilities: maintaining peace and stability of the market places and collecting market fees/duties for the king; allocating places, in the market, to the merchants where they could display and sell their products; assigning different sections of the markets to different trade items and also restructuring these sections based on the need of the day. The *Abbaa Gabaa* also served, on a market day, as policeman, judge and governor. He also addressed all forms of criminal acts in the market places including thefts, settled disputes and impose money fines on the culprits.¹²³

The *Abbaa Keellaa* was the father/keeper of the gate who mostly served as a guardian of the kingdom. He was responsible for counting and inspecting the incoming and outgoing merchants and their commodities, as well as collecting customs from them.¹²⁴ The local traditions revealed that *Abbaa Keellaas* were stationed at all of the four *Keellaas*/entry and exit gates linking the kingdom of Gommaa with the other Gibe states. On market days, the *Abbaa Kellaas* in Gommaa used to sit on at least a three meters high seat locally known as *Siree Abbaa Kellaa*, bed of the father of the gate. The height of his seat was aimed at enabling him to see every merchants and commodities entering into and going out of Gommaa and thereby levy and extract tax from them.¹²⁵

1.4.4.1. Trade Routes, Items of Trade, and Mediums of Exchanges

Mohammed's account revealed that all trade routes in the Gibe region, led to Saqqaa, the capital of Limmu Ennarya. According to him, "a number of routes ran from Saqqaa to Jimmaa, Geeraa, Gommaa, and Guumaa, along which the various products of these countries were brought to the commercial capitals of the Gibe region."¹²⁶ For instance, the main trade routes from Gambootaa in Guumaa and Challa in Geeraa passed through Sayyoo, the capital and main commercial center of Gommaa. The most important route from Saqqaa to Bongaa in kafa passed through Gommaa and Geeraa. The main trade route on the western directions to Ilu-Abbaa Booraa and Wallaga also

¹²³ Guluma, "Gommaa ...", pp.143-145; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture ...", pp.124-129; Mohammed, p.144; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*.

¹²⁴ Informants: *Ibid*; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy...*, pp.95-96; Mohammed, p. 145.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ Mohammed, pp. 136-137.

passed through Gommaa.¹²⁷ This demonstrates that the strategic location of Gommaa had enabled it to enjoy a high level of income from the trade routes coming from different directions.

In the nineteenth century trade, the major export items of the Gibe region included ivory, slaves, musk, gold and coffee. Among these products, slaves were the most important items of trade by the middle of the nineteenth century, and hence it is independently and briefly discussed under separate section below. The flow of these trade items from the source to the coast was facilitated by the *Jabartii*, long distance traders and the *Afkaalaas* (local traders). Sources indicated that the gold trade in the Gibe region was entirely monopolized by the rulers, and hence, the common people were excluded from the possession of gold let alone trading in it. In addition, the Gibe kings also dominated the trade in ivory, precious skins etc., though the wealthy class were also involved in musk trade.¹²⁸ Presumably, their monopoly over the trade of precious items coupled with their income from trade tax and land tribute had enriched the kings of Gommaa.

In the nineteenth century trade, the Gibe region used to import items like glass, beads, cloths of different sizes and colors, knives, scissors, cooking ware, and of course, salt (*amolee*). Among these products, salt (*amolee*) was by far the most important commodity needed everywhere in the Ethiopian region. Above everything else, salt (*amolee*) served as the official currency in the long distance trade of the Ethiopian region.¹²⁹ This brings us to the mediums of exchange in the nineteenth century trade of the Gibe valley, where there were two commercial centers in the capitals of each state and it seems that the mediums of exchange varied in accordance with the market centers and trade items exchanged at the market centers. The first and smaller one was the *mandaraa* (village) built close to the *Masaraa* (palace), where the *Jabarti* traders sold all their luxury foreign goods to the king and the aristocracy. The king himself also sold many commodities such as gold, ivory, musk and other luxury items at this market, where gold, Maria Theresa currency, musk, and spices were the most common mediums of exchange. Informants also confirmed the existence of such market center called Mandaraa in Gommaa, situated at Aggaaro town. The second and more important market center in each Gibe state was the main market where the mass of the population bought and sold or exchanged their goods against local or imported

¹²⁷ Guluma, "Gommaa....", pp. 88-91; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir Hassan & Sh/ Nasir Jemal*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 104-107; Guluma, "Land, ...", p. 116; Mohammed, pp. 147-150; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir & Sh/ Nasir*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*; Mohammed, pp. 145-146; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir H & Sh/ Nasir J*.

goods. But, the predominant mode of exchange in this market center was barter.¹³⁰ At least two things can be said from the above description: First, it seems that the Gibe kings built the *mandaraas* close to their royal *masaraa* both as a way of protecting the merchants and also to control their activities. Secondly, the Gibe kings' direct involvement in this trade and their monopoly over luxury goods had apparently, turned them into wealthy monarchs.

Informants reported that there were different market centers in the kingdom of Gommaa which served at different historical periods. The main market center in the kingdom was located in its political center at Sayyoo, which was connected with trade networks of Saqqaa (in Limmu), Bonga (in kafa) and Gamboxaa (in Guumaa).¹³¹ Caggoo and Yaacii were the other famous market centers in kingdom of Gommaa, which were held on Monday and Wednesday respectively. They were sources of trade items like grains, coffee, chickens, cattle vegetables, and chickens etc., and were attended by merchants from the neighboring kingdoms Kafa, Wallaga, Ilu Abbaa Booraa, and Shawa.¹³²

1.4.5. Slavery and Slave Trade in Gommaa

Mohammed indicated that domestic slavery became economically important to the Oromo wealthy cattle owners, mainly after their settlement in the Gibe region.¹³³ This means the Oromo of the Gibe region initially sought slavery mainly for domestic purposes.

However, after the nineteenth century, slaves became the main trade item of the Gibe region which were exchanged for horses, mules, guns, beautiful clothes, and also paid as a price for medicine, and given as gifts. The Gibe region obtained slaves mainly through war in which prisoners of wars against the surrounding stateless Oromo were enslaved. But those slaves captured in the wars between the Gibe kingdoms were sent back to their country as a part of the peace agreement. The Gibe monarchies also bought slaves from the neighboring Omotic states mainly Kafa. The kings' subjects accused of stealing the royal cattle were enslaved along with their family and friends. The Gibe kings also eliminated their main political dissenter and enslaved his entire family through the traditional practice known as *hari* (sweeping away or wiping away), and then publicly sell them to slave merchants. The *hari* practice was first abolished in Gommaa and then in other Gibe states,

¹³⁰ Mohammed, pp.145-146; Informants: *Sh/ Kadir H & Sh/ Nasir J.*

¹³¹ Informants: *Sh/ Kadir Hassan and Sh/ Nasir Jemal.*

¹³² Endalu, p. 42; Informants: *A/Nagaa A/Joobir, A/Milkii A/Dikoo & A/Maccaa A/Raagoo.*

¹³³ Mohammed, p.124.

though trading in non-Oromo slaves continued in the region.¹³⁴ Thus, the enslavement of the king's subjects was also the other sources of slaves for the kingdom of Gommaa. It is said that there was a massive slave trading in Gommaa, with the *mootii* being the biggest slave owner, though the wealthy families and dignitaries also owned large number of slaves.¹³⁵

1.4.6. System of Taxation in Gommaa

The collection of tributes, taxes and customs in the former Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe region was carried out in a well-organized manner and at different levels. To begin with, tributes and taxes (*buusii*) were collected mainly in kinds, though taxes were also collected in salt (*amolee*). The overall process of tax collection was organized from the palace, and carried out by *the Abbaa Qoros* with the assistance of other junior officials such as the *Abbaa Gandaas* and the *Abbaa Funyoo* (father of the cord). It was the *Abbaa Funyoo* who, with the assistance of the army, collected tax from each household and then report to the *Abbaa Qoros*.¹³⁶

However, the collection of taxes from merchants was administered differently, with the *Abbaa Gabaas* collecting market fees for the king, the *Abbaa Keellaas* levy and extract tax from the incoming and outgoing merchants¹³⁷ With more to come under chapter three, it can be said that several officials were involved in the process of tax/tribute collection in the former kingdom of Gommaa.

¹³⁴ Mohammed, pp. 124-128, 154-156; Aman, p. 47; Informants: Yishak Kanno & Naasir Hajii.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.125; Informants: Yishak Kanno & Naasir Hajii.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, pp. 95-99; Mohammed, p.144; Informants: Yishak K & Naasir H.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*; Mohammed, *Ibid*; Informants: Yishak K & Naasir H.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF GOMMAA OROMO

2.1. Demographic profile of Gommaa District

2.1.1. Clan Identity of the Oromo of Gommaa

The Maccaa Oromo which crossed the Gibe River and entered the Jimmaa area were loosely organized into nine clans: Qore, Harsu, Lalo, Bilo, and Badi, Hagalo, Sadacha, Hariro, and Batu.¹ Other than the local traditions, our information on the clan identity of Gommaa Oromo mainly comes from the works of Guluma and also Aman. Guluma maintains that the Limmu and Jimma Oromo, the two major Maccaa groups, moved to the southwest of Bisil and settled in the Gibe region. He further indicates:

The land along the valley of the little (Jimmaa) Gibe and north of the Gojeb, excluding only the [yam] and Bosha highlands in the east and southeast respectively, was occupied by the different Jimmaa clans, such as Harsu, Badi, Sadacha, Diggo, Qore, Dagoyye; while to the west of these (in Gommaa and Geeraa) was inhabited by Jarso, Jidda, Wacho, Badina, and Awalani clans.²

The biggest take from Guluma's statement is that the earliest Oromo clans that settled in Gommaa district were the Jarso, Jidda, Wacho, Badina, and Awalani clans, who also settled in Geeraa. In addition to these, Guluma pointed, Ennangea, Arfeti, Nagade Abba Chasso and Dagoyye were also the other major Oromo clans inhabiting Gommaa district.³ Aman presented almost a similar list of clans, except that he missed the clan name Arfeti in Guluma's list and added two more: Laaloo and Finchisso.⁴ In other words, Guluma presented a list of nine clans, while Aman presented ten. The local traditions added other clans such as Agaloo, Babbayyuu, Baaltoota, Ennoo, Guutee, Sapheeraa, Sadachaa, Qaaqaa and Sayyoo.⁵

Right from the start, the Oromo had developed mechanisms through which they could assimilate the people they conquered or those with whom they established peaceful co-existence. The two important Oromo institutions which facilitated their expansion and thereby enabled them to incorporate the people whom they conquered were called *moggaasa* and *guddifachaa*. *Moggaasa*

¹ Abrham Alemu, "Ethnicity and Local Identity ...", p.163; Deressa. "Historical ...", p. 15.

² Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", p. 40.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 49-50; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture and Society...", pp. 69-70.

⁴ Aman, pp. 9-14.

⁵ *Waaajira Aadaa fi Tuuriizimii Bulchinsa Magaalaa Aggaaroo*, 2020, p.1.

(adoption), which involves both individual and group adoptions, is a system by which non-Oromo were collectively integrated into Oromo society, whereas, *guddifachaa* is a system through which a foster parent adopts a child and hence it appears to be more personal than that of *moggaasa*.⁶

Through these two institutional mechanisms, and of course, through intermarriages, the Gommaa Oromo are said to have intermingled with the non-Oromo people of Ennarya.⁷ Among these clans who were not of Oromo origin but descended from the inhabitants of the former Kingdom of Ennarya were Innarata, Innamasa, Innannu, Inno, Innooqilloo, Innangea, Innaroo, Bosha and Beedina.⁸ However, according to the local traditions, these people descended from the people of kafa, not Ennarya. The traditions also added the following clan names which descended from Kafa-Berecho, Qaammo, Yecino, Ammo, Busase, and Garoo.⁹

All of these were fully assimilated, and/or integrated into the Oromo socio-cultural life and became part of them. During my field work, I came to realize two facts, beyond any doubt, with regard to the clan identity of the Oromo of Gommaa. First, with the people predominantly being speakers of *Afaan* Oromo, it is almost impossible to distinguish between the earliest Omotic settlers of the region and the Oromo. After all, I found no one in the area, except the other ethnic groups that came to Gommaa in the later periods, who claimed to be of different descent other than the Oromo. Secondly, the Oromo of Gommaa are so mixed that clan distinction seemed to have lost its significance and all of them wanted to be identified by their common and broader identity- the Oromo. Perhaps, the only case in which clan identity of a person is raised, told me my informants, is in some rural villages where the people identify a person by his first name along with his clan name, instead of his father's name. Abbaa Garo Jiddaa/Jaarso, with the latter two being clan names.¹⁰

Informants reported that the adopted people have full rights to participate in Oromo socioeconomic, political and cultural life regardless of their previous ethnic background. The

⁶ Mohammed, pp. 20-21 & 62; Guluma, "Gomma...", p. 18; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp.50-53.

⁷ Deressa, "Historical Ecology and Ethnography....", p. 69; Deressa, "Agro-Ecological History of Omoo Naaddaa" (M.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2008), p.25.

⁸ Aman, pp. 9-14.

⁹ Informants: *Sh/Nasir* Jemal, Shabuddin Mohammed & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

interesting irony, however, is that there was a tradition of attributing certain occupations to some social groups which were regarded as different from and inferior to the main stream Oromo community.¹¹ These social groups were artisans and craftsmen who were collectively known as *ogeeyyii* or *ogeessaa* (skilled ones). The *ogeeyyii* were identified with their various occupations such as blacksmiths (*tumtuu*), carpenters and tanners (*faaqii/duugduu*), potters (*fugaa*), bee hive makers and bee keepers (*gaagurtuu*), basket makers (*hodhituu*), and the hunters and foragers (*watta*) and etc.,¹²

Mohammed rightly said that the *ogeeyyii* were members of despised social class/of low social caste. But he wrongly named them as *hiru*, an Oromo term for sharing. The local traditions asserted that their proper name was not *hiru*, but *hirruu*, meaning something which is not full or not complete/defective.¹³ It is a derogatory term used by the local people to indicate the low social status of the *ogeessaa*. Mohammed also pointed that the *ogeessaa* did not have rights to communal ownership of (*qabiyyee*) land, except in some cases when the king and the *sooressaa* (rich persons and high-ranking officials) gave them plots of their own for the service they provided, a fact which is also confirmed by two craftswomen/potters in Gommaa. These craftswomen told me that they had inherited their crafts from their lineages, who, as they said, were denied access to land and hence, engaged in pottery as a means of livelihood.¹⁴

Given that land was assumed to be an important asset, it seems that the artisans were denied rights to land ownership as a way of keeping them subordinate to the main stream Oromo community in Gommaa. My informants and other sources indicated that the social and economic discrimination against the *ogeeyyii* was so severe that they were not allowed to intermarry with the members of the dominant Oromo clans. They neither took part in the Oromo ritual ceremonies nor in the

¹¹ Informants: *Sheikh* Nasir Jemal, Shabuddin Mohammed & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

¹² Mohammed, p.130; Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, p.182; Deressa, "Historical Ecology", p.127; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.127; Lewis, *An Oromo Monarchy*, p. 97; Informants: *Sh/* Nasir, Shabuddin & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

¹³ Mohammed, p.130; Informants: *Sh/* Nasir, Shabuddin & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

¹⁴ Mohammed, pp.130-131; Bartels, *Oromo Religion* ..., pp.186-187; Informants: Galaanee Eddosaa & Ataatu Ittafaa.

formulation of the societal laws; nor were they, as Mohammed mentioned, allowed to give testimony in courts.¹⁵

Informants further reported that the marginalization of the *ogeyyii* remained intact after the Shawan conquest of Gommaa and continued to be so throughout the imperial period up until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. Following the 1974 revolution, the socialist *Derg* government discredited the idea of the upper/privileged class and even recognized the socioeconomic role of the *ogeyyii* to be better than those sluggish persons who despised them. The *Derg* government's scheme of villagization led to the expansion of some craft industries in Gommaa such as pottery and basket making given that non-artisan women were able to learn these crafts from the relocated artisans. These government policies seemed to have contributed to the reduction, if not complete eradication, of the social discrimination of artisans.¹⁶

2.1.2. Ethnic composition and Interaction

We have no adequate sources to indicate the population size of the former kingdom of Gommaa but Beckingham and Huntingford suggested that the kingdom had a population estimated in 1880 of about 15,000-16,000.¹⁷ The 2007 national census reported a total population for this district to be 238,481, of whom 121,583 were men and 116,898 were women. The same census revealed that 83.88% of them were Muslims, 14.68% were Orthodox Christians, and 1.34% were Protestant.¹⁸

Currently, the district of Gommaa is said to be a home to various ethnic groups that came from different parts of the country for different reasons. The 1994 national census reported that the Oromo constituted the greater proportion of 79.11%, Amhara about 7.28%, Dawuro (4.2%), the Silt'e (2.6%), and the Kafficho (2.04%); all other ethnic groups made up 4.77% of the population.¹⁹

¹⁵ Mohammed, pp.130-131; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed; Bartles, *Oromo Religion ...*, pp.186-187.

¹⁶ Informants: Shabuddin Mohammed, *Sh/Nasir* Jemal & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

¹⁷ C.F. Bekingham and G.W.B. Huntingford. *Some Records of Ethiopian Studies 1593-1646*. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p. lxxx.

¹⁸ CSA, *2007 Population & Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region*, Vol. 1, part 1, pp.8, 342.

¹⁹ CSA, *1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region*, Vol. 1, part 1([https://web.archive.org/web/20091115040247/http://www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population and Housing Census 1994 /Statistical Report. pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20091115040247/http://www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%201994/Statistical%20Report.pdf)), Tables 2.1, 2.5, 3.4 (accessed 9 June 2019).

The Oromo settlement in Gommaa since the sixteenth century is said to be the major historical factor that changed the demography of the region,²⁰ though there were also other economic and historical factors of the latter periods that contributed to the diverse nature of Gommaa's population. Among other things, the Shawan conquest and the subsequent settlement of thousands of Amhara settlers in Gommaa had contributed to ethnic diversity of the district. The slave trade carried out in the region by various officials, landowners and coffee growers had also contributed to the ethnic interaction in Gommaa. For instance, the coffee farms of A/Joobir A/Lubbuu were cultivated by up to 500 slaves he brought from Kullo and Konta, and this added to the ethnic diversity of Gommaa district.²¹

The production and marketing of coffee in Gommaa had played a major role in enhancing the ethnic interaction in the district. This was because a large number of migrants from different parts of the country came to Gommaa. These migrants belonging to various ethnic groups come to the region mainly during the production and marketing of coffee. At first, most of the labourers were seasonal who returned to their homeland after the coffee season is over. But later on they began to permanently settle in Gommaa and engage in the local socio-economic activities.²²

Coffee growers like *Ras Mesfin Sileshi* and *Fitäwräri* Gebre kirstos Mekonnen are also said to have employed migrant laborers often coming from Wallo, Gondar, Gojjam, and Shawa, Kafa, Dawuro, Konta, Yem, Kambata and Gurage. Some of these laborers came to Gommaa between 1930s and 1960s and permanently settled in Gommaa, mainly in Aggaaro town, and also other smaller towns close to coffee plantations.²³ The migration of both Oromo and Amhara laborers to

²⁰ Mohammed, pp.27, 42; Guluma, "Gommaa...", p.1; *Idem*, "Land...", p.43.

²¹ Informants: A/Zinab A/Dagaa & Tesfaye A/Galan; Guluma, "Gommaa...", pp.167-169; Guluma, "Land...", pp.174-175; Mekuria Bulcha, *Contours of The Emergent & Ancient Oromo Nation: Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Politics of State and Nation-Building* (Cape Town, 2011), p.342.

²² Endalkachew Lelisa, "Land Tenure, Labor Allocation and Life of Coffee Farmers in Coffee Producing Areas; The Case of Jimma and Limmu Awräjjä Since 20th Century" (In Research on Humanities and Social Science, Bule Hora University, 2018), p.18; Informants: A/Zinab & Tesfaye.

²³ *Ibid*, p.18; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp.261-262; Yonas Seifu. "A Historical Survey of Jimma Town (1936-1974)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, A.A.U, 2002), pp. 49, 67-68; Dagm, "A History of coffee..." p.71; Informants: A/Zinab A/Dagaa & Tesfaye A/Galan.

Gommaa particularly to one of its coffee producing centers of Qombaa, mainly happened during the reign of Emperor Haile-Selassie (r.1930-1974); while the influx of the Dawuro, from the south, to Gommaa increased during the *Derg* regime. Later on the Dawuro acquired land in Qombaa village and settled there permanently.²⁴ Similarly, during the 1950s-1960s, there was a large influx of the Gurage and Silte, who permanently settled in Gommaa and engaged in different businesses activities. The resettlement program of the *Derg* regime in the 1980s had also contributed to the ethnic diversity of Gommaa and thereby enhanced the ethnic interaction which is characterized by peaceful interactions both in the past and at present.²⁵ Thus, various socio-economic and political factors had contributed to the ethnic diversity of Gommaa.

2.2. Religious History of Gommaa Oromo

2.2.1. Traditional Religion of Gommaa Oromo

The local traditions show that before they accepted Islam and/or Christianity, the Gommaa Oromo were followers of the Oromo traditional religion known as *Waaqeffannaa*, based on a belief in one Supreme Being known as *Waaqaa*/God.²⁶ The chief religious expert in *Waaqeffannaa* that acted as the spiritual leader of the Oromo was known as *Qaalluu* (priest). All People were expected to live according to the laws of *Waaqaa* which were handed down to the *Qaalluu* who usually used to teach the laws to the people so that they may adhere to the law to be spared from *waaqaa*'s severe punitive measures.²⁷

There were various *qaalluus*, and the chief priest of all *Qaalluus* was called *Abbaa Muudaa*, a spiritual leader whom the Oromo regarded as their prophet. A pilgrimage takes place every eight years to the holy shrine of *Abbaa Muudaa*, at his center of Haroo Walaabuu. In this pilgrimage known as the *Muudaa* ceremony, the pilgrims were men called *jilaa* or delegates of all Oromo clans in the country. Besides its religious significance, the *Muudaa* ceremony also served the various Oromo clans as a meeting place where they could renew their former link. Emperor Menelik who saw the danger of Oromo unity banned the pilgrimage to *Abbaa Muudaa* around

²⁴ Keiichiro Matsumura, "Inter-Ethnic Relationships in a coffee-growing community: A case study of Gomma Woredä, South-Western Ethiopia" Proceedings of the XV International conference of Ethiopian studies, edited by Siegbert Uhlig, (Kyoto University, 2015), pp.114-115.

²⁵ Informants: Jihad Hassan & Tamam A/Garo.

²⁶ Informants: Shabuddin Mohammed, Sh/Nasir Jemal & Mohammed A/Dagaa.

²⁷ Mekuria, *Contours of The Emergent*, p.238; Mohammed, pp.116-17.

1900.²⁸ Nevertheless, oral and written sources depicted that the kingdom of Gommaa had stopped this practice around 1846,²⁹ meaning long before the ceremony itself was abolished.

Informants stated that the various Oromo clans of Gommaa had a common ritual center known as Odaa Tumaa Seeqaa where they prayed in unity to their *Waaqaa* and ask him for peace, rain, prosperity, health, crop, children and cattle. Informants further added that the local people used to visit the *qaalluus* on various occasions mainly during the annual festivals held at the center of the *qaalluu* (*galmaa*) and attended by a large number of people coming from all corners of Gommaa. On such occasions, the people were served with food and drinks and also took part in the *dalagaa* (spiritual songs and dancing) aimed at praising the *Waaqaa* (God). They also paid a visit to the *qaalluu* whenever they encountered problems in their day to day life. It is a customary practice for the local people on their visit to the *qaalluu* to provide him with various gifts (*galchaa*) and also make pledges (*wareeggii*) to bring him after their problems were solved. They also used to take a new born child to the *qaalluu* so that the latter may bless the child and also name him with the best of names after consulting with the *waaqaa*.³⁰

Similarly, when a cow gave birth, the people won't drink the milk before taking part of the milk to the *qaalluu* and receive his blessings. In addition to their ritual services, the *qaalluus* were also involved in other social aspects particularly related to conflict resolutions,³¹ which is discussed separately under the same chapter. Thus, it is clear that the *qaalluus* had strong influences on the Gommaa Oromo, perhaps until Islam dominated the area.

The decline of the *gadaa* system had strongly affected the Oromo traditional belief system, which is said to have underwent a significant change during the middle of the 19th century. With the introduction and spread of Islam, the new *mootiis* (kings), who wanted to use it as an ideological base to reinforce their authoritarian rule, became strong advocates of Islam. Thus, after the Oromo

²⁸ Mohammed, pp. 6-8; Asmerom, *Gada*, p. 10; Mekuria, *Contours of the*, p.238.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.154; Aman, p. 47; Informants: Shabuddin M, *Sh/Nasir J & Mohammed A/D*.

³⁰ Informants: Shabuddin Mohammed, *Sh/Nasir Jemal & Mohammed A/Dagaa*.

³¹ Informants: Abdo A/R & Mohammed Kamal; Knutsson, *Authority and*, pp.96,110.

of the region accepted Islam, the *Qaalluu* institution began to lose their importance,³² meaning, Islam dealt the final blow to *Waaqeffannaa*.

2.2.2. The Introduction of Islam Among the Gommaa Oromo

Trimingham pointed that Islam was introduced into the Gibe region between 1840 and 1870s through the agency of merchants coming from Warjihe of Shawa, from Derita in Begemeder, and the Egyptian Sudan.³³ However, this, according to some oral and written sources, does not mean that Islam was introduced into an entirely new land during the period mentioned above. For instance, Mohammed pointed that Islam had a foothold at least in Limmu-Ennarya and Gommaa even decades before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Apparently Abbaa Bagibo, the king of Limmu-Ennarya (r.1825-1861), and Abbaa Manno, the king of Gommaa (r.1820-1840), may have been exposed to Islamic education at their young age. For that matter, some sources associated the advent of Islam to the Gibe region with the coming of the Muslim warriors of *Imam Ahmad* to the region back in the sixteenth century. Some elders who claimed descent from the Awalani clan believed that their forefather were Muslims during their settlement in Gommaa.³⁴

Even though Trimingham stated that the kingdom of Gommaa was the first Gibe state to accept Islam, Mohammed argued that this could only be true if it meant that Gommaa was the first Gibe state where the entire population accepted Islam. But the ruling house of Limmu-Ennarya, accepted Islam before that of Gommaa. Similarly, Mohammed suggested that the *Qadiriya* order was the first Islamic order to be introduced into Gommaa and in the entire Gibe region, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and reached its full development during the reign Abbaa Manno (r.1820-1840) when the other order, *Tijaniya*, also established itself in Gommaa.³⁵ Two points emerge from the above discussions: First, the Gommaa Oromo and those of the entire Gibe region had long been exposed to Islam, and the spread of this religion during the nineteenth century simply added to the already existing Islamic sediments.

³² Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, p.14. Mohammed, pp. 6-8; Guluma, "Gommaa", p.32; Aman, p.31.

³³Trimingham, J. Spencer, *Islam in Ethiopia* (Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 199.

³⁴Mohammed, pp.150-151; Guluma, "Gommaa....", p.6; Lange, *The History of Southern Gonga*, p.20; Aman, p.34; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

³⁵ Trimingham, p.199; Mohammed, p. 156.

Secondly, the *Qadiriya* is the oldest Islamic order in Gommaa and in the entire Gibe region, though it is the *Tijaniya* order, as pointed by Aman and my informants, which later became dominant in Gommaa and Jimmaa since the early part of the twentieth century. Aman and my informants also added that three out of the four schools of Islamic law (*madhhabs*, read *Mazāhabs*) existed in the Gibe region. These are the *Shafi'iyii*, *Hanafii* and *Hanbali madhhabs*. But the *Shafi'iyii madhhab* is the dominant School of Islamic thought in Gommaa and Jimmaa.³⁶

2.2.2.1. Agents for the Spread of Islam in Gommaa

A number of scholars pointed that the *Jabarti*, Muslim merchants from northern Ethiopia, were the main agents for the spread of Islam in the Gibe region and hence, were the first teachers of Islam particularly to the children of the nobility in the region.³⁷

However, Aman and Guluma refuted the fact of the *Jabarti* being the earliest teachers of Islam in the Gibe region and instead, suggested that the *Jabarti* had no direct involvement, as teachers, in the early spread of Islam other than facilitating the journey of northern itinerant clerics to the region. It was these itinerant clerics who came to dominate the teachings of the Quran and actively engaged in conversion of the local people.³⁸ This means, the earliest Islamic teachers in the Gibe region were not merchants themselves, but itinerant clerics who came with the traders.

Accordingly, a large number of *Ulamä*, Islamic scholars, from northern Ethiopia arrived in Gommaa where they were given protection by the kings and local chiefs, who feared the animosity from the ardent followers of *Waaqeffannaa* towards the *ulamä*. In return for their services, the *ulamä* were given land, horses and oxen.³⁹ Here, even though the role of the *Jabarti* traders cannot be totally ruled out, it seems that the itinerant clerics played far greater role than the merchants in the Islamization of the region. The rationale behind this argument is that the *Jabarti* were business men and hence, they may not have had the time to preach Islam in a way that resulted in massive conversion of the local people, nor were they ventured to jeopardize their business for proselytization which could have provoked the adherents of *waaqeffannaa*.

³⁶ Aman, p. 50; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

³⁷ Mohammed, pp. 151, 161; Trimmingham, p. 109.

³⁸ Aman, pp. 40-41; Guluma Gameda, "The Islamization of the Gibe Region, Southwestern Ethiopia from C. 1830s to the Early Twentieth Century" *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1993), p.70.

³⁹ Aman, pp. 40-47; Mohammed, p.110; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

According to my informants and, to Aman, the spread of Islam in the Gommaa took a new momentum with the arrival of Muslim clerics from Gondar, Wallo and other places in the late 1870s and 1880s. One of the most prominent Islamic scholars who played a significant role in the expansion of Islam in Gommaa, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was *Shekota* Tijje (al-*Hajj* Mahmud Abu Bakr or Mahmud Qorare, d.1917). He came from Argobba (in Wallo) and taught advanced religious subjects in Gommaa.⁴⁰

Sayyoo, the capital of Gommaa, located on the trade route connecting Limmu-Ennarya and Kafa, was able to attract large number of itinerant clerics who settled in the town and made it a center of Islamic learning. Qottaa, Coocee, Kiilolee, Aggaaro, Awwaanno, Bulbulo and Jimaatee Darruu were also among the areas in Gommaa which attracted itinerant clerics and eventually became major centers of Islamic teaching and diffusion.⁴¹

There were also local *Sheikhs* who established their own centers of Islamic learning in Gommaa and helped in the spread of Islam. Among them were *Shekota* Gommaa, which was established by *Sheikhs* Ahmed Sayyoo and Adam Gommaa. *Sheikh* Adam Gommaa (also known as *Sheikh* Adam Ibrahim or *Shekii* Gommaa) was one of the most prominent local Muslim scholars, who mastered the recitation of the Quran under a local Muslim cleric, *Sheikh* Ahmad Abbaa Soor, and then attended advanced Islamic studies in Dawe, southern Wallo. On his return to Gommaa, he opened his own center of Islamic learning at a place called Adami, where he extensively taught the Quran and different religious subjects. But later he moved to Jimmaa on the request of its king, Abbaa Jifaar II, who gave him land at place known as Garukee. Since then he became one of the most prominent Islamic teacher in Jimmaa. One of his former students was *Sheikh* Adam Abdallah (the later *Shekota* Guumaa), who played a leading role in the Islamization of the kingdom of Guumaa.⁴²

The other Muslim scholars who taught advanced subjects in Gommaa during the early part of the twentieth century include *Shekota* Coqorsaa or *Hajj* Yusuf Khalifa (of Darruu), Aabboo Nuraa or Muhammad Sharif (of Baqqoo), and *Sheikh* Muhammad Abbaa Bulguu (of Cedaro Suusee), *Shekota* Jamal Adam (of Awwaanno), *Shekota* Gibe or *Sheikh* Umar Gibe (of Amandirii), *Shekota*

⁴⁰Aman, pp. 50, 93; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 39-40; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

⁴² *Ibid*; Guluma, "The Islamization of ...", p.72; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

Gumar (of Yaacii), *Hajj* Siraj (of Gebu) and *Hajj* Muhammad Abbaa Margaa (of Goggee) were also among the other Muslim scholars who taught advanced subjects in Gommaa.⁴³

Apparently, these local clerics, together with those from northern Ethiopia, helped in the consolidation of Islam in the region by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, it seems that the local clerics were the main agents of Islamization at the grassroots level in the entire Gibe region.⁴⁴ Presumably, the local Muslim clerics had several clear advantages over the northern clerics: they were well-acquainted with the local language and traditions; they could move freely with little or no fear of animosity from the devotees of *waaqeffannaa* given that they were protected by families and also by societal values and norms.

In the traditions of Gommaa there were some individuals whom the local people recognized as ‘holy men’ (*Waliyyis/saints*) or those who possessed a special kind of divine blessings. They were known for their humble life style and the miracles they claimed to have performed in the name of Allah.⁴⁵ Of such individuals, the first and most persistently narrated name in the Islamic traditions of Gommaa, Gummaa and Geeraa was a certain Waarukkoo (Muhammad Anwar), the first legendary local Muslim Oromo holy man, from the Awalani clan of Gommaa. Waarukkoo, who is believed to have lived in the early part of the eighteenth century, was the grandfather of Abbaa Manno, the first king of Gommaa. He is portrayed in the traditions as someone who had descended from *Sheikh* Hussein of Bale. He is believed to have possessed some kind of divinity which enabled him to perform various miracles. For instance, it is said that, he could fly like an eagle, and could change men into animals,⁴⁶ which apparently made him very popular among his ardent followers.⁴⁷

Some of the most famous Muslim scholars who are said to have gained the status of saint-hood for helping in the spread of Islam in Gommaa, during the second half of the nineteenth and the first

⁴³ Aman, pp. 48-50; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 36 & 43; Guluma, “The Islamization...”, p.72; Informants: *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir J, Shabuddin M & A/Zinab A/D; Aman, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁶ Mohammed, p. 155; Aman, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁷ Whenever they encountered illness, distress or any other difficulty, it was a customary practice for Waarukkoo’s fervent followers to seek his comfort and blessing. He is said to have had some devoted followers even today who, at any time of difficulty, praised his name and ask for his assistance saying, “*Waarukkoo gaafa rakkoo!*” (*Waarukkoo the deliverer from any difficulty!*) (Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir, Shabuddin & A/Zinab A/D).

half of the twentieth centuries, were *Sheikh* Muhammad Abbaa Bushan, *Sheikh* Abdullah Abbaa Goolee (*Hajj* Abdullah Abbaa Goolee), *Sheikh* Usman *Sheikh* Husayn, *Sheikh* Muhammad Abbaa Bulguu, *Hajj* Hashim Abbaa Nagawwo, *Sheikh* Abbaa Waari, *Hajj* Ahmad *Sheikh* Mahmud, Abbaa Nuraa Aabboo, *Shekota* Shiroo, *Shekota* Gibe (*Sheikh* Muhammad Sharif), *Shekota* Coqorsaa (*Hajj* Yusuf Khalifa), *Shekota* Abbaa Jiddaa (*Sheikh* Bayän), *Sheikh* Sadiq Jaarso, *Sheikh* Muhammad Tayib, *Shekota* Buukkoo (*Sheikh* Sulayman), *Shekota* Boranaa (*Hajj* Ahmad Misku). On the other hand, some others like *Sheikh* Adam Ibrahim or *Shekii* Gommaa and *Shekota* Tijje were among the prominent ulama who died without attaining the status of a saint.⁴⁸

These saints were revered by the local community both in life and also after their death. Following their death, a number of *qubbaas* (mausoleums/shrines) are said to have been built in different parts of Gommaa in their honor. Some of these *qubbaas* are said to be sites of veneration even today. Aman and my informants indicated that Waarukkoo was at the top of the hierarchy of saints in Gommaa, while Abbaa Raagoo was the leading saint of Aggaaro town.⁴⁹

The shrines of the saints were erected either upon their burial places/graves or on the spots where they had lived at any time of their life. For instance, most of the shrines of Waarukkoo are in Gommaa (at Daalachoo, Booree, Jirgoo, Quudaa-Qunaacoo and Sadachaa), while some are found in Jimmaa and Limmu-Ennarya.⁵⁰ The shrine of Abbaa Raago Abbaa Dikoo which is located in Aggaaro town in front of the *Ras* Dasta Junior School, is built at the place he was buried. In all Gibe states, visiting the shrines of the saints is said to be a customary practice representing an important manifestation of popular Islam. The shrines of Waarukkoo and Abbaa Raagoo (in Gommaa), Abbaa Arabu (Jimmaa), Hasan Ahmad (Saddii, Geeraa) were among the most frequently visited ones by Muslims from all over the Gibe region.⁵¹

In conclusion, the rapid spread of Islam in the Gibe region during the second half of the nineteenth century could be attributed to the favorable socio-economic and political circumstances such as the decline of the *gadaa* system and the Oromo traditional belief system attached to it, the

⁴⁸ Aman, pp.36, 62-64; Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir J, Shabuddin M and A/Zinab A/D.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp.36, 62-64; Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir J, Shabuddin M and A/Zinab A/D.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 65-68; Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir J, Shabuddin M and A/Zinab A/D.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 65-66; Informants: *Shiekh* Nasir, Shabuddin & A/Zinab; see also Appendix V.

emergence of monarchical states and the royal support given to Islam, and above all through the role of the northern itinerant clerics, the local clerics and the saints.

2.2.2.2. The Role of Local Rulers in the Islamization of Gommaa

According to Mohammed, “Abbaa Manno is remembered as the first king of Gommaa, who introduced Islam to that land,”⁵² a rather vague statement which is open for different interpretations. First, it evokes the view that in Gommaa, introduction of Islam and state formation were simultaneous/parallel processes. This is something implausible as Mohammed himself asserts “Islam had been in the region at least since the sixteenth century,⁵³” which means the introduction of Islam predated the emergence of states in the Gibe region. Secondly, Mohammed’s description of Abbaa Manno as “... who introduced Islam to that land,” is misleading. In other words, Abbaa Manno was surely not the first person to introduce the religion to that land, and no one validates this better than Mohammed himself who, in addition to the one stated above, elucidates it on many different instances.⁵⁴ Thus, the advent of Islam to Gommaa had nothing to do with Abbaa Manno except that he was a Muslim who also appeared to be the first king of Gommaa.

Mohammed rightly said that Abbaa Manno was regarded as “*waliyyi*” (“the holy”), owing to his huge role in the spread Islam in Gommaa and the Gibe region, but he wrongly concluded that “... hence his dynasty got the memorable name Awuliani (‘the holy one’).”⁵⁵ In other words, Mohammed’s conclusion that the dynasty was so named due to Abbaa Manno’s status as “*waliyyi*,” is erroneous, at least for two reasons: First, the local people call their former ruling dynasty-Awalani, not Awuliani. Secondly and more importantly, the dynasty was named after one of the early Oromo clans that settled in Gommaa, the Awalani clan, to which Abbaa Manno belonged.⁵⁶

Abbaa Manno is said to have used Islam as an ideological justification for abolishing Oromo traditional celebrations such as *buttaa* festivals. He sponsored and patronized Muslim religious teachers particularly those of the *Qadiriya* and *Tijaniya* Islamic orders, whom he encouraged by

⁵² Mohammed, p.110.

⁵³*Ibid*, p.90.

⁵⁴Mohammed, pp. 151, 161.

⁵⁵*Ibid*, p. 110.

⁵⁶Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed; Aman, pp. 14-15; Guluma, “Gommaa”, pp.49-66.

rewarding them with land and motivated them to intensify proselytization activities in Gommaa.⁵⁷ He also imported copies of the Quran written on wooden slabs, which were brought from Limmu-Ennarya,⁵⁸ but presumably originated from the northern part of Ethiopia. Abbaa Manno is also reported to have played a role in the spread of Islam in Guumaa, where he encouraged the spread of the *Qadiriya* Islamic order.⁵⁹ Abbaa Manno's pro-Islamic policies are said to have boosted the spread of Islam in Gommaa, whose achievements in terms of Islamization, as Mohammed put it, "was a revolution." However, this is challenged by my informants and, also Guluma who suggested that it was rather under Abbaa Reebuu (r.1830-1856).⁶⁰ According to Guluma,

*Islam became a respected religion in Gommaa because of the pro-Islamic policies of Abbaa Reebuu. After embracing Islam, Abbaa Reebuu forced his court dignitaries to practice Islam. He threatened to confiscate their properties and dismiss them from their offices unless they accepted Islam and practiced it strictly.*⁶¹

Here, even though Guluma rightly described the strong royal support Islam enjoyed during the reign of A/Reebuu, his phrase "after embracing Islam," in reference to the king, however, gives the wrong impression that he was not born a Muslim, something which is utterly erroneous, according to my informants, who asserted that there is no way he could not be born a Muslim.⁶² For that matter, several sources, including Guluma himself, indicated that A/Reebuu, being the great grandson of Abbaa Manno, had a Muslim back ground.⁶³ Thus, Guluma's phrase 'after embracing Islam,' as a reference to the king, is inappropriate even by his own standard.

The local traditions indicated that A/Reebuu took the lion's share of credit for expanding Islam. Being a devout Muslim himself, he encouraged, and at times forced, others to strictly abide by the tenets of Islam as recommended in the Quran and the *Hadith*. Accordingly, he issued a decree that obliged all people in his kingdom including the *abbaa qoros* and other important officials to perform the daily regular *Salāt* (five times a day) in Mosques and thereby recite the holy Quran, to give *zakat* (alms giving) and keep fasting during the holy month of *Ramadan*. He is also credited

⁵⁷Mohammed, pp. 110, 156; Aman, p. 39; informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

⁵⁸ Aman, p. 39; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed.

⁵⁹Mohammed, pp.156-159; Deressa, "Historical Ecology and Ethnography", p. 83.

⁶⁰Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir* & Mohammed; Guluma, "The Islamization.....", p. 72.

⁶¹ Guluma, "The Islamization of the Gibe Region...", p. 72.

⁶² Informants: Shabuddin M, *Sh/Nasir* J & Mohammed A/D.

⁶³Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.55; Mohammed, p.110; Informants: *Ibid*.

with the expansion of Islamic education mainly given to children. To this end, he encouraged the influx of Muslim scholars from Wallo, Gondar, Limmu-Ennarya, and entrusted them with the task of teaching the children and leading the people in prayers.⁶⁴ This is a clear indicator of the strong royal support Islam had enjoyed during the reign of Abbaa Reebuu. It also depicts that the strong royal support may be at the root of the rapid spread of Islam in Gommaa, which had several important impacts both for Gommaa and other states of the region: -

First, it affected their religious rituals, working habits and burial practices, though this doesn't mean that the local people totally severed relations with their old religion. Instead, all the Gibe states exhibited a dual character with the majority of the common people retaining some elements of their traditional religion, along with Islam. Even the Gibe kings are said to have propagated Islam, didn't totally abandon their old practice of offering sacrifices to *Waaqaa*, nor did they stop sending gifts to the land of *Abbaa Muudaa*.⁶⁵

Secondly, in 1846 when the neighbouring Oromo states of the Gibe region sent gifts, in the hands of the *Jilaa* (pilgrims), to the land of *Abbaa Muudaa*, Gommaa alone boycotted the pilgrimage. However, both Islam and the Oromo traditional religion continued to coexist in Gommaa until the second half of the nineteenth century when the new religion totally overtook of the old.⁶⁶ Thus, their conversion to Islam did not abruptly eliminate the entire elements of their traditional religion. Thirdly, at the time when the other Gibe kings were still carrying out the notorious *harii* practice in which a political offender and his entire family were enslaved and sold to slave traders, one king of Gommaa is said to have banned this practice, and the other Gibe kings also emulated his decision and did the same.⁶⁷ Though both Mohammed and Aman didn't mention who this king was, my informants and also Guluma pointed that it was Abbaa Reebuu.⁶⁸ The rulers' decision to end this long age inhumane practice is an indicative of the strong influence Islam had exerted upon them.

⁶⁴Informants: Shabuddin M, *Sh/Nasir Jemal & Mohammed A/ Daga*; Aman, pp. 40-46.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*; Mohammed, pp. 151-154; Aman, p. 47.

⁶⁶*Ibid*; Mohammed, pp. 151-154; Aman, p. 47.

⁶⁷ Mohammed, p.154; Aman, p. 47; Informants: Shabuddin, *Sh/Nasir & Mohammed A/D*.

⁶⁸ Informants: *Sh/Nasir J, Shabuddin M and A/Zinab A/D*; Guluma, "Gommaa...", p. 85.

2.2.3. Christianity in Gommaa

2.2.3.1. Orthodox Christianity

Guluma and Ephrem pointed that in Gommaa, which was part of the medieval kingdom of Ennarya, there was an Orthodox Church at a place called Angari, identified as the present town of Aggaaro.⁶⁹ But it was Ephrem, who went further to conclude that in pre-Oromo days, Aggaaro served as a settlement for the Christian community, a trade center and a seat of a local ruler called Aggarasho.⁷⁰ However, Ephrem's assertion is not corroborated by any other sources including the local traditions. Be it as it may, a significant Christian presence in the region is highly unlikely until the last quarter of the sixteenth century when the ruler of Ennarya named Badancho was converted to Christianity in 1588.⁷¹ Henceforth, it seems reasonable to assume that the Christian kingdom would send church officials including priests and deacons to Ennarya and/or to Gommaa.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, the entire Gibe region was totally Islamized before the Shawan conquest.⁷² Thus, after the conquest, as we shall see in the next paragraph or two, it seemed that Christianity was entering into an entirely new territory.

This illustrates that the early process of evangelization of Ennarya that officially started back in 1588 may have probably been disrupted due to the Oromo incursion and final conquest of the region, and also due to Islam. Nevertheless, studies conducted by Anteneh, and Girmaye indicated the existence of Christian churches in the Gibe region long before the Shawan conquest, and the oldest churches in the region were the churches of St. *Mary* of Limmu kossa and St. *Tekle Haymanot* of Limmu, both founded in 1824, and that of the St. *Abune Gebermenfes Qidus* church in Saxxammaa, founded in 1855.⁷³ However, this is not corroborated by other sources.

The local traditions linked the introduction of Christianity into the region with the Shawan conquest, and the elders claimed that Christian churches were introduced to Gommaa following

⁶⁹ Guluma, "Gommaa and....", p.176; Ephrem Seifu, "A History of Agaro Town" (B.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 1988), pp.9-10.

⁷⁰ Ephrem, "A History of Agaro Town", pp.9-10.

⁷¹ Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", pp. 6-7; Mohammed, p.29.

⁷² Informants: *Sh/Nasir*, *Shabuddin M & A/Zinab A/D*; Trimmingham, pp.22-24.

⁷³ Anteneh, "A Religious History of", p.72; Girmaye G/michael, "The Religious setting in Jimma Zone (1880s-1974)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Jimmaa University, 2015), pp.85-86.

the arrival of the first Shawan settler soldiers, a view also supported by scholars.⁷⁴ Although some written documents suggested that up to 1911, the *Kossa Mariyam* church in Limmu was the only church in the entire Gibe region,⁷⁵ this claim is not supported by the traditions of Gommaa. The local traditions pointed that following the Shawan conquest, particularly after the arrival of *Ras Damissew* as a governor of Gommaa in 1889, the Shawans built the first church known as the St. *Michael* church at Qottaa in 1890, the same year, as *Ibsa* pointed, when the St. *Mary* church, locally known as *Ciiraa Maryam* was established in Geeraa.⁷⁶ *Abbaa Gabez Woldemedhin* was the first famous priest of the St. *Michael* church in Qottaa which, as the only church in Gommaa until the 1920s, served the Christian community of Gommaa and the nearby areas. Therefore, the Christian community in Aggaaro town and the surrounding had to travel eight (8) KMs to reach Qottaa, to bury their dead, baptize their children, participate in annual commemorations of the saints and to take part in other religious rituals.⁷⁷

When *Ras Dasta* shifted his center from Qottaa to Dalaachoo, he erected the St. George church (*Felege Salam Qidus Gi'orgis*), the first church in Aggaaro town in 1925/1926. Following this, a number of priests from Shawa came to Aggaaro, with *Qesa-gabaz Gabramedihin* and *Marigetä Yagilu* being the most widely remembered names among them. With the settlement of more members of the clergy and other people close to the church's compound, the neighborhood came to be named *qés Safar* (quarter of the clergy).⁷⁸

Girum and my informants suggested that the St. *Mary* Church, the second Church in Aggaaro town, was constructed by the personal initiative of *Ras Mesfin Silashi*, (Governor General of Kafa from 1945-1955). The construction of this church started in 1951 and was completed and inaugurated on January 9, 1955. *Fitäwräri Abbaa Garo Abbaa Kaabee*, the governor of Gommaa district, is said to have directly been involved in the construction of the church. It was on his initiatives that the financial resources needed for the construction of the church was collected from all residents

⁷⁴ Informants: Tesfaye TekleMariam & Tamiru Waldagabriel; Anteneh, p.72; Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, pp.22-24; Deressa, "Historical Ecology", p. 86.

⁷⁵Zelalem Temesgen, "The 2006 Religious Conflict in Dhedheessa and Gommaa *Woredäs* of Western Oromia" (M.A. Thesis, AAU, Indigenous Cultural Studies, 2010), p. 66; Deressa, "Historical....", p. 86.

⁷⁶ Informants: Tesfaye TekleMariam & Tamiru Waldagabriel; *Ibsa*, "A History of Geeraa", p.72.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*; Endalu, p.91

⁷⁸ *Ibid*; Girum Yeneneh, "A History of Agaro Town (1920s-1980s)" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, A.A.U, 2013), p.49.

of Aggaaro town and the surrounding areas, both Muslims and Christians alike.⁷⁹ Seemingly, the governor was motivated by political and economic considerations. Yishak Kanno Abbaa Garo, the grandson of *Fitäwräri* Abbaa Garo told me that there was a close relationship between *Fitäwräri* A/Garo and *Ras* Mesfin Silashi, in which the former picked the coffee producing area around Geembee to be the main coffee farm for the latter. The third Church in Aggaaro town, the Church of *Silässie* (Holy Trinity) was also built in 1967.⁸⁰

Fitäwräri GabreKristos, one of the famous coffee growers in Gommaa had also established the St. *Medahanealem* Church in the 1950s around his coffee plantation in Qombaa and Qoccollee, for himself and his workers. Another landowner, *Fitäwräri* Ababe Asras, relative of *Ras* Mesfin Sileshi, had donated the land and the money for the construction of the Bulbulo St. *Gabriel* Church, which was built in 1955.⁸¹ Similarly, *Gräzmäch* Abbaa Fiixaa, the *Abbaa qoro* of Urache, had a role in the construction of the *Medhanealem* church in Gommaa, built at Yaacii in the 1950s.

Gräzmäch Abbaa Fiixaa is reported to have said that “the construction of churches benefits us all given that it saves us from traveling long distances to bury a deceased Christian and also encourages tolerance among us.”⁸² Thus, lack of burial places for Christians and the positive attitudes of the local chiefs contributed to the expansion of churches in Gommaa.

2.2.3.2. Protestant Christianity

The protestant religion is said to have been introduced into Gommaa since the early decades of the twentieth century, with Dr. Bongham and Dr. Lambie, being the two biggest names associated with the institutionalization of Protestantism in southwestern Ethiopia. Dr. Thomas Alexander Lambie (1885-1954), a Physician from the USA, was particularly the leader of members of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), the first missionaries who initiated Protestantism in the region. The SIM was later renamed as Society of International Missionaries.⁸³

In 1930s, the SIM established the first Missionary station in Aggaaro town, on the land leased from *Gräzmäch* Gezhagñ Asras. Its head quarter was at the current Quujjoo Elementary School,

⁷⁹ Girum, p.49; Informants: Girma Demise, Tesfaye T/Mariam & Teshome Teklu.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*; Informant: Yishak Kanno Abbaa Garo.

⁸¹ Endalu, p. 91; Informant: Yishak Kanno Abbaa Garo.

⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 91-92; Informants: Girma Demise, Tesfaye T/Mariam, Teshome Teklu.

⁸³ Yonas, p.78; Deressa, “Historical”, p. 88; Dagim, “A History of Coffee”, p.109.

from where members of the SIM began to provide a mobile health services to the residents of the town until 1955 when the team established the first permanent clinic in the town. Mr. Freeman, Ms. Watsil, Mr. Wassen and Ms. Merry were among the prominent members of the SIM in Aggaaro town, who are said to have established the first protestant church known as *Kale Hiwot* church. But their achievement in converting the local people was negligible in the early stages. They were expelled during the Italian occupation but resumed their missionary activities in the post-liberation period, when they are said to have combined the preaching the Gospel with the expansion of education, health services and other development activities in Ethiopia.⁸⁴

There were also domestic preachers recruited from southern Ethiopia who were sent to Aggaaro in the 1960s to preach the gospel and lead the church. Despite being under strong pressure from the local communities, these preachers were able to convert a large number of people and established protestant churches even in some rural villages of Gommaa such as Coocee, Geembee, Goggaa, Qoccallee, and Limmu-shaayi.⁸⁵

The Full Gospel Believers Church was established in Gommaa in 1973 by the personal initiative of a government employee named *W/ro* Muluworq Kasa, who began to preach the creeds of this church at her home in Aggaaro town and converted seventeen high school students. Other government employees such as *Ato* Kebede Tolasa, *W/ro* Taddelech Kebede, *Ato* Amanuel Walde and others helped in establishing the Ethiopian Evangelical Church *Mekane Yesus* in Gommaa.⁸⁶ In 1980 the pro-communist *Derg* regime closed the *Kale Hiwot* church in Aggaaro and confiscated its property including school and clinic, but believers continued their worship in private homes until their current church is built in the early 1990s.⁸⁷

2.3. Cultural History of Gommaa Oromo

2.3.1. Marriage Practices of Oromo of Gommaa

There are five types of traditional marriages that are being practiced among the Oromo of Gommaa and its surrounding. These are *Haasa'annaa*, *Farda hidhaa*, *Aseennaa*, *Butii* and *Abaabbalii*.

⁸⁴Endalu, pp. 93-94; Yonas, p. 79; Informants: Temesgen Disasa & Abera Dinsa.

⁸⁵*Ibid*; Girum, p. 55.

⁸⁶*Ibid*.

⁸⁷*Ibid*; Informants: Abera Dinsa & Temesgen Disasa.

A. Haasa'annaa (Betrothal): -is the commonly accepted and most widely practiced type of marriage among the Gommaa Oromo. Mostly it is arranged by parents of the future marriage partners though, these days, the would be, particularly the boy can nominate and tell his parents about the girl whom he wanted to marry. It involves many ups and downs and/or series of negotiations between the families of the future couples.⁸⁸ There are many steps in *haasa'annaa*. First, the *Qorannaa* (inquiry/search) is conducted in which the boy's father search for a girl, identify her and her family, and examine how her conduct is. He also ensures that there is no blood tie between the two families to hinder the marriage, and that the girl is the proper caste for their boy, not from the out-casted groups such as *tumtuu*, *waattaa* etc., Then comes the *karaa ciraa*, or clearing the path leading to the girl's home/parents. The next step is *Jaarsa ergachuu* (sending elders), in which the boy's father sends elders to the girl's family to ask for their willingness to their daughter's marriage.⁸⁹

On their arrival at the girl's homestead, the elders tell the girl's parents that they came to create a new relationship and/or cement the already existing one between them and the family they represented. That is the other way of asking for the hands of their girl for the son of Mr. "x." The girl's parents tell them to return back after a certain days or weeks, as a way of asking for time to think over it. Then the boy's parents inform their son that they have chosen a girl to be his future partner/wife.⁹⁰ The girl's parents also make a similar inquiry, about the boy, already said to be made by the boy's father. In the second appointment, the girl's parents tell that they didn't reach decision and thus, ask the elders to come back after a week, meaning the third appointment is arranged. Before their departure, the elders representing the boy and the family of the girl fix the day on which the next step of *caatii qaamsifachuu*/ceremony of chewing *caat/khat* is performed. On this day, the boy's father buys a bundle of *caat/khat* and then go to the bride's home accompanied by four/five elders and chew the *caat/khat* together with her family. This ceremonial chewing of the *caat/khat* together not only enables the two families to get closer to know each other, but also is regarded as a sign of peace and the future shared love to be created through the

⁸⁸Informants: Jihad H, Tamam A/Garo & Ahmad H; Deressa, "Historical ...", p.57.

⁸⁹Informants: Jihad H, Tamam A/Garo & Ahmad H.

⁹⁰*ibid*

marriage and thus, it is traditionally unacceptable to decline the marriage after chewing the *caat/khat* together.⁹¹

If the marriage is approved by the girl's parents, then the elders, along with the boy's father go to the home of the bride for the final appointment, known as *barcuma teessiisaa*, literally meaning inviting to sit on a stool, but denoting some sort of welcoming in which the bride's parents awaits the elders by preparing food and drinks, mostly non-alcoholic. On reaching the home of the girl, the boy's father kisses the knee of the girl's father and says, "*mucaa keessan ilmoo taasiifachuun dhufe, mucaakoo ilmo taasiifadhaa*" meaning "I came to make your daughter mine and let you make my son yours." Then the bride's father declares his agreement to the marriage saying; "*Ilmi kessan ilma naa haata'u*" ("Your son be my son"); "*Hintalli koo hintala isinii haa taatuu*" ("My daughter be your daughter"); "*Hintala koo ilma keessaniifkenneera*" ("I gave my daughter to your son").⁹² Then comes *Amartiifi qubeelaa ergachuu* or sending *Amartii* (necklet) and *qubeelaa* (engagement ring) to the bride's home, an event which shows that the boy and the girl are engaged in a ceremony called *nikaa hidhuu*, wearing the engagement ring.⁹³

This is followed by what is called *Buna qalaa*⁹⁴ *milkee jaalalaa geessuu* or sending "coffee of good omen and love," prepared by the boy's mother, to the girl's home, where it is partly consumed, while the remaining part will be taken back to the boy's family. The whole act of carrying, eating and sharing the ritual coffee between the two families shows how much both sides are happy with their relationships.⁹⁵ The next step is *Qaraxa geessuu fi guyyaa cidhaa qabachuu*, sending tribute/dowry and fixing the date of the wedding. In between the days, until the wedding day, there were gifts coming to the houses of both parents from friends and relatives or lineages. It is the responsibility of the girl or her mother to prepare house utensils for the girl's future house, while the groom's family covers all the necessary financial expense for the preparation of the items or pays for them in advance.⁹⁶

⁹¹Informants: Jihad H, Tamam A/Garo & Ahmad H.

⁹² Deressaa, "Historical Ecology", p.58; Informants: Nasir Hajii & Jihad Hassan.

⁹³ Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

⁹⁴*Buna Qalaa* is coffee beans cooked with butter, melt with different spices and salt, and mainly consumed on special days: wedding, at child birth and also on religious festivities. It is known for its aromatic smell and delicious taste (Informants: Jihad H, Tamam A/Garo & Ahmad H).

⁹⁵*Seenaa Oromo Gommaa*, Aggaaroo, p. 30.

⁹⁶*Seenaa Oromo Gommaa*, Aggaaroo, p. 30.

This is the next step known as *tirmaa bituu* or buying everything necessary for the couples to start life at their own new home. This includes various kinds of household utensils such as water jars, baking griddles, cooking wares, kettles, cups, prepared foods, butter, spices, honey, and also praying & sleeping mats/beds, bed sheets, night cloths, prepared foods, butter, spices, honey etc., The family of the bride is responsible for preparing all these, while the groom's family covers all the necessary financial expense for the preparation of the items or pays for them in advance.⁹⁷

The last step is *Cidha waamuu*, sending invitation call to relatives and friends to attend the wedding ceremony. Both families prepare feasts on the wedding day. On this day, before their departure to the bride's home, the bride-groom and his *waahilaa* (best men), and *amaamotaa* (companions) are invited *cuubaa amaamotaa*, "cuubaa of the companions" and drink at least a cup of *qaawaa amaamotaa*, "coffee of the companions."⁹⁸ The most prominent traditional marriage songs among Gommaa Oromo is known as the *Addooyyee*⁹⁹ Song(*Sirba Addooyyee*).

In the local tradition, there is a great respect for a girl who behaved in accordance with the moral standard expected of girls in the community, and above all kept her sanctity or virginity, which is regarded as a guarantor for the stability of the marriage of young couples. The *addooyyee* song is sang for such a good mannered girl as a way of appreciating and gratifying her. It is a good bye song sung by the *addooyyee* or best friends of a girl who is marrying through *Haasa'annaa*. It also sends a message to the upcoming girls to emulate a similar rewarding path. Thus, it is incumbent upon her parents to reward her by making her wedding day the happiest and most memorable moment of her life. Therefore, at least two weeks before the wedding day, her parents call up on the *addooyyee* of their daughter to come to their home and sing the *addooyyee* song for her. The girls would be there, whether called upon or not, to beautify the wedding of their dearest.¹⁰⁰

During their stay at her home, her *addooyyee* help her family in performing various household activities. They also sing the *addooyyee* song for her all the night for one week until the wedding day. In their song, the girls express their love for her, and also express the depth of their misery at

⁹⁷ Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan; *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa*, Aggaaroo, p. 30.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Addooyyee* is a traditional way of solidarity of girls among the Oromo of Gommaa in which they form a strong bond of friendship and help each other during their wedding (Informants: Nasir & Jihad).

¹⁰⁰ Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

thinking about her departure due to marriage. The deep sense of sadness starts on the *jalabultii* /the eve of the wedding day. On this day, the *addooyee* of the bride praise their friend while insulting the groom and his relatives through a song locally known as *arabsoo durbaa* (girls' insult). This song, *arabsoo durbaa*, is not really meant to offend her future husband but to boost the morale of their departing friend, and more importantly to forget their sorrow for her departure. On the wedding day, the *addooyee* song is filled with dramatic events that combined both pleasure and distress, hilarity and tears. Joy, for she has attained such graceful moment of her life; and sadness, for she is departing. There is also a real wrestling between the groom and his companions who try to enter the bride's home, and her *addooyee* who block the entrance gate until their demand is met. Finally, the groom and his companions either forcefully clear the girls from their way or appease them by gifts and enter her room.¹⁰¹ On this day of her departure, the girls encircled her and sing the following verses;

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
<i>Bunnii bilchaatee guggubachuufii</i>	<i>The coffee is to be over-roasted</i>
<i>Firri qixxaatee gurgurachuufii</i>	<i>Relatives are baking to sell [her]</i>
<i>Anaa gurguruu</i>	<i>Let me be sold [for her/on her behalf]</i>
<i>Alagaan, masaanuun gabaabduu raasaa</i>	<i>An envious alien sways the one with a short stature</i>
<i>Dheertuu gabaabsaa beektuu damaasaa!</i> ¹⁰²	<i>It shortens the tall and ridicules the wise [girl] !</i>

Then they sing these verses to the weeping mother, in away her departing girl is talking to her

<i>Bakka ciisa koo Afaa buufadhuu</i>	<i>Where I sleep put a straw/bed [for your comfort]</i>
<i>Bakka nyaata koo Afaan guuttadhuu!</i> ¹⁰³	<i>For what I eat fill your mouth [with food]!</i>

This means as if her daughter is saying to her, “now I’m gone, you are free to enjoy everything that was mine in this house including my bed and my food.” Next, to the mother,

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
<i>Sila maal seetee</i>	<i>What did you expect?</i>
<i>mangaaggaa raaftee caatiisaa qaamtee</i>	<i>When you chew his [groom's] caat/khat?</i>
<i>Imimmaan sobaa-anuu na 'acophaa, garulee!</i> ¹⁰⁴	<i>I myself can shed crocodile tears, my flesh!</i>

It means, ‘you [the mother] have already agreed to her marriage and now your tears are insincere.

Then, they sing the following verses to the bride:

¹⁰¹ Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan; *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.29-30.

¹⁰² *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.29-30; Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*; Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

¹⁰⁴ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.29-30; Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

Afaan Oromo	Gloss
<i>Waan woggaa tokkoo araddaa ta'ii</i>	<i>For one year be a land, soil</i>
<i>Iddii biqilchi</i>	<i>Grow solanaceous fruits</i>
<i>Kan waggaan boodaa</i>	<i>After a year</i>
<i>haadha ilmaa ta'ii dubbiis liqimsii</i>	<i>Be a mother of a son and turn adult (be wise)</i>
<i>Golan taa'nnii, maal nyaatte? Jedhaa</i>	<i>If you sit in the kitchen, [she] asks 'what did you eat?'</i>
<i>Alan taa'inii, maal yaadde? Jedhaa</i>	<i>If you stay outside, [she] asks 'what did you think?'</i>
<i>Dhaabbii balbalaa toggoo amaatii</i>	<i>Nagging mother-in-law standing on the front door</i>
<i>Waan woggaa tokkosii</i>	<i>For a year</i>
<i>Kennaan nyaadhuusii</i>	<i>Eat if they give you</i>
<i>Jedhan baadhuu</i>	<i>Bear what they say [to you]</i>
<i>Sanaan booda immo jechan baaatinii</i>	<i>Thereafter, bear not what they say [to you]</i>
<i>Kennaa nyaatinii!</i> ¹⁰⁵	<i>Eat not what they give you[be self-reliant]!</i>

The overall process at the bride's home, comes to an end with the blessings of elders. Then, the bridegroom and his companions take the bride on a horse's or mule's back and return to his home where his parents warmly welcome them and provide the bride with fresh milk which she drinks on the spot. The next day, the bridegroom's parents send a message of congratulations to the girl's parents telling them that their girl was innocent and kept her virginity.¹⁰⁶

Haasa'annaa remains the most respected marriage type in Gommaa. It can also be carried out in the absence of either one or both of the would be couples particularly when anyone or both of them are living abroad, in Arab countries. Under such circumstances, the whole process of *haasa'annaa* were implemented except the *Addooyee* song. For that matter, the *Addooyee* song itself has lost its prominence due to the increasing influence of Islam in the area and thus, it is replaced by *Manzumaa* (an Islamic religious song).

B. Farda Hidhaa / karra cufii: -which literary means tying horses/closing the gate, is the type of marriage in which someone who could not marry a girl through *haasa'annaa* due to inability to pay the dowry to her parents or due to old age and etc., gathers his close friends with whom he simply goes to the home of the girl, at night time, without notifying her parents in advance. Then he ties his bridled horse in front of the *karra* or gate of her family's compound while his friends totally besiege the compound itself and also tie their bridled horses. After doing this, all of them speaks with one voice saying, "We have surrounded your compound, your gate is closed; you have

¹⁰⁵*Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.29-30.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid*; Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

no way out; you can't go to your neighbor, nor could your neighbor come to you; we want you to give the hands of your daughter in marriage to the son of Mr. "X." Until you agree and we take her with us, we won't eat, nor drink, and our horses won't be unbridled." It is traditionally unacceptable to refuse such a call, and thus, the girl's family would agree to the marriage.¹⁰⁷ Currently, this type of traditional marriage has ceased to exist in Gommaa due to influence of Islam, the community's outright rejection for such practices, as well as the expansion of education and the subsequent societal awareness on women's rights.

C. Assenna: - is the type of marriage in which a girl who couldn't find a husband in her twentieth or the one whom her parents decided to marry her to someone she didn't like, or for any other reason, decides to run into the house of someone she loved without his knowledge. She would do this in the evening at the time when the boy's mother and other family members are not at home. On her way, she takes *iddii* (*solanaceous fruits*) with her. On her arrival at the boy's house, she would directly enter into the *diinqa/gola* or bedroom or the kitchen and scatters the *iddii* fruits all over the room. When the whole family returns home, she gets out of the place she hid herself and openly declares "*gurbaa kessan jaaladheera, ani harra kaasee kan isaa fi kan kessan*" meaning, "I loved your son, from today on, I am his and also yours." No family dares to throw out such a girl. Therefore, the father of the boy slaughters an old bull for the feast to sanction the marriage.¹⁰⁸ The *asseenna* marriage is still being practiced among the Oromo of Gommaa but it is somewhat modified in a way that fits the current social and religious norms and values. A girl may run into the home of someone she loved if and only if the love is reciprocal, and with his prior knowledge and consent to her action.

D. Abaabbalii: -takes place by the mutual consent of a boy and a girl. It happens when the boy, due to his poverty or his being from a low social caste, couldn't marry a girl of his choice through *haasa'annaa*. Under these or similar circumstances, the boy persuades her to marry him. The girl agrees and runs away with him, mostly without the knowledge of her families. The boy takes her to his own or to his friend's home and then asks his family to intercede with her family. Then both

¹⁰⁷ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.29-30; Informants: Nasir Hajii and Jihad Hassan.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 32; Deressa, "Historical Ecology", p.60; Informants: Nasir & Jihad H.

families negotiate and legalize the marriage.¹⁰⁹ This type of marriage is being widely practiced even today among the local people.

E. Buutii (Abduction): -is carried out in two ways: first, when a boy, who can't marry the girl of his choice for whatever reason, forcefully abducts her without her consent; and secondly, when the boy did the same thing but with the consent of the girl to be abducted. The girl may agree to such arrangement because either she loved him, or when she is left at home and unmarried, or due to various other reasons.¹¹⁰ Now-a-days, the only way a marriage through *Buutii* (Abduction) is sanctioned by the local community is if it is carried out with the consent of the girl.

2.3.2. Traditional Food of Oromo of Gommaa

The Oromo of Gommaa have variety of traditional food that are prepared regularly and also on some unique occasions such as days of religious celebrations, marriage ceremonies, cooperative works, and all other forms of traditional gatherings. The most popular types of meals among the Gommaa Oromo are *marqaa* (Porridge) and *Cuuphaa/cuubaa*.

Marqaa (Porridge): is the most prominent and well-liked meal among the Gommaa Oromo. It is eaten both regularly and also on special occasions, mostly as a breakfast. It is prepared from the flours of maize, *teff*, sorghum, and etc., *Marqaa* is eaten with *qocqocaa*¹¹¹ and/or a spiced butter, mixed with dairy products such as cheese/yoghurt. Among the special occasions when porridge is eaten are during religious celebrations such as the end of a fasting month of *Ramadan*, on the fifth and ninth days of a child birth which are known as *shanan dubartii* (fifth day after childbirth) and *salgan dubartii* (ninth day after childbirth) respectively. But it must be noted that not all families, due to economic reasons, can afford the preparation of top quality *marqaa* in a way described above. There is also a specific type of *marqaa* locally known as *harkisoo*, which is easily prepared from a fresh maize (*boqqollooo asheetii*), and it is a very popular meal among the Gommaa Oromo. *Harkisoo* could be eaten mainly with *qocqocaa* alone or with the combination

¹⁰⁹ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa*, p. 33; Deressa, "Historical Ecology", p.61.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Qocqocaa* is a very delicious mixture of fresh/dried and ground/milled peppercorns and other *mi'essituu*/spices such as garlic (*Qullubii adii/allium sativum*), *dimibilaala* /coriander and etc., (Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan).

of dairy products and enjoyed by all households regardless of their economic status. Similarly, *kijjoo/maroo* is the other popular meal which is made from the same kind of maize and eaten with *qocqocaa* and also other spices.¹¹²

Sirna silgaa or the *silgaa* ceremony is the other traditional practice of the Gommaa Oromo which is celebrated by eating *marqaa*. This is a ceremony undertaken to celebrate when a cow gave birth. Accordingly, the owner of the cow prepares *marqaa* to be eaten with the yoghurt from the milk of the cow. It is traditionally unacceptable to consume the milk of a cow that gave birth without celebrating the *silgaa* ceremony and getting the blessings of the neighbors. For the first five days, the cow's milk is left for the feeding of the newly born calve. Starting from the six day, however, part of the milk is collected in a carefully washed pot for fifteen to twenty-one days and left to ferment naturally/turns into yoghurt and consumed on the *silgaa* ceremony. *Buna qalaa* is also prepared for the feast. On the eve of the *silgaa* ceremony, the owners of the cow invite neighbors from right and left to attend the feast. They also collect green grass and scattered on the surface of their home. After eating from the *marqaa* and *buna qalaa* as well as drinking from the milk and yoghurt, the attendants of the feast never washed their hands. Instead, they rub/wipe their hands on the grass scattered all over the floor, symbolizing their love and appreciation for the cow that enabled them to enjoy the feast. At the end, the attendants shower blessings upon the owners of the cow saying the following:

Afaan Oromo

Loon wal-haa hortu

Mooraa ishee haa guuttuu

Saani aannaan haa kennitu

Muchii afuranu haa guutuu

Aannan elmtuu haa guutu

*Hamaan loon ilaaltu haadoomtu!*¹¹³

Gloss

May the cattle be reproduced/multiplied

May the cattle fill their corral

May the cows give milk

May the four nipples/teats of the cow be filled [with milk]

May the milk fill the milk pot

May the evil eyeing the cattle be doomed!

The *silgaa* ceremony is still being celebrated in rural Gommaa.

Before talking about *Cuuphaa/cuubaa*, it is important to tell about the other two staple foods among the Oromo of Gommaa. It is known as *biddeen/injera*. *Biddeen/buddeena* is a thinly baked bread which is baked on a flat and round shaped clay griddle known as *eelee*. Of course, *biddeen/injera*

¹¹²Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan.

¹¹³ *Ibid; Waajira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, pp. 18-20.

is most widely eaten as the main food throughout Ethiopia. The dough for *biddeen* is mainly prepared from a flour of *teff*, maize and sorghum etc., which is fermented for two or three days in a dough pot locally known as *qodabukoo*.¹¹⁴ *Qixxaa* is the other traditional meal of Gommaa Oromo. It is unleavened bread mostly baked on a small ceramic griddle (*beddee*). Even though it is mostly prepared as a fast food from unfermented dough, of maize, *teff* and etc., so as to meet immediate needs, *qixxaa* is also baked for special events such as religious celebrations and others. It can be eaten alone or with cooked cabbage.¹¹⁵

Cuuphaa/Cuubaa: is the other popular meal among the Gommaa Oromo. It is a newly baked and double-faced *buddeenaal/injera* smeared with butter and *qocqocaa*. *Cuubaa* is mainly eaten on special days such as days of religious celebration, on wedding days, and also when a specially recognized guest/s come to one's home. Among the Gommaa Oromo, *Arafaa/Id-al adaha* is the most cherished and most lavishly celebrated of all the Muslim religious celebrations. Therefore, the food eaten on this day has a typical name known as *Maaddii Arafaa*/ the *Arafaa* meal. *Maaddii Arafaa* include all varieties among the most preferred types of food of the local community including raw meat locally known as *diimina* and served on a single but a very big dish known as *gabataa*, a flat and round shaped wood-plate carved from *Cordia africana* (*Woddesa/Wanza*). The Gommaa Oromo regarded *Maaddii Arafaa* as the one that best reflects their culture and identity.¹¹⁶

2.3.3. Indigenous Knowledge Transfer among the Oromo of Gommaa

Like any other non-literate community, the Gommaa Oromo used to transfer their indigenous knowledge to their children through various oral traditions so that their children may be knowledgeable about their surroundings, their history, their traditional values and norms, as well as moral principles such as respecting the elderly, avoiding immoral acts. They used to teach their children through the medium of stories, puzzles/riddles, proverbs, fables, poems, folktales.¹¹⁷

The most prominent of all these is known as *hibboo* (puzzles/riddles) which involves question and answers. It is kind of jousting/wordplay. Accordingly, the children sit in a circle around the fire, and someone begins saying, "*hibboo*," meaning I'm going to ask you a question, and the responder

¹¹⁴Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee G; *Wajjira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, pp. 18-20.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*; *Wajjira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, p. 17.

¹¹⁷Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan.

says, “hiiph/hibbaka,” meaning I’m ready to answer. Then the first boy may ask him this- “Sulula qal’oo Aradaa Bal’oo” — “Small rift [but] a vast field.” If he got it right, the responder may say, “Qoonqoo fi garaa dha” — “a mouth and a stomach.”¹¹⁸

“Irrii du’a jallii du’a gidduun Jira.” “The one at the top is dead, so is the other at the bottom, I’m in between and alive.” If he got it right, the responder may say, “Nama machallaa uffattee machallarrea chiissee.” “A man wearing a skin sheet (made of hides of cattle) and lying on a skin bed.” If the responder took longer to answer, as a way of prompting him to respond in time, the first says, “gaaffii koo naa galchii harreenkoo fe’isaan duute,” “answer my question otherwise my donkey is dying [tired] of the load.” If he failed to answer it at all, the first boy says the following before telling him the correct answer for the *hibboo*.

Afaan Oromo

Dadhabdeemoo naadeebistee
Galchite, galtee maddifattee
Bakkee abbaa kootii fardi hin dammaqsuu
*An si hin arrabsuu!*¹¹⁹

Gloss

Did you answer me or failed [to answer]
Did you return my trust or you ate it in return?
My father’s field won’t be disturbed by a horse
I won’t insult you.

The Oromo of Gommaa also use proverbs to teach their children about discipline/proper mannerism as well as to be knowledgeable and wise. For instance, the following proverb emphasizes the value of speaking and acting properly. “*Afaan gaariin afaa gaarii caala!*” “A good conversation is better than a good bed!” The next proverb underlies the values of knowing/understanding things in full before taking any action. “*Dhaga’e jettee hinoddeesini, arge jettee hindubbatini, keessoo dubbii utuu hinhubatini.*” “Don’t speak all you heard, don’t tell all you saw, before understanding things in full.”¹²⁰

These and other similar plays and proverbs were and, still are used to teach the children about their history, values, norms and thereby enable them think critically and/or draw analogy between different phenomena.

2.3.4. Social-Cultural Institutions in Gommaa

2.3.4.1. Daboo and Daadoo

The people of Gommaa district have well-organized traditional institutions of collaboration or cooperation among themselves. One of the most important of these traditional institutions is called

¹¹⁸ Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee G; *Waajira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*; *Waajira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, pp. 32-33.

¹²⁰ Informants: Awol A/B and Waaqtolee Galaan; *Waajira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, pp. 36-37.

Daboo. *Daboo* is a group of people/friends and neighbors gathered to perform a certain duty together mainly aimed at supporting each other. Both rich and poor or urban and rural households may benefit from the *daboo* institution. In rural Gommaa, *daboo* is usually practiced at the peak time of agricultural activities or any other activity when there is too much to be done but inadequate labor force. For instance, during times of plowing, planting coffee tree, weeding coffee/crops, harvesting crops, collecting coffee and construction of houses etc., A household which can't do any of these by his own labor force and that of his family members, asks for the assistance of his immediate neighbors and friends. It is also practiced to help the sick and elderly persons even if the latter couldn't reciprocate. Someone who wanted to have a *daboo* has to walk through his own village or neighboring ones, in advance, and ask each household to help him and tell everyone the specific job to be done. When the day arrives, all or part of those called upon voluntarily appear on the working site and help the person, for a quarter or half of a day. After the job is over, the host provides them with food, coffee and *caat/khat*.”¹²¹

Another very similar traditional system of cooperation among the local people through which they assist each other turn by turn is known as *Daadoo*, literally translates as reciprocity. This means, *daadoo*, much more than *daboo*, is a mutual help institution in which members exchange labor for mutual benefit. In *daadoo* cooperation is obligatory and each member is expected to take part in each other's work consistently. Moreover, each member of the *daadoo* is required to provide food and drinks to members of his *daadoo* when they are there to help him. These days, the tradition of *daadoo* is diminishing in Gommaa district.¹²² No doubt that the interactions of members of these mutual help institutions fosters mutual growth and also in enhances their social bonds.

2.3.4.2. *Iddir* and *Iqqub*

The other urban/rural institutions, in Gommaa, from which all members more or less equally benefit are the mutual aid associations such as *Iddir* and *iqqub*. According to Yonas, *Iddir* is a form of self-help association established for the purpose essentially of mutual support at times of bereavement, but also for coordinating efforts to address a variety of community concerns.¹²³ My informants said that *iddirs* are neighborhood burial associations in which both women and men can equally join as members. The rich and poor individuals have the same status in the *iddir*,

¹²¹ Informants: Awol A/B and Waaqtolee Galaan; *Wajjira Aadaafi Aanaa Gommaa*, pp. 36-37.

¹²² Informants: Awol A/B and Waaqtolee Galaan.

¹²³ Yonas, p. 84.

which operates on the basis of elaborate written laws. The first *Iddir* in Gommaa district was the *Fikreselāmiddir* which was established in early of 1940s with each member contributing 0.25 cents per month. The second oldest *Iddir* was *Ya Soddo Maradäjjä Iddir*. It was established in 1945/46 by residents who originally were from Soddo Gurage. Its first president was *Ato Jiru Badasso* and the secretary (*Tsahafi*) was *Ato Garrasu Guyyo*; both were influential elders of the community. During the early years of its formation, the Soddo *Iddir* started as an ethnic-based association involving the Soddo people only. Gradually, it came to accommodate non-Soddo residents.¹²⁴

As said before, the various *iddirs* in Gommaa district and Aggaaro town used to operate with the financial contribution monthly collected from their members, which means they encourage the community to save money for their common good, and each member was given a formally recognized receipt for the he/she contributed each month. In this regard, archival sources indicated that the *Sellässie Zuria Iddir* in Gommaa district Aggaaroo town had a modern receipt, printed by Ministry of Information, which it gives to each one of its members whenever they paid the monthly fee required of them.¹²⁵

Iqub is a saving association where each member agrees to pay periodically into a common pool a small sum so that each, in rotation, can receive one large sum. The number of members of an *Iqub* varies from one to another.¹²⁶ Informants reported that in Gommaa district *iqub* has many economic advantages in that it allows members to collect the pool free of charge whenever they face financial constrains to start a business or to strengthen the already existing one or even for other personal purposes. carryout any project they endeavored.¹²⁷ However, there is no any archival source to indicate when the oldest *iqub* associations in Gommaa district were formed.

2.3.5. Justice System and Indigenous Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

As said before, the *qaalluus* had also played key roles in conflict resolutions. Knutson pointed that the *qaalluus* were also involved in administering justice by applying religious principles, social norms and values, as well as the traditional system of reconciliation of the Oromo society.¹²⁸ This

¹²⁴ Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan.

¹²⁵ See Appendix I, File number ኢድ- 92/2687/1979

¹²⁶ Yonas, p. 84.

¹²⁷ Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan.

¹²⁸ Knutson, *Authority and ...*, pp. 96-110; Informants: Abdo A/R & Mohammed Kemal.

means in addition to their ritual services, the *qaalluus* had also significant social roles in conflict resolutions and thereby keeping peace and stability.

According to the local traditions and Guluma, there existed elders called *Abbaa Jarsaa* in the Oromo kingdom of Gommaa, who were responsible for transmitting the special concerns of the community to the local officials. They used to play the role of settling disputes among the community.¹²⁹ They did not have the power to enforce their decision but they may persuade the community to impose sanction on the offender. However, after the emergence of the Gibe monarchies, administration of justice particularly for serious criminal cases were addressed with punishment by the councilors or the *mootii*. The punishment often ranges from fines in salt or cattle to enslavement and confiscation of the whole property. In some cases, the offenders were even flogged or sent to the *Abbaa Gindoo* (chief jailor) to be jailed or tortured. Here, *Gindoo* refers to two things: first it is a heavy stock to which offenders were chained or tied and tortured; second, it also represented the state prison. In the tradition of Gommaa Oromo, if someone committed a murder, he may be punished by paying a compensation locally known as *guumaa*, which was paid in money, cattle or whatever, to the family and/ friends of the deceased person. Non-authorized, but traditionally accepted, officials known as *Abbaa Ligaas* (murder judges) arranged the payment of the *guumaa* and helping in reconciling the disputants.¹³⁰

Following the further consolidation of Islam, however, the *shari'a* law/Islamic religious law became more dominant than both the secular law (of the king and his officials), and the local customary law of the local elders (*Jaarsaa*). Based on oral traditions, Aman pointed that the *shari'a* law started to be implemented in Gommaa during the reign of Abbaa Reebuu (r.ca.1830-1856) mainly to address certain family matters like marriage, divorce and inheritance. The king, in consultation with the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) nominated the *qādis* (Muslim Judges). There were also times when the *ulama* nominated the *qādis* from among themselves *qādis* but the nominated judge had to get the king's approval. The *shari'a* court stopped functioning following the incorporation of the kingdom of Gommaa by the Shawan conquerors in 1886.¹³¹

¹²⁹Guluma, "Gommaa.....", p. 124; Deressa, "Historical.....", p. 65; Informants: Awol & Waaqtolee.

¹³⁰*Ibid*, p.125; Deressa, "Historical", p. 65; Informants: Awol & Waaqtolee.

¹³¹ Aman, pp. 53-54.

Currently, even though the modern court system is being used in Gommaa, in most cases, the people use traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, in which elders act as local agents of dispute settlements. The local traditions encourage disputants to settle their conflicts on their own through a direct negotiation, but if they failed to do so, they may involve a third party known as *Jaarsa Araaraa*. *Jaarsa araaraa* is a combined word of *Jaarsaa*/elder, and *araaraa*/reconciliation. Hence, *jaarsa araaraa* (also known as *Jaarssummaa*) refers to reconciliation through elders.¹³²

Jaarssummaa can be initiated either by one or both of the disputants or even by the third party who knows the disputants and wanted to reconcile them. The elders usually begin the *Jaarssummaa* proceedings with a *du'a* or prayers in which they ask the creator (*waaqaa* or Allah/God) to be part of the proceedings; appeal to him for peace, health, rain etc., Then they inform both sides to be honest in presenting their cases. If the case is very serious and possibly provocative of further heated argument, the elders may decide to hear the claims of each in the absence of the other and then report his/her claims to the opponent by using a carefully selected words and phrases, but without, of course, distorting the main content of the argument. If necessary, the elders may also ask for witness to testify on the issue under the proceedings. In some cases, the defendants are supposed to prove their innocence by making a solemn oath. If someone falsely swore an oath, but testified against by undercover witnesses, he/she may be ostracized by the society.¹³³

After hearing from both sides, elders propose a solution which they think is good for both, and/or for the harmony of their community. In other words, *Jaarssummaa* also emphasize maintaining social cohesion which is more important to them than a temporary conflict. Thus, the elders try to satisfy some demands of the applicant without inflicting too much harm up on the defendant. At the end of the proceedings, reconciliation is symbolically marked through shaking hands and/or kissing one another by the disputants and forgiving each other's faults.¹³⁴

2.3.6. Development of Modern Infrastructures

With regards to the development of infrastructures, public services and modern facilities in Gommaa, Aggaaro town, exhibited a tremendous change over the years. To begin with road

¹³² Informants: Awol A/Bulguu and Waaqtolee Galaan.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

construction, Abbaa Reebuu (r. 1830-1856), as said before, was the king of Gommaa who is credited with the construction of roads that connected the capital, Sayyoo, with the borderlands.¹³⁵

He had also built the road that linked Gommaa with the kingdom of Jimmaa, which was latter improved by *Ras* Dasta, and then upgraded by the Italian occupation forces which also built the road linking Gommaa with Guumaa. In 1950, *Ras* Mesfin Sileshi got the construction of another road between Gommaa and Jimmaa through Sentema. This road was upgraded to an all-weather gravel road between 1957-1965.¹³⁶ The inner roads in Aggaaro town and the ones connecting the town with Limmu-Saqqaa, and also Jimmaa were asphalted in the 1960s during the reign of *Dajjämäch* Tadesse Inqussillassie, the governor Limmu *Awrajja*. *Dajjämäch* Tadesse was specially credited for the role he played in improving both the inner roads of the town and also the ones connecting it with other towns. Archival sources indicated that the highway between Aggaaro and Geeraa was built in the 1970s by a foreign Company named Zorzi Guiseppe.¹³⁷

A Greek and a resident of Aggaaro town, Mr. Yani Luxriotatos, popularly known as Mussie Yani, was strongly associated with the advent of water supply and electricity in Aggaaro town. He is said to have diverted the Doggaajjaa river and brought water to Aggaaro town through canal in the 1950s, though this didn't last long. It was only in the 1970s (1971/72) that Aggaaro town got potable water services for the first time.¹³⁸ On the other hand, Muse Yani also established a hydro turbine on the Tamsaa river and also diverted the small streams called *Chesechee* and *Quujjoo* to Tamsaa to enforce more power. Since 1947 he began to provide electric light services at night time and for four hours to some selected individual customers from whom he used to collect service. In 1967 the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority had installed a diesel generator and began to provide a regular electric service until mid-night to the residents of Aggaaro town. A 24-hours electric services began in 1988 after a hydro power substation was established in the town.¹³⁹

¹³⁵Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu....", pp. 84-85.

¹³⁶Yonas, p.40; Socio-Economic Profile of Aggaaro Town from 1996-2000, Aggaaro Municipality, 2016, p.17; *Wajjira Aadaa fi Tuuriizimii Aanaa* Aggaaro, p.3; Informants: *Sh/Nasir*, Nasir H & Jihad.

¹³⁷Informants: *Sh/Nasir*, Nasir H & Jihad; *Wajjira Aadaafi....*, p. 21; Socio-Economic, p.19; See Appendix II, Folder no. 48, File number FÄ40/17-6.

¹³⁸ Socio-Economic Profile...., pp. 20-26; Endalu, p.80; *Wajjira Aadaaf Turizimii Aanaa Aggaaro*, p.19.

¹³⁹*Ibid*; Endalu, p.80; *Wajjira Aadaaf Turizimii....*, p.19.

The American Missionary services known as the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) used to give a mobile health services to the residents of Aggaaro town until it established the first permanent clinic in the town in 1955.¹⁴⁰ The first government clinic in Gommaa was established in Aggaaro town in 1948, while the current Aggaaro Health station was established in 1962. Dr. Moggaa Firrissaa and Asrat Dingu were the first health officers at the health station. Yadeta Kana'a, Mangasha Birratu, Taffese Mirago and Yohannes Tsige successively opened the first private clinics in the town. *Ato* Teffese Mirago was also the first person to construct a two story building in Aggaaro and opened clinic on it in the 1950s and later added another similar building.¹⁴¹

Modern Education in Gommaa was preceded by Islamic teachings, and also church education, which is said to have begun following the establishment of the St. George church in 1923. *Ras* Dasta primary school opened in 1947 was the first modern school in Aggaaro town to be followed by Quujjoo primary school in 1950 (a missionary school established by the SIM). Other primary schools emerged in the latter periods: Bulbulo (1968), Kuhe (1972), Jiddaa (1972), Qottaa (1973), Goggaa Kilolee (1973), Aggaaro Junior Secondary School, grade 7 and 8 (1971), Aggaaro secondary school grade 9 (in 1975), and Aggaaro *Kutir Hulet* primary school (1984).¹⁴²

The first telecommunication line between Aggaaro and Jimmaa was introduced by the Italians during their occupation period. But it was in 1954 that both telephone and postal services were opened in Aggaaro town for the services of its residents. The first branch of the Addis Ababa Bank outside the capital was opened in Agaro on 7 January 1965, while the commercial Bank of Ethiopia Aggaaro Branch was opened in 1967.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰Dagim, "A History of Coffee", p. 109.

¹⁴¹ Endalu, p. 86; Socio-Economic Profile....., p.40; Informants: *Sh/Nasir*, Nasir H & Jihad Hassan.

¹⁴²Endalu, p. 100; Dagm, "A History of Coffee", p. 110-111; Socio-Economic Profile....., p.40.

¹⁴³ Dagm, "A History of", p. 109; Endalu, p. 82; Socio-....., p.21; Informants: *Sh/Nasir*, Nasir & Jihad.

CHAPTER THREE

THE OROMO OF GOMMAA FROM THE 1880s-1974

3.1. The Conquest of Gommaa by the Shawan Imperial Forces

The kingdom of Gommaa, which was in the process of consolidation during the reign of Abbaa Reebuu (r.c.1830-1856), began to experience a decline following his death in 1856. Abbaa Reebuu, who had no male son, was succeeded by Abbaa Duulaa, the son of his brother, Abbaa Morkii. Abbaa Duulaa Abbaa Morkii (r.c.1856-1864) was more interested in horse riding than performing the functions of governing the kingdom, which he left to his mother. This event led to the decline in the quality of the kingdom's leadership until he was succeeded in 1864 by Abbaa Jifaar (r.c.1864-1877).¹

Even though Abbaa Jifaar was a capable leader, his reign, unfortunately, however, coincided with two major crises that affected the kingdom. According to Guluma's description, first, the entire Gibe region was struck by epidemic disease which came to the region in two phases in the 1870s and 1890s respectively. The first epidemic, apparently typhus and typhoid fever, is said to have claimed the lives of about half of Gommaa's population between June and December 1878.² This elucidates that on the eve of the Shawan conquest, the Gibe states, including Gommaa, were weakened by a severe pandemic that consumed a considerable degree of their population.

To make matters even worse, the Gibe region faced another major crisis due to the encroachment of the region by two powerful rival forces, Gojjam and Shawa, which were conducting frequent border attacks as well as cattle and slave raids in the region since the 1870s.³ This seemed to have further drained the strengths of these states. Meanwhile, in Gommaa, A/Jifaar was succeeded by Abbaa Booqaa (r. c.1877-1883) who, owing to his immaturity, exercised political power through the regency of his mother, *Gennee Dagoyyittii*. According to local traditions, *Gennee Dagoyyittii* and her administration was disliked by the court officials, the *qoppo*, and also by the larger public.⁴

¹ Guluma, "Gommaa and Limmu...", pp. 138-39; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", pp.135-137.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid*; Informants: *Sh/Nasir J & A/Zinab A/D.*

⁴ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p. 155; Guluma, "Land, ...", p. 142.

The opposition against her seemed to have been aggravated due to her failure to repel the attack from the forces of Gojjam. Both written and oral sources indicated that the forces of Gojjam under *Ras Darasso* began their invasion of the Gibe region in 1881 first by attacking Jimmaa, which agreed to pay tribute to *Ras Darasso* after vacillating for a while. The submission of Jimmaa had dealt a serious blow to the other Gibe Kingdoms given that it dashed out their opportunity to create a united front against common enemy. Guumaa which tried to resist was beaten by *Ras Darasso*, while Geeraa, Gommaa, and Limmu submitted to Gojjam without resistance. The traditions of Gommaa also indicated that their kingdom, mainly armed with traditional weapons, was not prepared for any sort of military confrontation with a rather well armed forces of Gojjam.⁵

On hearing the news of Gojjam's predominance in the Gibe region, Menelik of Shawa sent his famous Oromo general, *Ras Gobena* to the region in 1881 with an order of removing *Ras Darasso*. Accordingly, *Ras Gobena* trooped to the region in December 1881 and met the forces of *Ras Darasso* in Guumaa. *Ras Darasso* not only retreated but also promised not to enter the region again. *Ras Gobena* walked into the Gibe states which submitted peacefully and also agreed to pay tribute to him.⁶ Here, Gojjam and Shawa contested over the control of the rich lands of the Gibe region which originally belonged to others.

After securing the peaceful submission of the Gibe states, *Ras Gobena* reported to Menelik and also alerted him about the possibility of *Ras Darasso's* return with more reinforcement. Soon, Menelik abandoned his campaign to Arsi and marched to the Gibe region where he joined his general, *Ras Gobena*. King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam also arrived in the region to give a battle against his Shawan rival.⁷ On 6 June, 1882 the Shawan army defeated the forces of Gojjam at the battle of Embäbo, in Wallaggaa. King Teklehaymanot of Gojjam was taken prisoner of war by Menelik. Following this, the south western region including the Gibe states came under the control of Menelik.⁸

⁵Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p. 155; Guluma, "Land, ...", p. 142; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab A/D*.

⁶*Ibid*, pp.159-160; Guluma, "Land," p. 138; Bartels, *Oromo Religion.....* p.23.

⁷*Ibid*.

⁸*Ibid*; Guluma, "Land,", p. 145; Mekuria, *Contours of...*, pp.330-331.

The devastating epidemics, internal political decline (succession of incompetent kings to the throne) and military weakness coupled with the external incursions by Gojjam and Shawa since the 1870s have contributed to Gommaa's failure to defend itself from the Shawan conquest in the 1880s. Their failure to provide the necessary leadership in the face of external attack seemed to have further deteriorated the political position of the queen mother and her son, A/Booqaa. After this, the high ranking dignitaries of Gommaa, the *qoppo*, removed them from power and exiled them to Kafa around 1882.⁹

Soon, the *qoppo* had chosen a famous warrior in the form of Abbaa Duulaa as a king. Even though Abbaa Duulaa was a member of the ruling Awalani clan, he did not belong to the family of the preceding king, Abbaa Booqaa. He was rather the son of Abbaa Qerreppe, who was a political advisor to three kings of Gommaa from the 1850s to the late 1870s. Thus, the reputation of Abbaa Duulaa as a warrior and his politically active family background put together, created a significant hope in Gommaa that his leadership might restore the lost dignity of the kingdom.¹⁰ Whether Abbaa Duulaa lived up to the people's expectations is to be seen in the next few paragraphs, but his appointment as a king marked the end of a family dynasty which stayed in power since the emergence of the kingdom back in the first half of the eighteenth century.¹¹ This dynastic change in the kingdom took place amidst a confusion with its political independence curtailed and its status reduced to a tributary state.

3.2. The Immediate Aftermath of the Shawan Conquest

Ras Gobena is said to have won the peaceful submission of the Gibe region, Wallaga and Illubabor, after promising local autonomy to the rulers of these areas. Their peaceful submission seemed to have enhanced *Ras* Gobena's status in the eyes of Menelik who is said to have rewarded him the governorship of the southwestern region including the Gibe states. Menelik even went to the extent of appointing *Ras* Gobana as the *negus* (king) of Kafa, a province which was not yet conquered.¹²

⁹ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab A/D*; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.142; Guluma, "Land,", p. 142.

¹⁰*Ibid*; Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.142.

¹¹Guluma, "Gommaa ...", p.142; Mohammed, p.198; Informants: *Sheikh Nasir J & A/Zinab A/D*.

¹²Mohammed, P.199; Bahru Zewde. *A History of Modern Ethiopia (1855-1991)* (Athens, London and Addis Ababa, 2001), P.61; Guluma, "Gommaa and ...", pp. 155-160; Guluma, "Land, ...", p. 145.

The immediate aftermath of the Shawan conquest of the Gibe states, particularly between 1882-1886, was characterized by an indirect rule. Thus, the Gibe kings continued in power with their local authority remaining, more or less, intact, each paying tribute to king Menelik. No Shawan soldiers were stationed in these states until 1886.¹³ Thus, in the first three years of their conquest, the Shawans were only collecting tribute without intervening in the existing socio-political culture of Gommaa which remained intact both for the kings and the ordinary people.

The brief period of the Shawan indirect rule over the Gibe states but Jimmaa, came to an end in 1886 when Menelik not only stripped *Ras* Gobena of the title of *negus* but also removed him from the administration of the Gibe region.¹⁴ Although there is no clear evidence showing the relationship between the two, the removal of *Ras* Gobena was followed by a spontaneous rebellion in all Gibe states except Jimmaa.¹⁵

Presumably the local people must have rightly suspected that with the man that promised them autonomy and kept it until 1886 gone, the next step would surely be a complete loss of their autonomy and that may have prompted them to an open rebellion against the conquerors. The Shawan forces responded harshly to these rebellions. Mohammed rightly stated that following the rebellion, the rulers (*mootiis*) of Limmu, Gommaa, Guumaa, and Geeraa were imprisoned by the Shawan soldiers and put under the custody of Abbaa Jifaar II.¹⁶ The fact that Abbaa Jifaar was put in charge of his former equivalents not only revealed his treachery against them, but also the high degree of trust Menelik had in him.

3.3. The Impacts of the Shawan Direct Rule over Gommaa

3.3.1. Political and Economic Impacts of the Shawan Conquest

In 1886, Menelik appointed his nephews named *Dajjäzmäch* Bashah Abboyye, as the governor of Gommaa and Geeraa, and his brother *Dajjäzmäch* wolda Giorgis Abboyye as the governor of Limmu. Guumaa was put under *Dajjäzmäch* Tasama Nadaw. *Dajjäzmäch* Bashah led about ten thousand Shawan soldiers into the small kingdoms of Gommaa and Geeraa. His brother, *Dajjäzmäch* wolde Giorgis entered Limmu with about sixteen to twenty thousand soldiers.

¹³Guluma, "Gommaa...", p. 161; Guluma, "Land, ...", pp. 138,147; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

¹⁴ Mohammed, p. 199; Guluma, "Gommaa...", p.162; Guluma, "Land, ...", p. 148.

¹⁵*Ibid*, p.200.

¹⁶*Ibid*; Informants: *Sheik Nasir Jamal and A/Zinab A/Dagaa*.

Similarly, *Dajjāzmāch* Tasmaa settled his nearly fifteen thousand soldiers in Guumaa.¹⁷ This event marked two things: First, with Gommaa and Geeraa merged, four of the former Gibe states were reorganized into three, each one having its own governor. Secondly, the Shawans forces assisted by their soldiers practically established their direct rule over these lands.

After setting up his headquarters at Kire, on the Gommaa-Limmu borders, *Dajjāzmāch* Bashah ordered A/Duulaa, the reigning king of Gommaa, to come and submit to him. As said before, the warriors and dignitaries of Gommaa had put a significant trust in their king, A/Duulaa (r.1882-1886) to defend the kingdom. Despite their expectations, however, the king quarreled with the *qoppo* (council), ignored their advice and secretly submitted to the Shawan forces, and soon fled to Limmu where he joined *Dajjāzmāch* Bashah.¹⁸

On hearing A/ Duulaa's departure, a man named Saade'o Giddiboo (also known as Abbaa Booraa), whom the king had previously exiled to Kafa, returned to Gommaa and assumed the leadership. Having rallied the people around himself, he declared a *jihad* against the Shawan forces of *Dajjāzmāch* Bashah, whom he fought at the battle of Malkaa Tijjee, near Aggaaro town. In this disastrous battle for both parties, A/Booraa lost his life, while Bashah Abboyye suffered a huge loss of about 1000 dead, and thus retreated to Limmu,¹⁹

He stayed for about a year in Limmu. In 1887 he returned to Gommaa with more reinforcements from his brother's (woldaGiorgis') army. It is reported that despite their lack of a strong leadership, the people of Gommaa once again put up a strong resistance against the forces of Bashah Abboyye, though this time around, the latter's army defeated Gommaa's small army at a place called Bakkee Booraa. After recapturing Gommaa, Bashah Abboyye established a garrison at Sayyoo, the capital of Gommaa and gave the Oromo town the Amharic name *Manageshā* to symbolize his victorious return to the area which he had left in a huge loss a year earlier.²⁰

Besides Bashah's stronger army, Gommaa's military failure must have also contributed to its defeat. *Dajjāzmāch* Bashah stationed thousands of Shawan soldiers at his center of Sayyoo in

¹⁷ Guluma, "Gommaa...", pp.167-169; Guluma, "Land, ..." p.148; Mekuria, *Contours...*, pp.342-343.

¹⁸*Ibid*; Deressa, "Historical ...", pp. 38-39.

¹⁹*Ibid*, p.170; Guluma, "Land, ...", p.150; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

²⁰*Ibid*; Mekuria, *Contours...*, pp.342-343.

Gommaa. The settlement of imperial soldiers was followed by the introduction of a new socio-economic and political system in the conquered regions. Accordingly, all of the Gibe states, except Jimmaa, were annexed by the Shawan forces and fell under a feudal administration that involved a new system of land-tenure called the *Naftaññä-gabbär* system. The term '*gabbär*' means one who pays tribute to a superior person, institution or state, whereas '*naftaññä*' means soldiers and soldier-settlers who were stationed there to assist the governors in ruling the new provinces.²¹ But before delving into the *naftaññä-gabbär* system, we need to complete the remaining story of Bashah Abboyyee, who despite his major victory at Bakkee Booraa, failed to pacify the rebellious population of Gommaa.

In 1888, another rebellion caused by the harsh and repressive rule of the *naftaññä* settlers, broke out in Gommaa. It is even more interesting to find out the immediate cause of the rebellion which, according to the local traditions, and also to Guluma was the confiscation of Abbaa Boosoo's horse by the Shawan settler soldiers. Abbaa Boosoo is said to have appealed to *Dajjämäch* Bashah for the return of his horse. Even though the latter ordered his soldiers to return the horse, the soldiers had deliberately killed it, and this incident prompted Abbaa Boosoo to call up on the local people to rebel against the Shawan rule.²²

According to Guluma, in his call for a rebellion against the Shawan rule, Abbaa Boosoo said the following to his people: "I wanted to pay tribute and live in peace with the Amhara. But they refused and killed my 'brother' (read my horse). Therefore, all of you, who support me, shave your hair for me."²³ The people of Gommaa who seemed to have longed for a leader that could deliver them, were happy to find one in the form of this warrior, Abbaa Boosoo. Under his leadership, they began to attack the Shawan soldiers in different parts of the kingdom until the latter were confined to the besieged camp of Bashah Abboyyee at Sayyoo. The Shawan forces stayed in their besieged camp at Sayyoo for the next five months until they were rescued by the combined forces

²¹ Guluma, "Land...", pp.168, 189; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa: AAU Press, 2nd edition, 2002), p.88; Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 229.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 150-151; Guluma, "Gomma ...", pp. 170-172; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

²³ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Gomma and Limmu....", pp. 170-172; Informants: *Sh/Nasir and A/Zinab*.

of *Dajjāzmāch* Wolde Giyorgis of Limmu and Abbaa Jifaar of Jimmaa who came to the area on the order of Menelik.²⁴

Both written and oral sources are silent on the specific circumstances under which the Shawan forces were rescued. However, it is not impossible to assume that the rebellious people of Gommaa were brutally crushed and their status worsened due to the oppression and exploitations of the Shawan soldiers and settlers. Anyway, the first major outcome of A/Boosoo's rebellion was that Bashah Abboyye was removed from his governorship and replaced by another Shawan general in the form of *Fitāwrāri* and later *Ras* Demissew Mekonnen (r.1889-1900), who finally subdued the rebellion and ruled Gommaa and Geeraa for the next twelve years. Having stationed at Qottaa as his center, *Ras* Demissew had tried to involve some local elites into the administration of Gommaa.²⁵

Coming back to the *naftaññä-gabbär* system, some elders of Gommaa recounted that under this system, the *naftaññä* (armed settlers) shared both the land and the people among themselves. Being on their own land, the local people became servants of the imperial settler soldiers or the *naftaññä* and the Church to whom they were required to pay regular tributes and also render free labor services.²⁶ The Shawan rulers implemented this by confiscating two thirds of the land and dividing it, along with its people, to the *naftaññä* settlers in accordance with their title/ranks; while leaving the other one-third under the local chiefs, who later came to be known as *baläbbäts*.²⁷

Thus, in the conquered regions, the *naftaññä-gabbär* system entailed, as Crummey put it, “the parceling out of the conquered lands and peoples in tributary relationships to the groups and individuals who conquered them.”²⁸ The *naftaññä* (armed settlers) were garrisoned at strategic places (*katamas*) to suppress any resistance and ensure imperial control as well as to facilitate the transfer of resources to the imperial center. Since the soldiers were not salaried, the *gabbär-*

²⁴ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*; Guluma, “Land,”, pp. 151-152; Deressa, “Historical”, p.39.

²⁵ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaroo*, pp.5-7; Guluma, “Land,”, pp.150-151.

²⁶ Informants: *Sh/Nasir Jamal & A/Zinab A/Dagaa*.

²⁷ Markakis, J. & Nega A, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press,1986), pp.23-24; Gadaa Malba, *Oromia: An Introduction to the History of the Oromo people* (Khartoum, 1988), P.65; Crummey, *Land and Society Christian Kingdom.....*, p. 223.

²⁸ Crummey, *Land and Society Christian Kingdom.....*, p.229.

naftaññä system was used as a means to pay the soldiers and also maintain the imperial treasury.²⁹ Hence, it is possible to say that the expression *naftaññä-gabbär* system explained the relationship between the Shawan conquerors and the conquered people of the south and southwestern Ethiopia, who were reduced to the status of *gabbär*, and also subjected to severe oppression in the hands of their conquerors. Tesema asserted that the *naftaññä* were provided all their needs by the labor of the local peasants in accordance with Menelik's regulation of 1892. This regulation established the standard of what was expected from the conquered people/*gabbärs*, who were required to pay annual tribute in kind and render free labor services to the *naftaññä*.³⁰

Accordingly, the peasants in the conquered regions including Gommaa, were forced to pay tithe (*asrat*), meaning one tenth of their produce as a tribute to the state. In reality, however, the tax officials used to assess the *asrat* based on assumption or arbitrarily fix the amount of tribute one had to pay, which means they could either reduce or increase the amount of tax to be paid. This put the local peasants in a weaker position and thus, they used to do their best in winning over the tax assessors through various means including serving them, at their homes, with the best of food and drinks.³¹

In addition to paying tributes, each *gabbär* had to offer to his master a variety of free labor services including arduous works such as ploughing and harvesting on the field some day in the week, building houses and fences; repairing bridges, building churches, feeding the *naftaññäs'* horses and mules. Similarly, the *gabbärs'* wives and children had to serve the wives of the *naftaññä* by fetching water, grinding grains, collecting fire wood, washing clothes and etc., Moreover, the *gabbär* had to offer gifts to his master on special days of celebrations such as birth days and wedding ceremonies of the *naftaññä* family. He was also expected to collect *geeshoo*, a plant which his masters used for making local alcoholic drink called *farso* or *xallä*.³²

²⁹ Markakis, J, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2011), pp. 91, 97; Edmond J. Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.39; Marcus, Harold G. *A History of Ethiopia* (University of California Press, 1994), pp.105-106.

³⁰ Tesema, "The Political Economy of Western Central", p.165.

³¹Samuel Mamo, "The Administration of Arjo (South Eastern Wallaga) 1882-1936" (M.A. Thesis, Department of History Addis Ababa University, 1998), pp.57-58; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p.87; Deressa, "Historical Ecology", p. 233; Informants: *Sh/Nasir Jamal & A/Zinab A/Dagaa*.

³² Samuel, pp.57-58; Deressa, "Historical", p. 233; Informants: *Sh/Nasir J& A/Zinab A/D*.

The informants of the study added that the feeding of the *naftaññäs*' pack animals was often followed by more harassment of the *gabbär* by the *naftaññäs*. This was because the *naftaññäs* used to measure the belly of their mules/horses both at the time when they send them away to be fed and then after they came back. If the *naftaññäs*, after measuring the bellies of their animals, felt that their animals were not well fed, then a harsh punishment awaits the *gabbär* in charge of feeding the animals. The *gabbärs* were also expected to congratulate their *naftaññä* masters on the days of Christian religious celebrations and offer them gifts.³³

Following the defeat of Abbaa Boosso's rebellion, the status of Gommaa is said to have been changed into '*mäd-beet*' (royal "kitchen") meaning large tracts of land in Gommaa became the property of members of the royal family and were administered by their representatives (*mislanes*) who used compulsory labor to get the lands farmed, and then send the harvest to their patrons. My informants verified that Gommaa's new status put some of its richest coffee lands under the control of the imperial court,³⁴ which means these lands were totally left to serve the imperial court.

Guluma stated that due to the imperial court's special interest over the region, there was a quick succession of Shawan officials appointed to administer Gommaa which not only allowed the indigenous elite to have a stronger role in the administration of their territory, but also alleviated the exploitation of the peasants by the imperial soldiers. For instance, the successors of *Ras Demissew* (r. 1889-1900) as governors of Gommaa for the next two decades stayed in power for not more than an average four years and thus were not able to bring a significant change in the administrative system of Gommaa.³⁵

The local traditions corroborated the quick succession of governors, but they, as we shall see in the next paragraph, refuted Guluma's claim that the situation had partially mitigated the exploitation of the peasants by the imperial soldiers. According to the traditions, *Ras Demissew*'s reign was far better than his predecessor except that, during his reign, a highly contagious disease that killed both humans and cattle happened. Then came *Dajjzmäch* Alamaayoo who served as

³³Informants: *Sh/Nasir J & A/Zinab A/D*; Deressa, "Historical", p. 233; Samuel, pp. 52, 57-58.

³⁴ Guluma, "Land....", pp.151-152; Bahru, 2002, p.92; Deressa, *Ibid*; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

³⁵Guluma, "Land,", pp. 151-152 & 198.

a governor only for one year and his reign coincided with the advent of the plague known as *Hidär Bashtä* which killed a large number of human and cattle population.³⁶

The problem with these traditions is that they are not specific on the chronology of events. For instance, it is not clear whether the traditions were talking about the same *Hidär Bashtä* which was famously known in Ethiopian history as the “Great Famine” (1889-1892) that reached the Gibe region around 1890.³⁷ If they were referring to the Great Famine, their description better fits the reign of *Ras Demissew* than that of *Dajjämäch Alamaayoo*.

Anyway, according to the traditions, the quick succession of the governors of Gommaa was attributed to the continuous resistance of the local *qoros* (local chiefs), but it didn’t make life any easier for the local peasants, as Guluma claimed above. Instead, suggested, my informants, the exploitation of the *gabbär* by the *naftaññäs* was particularly harsh during the reign of all governors of Gommaa that served between *Ras Demissew* (r.1889-1900) and *Ras Dastaa Damtew* (r. 1920-c.1928). The most notorious of these governors were *Abbaa Wuqaw Berru*, *Dajjämäch Wolde Yohannes* and *Dajjämäch Wasane*. These governors are said to have governed Gommaa with an iron fist and caused an immense sorrow on the local people.³⁸

It was them, said the informants, who despite collecting tax in kind, also compelled each household to feed a minimum of two settler soldiers. They also evicted some of the local peasants from their land and reduced them to tenancy. Immediately before the coming of *Ras Dasta* as a governor, the situation was unbearable for the local people who were sick and tired of the endless free labor services to the settler soldiers. The people had to undergo a severe punishment for the slightest delay in fulfilling their duties, and the punishment often included tying the “wrong doers” with iron chains and torturing them physically. It was only after the advent of *Ras Dasta* as a governor, that the people of Gommaa felt some kind of respite from the harsh treatment of the *naftaññäs*. *Ras Dasta* is said to have banned such inhumane treatment and significantly alleviated the burdens of the local people. He reduced the amount of annual tribute and the number of settler soldiers in Gommaa, and even reinstated the lands of some local peasants which had been

³⁶ *Wajjira Aadaa fi Tuuriizimii Bulchinsa Magaalaa Aggaaroo*, pp.5-6.

³⁷ Guluma, “Land, Agriculture ...”, pp.135-137.

³⁸ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab; Wajjira Aadaa fi*, Aggaaroo, pp. 5-7.

appropriated by officials.³⁹ It seemed that the local people had a relatively positive and/or better memory about the reign of *Ras Dasta* than any other Shawan governors of Gommaa.

The *gabbär* system had also a significant political impact on the former *Abbaa Qoros*, later renamed *baläbbäts* (indigenous elites) who not only lost their political power but also became subordinates to the *naftaññä*. Yet, they retained a tenth of the state tax which allowed them to secure a higher status in the socio-economic hierarchy.⁴⁰ My informants pointed that the greater majority of the *baläbbäts* remained loyal to the central government. This enabled them to accumulate wealth and additional land through purchase and even by taking over the ones vacated by some *gabbärs* who fled away resenting the whole system.⁴¹ It is evident from the above description that the *baläbbäts* of Gommaa served as instruments of the imperial domination, which seemingly made them very unpopular among the local peasants.

Although, the *gabbär* system is said to have extremely been ruthless and exploitative in nature, it didn't take away the land from the local peasants. Instead, the *gabbärs* retained their land holdings. As a confirmation for their ownership of the land, they also possessed a tax receipts, for paying tribute to the *naftaññäs*.⁴² This means the *gabbärs* had a relative security of tenure.

Nevertheless, the status of the *gabbärs* deteriorated after the 1909-1910 land proclamation which introduced a new and more exploitative land tenure known as *Qalad* system. The *qalad* system involved the measurement and classification of land into private and state domains, and its redistribution on the basis of military, political and religious services to the central government. This land proclamation changed the status of the local peasants from *gabbär* to tenants, also called *cisäyñä*,⁴³ which means by the *qalad* system, the local free peasants were reduced into tenancy. The land measurement put two-third of the land under the state control and left the other one-third

³⁹Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab; Waajira Aadaa fi*, Aggaaroo, pp. 5-7.

⁴⁰ Guluma, "Land...", p. 168; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p.91; Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last*, p.110; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

⁴¹ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Guluma, "Land, ...", p.188; Tesema, "The political Economy ...", p. 196; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, pp. 88-89; Samuel, pp.57-58.

to the indigenous elites- the *baläbbäts* (the former *abbaa qoros*).⁴⁴ The land which became the exclusive property of the imperial government was divided into two: *Madariyä* and *Samon*. While *madariyä marét* was rewarded as a gift, in lieu of salary, to the *naftaññä*/soldiers and other officials who offer judicial, administrative, or military services to the state; the *Samon* land was given to the clergies and church officials. According to kidane, the church land called *samon* was “land held by peasants who pay tribute to the church rather than taxes to the state.”⁴⁵

Archival sources depicted that an Orthodox church in Gommaa had a land on which it collected tributes from the local people. Accordingly, the master priest of the St. Mikael church at Qottaa *qéssä gäbäz* Wolde Medihin Gebrewold administered a tributary land, in the name of the church, and he used to collect tributes from the local people.⁴⁶ The *qalad* system was implemented in different parts of the Gibe region at different times based on the strength and/or weaknesses of the settler soldiers and the level of resistance of the local elite. For instance, in Gommaa, it started to be implemented in late 1910s and early 1920s but delayed until the 1940s due to the strong oppositions from both the local *baläbbäts* and the *naftaññä*.⁴⁷

When the system started to be implemented in Gommaa later in the 1940s, it is said to have classified land into three categories: *lam marét* (fertile land), *lam-taf marét* (semi-fertile), and *taf marét* (unfertile land). *Lam marét* (fertile land) paid the highest and *taf* (unfertile land) the lowest rate of tax. As the former category of land tended to be occupied mostly by peasants, the burden of taxation thus fell most heavily on them.⁴⁸ The vast land of Gommaa came under the *lam marét*.⁴⁹ This means, the peasants of Gommaa had to pay the highest rate of tax.

The elders of Gommaa recounted that the redistribution of land was first conducted only on the basis of estimation taken at an eye glance or just through physical observation made by the concerned officials rather than by the standard measurement of *qalad*. The land measured in this

⁴⁴Guluma, “Land, ...”, p.188; Tesema, “The political...”, p. 196; Bahru, *A History...*, 2002, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁵*Ibid*, p.193, Tesema, *Ibid*; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p. 89; Kidane Mengisteab, *Ethiopia: Failure of Land Reform and Agricultural Crisis* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 50,58.

⁴⁶Archival center of Aggaaro Municipality, File number-44/6/11/44/1941 E.C.

⁴⁷ Guluma, “Land, Agriculture and Society.... ”, pp.196-199.

⁴⁸*Ibid*; Bahru, *A History of Modern.....*, 2002, pp. 89-90; Tesema, “The political”, pp.166-167.

⁴⁹ Informants: Yishaq Kanno and Hafiz A/Giddii.

way was redistributed mainly to the government officials from the north and the local *baläbbäts*. It is said that at first, the need to find extra land under the control of individuals and redistribute it to other tax paying individuals was the objective of the land measurement in Gommaa. Nevertheless, the implementation of the *qalad* system on the lands of the local peasants was delayed due to strong resistance of the local elites. Thus, at first, the land measurement was confined to the *taf marét*/uncultivated land under the settler soldiers. However, after delays for few months, the government officials forcefully implemented the *qalad* system on individually owned private lands and the outcome was a total disaster for the local peasants.

Basha Takolla was the official in charge of the land measurement and its redistribution in Gommaa. The elders of Gommaa had an unpleasant memory of this man, whom they accused of carrying out the land measurement through unethical manners that combined physical and psychological harassment of the local peasants. The officials pushed the lands of the local peasants from their original places to other agriculturally unfit areas. *Balämbäräs* Dubbale and Bashä Hayile were also among the other officials who measured lands in Gommaa by using rope as a standardized instrument.⁵⁰ The elders added that the implementation of the *qalad* system left a large number of their people as landless tenants and enriched the Amhara settler soldiers.

It also resulted in the privatization of more lands not only by the settler soldiers, but also by the local *baläbbäts*. But the *naftaññä* benefitted the most from the *qalad* system and hence, were transformed from being tax collectors to big landlords.⁵¹ My informants indicated that the local peasants who, owing to the *qalad* system, became tenants, had no legal documents/tax receipts showing their attachment to the land they cultivated. Instead they paid rent and/or tax to the land owners up on whose land they settled and worked on.⁵² This means the tenants did not have security of tenure.

Written sources also depict that those peasants who lived on *madariyä marét* had no claim on the land but lived and worked on it based on the will of the landlords who had the right to impose difficult conditions on them or even evict them. Moreover, it was incumbent for the tenant to work

⁵⁰Informants: Yishaq Kanno and Hafiz A/Giddii.

⁵¹*Ibid*; Gulumma, "Land,", pp.193-95.

⁵²*Ibid*.

on the *hudäd* (government land), the produce of which was sent to the palace granary. The overall process of surplus appropriation was carried out by stationing soldiers and assigning government agents called *Mislene* to supervise the fulfillment of labor obligation as well as to take other punitive measures.⁵³

This means any form of disobedience or timewasting entails severe punishment on the tenants. It is said that tenancy was unveiled in Gommaa mainly in two ways: one was share cropping (*ikul aräsh*) in which the tenant that settled on the landlord's land and provided all the necessary inputs by the lord, was required to pay half of his produce, as rent, to the landlord. Under this condition, it is clear that the tenant invested his labor only. Thus, part of the tenants in Gommaa were share croppers or (*ikul aräsh*) giving half or fifty percent of their produces to the landlords at the end each year. There were also cases in which some of the tenants give up nearly three-quarters of their produce. In addition, these tenants were also required to perform different kinds of works for their landlords, including cultivating the land of landlords, constructing homes and fences for nobles, and performing all other activities they were ordered to do, without any pay in return.⁵⁴

The other form of tenancy in Gommaa was *Irbo* which means one-fourth. Under this condition, the tenant provided his own inputs such as seeds, oxen and others and then cultivates the landlord's land, after which he was expected to pay a quarter of his produce to the landlord. However, in actual fact the tenant pays more than that. For instance, if the tenant produced ten *quintäls* of maize, there are times, pointed the informants, when he ends up with only two *quintäls* of maize having paid the rest in the form of tax and also other untitled methods to the landlord. There were also tenants who entered into contract with their lords to pay *sisso* or one-third of their produces as tax to the lords.⁵⁵

Due to the *qalad* system and the subsequent process of land sale, local peasants were forced to buy their own land and those who could not afford became tenants. However, it must be noted that even before the advent of the *qalad* system in Gommaa, there were peasants and/or land holders who, as pointed by Deressa, lost their lands after being accused of tax delinquency, or

⁵³Tesema, "The political", pp.196-201; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p. 87.

⁵⁴ Informants: Yishaq Kannoo & Hafiz A/Giddii.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

failure to pay tax in time. For instance, in 1928 *Dajjāzmāch* Wossane (r. 1907-1913) claimed the tax payment of dispersed peasants of Gommaa living over 86 *gāshās* of land and then took over the land of about 300 peasants whom he reduced into tenancy under his control.⁵⁶

Table-1: List of the major *Abbaa Lafaa*s/*Baläbbäts*/Landlords in Gommaa

	Name of land lord	Size of possessed land in <i>Gāshā</i>
1.	<i>Gräzmāch</i> Abbaa Dilbi A/Kaabe	141
2.	Abbaa Milkii Hajii	47
3.	Abbaa Milki A/Dhasa	136
4.	Abbaa Waarri A/ Kaabee	167
5.	Abbaa Daafis A/Jobir	280
6.	<i>Gräzmāch</i> A/Shifa A/Foggi	58
7.	<i>Qañāzmāch</i> Abbaa Waarri A/Waajji	185
8.	Abbaa Jihad A/Garo	69
9.	Sh/ Ahimed A/Jobir	67
10.	<i>Gräzmāch</i> Abbaa Fiixaa A/Boora	90
11.	<i>Gräzmāch</i> Abbaa Bulgu A/Kaabee	44
12.	<i>Gräzmāch</i> Abbaa Tamam A/Garo	21
13.	<i>Fitāwrāri</i> Abbaa Garo A/Kaabee	149

Source: Deressa, “Historical Ecology and Ethnography.....”. pp. 252-253.

Moreover, as we can understand from table-1 above, the family and descendants of the dominant Oromo clans in Gommaa, Awalani and Jidda, are said to have controlled land as hereditary (*rist*). For instance, A/Jobir A/Lubbu was a prominent land owner from the Awalani clan. From the Jidda clan, *Fitāwrāri* A/Garo A/Kaabee and his brother, *Qañāzmāch* A/Waari A/Kaabe were the well-known land owners in Gommaa right up to the outbreak of the 1974 revolution.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Deressa, “Historical Ecology and Ethnography.....”, p.233.

⁵⁷Informants: Alemayo, A/Maccaa & Ahmed A/G; Archival center of Aggaaro Municipality, File number-3394/2/1940 E.C.

To sum up land proclamation of Menelik II and the *qalad* system that followed had significant negative impacts on the Gommaa Oromo. It alienated them from their land and turned them from private land owners to landless tenants. The land measurement also either dislocated or changed the local peasants' land into small and fragmented plots which were agriculturally not conducive to work on them. It also promoted privatization of land in which land sale became common.

The other major impact of the Shawan conquest of Gommaa was its effect on trade, which along with agriculture, as stated earlier, was the basis of Gommaa's economy. Informants stated that the stationing of the Shawan settlers/soldiers at Sayyoo following the conquest, had boosted its commercial significance, even though the smooth conduct of the trade was temporarily affected due to the successive rebellions of the local people. However, *Ras Demissew's* shift of his center from Sayyoo to Qottaa led to the decline in the importance of Sayyoo while enhancing Qottaa's prominence as a market center.⁵⁸

All the Shawan governors of Gommaa from *Ras Demissew* to *Ras Dastaa Damtaw* made their political center at Qottaa, and hence, it became an important political, commercial and religious center in Gommaa, until it was latter eclipsed by Aggaaro town. Cattle, grains and butter were among the major trade items at the Qottaa market, which was attended not only by the merchants of the neighboring Oromo states but also by foreign merchants mainly Arabs. The importance of the Qottaa market declined due to *Ras Dastaa's* shift of his center first to Daalachoo, and then to Aggaaro. His move to Aggaaro enhanced the commercial importance of the town, and also led to the emergence of various market stations in the town based on the major types of items sold in them.⁵⁹ Since then, added the informants, Aggaaro became the leading market center in Gommaa, and as a result its weekly market on Tuesday (*Gabaa Maaksaño*) and Geembee's market on Monday (*Gabaa Saño*) became the most famous trading centers in Gommaa. The Aggaaro market attracted merchants from the neighboring states and also areas as far as Buunoo Beddellee, Wallaga, and Shawa. Some foreigners including Indian, Arab, Yemeni and Greek merchants also settled in Aggaaro town since the 1920s and engaged in shopping businesses.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Informants: A/Nagaa A/Joobir, A/Milkii A/Dikoo & A/Maccaa A/Raagoo.

⁵⁹*Ibid*; Ephrem, p.17.

⁶⁰*Ibid*; Ephrem, p.17.

Informants also pointed that the Shawan conquest of Gommaa had aggravated the already existing process of slavery and slave trade, which had significant demographic and socio-economic impacts on the local people. It is reported that after the conquest, slave trade in the region increased at such a rapid pace that in the weekly markets, slave children were sold along with commodities like cotton, flour, goats and sheep.⁶¹

A/Jobir A/Lubbuu, a member of the Awalani clan and a famous coffee grower in Gommaa, is said to have abandoned his small coffee farm at Ilbu and went to Kullo and Konta where he bought a large number of slaves and sold them at a high price in Gommaa. This enabled him to accumulate a huge capital which he later invested on his coffee farms largely worked up on by slave labor that numbered up to 500, and this made him the richest coffee farmer in Gommaa in the early twentieth century.⁶² Slavery and slave trade in Gommaa continued, with a brief interruption during the Italian occupation period, until both were officially banned by the Ethiopian government.⁶³ This shows that Menelik's incorporation of the southern region of Ethiopia had intensified slavery and slave trade.

3.3.2. Socio-Cultural Impacts of the Shawan Conquest

It is said that the majority of the people of the south were forcefully incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire. According to Keller, "the state [Ethiopia] was held together mainly by the ethnic hegemony of Shawan Amhara and other ethnic elites who had been assimilated into Ethiopian culture, the myth of a unified Ethiopian nation state."⁶⁴ Though it is debatable, the clause "the myth of a unified Ethiopian nation state," in Keller's statement above, illustrated that Ethiopia as a unified state is not existing through the will of its people, but it is simply an artificial state created by Amhara elites and kept together by force.

The project to build a unified nation, as Clapham remarked, involved the promotion of Amharic as a national language and the expansion of Orthodox Christianity as the state religion, was pushed

⁶¹Informants: A/Nagaa A/Joobir, A/Milkii A/Dikoo & A/Maccaa A/Raagoo.

⁶² *Ibid*; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", p.174.

⁶³*Ibid*; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture...", p. 93.

⁶⁴Edmond Keller, "Regime Change and Ethno-Regionalism in Ethiopia: The Case of the Oromo, in Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville, Red Sea Press, 1998)", p. 111.

at the expense of local culture, religion, and languages,⁶⁵ something indicating the imperial regimes extended cultural and political hegemony over the conquered people.

The elders of Gommaa have unanimously stated that the socio-cultural impacts of the Shawan conquest were no less than the economic and political oppression it brought to them. The elders said, “the Shawan conquest brought to us a new religion that not only threatened our own [Islam] but also consumed much of our lands for the purpose of constructing churches. We were also compelled to help in the construction of churches which we didn’t like to be built on our lands in the first place.”⁶⁶ Yet, due to the establishment of Islam on a strong ground in the Gibe region, the forceful conversion of the local people to Christianity was not successful in the region.

However, the Gommaa Oromo who used to freely practice their religion before the conquest, now came to be second class citizens that appeal to their Christian governors for all forms of infringements against their religious rights.⁶⁷ This is evident, among other things, from archival sources that indicates the application of the Muslims of Aggaaro town to government officials.

The case in point was a coffee pulping machine owned by a certain Greek called Leftre Yani. The machine was not only planted outside of the specific parts of the town allocated for industries, but also with in a distance of few meters away from one of the main Mosques in the town. The Muslims of the town opposed it right from the start and appealed first to the local officials, and then to the governorate general of kafa *Tekläy Gizät*. For many years the Muslims of the town grumbled that the machine affected them through its waste materials, its noisy sound and above all, its vibration which caused a crack to the wall of their Mosque. But their repeated pleas fell on a deaf ear for nearly a decade until 1969 when a meeting of administrative officials presided over by *Dajjämäch* Tsehay Inqusilläsie, the governor General of kafa *Teklay Gizät*, finally ruled in their favor and ordered the dismantling of the machine from the area.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Christopher Clapham, “Controlling space in Ethiopia.” In *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), p. 11.

⁶⁶ Informants: *Sh/Nasir Jamal, A/Zinab A/Dagaa, A/Maccaa A/R & Ahmed A/G.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Aggaaro Municipality, archival center file no. 115, and also no 1550/1904/61; Informants: Nasir Hajji, Jihad Hassan & Misku A/Booqaa.

Despite the fact that the people of Gommaa were predominantly followers of Islam, they were required to present gifts to their masters on the days of Christian religious celebrations, which may be celebrated either monthly or annually. The monthly celebrations were simply named after the prominent local *täbots* (ark), such as *Silässie*/the Trinity, St. George, and St. Mary while the annual holidays/celebrations were New Year celebration day (*enqutätäsh*), *Masqal*/Commemoration of The Finding of True Cross, *Timqat*/Epiphany, *Gannaa*/Christmas and *Fäsikä*/Easter.⁶⁹

The elders of Gommaa further added that the conquest had also affected the viability of the Oromo language in that each official from top to bottom spoke Amharic and as a result we had to deal with our every transaction with them including in matters affecting our life, through interpreters. This situation continued throughout the period of the imperial period and even until the last days of the *Derg* regime.⁷⁰ Thus, it can be concluded that the Shawan conquest and the subsequent incorporation of the people of the south into the Ethiopian Empire had affected their socio-cultural life. It resulted in the continuous marginalization of their language, culture and religion. This, coupled with, the other aforementioned economic and political impacts of the conquest, is undoubtedly at the root of the current unhealthy state of our politics.

3.4. Gommaa Oromo During the Italian Occupation Period (1936-1941)

During the second Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36, fascist Italians defeated the Ethiopian army and entered Addis Ababa in 1936. Soon following their victory of 1936, the Italians proclaimed the establishment of an Italian Colonial Empire known as Africa Orientale Italiana (AOI) or Italian East Africa. The Italian East African Empire encompassed Ethiopia, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea, and it was divided into six autonomous units. The Oromo-Sidamo [Sidama] was one of these administrative units. The administration of the former Kafa *tekläy gizät* fell within the new Italian administrative region of Oromo-Sidama with its capital at Jimmaa town.⁷¹

Having conquered Gommaa and Geeraa in 1937, the Italians reconstituted both under a single administrative entity known as the district of Gommaa and Geeraa (*Residenza del Ghéra e Gómmaa*) which itself was made part of the government of *Governorate della Galla di Sidama*.

⁶⁹ Informants: *Sh/Nasir Jamal & A/Zinab A/D*; Deressa, "Historical Ecology and....", p. 233.

⁷⁰ Informants: *Nasir Hajii, Jihad Hassan & Misku A/Booqaa*.

⁷¹Yonas, p. 18; Bossolasco, *Coffee Production.....*, 2009, pp.22, 42; Dagm, "A History of", p.35.

Aggaaro became the capital of *Residenza del Ghéra e Gómmaa* (the district of Gommaa and Geeraa).⁷²

In Aggaaro town, the Italians stationed a large number of troops mainly their infantry army which was also assisted by a special brigade equipped with heavy weapons. Their army made its base at its first foot hold of Daalachoo, and later shifted to the main office of the governor to Quujjoo missionary school. They built a compressed bridge on the Tamssaa river and setup a *Keellaa* (gate) on the main road to Jimmaa. Major Capitano was appointed as the overall governor of Gommaa and Geeraa, and also the commander of the Italian force stationed there. He was responsible for administering the town and its surroundings.⁷³ This means he was entrusted to quell the resistance movement in the region either peacefully or by use of force.

At this juncture, it would be necessary to briefly look at the relations between the Italian occupation forces and the Gommaa Oromo during the former's stay in Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941. The local traditions pointed that the Italians allowed certain degree of internal autonomy in which they appointed a certain *Fitäwräri* Abbaa Garo A/Kaabee, who collaborated with them, as the governor of Gommaa. Deressa stated that Abbaa Garo A/Kaabee and his brother A/Waarii A/Kaabee collaborated with the Italians and thus were granted the titles of *Fitäwräri* and *Qañäzmäch* respectively.⁷⁴ The local traditions mentioned that *Fitäwräri* A/Garo's appointment as a governor was also based on the huge public support he enjoyed among the local people.⁷⁵

Despite allowing some internal autonomy for the people of the Gibe region, however, the Italians themselves ran courts dealing with all criminals acts which they mainly dealt with based on Italian laws though they sometimes used Ethiopian laws to settle disputes among Ethiopians.⁷⁶ This revealed their lack of trust for the local legal institutions.

Informants indicated that almost all of the Gommaa Oromo didn't regard the Italian occupation forces as their foes, given that they were sick and tired of the exploitative feudal mode of production/ the *gabbär* system imposed up on them by the imperial rule of Ethiopia. The Italians,

⁷²Girum, "A History of Agaro Town (1920s-1980s)", pp.22-23; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁷³*Ibid*; Informants: Nasir H & Jihad Hassan.

⁷⁴*Ibid*; Deressa, "Historical", p.46; Informants: Nasir H & Jihad H.

⁷⁵ Informants: Yishak Kanno A/Garo, Nasir Hajii & Jihad Hassan; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁷⁶ Deressa, "Historical Ecology and", p.46.

who seemed to have known this very well, are said to have taken several positive measures to win the local people to their side. For instance, they ended the old feudal practices of the *gabbär* system, removed/forced out the settler soldiers, the *naftaññä*, ended the exploitative system of peasants' corvee labor and also abolished slavery and slave trade.⁷⁷

The local traditions also added that the Gommaa Oromo were predominantly appreciative of the Italians than the feudal imperial administration given that the Italians appointed the natives of Gommaa in all administrative hierarchy instead of former Amhara/Shawans dominated rulers. They also allowed peasants to cultivate coffee and other cereals on their own land and harvest their own produces.⁷⁸ Such measures by the Italians enabled them to gain popularity among the oppressed sections of the society including the Gommaa Oromo. Thus, there is no wonder if the local people welcomed the Italian aggressors as 'Liberators,' than conquerors.

This being said however, the traditions indicated that the Amharic speaking settlers and some other indigenous individuals particularly *baläbbäts*, who benefited from the Ethiopian imperial system, resisted Italian rule from the very beginning. Initially the role of the local individuals was limited to provision of logistics and other supplies to the Amharic speaking fighters. Among these local individuals was A/Milkii A/Waajjii who regularly provided all forms of support including provision to the patriotic forces that were hidden in the dense forest along Gommaa and Geeraa border. Even though they had adequate intelligence information on him, they Italians proposed reconciliation with A/Milkii but the latter is said to have turned down the call for peace.⁷⁹

The limited resistance against the Italians in Gommaa is said to have continued until the coming of *Ras* Emiru who, according to my informants, arrived in Gomma and recruited many followers from local residents.⁸⁰ After hearing *Ras* Emiru's arrival in Geeraa, Major Capitano, the governor, is said to have first asked for the peaceful submission of *Ras* Emiru, but when the latter refused, the Italians fought him at the battle field called *Dirree Agaloo* in Geeraa, thereby forcing him to flee Geeraa and retreat to kafa. But the Italian forces being supported by Abbaa Joobir of Jimmaa

⁷⁷ Perham Margery, *The Government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1969), p. 221; Gadaa Melba..., pp. 66-73; Informants: Yishak, Nasir & Jihad.

⁷⁸ Informants: Yishak, Nasir & Jihad; Deressa, "Historical Ecology and", p.46.

⁷⁹*Ibid*; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁸⁰*Ibid*.

defeated the forces of *Ras* Emiru in the northern bank of the Gojeb River. *Ras* Emiru was captured and exiled to Italy.⁸¹

Gräzmäch Abbaa Saambii/Firrissa/ was the other local participant in the resistance against the Italian occupation in Gommaa. Hoping to capture or kill him, the Italians are said to have sent their planes which landed at place known as Ganjii Daalachoo or Dakkoo but they were unable to find him after searching for him in the nearby forest areas. *Gräzmäch* A/Saambii entered into conflict not only with the Italians but also with the *qoros* of Guumaa. As the *Abbaa qoroo* of Yaacii, Gommaa's territory adjacent to Guumma, *Gräzmäch* A/Saambii quarreled with two *Abbaa qoroos* of Guumaa. *Balämbäräs* A/Milkii and A/Billoo whom he accused of violating Gommaa's boundary, at Ganjiii around Dhedheessaa river, and expanding Guumaa's territory at the expense of Gommaa.⁸²

As opposed to Gommaa where the Italians encountered limited resistance by the former settlers and few of the local notables, Guumaa was totally collaborating with the invaders. Thus, when *Gräzmäch* A/Saambii was captured and handed over to the Italians, the leaders of Guumaa are reported to have asked for his immediate execution, and the Italians, in a move that seemed to entertain their Guumaa collaborationists, executed *Gräzmäch* A/Saambii. Other prominent individuals from Gommaa who joined *Ras* Emiru's army were A/Garoo A/Waarrii, *Ato* Ashaageree Arrefee, *Obbo* Biloo A/ Saambii and *Obbo* Rashiid A/Garoo, all of whom died while fighting against the Italians in Geeraa.⁸³

Emperor Haile-Selassie who visited Gommaa in the post-liberation period is said to have asked the local people about who did what to defend his country against the Italians. When he was told about the story of *Gräzmäch* A/Saambii, as a way of recognizing/rewarding his patriotism, the Emperor is said to have taken the two sons of A/ Saambii: Takkaa Firrissa and Moggaa Firrissa to Addis Ababa and educated them. While Moggaa graduated as a medical doctor and became the first medical Doctor to serve in Aggaaro town, Takkaa was appointed as the finance chief of Kafa *Teqläy Gizät*. Following the execution of *Gräzmäch* Abbaa Saambii, the Italians are said to have

⁸¹Deressa, "Historical", p. 45; Bahru, *A Histroy of....*, 2002, pp.168-169; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁸² Informants: Yishak Kanno, Nasir Hajii & Jihad Hassan; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁸³ *Ibid*; Endalu, pp.12-14.

almost pacified Gommaa except for some sporadic skirmishes against some staunch fighters from the remnants of the former *naftaññä* groups and few of their local counter-parts. The Italians had initially attempted to recruit local volunteers to strengthen their army. When they failed in that they introduced compulsory conscription but their success was negligible.⁸⁴

During their occupation of Ethiopia, the Italians are said to have pursued a pro-Oromo and pro-Muslim policies in the country as a whole and particularly towards the predominantly Muslim Oromo of the Gibe region, to whom they promised many things including construction of mosques. For instance, the Italians had begun the construction of the grand Alazar Mosque in Aggaaro town, though they didn't stay to complete its construction. The Italians had also built a big mosque at Mantiinaa in Jimmaa, where the ruler, Abbaa Jobir is said to have collaborated with them in their conquest of the southwestern part of the country.⁸⁵ Thus, the above descriptions elucidated why the Gommaa Oromo largely welcomed the Italians more as liberators than conquerors.

3. 5. Gommaa Oromo from 1941-1974

3. 5.1. Administrative system in Gommaa from 1941-1974

The liberation of Ethiopia from the fascist Italian occupation was achieved through the British military assistance and the huge sacrifices paid by Ethiopian patriots. Accordingly, on April 6, 1941, the British army commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Alan G. Cunningham entered Addis Ababa. On May 5, 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie entered Addis Ababa.⁸⁶ In Gommaa the Italians are said to have been under pressure to give up the district since the middle of 1941, and they finally handed over Aggaaro (Gommaa) to the joint Ethio-British forces, which comprised about 5000 Ethiopian patriots led by *Dajjäzmäch* Garasu Duki and *Lij* /later General Jagamaa Keello, while the British army was under the command of Colonel Fox.⁸⁷

In 1942, a year after liberation, the imperial government announced a decree reorganizing the empire into a new administrative system that divided the country into fourteen *teqläy-gizäts*

⁸⁴Informants: Yishak Kanno, Nasir Hajii & Jihad Hassan; Endalu, pp.12-14.

⁸⁵*Ibid*; Endalu, pp.12-14; Yonas, p.22; Deressa, "Historical Ecology...", p.44.

⁸⁶Bahru, ..., 2002, pp.176-179; Deressa, "Historical...", pp.46-47; Markakis, J. *Ethiopia: Anatomy of Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 119; Crummey, *Land ...*, pp. 234-235.

⁸⁷Deressa, "Historical Ecology...", pp.46-47; Informants: Yishak Kanno and Jihad Hassan.

(governorate–generals), one hundred and three *awrājās* (provinces), five hundred and five *Woredās* (districts) and nine hundred and forty-nine *mikitel Woredās* (sub-districts). These administrative units were created based on various criteria, with the policy of assimilation being the main criterion.⁸⁸ One of the fourteen *Teqläy Gizäts* (governorate generals) was the Kafa which in turn was subdivided into six *Awrājās* (sub-provinces), namely Kullo[Dawuro] Kanta *Awrājā*, Limmu *Awrājā*, Kafa *Awrājā*, Gimira [Benchi] *Awrājā*, Maji *Awrājā* and Jimma *Awrājā*. Limmu *Awrājā* was also divided into districts of Limmu Kossa, Limmu Saqqa, Gommaa and Geeraa districts.⁸⁹

Apparently, Aggaaro was chosen as the administrative center of Limmu *Awrājā* owing to its status as the leading coffee producer and chief market center. It had also a relatively better developed infrastructure.⁹⁰ It is said that the emperor appointed persons of his own choice, as provincial governor generals and sub-provincial/*awrājā* governors who could help him in realizing his policy of creating a highly centralized system of administration. In his appointment of these officials, Emperor Haile Selassie did not only reinstated some of the former petty chiefs, but also empowered even those who collaborated with the fascist Italian forces.⁹¹

Accordingly, *Fitäwräri A/Garo A/Kaabee*, who collaborated with the fascist Italians and served under them as the governor of Gommaa district during their occupation period, was also allowed to stay in power, though some local members of the former patriotic forces disfavored him. When Emperor Haile Selassie visited Gommaa in the post-liberation period, these former patriots appealed to the emperor to remove *Fitäwräri A/Garo* from power, citing that he collaborated with the fascist forces, and instead, the appointment a certain A/Milkii A/Waajjii as the governor of Gommaa. A/Milkii A/Waajjii, as said before, was one of the staunch supporters of the patriotic

⁸⁸Deressa, "Historical Ecology...", pp.46-47; Gebeyehu Temesgen, "A History of Jimma *Awrājā*,1941-1991" (M.A. Thesis, Jimma University, History, 2013)", p.24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pp.48-49; Dagem Alemayehu, "Historical Survey of Limmu Genet Town from Its Foundation Up to Present" (*International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* Volume 6, Issue 07, July 2017, Bule Hora University), p.296; Informants: Yishak & Jihad.

⁹⁰*Ibid*; Dagm, 'Historical Survey of ...'; Informants: Yishak & Jihad.

⁹¹Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia, 1896-1974* (Red Sea press, Lawrenceville, 1995), p.124; Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, p.345; Crummey, *Land and*, p. 237.

forces. On the other hand, however, the greater majority of the local people are said to have shown their preference for *Fitäwräri* A/Garo. For that matter, A/Milkii himself is said to have been unenthusiastic to assume the post of district governorship. Instead, he appealed to the emperor for unrestricted security clearance to visit him at the national palace in Addis Ababa, and the Emperor fully agreed to his request. Hence, it is said that A/Milkii was the biggest official in Gommaa who could enter the Emperor's palace any time he wanted.⁹²

The public support for *Fitäwräri* A/Garo was attributed to his fair administration and good treatment of the people during his reign as the *Abbaa Qoro* of Baqqoo, and also as district governor during the occupation period. He is said to have not only been a good administrator but also a man who treated everybody equally regardless of their ethnic or religious identity, and hence, loved and respected by Muslims and Christians alike. The informants further added that a Greek businessman and a resident of Aggaaro town, named Muse Yani, appeared before the emperor and robustly presented his case, in favor of *Fitäwräri* A/Garo. The Emperor who must have recognized the danger of removing such a man with a huge public support, grudgingly yield in and A/Garo continued as a governor until 1974.⁹³

Sources depicted that in Gommaa district there were various officials with the titles of *Mislane*, *Abbaa qoros*, and *Abbaa Gandaas*, all of whom were serving at different administrative levels.⁹⁴ The *Mislane* (representative) were governors of *mikitel Woredäs* (sub-districts) who served as agents of the district governor and the *naftañña* in the provinces and estates, and in the absence of the *naftañäs*, acted on their behalf.⁹⁵ The *Mislane* had jurisdiction over the *Abbaa Qoro* whom they could order to do things for them, and the latter in turn fulfils the order by employing the labour of the peasants under his jurisdiction. In some cases, the *Mislane* administered justice.⁹⁶

The former *Abbaa Qoros*, later renamed *baläbbäts* were given the title of *atbiyä dagña* (local judges) and were also allowed to exercise some judicial and military powers in their respective

⁹² Informants: Yishak & Jihad.

⁹³ *Ibid*; Guluma, "Land, ...", p.312; Aggaaro Municipality archive, File No. 3394/24/89.

⁹⁴ Endalu, p.17; Informants: Yishak & Jihad.

⁹⁵ Endalu, p.17; Shiferaw Bekele, "The State of Their Historiography" *In Kasa and Kasa Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV 1855-1889* (Addis Ababa University,1990), pp.302-303.

⁹⁶ Endalu, p.17.

territories, under the district governors. In most cases, they were appointed as chiefs of subdivisions of *Mikittil woredäs*, named *qoros* (sub-districts). According to informants, and Endalu, in the post-liberation period, there were around thirteen *qoros* (sub-districts under the *Abbaa Qoros*) in Gommaa, with each having a land size of over sixty *gāshäs*, though it was not legally defined by the size of population.⁹⁷ The *baläbbäts* served as social bridges linking the imperial state to local people, and also involved in performing various functions of the state such as maintaining law and order, reporting crimes and apprehending culprits, hearing disputes and administering traditional justice, as well as assessing and collecting taxes and command the officials below them. Moreover, the *Abbaa qoros* were expected to work in expanding infrastructures like road construction, building of bridges and, through their special agents known as *lebäddañi* (thief hunter), clear their *qoro* of burglars and/or robbers.⁹⁸

In return for their services, the *Abbaa Qoros* had large tracts of farm lands which were regularly worked up on by the tenants, and failure to attend the farm works of the *baläbbäts* was severely punishable. The people had no say in the appointment and/or removal of the *baläbbäts*, while the government could do whatever it liked to them. The office of the *baläbbät* was hereditary, meaning when a *baläbbät* dies, he would be succeeded by his male son or close relative.⁹⁹

Even though the *Mislane* had jurisdiction over the local *baläbbäts*, there were cases when they disobeyed them in Gommaa. For instance, in 1955, when *Gräzmäch* Ababe Asras was the *Mislane* of Gommaa and Geeraa, there happened an incident in which several of the *Abbaa Qoros* and the land owners became unruly to the head of the *Mislane* and this grew into a bigger crisis which latter came to be known as the rebellion of *Abbaa Qoros* in Gommaa. Many of these *Abbaa Qoros* were punished by the imperial government, particularly by the Gommaa Public Security Commission, after being accused of failure to maintain law and order in their respective *qoros*, their harsh treatment of their people, and their refusal to obey the orders of the *Mislanes* in

⁹⁷ Endalu, pp. 18, 27; Informants: Nasir Hajii, Yishak Kanno & Jihad Hassan.

⁹⁸ Deressa, "Historical", pp.49-50; Guluma, "Land,", p. 168; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, p. 105; Bahru, *A History of*, 2002, p.91; Crummey, *Land...*, p. 225; Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

⁹⁹ Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

Gommaa. Most of them of them were sentenced to money fines, while others lost their position and were imprisoned.¹⁰⁰

Below the district governor, the *mislane*, and the *Abbaa Qoros*, there were officials called *Ciqä Shums*. It is said that in Gommaa district each *qoro* was divided into three to four *Ciqä Shums*. For instance, the *qoro* of Urache under *Gräzmäch A/Fiixaa A/Booraa* was divided into four *Ciqä Shums*. The *Abbaa Qoro* and district governor were involved in the division of a *qoro* into *Ciqä Shums*.¹⁰¹ Thus, the *Ciqä Shum* was the lowest administrative official in Gommaa below the *Abbaa Qoro*.

The *Ciqä Shum* was the chief representative of his village vis-à-vis other villages and with the hierarchy of the provincial administration. He was responsible for enforcing the regular collection of taxes; organizing, directing and supervising communal works, as well as maintaining law and order in his village. He, along with the *aleqä menziri* (tax collectors) also mobilized the tenants to cultivate the lands of the *baläbbäts*, construct their fences, collect fire wood for them and served them in other social events. It is said that the *Ciqä Shum* was the most influential authority among the ordinary people.¹⁰² However, the main duty of the *Ciqä Shum* was to assist in the collection of revenue from landowners. In doing this, the *Ciqä Shums* were assisted by other groups of officials known as *aleqä menziri*. Since they were not salaried, *Ciqä Shums* were given land in return for their services. The local people helped the *Ciqä Shums* in cultivating their land and harvesting; they also provided gifts.¹⁰³

It is said that before 1941, the *Ciqä Shums* were appointed by *baläbbäts* and their power was not hereditary. The *baläbbäts* could remove the *Ciqä Shum* from power if the people demanded his removal. But after 1941, the *Ciqä Shums* generally developed a cordial relationship with the local governors and were able to hold on to their position and turn it into a hereditary office, and were able to act as chief of *qebele* up to 1974 revolution.¹⁰⁴ In other words, through the support of the

¹⁰⁰Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*; Endalu, pp.17-18; Aggaaro Municipality archival center Folder number 25/6, File no. 7276/3, and also File no. 93/00.

¹⁰¹Informants: *Sh/Nasir & A/Zinab*.

¹⁰²Dereessa, "Historical", pp.49-50; Informants: *Anbasse, Tamiru & Bazabih*.

¹⁰³ Endalu, p.20; Informants: *Anbasse A/Milikii, Tamiru Banti & Bazabih Dasta*.

¹⁰⁴Endalu, p.20.

district governors, the *Ciqä Shums* were able to withstand the popular pressures for their removal, and were able to stay in their position until the 1974 revolution.

3.5.2. Land Tenure in Gommaa in the Post-Liberation Period

As said before, the greater majority of Gommaa Oromo were expressively at comfort during the Italian occupation period. However, the elders of Gommaa stated that almost all of the former oppressive policies of the imperial government, including the exploitative land tenure that were abolished during the Italian occupation, were once again reinstated in Gommaa district following the restoration of the emperor. The immediate post-liberation period coincided with the implementation of the *qalad* system in Gommaa in the 1940s. The *qalad* system, as said before, not only led to extensive expropriation of the *gabbär* land, but also accelerated the process of land privatization and land sale.¹⁰⁵

The land previously held by individuals, institutions and government officials under *madariyä marét* was changed into a private permanent possession. The imperial government is also said to have made extensive land grants from its large reserve, commonly known as *yamangist marét* (government land). From 1942-1967, Emperor Haile Selassie is said to have carried out imperial land grants aimed at transferring vast tracts of land from peasants and pastoral communities to private hands. As a result, large number of peasants were transformed into tenants who were expected to handover three-fourth or up to seventy-five percent of his produces to landlords.¹⁰⁶

In the Gibe region, the situation is said to be aggravated particularly after the 1950s. Since then most of the officials appointed in Jimmaa and Limmu *awräjjäs* as governors and administrative personnel were granted a *gäshä* of land from the government. Some of the prominent individuals who became owners of vast land in the region through the land grants were *Qañäzmäch* Dinku, *Dajjämäch* Yohannes Girmaye, *Gräzmäch* Asafa Ayele, *Ato* Mangistu, *Gräzmäch* Bogale, and the top provisional officials such as *Ras* Masfin Sileshi, General Asefa Ayine, *Lij* Abate Mulat,

¹⁰⁵Informants: Anbasse A/Milikii, Tamiru Banti & Bazabih Dasta.

¹⁰⁶Tesema, "The Political," pp. 208-210; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture," pp.193-199; Guluma, "The Rise of Coffee and Demise of Colonial autonomy: The Oromo Kingdom of Jimma and Political Centralization in Ethiopia" *Northeast African Study* V.9. (Michigan State University Press, 2007), p.79.

Fitäwräri Mengistu Terefe (the general secretariat of Kafa *tekläygizat*), General Woldemariam Haile (head of the police force).¹⁰⁷

There are also archival sources in Gommaa indicating the government's land grants to its officials. For instance, a letter from the imperial ministry of finance to the Gommaa-Limmu treasury office ordered the latter to give one *gäshä* of land, out of the fifty *gäshäs* reserved for future use in the *qoro* of Smaller Booree *yibbaa dagaa kebele*, to Captain W/Mariam Kidane, as “*madariya marét*” or in lieu of salary. The land grant is said to have mainly benefited the patriots, exiles, soldiers, and civil servants, a fact corroborated by archival sources which indicate the lands granted to the former patriots.¹⁰⁸

Most of the recipients of the government's land grants didn't reside in Gommaa, which means they were absentee landlords. In other words, absentee landlordism became the other major feature of land tenure in Gommaa. For instance, *Qañäzmäch* Dinku, *Dajjäzmäch* Yohannes Girmaye, *Gräzmäch* Asafa Ayele, *Ato* Mangistu, *Gräzmäch* Bogale, General Asefa Ayine, *Lij* Abate Mulat, *Fitäwräri* Mengistu Terefe (the general secretariat of Kafa *teqlaygizat*), General Woldemariam Haile (head of the police force) and Captain W/Mariam Kidane were among some of the absentee landlords in Gommaa. Even though I couldn't find any archival sources to corroborate it, few well versed informants told me that 50-60 percent of lands in Gommaa was under absentee landlords whose lands were looked after by their agents or representatives in the district. The absentee landlords could transfer their possession to whomever they liked but not to the local *baläbbäts*. Since, the land grants were largely made on lands that belonged to the *gabbärs*, the outcome, undoubtedly, was an increased tenancy in the region including in Gommaa.¹⁰⁹

3.5.3. Taxation in Gommaa in the Post-Liberation Period

As said before, in Gommaa, land tax was collected by officials known as *bale karni* (owner of the tax receipt) or *aleqa menzir* (owner of the receipt). Each *aleqä menzir/bale kärni* was appointed

¹⁰⁷Informants: Anbassee A/Milikii, Tamiru Banti & Bazabih Dasta; Endalu, p.34.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid*; Aggaaro Municipality archive center, File No.378/15, & No. 150/2/11/40.

¹⁰⁹Informants: Anbassee, Tamiru & Bazabih; Endalu, p.34.

over five or six land owners and had recognition from district governor, the *Abba Qoro* and the *Ciqāshum* respectively.¹¹⁰

The *aleqā menzir* was more respected and/or feared than other officials, and was free from feudal dues but collect tribute from his *menzir*. The overall process of imposing taxes on the landlords was preceded by the gathering of land related information and its registration on a land file known as *megemecha* (land folder). It was based on the data recorded on the *megemecha*, that the amount of tax to be paid was determined and/or imposed on the landlords. Thus, the land owners under one *aleqa menzir* would share the cost and pay it to the receipt holder.¹¹¹

In 1942, the imperial regime had issued a land tax proclamation which established a uniform rate of taxation. Accordingly, land was classified in to *lam*, *lam-taf* and *taf* (fertile, semi-fertile and unfertile). Hence, the amount of tax per fertile *gāshā* of land was fifteen birr, while that of semi-fertile and unfertile were ten and five birr respectively.¹¹² Informants indicated the vast land of Gommaa, owing to its being one of the leading coffee producing areas, came under the *lam* or fertile category, and hence, the local peasants pay the highest rate of tax imposed on fertile land.¹¹³

The land tax proclamation of 1944 is said to have increased taxes on the peasants. According to the proclamation, land tax per *gāshā* increased to 50, 40, and 15 Ethiopian dollars for the fertile, semi-fertile and infertile land respectively.¹¹⁴ In the 1940s, the imperial regime is said to have imposed heavy taxes on the entire Gibe region and specifically on Gommaa and Jimmaa. The rate of taxation on Gommaa and Jimmaa, as pointed by Guluma, did not follow the categories set in the proclamations of 1942 and 1944. For instance, *Ras Birru*, governor of Jimmaa and Gommaa (1941-1945) had imposed \$Eth100,000 on Jimmaa and Gommaa. The new tax system/ heavy taxation is said to have ruined the economic life of the peasants and the landlords alike. This coupled with the shortage of labor discouraged the landlords to cultivate their lands, and this in turn, affected agricultural productivity. As a result, some of these landlords are said to have

¹¹⁰ Informants: Anbassee A/Milikii, Tamiru Banti & Bazabih Dasta.

¹¹¹ Informants: Anbassee, Tamiru & Bazabih.

¹¹² Baharu, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p.42; Shiferaw Bekele, *An Economic History of Ethiopia: The Imperial Era :1941-74* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.108.

¹¹³ Informants: Anbassee A/Milikii, Tamiru Banti & Bazabih Dasta.

¹¹⁴ Baharu, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 2002, p.42; Shiferaw, *An Economic History of ...*, p.108.

become tax delinquents and thus lost their title to the land, which became state property. The land transferred to state domain on the pretext of tax delinquency was known as *giber-tal marét*.¹¹⁵

3.5.4. Coffee Production During the Imperial Regime

The process of the Shawan conquest and the early period of their administration of the Gibe region is said to have destroyed the coffee production that flourished in the region before Menelik's conquests. During the period of resistance, local coffee cultivators of Gommaa are said to have left their coffee farms and shifted to the production of subsistence crops not only for their own consumption but also for the shawan soldiers stationed in Gommaa whom they were forced to feed. On the other hand, the coffee farms they abandoned were later labeled as "wild/forest" coffee and taken over by Menelik's soldiers and their commanders who developed the cultivation and commercialization of coffee.¹¹⁶

As Guluma notes, the imperial soldiers' weak control over the local *baläbbäts* of Gommaa allowed the quick recovery and development of coffee cultivation in the early twentieth century. This situation mainly benefited the local *baläbbäts*, though it also benefited some local peasants. A/Jobir A/Lubbu was one of the local *baläbbäts* in Gommaa who became the richest coffee farmer during the early decades of the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ Informants said that he was very innovative in terms of coffee cultivation. He established his own coffee seedlings production and nursery centers at Ilbu, Kilole up to Kaffi which were largely operated by slave labor, expanded his coffee farms by purchasing more lands between areas like Qottaa and Yaacii, and also introduced the use of sacks which still is regarded as the modern technique of preserving coffee beans.¹¹⁸

Due to the emergence of coffee as the most important export commodity, the Abyssinian governors began to expand their coffee plantations in the 1920s, by adding new plantations to the existing coffee plots which they had confiscated from the indigenous farmers. *Ras* Dasta, the then governor of Gommaa had personally participated in the cultivation of coffee and also encouraged the peasants and local *baläbbäts* to plant coffee by offering tax relief.¹¹⁹ During the Italian

¹¹⁵ Gulumma, "Land,", pp.239-240; Informants: Anbassee, Tamiru & Bazabih.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 91-127, 159-77; Bossolasco, *A Case Study on Coffee....*, p.3; Informants: *Ibid*.

¹¹⁷ Guluma, "Land,", p.192.

¹¹⁸ Informants: Alemayo Tolasa, A/Maccaa A/Raagoo and Ahmed A/Garo.

¹¹⁹ Gulumma, "Land, Agriculture and Society....", p.199.

occupation period (1936-41), the production of coffee was generally low due to the decline in the market economy caused by the world economic depression, the preference of the Italians for food crops than cash crops/coffee, and also the scarcity of man power even to collect the coffee beans from wild (forest) coffee trees.¹²⁰

In the immediate post-liberation period, the production and marketing of coffee was also affected by the heavy taxation, as discussed above, imposed by the government on coffee growing areas particularly on Jimmaa and Gommaa. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a significant boom in coffee production and marketing, and a growing participation of large-scale producers, including some government officials and local *baläbbäts*. Coffee cultivation by small holder peasant also expanded.¹²¹

Among the prominent individuals who played a significant role in the expansion of large scale coffee production in the Gibe region during this period was *Dajjämäch*/later *Ras Mesfin Sileshi*, the governor general of Kafa province (1945-1955). *Ras Mesfin* not only encouraged coffee farmers and merchants to engage in coffee cultivation, but also took up the job himself. He encouraged some of the land owners in the districts of Limmu *awräjjä* to plant coffee. He is also said to have amalgamated a number of small coffee farms near the town of Geembee and created a big coffee farm/coffee plantation. The sources of labor for *Ras Mesfin*'s coffee plantations came mainly from the provinces of Wallo, Gondar, Gojjam and Shawa.¹²² Most of the land on which *Ras Mesfin* developed his coffee farm belonged to the family and heirs of A/Garo A/Foggii, who was the local *qoro*, and thus, this family was granted land in Limmu *awräjjä*, as a compensation.¹²³

Dagm mentioned that *Ras Mesfin* had also used force to take over a coffee farm in Dalachoo which belonged to the local *abbaa qoro* named Abbaa Hussein. As a result, *Ras Mesfin* became the owner of big coffee farms in Dalaachao and Debelo in Limmu Kossa district, which is now part of Suntu coffee farm. Some parts of it was given to peasants after the land reforms of 1975.¹²⁴ According to some of my informants, *Ras Mesfin* had also owned a coffee farm at the present day

¹²⁰Gulumma, "Land, Agriculture....", pp. 229-237; Yonas, p.44; Bosolasco, *A Case Study on Coffee*, p.36.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 238-239; Yonas, p.44

¹²² Yonas, pp.47-48; Informants: Alemayo T, A/Maccaa A/Rand Ahmed A/G.

¹²³*Ibid*.

¹²⁴ Dagm, "A History of coffee Production", pp.68-69.

coocee town which he created on a land he confiscated from a local *baläbbät* named A/Bulgu A/Diko. A/Bulgu who sought justice at the courts is said to have secretly been killed while the legal process was ongoing, and this enabled *Ras Mesfin* to declare complete ownership over the land.¹²⁵

The traditions from Gommaa further indicated that no one was allowed to pick his/her private coffee beans before *Ras Mesfin*'s coffee was collected. Accordingly, each year when the coffee beans ripened a man carrying the Ethiopian flag wonders in the town (Aggaaro) and publicly announce that everybody should carry his own provision and go to the coffee farms and work day and night until his coffee was fully collected. On their way many of the local people caught malaria and some of them even died of it. *Ras Mesfin*'s coffee plantations in Gommaa were later nationalized by the *Derg* regime and named Gommaa I State Coffee Farm.¹²⁶ Thus, it can be said that *Ras Mesfin* became a prominent coffee grower by using all means at his disposal including taking over coffee farms and lands of the local people either through force or persuasion.

Fitäwräri GabreKiristos Makonnen, *Qañäzmäch* Taka Egano, *Lij* Abate Mulat, Mahari Endale, Berhanu Galata, Gabre Kiristos Marsie Hazan, Cherinet Wolda Mariam, Takla Mariam Kassahun, *Woizaro* Aster Asfaw, Tsehay Shifaraw, Ababach Guumma, Yashiharag Guumma, and Martha G/Tsadiq etc, were also among the famous civil/ military officials and urban business men who were engaged in coffee cultivation and marketing in the Gibe region during the 1950s and 1960s.¹²⁷ *Fitäwräri* GabreKiristos was the grandson of *Fitäwräri* Wassane, was the governor of Gomma from 1907 to 1912. *Fitäwräri* GabreKiristos gave up his government job at the Ministry of Interior and started coffee cultivation on a vast area of wild-coffee of his grandfather *Fitäwräri* Wassane. Like *Ras Mesfin* Sileshi, *Fitäwräri* GabreKiristos is said to have treacherously evicted large number of peasants in Qombaa and Qoccolle telling them that their loss would be compensated by the government. With the objective of modernizing coffee cultivation, he encouraged the local peasants to replace the old coffee plants with new ones and also introduced a relatively modern coffee plantation at Qoccollee and Qombaa.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Informants: Alemayo Tolasa, A/Maccaa A/Raagoo and Ahmed A/Garo.

¹²⁶ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaro*, pp.9-10.

¹²⁷ Yonas, p.49; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture....", pp.261-262.

¹²⁸ Yonas, p.49; Guluma, "Land, Agriculture....", pp.261-262; Informants: Alemayo & Ahmed.

The local tradition says that *Fitäwräri* Gabrekiristos owned a vast coffee farm in a place known as *Cadaro Suusee*. He encouraged the local coffee farmers to adopt modern technique of coffee cultivation in the mid of 1960s, and also expanded coffee farms in Geeraa. He also developed his plantation into a profitable enterprise and in the middle of the 1960s and established the “Gommaa coffee Farmers’ Cooperative” along with around three hundred coffee growers. He also started agricultural mechanization in Gommaa in which he began a small scale mechanized maize farming in Qoccoollee and Qombaa, with the objective of providing food for his workers on his coffee farms. In 1975, the *Derg* regime confiscated his coffee farm and renamed it Gomma II state farm.¹²⁹

Lij Abate Mulat was the other former government official who quitted his job at the Ministry of Finance and then took up coffee cultivation. As a government employee, *Lij* Abate had already been granted 360 hectares of land in Limmu Kossa district by Emperor Haile Selassie in the mid-1940s. He expanded his land to 2,649 hectares by purchasing government land for 30 Eth. *Birr* per *gäshä*, near Suntu town, which was renamed Limmu Ganat by *Ras* Mesfin.¹³⁰

Among the local *baläbbäts*, *Fitäwräri* A/Garo A/Kaabee was one of the prominent coffee growers during this period, who had also a key role in the establishment of the Gommaa coffee farmers’ cooperatives and served as its chairman, though he is said to have been removed from his position by the plots of Gabrekiristos and other coffee farmers. *Giräzmäch* A/Waarii A/Saambii had coffee plantations in Gommaa district, now under Gommaa I coffee farm; *Ato* kadir Eebbaa had coffee plantations in Kossa and Gaallee, *Fitäwräri* A/waarii A/Kaabee, the *Abbaa Qoro* of the coffee rich *qoro* of Coocee, was also a famous land owner and coffee farmer in Gommaa.¹³¹

¹²⁹ *Seenaa Oromo Gommaa, Aggaaro*, pp.9-10.

¹³⁰ Yonas, p.50; Dagm, “A History of coffee Production....”, p.70.

¹³¹ Informants: Alemayo, A/Maccaa & Ahmed; Dagm, “A History of coffee Production....”, p.73.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OROMO OF GOMMAA FROM 1974 TO 1991

4.1. The Oromo of Gommaa and the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974

The 1974 Ethiopian revolution has widely been addressed by various authors.¹ With the exception of some individuals and/or groups, the greater majority of the people of Gommaa are said to have jubilantly received the news of the overthrow of the old regime and the rise to power of the provisional government in 1974. Their happiness was out of the expectation that the change would make them the masters of their land once again.²

Thus, as soon as they heard the news of the Emperor's downfall, the local people of Gommaa, began to destroy and/or loot the properties belonging to local *baläbbäts* and the northern landlords. In the rural areas, some peasants destroyed the houses and properties of the landlords and forcing some of them to flee to the urban areas mainly to Aggaaroo. Under such conditions, some groups of men from rural Gommaa and Aggaaroo town even attempted to attack *Dajjämäch* Tadesse Enquiselassie, the then governor of Limmu *Awräjjä* who was in the town.³

It is said that at the time the governor was waiting with his gun loaded and ready to shoot at anyone who approached him. But members of the military swiftly intervened and the crisis was over without a major incident. The soldiers arrested the governor and brought him before the public the next day. Then, they sent him to Jimmaa and another member of the army known as Major Damissew was instated as the new governor of Limmu and Gommaa. Meanwhile, *Fitäwräri Abbaa* Garo **Abbaa** Kaabee, the governor of Gommaa district, was removed from his governorship of Gommaa.⁴

¹Mariana. Ottaway, *The Political Economy of Ethiopia* (New York: Prager Publishers, 1990), PP. 12-13; Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1989), PP. 11-16; Tefera Haile-Selassie, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1994: From a Monarchical Autocracy to A Military Oligarchy* (London and New York: Kepan Paul International, 1997), pp. 87-89; Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuities in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge and New York; Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.38-40; Adejumobi, Saheed A. *The History of Ethiopia* (Greenwood Press Westport, Connecticut, 2007), p.120; Bahru,2002, p.240.

² Informants: A/Bulgu A/Duraa, Ahmad Haji kadir &Temam A/Olii.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴Informants: A/Bulgu A/Duraa, Ahmad Haji kadir &Temam A/Olii; Adejumobi, p.116; Bahru,2002, PP.231-232; Jimmaa Zone Administrative Office archival center, File No 11/4281/5821/62.

The military regime pursued a highly centralized administrative structure with the country being reorganized under fourteen *kifle hagers* (provinces), which in turn were divided into 102 *awräjjäs* (sub-provinces) and 556 *woredäs* (districts). Limmu *Awräjjä*, which included Gommaa *woredä*, Geeraa *woredä*, Limmu- Kossaa and Limmu-Saqqaa, was put under Kafa *kifle häger* (province) and stayed that way until 1981 when the number of administrative provinces had increased to sixteen.⁵ Following the ratification of a new constitution in February 1987 and the establishment of Peoples' Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the regime reorganized the administration of the country into twenty-five administrative regions, and five autonomous regions.⁶

By the new administrative restructuring some parts of the former kafa *kifle häger* such as Jimmaa and the ex-Limmu *awräjjä* became parts of Iluababor Administrative Region with its capital at Jimmaa. Limmu *awräjjä* also was divided into three *awräjjäs* such as Limmu Kossaa, Limmu Saqqaa *awräjjä* with their capital at Genet and Atnago respectively, while Gommaa and Geeraa *woredäs* were merged into a single *awräjjä* with its center at Aggaaro town up to 1991.⁷

Soon the *Derg* began to introduce sweeping reforms designed to uproot the socioeconomic foundations of the old order. One of the most important changes was the measure it took regarding the land tenure system of the country.⁸

4.2. Land Reform and the Formation of Peasant Associations in Gommaa

On 4 March 1975, the *Derg* issued the Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, which nationalized all rural land; abolished all forms of private ownership of land or banned landlordism; gave farming households the right to land use over a land as many as ten hectares; abolished tenancy; forbade the hiring of labor for agricultural work except for handicapped individuals; and banned transfer of land through sale, mortgage, lease, and inheritance. The land was subject to periodic reallocations by peasant associations to accommodate new claimants. The proclamation also led

⁵Thomas Ofcansky and Laverle Berry, *Ethiopia, A Country Study* (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), p.183; Informants: A/Bulgu A/D, Ahmad Haji kadir & Temam A/Olii.

⁶ Bahru, 2002, P.255.

⁷ Bossolasco, *A Case Study on Coffee*, p.22; Jimmaa Zone Administrative Office archival center, file no. 5948/1/22-4/81.

⁸Adejumobi, p. 120; Dassalegn Rahmato, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. 1984), pp. 37-39.

to the confiscation, without compensations, of all property belonging to landlords, gentry and landed nobility. It also declared all rural lands as the collective property of Ethiopian people. The large scale private farms were confiscated by the government which could run them either as state farm or convert them into cooperatives.⁹

As mentioned before, the great majority of the *baläbbäts* in Gommaa were acting as agents of the exploitative imperial regime. However, there were also handful of the local *baläbbäts*, who, even before the revolution, are said to have taken heroic measures to improve the status of their tenants. *Gräzmäch* A/Saambi A/Billoo of Urache was one of the very few landlords in Gommaa who allowed their tenants to own the land they worked up on and thereby become owners of tax receipts over that land. He was ostracized by the other landlords who didn't like his action fearing that it might set a bad example and threatens the overall system in Gommaa. On the other hand, most of the land owners remained defiant to recognize the rights of their tenants right up to the 1974 Ethiopian revolution and the subsequent land proclamation.¹⁰

The implementation of the land reform is said to have been impossible without the supportive role of thousands of secondary school and university students and their teachers, on the one hand, and the involvement of rural institutions such as peasant associations and producers' cooperatives etc., Each one of them is briefly discussed below.

4.2.1. Development Through Cooperation Campaign (*Zamächä*) in Gommaa

For the implementation of the land proclamation and other associated changes of the revolution, the *Derg* used high school and university students and staff on the Development through Cooperative Campaign popularly known as *idget behibret zamächä*, which was announced even before the land reform was proclaimed.¹¹ About six thousand university students and teachers, as well as nearly fifty thousand secondary school students from the entire country, were involved in the *zamächä* (campaign). In January 1975, the campaigners were mobilized to 437 places in the countryside to perform a wide range of activities: organizing peasant associations and guiding the redistribution of land; building schools and clinics, latrines and wells with the local people; and

⁹ Bahru, ,2002, pp. 240-242; Dawit, *Red Tears* PP. 267-268; Dassalegn, *Agrarian Reform*, pp.38-39.

¹⁰ Informants: A/Bulgu A/Duraa, Ahmad Haji kadir and Temam A/Olii.

¹¹ Ottaway. *The Political Economy*, PP.18-2 1; Dawit, *Red Tears:* PP.267-268.

also to helping in the formation of women's and youth associations.¹² Yet, some were suspicious of the campaign saying that the *Derg* regime was simply using this as a good opportunity to remove the students, who were calling for radical reforms, from the highly volatile urban centres, mainly Addis Ababa, so as to prevent them from raising questions against the regime.¹³

Even though, their exact number is not known, informants of the study stated that between two hundred fifty to three hundred members of the cooperative campaign popularly known with their Amharic name '*Zamäch*' (campaigners of development through cooperative campaign) arrived in Gommaa *woredä* in March 1975.¹⁴ Soon they ventured to rural areas of the district and described to the peasants about the new government's policy, and also registered the former tenants, hired farm workers over the age of eighteen, ex-land owners who had less than ten hectares of land, and widowed or divorced females.¹⁵

The arrival of the *zamäch* in Gommaa had played a significant role in enhancing the peasants' (former tenants') level of consciousness in many ways. To begin with, the campaigners (*zamäch*) carried out massive propaganda campaign and/or defamation against the landlords. They told the peasants that feudal landlordism has come to an end and land belongs to all peasants, thus, no one has to pay any rent. They assured the local peasants that the former exploitative feudal administration has gone never to return back. They informed the peasants to report to them if and when any of the landlords attempted to harm them. Any former landlord who was implicated by the peasant for causing problems was severely punished or imprisoned. The peasants were also told not to pay back all the money they owed to their former lords. Through these and other similar measures, the *zamäch* were able to destroy the reputations of the former landlords in Gommaa.¹⁶

¹²Randi Rønning Balsvik, "Addis Ababa University in the Shadow of the Derg, 1974-1991", In: *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele (Trondheim, 2009), pp.260-261; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, pp.192-193; Adejumobi, pp.120-121.

¹³Balsvik, pp.260-261; Adejumobi, pp.120-121.

¹⁴Informants: A/Bulgu A/Duraa, Ahmad Haji kadir and Temam A/Olii.

¹⁵Kehchiro M, "Change Beyond the State Institution: Socialist Policies and Land Tenure in Coffee-Growing Village, Southwest Ethiopia" *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*.vol.8-9 (Tokyo: Kyoto University, 2002), pp. 17-19.

¹⁶Endalu, p.54; Informants: A/Bulgu A/Duraa, Ahmad Haji kadir and Temam A/Olii.

The *zamäch* informed the peasants that they were suppressed and oppressed as a group/or class and thus, they should strengthen their unity. As a part of their campaign, *zamächs* in Gommaa created peasant associations and also aided in the formation of Revolutionary Ethiopian Youth Association (REYA) and Revolutionary Ethiopian Women Association (REWA). Until their departure in 1976, the *zamächs* also taught some voluntary people how to read and write.¹⁷

Informants said that in the early days of the revolution, the *zamäch* (campaigners) assigned to Gommaa *woredä* were accused of inciting violence by telling the local people to attack the landlords and destroy and/or loot their property. They were also accused of encouraging the people to conduct public demonstration in Aggaaro town. The public demonstration was meant to condemn the agents of the feudal regime in Gommaa but it was planned to take place at the time when the *Derg* regime officially banned any form of public demonstration.¹⁸ This shows that the *zamäch* were expecting more radical reforms than the *Derg* officials themselves, a sign of what was to come of the relationship between them and the military government.

The security forces in Aggaaro town were worried about the public demonstration and hence, called for assistance from Jimmaa. Following this, *Birgädier* General Shāwul Zelleqe, a *Derg* representative came from Jimmaa accompanied by additional security reinforcement. He was greeted by a big crowd from the town and the surrounding rural villages who were ready to take part in the public demonstration organized with the help of teachers. Yet, the *Derg* representative from Jimmaa, *Birgädier* General Shāwul gave a green light to the public demonstration which was peacefully ended without any incident.¹⁹

Accordingly, the public demonstrators held a meeting at Aggaaro stadium where a *Derg* member called Major Tefera Deneke took the forum and explained the purpose of the revolution saying that it aimed at building socialism under the slogan of *Ethiopia Tiqdem* (Ethiopia First). He also talked about what the leadership of the revolution was doing to establish a socialist system in which all of the Ethiopian society enjoy equal rights and privileges.²⁰ On the meeting, Major Tefera Deneke asked if any one of the local people wanted to ask questions or express his/her

¹⁷ Informants: A/Faajjii A/Temam & Asafa Benti; Balsvik, pp.260-261.

¹⁸ Informants: A/Faajjii A/Temam & Asafa Benti; Endalu, p. 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Informants: A/Faajjii A/Temam & Asafa Benti.

view. Soon, a resident of Aggaaroo town, named Mohammad Saaliih rose up and openly called up on the people of Gommaa to cutoff the necks of the landlords and confiscate their property. Zinaab A/Garo who was translating Mohammed's speech into *Afaan Oromo* added fuel to it in a way that totally disrupt public peace and security. Finally, the chairperson of the meeting, Major Tefera, called up on all the attendants to calm down, condemned some of the *Zamächs* for inciting violence and endangering public security. He warned both the local people and the *Zamächs* to restrain from violence, and remain vigilant in guarding the gains of the revolution.²¹

4.2.2 Peasant Associations in Gommaa

The formation of peasant associations was one of the most important features of the land reform. Articles 8 and 10 of the 1975 Land Reform Proclamation provided that, peasants shall be organized under farmers' associations, which were charged with the task of facilitating the implementation of rural development programs and policies. The Proclamation established the Peasant Association (PA) as a new mass organization, as an organ of government and as the lowest level government structure(*qebeles*). The peasant associations were empowered with the responsibility of confiscating the land, organizing cooperatives and electing committees to implement and guide extra activities. In fact, it was the implementation of the land reform that came to be identified as the main task of the peasant associations.²² Thus, throughout the country, the implementation of the land reform started with the formation of Peasant Associations in every rural area.

The *Zamäch* helped in organizing more than sixty peasant associations in Gommaa district, in less than three months after the land proclamation. But the numbers of the PAs were later reduced to about forty through mergers. In accordance with the proclamation, each peasant association in Gommaa had a land size of eight-hundred hectares. In most cases, their boundaries were demarcated following the topographic features such as rivers, valleys or mountains. As provided in the legislation, all former tenants, land less persons, hired farmers, and former land owners possessing less than ten hectares of land were allowed to become members of the peasant

²¹Informants: A/Faajjii A/T & Asafa B; Aggaaro Municipality archival center, File no-7259/1/162.

²² Adejumobi, pp.120-121; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, p.192; Bahru, 2002, PP. 241-243; Dassalegn, *Agrarian Reforms*, pp.38-39.

associations, while those land owners having more than ten hectares each had to wait and could become members of the PAs after their lands were redistributed.²³

Then each peasant association elected its own executive committee and/or officials, consisting of a chair person, secretary, treasurer and two assistants. They also elected their own land distributing committees. These peasant associations (*qebeles*) in Gommaa became the smallest administrative units that were authorized over administering public property, maintaining law and order, conflict resolution, tax collection, and above all the implementation of government land use directives including the equitable redistribution of land within their jurisdictions.²⁴

Among the local people who played a leading role in the creation of peasant associations in Gommaa were persons like Abbaa Faajjii, a reputed person in Gommaa, *Ato* Manikule, the then governor of Gommaa *woredä* and Abbaa Biyyaa *Sh/Ahimad*, who was later elected as the chairman of Gommaa *woredä* peasant association.²⁵ The next step after the PAs were organized in Gommaa district, was the creation of land distribution committees in every *qebele* through election largely influenced by the campaigners or officials who tried to impose their ideas concerning social justice. These committees took over the task of distributing land to each household on the basis of family size.²⁶

The land to be distributed included both the fertile land confiscated from the landlords as well as the uncultivated land. Before starting land redistribution, the committee along with the *zamächs* gathered information on where to find the lands to be redistributed. It was only after they identified and located the land that the distribution was began in Gommaa. Thus, plots of land were allocated to all households, including the landless tenants, hired farm workers and others more or less on an equal basis. Households were eligible to get land in their residential *qebele* only. Many landlords who attempted to block the process of land redistribution were imprisoned or killed by the campaigners and the local security forces.²⁷

²³ Adejumobi, pp.120-121; Dassalegn, *Agrarian....*, pp.38-39; Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa.

²⁴ Adejumobi, pp.120-121; Dassalegn, *Agrarian Reforms*, pp.38-39; Informants: *Ibid.*

²⁵ Informants: A/Faajjii and Asafa Benti.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa Benti.

However, it must be noted that the implementation of the land distribution in Gommaa *woredä* was carried out in a way that violated the land proclamation which promised ten hectares of land to each household. Thus, only three hectares of land were allocated to each farming household in Gommaa mainly due to the wide discrepancy between the number of population and land size of the district. Some of the former insecure tenants retained the land they were cultivating as tenants at the time of the reform. But this time they became free peasants farming the land for their own benefit, and their payment of rent, tribute, labor, or other obligations on the land were totally abolished.²⁸

Moreover, since the land reform began to be implemented at the start of the cropping season of the area, a number of peasant associations permitted the farmers to till the land they possessed (the farmers who had owned land less than ten hectares), but provided lands for the landless members. My informants appreciatively said, the 1974 Revolution enabled us to get back our lands.²⁹

As it was stated from the start, the land allocated to each household is subjected to future rearrangement by the peasant associations or other government bodies. Thus, successive land redistributions by the peasant associations continued after the campaigners left Gommaa *woredä* following the official end of the *zamächä* in June 1976. This was done mainly to accommodate new claimants (often children of the members of the association whose age reached 18), and to adjust plots in areas where family size has increased. As a result, most of the peasant associations gave pieces of land to peasants in different parts of the *qebele*, something that made peasants to own land scattered all over the *qebeles*, at times, far from the peasant's residence.³⁰

The informants attested that one of the major flaws of the PAs in implementing the land reform in Gommaa *woredä* was that they gave more attention to allocation of land for all rather than to the consolidation of farmlands. For instance, some of the former hired farm workers were given land without having any agricultural implements and thus, were compelled to enter into a type of contractual agreement with others in return for certain benefits. In such cases, a peasant may use

²⁸ Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa Benti; Keiichiro, "Inter-Ethnic Relationships in a coffee...", pp. 17-19.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa Benti

the farm oxen and agricultural implements of the other and pay him back in cash or in kind. This, in turn, contributed to the inefficiency of peasant's production.³¹ Nevertheless, the land reform highly benefited the landless peasants and former tenants, while eroding the political and economic privileges of the former landlords in Gommaa.

The other major defect of the peasant associations in Gommaa was that they failed to live up to the level of public expectation. The proclamation which established them in the first place, stated that the PAs were mass-based, participatory and democratic institutions to be under the control of the peasants themselves and would provide the organizational means for administering the land reform and dealing with the social and economic problems within the community.³²

However, my informants indicated that in the latter days, the functions of each PA in Gommaa was highly influenced by the *woredä* party and administrative officials as well as ordinary *cädrés*, and this turned the PAs not only into state agents but also made them dictatorial institutions.³³

4.3. The Literacy Campaign in Gommaa

As mentioned before, one of the contributions of the *zamächs* was the provision of basic education to the local people of Gommaa, which they continued until the *zamächä* program ended in 1976. After consolidating its power vis-à-vis internal and external challenges, the *Derg* launched a large scale and a nationwide literacy campaign in 1979, as a tool to inculcate its socialist ideology. To this end, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Education (MOE), a special body known as Literacy Campaign Coordinating Committee (LCCC) was also established at all administrative levels including PAs.³⁴

In Gommaa district the Literacy campaign is said to have started in July 1979. Initially, it was seen as a testing round of the overall Literacy Program in the *woredä*. All people between the age

³¹Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa Benti.

³²Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, "A Proclamation to Provide for Public Ownership of Rural Lands," *Nägarit Gazäta* 34/26 (April, 1975), p. 94; Proclamation No.71 of 1975, "A Proclamation to Provide for the Organization and Consolidation of Peasant Association," *Nägarit Gazäta* 35/15 (December, 1975), pp. 108-109.

³³ Informants: A/Faajjii A/Temam and Asafa Benti.

³⁴Bahru, 2002, pp.240-241; Tefera, *The Ethiopian ...*, pp.221-223; Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa B.

of seven to sixty were registered to attend the education program, while the first teachers were local students of grade eight who were given a brief training of about ten days just to teach Amharic alphabet. In 1980, a full scale literacy campaign started in Gommaa. This time, the teachers were Grade 12 graduates of Gommaa and the neighboring districts who were obliged to give a minimum of four months of teaching services in the literacy program.³⁵

The local peasants built residential houses for the campaigners and served them in fetching water, collecting fire wood, taking grains to flour mills, and etc., The government also offered the campaigners certain amount of salary and uniform cloths to wear.³⁶ The present researcher had taken part in such campaign in 1987 and served as a teacher for four months in a rural *qebele* a kilometer or two away from Sarbo town, eighteen kilometers from Jimma on the way to Addis Ababa. He was paid a monthly salary of sixty birr.

Community halls and temporary shelters called *däs*/huts were used as classrooms in Gommaa district. The adult learners were given basic education: reading, writing, and basic mathematical operations like adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. In order to allow all people to attend the lessons, the learning schedule were arranged in a way that didn't hinder the normal day-to-day activities of the learners. Initially the local people, especially the elders, viewed the campaign just as a waste of time. One of the attendants of the literacy campaign recalls how the local people attempted to resist at the beginning of the program, but they came to love it all after they were able to put together the alphabets and write their names. This was almost a revolution which declared their self-reliance in reading and writing.³⁷

There is no archival record to indicate the number of students that attended the literacy campaign as a whole, but a more conservative estimate made by one of my informants suggested that starting from 1979 to 1990 when the program was abandoned, 21 rounds of literacy campaign was carried out in Gommaa and a minimum of 120,000 of the local people became members of the literate society and thus, the campaign was a complete success.³⁸

³⁵Informants: A/Faajjii & Asafa Benti.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷ Informants: Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

³⁸*Ibid.*

4.4. Producers' and Service Cooperatives in Gommaa Woredä

The Proclamation No. 138/78 grouped cooperatives into four types; producers, service, thrift and credit, and housing.³⁹ However, only two of them, producers' cooperatives and service cooperatives were formed in Gommaa.

4.4.1. Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives in Gommaa Woredä

In order to enhance agricultural production beyond subsistence and to achieve surplus production needed for industrial inputs, and thereby realize its policy of building socialism, the *Derg* regime proclaimed the formation of producers' cooperatives. The December 1975 proclamation declared the establishment of agricultural producers' cooperatives, also known as collectivization of agriculture, based on a moderate collectivization of means of production.⁴⁰

Even though the *Derg* regime is said to have made a concerted effort in downplaying private smallholder farming activities and thereby promote collectivization of agriculture, peasants in most parts of the country, opted for individual farming activities on their respective plots than joining the PCs.⁴¹ Thus, the government forcefully imposed the program on a largely unwilling peasantry. However, the situation was totally different in Gommaa *woredä*. The advent of collectivization of agriculture in Gommaa coincided with the period of massive campaigns aimed at expansion of the community coffee farms/ later renamed state coffee farms owned by the PAs and worked upon by free labour services of the peasants. Consequently, a large number of the local peasants are said to have voluntarily joined the agricultural producers' cooperatives just to escape the collective works of the PAs on the community coffee farms, from which they gained nothing.⁴² In other words, the peasants of Gommaa voluntarily joined the PCs not because they

³⁹ Cohen, John M., "Foreign Involvement in the Formulation of Ethiopia's Land Tenure Policies: Part I" (*North-East African Studies* 7(2) 1985b), p.15.

⁴⁰Dassalegn, *Agrarian Reform*....p.41; Kebebew Daka, "The Role of Cooperatives in the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture" *Institute of Development Research Seminar on Strategies for Socialist Rural Transformation* (October, 1978), pp. 4-5; Dawit, *Red Tears* PP.271-272; Clapham, *Transformation*, PP.171-172.

⁴¹Dawit, *Red Tears*, PP.271-272; Clapham, *Transformation*., PP.171-172.

⁴²Informants: Mohammed & Taaju; Sagni Gemmechu, "History of Coffee Production, Processing and Marketing in Gomma District 1900-1991" (MA Thesis, Department of History, Jimma University, 2018), p.48.

liked them but because they had more hatred for the collective works of the PAs from which they made no gains, or simply they have chosen the lesser of two evils.

It is said that agricultural producers' cooperatives (PCs) are established in Gommaa in 1979/1980 on parts of a 'forest land.' This event ushered in the advent of collective farms, locally known as *amrächi* (producer), that were managed autonomously by each PA in Gommaa. The agricultural producers' cooperative in Gommaa *woredä* started its activities earnestly in 1981/82 with 23 households and then expanded in 1984/85 to 70 households.⁴³

The basic essence of these agricultural producers' cooperatives was that all peasants would integrate their labour and agricultural implements and then share the produce of their works. In these PCs, oxen and other agricultural implements were regarded as the common property of the cooperatives and an individual had no right to sell them without the prior permission of all members.⁴⁴ Informants reported that during the *Derg* regime, there were eleven Peasant Cooperatives in Gommaa district: -Tiliku Coocee, Cedero, Bulaadoo, Odwo Daru, Yaacii, Omoo Baqqoo, Limmu Saqaa, Nasew Geggaa, Limmu Sadacha, Ilbu Goggaa, Qottaa. According to informants, maize was the main crop cultivated by the collective farms in Gommaa.⁴⁵

Each PC had an official whose duty was recording the workload of a peasant and the share of the produce (maize) was made on the basis of one's workload and the size of its family. The surplus maize is said to be sold and the benefit shared to all members at the end of a year. Through time, the peasants' motivation began to decline due to the less gains they made from the collective farms. The major reason for this, as told by the informants, was that all people do not have equal working capacity nor they have equal enthusiasm for work. Yet there were some success stories that worth mentioning about the peasant associations in Gommaa *woredä*.⁴⁶

For instance, the former members of the peasant associations in Goggaa *qebele* proudly talked about their achievement in buying a car, while those in Qottaa boasted of establishing coffee

⁴³ Ermias Demere, "Productivity study of resource and income in the growing farms of Kaffa administrative region" (M. SC. Thesis, AAU, 1985), p. 36.

⁴⁴ Clapham, *Transformation*, PP.171-172; Cohen, "Foreign Involvement in", pp. 1-7.

⁴⁵ Informants: Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

⁴⁶ Informants: Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

pulping machine and also buying lorry for transportation of goods.⁴⁷ Despite their unpopularity both among the members and non-members, the agricultural producers' cooperatives in Gommaa continued until May 1990 when the government announced economic reforms in the form of mixed economy. Soon, the great majority of PCs were disbanded by their own members to whom the lands of the cooperative farms were redistributed.⁴⁸

The other forms of Producers' cooperatives established in urban and semi-urban areas of Gommaa *woredä* were cooperatives like *libsi sefiwoch mähber* or cooperatives of tailors. As stated under chapter one, the *Derg* regime had organized all of the artisans and craftsmen (*ogeeyyii*) in Gommaa in terms of their respective occupations. Accordingly, *shemänewoch mähber* or weavers' cooperatives, *Biret seriwoch mähber* or black smiths' cooperatives and etc. Most of these kinds of cooperatives were mainly found in Aggaaro town. They were able to import inputs of production on a large scale and with little cost. Except this, said the informants, the production system and financial issues had the intervention of government officials, whom they accused of using the cooperatives as a propaganda forum for the regime while bringing little gains to its members. Thus, these cooperatives largely became unpopular and withered away in the same way the agricultural producers' cooperatives were gone.⁴⁹

4.4.2. Service Producers' Cooperatives in Gommaa Woredä

Service Cooperatives were the other institutions created by the *Derg* regime to increase agricultural production. The proclamation No. 71 of 1975 provided that service cooperatives be formed with specific objectives and duties by no less than three and by no more than ten peasant associations. Some of the objectives of service cooperatives were to provide improved agricultural inputs, marketing service, rent out tractors and other farm machinery, supply consumer goods, storage and saving services, etc.; all of which were aimed at protecting the exploitation of peasants by private traders.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Informants: Mohammed A/Z & Taaju A/M; Kidane, *Ethiopia: Failure of Land Reform*, p. 167.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Proclamation No. 71 of 1975, pp. 108-109; Sagni, "History of Coffee..." p.49; Informants: Abdo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab & Taaju A/Maccaa.

Accordingly, in Gommaa *woredä* service cooperatives like in Qotaa, Goggaa and Geembee were set up by peasant associations. The service cooperatives of Gommaa *woredä* gave priority to the establishment of shops, which were known for selling some goods needed by the peasants among which were goods like salt, sugar, cooking-oil, soap, matches, blankets, dry cell batteries, etc. at prices less than that of private merchants.⁵¹ But the service cooperatives suffered from lack of trained man power which opened the way for embezzlement of its resource by peasant associations and service cooperatives leaders. Moreover, sometimes the cooperatives failed to decide even on the internal affairs of their institution due to the interference of state officials.⁵²

Yet, the service cooperatives were perhaps the only institutions relatively appreciated by the peasants.⁵³ In 1990, following the shift from command economy to ‘Mixed Economy,’ the cooperatives were left free to choose between staying or dissolving. Subsequently, both producers and service cooperatives ceased to function in Gommaa.⁵⁴ The other major institution that was aimed at enhancing rural development was the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) also known as ‘*irshä sebil gebeyä*’ which was established in the whole of the country, including Gommaa *woredä* in 1976 with the aim of buying surplus grain at fair price from the peasants and later on re-sell it in times of shortage of grain to the masses.⁵⁵

However, informants pointed that the AMC in Gommaa district was exploited by private traders and hence, failed to discharge its responsibility when the local people had faced shortage of grain in the early 1980s. Because of such setbacks the AMC was also disliked by the peasants who later opted for selling their products in markets following the introduction of mixed economy in 1990.⁵⁶

4.5. Nationalization of Urban Land and Extra Houses in Gommaa

By the proclamation No. 27 issued on 26 July 1975, the *Derg* government nationalized all urban lands and extra houses but allowed individuals the ownership of one house and the use of as many

⁵¹ Informants: Abdoo A/R, Mohammed A/Z & Taaju A/M; Clapham, *Transformation...*, p. 175.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Kidane, p. 167; Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab & Taaju A/Maccaa.

⁵⁵ Alemayehu Lirenso, “Grain Marketing in the Post 1974 Revolution: Policies Problems and Prospects,” Taddese Beyene (ed.), *In Proceedings of the eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. I (Addis Ababa, 1984), p. 392.

⁵⁶ Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

as five hundred square meters for residential purposes. The proclamation established the Urban Dwellers' Associations (UDA) which were entrusted with the task of administering the urban centers. The proclamation also included the provision for the establishment of neighborhood organizations known as *qebeles*, the urban equivalent of the peasant associations.⁵⁷

The *qebeles* were established to administer the newly nationalized dwellings. They collected all rents on small homes and used the proceeds to finance social services for its members. This means, in urban areas, the state replaced the individual landlords in collecting house rents which were sharply reduced (at least by 50 percent), especially for low-income families. In subsequent years the *qebeles* became instruments of government control and were given political functions far beyond the administration of the nationalized property.⁵⁸

In Gommaa district including Aggaaro and other small towns, the proclamation on extra houses and urban lands was accepted by the greater majority of the population with a big elation. The implementation of the proclamation in Gommaa is said to have been carried out after a thorough investigation was made on each landlord possessions in the towns of the district, particularly in Aggaaro. The investigation involved whether a landlord had both extra houses in the town and at the same time farming lands in the rural areas. Under such condition the man had to choose between the two and take one. It also considered whether the owners of houses had means of livelihood other than renting the houses, and if his/her income is only from the rent he/she collected, the *qebeles* were obliged to pay half reimbursement for the individual who lost his/her extra houses due to the proclamation.⁵⁹

The proclamation on urban land and extra houses allowed all urban dwellers living in houses rented from the landlords to keep their houses for themselves but with far smaller monthly paid rent to the state. One of the most prominent landlord and richest man in Aggaaro town at the time was *Ato* Mammo Haile who is said to have owned 99 extra houses in the town all of which were confiscated and the man himself was imprisoned. However, he and other seven prisoners escaped from prison but were killed at Qoccolle.⁶⁰ The government also began to allocate land in urban

⁵⁷Endalu, p.55; Bahru, *A History of Modern*, 2002, p.243; Marcus, p.193.

⁵⁸*Ibid*; Bahru, *A History of Modern*, 2002, p.243; Marcus, p.193.

⁵⁹*Ibid*; Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

⁶⁰*Ibid*; Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

areas to those who wanted to build residential houses. After building houses, the urban residents were expected to pay two forms of taxes annually. These were taxes paid for the place on which they built the house, known as *yamarét gibir* (tax paid for the occupied land) and *täriyäna gigidä* (tax paid for the house).⁶¹

4.6. Opposition to the *Derg* Reforms in Gommaa

As mentioned before, the greater majority of the people of Gommaa jubilantly welcomed the overthrow of the imperial regime expecting that it might bring about major changes that suit their interest. However, though most of them were wiped out by the new regime, some remnants of the former local *baläbbäts*, vehemently opposed the revolution right from the start.⁶²

Being in their secret bases where they hid themselves, these former *baläbbäts* began to act against the new regime by organizing and financing some underground groups that helped them in sabotaging the gains of the revolution. Through time they were joined by many, though for different reasons. Some of the few peasants who are said to have joined the opposition against the *Derg* even complained that the revolution relieved them of tenancy of the feudal land owners simply to put us under the tenancy of the state. Wealthy men despised the *Derg* for impoverishing them, while the young ones were tired of imprisonment and death.⁶³

For instance, when the land reform was proclaimed, some of the local *Abbaa Qoros* are said to have attempted to resist the *zamäch* (campaigners) who came to effect the implementation of the land reform. However, they were arrested by the joint efforts of the *zamäch* and the former tenants who suffered under the *abbaa qoros*. *Ato* Shibiru Badhaaso whose land at Bulbulo was confiscated, opposed the government's measure but was jailed by the *zamäch*. The other personalities who were engaged in the anti-*Derg* movement in Gommaa include *Haji* Hassan, *Ato* Mamo Haile, *Ato* Gassase, *Gräzmäch* A/Waarii (former official) and Tijjani A/Gojjam of Booree, and etc., who were secretly instigating public anger against the regime and financing the opposition to it. However, all of them were captured and executed by the *Derg* regime.⁶⁴

⁶¹Aggaaro Municipality archival center, Folder number አ፩ 25/K1, File number 48/2686/79.

⁶² Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

⁶³Endalu, p.57; Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa.

⁶⁴ Informants: Abdoo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa; Endalu, p.57.

Of all however, the most prominent opponent of the *Derg* regime in Gommaa, who is said to have also been a fierce adversary to the imperial regime was A/Luulesa A/Gibe, also known as A/Luulesa Ashamfar. During the imperial regime, A/Luulesa had been the owner of a vast land but he is said to have resented the unjust treatment of the people in the hands of the bigger landlords, and thus, refused to pay tribute expected of him.⁶⁵

By the land reform of March 1975, the *Derg* regime confiscated the land of A/Luleessaa in Booree. This measure antagonized and even prompted him to openly display his resentment at the *Derg* regime. He publicly declared his preference for dying a free man than living under the subjugation of the *Derg*, which he is reported to have said, “tantamount to slavery.” Afterwards, he is said to have shot and killed three *Derg* soldiers, who went to his home to arrest him, and then entered the bush. He started as a solitary insurgent but was later joined by some followers.⁶⁶

He remained a fugitive for the next two years during which he is said to have killed ten to fifteen policemen and *Derg* soldiers. The government had made several attempts to capture or kill him but all its attempts ended in vain. Then, the officials promised a bounty on his life and/or his body. Being in the bush, A/Luleessaa caught a cold which caused him severe pneumonia. His illness aggravated in time. One day, he was seen lying on the ground totally unconscious at a certain place, where a passer-by named Abbaa Jirruu recognized him instantly. A/Jirruu mounted one of the horses in the field, put A/Luleessaa on the horse’s back and took him to his home, but unfortunately A/Luleessaa died soon.⁶⁷ Then A/Jirruu went to the home of *Sh/Imaam* A/Milkii and asked on what to do with the dead body. *Sh/Imaam* advised him use to stab the dead body of A/Luleessaa, and then report to the officials claiming that he had killed him. The man did what he was told and got rewarded for it.⁶⁸

The news of A/Luleessaa’s assassination was a significant sigh of relief for the local *Derg* officials who welcomed his death with great jubilation. It is said that his dead body was tied to the rear of a car owned by *Ato* Tafara Mamo and dragged on in the streets of Aggaaro town. The officials did this so that everybody could see him and consider what might happen to him in case he opposed

⁶⁵Informants: Abdo A/Raagoo, Mohammed A/Zinab and Taaju A/Maccaa; Endalu, p.57.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷Informants: Abdo A/R, Mohammed A/Z & Taaju A/M; *Wajjira Aadaafi Turizimii...*,2020, p.14.

⁶⁸*Ibid*; *Wajjira Aadaafi Turizimmii Aanaa* Aggaaro, 2020, p.14.

the government. They wanted to send a clear message to those prospective dissidents against the regime. Then he was buried in a place called *bowwaa haxxee* or the *haxxee* cliff. A/Luleessaa is considered as a hero by the majority in Aggaaro town. Recently, the former Meles Zenawi park on the outskirts of Aggaaro, on the way to Tobbaa town, was renamed as A/Luleessaa's memorial park.⁶⁹

4.7. The 1974 Revolution and the Women of Gommaa

During the imperial regime, the engagement of women in Gommaa in the overall societal life is said to be very limited owing to the socio-cultural and religious factors. Perhaps, the only exception, from the entire Limmu *awräjjä*, during this period was Rabiya Abdulqdir, who was a lawyer by profession. She represented the people of Limmu Kossa and became a member of the upper chamber (Senate) of the imperial parliament. She was credited with facilitating the installation of telephone wires from Kossa to Genet town. One well versed informant told me that she is the first women parliamentarian in the entire Gibe region.⁷⁰

In the economic sphere, there were few women in Gommaa who, before the 1974 revolution, rose up to the status of landowners and extensively involved in many other business activities. For instance, *W/ro* Yeshi Mekonnen was one of the famous land owners in Gommaa who owned about 100 hectares of land in areas like Barasso and Baqqoo, though she lost it all to the military regime in 1975. Yeshi had also a Hotel in Aggaaro town which she later sold to Yirga Egano in 1970. He renewed and renamed it Yirga Hotel, which has been serving the society to the present. The other women of big name in Gommaa and Aggaaro town was Alamitu Radda who owned a vast land in Qoccolele, and opened the current Alamitu Hotel in Aggaaro town. *W/ro* Belayinash Radda, was the other woman who was engaged in wine trade, hotel and agriculture, while Hayimanot Kabbade also opened hotel known as '*Abbäy Minci*' in Aggaaro town.⁷¹

As mentioned before, the *zamäch* had aided in the formation of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women Association, REWA, which was established as a part of the *Derg* project to improve the status of women in the society.⁷²

⁶⁹ Informants: Abdoo, Mohammed & Taaju; See Appendix VI: *Waaajira Aadaafi....*, 2020, p.14.

⁷⁰ Informants: Yishak & Abdoo A/R; Endalu, p. 59; Dagm, "Historical Survey ..."p.299.

⁷¹Informants: Yishak & Abdoo A/R; Girum, p.64; Endalu, p. 59.

⁷² Balsvik, "Addis Ababa university in the Shadow of..." , pp.260-261; Informants: Yishak & Abdoo.

Women associations were formed in Gommaa district both in the urban and rural *qebeles*. However, the leadership of the women associations in Gommaa were dominated by the small group of upper class women who were married to powerful men and hence, they paid little attention to poor women. Informants recall the names of the first leaders of the woman's association in Gommaa: *W/ro* Almaz Kasa and Mulu Kasa. It is said that the women association was aimed at improving the socio-economic and political engagements of the Ethiopian women. However, critics said that these associations were simply created for the mere objective of promoting the *Derg* policy.⁷³

The women associations in Gommaa were engaged in certain kinds of economic activities both in rural and urban areas. For instance, in rural Gommaa, the government had established peasant association of women in each *qebele* and provided them coffee farm lands that were confiscated from landlords. Similarly, the women associations in the urban areas of Gommaa were engaged in shopping business in which they sold various kinds of garments and other textile products. Each member of the associations was expected to contribute five birr in each month and the money was used to buy inputs they needed for their business but the profit they used to gain from such business was negligible.⁷⁴

Like members of similar organizations, the women association in both rural and urban areas of Gommaa were expected to contribute their money and labor for the government's war efforts. They were mainly responsible to prepare various kinds of provisions for the soldiers fighting against the insurgents. The slogan at the time was "*Everything to the war front.*" If a women failed to attend such programs, she was punished by money fines or even imprisonment for one day. Women involvement in the local politics is said to have been improved in the mid-1980s, with some of them becoming members of the workers' party (WPE).⁷⁵

4.8. Viillagization, Resettlement and Famine in Gommaa

4.8.1. Viillagization in Gommaa

Villagization is a process of moving peasants, who traditionally lived in scattered homesteads to "villages." It started in the Oromo province of Bale in 1978 and then was extended to the Hararghe

⁷³ Informants: Yishak Kenno & Abdoo A/Raagoo; Endalu, p. 59.

⁷⁴Yishak & Abdoo A/R.

⁷⁵Yishak & Abdoo A/R.

region in 1984, as a response to increasing OLF activities in the region. The program is said to have been implemented without any plan or preparation, and yet about one million Oromo peasant households were moved into new villages within a brief period of six months.⁷⁶

The government of Ethiopia is said to have introduced a nationwide villagization program in 1985. The officially declared objectives of this program were enhancing extension to increase agricultural productivity; promoting more rational land use patterns and conserve natural resources; facilitating access of rural population to social services such as education, health, water supply, electricity and transport services; strengthening security and self-defense; advancing the socialist revolution and promoting collectivization of agriculture, and etc.,⁷⁷ But informants suggested that by introducing villagization, the government had a secret motive of enhancing its control over the peasant population.⁷⁸ Presumably, in addition to socio-economic motives, villagization had also a political motive.

In Gommaa *woredä*, villagization is said to have started at the end of 1987/1988 and lasted until the overall program was terminated due to the shift in government policy in 1990. As it was the case at the national level, the implementation of villagization in Gommaa *woredä* was preceded by the establishment of coordinating committees at different levels of administration such as *awräjjä*, *woredä* and *qebele* levels. The coordinating committees at *qebele* levels were the ones that played a crucial role in selecting sites for villagization. In their attempts to convince the local people about the importance of villagization, the local officials pledged that the new villages to be formed would be equipped with all the necessary infrastructures such as clean water, electricity, health stations, school, roads and etc. However, all of these pledges were not materialized except the relatively better achievement made in terms of expanding schools. The new peasant villages were erected in a rectangular shape and in a pattern that allows easy movement and

⁷⁶Mekuria Bulcha, "Famine as an Instrument for Nation-Building and State Consolidation: Ethiopia's Resettlement and Villagization Programs of 1978-1991 in Retrospect" *The Journal of Oromo Studies*. Volume 8, Numbers 1 And 2, July 2001, p.115; Alemayehu Lirensu, "Villagization and Agricultural Production in Ethiopia: The Case Study of Two Regions" A Research Report Prepared for the Winrock International for Agricultural Development, IDR Research ReportNo.37, (Addis Ababa, 1989), pp. 1, 9-10.

⁷⁷ Ottaway, *The Political Economy ...*PP.64-65; Dawit, *Red Tears ...*, PP. 306-307; Tefera, *The Ethiopian Revolution ...*, PP.267-270; Clapham, *Transformation ...*, PP.174- 175.

⁷⁸ Informants: Yishak Kenno & Abdoo A/Raagoo.

communication of people between each houses.⁷⁹ Informants pointed that the process of villagization in Gommaa *woredä* was implemented under the watch and directives of the local officials such as *Ato* Abarra Habte and *Ato* Yared Asfaw, the then governor of the *woredä* and representative of Workers Party of Ethiopia in Gommaa, respectively.⁸⁰

Except for some who genuinely believed that villagization would bring them more positive things than the otherwise, the greater majority of the local peasants didn't want to leave their localities, and hence put up a stiffly resisted its implementation. In some cases, the security forces in Gommaa took some extreme measures of setting a blaze on the houses of the staunch opponents of the scheme. The dissidents were forced to flee away particularly to the neighboring urban areas where they are said to have become daily laborers. The dislocated peasants said that villagization uprooted them from their ancestral lands, gardens and homesteads. They complained that they were forced to leave their original homesteads for new villages, leaving behind their former settlements on which they made a lifelong investment.⁸¹

“It was complete madness,” angrily said one of my informants, who indignantly added that “we were evicted from our previous homes with a relatively closer water sources, and in the new villages we had to walk far more distance just to fetch water.” Informants also added that the far distance between their new settlements and their farm lands discouraged production given that peasants had to travel for more than an hour or so to and fro their farmlands. They were forced to dismantle their former houses which were relatively better, only to settle in inconvenient environment and in small huts, smaller in size than our previous homes.⁸²

From August to September 1987, the present researcher had lived in a rural *qebele* called Awaye-Sabu, just a 30 minutes' walk from Sarbo, a small town eighteen kilometres away from Jimmaa and was able to witness abandoned rural villages and houses particularly surrounded by plants of fruits, banana, false banana (*enset*), coffee and *khat*. They were totally abandoned and left to wild animals and any passer-by who could take them without any sense of guilt. One can imagine how

⁷⁹Shumet Gizew, “Resettlement Revisited: The Post Resettlement Assessment in Biftu Jalala Resettlement Site” *EJBE* vol. 3, number 1 (Dilla University, 2013), p.29; Informants: Yishak K & Abdoo A/R.

⁸⁰Informants: Yishak Kenno & Abdoo A/Raagoo.

⁸¹Informants: Yishak Kenno & Abdoo A/Raagoo.

⁸²Informants: *Ato* Katama Lema, Kamaal A/G & A/Giddi A/W; Clapham *Transformation...*, pp. 175-178.

long it took each peasant household to grow all these and leave them behind, only to restart again from ground zero in the new villages. It was apparent that villagization also forced some of the local peasants to migrate to towns instead of village resettlements.

Regarding the impacts of villagization in Gommaa, oral sources asserted that it had contributed to the decline of agricultural production; and since it was carried out on communally owned lands formerly used for grazing and other socio-cultural practices, it also affected the ecological balance and contributed to the general degradation of the environment; it accelerated the spread of communicable diseases, increased plant pests and diseases.⁸³ However, in the late 1980s, the farmers began to abandon the new villages at an alarming rate, and with the down fall of the regime in 1991, most farmers returned to their original sites.⁸⁴ Thus, it can be concluded that villagization which was meant to change the life of the rural peasants for the better ended up in a complete disaster for them and thereby for the country.

4.8.2. Resettlement in Gommaa

Resettlement, in the context of this thesis, refers to the movement of people from the northern part of Ethiopia to regions in the south and southwest. The *Derg* is said to have started the resettlement program in 1978,⁸⁵ but it was discontinued in 1981 mainly due to persistent resistance and also lack of resources. The operation was resumed in 1985. It was the dreadful famine of 1984-1985 in Ethiopia that created a favorable condition for the *Derg* to resume the relocation on a grand and an unprecedented scale.⁸⁶

The government had officially declared that resettlement was meant to relieve people from the famine stricken northern provinces of Wallo and Tigray, and resettle them in the southwestern parts of Ethiopia. However, critiques suggested that the program was motivated by the desire to remove as much agricultural population as possible from rebellious area thus, undermining guerrilla movements.⁸⁷ In other words, it was aimed at forcibly relocating northern peasants in the

⁸³Informants: Kamaal A/G & A/Giddi A/Waarii; Clapham *Transformation...*, pp. 175-178.

⁸⁴Informants: Kamaal A/G & A/Giddi A/Waarii; Clapham *Transformation...*, pp. 175-178.

⁸⁵Mekuria, "Famine as an Instrument for Nation-Building ...", pp.114-115.

⁸⁶ Shiferaw Bekele, "An Empirical Account of Resettlement in Ethiopia (1975-1985)" *Proceeding of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, Vol 2,1988), p. 141.

⁸⁷ Paul D. Henze, *Communist Ethiopia- Is It Succeeding?* The Rand Papers Series, 1985, P.42; Marcus, p.209; Dawit, *Red Tears....*, pp.289-297; Tefera, *The Ethiopian Revolution...*, PP. 260-262.

south and southwest and thereby deny support to the armed rebels such as TPLF and EPLF who were fighting against the *Derg* regime, something similar to the saying ‘*draining the sea to catch the fish.*’

As a part of the southwestern region, the present day Jimmaa zone to which Gommaa *woredä* belongs was one of the largest settlers receiving regions in Ethiopia. As it was true for other districts, the settlers from Wallo and Tigray came to Gommaa *woredä* assigned by the *Awräjjä* committees. Hence, the settlers were stationed at the sites selected for their residence around Dhedheessaa river at particular places such as Daako, Meexxii and Kotichaa. These areas were selected for settlement mainly because there were extensive spaces to settle numerous peoples, and also they possessed high water supply for different purposes. Since there were no houses built for them in advance, the settlers temporarily settled in the huge store house confiscated from the former land owner known as Kadir Eebbaa. Within a month or so, through the help of the local peasants, houses were built for the settlers on the land, partially covered with forest coffee, which was confiscated from the same person. The local peasants and urban residents in Aggaaro and other areas voluntarily provided the settlers with various kinds of provisions including food, clothes and household utensils. Farmers also shared part of their produce to the settlers until the latter were able to stand by themselves.⁸⁸

On the other hand, the local officials arranged various programs through which they could gather whatever help they could find from the local residents and even imposed certain taxes on the rich families. Then they bought oxen and agricultural implements for the settlers which enabled the latter to make a living on their own. Despite all these supports, however, it was not easy for the settlers to get accustomed to their new settlement. After surviving the harsh famine, some of them could not adjust themselves to the new physical, social and economic environments, and even died of illness. Some others fled to the nearby towns and became daily laborers.⁸⁹

However, there were few success stories told by some of the former settlers who, within a relatively short period of time, have gone beyond expectations and became even rich families. One of my informants, a former settler, now a resident of Aggaaro town, told me the condition

⁸⁸Informants: Kamaal A/Gissaa & A/Giddi A/Waarii; Endalu, p.69.

⁸⁹*Ibid*; Endalu, p.69.

under which he was brought to his current locality. He said that he along with his entire family and friends were evicted from Tigray without their consent and put in a temporary camp until they were transported to their current environment. Those who tried to escape from the camp were shot dead on the spot and no one cared about giving them a proper burial, not only because the officials didn't allow it but also everyone was incapacitated to the extent of losing the difference between life and death. "After few days," he said "we were transported on lorries and buses all from Tigray to here, and many families died on the way. Since it was carried out by force, there were families who were torn apart in the whole process and only God knew how many of those families were able to see each other again, or if any one of them, at all, were able to meet again. Despite all these bad memories, however," said my informant, "I am happy with where and what I am now."⁹⁰

This is the tale of one of the few former settlers who, through a combination of hard work and good luck, succeeded in life. Otherwise, the fate of the greater majority of the settlers, as reported by one of the former local officials who took part in the overall business of settlement back then, was as horrendous as the famine itself. In deed the local people and the officials had made the utmost effort to rehabilitate the settlers but the magnitude of the settlers' problem was so severe and overwhelming that all the helps they got were simply a tiny fraction of what they deserved and thus, the settlement program put the settlers in a humanitarian crisis as severe, if not worse, as the famine, which it meant to relieve them of.⁹¹

The settlement program in Gommaa in the 1980s had also adverse effects on the environment. With the reduction and then complete termination of the emergency support they used to get, the settlers are said to have begun to exploit the resources they found in their immediate environment. Of all, they caused massive destruction to the local forest resources. They cut trees for various purposes: to get fuel wood, to clear the land for farming, to make farm implements and household equipment, and some of them even made forest resources as source of income by selling fire wood and/or charcoal in the nearby urban areas mainly Aggaaro town. As a result, an area which, before the arrival of the settlers, was largely covered with forest, was almost turned into a barren land.⁹²

⁹⁰ Informant: Ato Habtom G/Silässie.

⁹¹Informants: Kamaal A/Gissaa &A/Giddi A/Waarii; Endalu, p.69.

⁹²*ibid.*

4.8.3. Famine of 1985 in Gommaa

In the post-1941 period, Ethiopia is said to have faced recurrent famine, of which the famine of 1973-74, famously known as the Wallo famine, was the most overwhelming to the peasantry. The Wallo famine was the worst catastrophe to have occurred during the Old Regime.⁹³ The revolutionary leaders that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 are said to have used the Wallo famine to stir up public sentiments against the Emperor. However, they themselves were caught totally unprepared to tackle the worst and most widely reported famine of 1984-85, which struck the greater part of Ethiopia including Gommaa district.⁹⁴

The rain failure/drought during July-September 1983 was followed in 1984 by crop failure and hence, a considerable loss in agricultural productivity. The normal process of ploughing was disrupted due to the rain failure, shortage of seed for planting, and in some cases due to lack of oxen. Peasants were left with no crop reserve and were compelled to consume even the seeds they had retained for planting. By July 1984, it came to be clear that provinces like Wallo, Sidamo, Hararghe, Shawa, Tigray, and Gondar were the worst hit.⁹⁵ The horrendous famine of 1984/1985 is said to have generated a huge international sympathy which was followed by a wide relief effort by the international community. Several governments and international organizations and private agencies came up with a huge amount of emergency food and other essentials in 1985 and 1986.⁹⁶

In Gommaa, the 1984/1985 famine was mainly attributed to the drought and/or scarcity of rain that resulted in crop failure. In addition, the coffee disease that occurred in the same year had caused a significant loss of production and thereby financial deficiency to the people. Informants also indicated that there were man-made factors that aggravated the famine. For instance, the price of cereals is said to have been more than doubled, while that of livestock sharply dwindled. As a result of severe food shortage and low purchasing power, people migrated to other areas. Some merchants who traded in grains are said to have also speculated the rise in the price of their

⁹³Mesfin Wolde Mariyam, *Rural Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia, 1958-1977* (London: Intermediate Technology publications, 1986), pp. 11, 15-16; Dessalegn Rhamato, *Famine and Survival Strategies: A Case Study from North East Ethiopia* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1991), pp. 1-2.

⁹⁴ Marcus, pp.205-207.

⁹⁵ Marcus, pp.205-207.

⁹⁶Marcus, pp.205-207; Endalu, p.70.

products and hence, stockpiled grains in their stores until the local officials intervened and compelled them to open up their stores and sell their products at a market prices.⁹⁷

The peasants of Gommaa were severely stricken by the famine and thus, are said to have sold their household utensils just to buy food, and even eaten the grain they had retained to use as seed for the next year's harvest. After running out of any other alternative, hundreds of these peasants are said to have left their rural homes and flocked to the urban areas mainly to Aggaaro, hoping that either the government or the local people would give them something to eat. "It was a heart breaking, said one of my informants, "to see people lying down on the road sides and begging for food. Some of them were even not strong enough to utter a word to beg and thus, die on the streets." The famine was not limited to the rural areas. Even in Aggaaro town, hundreds are said to have undergone silent starvation, though there was no one in the town who is reported to have died of the famine.⁹⁸ Informants also reported that the famine in Gommaa had other socio-cultural consequences. It is said that the famine had broken down the socio-cultural fabric of the community both in urban and rural areas. For instance, lack of decency and theft which, in earlier times, were reviled by the local community became the new normal during the famine years.⁹⁹

4.9. The Oromo of Gommaa in the Immediate Aftermath of the Fall of *Derg*

The Gommaa Oromo were overwhelmingly happy at the early days of the 1974 revolution. But later they came to despise the *Derg* regime which, they said, was characterized by injustices, corruption, arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial killings of their people which made them live in a state of fear.¹⁰⁰ Despite deep hatred for the regime however, there was no any kind of open dissensions, against the regime in Gommaa.

In fact, the *Derg* regime was brought down by ethno-nationalist insurgents that waged guerrilla operations against the regime in different parts of the country particularly in the north. These ethno-nationalist organizations include the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), the OLF (Oromo liberation Front), OPDO (Oromo People's Democratic Organization), EPDM (Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement) later renamed as

⁹⁷Endalu, p.70; Informants: Ahmad Sirraaj & Ali Jabal.

⁹⁸Informants: Ahmad and Ali Jabal.

⁹⁹Informants: Ahmad and Ali Jabal.

¹⁰⁰Informants: Ahmad and Ali Jabal.

APDM (Amhara Peoples Democratic Movement), and OLM (Ogaden Liberation Movement) etc., The EPLF fought to liberate Eritrea, the OLF went alone to fight for the independence of the Oromo lands, while the other insurgent groups such as TPLF, OPDO and EPDM formed a coalition which came to be known as EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) largely dominated and led by the TPLF. It was this coalition that emerged victorious and drove the *Derg* from different parts of Ethiopia. While the EPLF entered Asmara on 24 May, 1991, the EPRDF forces entered Addis Ababa four days later on 28 May. This event marked the end of the *Derg* regime.¹⁰¹

The national conference of all political groups held in Addis Ababa from July 1-5, 1991, adopted a transitional Charter that laid out guidelines for a reorganization of Ethiopia, and adopted principles for sharing power between the central and regional ethno-national governments. Based on the Charter, a Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), consisting of a Council of Representatives and Council of Ministers was established. Proclamation No. 7 of 1992 established fourteen self-governing regional states which were given substantial powers including organizing their regional government under legislative, executive and judicial government organs. Power was shared between the central government and these regional governments.¹⁰² It was based this proclamation that the Oromia regional government was established as one of the fourteen self-governing regional states. Gommaa and Geeraa became two separate districts in Jimmaa zone with Aggaaro maintaining its status as the capital of Gommaa.¹⁰³

As one of the forces that brought down the military regime, the OLF was among the fronts and organizations that formed the transitional government of Ethiopia and began operating throughout Oromo territory.¹⁰⁴ In Gommaa district the OLF army under the command of Abbaa Malkaa stationed at a particular place around Qottaa. Soon, the OLF began a literacy program, throughout the Oromo lands, using the Latin-based Oromo alphabet called *qubee*. The literacy campaign was

¹⁰¹ Daniel Gemechu, "A Nation in Perpetual Transition: The politics of Changes in Administrative Division and Subdivisions in Ethiopia" Papers proceeding of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (1994), p.105; Informants: Ahmad Siraaj and Ali Jabal.

¹⁰² Asafa, *Oromia and Ethiopia...*, pp.105-106; Mekuria, *Contours...*, pp. 535-536; Daniel, pp. 105-107.

¹⁰³ Informants: Ahmad Siraaj & Ali Jabal.

¹⁰⁴ Mekuria, *Contours of the Emergent*, pp. 497-498 & 535- 536; Daniel, p.107.

conducted extensively for the first time in the Oromo language. The Oromo language became a medium of instruction in all primary schools and a language of administration in Oromia. The Gommaa Oromo happily received the adoption of the *qubee* alphabet as something that shows the beginning of a new chapter in their history.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the adoption of *Afaan* Oromo as a medium of instruction in Gommaa was preceded in 1992 by the provision of training to all the elementary and junior school teachers in Gommaa district. In this training held at Aggaaro town and lasted for ten days, the teachers were acquainted with the Latin scripts newly adopted to be used as *Afaan* Oromo alphabets or *qubee* so that they may be able to use them in reading and writing. In addition, the teaching of the *Afaan* Oromo alphabets, was also given to all government employees or civil servants owing to the fact that the language had become the working language in Oromia.¹⁰⁶ Thus, one practical achievement of the ethnic based federal arrangement for the Gommaa and other Oromo, and of course, all other major nations of the federations was that they enjoyed the right to use their own language for instructional purpose in primary schools and also for administrative functions at the local level.

In the later periods disagreements occurred between the leading governing parties, EPRDF and OLF, and thus, the latter withdrew from the transitional government. Soon war broke out between the two. The EPRDF and OLF forces fought at Qottaa in Gommaa, and in Geeraa districts. During this time of conflicts, the Gommaa Oromo particularly those in the rural areas mainly sympathized the OLF but only a limited number of them joined the OLF army. Finally, the conflict came to an end with the victory for OPDO/EPRDF which made it the sole governing body in Oromia.¹⁰⁷

Informants reported that the system of federalism which was consolidated by the 1995 constitution of Ethiopia didn't brought them a full local autonomy given that the EPRDF led government was no better than the former regime. Particularly, they despised the government's land policy which denied the local peasants to own their land but simply allowed them to the right to land use which it could take back any time it deems necessary.¹⁰⁸ As said above, the OPDO became the sole governing body in Oromia region, though it was known clearly to everybody that all parts of the

¹⁰⁵*Ibid*; Informants: Ahmad Siraaj & Ali Jabal.

¹⁰⁶ Informants: Ahmad Siraaj & Ali Jabal.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid*.

country including Oromia was dominated by the TPLF. TPLF exercised a total monopoly of power both at the central and regional levels and was the sole decision maker on every issue,¹⁰⁹ meaning, the OPDO was regarded as a puppet of TPLF in Oromia region. Moreover, the local people claimed that they didn't see the changes they wished for and expected from the TPLF led government, with the previous socio-economic and political problems remaining intact and in some cases even worsened. The TPLF stayed in power for nearly three decades until a nationwide popular discontent grew into an open rebellion which ultimately culminated with its removal from power a couple of years ago. This seemed to have brought certain hope for most Ethiopians, though at present that hope seems to be dying out with the current wars in the northern part of the country.¹¹⁰ It seems that Ethiopia is running into the unknown, and no one can predict what lies ahead, though it is (and it should be) clear to everybody that the future of our country cannot be envisioned without the unity and equality of all its people.

¹⁰⁹Informants: Ahmad Siraaj & Ali Jabal.

¹¹⁰*ibid.*

Conclusion

Before state formation, the Oromo of Gommaa were governed by the *gadaa* system with their common *gadaa* center at Tumma Seeqaa which also served as their ritual center. Before they accepted Islam and/or converted to Christianity, the Gommaa Oromo used to follow the Oromo traditional religion known as *Waaqeffannaa*. The kingdom of Gommaa was the first Gibe kingdom to stop sending pilgrims to the *Abbaa Muudaa* around 1846. The decline of *gadaa* system and the introduction of Islam contributed to the end of the *Waaqeffannaa* religion in the Gibe region.

The itinerant clerics from northern Ethiopia, local clerics and also the “saints” were the major agents for the spread of Islam in the Gibe region. Abbaa Reebuu (r. 1830-1856) was the king of Gommaa who took the lion’s share of credit for expanding Islam. The St. *Michael* church at Qottaa built in 1890, was the first Christian church in Gommaa, while the St. George church completed in 1925/1926, became the first church in Aggaaro town. The Sudan Interior Mission which was later renamed as Society of International Missionaries established the first protestant church known as *Kale Hiwot* church in Aggaaro town.

The kingdom of Gommaa was founded by Abbaa Manno (Odaa Allayyoo) in the first half of the eighteenth century/ at about 1735. But, due to lack of unanimity of sources, it seems difficult to make a definitive conclusion as to whether the kingdom was founded peacefully or through war. The *mootii* (king) of Gommaa wore a gold ring on his finger as the main insignia of his kingship. Owing to the influence of Islam, he and the other Gibe kings didn’t claim divine right. The kingdom of Gommaa was organized into various administrative units such as the *Qoros*, *Gandaas*, *Lagaas*, and *Jigaas*. The king of Gommaa was at the top the political pyramid, and was assisted by councilors known as *qoppo*(council). Geeraa was the only state of the region with which the kingdom of Gommaa had peaceful relations for a long time, while Gommaa’s relations with the kingdoms of Jimmaa was largely hostile.

The *mootii* of Gommaa was the biggest landowner (*Abbaa lafaa*) in the kingdom, followed by the nobility, the free peasants with their own plots of land. The foundation of economy of Gommaa Oromo, since earlier times, was agriculture in which the people produced various kinds of food crops and also cash crops. Gommaa is considered as the origin or birth place of coffee, which is its most important cash crop. It has also areas of grass lands which supported a large cattle population including cows, oxen, goats and sheep, horses, mules and donkeys. The beekeeping in

Gommaa produces honey twice a year. Trade was and, still is the other important economic activity of the people of Gommaa. The main trade routes from Gamboxaa (in Guumaa) and Challa (in Geeraa) passed through Sayyoo, the capital and main commercial center of the kingdom of Gommaa. The most important route from Saqqaa (in Limmu) to Bonga (in kafa), as well as the one on the western directions to Ilu-AbbaaBooraa and Wallaga also passed through Gommaa and Geeraa. The *Jabartii* traders from northern Ethiopia and their local counterparts, the *Afkaalaas*, facilitated the flow trade items from the sources to the coast and the vice versa. Sayyoo, Qottaa, Caggoo and Yaacii were also among the famous market centers in Gommaa, which were attended by merchants from near and far places.

Two major events of the last quarter of the 19th century had significantly affected the history of the entire Gibe states. First, epidemic disease struck the entire region in the 1870s and consumed about half of Gommaa's human population. Meanwhile, the kingdom of Gommaa was also in a state of decline due to the succession of weak kings to the throne. The second event was the encroachment of the entire Gibe region by two powerful rival forces, Gojjam and Shawa since the 1870s. The forces of Gojjam commanded by *Ras* Darasso were the first to invade the Gibe region first by attacking Jimmaa in 1881, which agreed to pay tribute to Gojjam. Gommaa and the other states also did the same. Following the Shawan victory over Gojjam at Embabo, all the Gibe states shifted their allegiances to Shawa since 1882. From 1882-1886, Gommaa was under an indirect rule of Shawa. But after 1886 the Shawans established a direct rule and introduced a new socio-economic and political system-the *näftäñña-gäbbar* system in Gommaa and the neighboring states. The people of Gommaa were distributed with their lands, as *gabbärs* to the imperial settler soldiers or the *näftäñña*. They paid regular tribute and also give free labor services to the settler soldiers and even to the Church. The *qalad* system introduced by the Land Proclamation Act of 1910 changed the status of the local peasants from *gabbär* to tenants. The classification of land based on fertility put the vast land of Gommaa under of the fertile category and exposed the local people to pay the highest rate of tax. The imperial settlers and soldiers not only imposed their language and culture on the Gommaa Oromo, but also curtailed their religious rights.

During the Italians occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941), the majority of the Gommaa Oromo felt some sort of respite from the exploitative imperial policies, though all of those exploitative policies were reinstated in the immediate post-liberation period. The government also alienated

peasants from their lands through land measurement, land sale, land grants and increase in taxation. The greater majority of the people of Gommaa warmly welcomed the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. Initially, the socialist oriented *Derg* regime undertook some progressive measures which delighted the majority of local people, though their happiness died out after the new regime began to implement of some very unpopular schemes such as collectivization of agriculture, villagization, resettlement and etc., A coalition of ethno-nationalist insurgents overthrew the *Derg* regime in May 1991 and thereafter, ethnic based federal system was established in Ethiopia. The federal system divided Ethiopia into nine-administrative regions of which Oromia was one. Gommaa *woredä* was put under the Jimmaa Zone of Oromia regional state since then. One major achievement of the ethnic based federalism for the Gommaa Oromo, and of course, all other major nations of the federations was that they began to use their own language for instructional purpose in primary schools, and also for administrative functions at the local level.

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List of Informants

	Name	Age	Sex	Interview		Remarks
				Date	Place	
1.	A/Bulgu A/Booraa(<i>obboo</i>)	75	M	7/5/2020	Geeraa.	Elder from Geeraa who told me the formative period of the kingdom of Geeraa.
2.	A/Bulgu A/Duraa(<i>obboo</i>)	75	M	5/5/2020	Aggaaro	Elder from Gommaa who told me the reaction of the Gommaa Oromo to the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the land reform proclamation.
3.	A/Faajjii A/Temam(<i>obboo</i>)	75	M	5/5/2020	Aggaaro	A knowledgeable informant on the history of the <i>Zamächs</i> /campaigners, the formation of peasant associations, and literacy campaign in Gommaa.
4.	A/Giddi A/Waarii(<i>obboo</i>)	82	M	6/5/2020	Yaaci Isa	The former official in peasant associations who told me about villagization in Gommaa.
5.	A/Macaa A/Raagoo(<i>obboo</i>)	83	M	8/5/2020	Qottaa	Elder from Gommaa who told me the early history of Gommaa Oromo.
6.	A/Milkii A/Dikoo(<i>obboo</i>)	70	M	9/5/2020	Semmaa	Elder from Gommaa who told me the early history of Gommaa Oromo.
7.	A/Nagaa A/Joobir(<i>obboo</i>)	76	M	5/4/2019	Yaacii	Elder from Gommaa who told me the early history of Gommaa Oromo.
8.	A/Simal A/Foggii(<i>obboo</i>)	77	M	3/4/2019	Geeraa	Elder from Geeraa who told me the formative period of the kingdom of Geeraa.
9.	A/ Zinab A/Dagaa(<i>obboo</i>)	85	M	15/2/2019	Qujjoo	Elder from Gommaa who told me the various factors that contributed to the diverse nature of Gommaa's population .
10.	Abdo A/Raagoo(<i>obboo</i>)	84	M	17/2/2019	Yaacii	Elder from Gommaa who told me the reaction of the Gommaa Oromo to the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the land reform proclamation.
11.	Abera Dinsa(<i>Ato</i>)	70	M	13/2/2019	Yaacii	Elder from who told me the history of the the Protestant religion in Gommaa
12.	Ahmad A/Garo(<i>Ato</i>)	68	M	19/1/2019	Coocee	Informant on the history of Coffee Production in Gommaa, during the the imperial regime.
13.	Ahmad Haji kadir(<i>Ato</i>)	76	M	22/1/2019	Aggaro	Elder from Gommaa who told me the reaction of the Gommaa Oromo to the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the subsequent land reform.
14.	Ahmad Siraaj(<i>Ato</i>)	78	M	22/1/2019	Aggaro	Elder from Gommaa who told me the story of the 1984/1985 famine and the impacts of villagization.
15.	Alemayo Tolasa(<i>Ato</i>)	65	M	1/3/2019	Bulbulo	Informant who told me the history of Coffee Production during the imperial regime.
16.	Ali Jabal(<i>Ato</i>)	80	M	15/3/2019	Urachee	Elder from Gommaa who told me the story of the 1984/1985 famine & the impacts of villagization.
17.	Anbasse A/Milikii(<i>Ato</i>)	92	M	9/1/2019	Aggaro	An informant on the history of administrative system in Gommaa in the post-liberation period.
18.	Asafa Benti(<i>Ato</i>)	60	M	21/2/2019	Aggaro	A knowledgeable informant on the history of the <i>Zamächs</i> /campaigners, the formation of peasant associations, and literacy campaign in Gommaa.

19	Awol A/Bulguu(<i>obbo</i>)	65	F	29/2/2019	Aggaro	He told me the cultural history of Gommaa Oromo mainly their marriage practices and indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution.
20	Bazabih Dasta(<i>Ato</i>)	75	M	15/3/2019	Coocee	A knowledgeable informant on the history of the <i>Zamächs</i> /campaigners, the formation of peasant associations, and literacy campaign in Gommaa.
21	Farid A/Boor(<i>Ato</i>)	60	M	14/3/2019	Tobbaa	Informant who told me the formative period of the kingdom of Guumaa.
22	Fikru Abdissaa(<i>Ato</i>)	52	M	19/4/2019	Aggaaro	My colleague whose family used to produce musk, coffee and also reared cattle.
23	Fikru Hordofa (<i>Ato</i>)	62	M	20/4/2019	Aggaaro	An informant who told me about coffee production during the imperial & <i>Derg</i> regimes.
24	Firdoshee Ittafaa(<i>aadde</i>)	48	F	19/4/2019	Aggaaro	a craftswoman/a potter in Gommaa who told me about the social stigma against them.
25	Galaanee Eddosaa (<i>aadde</i>)	45	F	10/3/2019	Aggaaro	a craftswoman/a potter in Gommaa who told me about the social stigma against them.
26	Girma Demise(<i>Ato</i>)	69	M	23/3/2019	Aggaaro	Informant on the history of Orthodox Christianity in Gommaa.
27	Habtom G/Silässie (<i>Ato</i>)	70	M	12/5/2019	Aggaaro	A former settler who came to Aggaaro during the 1984/1985 settlement program.
28	Hafiz A/ Giddii(<i>Ato</i>)	54	M	13/5/2019	Aggaro	My colleague and the son of the former <i>Abbaa Lafaa</i> (land owner) in Gommaa.
29	Hindii Kamal (<i>aadde</i>)	68	F	5/5/2020	Suusee	An elderly woman from Gommaa who told me about the overall history of Gommaa Oromo.
30	Jemaal Negawoo(<i>obboo</i>)	67	M	5/5/2019	Tobbaa	Informant from Tobbaa who told me the formative period of the kingdom of Guumaa.
31	Jihad Hassan(<i>obboo</i>)	68	M	11/4/2019	Aggaaro	The former chief of cultural and tourism bureau of Aggaaroo <i>woredä</i> , who had something to tell almost on every issues addressed in this thesis.
32	Kamaal A/Gissaa(<i>obboo</i>)	70	M	17/4/2019	Semmaa	A former official in peasant associations who told me the story of villagization in Gommaa.
33	Katama Lema (<i>Ato</i>)	69	M	5/4/2019	Aggaro	The former mayor of Aggaaroo town who told me the story of villagization. Unfortunately, he passed away two months after I interviewed him.
34	Misku A/Saambii(<i>aadde</i>)	82	F	14/5/2019	Qottaa	An elder informant on the political history of the kingdom of Gommaa.
35	Mohammed A/ Daga (<i>obboo</i>)	67	M	19/5/2019	Qottaa	A descendant of the Awalani clan who has a deep knowledge on the history of the Gommaa Oromo.
36	Mohammed A/Zinab(<i>obboo</i>)	55	M	21/5/2019	Ilbuu	Informant who knows the history of the reforms of the <i>Derg</i> regime and the opposition it encountered.
37	Mohammed Kemal(<i>obboo</i>)	58	M	22/5/2019	Aggaro	My colleague who told me about the history of Gommaa's population during the <i>Derg</i> regime.
38	Nasir Hajii (<i>obboo</i>)	63	M	22/5/2019	Aggaro	The former chief of cultural and tourism bureau of Aggaaroo <i>woredä</i> , who had something to tell almost on every issues addressed in this thesis.
39	Shabuddin Mohammed (<i>obboo</i>)	68	M	24/5/2019	Qunaaco	A descendant of the Awalani clan who has a deep knowledge on the history of the Gommaa Oromo.

40	Sh/ Nasir Jemal	66	M	26/5/2019	Bunddee	A descendant of the Awalani clan who has a deep knowledge on the history of the Gommaa Oromo.
41	Taajuu A/ Maccaa(<i>obboo</i>)	67	M	1/5/2019	Bashasha	An Informant on the history of the <i>Derg</i> regime and the opposition against the regime in Gommaa.
42	Tadelech Cimdessa(<i>aadde</i>)	76	F	3/5/2019	Aggaroo	An elderly woman from Gommaa who told me about the overall history of Gommaa Oromo.
43	Tamam A/Garo	64	M	3/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant on the various factors that contributed to the diverse nature of population of Gommaa.
44	Tamiru Banti(<i>Ato</i>)	68	M	4/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant on the system of administration in Gommaa in the post-liberation period.
45	Tamiru W/Gabriel (<i>Ato</i>)	67	M	4/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant on the early history of the introduction of Christianity into Gommaa.
46	Temam A/Olii(<i>obboo</i>)	63	M	4/5/2019	Aggaroo	Elder from Gommaa who told me the reaction of the Gommaa Oromo to the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the subsequent land reform.
47	Temesgen Disasa (<i>Ato</i>)	64	M	5/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant on the history of the Protestant religion and churches in Gommaa
48	Tesfaye A/Galan(<i>Ato</i>)	68	M	5/5/2019		Informant who told me about Orthodox churches were created in Gommaa.
49	Tesfaye T/Mariam(<i>Ato</i>)	66	M	5/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant who told me the history of Orthodox Christianity in Gommaa.
50	Teshome Teklu(<i>Ato</i>)	67	M	6/5/2019	Aggaroo	Informant who told me the history of Orthodox Christianity in Gommaa.
51	Waqtolee Galan(<i>obboo</i>)	85	M	4/1/2020	Cedero	Elder of Gommaa who told me the cultural history of the people mainly their marriage practices & indigenous conflict resolution.
52	Yishak Kanno A/ Garo (<i>obboo</i>)	60	M	15/3/2019	Aggaaro	The grandson of <i>Fitäwräri</i> A/Garo A/Kaabee. He is very knowledgeable about all aspects of the history of Gommaa district and its people.

Appendix II-Source : Endalu, p.136.

SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT OF
ETHIOPIA
ETHIOPIAN ROAD AUTHORITY

Post Office Box 1770 Addis Ababa Ethiopia
Cable Address Highways Addis Ababa
Telex 21180

የግንባታ ግዛት ፋብሪካ ፡ 1770 አዲስ አበባ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡
የቴሌግራም ፡ አድራሻ ፡ አውራ ፡ ጉዳዮች ፡ አዲስ አበባ ፡

ፋብሪካ ፡ መስተዳደር/17-6

አዲስ አበባ ፡ ህዳር 21 ፡ 1969 ዓ. ም. ፡ Addis Ababa ፡ 19

Ref. No.

በጎበኝ ተሰባሳቂት ኢትዮጵያ
ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግሥት
የከፋ ክፍለ ሀገር አስተዳደር ጸ/ቤት
ጻፀ።

የመንገድ ሥራ ባለሥልጣን ከዞርዚ ጊዌሴፕ ኮሚሽን የአገሪቱ ጊራን መንገድ
ለመሥራት ከወ/ቤታቸን ጋር በተዋዋለው መሠረት ሥራው ተፋጥኖ በአሁኑ ጊዜ ወደ
ጣለ ይጀምራል ወይንም ይታወቃል።

የተሰጠው አጭር መንገድ አካባቢ ያለውን ወደፊት ለኖር የሚችል የሰዓት
አገባብ ያሉ ከፍተኛ ያለ መሆኑ ስለታወቀ በተጨማሪም የተሰጠው መንገድ ከዓለም ባንክ በተገኘው
ብድር አንዳንድ ባንኮች አገልግሎት መስጠት እንደሚችሉ የሚጠበቅ ስለሆነ
ተጭራቅ በገባው ውስጥ መሠረት ሥራውን ለመቅጠብ ሠር ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ ይኖርበታል።

ተጭራቅ ሥራውን ለመጨረስ በአገሪቱ ከተማ መገንጠያ መንገድን በሚሠራበት ጊዜ
አ.አ.አ ሕግ 9 ቀን 1976 ዓ.ም የከተማው ባለሥልጣናት አገልግሎት ገራደርና
አገልግሎት ይዘው የከተማው የውስጥ መንገዶች አንዳንድ አስገዳጅ አ.አ.አ
ሕግ 11 ቀን 1976 ዓ.ም አሠር ተዋዋለ።

ይህ አድራጊት የመንገድ ሥራ ወደ ግንባታ ከመገኘቱ በላይ ለሌሎች
የሥራ ዘርፎች እንዲያሠሩ አድርጓል። በዚህም ያካተተ ተጭራቅ ወደፊት ተወስኖ
ድርጊት ቢፈጸም ባይሆንም በወ/ቤቱ ላይ የኪነ-ባህሪ ክስ የሚመሠር ተመሳሳይ
በቁጥር BII/11/1050/76 አ.አ.አ ሕግ 12 ቀን 1976 ዓ.ም በተጻፈ ደብዳቤ
አሳስቦታል።

ስለዚህ የመንገድ መሥሪያ መሣሪያዎች ከሚሠሩበት በታች ላይ ወደ ሌላ
ሥራ አንዳንድ ሲደረግ ሥራው ወደግን ቢገባበት በውስጥ መሠረት በውስጥ ላይ ሊፈጸም

48
27-5-69

Appendix III

Appendix- III (A) King list of the kingdom of Gommaa

1.	Abbaa Manno (r. 1735- 1775)
2.	Abbaa Bagibo (r. 1775-1805)
3.	Abbaa Rago (r. 1805-1830)
4.	Abbaa Reebu (r. 1830-1856)
5.	Abbaa Duulaa (r. 1856-1864)
6.	Abbaa Jifar (r. 1864-1877)
7.	Abbaa Booqaa (r. 1877-1883)
8.	Abbaa Duulaa (r. 1883-1886)

Source: Guluma, “Gommaa ...”, p.230; *Waaajira Aadaaf Turiizimii Aanaa Gommaa*, 2008, Aggaaroo, p.8.

Appendix- III (B)-Genealogical Table of kings of Gommaa

Awalani
Abbaa Bookee
1. Abbaa Mannoo (Oodaa Allayyoo, r.1735-1775) 16 th son of Abbaa Bookee Founder of the dynasty. Ruled for forty years.
2. Abbaa Bagiboo (r.1775-1805) eldest son of Abbaa Mannoo. Ruled for thirty years.
3. Abbaa Raagoo (r.1805-1830) eldest son of Abbaa Bagiboo. Ruled for 25 years. Exiled to Geeraa.
4. Abbaa Reebuu (r.1830-1856). Third son of Abbaa Bagiboo. Ruled for 26 years. Died in 1856.
5. Abbaa Duulaa (r.1856-1864). Adopted son of Abbaa Reebuu. Ruled for seven years. Died in 1864.
Abbaa Morkii, second son of Abbaa Bagiboo and the father of A/Jifaar
6. Abbaa Jifaar (r. 1864-1877) son of Abbaa Morkii, ruled for 13 years.
7. Abbaa Booqaa (r.1877-1883). son of Abbaa Jifaar. Ruled for six years. Exiled to kafa together with his mother Gennee Dagoyyittii
Abbaa Qerephee, chief advisor of Abbaa Jifaar and the father of A/ Duulaa
8. A/Duulaa (r.1883-1886). Took over power from the family of A/Mannoo. His rule marked the end of the independence of the kingdom.

Source: Guluma, “Gommaa ...”, p.55; *Waaajira Aadaaf Turiizimii Aanaa Gommaa*, Aggaaroo, p.8.

Appendix IV-A Coffee Museum built in 2011 at Coocee in Gommaa District. Source: *Seenaa Aanaa Gommaa, Waajjira Aadaa Fi Tuurizimii Aanaa Gommaatiin Qopha'ee* 2020. P.44.

Goda-hambaa argama bunaa Arabikaa Coocee Kattaa Muduga'aa



Appendix V-The shrine of Abbaa Raagoo in Aggaaro town. Source: Girum Yeneneh, p.52.



Appendix VI- a Photo of A/Lulessa A/Gibe. Source: Giddii A/Lulessa, son of A/Lulessa



Appendix VII- *Fitäwräri* Abbaa Garo Abbaa Kaabee



Fitäwräri Abbaa Garo A/Kaabee, to the left. Source: From Yishak Kanno A/ Garo grandson of A/Garo.

Glossary

<i>Aadaa</i>	Culture
<i>Aanaa</i>	District
<i>Aannan</i>	Milk
<i>Ababbalii</i>	Elopement
<i>Abbaa Warra</i>	Husband, household
<i>Abbaa</i>	Father/ a title of respect
<i>Abbaa Fuynoo</i>	Father of the rope who collected tax in the former Gibe states.
<i>AbbaaGandaa</i>	Village governor in the former kingdom of Gommaa
<i>Abbaa Gindoo</i>	Chief jailor in the former kingdom of Gommaa.
<i>Abbaa gonno</i>	A drum beater who made a signal for war in the former Gibe states.
<i>Abbaa Jigaa</i>	Governor of part of a village called <i>Lagaa</i> in the Gibe states.
<i>Abbaa Lafaa</i>	Land owner
<i>Abbaa Lagaa</i>	Governor of part of a village called <i>Lagaa</i> in the Gibe states.
<i>Abbaa Muudaa</i>	The chief priest in the Oromo traditional religion
<i>Abbaa qoppo</i>	Father of solution/tactics, chairman of the <i>qoppo</i> .
<i>Abbaa Qoros</i>	Provincial governors in the former Gibe states latter became <i>baläbbäts</i> .
<i>Addooyyee</i>	A traditional way of solidarity of girls among the Gommaa Oromo.
<i>Afaa</i>	Bed
<i>Afkaalaa</i>	Muslim traders from southwestern Ethiopia, the Gibe region
<i>Aläqa</i>	Head of the Ethiopian Orthodox church.
<i>Alngaa</i>	Whips.
<i>Amaamotaa</i>	Companions of the groom on his wedding day.
<i>Amaatii</i>	Mother-in-law
<i>Amartii</i>	Necklet
<i>Amolee</i>	Salt bar
<i>Angafaa</i>	Eldest son /first born
<i>Arabsoo</i>	Insult.
<i>Asqarri</i>	A cleric who teaches the recitation of the Qur'ān
<i>Asrat</i>	One-tenth/ tax paid to the state and also the Church in the imperial era.
<i>Atbiyä dañä</i>	Local judges in the immediate post-liberation period.

<i>Ato</i>	Civil title given to ordinary people, equivalent to Mr.
<i>Awräjjä</i>	Administrative sub- province.
<i>Badda dare</i>	Mid-highland
<i>Badda/ Dagä</i>	Highland
<i>Baläbbät</i>	Landlord or local hereditary chief.
<i>Balbala</i>	Door/gate
<i>Bale karni/aleqa menzir</i>	Tax collectors during the imperial regime.
<i>Barcuma</i>	Stool/ a seat
<i>Beroo</i>	Defensive ditches
<i>Biddeen/buddeena</i>	A thinly baked bread which is a traditional food in Ethiopia.
<i>Billaa</i>	Knife
<i>Bona</i>	Winter
<i>Boqqollooo</i>	Maize
<i>Bowwaa</i>	Cliff
<i>Bullukoo/gaabii</i>	A thick rectangular cotton cloth often used mainly by older men.
<i>Bunnaa</i>	Coffee.
<i>Butii</i>	Abduction
<i>Buttaa</i>	A banquet/feast in the ceremony of power transfer in the <i>gadaa</i> system
<i>Caffee</i>	The <i>gadaa</i> assembly/parliament
<i>Cidhaa</i>	Wedding feast.
<i>ciqä shum</i>	The lowest administrative official in the imperial era.
<i>Cisäyñä</i>	Landless tenant.
<i>Cuuphaa/cuubaa</i>	A doubled faced <i>buddeena</i> smeared with butter.
<i>Daadoo</i>	A mutual help institution where members exchange labor.
<i>Daboo</i>	A group of people gathered to perform a certain duty together
<i>Däjjazmäch</i>	A military title below <i>Ras</i> .
<i>Damma</i>	Honey
<i>Dañä</i>	Judge
<i>Derg</i>	The military government that ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.
<i>Dhoftuu</i>	Basket makers
<i>Diimina</i>	Raw meat which is among the popular meal of the Gommaa Oromo.

Diinqa/gola——— Bedroom or kitchen
Du`a ——— \Supplication/prayers
Dubartii——— Married woman.
Durba ——— Girl
Eebicha——— A plant which has bitter tastes and aromatic flower.
Eeboo——— Spear
Eelee ——— A flat and round shaped clay griddle used for baking *injera* or *qixxaa*.
Enqutätäsh——— New Year celebration day.
Enset ——— False banana (*Ensete ventricosum*),
Faaqii/ duugduu—— Carpenters and tanners
Farda ——— Horse
Farso ——— Local alcoholic beer
Fäsikä ——— Easter.
Fitäwräri——— Commander of the Vanguard, a military title below *Dajjämäch*.
Fugaa——— Potters
Gaachana——— Shield.
Gaadduu/qeetoo—— Unseen guards or invisible spies in the former kingdom of Gommaa.
Gagaa ——— Wax, the waste product of honey
Gaagura ——— Honey barrels, a cylindrical object made of bark, bamboo, and hung in trees
Gaagurtu——— Beehive Makers and Bee Keepers
Gäbäyä ——— Market place.
Gäbbär ——— Tribute paying peasant.
Gadaa ——— A socio-economic, political and religious institution of the Oromo
Galchaa ——— Gifts.
Gammoojji ——— Lowland
Gannaa ——— Christmas.
Gäshä ——— Unit of land measurement equivalent to 40 hectares.
Geeshoo ——— A plant used for making local alcoholic drink.
Gennee ——— A title for a married woman in Gommaa and the entire Gibe region.
Gibir ——— Tribute/ tax.
Gimjä bét ——— Treasury.

Gindoo—————State prison in the former kingdom of Gommaa.

Gizät—————An administrative area.

Gonno—————A special drum beaten to make a signal for war in the former Gibe states.

Goraadee—————Swords

Gräzmäch—————Commander of the left, a politico- military title.

Gumaa—————Compensation paid to the family of a victim as a part of reconciliation.

Gundoo—————Plate like utensil/vase made from tainted grass.

Guumaa—————A compensation/ blood ransom paid by the guilty party to the victim.

Haamtuu—————Sickles

Haasa'annaa—————Betrothal marriage.

Hadith—————Traditions of the Prophet/one of the two sources of law in Islam

Harii—————Sweeping away

Harkisoo—————Porridge prepared from a fresh and ground maize.

Harree—————Donkey

Hibboo—————Puzzles/riddles.

Hidär Bashtä—————Great Famine (1889-1892) in Ethiopia.

Hintala—————Daughter

Hiriyyaa—————Age mate,

Hirru—————Not full, incomplete or defective.

Hodhitu—————Basket makers,

Hora—————Mineral water

Hudäd—————Government land in the imperial era.

Iddii—————*Solanaceous* fruits

Iddirs—————Neighborhood burial associations

Idget behibret—————Development through Cooperation

Ikul aräsh—————Share cropper/ share cropping

Ilmoo—————Offspring/son/daughter.

Injera—————A thinly baked bread which is a traditional food in Ethiopia.

Iqqub—————A voluntary saving association.

Irbo—————One-fourth, tribute paid by a tenant during the imperial era.

Irshä sebil—————Agricultural Marketing Corporation.

<i>Ittillee</i>	Bed sheets made of leather
<i>Jaalalaa</i>	Love
<i>Jaarsaa</i>	Elder
<i>Jaarsaa araaraa</i>	Reconciling elders
<i>Jaarsuummaa</i>	Reconciliation through elders
<i>Jabanaa</i>	Coffee pot or Kettle.
<i>Jabarti</i>	Muslim traders from northern Ethiopia
<i>Jalabultii</i>	The eve of a very important day like wedding day.
<i>Jila</i>	Delegates
<i>Kallee/Sijaajaa</i>	Prayer mates
<i>Karaa</i>	Way/path/street
<i>Karra</i>	Gate.
<i>Katama</i>	Garrison centers settled by Menelik's soldiers during the conquest.
<i>Kélla</i>	Customs gate legal trade controlling place.
<i>Khat/Caat</i>	A highly stimulant green leaf regularly chewed by the community.
<i>Kifle hager</i>	Province, an administrative unit during the <i>Derg</i> regime.
<i>Kophee</i>	Shoes
<i>Lam</i>	Fertile.
<i>Lammii/ergamtu</i>	Envoy/messengers and emissaries of the <i>mootii</i> of Gommaa.
<i>Lam-taf</i>	Semi-fertile.
<i>Lebäddañi</i>	Thief hunter in the <i>qoros</i> of the Gibe region during the imperial era.
<i>Loon</i>	Cattle
<i>Luugama</i>	Bridle/ stirrup/ the metal part of harness for horses and mules.
<i>Mäd bét</i>	Royal "kitchen".
<i>Maaksaño</i>	Tuesday
<i>Maarashaa</i>	Ploughshare.
<i>Maasii</i>	Cultivated Land.
<i>Machallaa</i>	Hides/bed sheet
<i>Madäriyamaret</i>	Land given in lieu of salary to civil and military officials
<i>Makkaddaa</i>	Pillow
<i>Mallattoo</i>	A signal

Mandaraa—————Village
Marigetä—————A religious title given to the clergy who educate the liturgy.
Masaraa—————Palace.
Masqal—————Commemoration of The Finding of True Cross.
Megemecha—————Land file record of tax assessment and the amount of tax one had to pay.
Migira—————Grass
Mikitel Woredäs————Sub-districts
Milkii—————Omen
Mislane—————Governor of *mikitel Woredäs* in the imperial era.
Moggaa—————Boundary or frontier, a buffer zone in between the former Gibe states.
Mootii—————King
Mootuummaa————Government/State
Mosoobii—————Plate made from dried and tainted grass, and used to serve food.
Mucaa—————Child/son
Mudaay—————Colorful and eye-catching furniture made from dried and tainted grass.
Muudaa—————Anointing/appointing
Naftañña—————One holding a rifle, Menelik’s soldiers that settled in the conquered areas
Nagadras—————Head of merchants
Naggaadee—————Merchants, Muslim clerics from northern Ethiopia.
Nama—————Man
Nikaa—————Engagement ceremony/wearing the engagement ring.
Obboo—————An Oromo civil title given to ordinary people, equivalent to Mr.
Odaa—————The holy sycamore tree, a sacred place of assembly
Ogeeyyii—————Skilled ones, artisans and craftsmen.
Qabale—————The Lowest administrative unit in Ethiopia
Qabattoo—————Belt.
Qabiyyee—————Possession
Qädi—————Muslim religious judges in the *Sharia* law
Qalqalloo—————Honey and/or butter container made of leather.
Qañäzmäch—————Commander of the right, a political military title above *Gräzmäch*.
Qaraxa—————Tribute/dowry paid by the family of the groom to that of to the bride

<i>Qéssä gäbäz</i>	Master priest of an Orthodox church
<i>Qibee</i>	Butter.
<i>Qixxaa</i>	Unleavened bread
<i>Qomee</i>	Robes and Cloaks mainly for religious leaders mostly during prayers.
<i>Qoppo</i>	Council/councilors in the former kingdom of Gommaa.
<i>Qorannaa</i>	Inquiry/search
<i>Qoroo</i>	Equivalent to province in the former Gibe kingdoms.
<i>Qottoo</i>	Axe
<i>Qubbaa</i>	Mausoleum/grave yards (of the Muslim holy-men)
<i>Qubee</i>	A Latin alphabet used to write in <i>Afaan Oromo</i>
<i>Qubeelaa</i>	Engagement ring
<i>Qubsiisaa</i>	Settlers
<i>Quintäl</i>	A measurement of cereals/coffee etc., a <i>quintal</i> is about 100 kilos.
<i>Ras</i>	A higher politico-military title below king
<i>Rist</i>	A private land permanently owned by a family.
<i>Saa'a/ saawa</i>	Cow
<i>Sabbata</i>	A long belt which older women used to tie around their waist.
<i>Säfar</i>	Neighborhood or camp.
<i>Salgaan</i>	Ninth day of an event, mostly after childbirth.
<i>Samon land</i>	A land given to the clergies and church officials.
<i>Sañoo</i>	Monday
<i>Shammanee</i>	Weavers.
<i>Shanaan</i>	Fifth day of an event, mostly after childbirth.
<i>Shäria</i>	Islamic Law.
<i>Shéikh</i>	A Muslim cleric (plural- <i>Shekootaa</i>)
<i>Shemänewoch</i>	Weavers
<i>Shiinii</i>	Cup
<i>Silässie</i>	Trinity,
<i>Silgaa</i>	A traditional feastto celebration when a cow give birth
<i>Sirba</i>	Song.
<i>Siree</i>	Bed

Sirna ————— Ceremony
Sisso ————— One-third the amount of tax paid by tenants in the imperial era.
Soreessaa ————— Wealthy people.
Suphee ————— Clay soil
Täbots ————— Ark
Taf maret ————— Unfertile land
Tallä ————— Local alcoholic beer
Ṭäqalay-Gizät — Province during the imperial regime in Ethiopia.
Tara ————— Line/part/section of a place-
Teepha ————— A long leather strip made of leather and used as rope
Timqat ————— Epiphany.
Tirmaa ————— Household utensils bought for couples to be married.
Tsahafi ————— Secretary.
Tumtuu ————— Black Smiths
Tuufoo ————— Yellowish flowers that bloom in the months of October to mid-December.
Ulamä ————— Muslim scholars (singular- *alim*)
Uuroo/okkotee — A traditional pot/ water jar.
W/ro (Weizero) — A title for a married woman in Ethiopia.
Waahilaa ————— Best men the bride groom on his wedding day.
Waaqa ————— Sky god and the sky itself
Waaqeeffannaa — Oromo traditional religion
Waattaa ————— Hunters and foragers
Waliyyi ————— Muslim holy man.
Wandaboo ————— A loose dress for older women.
Wäyna-däga ————— Moderate climatic zone.
Woggaa ————— Year.
Woredä ————— District/ Administrative unit below *Awrajjä*.
Xuwwee ————— Cooking ware made from clay.
zamächä ————— Campaign
Zone ————— Administrative unit below regional government in post 1991 Ethiopia

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis “The Oromo of Gommaa, Southwestern Ethiopia, A History: 1880s to1991” is my own work, and has not been submitted to any other institution anywhere for the award of any academic degree. All published or unpublished materials used in this thesis have been duly acknowledged. All possible effort has been made to avoid any plagiarism in the preparation of this thesis. I have followed all ethical principles of scholarship in the preparation, data collection, data analysis and completion of this thesis.

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Date of submission: _____

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university advisor.

Advisor’s Name _____.

Sign. _____

Submission

Place: Jimma University

College: Social Sciences and Humanities

Department: History and Heritage Management

Date: _____