



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

**A HISTORY OF ETHNIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN
THE SURMA AND THE NEIGHBORING PEOPLES,
SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA: CA. 1898-1991**

BY
SEID NURU

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
HERITAGE MANAGEMENT OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ART IN HISTORY**

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JIMMA, ETHIOPIA

Jimma University
School of Graduate Studies
College of Social Sciences and Humanities
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Advisor: Buruk W/Michael (Assistant Professor)
Co-Advisor: Belay Beyene (PhD Candidate)

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Abstract

The thesis focuses on the reconstruction of a history of ethnic interactions between the Surma and the neighboring peoples in the period between 1898 and 1991. It probes into complex process of inter-ethnic relations surpassing the commonly asserted ethnicity assumptions and arguing that treating the issue in such a pattern is just overlooking the impacts of center-periphery relations in determining the nature of Surma people's interactions with the neighboring peoples. It conceptualizes that the patterns of ethnic interactions in this remote southwest corner of Ethiopia has showed remarkable changes during the three successive regimes which took power in the country in the period between 1898 and 1991. Nevertheless, it is unfair to treat the aspects of Surma's relation with the neighboring peoples only in a dimension of cooperation and animosity triggered by political factor, the pattern of center-periphery relation. There was also a pattern of cordial inter-ethnic relations nurtured by socio-cultural factors. Moreover, the basic theme which is highly illuminating regarding ethnic interaction between the Surma and the neighboring peoples is the essence of change and continuities. While the traditional pattern of more or less uneasy affiliation cannot be glorified, there has been an escalation of inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and their neighbors since 1980. Since the last three decades, the Surma have been in conflict with almost all the neighboring peoples. The issue has remained unanswered until now. Thus, this thesis assesses the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflict in the area within a context of economic, environmental, regional political dynamics, cultural and institutional dimensions since 1980 as a way forward to peace building efforts in the future.

Preface

The aim of this thesis is to reconstruct a history of ethnic interaction between the Surma and the neighboring communities from 1898 to 1991. The year 1898 is used as the point of departure as it was the year in which the Surma and the neighbouring peoples were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire by the expanding force of Emperor Menilek II. Whereas, the terminal year 1991 was considered as a landmark merely as it marked the demise of the *Derg* regime and the coming to power of EPRDF, and the subsequent adoption of ethnic federalism. The Me'en and Dizi peoples, as they are the closest of all other neighbors to the Surma (both geographically and administratively), are the major focuses of this thesis. But, this does not mean that the other neighboring peoples are totally excluded. This is due to the fact that the pattern of Surma relation with the Me'en and Dizi peoples was directly or indirectly affected by the nature of Surma relations with the other neighboring agro-pastoralist peoples like the Nyangatom and Mursi of South Omo Zone and even with Toposa of South Sudan. In dealing with the subject, the researcher has attempted to utilize the available archival materials, published and unpublished materials as well as oral sources.

The thesis is organized under four chapters. The first chapter provides an introductory background of the socio-economic and political contexts of the Surma and their neighbors. In the second chapter, issues related to center-periphery relations in this southwest frontier of the country are critically evaluated, considering the state as the main actor in the inter-ethnic relations in the area. Whereas, under chapter three, the socio-cultural aspects of inter-ethnic relations and integration between Surma and their neighbors as well as within the Surma is presented and discussed. In the last chapter, the paper investigates the role of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms for peace building efforts in the area by identifying key factors for the intensification of conflicts since 1980.

Acronyms

AOI: Africa *Oriente Italiana*

BMZAO: Bench Maji Zone Administrative Office

BMZCTO: Bench Maji Zone Culture and Tourism Office

E.C: Ethiopian Calendar

KAR: King's African Rifles

MWAO: Maji *Wäräda* Administration Office

NALA: National Archives and Library Agency

SIL: Summer Institute of Linguistics

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region

SOZ: South Omo Zone

SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army

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Keys to the Transliteration System

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

| Vowels | Symbols | Instances |
|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1st order | ä | ቦ =Bä |
| 2nd order | u | ቦፕ=Bu |
| 3rd order | i | ቦ፣=Bi |
| 4th order | a | ቦ፡=Ba |
| 5th order | é | ቦ፣፣=Bé |
| 6th order | e | ቦ፣፡=Be |
| 7th order | o | ቦ፡፡=Bo |

II. Palatalized Sounds are represented as follows:

| Consonant | Symbol | Instance |
|-----------|--------|-------------------|
| ገ | G | ገልከም = Gälkäm |
| ኘ | Ñ | ቀኝ አዝማኝ=Qäñazmach |
| ዠ | Ž | ዠዠ=Gäž |
| ጃ | J | ጃባ = Jäba |

III. Glottalized Sounds are represented as follows:

| Sounds | Symbol | Instance |
|--------|--------|--------------------------|
| ቀ | Q | ቀበሌ = <i>Qäbälé</i> |
| ጠ | Ṭ | ጠድ = Ṭid |
| ጭ | Ç | ጭቃ ሹጭ = <i>Çiqa-shum</i> |
| ረ/ፀ | Ş | ፀሚ = Şämi |

CHAPTER ONE

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Early History of the Surma People

The Surma are transhumant pastoralist people dwelling in the lowlands below the Maji plateau of Southwest Ethiopia. During the Imperial period, they were nominally administered in the Maji *Awraja* of Kafa administrative province.¹ In the recent administrative re-organization of the country, the Surma have been placed in the Bench Maji Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). They predominantly live in Surma *Wäräda*.² According to the 2007 Central Statistics Agency census, their population size was 27,886.³ The Surma are frontier people bordered by the Republic of South Sudan in the west, the Nyangatom in the south, the Dizi and Me'en in the north-east, the Anuak in the far northwest, and east across the Omo River- the Mursi.⁴ The following figures show the location of the study area, the Surma *Wäräda*, in relation to international and local administrative borders.

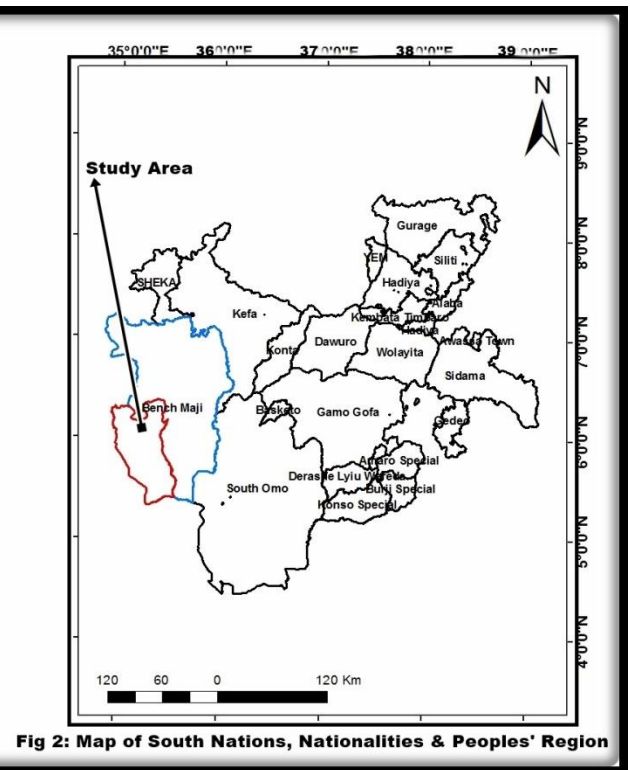
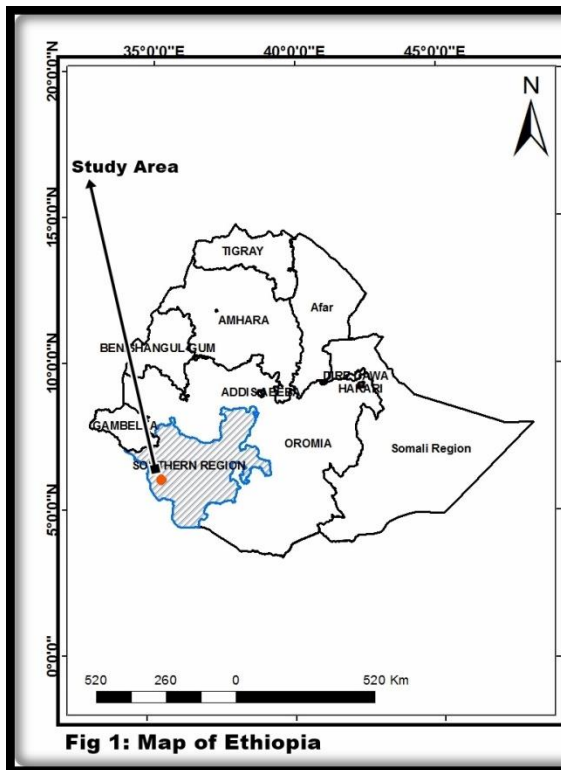
¹ John Abbink, "The Deconstructions of Tribe: Ethnicity and Politics in South-Western Ethiopia," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 24 (1991), p.8.

² Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional Council, *ye Debub Biher Bihereseboch Ena Hezboch Profile (The Profile of Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples,)* (Hawassa: Fikre Selam Printing Press, 2001E.C.), p.138.

³ Central Statistics Agency, *the 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. Part I: Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa: Branna Printing Enterprise, 2010), p.135.

⁴ Niguse Belay and *etal*, "A Historical Survey of Suri People, ca.1898-1991", A Research Paper (Submitted to Mizan Tepi University Research Directorate Office, 2017), p.1.

Figures: Maps showing the location of the study area in relation with map of Ethiopia and South Nations,Nationalities and Peoples Region.



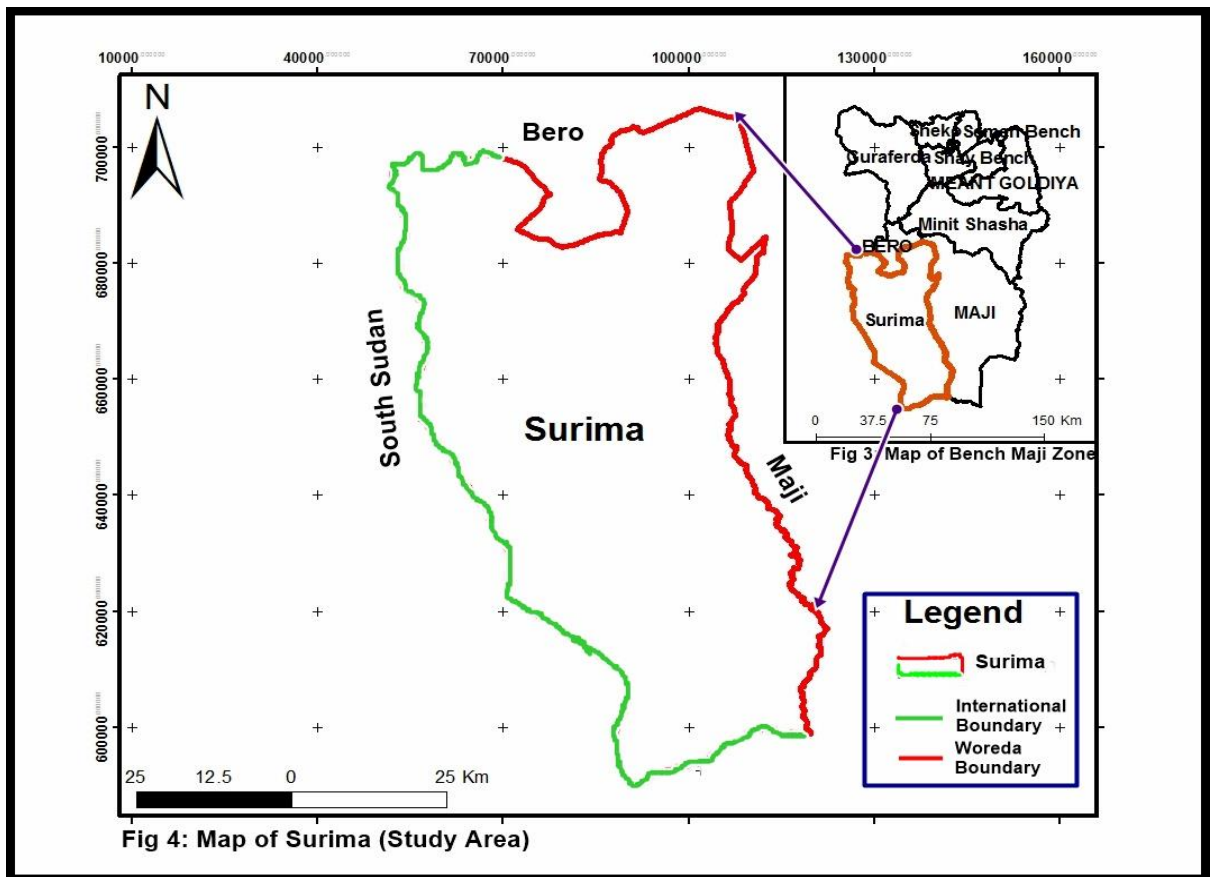


Fig 4: Map of Surima (Study Area)

Source: Ethio-GIS 2015; CSA 2007.

Topographically, the Surma lives predominantly in the tropical savannah land that ranges in altitude between 900 and 1500m. The maximum elevation points of mountain areas reach up to 2000m above sea level. The annual average rainfall of the area is less than 1000mm, erratic for agriculture. Like any other areas of Ethiopia, the Surma area receives maximum rainfall during summer season whereas it receives minimum amount of rain from February to April. The period from August to January is dry season. The vegetation type of the area includes savannah grassland, bush land and riverine forest in the bank of Kibish River. The Surma predominantly inhabits the lowland hot climate areas along the foothills of Maji plateau. Due to its nature of lower elevation, the area is prone to various problems like erratic rainfall, cattle disease such as tsetse fly cattle epidemic and, the people frequently suffer from

livelihood insecurity. The area was also a home of many game animals in the past but now it is alarmingly declining due to the intensification of illegal hunting practice.⁵

The most important water source of the Surma area is the Kibish River. There is also savanna grassland that stretches from Kibish River to Tuligit Mountain. The environmental condition of the area is suitable for pastoralism, bee keeping, hunting and gathering and to some extent for semi-agricultural practices. The topographical feature of the area along the Kibish River is a plain land which allows cultivation of some crops through rain feed and irrigation based farming. Unlike the settled farmers in the highland areas, land is a communal property of a family among the Surma and the society is strange for feudal land holding systems. Besides for agricultural practices, the environmental condition of the Surma allows for the growth of different types of trees such as *Tid* (juniper), *Woyera* (*Olea*) and *Girare* (acacia).⁶

However, due to increasing population pressure among the Surma themselves as well as the neighboring peoples such as the Nyangatom who encroaches the Surma land due to population increase, the vegetation cover of the area is dwindling from time to time. Also deforestation for fire wood purpose is another factor for the decline of vegetation cover of the area. Yet, there are some cultural practices among the Surma that favors forest conservation. For instance, each traditional chief had a private possession over a certain extent of scared forest area in his particular environs for grave yard purpose for his family and clan members.⁷

⁵ *Ibid*, p.2; Bench Maji Zone Administrative Office, “The First Symposium of Culture and Language,” (Mizan Aman, 2012), p.15; Kemal Hussien, “The Suri of South Western Ethiopia: A Survey of their History, 1898 to present”, MA Thesis (Dila University, History, 2018), p.1.

⁶ Niguse and *etal*, p.2; Kemal, p.2.

⁷ *Ibid*.

Regarding the nomenclature of the ethnic group, the people prefer to call themselves "Suri". They had historical and cultural affinities with the Nilotic peoples in neighbouring South Sudan as well as with their fellow Ethiopian neighbours like the Mursi and Me'en. The name Surma is a collective name for the Chäi, Tirma and Zilmamo (Baalé). Although the first two are sections of a single ethnic group, in the past they prefer to be called independently as Țid or Tirma.⁸ Other ethnic groups refer each sections of the Surma in different names. The Trima are called Mokurma by the Toposa of Sudan and Chima by their Ethiopian neighbors. The self-preferred name of the Țid sub-group is Chäich. Also the other sub-section of the Surma, the Tirma, refers the Țidas *Dolot*, a name most likely derived from the Suri *Komoru-Doleti*.⁹

However, the term Surma (which is now the official name of the Ethnic group), is a name given by their neighbours, the Dizi. In fact, at present time, the Suri people also tends to call themselves as "Surma", in doing so defining their clear ethnic boundary from the surrounding ethnic groups such as Dizi, Me'en and others. The Tirma and Chäi speak the same language with only dialect variation.¹⁰ Although ethnically the Baalé people had bond friendship with the Surma, their language is fairly different from the latter. The Baalé call the language they speak Baalési. Sometimes, they are also known as Zilmamo, derived from the name of their country, located west and south of Jäba town, along the official boundary with the present Republic of South Sudan. Despite this linguistic difference, there is a strong feeling of inter-cultural relation between them as expressed by shared cultural values like similar age-set

⁸ Ernesta Cerulli, "Peoples of Southwest Ethiopia and its Border Land", *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, North-Eastern Africa, Part III* (London: Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd, 1956) , p.38.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Gerrit Dimmendaal, *Sociolinguistic Survey Report on Tirma, Chai, Baale, and Mursi*, (SIL International, 2002), p.2.

systems, or common ceremonies, and even material culture such as the wearing of lip plates by women.¹¹

Linguistically, the people speak the Suri language within the East Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan super family.¹² But the name “Surmic” is a group name for classifying the language spoken by many of ethnic groups within the East Sudanic branch. It is a nomenclature provided by historical linguists like Conti Rossini, William Muldrow and Lionel Bender. It should not be blurred with and as such used interchangeably with the name of a single ethnic group called Surma (Suri).¹³

There are many claims on the origin of the Surma people and general group formation in the area. According to Turton, the origin of Surma-speaking peoples was in the southern Sudan and they moved at different times eastwards into the lower Omo Valley and then northwards and westwards into the lower ranges of the Ethiopian Highlands.¹⁴ Likewise, the Tirma and the Ṭid (the two sub-groups of Surma) under the name of Nyikoroma are the branch of the Boma plateau Suri in southern Sudan. This opinion is inferred from the special respect that the Surma shows towards the chief of Boma plateau Suri.¹⁵ Supporting the above view, Lyth also stated that the Tirma sections of the Ethiopian Surma are very similar in appearance and customs with the Suri of Boma plateau of Southern Sudan (for instance in stretching the lower lip and ear lobes). There was also some extent of marriage relation between them.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Marvin L. Bender, *The Ethiopian Nilo-Saharan* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers, 1975), p.20.

¹³ Marvin L. Bender, “The Surma Language Group: A preliminary Report,” *Supplement 7: Studies in African Linguistics* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1977), pp.11-13.

¹⁴ David Turton, “A Journey Made Them: Territorial Segmentation and Ethnic Identity among the Mursi”, in: Ladislav Holy (eds.), *Segmentary Lineage Systems Reconsidered*, (Antrim: W. & G. Baird Ltd. Greystone Press: 1979), p.136.

¹⁵ Cerulli, p.42.

Besides, the languages of Boma plateau Suri and the Ethiopian Tirma have 30-40% affinity in root words.¹⁶

However, there are oral traditions of the Surma that claim descent within Ethiopia but with mixed ancestry from the neighboring groups like the Dizi, Mursi and others. The two sections of the Surma called Tirmaga and Chäi have different stories of origin. For instance, one branch of the Suri, the “Timaga” traces its descent from the Dizi in the current Maji district from a particular place called Gobi. Niguse and others reconstructed ill-defined oral stories that states that as a result of the conflict between two brothers of the Dizi Bourji son, the group called ‘Tirmaga’ means “they did not know revenge”, were retreated and settled in Kibish area. On the other hand, their counterpart the Chai tradition claims descent from the Mursi ethnic group.¹⁷ According to this tradition, the name Chayee itself had a meaning that “we revenge” and their earlier name was Nabo and they came from Gamo Gofa (the area where the Mursi live) to their present settlement due to drought and famine.¹⁸ But, given the linguistic and cultural similarity that the Surma has with the Boma Plateau Suri, it is possible to argue that their place of origin is in the Southern Sudan.

Regarding their arrival to their present settlement, it has been indicated that the Surma have emerged some 250 years ago along the Ethio-Sudanese border area. During their arrival, they settled around the Shulugui Mountain (Mount Naita) on the Ethiopian border with Sudan, the area now inhabited by the Nyangatom. They regard this area as sacred place and *Kyeño* (stomach) of their country. This was due to the fact that it was the center of many of their

¹⁶ R. E. Lyth, “The Suri Tribe”, in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. 28, (University of Khartoum, 1947), p.107.

¹⁷ Niguse and *etal*, pp.6-7; Kemal, p.6.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

cultural heritages such as the burial sites of their ritual leaders (the *Komorus*), the places of initiation ceremony for their age-grade system and they used to get several vital ritual materials (plants, ritual paint, and colored stone) from this area. But now they are not living in this area as they were repulsed by the Nyangatom. Their current settlement is about 50 to 60 kilometers to the north, close to the Dizi Mountains and the western Akobo Valley.¹⁹

1.1.1. Socio-Political Organization

The Surma are quite an egalitarian society, centered on solid notions of equality and balance among members. They do not know chieftaincy as an institution of hierarchical political authority. The Surma could not allow a single person to have ultimate power over the entire society. But, this does not mean that they had no leaders. The concept of authority among the Surma is not a question of 'governing', but the issue of collective leadership in accommodating group interest. The social institutions through which this authority accorded are two: age grade systems, and a ritual leader or figurehead called *Komoru*.²⁰ According to Abbink, in the age grade system of the Surma, four grades are identified; the children age-grade is called *Lusi*, the youth or the warrior age-grade is called *Tagay*, the reigning age – grade of elders is called *Rora* and senior elders age-grades is called *Bara*. The real political authority is vested in the hand of the third grade, called *Rora*. The maximum time for the initiation of this grade is in every 20-25 years and have common name in the society.²¹

¹⁹ John Abbink, “Conflict and Social Change on the south-west Ethiopian frontier: an Analysis of Suri Society,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vo.3, No.1 (2009), p.25.

²⁰ John Abbink, “Authority and Leadership in Surma Society (Ethiopia).” *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studie Documentazione dell’Istituto Italiano per l’Africae l’Oriente*, Anno 52, No. 3(1997).,P.325.

²¹ *Ibid*, P.326; John Abbink, “Restoring the Balance: Violence and Culture among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia” In: G. Aijmer and J. Abbink (eds.) *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p.80.

The second most important socio-cultural institution in the customary political system of the Surma is the *Komoru*, a religious figure who has a kind of unbiased, ritually facilitating position. The *Komoru* is not entitled with political power but he is primarily a ritual leader.²² He assumes position by a combination of inheritance and personal charisma; he must be descended from one of the old Surma clans, he must be intellect and charm, good orator in public debates and calming personality. He is nominated by members of the reigning age-grade, approved or elected by the people, and then ritually installed. Thereafter, his position is inalienable except in case of suffering from mental disorder.²³

The main task of the Surma *Komoru* include the following; performing rain rituals, serving as ritual 'war leader'; declaration of war or providing advice on combat strategies, pledge reconciliation ceremonies, take part in forecasting the future through the ritual practice of reading the intestine of slaughtered animal, blessing for the wellbeing of the society, cattle and fields for cultivation, and delivering closing speech for public debates.²⁴ There is also a more secular type of headman among the Suri, the *Gulsa*, who is a territorial or village leader. He is nominated by the local people and the elected person requires the approval of the *Komoru* through ritual blessing to begin discharging his responsibility. The *Gulsa* cannot perform all the above functions of the *Komoru* but must maintain law and order under his jurisdiction.²⁵

²² John Abbink, "Violence and Political Discourse among the Chai Suri", in: G.J. Dimmendaal, M. Last (eds.) *Surmic Languages and Cultures* (Cologne: Köppe, 1998), p.326.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Abbink, "Authority and Leadership...", P.326-328.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The most important centre for political participations among the Surma are the sedentary villages, where most of the reigning age grade, women and young children are dwelling. For instance, the village of Makara, residence of the Chai *Komuru*, is the venue of the most important public discussion and ritual ceremonies. The members of the warrior age grade (*Tagay*) generally live in make-shift camps far away from these villages in the lowlands following cattle herds. It is only the senior *Tagay* among them that are entitled with public participations but their remoteness from the villages could not allow doing so.²⁶ Yet, there is well established ways of communications between these two sections using both men and women travelling between villages and cattle camps for the purpose of communicating news, visiting relatives and friends, looking dairy products and bloods from cattle, or provision food for the cattle keepers such as sorghum beer and grain porridge.²⁷

1.1.2. Economic Activities

The Surma are predominantly a pastoralist society depending on livestock raisings such as cattle, goats, and sheep. The most valued possessions of the Surma are cattle. They attach a great socio-cultural value to cattle beside their economic values. Cattles are intimately tied with many socio-cultural aspects such as dowry payments for marriage and as compensation payments after a homicide. But the Surma did not see cattle as sacred and eating of their flesh is not considered as taboo. Average Surma male can have around 30 to 40 cows. However, it is taboo to kill cows unless they are required for ritual scarification. Even the naming of the Surma male is related with the colours of their most beloved cattle. The social status of a person is also partly determined by the number of cattle he owns. Even the Surma give attention to cattle even to the extent of beautifying them by decorating their horns and body,

²⁶ Niguse and *etal*, p.8; Kemal, pp.8-9; Abbink, "Violence and Political Discourse among the Chai Suri...", pp. 326-27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

ear cuttings, lobe piercing, branding, covering the hide of the living animal with ash to shelter them against the biting of insects.²⁸

Besides, the Surma subsidize their economy through shifting cultivation. They cultivate different crops like sorghum, maize, cabbage, beans, sweet potatoes, and peppers. Besides, the Surma involves in hunting and gathering. They hunt different animals such as buffalo, elephants, giraffes, leopards, lions, and ostriches. Apart from using the meat of the hunted animals, the Surma earn cash by selling the bi-product of the animals (like skins, feathers and tail hair) to northern traders in the highland village. They also often engage in the gathering of different roots and fruits. In the recent past, the traditional gold mining practice around the southern tributaries of the Akobo River had become the most important source of cash to the Surma. They sell their gold to the highland traders in Maji, Dima and Jäba and in turn use the cash earned to purchase small household utensils, cattle and weapons.²⁹

The Surma society had a well-established system of labor division based on their age-grade system and gender difference. For instance, male members of the two lower age grades are economically active and involve in cattle herding, construction of houses, and hunting, cleaning fields for cultivation and engage in cattle rustling activities. On the other hand, the members of the two senior age grades are economically less active. They only perform the tasks of social leadership.³⁰

Women are the most economically active section of the society more than their counter part men. They engage extensively in agricultural activities and local trade. Also women perform

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Abbink, "Conflict and Social Change....", pp.5-6.

³⁰ Niguse and *etal*, pp.17-18; Kemal, p.18.

all the household tasks of raising children, preparing meals for the family, fetching water and collecting firewood. Women also provide cash income to the family by engaging in pottery making. They also perform the tasks of leather work cleaning, cutting, drying and decorating the hides. Even though many of the iron tools are produced by male smiths, women sometimes produce bracelets and necklaces as of their counterpart men.³¹

1.2. Socio-Economic and Political Setting of the Neighboring Peoples

It has been generally indicated that for a long period of time, the Ethiopian societies have been an assembly of different ethnic and linguistic groups.³² This statement particularly holds not only to the well-studied northern parts of Ethiopia, but more importantly to the least historically studied southwest corner of the country. For instance, owing to history and geographical location of a dozen of pastoral and agro-pastoral groups border the Surma. Now it is important to have a brief overview of the peoples bordering the Surma; the Me'en and the Dizi people as they are the main focus of this thesis.

Accordingly, the Me'en people are the closest neighbors of the Surma in the northeast. The neighboring peoples refer in to the Me'en people by different names. For instance, their northern neighbors, the Kafficho and the Bench call them as “Shuro” and “Daim”,

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Tadesse Tamrat, “Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agaw”, *the Journal of African History*, Vol.29, No.1 (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p .5.

respectively. While their southern neighbors, the Dizi and the Surma referred to them as “Surbm” and “Sogore”, respectively.³³

However, it has been argued that all of these names are pejorative terms coined because of their earlier antagonistic relations with these neighboring peoples. For instance, the Bench calls them Daim because in the past, the Me'en forced them to leave their ancestral land, Jash. The term *Tishana* or *Teshana* is a name given by the northern settlers to the peoples inhabiting the highland areas north of Maji, “Gimira”, and Golda. It is derived from a word “*Tishana mydea*” which is a greeting term; means “how are you”. It is a kind of greeting expression for beloved ones. But the people prefer to call themselves as Me'en (means “humans”), a term derived from “*tuk-te-Me'en*” means “language of humans”.³⁴

Linguistically, the Me'en are categorized under the ‘Nilo-Saharan Language super family, in which linguists classify it into Chari-Nile Language Family, sometimes known as East-Sudanic Language Family. It includes Anuak, Berta, Kunama, Kwegu, Megenger, Murle, Mursi, Nuer, Surma, and Zilmamao, whereas the Koman Language Family includes Gumuz, Koma, Langa, Northern Mao, Tirma and Sese’.³⁵ Regarding the origin of the Me'en people, it has been indicated that the people mainly trace their origin to the Omo Valley though there is also another oral tradition of the Me'en indicating their origin from South Sudan.³⁶

³³ Hailu Megersa, “A History of Me'en People, Ca.1898-1991”, MA Thesis (Bahirdar University, Department of History, 2012), p.4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Bender, “the Ethiopian Nilo-Saharanans...”, p.20 ;Niguse Belay, “Socio-Cultural and Economic History of Me'én, 1898-1991”, *Papers of the 1st National Research Conference of Mizan Tepi University (MTU, April 2015)*, p.113.

³⁶ Hailu, p.5.

Now, the Me'en people are largely divided in to two main dialectical and territorial sections. Those living in the lowland areas are called the Bodi-Me'en, named after the Bodi tree from which they used to prepare a lip plates. While those living in the highland area north east of the Surma called *Tishana-* Me'en. The difference between the two sub- divisions of the Me'en is only in a means of livelihood, it is the pastoralist Bodi and an agriculturalist *Tishana*. Their language is also indicated to have more than 90% similarity and the slight difference lies in sound shift and variation in numbering system.³⁷

Regarding their socio-political organization, like the Surma, the Me'en have no stratified social and political systems. They are an egalitarian society. The Me'en had no well-structured chiefdoms as a system of administration. The traditional administrative system of the Me'en is organized from the elders (*Tia*) of certain lineage groups, the *Komuruts* (ritual chiefs) and their district agents, the *Bizingit*. But the hereditary elders of the clans also can serve as administrators and judges of specific issues such as land use right. These hereditary clan elders assumed the position initially at the family level, and then grew up to the position of the *Bizingit*.³⁸

The other closer neighbors of the Surma in the north eastern direction are the Dizi. According to the result of the 2007 housing and population census of Ethiopia, the Dizi numbered

³⁷ *Ibid*,p.11.

³⁸ *Ibid*,pp.12-14.

36,380.³⁹ The Dizi people have been known often in the past by the name Maji, a word derived from both the name of their largest chiefdom and a name of the most important town in the area.⁴⁰ They call the language they speak Dizin which belongs to the Omotic group of Afro-Asiatic language super family.⁴¹ In terms of skin color, they are lighter and more rugged looking than the surrounding lowland inhabiting pastoralist people like the Surma, Me'en, Zilmamo and Mursi.⁴² The different Dizi chiefdoms have different mythical origins. Some groups of the Dizi traces their genealogy to the Christian north particularly Tigray.⁴³ Others claim descent from Shako and the present Bench areas.⁴⁴

Regarding their social structure, before the expansion of Menelik II, the Dizi were hierarchical society which was even described by Haberland as a 'caste Society'. The society was organized hierarchically in to five groups; nobles (*Karyab*), free men (*Nyank*), bondsmen (*Zaku*), *Geymi* and hunters (*Kwoygi*). Each social stratum differs from one another by large number of privileges, obligations, prohibitions and language aspects.⁴⁵ However, Duguchi strongly criticized Haberland's description of the Dizi as 'caste' society. He argued based on the very concept of the term 'caste' itself and explained that it had only a historical connotation with ancient Indian Society. In this regard, he explained that the Dizi social

³⁹ Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional Council, p.141.

⁴⁰ Eike Haberland, "An Amharic Manuscript on the Mythical History of the Adikyaz (Dizi, Southwest Ethiopia)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 46, No.2 (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.240.

⁴¹ Marvin Dean Beachy, "An Overview of Central Dizin Phonology and Morphology", MA Thesis (the University of Texas, Linguistics, 2005), p.4.

⁴² Ayele Tariku, "Marriage and Value of Virginity in Rural Dizi People, South- West Ethiopia" *Journal of Language, Society and Culture* (2017), p.8.

⁴³ Beachy, p.7

⁴⁴ Gizaw Kebede, "The History of Dizi National Minority in Maji Awraja." BA Thesis (Yäkatit 66 Institute of Political Education, Department of History, 1989), p.18.

⁴⁵ Haberland cited in Akira Deguchi, "Rainbow-like Hierarchy: Dizi Social Organization." *Essays in North East African Studies, Senri Ethnological Studies* 43(1996), pp. 123.

structure was not based on occupation (as was the case in ancient Indian society) but rather a “lord- vassal retainer”. Besides, the ‘caste’ applied to the personalities on the hierarchy but not to the whole rank or class of the Dizi.⁴⁶

Politically, the Dizi people had their own traditional administration system which was organized based on chiefdoms. Accordingly, there were twenty five territorially divided and autonomous larger chiefdoms.⁴⁷ Each of the chiefdoms had their own local lords (*balabats*) who served as both village head men and spiritual leaders. Power was also hereditary.⁴⁸

Economically, the Dizi are one of the most settled agriculturalists in the area as compared to the neighboring people. They had a long agricultural tradition and were familiar with hoe culture before they started ox-drawn plough farming. However, though they had abundant fertile land, the Dizi remained mostly dependent on consumption driven agriculture for a long period of time. This was mainly due to the long existed tribal violence in the area. The farmers cannot cultivate their land properly because of the fear of constant raids from the neighboring pastoralist peoples of the Me'en and mainly the Surma people.⁴⁹

Even though the study mainly deal with the history of ethnic interaction between the Surma and their closest neighbors, the Me'en and Dizi people, it also tries to assess the pattern of

⁴⁶ *Ibid*,pp.128-129.

⁴⁷ Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional Council, pp.142-143.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ Adinew Abitew, “The Power of Culture in History: Conflict Management Mechanism among the Dizi Community, South West Ethiopia”, *the International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, Vol.5, Issue 3(2017), p.101.

Surma relation with different ethnic groups that border them like the Nyangatom and Mursi of South Omo Zone (SOZ) and even with Toposa of South Sudan .This was due to the fact that the pattern of Surma relation with the Me'en and Dizi people was directly or indirectly affected by the nature of Surma relation with the neighboring agro-pastoralist people with in Ethiopia as well as in the neighboring countries. Thus, the process of inter-ethnic relation in the area is a dynamic process dictated by different factors as we shall see in the next chapters

CHAPTER TWO

2. CENTER-PERIPHERY RELATIONS AND ETHNIC INTERACTION SINCE 1898

2.1 Surma-State Relation and Patterns of Ethnic Interaction (1898 to 1930)

The nature of ethnic interactions between the Surma and the neighboring peoples cannot be understood without tracing the historical processes of state expansion to the area and how the center-periphery relation shaped their pattern of interactions. Accordingly, the last years of the nineteenth century was marked as a turning point in the history of the people of southwestern Ethiopia in general and pattern of inter-ethnic relations in particular. It was during the end of the 1890s that the Surma and other peripheral people of the region were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire. The conquest and the subsequent incorporation of the region played a significant role in bringing these various independent groups under the Socio-economic control of the imperial regime. The imperial expansion of Menelik II to the area was made to increase his sphere of political influence and secure the flow of resources.⁵⁰

The campaigns against the Surma and the neighboring peoples also cannot be seen separately from Menelik's overall policy of expansion to the south and the southwest regions of Ethiopia. Therefore, before discussing the impact of the incorporation on the pattern of ethnic interaction between the Surma and the neighboring peoples, let us briefly discuss Menelik's

⁵⁰ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2001), pp.61-62.

policy of expansion and colonial rivalries of the surrounding European powers in the southwestern region of Ethiopia.

The southwestern region of Ethiopia, mainly the kingdom of Kafa and its environs was the centers of the lucrative long distance trade route that was connected with other parts of the country and even to the outside world. The long distance trade that began from Bonga, the capital of Kafa, was linked with markets in northern part of the country ending in the Red Sea region.⁵¹ Also the area was recognized as the source of different precious commodities⁵² such as ivory, gold, civet, leopard skin, slave and other agricultural product. In turn, the control of this important trade route and the increasing access to the precious commodities of the region was envisaged by Menelik II as a means of increasing the power and prosperity of his Empire.⁵³

The ambition to monopolize this resourceful region of the south and southwest of Ethiopia had been a major source of rivalry between the vassals of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889); *Nigus* Menelik of Shawa and *Nigus* Teklehaymanot of Gojjam. But the military victory of Menelik against Tekle Haymanot at the Battle of Embabo in June 1882 served as a steppingstone to conquer the region beyond the Gibe. The battle created a favorable condition for the expansion of Menelik of Shewa to the resourceful region of southwest Ethiopia.⁵⁴

⁵¹. Tsehaye Mikre, "A Historical Survey of the Bench People, 1898-1974", (M.A. Thesis, Adama University, Department of History, 2010), pp 33-34.

⁵² Yonas Seifu, "A Historical Survey of Jimma Town (1936-1974)", (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2002), p.5.

⁵³ Tsehaye, pp 33-34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The imperial state expansion to the southern half of the country in the post-Adawa period had also an international dimension. It was stimulated by the Europeans' competition of the 1880s for the colonial partition of Africa.⁵⁵ This was due to the fact that the period after the battle of Adawa was marked by the vigorous competition between Britain and France over the Horn of Africa and both of them tried to subvert Menelik against one another. During that time, the Emperor allowed the French colonial mission to use his territory as a base and assisted them by sending his men to infiltrate into the Sudan. Thus, the incorporation of the extreme south and south western part of Ethiopia was intended to create a buffer zone against the encroachment of the imperial powers from the neighboring colonies. As a result, Kefa and its surrounding areas were conquered by *Ras Wäldä Giorgies* in 1897. Then, Kefa was used as spring board to control the remaining areas of the region.⁵⁶

However, the only brief account about the process of expansion to the Surma by the force of *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis* was left by a Russian officer, Alexander Bulatovich who accompanied the imperial army expansion to the Southwestern part of Ethiopia in January-April of 1898. The problem is, however, he did not describe the people exactly as 'Surma' or 'Suri'. Besides, Bulatovich's account did not elaborate the process of state expansion to the Surma area. He described that on 16 March 1898 the imperial army marched from the Béru area (Dizi locality) to the west, into the valley of the Kari River. In this area they met a people resembling, he said, the 'Sciuro' (i.e. the Me'en, a neighboring agro-pastoral people).⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ Bisrat Lema, "Politics of Resistance among Shako during Imperial Ethiopia: Historical Perspective", *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: D History, Archaeology & Anthropology*, Volume 17 Issue 1,(2017), p.11.

⁵⁶ Amare Fentaw, "A History of Shakacho (1898-1974)", MA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, Departement of History, 2007), p.58.

⁵⁷ Richard Seltzer (Trans.), *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: A Country in Transition 1896-1898*(Asmera: Red Sea Press, 1993), p, 374; Niguse and *etal*, pp. 26-27; Kemal p, 18.

only information this account provide about the expedition in the Surma area is the fact that the imperial army did not involve into direct confrontation with the native and their response to the passing troops was retreating to the forest.⁵⁸

Subsequently, once the imperial state accomplished its mission of incorporating the neighboring peoples in the last decade of the nineteenth century, it envisaged integrating the Surma into its structure through tribute collection. But, this was a desperate failure and the Surma remained mostly autonomous as we shall see below. They had only trade connections with the northerners' in the highland villages who transacted cloth, iron tools and later guns and bullets with the Surma for cattle, grain and game products (such as ivory, hides and skins), and also sometimes raided them.⁵⁹

In terms of inter-ethnic relation, this thesis argues that, beyond ethnicity assumption, the incorporation and the subsequent society-state relations had been mainly the cause of dynamic (manifested by both cooperation and animosity) ethnic relations in the area. In this regard, firstly, the varied response of the peripheral people against the expanding central state had become a major factor. This particularly holds true in the history of ethnic interaction between the Surma and Me'en people on one hand, and the Surma and Dizi people on the other hand. This entails a brief explanation of how these people responded to the process of incorporation by the imperial invading army and how it dictated their pattern of interactions.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ John Abbink, "Paradoxes of Power & Culture in an Old Periphery Surma, 1974-98.", In: Donald Donham and *Etal* (eds.) *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), p.159.

Accordingly, both the Surma and the Me'en people resisted the army of Menelik II by retreating to forests.⁶⁰

Particularly, the Me'en people were aware of the consequence of the incorporation and rallied their forces to secure their land. But, later they were unable to withstand the pressure of MenelikII's army and resorted to retreating to the forests. Then, they engaged in guerilla fighting against the imperial army.⁶¹ Though the resistance was not successful, informants noted as a result of such shared pattern of resistance, 'run away tactic', against the enemy penetrating their lands, the Surma people had developed a particular regard for the Me'en people after that time and consider them as their best optional friends in the area. During that time, the circumstance became one of the sources of cordial relations between the two ethnic groups.⁶²

In contrary, unlike the Surma and Me'en, in the Dizi area the imperial army did not face stiff resistance except minor resistance that launched from some individuals. The Dizi people even welcomed the army with gifts of ivory, hens and honey anticipating that they might leave their territory having such gifts.⁶³ Indeed, different factors were suggested for the poor resistance of the Dizi people to the army of Menelik II. First, there was lack of unity among the Dizi to resist strongly the army. During this time, the Dizi territory was divided into some twenty five autonomous and rival chiefdoms that weakened the sense of unity among the

⁶⁰ Gebre-hawariya Amare, "A History of the Dizi People of South -West Ethiopia, c.1889-1991", MA Thesis (Bahir Dar University, Department of History, 2015), pp.40-41; Informants: Kasa Kăbădă, Jayo Şegaye and Bardula Lămudigir.

⁶¹ Hailu,p.38.

⁶² Informants; Barkomuru Otodu, Kasa Kăbădă and Dolte Wolikoro

⁶³ Gebrehawariya, pp.30.

society. Second, until the time of incorporation, the patterns of Dizi relation with its neighbours such as Surma and Me'en was in a condition of 'no peace no war'. Thus, they feared lack of coordination among the ethnic groups. Third, the Dizi anticipated that the consequences of the resistance struggle against the well-equipped army of Menelik II might be very fatal.⁶⁴

However, the peaceful submission of the Dizi to the imperial army became the source of animosity with the neighbouring ethnic groups particularly the Surma. This was started after *Ras Wäldä Giorgies* (the governor of Kafa province) began to use the Dizi as a spring board to control the neighbouring peoples such as the Surma, Nyangatom and Me'en who labelled the Dizi as proxies of the imperial state in penetrating their territories. As a result of this, most of the neighbouring ethnic groups mainly the Surma developed suspicious behaviour towards the Dizi.⁶⁵ Informants also affirm that the Dizi are always the ally of the state in controlling the Surma and Me'en territory and hence regard them as their enemy equally with the state.⁶⁶

Indeed, partly as a result of such displaced aggression of the Surma and the Me'en people against the Dizi due to the aforementioned development, it has been also argued that the latter still regard themselves as more similar to the Amhara or northerners than to their older neighbours. They had a marriage relations and are highly influenced by the northerner's material culture and customs which were manifested by their practice of Amhara model of

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.36; Gizaw Kebede, p.22.

⁶⁶ Informants: Wolkoro Säbakoro, Kasa Käbädä and Abäbä Jämu.

life including family relations, adherence to Orthodox Christianity, agricultural practices and even their view of labelling the neighbouring Surma and Me'en as 'un civilized'.⁶⁷

Besides, the impact of center-periphery relation on the pattern of Surma people interaction with the neighboring peoples should also be seen in light of the changing balance of power among the diverse ethnic groups in the area due to differential level of state rule following the incorporation to the Ethiopian empire. Until their power was challenged by the Nyangatom in the 1980s, Surma had been the most powerful ethnic group who recognize no overlord in the area.⁶⁸

This was partly due to the fact that the absence of strong state administration in Surma land gave an opportunity to possess fire arms freely and thus to maintain such powerful position among their neighbors. Informants recounts that the military decline of the Me'en, Nyangatom and Dizi people in comparison to the Surma was the result of varied level of access to arms dictated by different level of state control in these areas. The presence of strong state rule and the subsequent imposition of restrictive disarmament policy in the neighboring peoples by the imperial government and the lack of similar policy in the Surma land changed the military balance of power in favor of the latter.⁶⁹ Thus, the autonomous status of the Surma since incorporation to the Ethiopian empire is their unique historical advantage over their neighbors.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*; Abbink, "Deconstruction of Tribe.....", p.7.

⁶⁸ Informants: Bäqälä Läma, Anyab Bäyitu and Kasa Käbädä.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

The status of the Surma can be further illustrated by introducing the three classification proposed by Donham in the areas of Southern Ethiopia based on varied level of state control following incorporation to the Ethiopian empire. Accordingly, the first categories include formerly independent kingdoms that pay directly tributary to the crown. The second category comprises those areas which were subjugated to the *gäbbar* system through which the soldier were entitled to obtain free labor and other provisions from the natives. The last category includes those areas which are found in the far peripheral lowlands inhabited by those agro-pastoralist peoples. Donham cited, Nekemte is an instance of the first group while, Maji, Male, and Gedeo are an instance of the second, and lastly areas like Gumuz, Neur, Anuak, Me'en, Dasenetch, Mursi and Kwegu .⁷⁰ As compared to the first two categories, areas under the third group were advantageous of limited state control as they were only connected to the center through tribute collection via the *balabbats*. Here, the restrictive armament policy of the state was also loosely applied.⁷¹

Nonetheless, the case of the Surma did not fit to all of the three categories. Informants underscore that administration was virtually non-existent among the Surma soon after incorporation to the Ethiopian empire. Until the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, the Surma people were neither direct tributary to the crown nor subjugated to the *gäbbar* system and even they were not connected with the center through tribute collection via *balabats*. Rather than some imperial encroachments from administrative posts established in neighbouring territories, the state did not effectively administered the Surma.⁷² Until Italian occupation,

⁷⁰ Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History". In: D. Donham & W. James (eds.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) pp.37-39

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.42.

⁷² Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Anyab Bāyitu and Wolkoro Säbakoro.

there were no military and administrative posts established in the area.⁷³ Even it was only after 1941 that the central government levied taxes from the Surma in cash but converted in to in kind (cattle) through their traditional chiefs.⁷⁴

Three important factors are identified for the absence of state control in the Surma area following the nominal incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian empire. First, the mobile nature of the Surma people presented a great challenge to the central government in bringing these transhumant pastoralist people under the control of the newly established imperial socio-economic order. The Surma people had a tactic of retreat to the neighboring countries, Sudan and Kenya to escape from their forced inclusion in to the feudalist social structure.⁷⁵ This explanation conforms with argument of Asmerom Legesse that the presence of new international border in the south was a unique advantage for lowlanders, when Ethiopian officials grew too exploitative, local people crossed over in to the neighboring countries.⁷⁶ The only exception is the fact that the Surma fled to the neighboring countries to escape totally from state control rather than worsened exploitation of the state officials. Second, the failure of the imperial government to send a strong army that would establish its socio-economic order contributed for the absence of state control in the Surma area.⁷⁷ Third, ecological challenges, the lowland areas with its hot climate were seen by the northerners as

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Barkomuru Wotodu and Burkutul Gurniyo; Abbink, “Paradoxes of Power and Culture.....”, p.160.

⁷⁵ Geberehawariya, pp.47-49

⁷⁶ Donham, ‘Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia...’, p.42.

⁷⁷ Informants: Kabar Chich, Burkutul Gurniyo and Wolkoro Säbakoro

unproductive, diseased and inhospitable for settlement that made the establishment of strong and permanent administration difficult.⁷⁸

Consequently, this autonomous status of the Surma enabled them to dominate the neighboring peoples for a long period of time. The Me'en, Dizi and the Nyangatom peoples were frequently a victim of raid by the Surma. They complained that the imperial government had to disarm them and imposed restriction that prevented them from rearming or freely conducting cross-border mutual raids on their traditional enemies. This exposed them for attack by the relatively well armed Surma people.⁷⁹ Informants added that their isolation from the imperial socio-economic order also provided the Surma with economic capability to purchase fire arms.⁸⁰

Another important ramification of center-periphery relation on the pattern of Surma interaction with their neighbors following incorporation to the Ethiopian empire was related to the official indifference of the state to mediate inter-ethnic violence. Until the restoration of the government of Emperor Haile Selassie, the state apparatus and its agents in the area were reluctant to settle inter-ethnic violence.⁸¹ In fact, state agents have been criticized for stimulating the hitherto inter-tribal raid in order to increase their access to the supply of war prisoners taken as slaves and retainers to the other parts of the country. Even though there

⁷⁸ Geberehawariya, pp.47-49; Tagel Wondimu & Fana Gebresenbet, "Resourcing Land, Dynamics of Exclusion and Conflict in the Maji Area, Ethiopia", *Conflict, Security & Development*, 18:6 (King's College London, 2018), p. 551; Will Hurd, "Surviving the Second Conquest: Emperor Menelik and Industrial Plantations in Ethiopia's Omo Valley", *Solutions*, Volume 7, Issue 1, (2016), p.70.

⁷⁹ Informants: Getachäw Majigäz, Barkomuru Otodu and Kasa Käbädä.

⁸⁰ Informants: Koro Gidangi, Barkoy Olisurba and Burkutul Gurniyo.

⁸¹ Informants: Aniyab Bäyitu, Bälay Bogalä and Abäbä Jämu.

were precarious traditional conflict resolution mechanisms used by the natives to deal with inter-ethnic violence, the state hardly intervened in the issue that further reinforced the problem.⁸²

The above analysis conforms to the argument of Turton that states because of the inconsistency of government administration in the lower Omo region, ethnic relations have not been stable, unlike the case in the southern parts of the former Sudan since, at least, the last five decades through the imposition of an outside administrative apparatus.⁸³ Moreover, the trans-frontier trade conducted by different groups which was highly intensified following the state expansion to the area and the subsequent socio-economic developments played its own role in determining the pattern of ethnic interaction as discussed in the next section.

2.1.1 Trans-Frontier Trade and Inter-Ethnic Relation in the Area

Another important development that affected the patterns of ethnic interaction between the Surma and the neighboring people was the heavy hand of the trans-frontier trade that was intensified after the incorporation of the area to the Ethiopian empire in the last decade of the nineteenth century. This was particularly associated with the introduction of ivory, arms and slave trade. After the incorporation, economically, these frontier areas of Ethiopia were connected to international trade networks initially through ivory trade.⁸⁴

Among the traders who actively participated in the business were the Swahili merchants. They were involved as part of the East African ivory trade of the early twentieth century.

⁸² *Ibid*; Abbink, “Paradoxes of Power and Culture...”, P.159.

⁸³ Turton, “A Journey Made Them.....”, P.138.

⁸⁴ Hailu, p.47; Informants : Kasa Kābādā, Bākālā Lāma and Bālay Bogalā

Mostly, they were individuals and sometimes they came in group as poachers, hunters and raiders.⁸⁵ Literatures indicate that southwestern part of Ethiopia along with the present day southern Sudan, northern Uganda and northern Kenya had been the most important source of ivory. This precious commodity reaches international market via the trade route that passes across the highlands of Ethiopia, then to Red Sea ports, and finally to the oversea markets. It was perhaps functioning early in the 1800s.⁸⁶

The first contact between the ivory traders and indigenous ethnic groups such as Surma, Dizi and Me'en was begun in the beginning of the twentieth century. During this time, Maji became the central market of ivory. The existing feudal system in Ethiopia did not contributed for the beginning of the ivory trade in the area but it provided a favorable condition for the flourishing of the business. Even as compared to the northern Ethiopians ivory traders, the Swahili poachers were the most successful traders and elephant hunters in the area. The Swahili poachers obtain weapons and other supply from the northern settlers at Maji. Finally, the Ethiopians obtain some portion of ivory from the Swahili as a return for their material supply and through custom collection at different posts.⁸⁷

Next to the Swahili traders, the Indians were the main actors in the ivory trade in the area. Immediately after the incorporation, there was no head of merchants or *nägradras* appointed in the area. Therefore, in 1909, *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis* with the intention to increase his income gave a trade monopoly of one of the profitable ivory trade of the area to the Indians but latter

⁸⁵ Garretson, pp.207-2010; Gebrehawariya,p.52.

⁸⁶ I.S.C. Parker, *The Ivory Trade; Volume 1 Commerce in Ivory*, (Nairobi: Wildlife Services Ltd, 1979), p.11.

⁸⁷ Garretson, pp.207-2010; Gebrehawariya, p.52.

expelled due to less profit margin obtained from the company.⁸⁸ Besides, the ‘Tigre’ poachers from north and others involved in trade activities of those profitable commodities of ivory and slaves. Also, it was indicated that Arab traders from the neighboring Sudan called Tuharis from Ginjar area came to Siekka and “Suro” to trade different commodities. They came to the area via Wallaga and exchange beads with slaves and gold from the area.⁸⁹ This is how these frontier communities of Ethiopia exposed to contact with the outside world.

In principle, trade facilitates socio-cultural interaction of peoples with diverse backgrounds. It has been generally argued that the link in long distance trade and local trade positively affect popular interactions.⁹⁰ For instance, Tagesse argues that links in local trade and long distance trade facilitated popular interaction among the Kambata and Hadiya society.⁹¹ Particularly, Bahru indicated that the trans- frontier trade between Sudan and Ethiopia through Gambella trading post was hoped by British colonial administrators to have considerable political importance ,even more than its commercial one. It was anticipated that a unity of trade interest between the peoples who occupy both side of the border may tend to establish harmonious relations between them.⁹² All these are general premises about the importance of both local and trans-frontier trade in encouraging popular interactions.

⁸⁸ Hailu, p.47.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Mamo Aushecho, A History of Interactions between Dawro and the Sourounding Communities (1800s-1990s), MA Thesis (Jimma University, History, 2017), p.60.

⁹¹ Tagesse Shuramo, “Ethnic Interaction in South Central Ethiopia: The Case of Kambata and Hadya (1890s -1990s)”, MA Thesis (Jimma University, Departement of History, 2013), p.73.

⁹² Bahru Zewde, “Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935”, (Ph.D. Disertation, the University of London, History, 1976) , pp.242-243.

However, as opposed to the above premises, it seems that trans- frontier trade connections in ivory, arms and slaves had been ‘a curse than bless’ to ethnic interactions among the various ethno- regional groups along the official borders of Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya. In support of this idea, Parker noted that the unique aspect of the Ethiopian ivory trade in this frontier area was that it was almost unbearable to contain it because the raiders could retreat into Ethiopia. Then, he proceed to conclude that the issue had reached to the extent of requiring military intervention like the several guerilla conditions that have prevailed since the second world war in which nothing be sufficient sort of 'hot pursuit' over the border.⁹³ This argument had the implication that the ivory trade had become a source of hostility among communities along the official borders rather than a basis for cooperation through shared trade interest.

In similar vein, the trans-frontier arms trade concomitantly with ivory and slave trade seriously affected cross border popular interactions in the area. Regarding the genesis of the arms trade in the area, Mburu indicated that the practice antedate the beginning of colonialism and it was began by Ethiopian meddlers and Arab merchants. This trans-frontier arm trade was coincided with the intensification of slave raiding and hunting of game animals for their products like ivory and rhinoceros horns. Due to the decline of the slave supply in this southwest border lands, the Ethiopian slave hunters raided as far as northern Lake Turkana societies. Besides, since the area was endowed with wild life resource, the Ethiopian game hunters involved in the hunting practice and they brought some weapons.⁹⁴

⁹³ Parker, p.18.

⁹⁴ Nene Mburu, “Firearms and Political Power: The Military Decline of the Turkana of Kenya 1900 – 2000”, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10(2).2001, pp.153-154.

Moreover, the loose presence of state administration in these border lands following incorporation to the Ethiopian empire contributed to the intensification of the already existed practice of illegal arm trade. Particularly, following Menilek's illness and the subsequent political turmoil in the center, there was widespread smuggling of modern guns by crossing the newly defined southwestern borders of Ethiopia. As a result, the well-armed officials, soldiers and *shifita's* had begun to cross this newly defined border with less restriction to hunt elephant and for cattle rustling. This in turn instigated inter-ethnic conflict with the neighboring frontier communities. For instance, in May 1918, *Däjjazmach* Birru and his son, *Fitawrari* Dästa (governor of Maji, 1911-22), conducted slave and cattle raiding that led to the battle of Kangalla, in Sudan where Ethiopian troops were seriously defeated by joint force of Sudanese army and King's African rifles.⁹⁵ Even though, the succeeding governor *Däjjazmach* Mäkuriya was supposed to solve the border problem, arm trade and slavery issue, the expectations were not met.⁹⁶

Correspondingly, the gradual expansion of the Sudan, Uganda and British East Africa rule in to Ethiopian territory facilitated the free flow of arms between 1910 and 1928. Therefore, Toposa and northern part of Turkuana ethnic groups closely connected with the trade in ivory and arms with the Maji people. The Boma plateau people were not only connected by trade with Maji but also it was part of Ethiopian state administration until 1936. For instance, the Dizi local *balabbat*, Maji Kuri collected taxes from these people. When they refused to include in to the *gäbbar* system, Maji Kuri made frequent raiding. The same relation appeared to the southeastern Sudanese people such as the Nyangtom. These peoples paid

⁹⁵ Garretson, p.204; Major Henry Darley, *Slaves and Ivory: A Record of Adventure and Exploration in the Unknown Sudan, and among the Abyssinian Slave-Raiders*, London (H. F. and G. Witherby and High Holborn, W.C., 1926), and p.203.

⁹⁶ Garretson, p.205.

tribute to the Ethiopian governor in Maji and chiefs were directly appointed from Ethiopia at various times until 1920s. Toposa was not only a source of ivory but also grain and donkey for the local people and others at Maji. Finally, Maji's influence over Toposa and Boma plateau declined after Sudan took over of Toposa in 1926 and Boma in 1936.⁹⁷

Indeed, the practice of trans-frontier trade not only troubled popular interaction among communities inhabiting both sides of the official borders but also it greatly affected the relation between the Surma and their neighbors within Ethiopia's territory. The increasing arms trade hastened the spread of arms in the Surma area and its vicinities which in turn began to trouble inter-ethnic relations alarmingly at the expense of the traditional weapons (spears, knives and clubs).⁹⁸ Thus, from the 1900 to 1930, ethnic groups like the Me'en, Suri, Toposa, Boma and Nyangtom involved in an international network of ivory, slaves and arms trade that increased their military power in the area.⁹⁹

On the other hand, the ethnic groups ruled strictly by the Ethiopian state were not the beneficiaries of this armament trade. Consequently, after this time the well-armed peoples like Me'en and Surma began to attack their less armed neighbors. The case in point was the raiding of the unarmed Dizi by the well-armed Me'en people in 1924. The same is true for the well-armed Surma in which the raiding of the unarmed neighbors was a means to obtain slaves to be exchanged from northerners with guns. Also, in 1935 the area was in a state of chaos since the indigenous peoples like the Me'en, Béro (Dizi locality) and Surma were in a

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.206.

⁹⁸ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Bäqälä Lämaand Bälay Bogalä.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*; Gebrehawariya, pp. 53- 54.

violent inter-tribal raiding. Even in the early 1930s, the Surma were reported to have killed two of the British consul mail messengers in Maji.¹⁰⁰ In fact, archival sources also indicated that due to their extensive possession of fire arms, the Surma and Tishana (Me'en) people were even revolted against the state that lasted from 1944 to 1948.¹⁰¹

Congruently with the arm trade, slave trade also negatively affected ethnic interactions between the Surma and their closest neighbors due to the subsequent intensification of resource conflicts in the area over this precious commodity.¹⁰² The desire to obtain slaves partly prompted the state expansion to the southern part of Ethiopia. The practice intensified until the first decade of the twentieth century, often being the local officials the main actors of the trade in human merchandise.¹⁰³ In Maji area, the practice gained momentum and replaced ivory trade particularly after 1910 due to the dwindling of elephant resource of the area. The trade in human commodity had got fertile ground in the area partially due to the trend of inter-ethnic conflict among the pastoralist peoples for cattle raiding. The northern settlers also call the indigenous people as “*Shanqilla*” or blacks and consider as ‘inferior to them’, thus regarding them as a ‘perfect candidate’ for slavery.¹⁰⁴

The practice affected inter-group relation in the area due to the fact that slave raiding was not only conducted by governors and northerners but also by the indigenous ethnic group

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*; Garretson, p.206; Informants: Getachew Majigäz, Barkomuru Otodu and Kasa Käbädä.

¹⁰¹ NALA, FolderNo. 17.1.8.11, File No.17.1.8.11.05, A Letter from Colonel Asfaw Shähamit,a Governor of Maji *Awraja* to Colenel Tamirat Yigäzu, Governor of Kefa Province, Ref No 2373/810/105,1949 E.C,p.1(see appendix 1-A for detail.)

¹⁰² Tagel and Fana, p.552.

¹⁰³ Timothy Derek Fernyhough, “Serfs, Slaves and Shefta: Modes of Production in Southern Ethiopia from the Late Nineteenth Century to 1941”, PhD.Dissertation (University of Illinois, History, 1986), P.178.

¹⁰⁴ Hailu, p.48.

themselves against their close neighbors. For instance, the Me'en people conducted a slave raids against their neighbors such as the Surma, Bench, and Dizi.¹⁰⁵ The motive of the Me'en to conduct such slave raiding against their neighbors was to avert northern raids against them for slaves. They tried to free their own enslaved relatives by exchanging with their new captives raided from the neighboring community, which means bribing the northern slave traders.¹⁰⁶ Garretson also described that the Me'en cooperated with the governor of Maji, Ergeté, as well as the Dizi chief and greatly involved in a slave trade routes that stretched from Omo to Bonga and Jimma. Their source of slave was by raiding the neighboring peoples like the Surma.¹⁰⁷

Thus, during that time the practice of slave raiding had become the source of inter-ethnic conflict in the area like between the Surma and Me'en as well as between Dizi and Me'en. Indeed, the shadow of the slave raiding particularly in the relation between the Me'en and Surma people is reflected even to these days. Now, the mistrust between Surma and Me'en is partially associated with the practice of slavery and raiding conducted by the later against the former in the past. The Surma people had developed a hard print memory of the occasions of past raiding which they suffered since imperial times from neighboring groups and the government, and are supposed to revenge the alleged killers or their families when they got the chance.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Garretson, "Vicious Cycles...", p.206.

¹⁰⁶ Hailu, pp.42-43.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*; Garretson, p.206.

¹⁰⁸ Quincey A. Wagstaff, "Development, Cultural Hegemonism and Conflict Generation in Southwest Ethiopia: Agro-Pastoralists in Trouble", *Observatoire des Enjeux Politiques et Sécuritaires dans la Corne de l'Afrique*, (USA: Huxley College, 2015), Pp.23-24; Informants: Ato Koro Gidangi, Ato Bardula Lämudigir and Ato Burkutul Gurniyo.

To conclude this sub section, from the above discussions one can easily realize that the trans-frontier trade in ivory, armament and slaves dictated by the patterns of center-periphery relation in Ethiopia as well as regional political dynamics affected ethnic interactions in the area in a vicious ways. The central government of Ethiopia tried to check this trans-frontier trade, especially the illicit arm transaction, only during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie thereby reducing inter-ethnic conflicts in this remote area of Ethiopia .Hence, the next section of this chapter examine closely the nature of Surma-state relations and the measures taken by the central government to stabilize inter-ethnic relations in this remote frontier area of Ethiopia during the reign of emperor Haile Selassie.

2.2. Administration and Ethnic Relations during the Haile Selassie Era (1930-1974)

As indicated in the above pages, the Surma were the most autonomous ethnic group during the imperial times. During the brief period of Italian occupation, the Surma retained this statues quo, even though raiding for slaves and cattle was reduced. The Italians established four army border posts in the Surma area to guard the frontier of *Africa Orientale Italiana* with British East Africa and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. But there were no frequent contacts between Italians and Surma though at least in one occasion the former launched a punitive attack against the latter.¹⁰⁹

The administrative system under the restored government of Emperor Haile Selassie was characterized by indirect rule over fringe areas such as southern Kefa, home to diverse ethnic groups like Me'en, Suri, Dassanetch and Dizi. During that time, the Surma ostensibly fell under the district administration but ruled indirectly from its political centre in Maji town.

¹⁰⁹ Abbink, "Authority and Leadership in Surma Society...", p. 328.

After the evacuation of the Italians, the Ethiopian central government reinstated its authority, taking over the four Italian army posts and espoused to improve the administration system of these remote border lands of the empire. There was only indirect influence of the state via traditional chiefs in order to keep local peace, reconcile inter-ethnic violence with the settled farmers, and collect taxes.¹¹⁰

Subsequently, for the first time since the state expansion to the area in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the government of Emperor Haile Selassie succeeded in taxing the Surma. They paid taxes in-kind (cattle) through their local chiefs (the *Komoru*). The Surma paid in cattle due to the fact that they had no currency rather than barter exchange.¹¹¹ The government selected the Chai Surma *Komuru Dollote IV* (Wolekoro) to facilitate the process of tax collection. But the real tax collectors were government agents and the role of the local chief was only coordinating the activity. Also, the imperial regime of Haile Selassie attempted to improve the living conditions of the Surma people. For instance, it provided them with clothes, agricultural utensils, improved seeds, and oriented them to start plough agriculture though it was proved to be unsuccessful. The Surma had only contact with the settlers in local trade through barter exchange of cattle and grain. Thus, the indigenous Surma people did not involve in local administration rather ruled indirectly through the settlers from the highland village.¹¹²

Despite this fact, however, informants recount that during the period of Emperor Haile Selassie, Surma relation with the neighboring ethnic groups was relatively stable than before and after this period. After restoration of his power, the emperor undermined any type of

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 329; Niguse and *etal*, p.30.

¹¹¹ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Barkomuru Wotodu and Koro Gidangi.

¹¹² *Ibid*.

cross ethnic violence through different measures. As to the informants view, the most important action taken by the government to undermine any kind of inter- ethnic violence in the area was the stationing of permanent armed force along the official border areas of Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya. It established military posts in the Surma area like Märdur and Nikwa (beyond kibish river) to protect the infiltration of ethnic groups from the neighboring Sudan. This reduced cross-border raiding between Surma and Toposa of today's South Sudan.¹¹³ In 1946, officials like *Girazmach* Gäbrä Sellasé Däjäné and Yirdaw Täfäri were appointed by the central government to lead the aforementioned task of guarding the official border in the area.¹¹⁴

Nonetheless, the guard stationed in the area suffered frequent threats from British colonial personnels in the neighboring Sudan. These British officials from Sudan involved in trade with the people in Maji area through the exchange of natural resources and crops with cotton cloths. They were transporting large cargos of crops, cattle, sheep, got and natural resources from this frontier area of Ethiopia to the most important town called Liktab in the neighboring colonial Sudan.¹¹⁵ Even these intruders also bribed some *balabbats* in the area to facilitate their trading activities. One of the traditional chief of the Tirma section of the Surma (the son of Wolzig) along the border with Sudan was reported to have been bribed by British officials in the area. He tried to convince the other peoples of the area like Dizi to be part of

¹¹³ Informants: Abäbä Jämu, Bardula Lämudigir and Anyab Bäyitu.

¹¹⁴ Ayele Tariku, "Inter-Group Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: The Case of Diz and Suri People, Ethiopia", *Human Affairs* 28, 130–140(2018), p.137.

¹¹⁵ Adinew, p.106 ; Ayele, p.134.

British-Sudan as far as the source of Kibish River and was indicated to have got some acceptance.¹¹⁶

Even higher ranking government officials were the victim of the bribing strategy of these British officials. For instance, in 1957, rather than providing the guards with the necessary supply, the then secretary of Kefa *Awraja*, *Käñazmach* Tadäsä Nägash, wrote a letter to *Fitawärari* Häilämaryam, the governor of Tirma –Ṭid (now Surma *Wäräda*) stating that the guards who stationed in Nikewa (beyond Kibish River) ought retreat back on to the side of Maji.¹¹⁷

Due to insufficient military size, shortage of armament and problem of finance, the force led by *Däjjazmach* Zäwdé Ayälä was unable to control the bribing act of the British officials and the rebel of the indigenous ethnic group (who consider themselves as part of British Sudan). Finally, in 1957, the guard left the border camp and stationed in Maji where it was trapped for many days by the rebel indigenous people of the area. The evacuation of the guards left the area called Näbärus *Käbälé* (previously called Asäfa Wosän Kéla) which was the territory of Ethiopia for a long period of time now became under the control of the British. They were further encroaching to the interior area of Ethiopia instigating the local people for violence against the Ethiopian state officials in the area.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Adinew,p.106.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.107.

¹¹⁸ NALA, Folder No.17.8.22.05, File No 17.8.22.05.01, A Letter from *Fitawärari* Häilämaryam , Governor of Kaffa Province to Emperor Haile Selasie,1949 E.C,P.1.(See appendix 1-B for detail).

In fact, there were many localities that came to nearly under British-Sudan influence. In this regard, archival sources further states that: “እነዚህ ሀያ አገሮች [አካባቢዎች] ማለትም ገለብ፣ቡሜ፣ጥድ፣ ቲርማ፣ዝልማም፣ቤሮ፣አካባ፣አዲካስ፣አደባልቻ፣ማገርገዥ፣መሸኪያዥ፣ወረቡርጂ፣ከርሴ፣ሆሮ፣ፀሚ፣ጌሻ፣ቲሸና፣ሻሻ፣ጎልዲያ እና ሸጎሮ በእንግሊዝ በፍፁም ተሰብከዎል፣ በፍፁም ጥቁር ይገዛናል አይሉም”።¹¹⁹These twenty countries(areas);Gäläb,Bume,ፐid,Tirma,Zilmamu,Béro,Akaba,Adicas,Adäbalcha,Magergäž, Mäshkiyaž,Woreburji,Kersi,Horo,ፆämi,Gésha,Tishana,Shasha,Goldiyaand Shägoro are absolutly convinced by the British and they did not believe that they could be ruled by black.

Consequently, the act of the British troubled the stability of ethnic relation in the area, though the condition was relatively better than before and after this time. For instance, the Bume of Kenya who were assisted by the British colonial governor of Sudan frequently launched offence against the local inhabitants within Ethiopian border. The attack forced *Känazmach* Näbärus who was the *balabbat* of the area near Kibish River to evacuate the area. Also, the pressure from the Nyangatom of Kenya forced the Ethiopians Nyangatom (Bumé) to leave the territories. Again, failing to withstand the attack of the Nyanagtom of Kenya, the Ethiopian Bume encroached in to the Surma territory pushing the latter again to the Dizi territory. Therefore, the influence of British-Sudan during that time challenged state policies to reduce inter-ethnic violence in the area.¹²⁰

The second important factor that contributed to the relative stability of ethnic relations of the Surma and their neighbors during the period was the disarmament measure taken by Haile

¹¹⁹ NALA, Folder No.17.8.22.05, File No. 17.8.22.05.01, A Letter from *Fitawärari* Häilämaryam , a Governor of Kaffa Province to Emperor Haile Selasie,1949 E.C, p.2.

¹²⁰ Adinew, 107; Ayele, p.135.

Selassie regime in the area. The smuggling of weapons which was common before 1930s to the area was banned in the post- liberation period. Also, in 1949, by the order of the central government, *Ras Mäsfin Siläshi*, the governor of Kefa province, with around five hundred soldiers led a disarmament campaign to the area.¹²¹ After a bloody skirmish, the force of *Ras Mäsfin Siläshi* succeeded in disarming the local people.¹²² The campaign collected many fire arms from the Surma, Me'en and Dizi peoples in Jäba area. The collected fire arm was stored in the Italian building, which later served as *Maji Awraja* administrative office and very recently as administrative office of Maji Town. This measure restored temporary peace in the area.¹²³

Also, in the 1960s to contain the illicit arm trading activity in these remote border lands of Ethiopia, the central government employed the *Nächläbash* (local soldiers) to bring these traders in to trial. Similarly, *Balambaras Mahtämä Selassié*, the then Work and Communication Minister of Ethiopia, wrote a letter to Ethiopian airline authority stating that the transportation of any kinds of armament to Maji using the Ethiopia air lines is strongly prohibited. The command was unsuccessful since the illegal arm traders bribed some of the official and police men's to get their assistance in the process of smuggling weapons to the area.¹²⁴

¹²¹ *Ibid*,p.106.

¹²² NALA Folder No.17.1.8.11,File No. 17.1.8.11.05, A Letter from Colonel Asfaw Shähamit, Governor of *Maji Awraja* to Colonel Tamirat Yägäzu, Governor of Kefa Province, Ref. No. 2373/810/105,1949 E.C,p.1.

¹²³ Informants: Getachäw Majigeäž, Tädäsä Niyang and Barkomuru Otudu.

¹²⁴ Ayele, p. 138; Adinew,p.106.

Consequently, the disarmament measures of the state were not effective enough as the arm trade continued to disturb the security of the area. The supply of weapon to the illegal arm trade in the area was from the left over of the Italians, Sudan and Addis Ababa. Particularly, individual traders were highly involved in transporting bullets and weapons from Addis Ababa by airplane as far as Maji and MizanTäfäri and vended it in various areas covertly for Surma, Dizi, Me'en and others peoples. Individuals such as Misganaw Tafäsä, Bogalä Häilämaryam, Lobawi Agäfré and Mäkonän Alayu were some of the traders who actively involved in the arm business at the time.¹²⁵

Also, some members of the police force serving as a guard for government gun store during that time were reported to have been involved in selling arms secretly to the indigenous peoples of the area.¹²⁶ The major participants among the police force in Maji include *Shambäl Yirdaw Täfäri*, *Shambäl Tadäsä Agedié*, *Shambäl Tadäsä Ligidié Burka*, *HamsaAläqa Käbädä Yimär*, *Mamo Häilämaryam*, *Käbädä Fäyisa*, *Bogalä Laqäw*, *Bogalä Wäldä Giyorgis*, *Fäkadu Häilämaryam* and *Abba Mäkés*. Also, some members of the army at Kullié camp were recognized by the people as a direct participant in the illicit armament trade activity.¹²⁷ So, the disarmament measures of Haile Selassie regime in the area were not totally effective though it minimized the problem better than the condition before and after that time.

In fact, the major factor for the ineffectiveness of the government effort in halting the illicit arm trade in the area from the beginning was associated with the failure of the central

¹²⁵ Adinew, p.106.

¹²⁶ Gebrehawariya ,p.63.

¹²⁷ Adinew, p.106.

government to issue legal frameworks to punish individuals who involved in the transaction process. The only measure used against these illegal arm traders was confiscating the arms found in their hand.¹²⁸ But the central government was reported to have been in process of issuing a new proclamation on the issue that remained in its draft process.¹²⁹

The third measure of Emperor Haile Selassie regime to stabilize inter-ethnic relations in the area was the precarious conflict mediation efforts undertaken by the state. The response of Haile Selassie regime for incidence of conflict between the Surma and the neighboring people was immediate. The central government was deeply aware of the human causality caused by the frequent inter-ethnic conflict among the pastoralist people of the area. Then it urged the government agents in the area to take immediate action in time of such incidences.¹³⁰ Accordingly, for instance, immediately after the raiding of the Surma on *Sayi Kābālé* of Dizi people in 1972, the state agents in the area sent a special forces to solve the issue.¹³¹ The reconciliation group met with the pastoralist Surma people around Muiy River and they mediated the conflict peacefully.¹³²

¹²⁸ NALA, Folder No.17.1.8.11. File No. 17.1.8.11.05, A Letter from Colonel Tamirat Yigāzu, a Governor of Kefa Province to the Ministry of the Interior, Ref. No. 3530/28/8/49, 1949 E.C.,p.1.(see also appendix 1-C for detail information).

¹²⁹ NALA, Folder No.17.1.8.11, File No. 17.1.8.11.05, A Letter from the Ministry of the Interior to Colonel Tamirat Yigāzu, Governor of Kefa Province , Ref. No 25/68,1949E.C.,p.1.(see also appendix 1-D for detail).

¹³⁰ BMZAO, Folder No. 250, File No. ሰክ.7.a Letter from Lägāsā Bizu, head of the Ministry of the Interior to *Dājǰazmach* Şehaye Enquselasé, the Governor of Kafa Province, Ref. No.,7/12129,1964 E.C.,p.1.(See appendix 1-E).

¹³¹ BMZAO, Folder No. 243, File No. ከስ.14, A Letter from Mitiku Dästa, the Governor of Mähäl Maji *Wäräda* to Maji *Awraja* Office, , Ref. No. 226/40/61,1964 E.C.,p.1(see also appendix 1-F for detail).

¹³² BMZAO, Folder No. 243, File No. ከስ.15, A Letter from Mitiku Dästa, Governor of Mähäl Maji *Wäräda* to Maji *Awraja* Office, Ref.No, 258/40/64, 1964 E.C, p.1 (see appendix 1-G for detail).

Yet, despite the fact that the government of Emperor Haile Selassie for the first time took different measures to stabilize inter-ethnic relation in the area with some degree of success, some of the administrative policies endorsed by the regime were also the source of inter-ethnic animosity and suspicion in the area. Under the restored government of Emperor Haile Selassie, administrative officials in different parts of Ethiopia were appointed by the central government from a certain area to other irrespective of local power base. These alien officials were assigned at various ranks of the imperial regime's administrative apparatus.¹³³

The trend was no less apparent in the Surma area. Sometimes the Surma were ruled by officials appointed by the imperial regime from the neighboring Dizi people. Typically, a Dizi man called *Fitawärari* Kuri was appointed as administrator of Adikas district in 1947 making his center at Tid (Surma area). Similarly, *Ato* Komoro Adikyas, also from the Dizi was assigned as governor of Tid and Tirma sub-district making his center at Bambu. This reinforced the resentment of the Surma toward the Dizi as the collaborators of the imperial regime in controlling their areas.¹³⁴ But as indicated before this cannot outweigh the fact that the period of Haile Selassie was marked by relative stability of inter-ethnic relations in the area, though there were internal and external challenges to the measures taken by the state to achieve such stability. Rather, the period of *Derg* witnessed in the exacerbation of inter-ethnic violence in the area emanated mainly from the state policies which were met with stiff resistance from the Surma and Me'en people as discussed in the following sub-section.

¹³³ Ayele ,p.132.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

2.3. Policies and Ethnic Interaction during the *Derg* Regime (1974-1991)

The *Derg* regime that came to power after the demise of the Imperial Regime in 1974 adopted socialism as an ideological principle of the country.¹³⁵ Then, the revolutionary regime carried out social and political reforms both at the local and national level. The Maji frontier of Ethiopia had been among the focus areas in the development initiatives of the revolutionary regime. In relation to this, archival sources insights:

በወደቀው መንግስት ጊዜ ተረስቶ በመቅረትና ከልማት ፕሮግራም በመገለል ረገድ የማጂ አውራጃ ተወዳዳሪ የሌለው ነው። ጊዜያዊ ወታደራዊ መንግስት ለተረሳው ሰፊ ህዝብ ታጥቆ መነሳቱን በቃልም በተግባርም ከማረጋገጡ ሌላ የአገሪቱ ልማት ከዳር ወደ ውስጥ የሚጀምር ስለመሆኑ ቃል ገብቷል።¹³⁶

Maji *Awraja* had been incomparable in terms of its negligence and exclusion from development programs during the demised imperial regime. In addition to its theoretical and practical commitment to stand for the neglected broad mass, the provisional military regime vowed that the country's development program proceed from exterior to the interior.

Accordingly, under the development initiatives of *Derg*, the Surma were portrayed as a 'primitive communalist' society, in the lowest stage of development. They are considered as an ideological and developmental obstacle to the government dedicated to collectivist-socialist development and the reversal of the oppressive feudal system in every corners of the country.¹³⁷ They were perceived to be found at the lower range of human development that has to be improved through the state revolutionary programs. Archival document illustrate the view of the state as follows:

¹³⁵ Andargachew Tiruneh, "The Ethiopian Revolution (1974 to 1984)", (Ph.D. Dissertation, London School of Economics, 1990), p.136.

¹³⁶ NALA Folder No.17.1.8.13, File No.17.1.8.13.01, A Letter from *Fitawärari* Tadäsä Tayä, Vice Adiminstrator of Maji *Awraja* to Colonel Kassayä Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kiflä Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.2.

¹³⁷ Abbink, "Paradox of Power and Culture in an Old Periphery...", p.161.

አመለካከታቸው [የሱርማዎች] ከጎሳ ደረጃ አላለፈም። የሚያውቁት በአከባቢያቸው ያሉትን ጎሳዎች የዲዚን እና ቲሻናን በጋሞ ጎፍ ክፍል ሀገር ውስንተኛቸውን ቡሜን እና ሙርሲን ከሱዳን ቡሜን ሲሆን የተቀረውን የመንግስት ሰራተኛም ሆነ ሌላውን እንደ አማራ ያዩታል።¹³⁸

Their [the Surma] attitude did not go beyond ‘tribal’ level. They are only familiar with the surrounding ethnic groups such as the Dizi and Tishana-Me’en, their neighbors from Gamo Gofa *Kifla Hager*; the Bume and Mursi, and the Sudanese Bume. Otherwise, they regard the government employees and other community generally as Amhara.

Subsequently, soon after the issuing of the new rural land proclamation in 1975, the campaigners were sent to the Surma and Me’en area to prepare the people for the land reform and abolish the repressive feudal systems. But these revolutionary programs of the state were irrelevant to the socio-economic conditions of the Surma as there was no feudal land owning system in the area.¹³⁹ Regarding the overall socio-economic condition of the Surma society before that time, archival sources also asserts that “በዝባኝና ተበዝባኝ የለም። ሁሉም የሚችሉውን ያህል ዘርቶ የሚያገኘውን ምርት አብረው ይካፈላሉ። ባለርስት እና ጭሰኛ አልነበረም።”¹⁴⁰ (There were no exploiters and exploited. They sow what they could collectively and share the production together. There were no land lords and land less peasants in the society). Thus, the land reform policy failed in the Surma area.

After the failure of the land reform program, the campaigners proceed to cultural offenses against the customs of the Surma in name of abolishing harmful cultural practices. Accordingly, they commanded the people to; start wearing clothes, began a sedentary way of life, start plough agriculture, abandon the culture of stick fighting contests and abolish the customary practice of wearing lip-plates and ear discs. But the people seriously resisted of

¹³⁸ BMZAO, no Folder No, no File No, A Letter From Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji *Awraja* Adminstrstive Office to Colonel Kassaye Mandäfro, a Governor of Kefa *Kifle Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.3.

¹³⁹ Abbink, “Paradox of Power and Culture in an Old Periphery....”, p.162.

¹⁴⁰ BMZAO, no Folder No, no File No , A Letter from From Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji *Awraja* Adminstrstive Office to Colonel Kassaye Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kifle Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.3.

abandoning such cultural values. In terms of administrative reforms, a few peasant associations were planned to be established within Tirma-Tid *Wäräda* though it had never been materialized. Besides, *Wäräda* officials also attempted to levy taxes from the Surma but proved unsuccessful.¹⁴¹

It has been further argued that the government also failed to respond effectively to local problems in the Surma area such as the famine of 1984-85 and 1988, and failed to check the infiltration of Sudanese ethnic groups in to Ethiopian territory to stabilize the area.¹⁴² However, informants indicated that the military regime attempted to become responsive to the problems faced by the Surma. For instance, the government provided food aids in time of such disasters in Surma land. Informants also further explained that in order to solve the problem of the drought, the *Derg* regime resettled many Surma people in Mizan area that later came to be known as Surma camp, the area where now Mizan Tepi University main campus is located. The government also provided free supply of clothes to the Surma people. But the resettlement project failed since almost all of the settlers returned to their original settlement area.¹⁴³

Also, the government tried to reconcile inter-ethnic conflict in the area. There was inter-ethnic violence between the Bume of Gamo-Gofa *Keflä Hagär* and Surma people of Maji *Awraja* in 1976. The turmoil was begun due to the arbitrary killing of the Suri by the Bumé clan called, *Kätäqa* shot. It was conducted after entering the Surma territory. Initially, they Bume

¹⁴¹ Niguse and Hailu p.38-39.

¹⁴² Abbink, "Violence and the Crisis of Conciliation: Suri, Dizi and the State of South-West Ethiopia", *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 70, No.4 (2000), p.539.

¹⁴³ Informants: Abäbä Jämu, Tädäsä Niyang and Barkulie Olkori

offenders wounded one Tirma man, called Yälakurokula and finally killed five innocent Surma ladies.¹⁴⁴ The conflict escalated to large scale violence. Finally, government agents in the two areas organized a reconciliation ceremony at Muyi Valley an ideal place for all the ethnic groups. Although the meeting calmed the instability for a while, it was short lived.¹⁴⁵

Consequently, as compared to the period of Haile Selasie, the provisional military regime was far behind in containing inter-ethnic violence in the area. The major factor for the failure of the state measures was the resistance of the people. Again the resistance of the Surma against *Derg* polices had become a source of cooperation with their neighbouring Me'en people, who resented the state presence in the area too. In 1977, the Surma and Me'en launched a joint devastative attack on the major towns in the area such as Bachuma, Gésha, Barda, Tui, Chäbära, Jämu, Shasha, Däbräwärq and Maji. The main reason behind the attack of these towns was due to the fact that the rebels supposed that they are the strategic centres of the state in the area.¹⁴⁶

The government regard the revolt of the two ethnic groups as obstacle to execute its development tasks in the area. The condition was reported in the words of the government cadres as follows: “የቲሻና እና የሱርማ ጎሳዎች አቢዮቱ የመጣላቸው እንጅ የመጣባቸው ያለመሆኑን ባለመረዳት አምፀው በንብረት እና በሰው ላይ ጉዳት በማድረጋቸው የአውራጃው ፀጥታው ታውኮ በ 1969 ዓ.ም ይጠናቀቅ የነበረው ስራ ወደ 1970 ዓ.ም ሊተላለፍ ችሏል።”¹⁴⁷ (misunderstanding the fact that the revolution came for, rather than against them, the *Tishena* (Me'en) and Surma ethnic groups rebelled that resulted

¹⁴⁴ Gebre- hawariya p,115.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*,p.116.

¹⁴⁶ Niguse and *etal*, p.39.

¹⁴⁷ MWAO, Folder No. 21, File No. 266, A Report from Maji *Awraja* Adiminstration Office to Kefa *Täkqlay Gizat* Office, 1970 E.C.

in material and human causality. Due to the troubling of the *Awuraja*'s security, the tasks to be accomplished in 1969 E.C were postponed to 1970 E.C.).

Indeed, it can be said that like many other policies of the *Derg*, its response to inter-ethnic violence between the Surma and the neighboring people was largely repressive. The typical example was in response to the growing problem of the Surma and Me'en with the neighboring peoples in 1977, the *Derg* officials in the area asked the central government for aerial bombardment of the Surma and Me'en. Even the technical aspects of implementing the proposal were indicated such as the latitudinal and longitudinal location of the target areas.¹⁴⁸ But, there are no tangible evidences indicating the actual execution of the proposal.

Yet, the revolt of the Surma and Me'en during that time was lastly put down by the government infantry army sent from the provisional capital, Jimma. The rebels designed a plan of devastative offense in the town of Maji. Unfortunately, the plan failed due to miscalculation of the day, the Surma arrived one day later than the proposed day after the Me'en force was defeated and returned back by the people of the town and government army. They regard the attack and the looting against the Dizi equally as an offence against the state because the Surma and Me'en perceive them as the collaborator of the state in the area. During that punitive attack, the Me'en and Surma ruined an airstrip in Wacha in the Surma land established by the Italians fearing that the *Derg* may use it for aerial bombardment.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ NALA, Folder No. 17.1.8.05, File No,17.1.8.05.02, A Letter from Kasaye Mandäfro, a Governor of Kefa *Täqalay Gizat* to the Ministry of the Interior, *Derg* Regime, Ref.No.35540/69, 1969E.C.(see appendix 1-H for detail).

¹⁴⁹ Niguse and *etal*, pp.39-40

In fact, the effort to repulse back the Surma from the Dizi territory had also got support from the neighbouring Nyangatom (Bume) people, who are the well-armed and the bitter enemy of the Surma in the area. The support of the Bume in stabilising the area was praised by the government agents in the following manner:

“የሱርማ ወንበዴዎች ቀደም ሲል እስከ ማጂ ከተማ አካባቢ ድረስ እየመጡ ይዘርፉ የነበሩት ሀገር ወዳድ የቡሜ ጎሳዎች በገዛ ፍቃዳቸው ለእርዳታ መምጣታቸውን ሰምተው መንደራቸውን እየለቀቁ በመሸሽ ላይ በመሆናቸው ፀጥታው ከቀድሞው የተሻለ መልክ ይዞ ይገኛል።”¹⁵⁰

The Surma gangs who loots as far as Maji town in earlier times are now retreating from their village hearing the arrival of patriotic Bume people for voluntary assistance . Due to this, the security situation has now improved than before.

Besides, the inter-ethnic violence of the period was further exacerbated by the misguided policy followed by the government of Ethiopia during the 1980s. The state program of forceful army conscription in its final years added a fuel to the existing popular grievance and mistrust to the regime.¹⁵¹ In the final years of Mengestu regime, the Surma were at conflict with almost all of the neighboring peoples such as Dizi, Anywaa and Nyangatom. They had relatively peaceful relation only with their eastern neighbors the Mursi, not raided probably due to their strong socio-cultural similarity with the Surma.¹⁵²

Thus, the period was marked by heightened inter-ethnic conflict in the area and government officials also reported that it has become beyond their control. This was mainly due to the wider access of automatic rifles by the pastoralist people of the area. The arms possessed by these ethnic groups were by far superior in quality than possessed by government militias in

¹⁵⁰ MWAO, Folder No. 9, File No.92, A Report from Maji *Awuraja* Administration Office to Kefa *Täqalay Gizat* Office, 1970 E.C.

¹⁵¹ Gebre-egzabhier Tesfaselasie, “A History of Bench People, 1974-2005”, MA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2018), p.91.

¹⁵² Informants: Aniyab Bāyitu, Wolichari Sabakoro and Marshi Adikyaz; Abbink, “Conflict and Social Change.....” ,p.27.

the area.¹⁵³ In fact, there were also many other factors for the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflict in the area since 1980 as we shall discuss it separately in the last chapter of this thesis. Yet, it is unfair to treat the aspects of Surma relation with the neighboring peoples only in a dimension of cooperation and animosity shaped by political factor, the pattern of center-periphery relation. There was also a pattern of cordial inter-ethnic relations conditioned by socio-cultural factors as discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*; Hailu, p.125.

CHAPTER THREE

3. SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS AND INTEGRATION

3.1. Surma-Me'en Relations

In the past, the Surma and Me'en peoples had strong affinities in different socio-cultural aspects. To begin with, the two ethnic groups had some common descent system. Some oral traditions of the Surma and Me'en indicate the South Sudan as the place of their origin, even though there are also other traditions pointing to the lower Omo Valley as place of origin for the two peoples. From these areas, they moved to their current settlements in different time, with the Surma to have arrived earlier than the Me'en. Also, according to these oral traditions in their arrival to the current settlement, the Me'en passed across the current Surma territory.

¹⁵⁴ This demonstrates the potential connections between the Surma and the Me'en in their genealogy.

Another important feature of interaction between the Me'en and Surma people was in language aspect. Linguistically, the Me'en people have much similarity in root words with the Surma.¹⁵⁵ The language of the Surma also has more linguistic affinity with the Me'en than with the language of the Zilmamu or Bale ethnic group though the latter are socio-culturally very similar with the Surma. However, this does not mean that the languages of the Surma and Me'en are identical.¹⁵⁶ Scholars who investigated the linguistic affinity among the

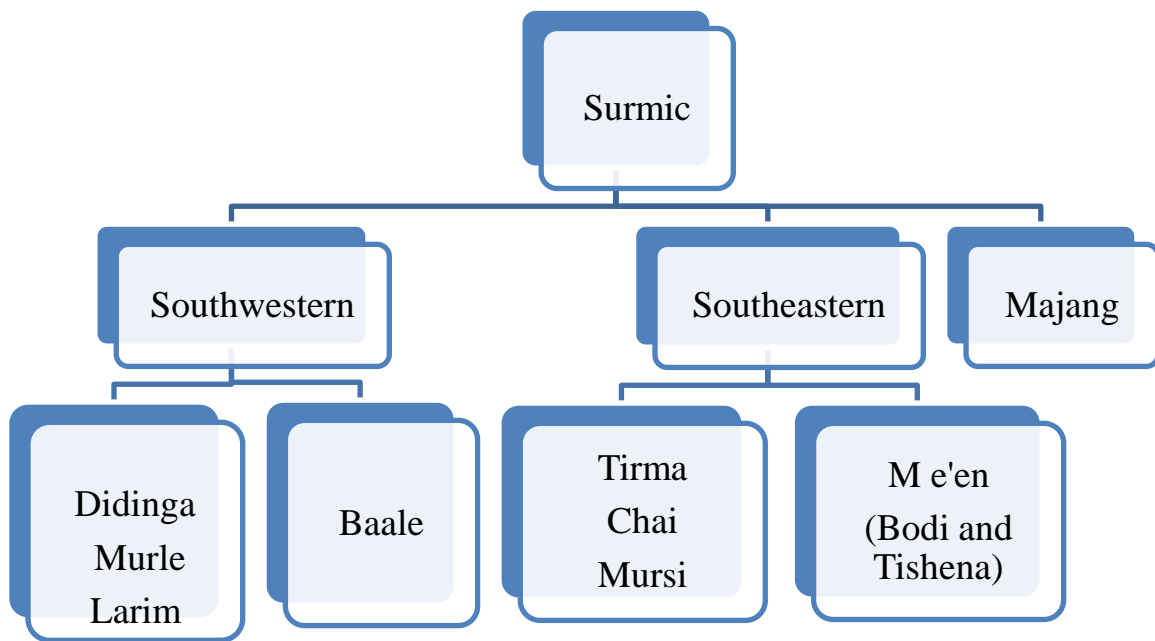
¹⁵⁴ Informants: *Ato Kasa Kābādā*, *Ato Bardula Lāmudigir* and *Komurut Markos Tikai*

¹⁵⁵ Hailu, p.32; Informants: *Ato Yāwha Koptalé*, *Ato Kasa Kābādā* and *Ato Barkomuru Otodu*.

¹⁵⁶ Dimmendaal, p.2.

Surmic language groups revealed this fact. The following picture clearly shows the language interaction between the Surma and the neighbouring communities.

Figure 5: The Affiliation of the Surmic languages



Source: Gerrit Dimmendaal, SIL International 2002:3

The most important question is, however, to what extent linguistic and other cultural ties determined inter-ethnic relation between the two ethnic groups? It has been often argued that sharing a common language is not by itself a guarantee for cordial inter-ethnic relations. For instance, the Turkana, although they have a strong linguistic affinity with the Nyangatom,

had often been in the past regarded by the latter as traditional enemies.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, it has been maintained that linguistic affinity was an important factor to establish harmonious inter-ethnic relations.¹⁵⁸

In case of Surma – Me'en relation, it can be argued that linguistic affinity and other cultural ties served as a positive means of reinforcing harmonious relation between the people. In the past, the relation between the two ethnic groups was marked more by friendship and fraternization than by hostility. Before the incorporation of the region to the Ethiopian Empire by Menelik II, the Me'en were not raided by the Surma because the latter considered the former as a member of their 'moral community' mainly because of such linguistic affinity and other shared cultural values.¹⁵⁹

As a result, there was a cordial inter-ethnic relation and even integration between the Surma and the Me'en in the earlier times ever since they arrived in their current settlements. Ethnic boundaries between the two ethnic groups were not strict. Particularly, the Me'en people around Gésha area were very similar with Surma in different cultural aspects like age- grade systems and ritual ceremonies. There was also high level of marriage ties and cultural assimilation between the Surma and Me'en in their adjacent territories.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Serge Torny, "The Nyangatom: An Outline of their Ecology and Social Organization". In: M.L. Bender (ed.) *People and Cultures of the Ethio-Sudan Borderlands*, (East Lansing: African Studies Center, 1981), p.168.

¹⁵⁸ Marco Bassi, "Primary Identities in the Lower Omo Valley: Migration, Cataclysm, Conflict and Amalgamation, 1750-1910", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (2010), p.30.

¹⁵⁹ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Barkoy Olisurba and Yäwha Koptalé.

¹⁶⁰ Informants: Barkomuru Otodu, Markos Tikaiand Kasa Käbädä; Abbink, "The Deconstruction of Tribe...", p.9.

In similar vein, Surma-Me'en relations in the past were also highly visible and applicable in local markets. They had a barter trade in cattle in the nearby markets such as Maji and Tum. Also, they used these local market connections as a forum for developing their social interaction and economic cooperation. The Surma and Me'en people had well established traditional ways of communication in these markets via traditional chiefs regarding common concerns like the raiding of potential enemies and prices of different precious commodities of the time like ivory in local and regional markets. Besides, the two groups supported each other in times of difficulties. The Surma were often invited by the Me'en people for temporary settlement during the occasions of drought and famine.¹⁶¹

Moreover, in the past there was similarity between Surma and Me'en people in livelihood systems. Both of them were pastoralists and had cattle oriented culture.¹⁶² However, now, there is a difference in the subsistence base of the two peoples. The Me'en people are predominantly practicing shifting cultivation as opposed to the pastoralist Surma people. The frequent cattle epidemics since the nineteenth century led to the decimation of livestock population and forced the Me'en people to expand to the highland areas of Kafa and Bench. This expansion to the highland area gradually brought transformation in the livelihood system of the Me'en people mainly from pastoralism to shifting cultivation.¹⁶³ Thus, now, the Me'en people have lost their power as raider nomadic people and in turn began to regard the pastoralist peoples like the Bodi and Surma as their bitter enemies because of their sporadic raiding on them.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Kasa Kăbădă and Jayo Şegay.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Hailu, pp .20-21.

¹⁶⁴ Abbink, "The Deconstruction of Tribe and Ethnicity....", pp.5-6; Niguse,p.3.

Informants also narrate that in the recent past the relation between the two ethnic groups was marked by hostility due to the Surma's irregular cattle rustlings and killing against the Me'en. As a result of such hostility, all the earlier intimate socio-cultural ties are hardly maintained. At the present time, the Me'en people see the Surma as unruly and dangerous people of the area despite of their historical ties. Also, due to the decline in the frequency of contacts between the two ethnic groups, only a few Me'en can speak the language of the Surma and vice versa. Similarly, due to the increasing violent behavior of the Surma, the extent of intermarriage and local trade connections between the two people are currently very restricted.¹⁶⁵ Also, Abbink affirms this idea. He states that the marriage ties between the Surma and the northern Me'en was totally disrupted though there is some extent of intermarriage with the southern Me'en due to the anticipation of material gain by the Me'en in return from such relations that include higher cattle bride-wealth and quicker pay of the Surmas.¹⁶⁶

Their cooperation in the recent past had been only in resistance against the state shaped by common resentment against the government policies rather than shared socio-cultural traits as was the case in the earlier times. In the early 1980s, the Me'en people had revolted against the policies of the *Derg* regime. To suppress their revolt, the government launched constant offenses against the Me'en using its force stationed at Maji town. But the Me'en people got the Support of the Surma who were also by then resenting the state presence in the area. Then, the combined force of the Me'en and the Surma launched a revengeful attack against the government base at Maji. During this attack, they devastated and looted the Dizi people,

¹⁶⁵ Informants: Kasa Kăbădă, Tăka Mamo and Bardula Lămudigir

¹⁶⁶ Abbink, "The Deconstruction of tribe and Ethnicity....", p.6.

since both the Surma and Me'en people regard the Dizi as the ally of the government and hence, their common enemy.¹⁶⁷

However, Socio-culturally, now, the Surma consider the Me'en people as outside of their moral community with no similar custom with them, as a settled agriculturalist people with no cattle oriented culture like the Dizi highlands and often raids them. The Surma people always emphasize their cultural differences to allow integration, ethnic inclusion of the neighboring peoples. They are isolated from all of their neighbors except the Mursi and Zillmamu people. They had particular regard for the Mursi people due to the fact that they had strong socio-cultural ties. For instance, they had common culture of removing lower incisor, body decoration, the wearing of lip-plates and ear discs and the ceremonial dueling of *Donga*.¹⁶⁸

Accordingly, the Mursi and the Surma had extensive marriage ties that enabled the latter to encroach in to the former's land without violent conflict.¹⁶⁹ Also, the Surma people were allowed to have permanent settlement in the Mursi territory during the time of drought in the former's ecology.¹⁷⁰ This affirms the argument that inter-dependence between the ethnic groups is highly determined by the sharing of some cultural traits.¹⁷¹ The relation between the Surma and Dizi also reveals this fact as discussed in the next sub-section.

¹⁶⁷ Abeje, p.6.

¹⁶⁸ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Barkomuru Otodu and Bartagi Barkori.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*; Turton, "A Journey Made Them.....", p.133.

¹⁷⁰ David Turton, Pastoral Livelihood in Danger: Cattle Disease, Drought and Wildlife Conservation in Mursiland, SouthWestern Ethiopia, an Oxafam Working Paper (Uk and Ireland 1995), p 13.

¹⁷¹ Fredrik Barth., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), P.18.

3.2. Surma - Dizi Relations

The history of ethnic interaction between the Dizi and the Surma people was marked by both hostile and peaceful pattern of relation. Before the arrival of the Amharas, the Dizi lived in a problematic relation with the neighboring pastoralist Surma people who settled in the surrounding lowlands probably centuries after the Dizi chiefdoms' had developed.¹⁷² However, the tension between the Surma and the Dizi was almost relaxed after the end of the nineteenth century. They gradually began to establish a cultural link. They have entered in to a sort of ritual alliance in the issue of rain control. They had a rain pact based on the belief that the Dizi chiefs possess 'ultimate mastery' over the rain and also the occurrence of rain in the Surma land was determined by their ritual blessings.¹⁷³

According to this ritual agreement on rain control, the Suri were allowed to penetrate the areas of the Dizi when they faced natural calamities such as drought. Under such conditions, the Suri brought cattle to the Dizi ritual headmen. Then, the Dizi chiefs performed rain ritual practice to the Suri.¹⁷⁴ The traditional chiefs of the two ethnic groups had also regular meetings, apart from the rain ritual ceremonies, usually in the local markets to discuss about common concerns as per the ritual alliance. Such kinds of cultural pact affected the relationship between the two ethnic groups positively even to the extent of allowing them to use each other's adjacent ecological niche communally. They also settle disputes through negotiation approach under the guidance of the Dizi ritual chiefs.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Abbink, "Deconstruction of Tribe.....", p.7.

¹⁷³ Informants: *Ato* Barkoy Olisurba, *Ato* Wolichari Sabakoro and *Ato* Marshi Adikyaz; Abbink, "Violence and the Crisis of Conciliation....", p.534.

¹⁷⁴ Gebrehawariya, p.37.

¹⁷⁵ Informants: *Ato* Barkomuru Otodu, *Ato* Tädäsä Niyang and Markos Bogälä.

Such ritual link had also developed into a marriage ties through cattle arrangements. Mostly the Surma men marry wife from the Dizi through dowry payments and sometimes through abduction. Occasionally, the Dizi men also marry Suri women.¹⁷⁶ But in establishing such marriage relations with the Dizi, the Suri people take into consideration the social status of their potential marriage partner.¹⁷⁷ In the past, individuals at the highest level of the Dizi social strata such as *Fitawārai* Adikyaz arranged marriage alliance with the Surma.¹⁷⁸

Correspondingly, the two ethnic groups had a strong social bondage in attending the burial ceremony of each other's traditional chiefs. For example, the Surma chiefs attended the funeral rites of the two most prominent Dizi chiefs, *Fitawārai* Adikyaz and *Fitwārai* Kuri. Similarly, the Dizi chiefs attended the burial ceremony of the most influential Surma chief named Wolo Zogy.¹⁷⁹ Besides, the Dizi and the Suri had also economic interaction in local markets such as Maji and Tum. In such local markets, the Dizi provide the Suri with surplus grains such as maize and sorghum, household utensils like clay cooking pots and plates and manufactured goods like blade, soap, *abujäd*, beads and salt. In turn, the Suri provide the Dizi with cattle and gold.¹⁸⁰

Yet, even though the two peoples had an age old socio-economic contacts, they have difference in self-image and image of others. They had a strong attachment to their ideas of 'moral community' which manifested through a range of what they perceive as dissimilar

¹⁷⁶ Informants: *Ato* Wäldä-Maryam Gäbrsälasié , *Ato* Getachew Majigäž and *Ato* Olichagi Ouya

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Abeje, p.9.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Informants: *Ato*Bäläy Bogalä, *Ato* Getachäw Majigäž and *Ato*Bardula Lämudigir.

habits and customs. The two peoples did not regard each other as a member of 'human community' in which vital shared tenets hold. The Surma despise the Dizi for their permanent sedentary way of life and for not possessing many cattle. On the other hand, the Dizi degrades the Surma as uncultured, wild and violent.¹⁸¹

Also, there was a significant difference in the social organization of the Surma and the Dizi society. The Suri are quite egalitarian society with no difference in social status, whereas the Dizi are hierarchically organized society. This difference on the model of social organization has brought incompatible perceptions as to the pattern of social and political dealings between each other. However, the existing dissimilarities in social structure had not been the cause of inter-ethnic conflicts.¹⁸²

On the contrary, the difference in the subsistence base of the two peoples had often been the causes of their conflicts. The Dizi are settled farmers usually demanding permanent fields for the cultivation of different crops, whereas the Surma are transhumant pastoralist group always in need of extensive areas for cattle herding. In order to meet their desire for large grazing lands, the Surma often encroach to the Dizi territory in a form of raiding, thus frequently generating conflicts. Also, the Surma have unjustifiable claim that most of the areas inhabited by the Dizi were their ancestral lands.¹⁸³ Thus, the competition for agro-ecological niches had been the main causes of inter-ethnic conflicts between the Surma and Dizi rather than the perceived socio-cultural differences.

¹⁸¹ Abbink, "Violence and the Crisis of Conciliation....", p.536.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Informants: Bäkälä Läma, Tadäsä Niyang and Tamänä Karba; Abeje, p.9.

Besides, though the Surma people had deeply engrained violent culture, as compared to the aims of their attack against the neighboring pastoralist groups like Nynagatom, they did not attach much economic and cultural value to the raiding and killing of the settled agriculturalist Dizi people. The Surma raiding against the Dizi had no as such tangible economic gains as the latter did not own many cattle to be looted in the process. Also, the raiding and killing against the Dizi had less cultural value among the Surma. The Surma men who killed a person from the Dizi could not be regarded socially as ‘hero’ and the body decoration mark, the *rido* (signifying him as ‘best war actor’) could not be put in his arm. This was due to the fact that the Surma regard the Dizi as less challenging to them as they did not revenge earlier offenses and receive no homicide compensation from the killer’s group.¹⁸⁴

3.3. Intra-Ethnic Relations of the Surma

In terms of internal relations, the Surma people in the past were not totally free of intra-ethnic violence. As with any traditional societies, there were always different forms of domesticated violence. But in the earlier times, internal violence among the Surma did not have fatal consequences as compared to the recent past. They had mechanisms of self-control based on their socio-political system mainly the age –grade system. Particularly, the reigning sets of elders called the *Rora* were powerful enough in containing violence within the society through different mechanisms like homicide compensation. Also, the lesser magnitude of intra-ethnic conflict in the past was due to the use of traditional weapons (like spears and

¹⁸⁴ Informants: Aniyab Bäyitu, Getachäw Majigäz and Bälay Bogalä; Abbink, “Restoring the Balance ...”, p.89.

knives) in fighting which had not the potential to inflict more loss in human lives as compared to the modern weapons widely used by the people in the recent past.¹⁸⁵

There were different ritual enactments of internal violence in the Surma society. The first is the ceremonial stick dueling. This ritual and sporting game is called *Donga* or *Sagenai* (*Saginay*). *Donga* is both the name of the sport and the stick, whereas, *Sagenai* is the name of the stick-fighting session.¹⁸⁶ The game had its own rules and regulations. The killing of contestants from the opponent group intentionally or by default is strongly forbidden. If death occurred in the occasion, then it would be resolved by homicide compensation. It is indicated that the stick fighting contest had three major purposes among the Surma society. It serves as a forum for males to show their strength and get culturally recognized status among their peers and provide them with the opportunity to be selected by girls for dating. Also, it had a psychological purpose of serving as a training ground for *Tagay* age- grade to discover the excitement and vitality of violence in orderly way. Moreover, it serves as place of gate together for different villagers to enhance their sense of social belongingness.¹⁸⁷ The following picture depicts the actual contest of the *Donga*, the typical example of domesticated violence.

¹⁸⁵ Informants: *Ato* Bardula Lämudigir, *Ato* Bargada Olisuri and *Komuru* Belogidangi Midireole.

¹⁸⁶ *The Ethiopian Tours Magazine*, Vol. 2 (Addis Ababa, 2011), pp.1-2.

¹⁸⁷ Abbink, "Restoring the Balance ...", p.85.

Fig.6: Donga (Stick Fighting Contests), Domestic Violence among the Surma



Source: Photo by Eric Lafforgue

The second aspect of ritual enactment of violence within the Surma was the procedure of homicide compensation (*Ligin*). When an internal homicide has occurred, it is usually resolved through negotiation based on the fixation of a compensation sum and the agreement

to hand over a young girl to the victim's group by the perpetrator. Again, members of the two conflicting lineage must also be purified with the blood of a sheep. This is done during the ritual killing of livestock (*Nitha*). Thirdly, before going on raid, the warrior age-grade of the Surma society must receive the blessings of the *Komoru* for their success through the ritual of *Dirâm* (blessing of the raiders).¹⁸⁸ All these show how the social systems of the Surma contained the magnitude of internal violence in the past.

However, there was a changing pattern of domesticated violent practices among the Surma since the last three decades. According to informants, this was due to the wider access to modern weapons since the 1980s. This re-enforced the existing violent behaviors of the Surma. Unlike the past, the younger generations of the Surma people are no longer abided by their own social institutions which previously contained violent behaviors. Informants narrate that the “Surma changed from bad to worse”. Their killing habit had increased dramatically not only against the neighboring peoples but also against their own community. The wider access to automatic weapons degraded the socio-cultural values that contained the effects of violence in the Surma society.¹⁸⁹

The increasing access to automatic rifles among the younger generation of the Surma since the last three decades led to the erosion of the earlier socio-cultural institutions in many aspects. First, the role of the *Komoru* as ritual chiefs of the Surma has been getting diminished. Their position is superseded by the village head men's, the *Gulsa*, who had inferior position in the past. Also, the numbers of the *Komoru* was reduced from three to

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp.86-87.

¹⁸⁹ Informants: Kasa Kâbädä, Anyab Bâyitu and Bargada Olisuri.

one.¹⁹⁰ Second, after the proliferation of automatic rifles, there was a crisis in the age-grade systems of the Surma. There was a shift of power from that of the junior elders (*Rora*) to the grade of the unmarried young men, the so-called ‘warriors’ (*Tagay*) due to their increasing access to weapons. Thus, the customary authority of the reigning age-grade of elders has been substituted by that of young men and the rules on the battlefield, which customarily controlled the intensity of violence, have now deteriorated under the lead of violent youth.¹⁹¹

Consequently, though the socio-cultural values of the Surma by its nature promote individualism and assertive behavior, it was reinforced further by the proliferation of weapons that brought an ultimate disintegration of social cohesion within the society. Inter-ethnic violence with the neighboring peoples was not the source of cooperation and unity within the Surma society. In contrary, it further widens the existing division within the society like between the Trimaga and Chai sub sections. Also, the Surma men’s are always in conflict with each other over different causes like women, the division of cattle acquired from raiding, scoring disputes during stick fighting contests and homicide compensation issues.¹⁹² In fact, the killing of others and looting property from other groups has still been considered as a normal activity among the Surma society.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Bargada Olisuri and Belogidangi Midireole; Abbink, “Authority and leadership...”,p.334.

¹⁹¹ Abbink, “Restoring the balance...”, p.93 ;Toru Sagawa , “Automatic Rifles and Social Order amongst the Daasanatch of Conflict Ridden East Africa” , *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (White Horse Press ,2010), p.88.

¹⁹² Abbink,” Conflict and Social Change.....” , p.31.

¹⁹³ MWAO, Folder No.9, File No, 93, A Letter from Mähäl Maji *Wäräda* to Maji *Awraja* Adiminstrative Office, Ref. No, 3/905/74, 1974 E.C, p.1. (See appendix 1-I for detail).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. PROTRACTED CONFLICTS SINCE 1980 AND TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM

4.1. Factors for the Escalation of the Conflicts

4.1.1. Economic Causes of the Conflict

While the traditional pattern of more or less uneasy affiliation cannot be glorified, there has been an escalation of inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and their neighbors since 1980. The major factor for the intensification of the conflicts was the lifting of the border guard force of Ethiopia stationed in the Surma area along the official border with Sudan in 1980 due to the shortage of supply provisions.¹⁹⁴ But, there were also other basic socio-economic and political developments in the area that contributed directly or indirectly to the exacerbation of the conflicts.

Economically, drought, famine, cattle diseases and resource competition had been the basic causes of inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and their neighbors since the earlier times. Regarding this, sources indicate that one of the major historical factors that shaped the nature of inter-ethnic relation in southwest Ethiopia in general and Maji area in particular was the outbreak of different plagues in late nineteenth century. Indeed, it affected many areas of the horn of Africa.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Informants: Aniyab Bāyitu, Bālay Bogalā and Bākālā Lāma.

¹⁹⁵ Gebre-hawariya, p.26.

For instance, the 1890s was a catastrophic period in East Africa, including the lower Omo Valley. Epidemic diseases specifically render pest, human sleeping sickness and smallpox devastated people and cattle all over the region. These also impacted ethnic interaction due to large scale population mobility induced by the disasters. The southward expansion of the imperial state under Emperor Menelik II added to the chaos in the lower Omo.¹⁹⁶ Particularly, the 1889 render pest plague which is commonly referred as “a cruel day” (*Kefu qen*) in modern history of Ethiopia as the pathogen killed a huge number of animals and people, and accompanied by a major famine. Supporting this idea, Getnet argued that the pandemic had also a long term impact on the farmers’ decision making, recovery rates and livestock production. As a result of the impact of the epidemic, many people were forced to pack up and go to places where they thought less affected by the problem and there was a better chance of survival.¹⁹⁷

Likewise, the cattle epidemics of the late nineteenth century greatly affected the pastoralist of the Omo valley. The local livestock population of the area was decimated because of the cattle pathogen which forced the inhabitants to move out of the valley in search of food and new hospitable environment to replenish the lost cattle population.¹⁹⁸ This population mobility induced by the disaster again resulted in inter- ethnic conflict in the area. The pastoralists’ effort to penetrate the new areas was not peaceful rather a numbers of battles

¹⁹⁶ David Turton, "Exploration in the Lower Omo Valley of Southwestern Ethiopia between 1890 and 1910." In *L'Africa ai Tempi di Daniele Comboni: Atti Del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Africani*, ed. M. Caravaglios (Rome: Istituto Italo Africano e Missionari Comboniani, 1981), P.4.

¹⁹⁷ Getnet Bekelle, “Contingent Variables and Discerning Farmers: Marginalizing Cattle in Ethiopia’s Historically Crop-Livestock Integrated Agriculture (1840-1941)”, *North East African Studies*, Volume 9, Number 2, (Michigan State University Press, 2002), pp.90-91.

¹⁹⁸ Gebrehawaria , p.26.

were fought over the control of lands. The Shako and Bench came to see the Me'en as their arch-enemies because of this development.¹⁹⁹

Also, during that large scale population expansions, the Surma, Me'en and Dizi people involved in a serious competition to occupy the suitable highland areas. But the Dizi were successful in retaining the highland areas. Finally, the other pastoralist peoples of area such as the Surma and Me'en were forced to dwell in the inhospitable hot climate in the foothills of Maji plateau. Even though the Dizi faced frequent raids from these low land pastoralists, particularly the Suri, they were able to maintain their territorial integrity for a long period of time. Thereafter, the Dizi had, however, developed a suspicious behavior toward the Surma and Me'en because of the unprecedented raid and attack of the latter on the former.²⁰⁰

In similar vein, the heightened inter-ethnic conflicts in the area since the last four decades had been partly the continuation of such historical process of competitions for agro-ecological niches among the various ethnic groups. Since the 1960s, the subsistence base of the Surma had been frequently threatened by drought, famine and cattle diseases that necessitate constant expansion to the neighboring areas for survival. In this regard archival sources insights:

በማጂ አውራጃ በትርማ ጥድ ወረዳ ነዋሪ የሆኑ የሱርማ ጎሳዎች በ 19 55፣1956 እና 1966 ዓ.ም በአከባቢያቸው በደረሰው ድርቅ እና ድርቁን ተከትሎ በመጣው የከብት በሽታ ዋና መተዳደሪያቸው የሆነው ከብት ስላለቀባቸው ከፋ ያለ ችግር ላይ ስለወደቁ፣ የሚበሉትን አጥተው የዱር አራዊት

¹⁹⁹ Hailu, p.18.

²⁰⁰ Gebre-Hawaria,p.26.

እያሳደዱ በመግደል እና የእንጨት ፍሬም እየለቀሙ በሙብላት ችግሩን ለመቋቋም ስላልቻሉ ከቦታ ቦታ በመዘዎወር እርሻ መለማመድ ጀምረዋል።²⁰¹

The Surma people who live in Tirma-Tid *Wäräda* of Maji *Awraja* faced a great crisis as they lost their cattle which is their main subsistence base due to the occurrence of drought and cattle diseases in their environment in 1955, 1956 and 1966 E.C. They lost food and as they failed to cope up with the crisis through the intensification of hunting and gathering, they began to practice plowing by moving from one area to other.

Consequently, the effort to enter the new hospitable environment had been the source of contention with the neighboring peoples. The Surma clashed with the Dizi as well as the Toposa of South Sudan due to the competition for new agro-ecological niches driven by the effect of such disaster. It reached its climax with the drought and famine of 1984/85, which was described as the worst of all other catastrophes in the history of the people. It resulted in the loss of many lives and forced the Survivors to expand into many Dizi areas as well as towards Boma plateau of Sudan, triggering many incidents of skirmish with the inhabitants of the area.²⁰² Not only occupying new lands from their neighbors, the Surma people also began to plunder the property of the neighboring peoples to survive the effects of the drought.²⁰³

Indeed, the Surma people were also the victim of large scale spiral population movements in the region with the prospect of controlling new agro-ecological niches. Since the 1980s, the Surma encroach to the Dizi territory partly because they were themselves suffering pressure from the rapid north ward expansion by the Nyangatom in their lower Kibbish area, which was formerly owned by the Surma. Also, the Nyangatom are being pushed in the same direction mainly by Kenya based Turkana with the occasional support of Kenyan government forces. Yet, another tribal group, the Toposa, culturally and linguistically very similar to the

²⁰¹ BMZAO, no Folder No, no File No, A Letter from Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji *Awraja* Adminstrsive Office to Colonel Kassayä Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kiflä Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.1.

²⁰² Informants: Aniyab Bäyitu, Tädäsä Niyang and Bälay Bogalä.

²⁰³ Informants: Bäqälä Läma, Tilahun Täfära and Getachäw Majigäž.

Nyangatom, also encroach the Surma territory from the southwest.²⁰⁴ Turton described the same correlation among the Mursi in that at the same time drought affected their land, they entered in to conflict with their northern neighbors, the Bodi, with who they had been in friendly relations sine 1950s.²⁰⁵

Another economic reason for the conflict between the Surma and their neighbors since the 1980s was competition for controlling gold mining fields. Traditional gold mining sites are available in the neighboring *Wärädas* of Surma, Bero, Dizi and Dimma. Particularly, Dimma, which is administratively found within the neighboring Gambela region and lies on the way to Surma had been the center of popular interactions attracted by the gold resource of its surrounding fields. The Surma people also exchange gold and other goods with other ethnic groups in this small town.²⁰⁶ But, there had been incidences of conflict due to competition over gold mining fields. While they were in conflict with the Nyangatom and the Toposa (in Sudan) in the mid of 1980s for ecological reasons, the Surma were also in conflict with their northern neighbors, the Anuak people, due to competition over controlling gold mining sites in the area.²⁰⁷ Thus, the intensified conflicts between the Surma and their neighbors for the last three decades had their own impetus from different economic factors.

4.1.2 The Impacts of Sudanese Civil Wars and Border Openness

Political developments in the neighboring Sudan (the Sudanese civil war) had also its own tremendous effect in the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflicts in this frontier area of Ethiopia.

²⁰⁴ Informants: Aniyab Bäyitu, Tädäsä Niyang and Bälay Bogalä; Gebre-hawariya, p.115.

²⁰⁵ Turton, "Pastoral Livelihood in Danger...", p 13.

²⁰⁶ Mesfin Degu, "Assessment of Socio-Cultural Risks in Relation to HIV Transmission in Pastoralist Community of Surma *Woreda*, SNNPR, Ethiopia" MA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, Department of Public Health, 2006), P.8.

²⁰⁷ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Aniyab Bäyitu and Bardula Lämudigir.

The Sudanese civil war contributed to the loose administration of the border areas and troubled the frontier communities of Southwestern Ethiopia. During the time, the rebel groups in South Sudan were strongly backed by the *Derg* regime of Ethiopia which allowed them to use Gambella area as their military base. However, the presence of the SPLA (Sudanese People Liberation Army) in the region troubled the stability of inter-ethnic relation in this remote border land of Ethiopia.²⁰⁸ The rebel groups had problematic relations with the indigenous Anuak people.²⁰⁹ In fact, there were also some Sudanese refugees who settled in Dimma area (very close to the Surma land).²¹⁰

The political development in the neighboring Sudan contributed its own role in the intensification of the conflict between Surma and the neighboring peoples in many aspects. First, the growth of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) hastened the spread of illegal arms trade in the Surma area which was used to accelerate inter-tribal ridings. The Surma exchanged gold for medium range refills with the SPLA. This increased the power of the Surma over other peoples of the Maji area.²¹¹ Even the Surma began to deal with minor individual quarrels in some public places with gun. As a result of the disastrous impact of fire power, minor individual disputes turns easily in to full-fledged conflicts.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Alexander Meckelburg, "Changing Ethnic Relations: A Preliminary Investigation of Gambella, Southwest Ethiopia", *Kolner Afrikawissenschaftlichen Nachwuchstagung* (2005), pp.9-10; Gebrehawariya Amare and Tamagn Woyesa, "Retrospect of Conflict and Resolution in Yeki Woreda, SNNPRS: A Historical Perspective", A Research Paper (Submitted to Mizan Tepi University Research Directorate, 2017), p.80.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Anyab Bäyitu and Bartu Oligidangi; Wendy James, "No Place to Hide: Flag Waving on the Western Frontier", In: Donald Donham and *etals* (eds), *Re -Mapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After* (, Oxford Jems Curvey Ltd., 2002).

²¹¹ Informants: Anyab Bäyitu, Bälay Bogalä and Dolite Wolkoro.

²¹² *Ibid*; Gebre Hawariya, p.115

Second, the civil war in Sudan which brought population displacement in the area also forced the Toposa of Sudan to encroach into the Surma land from the western direction. Thus, the Surma lost their grazing lands, ritual sites and burial places. The raiding challenged the physical and cultural survival of the Surma, hence had become a source of conflict with the Toposa.²¹³ Third, the settlement of the Sudanese refugees in the south-west Ethiopia in the 1980s by itself had also its own impact on the instability of the area. This was due to the fact that not all the refugee population was civilians and hence there was regular trouble with the indigenous inhabitants of the area such as the Anuak and Surma.²¹⁴

Moreover, informants recount that the porousness of the border between Ethiopia and Sudan as well as Kenya led to the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. The Ethiopian armed force stationed in the area since the time of Haile Selassie was lifted in the final years of Mengistu's regime. Then, the official border of the two countries became open.²¹⁵ The openness of the border enabled some in the borderland communities to involve in different illegal activities, including in intergroup ridings between frontier communities of Sudan and Ethiopia. Both the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan were reluctant to device border policies and to control illegal movement of people across the official border.²¹⁶

²¹³ Abbink, "Restoring the Balance.....", p.93.

²¹⁴ NALA, Folder No.17.1.8.05, File No.17.1.8.05.02, A Letter from Kābādā Gurum, Governor of Kefa *Kiflā Hagār* to the Ministry of Interior, *Derg*, 1979 E.C (see appendix 1-J for detail information).

²¹⁵ Informants: Anyab Bāyitu, Barkomuru Otodu and Markos Bogalä.

²¹⁶ Tasew Gashaw, "Cross-Border Intergroup Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Ethiopia-South Sudan Borderland People", A Research Paper No. 19 (Wilson Center Africa Program, 2017), pp.3-4; Gebrehawariya and Tamagn, p.77.

Consequently, the openness of the official border instigated the Sudanese pastoralists to encroach in to the areas controlled by the Surma, frequently generating conflicts between them. In this regard archival source insights: “የሱዳን ቡሜዎች ለዘጠኝ አመታት በማጂ አውራጃ በመግባት በሱርማዎች ላይ የነፋስ ግድያና ከብት ዘረፋ አካሂደዋል።”²¹⁷ (By infiltrating in to Maji *Awraja*, the Sudanese Bume carried out killing and cattle rustling on Surma people for nine years). Indeed, the intrusion of the Sudanese Toposa in to the Surma land had also a cyclical effect of generating conflicts between the Surma and their closest Ethiopian neighbors like the Me'en and Dizi people. This was due to the fact that failing to withstand the pressure from the Toposa of Sudan; the Surma began to expand into some areas that were inhabited by the Me'en and Dizi peoples. The computing result was thus of a cyclical development in a way that the infiltration of Toposa affected the Surma pastoralists who in turn tried to compensate what they have lost from their own Ethiopian closest neighbors such as the Me'en and Dizi.²¹⁸

Particularly, this displaced aggression of the Surma people was most of the time directed against the settled agriculturalist Dizi people, who are regarded as their ‘defense less wife’, an analogical expression with the role of wife as a passive obedient of her husband will in the traditional patriarchal society. It has been said that whenever the Surma are looted of their cattle by their most powerful neighbors like the Nyanagtom and Toposa, they raid the Dizi to

²¹⁷ NALA, Folder No.17.1.8.05, File No.17.1.8.05.02, A Letter from Kābādā Gurum, Governor of Kefa *KiflāHagārto* to the Ministry of Interior, *Derg*, 1979 E.C.

²¹⁸ Sisay Gebre-Egziabher, “What Role Should Civil Society Organizations Play to Address Ethnic Conflicts in Ethiopia”: The Challenges and Opportunities for Peace and Development in Ethiopia and North Africa, International conference on Ethiopian Development Studies (Haworth College of Business, West Michigan University, Kalamozoo, USA, 2007) p.10; Ayele Tariku, p.134; Informants: Wāldā-Maryam Gābrāselasie, Worku Bāyānā and Wolkoro Sebakoro.

compensate the lost cattle.²¹⁹ Though government authorities continuously urged the Surma to withdraw from the areas that they took from the Dizi and Me'en, the Surma strongly resisted it. Their justification was that they had been exposed to raids by the peoples from the Sudan. As the government failed to address the illegal infiltration of the borderland people, the case of the Surma and their neighbors is gaining momentum from time to time.²²⁰

4.1.3. The Proliferation of Small Arms and its Role in Shaping the Conflict

As we have discussed in the above pages, the major historical factor for the beginning of arm proliferation in the area was the practice of illicit arm trade in this frontier area. It was traced back to the nineteenth century. Also, its effect in changing the balance of power among the various ethno- regional groups along the borders of Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya began to be felt soon. Despite of this fact, however, informants recounts that the heavy hand of the proliferation of arms in changing the balance of power and intensifying inter-ethnic conflicts particularly between the Surma and their neighbors began to be felt strongly after the 1980s. All the pastoralist peoples of the area including the Nyangatom, Surma, Mursi and Me'en people tried to have access to these weapons after this time.²²¹

The increasing access of the pastoralist groups to automatic weapons led to the militarization of the groups and dramatically changed the traditional pattern of raiding. It has been said that it is a must for the pastoralists to arm themselves as much as possible in order to assure their survival as a group. For instance, the Surma described the necessity of weapons to the extent

²¹⁹ *Ibid*; Informants: Getachew Majigäzhi, Sanbot Tarm Kiyaz and Bardula Lämudigir.

²²⁰ *Ibid*.

²²¹ Informants: Bälay Bogalä , Burkutul Gurniyo and Täka Mamo

of “gun is the governor”.²²² The Surma are normally peaceful people but their wider access to weapons has enabled them to adopt self-destructive behavior. The ethnic group claim to use these guns to defend themselves from their traditional enemies and to intensify their traditional raiding practice. The regional power balance in the area was highly determined by the size and quality of armament that a certain group possesses.²²³

Now, it is imperative to analyze how the Surma and their neighbors got access to these weapons and how it leads to the transformation of conflicts in the area since 1980s. In this regard, the first of the Surma neighbors to have a wider access to these weapons were the Nyangatom.²²⁴ According to Mburu, in the 1970s, the less armed Nyangatom were under persistent attacks from their pastoral neighbors like the Dassanetch and they were reported to have lost about ten percent of their population as a result of the attacks. The crisis forced the Nyangatom to purchase new weapons for self-protection in the 1980s. They purchased enormous quantities of Kalashnikov assault rifles from diverse sources through barter where one rifle was then exchanged for four to seven heads of cattle.²²⁵ Their main suppliers were the Toposa who were in turn equipped by the government of Sudan as people’s militia to subvert the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern part of the country. Also, the Nyangatom got the supply of these weapons from Ethiopian arms traders that transacted on willing-buyer-willing-seller basis. The increased access to these modern weapons enabled the Nyangatom to defend themselves against their traditional enemies.²²⁶

²²² Informants: Getachew Majigäž, Kassa Käbädä and Bargada Olisuri.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Tadäsä Niyang and Bardula Lämudigir.

²²⁵ Mburu, P.159.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

In fact, the newly acquired weapon was not only used by the Nyangatom for self-defense but also to intensify their traditional raiding practice as the case of their conflict with the Surma reveals. Until the 1980s, the Surma dominated the Nyangatom, but after they purchased large quantities of modern automatic rifles the Nyangatom in alliance with the Toposa (who are culturally and linguistically similar to them) launched a punitive raiding and became victors against the Surma.²²⁷ The main reason for their defeat is that the Surma were unable to obtain new automatic rifles that the Nyangatom had acquired.²²⁸ Due to the defeat by the attacks of the Nyangatom between 1984 and 1986, the Surma were displaced from their ancestral lands around Mount Naita and settled in the lower part of the Maji highlands. In fact, using recently acquired Kalashnikov automatic rifles, the Nyangatom also launched a massive attack on the Mursi people (culturally similar with the Surma), massacring five hundred people and controlling many areas.²²⁹

Nevertheless, the Surma succeeded to arm themselves in a few years with automatic weapons. The chief suppliers of weapons to the Surma during that time were their northern neighbors the Annuak people, who had in turn acquired them from the SPLA army.²³⁰ The illegal arm trade of the Anuak in different areas of Maji *Awuraja* troubled the security situation in the area. In this regard archival sources illustrate that:

እንደሚታወቀው የማጂ አውራጃ ጠረፍ አከባቢ እንደመሆኑ መጠን የፀጥታው ችግር የጎላ በመሆኑ ያንኑ ያህል ከፍተኛ ጥበቃ እና ክትትል የሚሰፈልገው ነው። ይሁንና ይህን መሰሉን ህገ-ወጥ የመሳሪያ ንግድ ለመቆጣጠር ከፍተኛ ጥረት ቢደረግም ከክፍል ሀገራቹህ ይህንኑ ተግባር ለማከናወን

²²⁷ Abbink, "Violence and Political Disourse.....", p.333.

²²⁸ Takeshi Fujimoto, "Armed Herders, Unarmed Farmers, and the State: An Analysis of Violent Conflicts in the Middle Omo Valley with Reference to the Cases in Malo, Southwest Ethiopia", *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies* 13:63-77 (2009), p.73; Informants: Aniyab Bäyitu, Bäqälä Läma and Bardula Lämudigir.

²²⁹ Turton, "Pastoral Livelihood in Danger.....", p 13.

²³⁰ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Tamänä Karba and Tadäsä Niyang

ወደ አውራጃው እየተሻሻለው የሚገቡ የአኝዋክ ጎሳዎች ቁጥር እየጨመረ በመሃዱ የፀጥታውን ችግር አጉልቶታል።²³¹

As Maji Awraja had been a frontier area, the security problem is apparent and as such needs a high protection and follow-up. Yet, though there was a strong effort to check the illegal arm trade, the number of the Anuaks from the province [Illubabor *Kiflä Hagär*] infiltrating to the Awraja [Maji Awraja] to conduct the activity is increasing, augmenting the security problem.

Consequently, the central government was also reported to have commanded the concerned Illubabor *Kiflä Hagär* Administrative Office to take immediate action against the illegal arm trade activity of the Anuaks.²³² The principal medium of exchange used in these arm trade was gold, which the Surma gained by panning in the Akobbo area.²³³ Moreover, the Surma brought weapons from markets in Boma on the border of Kenya.²³⁴ Thus, increasing access to weapon enabled the Surma to achieve a new position of power in the area.

Indeed, the main reason for the increasing access to fire arms and new position of power of the Surma in the 1980s was their involvement in the exploitation of gold in Dimma area. Particularly, the Surma intensify the gold mining activity when their means of subsistence is threatened by disasters such as drought.²³⁵ The income from gold sale was not only used to buy tools, food and cattle but also used to buy Kalashnikovs from the Anuaks'. Thus, gold

²³¹ NALA, Folder No.17.1.8.05, File No, 17.1.8.05.02, A Letter from Kābādä Gurum, Chief Adiminstrator of Kefa *Kiflä Hagär* to Illubabor *Kiflä Hagär* Adiminstrative Office, Ref.No.መሳሪ/876/80,1980 E.C.

²³² NALA Folder No.17.1.8.05,File No,17.1.8.05.02,A Letter from Fākadu Dämsie,Head of Commission for Provincial Affairs to Illubabor *Kiflä Hagär* Adiminstrative Office,1980 E.C(see appendix 1-K for detail)

²³³ Informants: Bälay Bogalä, Aniyab Bāyitu and Barkutul Guniyo.

²³⁴ Hailu, p.123.

²³⁵ BMZAO, no Folder No,no File No, A Letter from Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji Awraja Adminstrstive Office to Colonel Kassayä Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kiflä Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.1.

Consequently, though the Nyangatom are the heavily armed and dominant ethnic group in the lower Omo valley,²⁴¹ the Surma people particularly intend to use the newly acquired weapons against the former foes to whom the latter lost their ancestral lands around Mount Shulugui.²⁴² The deep sentiment of the Surma to challenge the Nyangatom by using the newly acquired weapons can be further attested from the speech delivered in the 1991 by an influential elder at a public meeting of the Surma people, before one of their major raids on the Nyangatom. The quote below, therefore, succinctly depicts the sentiment of the Surma to use the newly acquired guns to reclaim their ancestral land from the Nyangatom.

Over there in the fog, we see it, Shulugui. With our newly acquired guns we will now go there. Why do we only sit here and drink *gesso* (a light alcoholic sorghum beer). Why are we getting slow and complacent? Don't think about fighting, killing and getting killed and suffering, just go there! I will go; I will really like to go. Don't fight with the Su (the Dizi), only with the Bume (Nyangatom). Shulugui: it's not theirs, it's ours!' Are our guns only to be used for shooting buffaloes? No, isn't it for the fight for Shulugui? Go tomorrow; go to fight in our country. (.....)'Were our fathers here? Did they live here? Don't you have guns? We bought new guns and bullets, we have enough. We will go to clean our area, our country. It should be like this; it's right. (.....)Yesterday we only had Minishir rifles. Now we have acquired real ones. We have no other task [than to fight at Shulugui,]; we were there in the past. Don't you have force, or strength to fight? So far, we have only talked too much about all this. Our women and children were killed, our cattle was stolen. If you don't act, you have no fighting spirit, no value. Our real place, our homeland, is there [the speaker pointing south].²⁴³

Thus, it is possible to argue that proliferation of weapon was one of the main factors for the intensification of inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and the neighboring peoples particularly since 1980s. But there were also different cultural elements of the Surma and the neighboring peoples that contributed for the intensification of inter-ethnic violence in the area as discussed in the next section.

²⁴¹ Hiroshi Matsuda, "Political Visibility and Automatic Rifles: The Muguji in the 1990s", in Donald Donham and *etals* (eds.), *Re –Mapping Ethiopia: Socialism and after*, (Oxford: Jems Curvey Ltd., 2002), P.176.

²⁴² Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Barkutul Gurniyaro and Barkoi Olisurba.

²⁴³ Abbink, "Violence and Political Disourse.....", pp.321-322.

4.1.4 The Impact of Culture on the Conflict

Some cultural aspects of the pastoralist people were also the causes for the exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. One such common cultural denominator of pastoralist group in the lower Omo valley was/is the culture of social prestige and retaliation. Conflicts usually result in the loss of human lives, damage to property and disruption of livelihood activities. The long-standing culture of retaliation had a compounding effect and sustains conflict cycles. The inability to revenge back an attack was considered as humiliation among the pastoralists groups of the area. Retaliatory measures are highly valued and were even rewarded by the community. The feeling of humiliation and the consequent avenging actions are generally regarded as shared responsibilities of the whole member of a certain ethnic group.²⁴⁴

Similarly, the Surma's perception towards violence is beyond a means of just self- defense. Violent behavior is tied in to various socio-cultural aspects of Surma life, into essences of masculinity or social personality, and in general in a ritually aspect of what is called reproductive success: the expansion of groups and of family and offspring. For people outside the ethnic group, this perception is echoed in many cultural symbols which pervade particularly the Chai section of the Surma culture. Even the group name 'Chai' had the meaning that "we revenge, we pay (them) back".²⁴⁵ This had the effect of exacerbating the conflicts between the Surma and their neighbors. For instance, though the main factor for the

²⁴⁴ Yohannes Gebre Michael and *etal*, "Addressing Pastoralist Conflict in Ethiopia: The Case of the Kuraz and Hamer Sub-districts of South Omo Zone", A Report Paper, Africa Peace Forum, *Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association* (Interafrica Group: Saferworld, 2005), p.17.

²⁴⁵ Abbink, "Restoring the balance..." , p. 82.

conflict between the Surma and the Nyangatom was the deprivation of the former by the latter from its previous agro-ecological niches, the culture of retaliations sustained the cycle of conflict between the two ethnic groups.²⁴⁶

The pastoralist peoples of the area generally attach socio-cultural values to violent performances. An individual who killed from the traditional enemy group is prized and rewarded by the society. As part of rewarding and honoring best war actor who has killed a member of another ethnic group, ritual ceremonies are held during which his performance is publically recognized, a cultural practice that lifts his position in the society and expand his chances for getting best wife.²⁴⁷ As a symbol of his privileged status because of his deeds in combat, decoration marks are tattooed on easily visible parts of the body (on the chest, above the shoulder or on the back). The numbers of decoration marks and level of social prestige accorded is also proportional to the number of people killed by the individual. The social prestige accorded to the 'hero' is also shared by all members of his family. For instance, his wife must not wait her turn in accessing water points or privileged status in the occasions of different ceremonies performed by the entire members of the group.²⁴⁸

The practice of putting decoration marks on the parts of the body as means of honoring best war actors particularly holds to the culture of the Surma. The typical example in this regard was the killing of a Nyangatom allowed a Surma hero to put the respected *rido* tattoo on his arm. The Surma highly respect such heroes and even girls have prize songs appreciating the

²⁴⁶ Yntiso Gebre, "Ethnic Boundary Making in East Africa: Rigidity and Flexibility among the Nyangatom People", *African Study Monographs*, 37, 4 (2016), pp.158-159.

²⁴⁷ Yohannes and *etal*, p.19.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

men who showed his braveness by killing his counterpart male.²⁴⁹ In this regard archival sources attested that “ነፋስ ግድያንና ከብት ዝርፊያን [ሱርማዎች] እንደ ጀግንነት ይቆጥራሉ። ሰዉ የገደለ ከጀርባው የጀግንነት ምልክት ይደረግለታል፣ጥሩ ሚስት መርጦ ያገባል። በህይወት ሳለ አንድ እንኳን ሰው ያልገደለ በወጉ አይቀበርም።”²⁵⁰ (They [the Surma] consider the act of killing and cattle rustling as a sign of bravery. Decoration mark will be made on the back of the individual who killed a man. He could marry the best wife. For an individual who never killed a man throughout his life time, there would be no proper funeral rite up on his death).

However, as informants narrate this violent culture of the Surma could not allow conflict for no reason. The killing must be directed against their purported enemies such as the Nyangatom. Killing innocent individual from ethnic group with whom the Surma had intimate relation such as the Mursi was not acceptable by the society.²⁵¹ This has been further attested by archival source as it states that: “ይህ ሁሉ ወንጀልና ፀብ የሚፈጠረው የጎሳ ግጭት በለባቸው መካከል እንጅ በመንግስት ሰራተኛው እና ከሚጣሉት ጎሳ ውጭ የሆነ ሰው ላይ አጋጣሚ ምክኒያት ከሌለ በቀር ወንጀል አይፈፀምም፣ አይጣሉም።”²⁵² (All these killings and violence occurs only between ethnic groups who had been at conflict. Unless there was exceptional case, they could not offend the government employees and members outside of their perceived enemy groups).

The people are also very proud of their way of life and identity. The Surma have strong self-image of superiority against their neighbors like the Nyangatom, the Dizi and the northerners

²⁴⁹ Adinew, p. 104.

²⁵⁰ BMZAO, no Folder No, no File No, A Letter from Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji *Awraja* Adminstrstive Office to Colonel Kassayä Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kiflä Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.3.

²⁵¹ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Nagoldi Elegolegn and Narogi Olikibo.

²⁵² BMZAO, no Folder No, no File No, A Letter from Mamo Dubalä, Governor of Maji *Awraja* Adminstrstive Office to Colonel Kassayä Mandäfro, Governor of Kafa *Kiflä Hagär*, 1968 E.C, p.3.

who are called "*Golach*". Particularly, they are very proud of their aesthetic practices like body decoration and their moral imagination, which define a clear cultural boundary with their neighbors. A violent imagination is part of Suri life, not necessarily because they are in comparison to others, a violently disposed people, but because of a socio-cultural response, codified in their culture, to their position as a herding people in a vulnerable environment both with regard to natural and human conditions. As a pastoral people with a mobile way of life, a decentralized social organization, and a vigorous commitment to livestock as the crucial store of wealth and a means of forging social relationships, there is an ethic of independence and assertiveness, both among men and women.²⁵³

Moreover, the two overlapping traditional practices (cattle rustling and dowry payments) of the pastoralist people were another factor for inter-ethnic conflict in the area. Informants noted that cattle rustling had been the main cause for the conflict between the Surma and their neighbors. Like any other violent behaviors of the Surma, cattle rustling had also been regarded as a normal course of life and as a short cut way to accumulate wealth among the Surma and their pastoralist neighbors like the Nyangatom, Mursi and the Toposa.²⁵⁴ This practice usually results in conflicts. For instance, the Nyangatom regard the neighboring nomadic peoples such as the Surma, Daassanech and Turkana as their "traditional enemies" due to their frequent conflicts with these groups typically brought by the practice of cattle rustling.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Abbink, "Violence and Political Disourse.....", p.328.

²⁵⁴ Informants: Anyab Bäyitu, Kasa Kābādā and Abābā Jāmu.

²⁵⁵ Fekadu Mulugeta, "Statehood, Small Arms and Security Governance in Southwest Ethiopia: The Need for an African-Centred Perspective by Mercy", In: Sunday Okello and Mesfin Gebremichael (eds.), *African-Centred Solutions Building Peace and Security in Africa*, (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, 2016), P.117.

Indeed, the most prized possession of the pastoralist people in this area is cattle. Mainly, the Surma people attach great socio-cultural values to cattle besides its economic value. The size of cattle herd that an individual possesses determines his position in the society. Cattle are also important in different vital events like ritual ceremonies, funeral rites, wedding ceremonies and homicide compensation.²⁵⁶ Therefore, under their mode of subsistence based on pastoralism and socio-cultural system that greatly value cattle, cattle rustling had become an accepted short cut way to accumulate wealth and to achieve prestige in the society.²⁵⁷

Besides, cattle rustling practice was twisted with the culture of dowry payment to intensify inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. Dowry (gift) for marriage is/was paid in-kind (cattle). The intensification of cattle rustling in the last few decades had been associated with the increasing emphasis on bride wealth system among the Surma. There has been a cultural transformation in the bride wealth system due to the fact that arms entered the system as part of the payment (in addition to cattle) and the amount of the dowry payment increased.²⁵⁸ According to the marriage practice of the Surma, young men's are required to arrange large number of cattle for bride wealth, which is at a competitive base, to marry their chosen wives. Typically, a Surma young man needs to pay at least thirty cattle and one weapon as bride wealth to marry a wife. Demanding such gifts is often beyond the capacity of the young and his family that instigates them to raid and loot cattle from their neighbors notably Nyangatom, Toposa, Me'en and Dizi, hence frequently generating conflict between them.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Barkomuru Otodu and Anyab Bäyitu.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Informants: Nagoldi Elegolegn, Anyab Bäyitu and Bardula Lämudigir.

²⁵⁹ Informants: Narogi Olikibo, Anyab Bäyitu, Barkomuru Otodu and Barkule Olkori; Ayele, p.135; Adinew, p. 104.

4.2. Socio-Economic Impacts of the conflicts

Inter-ethnic Conflicts have a wide range of consequences. Generally, the end result of inter-ethnic conflict is loss of human lives, destruction of property, forceful expansion to others 'territories for pasture and water access, spread of cattle epidemics, food insecurity and dependency on aid. Even after the conflict is over, the interaction between the groups involved remains tense, which sustains conflict cycles. Inter-ethnic violence confines free movement or other sorts of interactions, and consequently deters the wise use of scarce resources.²⁶⁰

In similar vein, the frequent inter-ethnic conflict had multifaceted impacts on the socio-economic progress of the Surma and the neighboring peoples. Firstly, the hitherto inter-tribal raiding practice in the area resulted in alarming increase in the intensity of internal population displacement. For instance, as a result of their conflict with the Nyangatom, the Surma were forced to leave many of their lands. In 1986-87 the pressure from the Nyangatom lastly forced the Surma to dwell in their present settlement in the bottom of Maji highlands. They feel as living in exile from their ancestral land and their most important ritual place around Shulugui (Mount Naita).²⁶¹ Also, informants recount that the frequent attack of the Surma on the neighboring Me'en and Dizi people had been a cause of wide spread sense of insecurity, terror and forced displacement of peoples in the area.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Yohannes *etal*, p.24.

²⁶¹ Abbink, "Conflict and Social Change.....",pp. 28-29.

²⁶² Informants: Aniyab Băyitu, Bălay Bogală and Kasa Kăbădă.

Secondly, inter-ethnic conflict affected tourism development in the area in different aspects. First, the internal displacement of peoples induced by inter-ethnic conflicts in the area was reported to have been seriously affecting biodiversity and protected parks in the area. For instance, the Mursi withdrew to Mago National Park as a result of the attacks by the Nyangatom in the 1980s. After they occupied this protected area, the Mursi reportedly involved in hunting and agriculture hence disrupting the biodiversity of the protected zone.²⁶³ Second, the absence of stability in the area affected tourist in-flow even though the region has become a popular destination for rich explorer-tourists since 1980s²⁶⁴ looking for attractive, original and primordial African people in non-industrial, natural scenery.²⁶⁵ Informants underscore that the hitherto security problem affected the inflow of both domestic and international tourists to the area due to the fear of being robbed while visiting or traveling. Thus, inter-ethnic conflicts limited the opportunities to generate income which could be utilized to improve socio-economic developments in the area.²⁶⁶

Thirdly, the frequent inter-ethnic tension and conflict increased the vulnerability of the people to famine. Typically, the effect of the 1984-85 famines which seriously affected the Surma was worsened due to their conflict with the Nyangatom. The conflict widened the magnitude of the effect of the famine because it undermined the traditional drought coping systems of the Surma such as the sale of cattle, intensification of hunting and gathering, and

²⁶³ Michael J. Jacobs and Catherine A. Schloeder, *Impacts of Conflict on Biodiversity and Protected Areas in Ethiopia*, (Washington, D.C: Grammarians, Inc., 2001), p.21.

²⁶⁴ Tamas Regi, "Coping with Strangers in Africa: Tourism, Politics and Development in South-Western Ethiopia", *QEH Working Paper Series –QEHWPS191* (The University of Sheffield, Sheffield International College, 2011), pp.15-16.p.11.

²⁶⁵ David Turton, "Lip-Plates and the People Who Take Photograph: Un Easy Encounters between Mursi and Tourists in Southern Ethiopia", in *Journal of Anthropology Today*, Vol 20, No. 2 (2004), p.3.

²⁶⁶ Informants: Bardula Lämudigir, Taka Mamo and Wolkoro Säbakoro.

seasonal migration.²⁶⁷ As informants' recounts, still now, the Surma people struggle with food shortage when their subsistence base is threatened by drought and especially coincided with the time of inter-ethnic conflict as it undermines the provisions of surplus grain from neighboring areas.²⁶⁸

In similar vein, the Surma raiding practice by itself had also been the cause for food insecurity for the neighboring peoples. For instance, the raiding of the Surma over the Dizi had brought a serious food shortage among the latter. One of the report states that:

በጠጥታው መታወክ ምክንያት የማጂ ህዝብ ንብረቱንና ህይወቱን ለወንበዴዎች ገብሮ አርሶ አደሩም ሆነ በከተማው የመንግስት ሠራተኞች ሸምቶ አዳሪዎች ምግብ በማጣት በከፍተኛ ችግር ላይ ስለሚገኝ የተዘራው እህል እስኪደርስ ተፈጥሮ ከጎዳው በበለጠ በሠው ሰራሽ ችግር በረኅብ ለተጎዳው ህዝብ ከመንግስት የሚረዳበት መንገድ እንዲፈለግ፡፡²⁶⁹

Translated as: "...due to security problems, the Maji people sacrificed their life and property to the bandits. Both the peasants and government workers are suffering from a serious food shortage. Until the harvest of the sowed crops, the famine induced by manmade problem is seriously hitting the people than the one caused by natural disasters. Thus, urgent aid is needed from the government".

Besides, there was a direct economic cost to these poor communities as they strive to acquire weapons for self-protection and for revenge rather than spending their income to improve their livelihood.²⁷⁰ Even though this effect is often strongly felt among the pastoralist peoples like the Surma, there was also some tendency among the settled farmers to arm themselves. It

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Informants: Anyab Bāyitu, Getachew Majigāž and Barkomuru Otodu.

²⁶⁹ MWAO, Folder No. 9, File No.94, A Report from Maji *Awraja* Administration Office to Kefa *Teklay Gizat* Office, 1970 E.C.

²⁷⁰ Informants: Barjala Olikibo, Koro Gidagi and Bartu Oligidangi.

has been noted that throughout the *Derg* regime, the Dizi people and government workers wanted to arm themselves to defend from the deadly attacks of the Surma.²⁷¹

Consequently, basic human development indicators like literacy and health are also poor in the area due to the problem of conflict. Particularly, mobility and conflict had been persistent challenges in expanding access to education among pastoralists in the lower Omo valley of Ethiopia. It has been argued that in the lower Omo, in a situation where migration is inevitable alternative thinking about schooling is unwise. When the communities' surrounding a particular school setup resorted to move to other areas, the formal education system proves its triviality to meet the aim of educating pastoral children. Also, during conflict, students absent from schools and participate as fighters either on appeal from parents or act upon the traditional norm that requires them to play a big role in responding to conflict situations.²⁷² Similarly, informants noted that the Surma child hood is in crisis as their access to education is hampered by the hitherto inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. Parents prefer their children to be the future best warrior rather than becoming educated.²⁷³

Fifthly, the conflicts resulted in immense human and material casualties. Typically, the 1989 inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and Dizi that almost turned into full inter-ethnic civil war resulted in the loss of many lives and enormous material destructions. The immediate cause of the conflict was the killing of four women and one Surma man by unknown person. This prompted the Surma people to take revengeful attack which turned soon in to full scale violence. The conflict resulted in the death of 37 people from Karsi, Duyet and Siski villages

²⁷¹ Gebre-hawariya, p.117.

²⁷² Alemayehu Debebe, "Mobility and Conflict: Persistent Challenges in Expanding Access to Education Among Pastoralists of South Omo, Ethiopia", *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*. Vol. 11, No 2 (March 2016) , p.45.

²⁷³ Informants: Bartu Oligidangi, Barkomuru Otodu and Bardula Lämudigir.

of the Dizi. In addition, many heads of cattle, sheep and goats of the Diz were looted by the Surma during the attack.²⁷⁴ In terms of material destruction, the schools of Siski and Karsi were totally ruined. Also, the Shalt and Duyet schools were partly destroyed. Moreover, the Surma raid of Dizi also resulted in the plundering of the grain from the Dizi localities and the rest was burned and turned in to ash.²⁷⁵

4.3. The Role of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In the past, the Surma people and their neighbors tried to share ecological niches and frequently resolved conflicts through traditional resolution mechanisms where inter- ethnic relations were cautiously mediated on the basis of local customs and institutions.²⁷⁶ In this section, an attempt is made to discuss some of the traditional mechanisms of resolving inter-ethnic conflicts in the area, and then how their role diminished since 1980s, due to different factors.

In this regard, reconciliation rituals were the best means of resolving inter-ethnic conflicts including, homicide. The process involves the public meeting of the conflicting groups followed by elders mediation based on agreement compensation in-kind or in-cash and ritual reconciliation ceremony.²⁷⁷ In time of frequent and heightened inter-ethnic conflicts in the area, a reconciliation ceremony was organized through local chiefs of the concerned ethnic groups. The ceremony may last to a few days.²⁷⁸ It involves the slaughtering of two or more oxen (usually black in color), the washing of the local chiefs through the blood of the

²⁷⁴ Gebre-hawariya,p.118.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Informants: Kasa Kābādā, Getachew Majigāzh and Barkutul Gurniyaro.

²⁷⁷ Abbink, “Violence and Crisis Conciliation...”, p.538.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*; Informants: Getachāw Majigāzhi, Kasa Kābādā and Bardula Lāmudigir.

slaughtered oxen, the act of dissecting and drying the peritoneum on the fresh hide of the slaughtered oxen, the oath of the local chiefs of the respective groups by sitting on the hide of the slaughtered animal not to repeat the same mistakes, the washing of their hands in the green matter found in the digestive tract of the deceased animal and hanging the dried strips of the peritoneum on the necks of the conflicting parties involved.²⁷⁹

In similar vein, the Dizi had their own customary practice of reconciliation ritual called *Dofie* ceremony to resolve conflicts within their own society as well as with the neighboring peoples such as the Surma. The sole purpose for the observance of the *Dofie* ceremony is mediating conflicting parties. The name of the specific place where the ceremony conducted usually is called *Kiyam*. There are individuals specialized in organizing and conducting the ceremony. They are known as *Geima* selected at a clan level and may have different names in every clan of the Dizi.²⁸⁰ They are believed to have the ritual skills of determining whether the negotiation agreement is wholeheartedly or superficially and the ability of foretelling the future fortune of individuals and the society just by reading the intestine of slaughtered animals. Before incorporation to the Ethiopian empire, the Surma were highly abided by such reconciliation rituals of the Dizi as they fear the happening of the curse when they violate the reconciliation agreements.²⁸¹

However, these customary practices of reconciliation were no longer effective in ending conflicts though they served as temporary solutions to the issue. Especially, since the 1980s, their role in regulating inter-ethnic relation is diminishing mainly due to two reasons. The

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Adinew, p.104.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

first factor was the proliferation of weapons among the pastoralist peoples of the area. Due to their wider access to automatic weapons, the pastoralist peoples always incline to judge disputes only through guns rather than reconciliation rituals. The development resulted in the erosion of different socio-cultural values regulating ethnic relations in the area. Among the Surma the days of elaborated reconciliation ceremonies with neighboring ethnic groups were scarcely held since 1980s because of the destructive effects of the proliferation of weapons.²⁸²

Consequently, even if there were some reconciliation ceremonies held in the recent past, they did not last long and were easily violated. Informants particularly noted that the Surma are usually the violators of such reconciliation agreements as they are always obsessed with the belief in the powers of guns.²⁸³ Informants narrate that, for instance in 1986, a huge reconciliation ceremony was conducted in Maji air plane field that involved the Surma, Me'en and Dizi peoples. The ceremony involved all the aforementioned ritual practices of reconciliation. Surprisingly, the Surma raided the Dizi only within 18 days after the reconciliation ceremony. Even some Dizi areas were reported to have established a marriage ties with the Surma as an alternative means of reducing the raiding of the latter on the former. But it was also proved unsuccessful and the Dizi areas which established such marriage relation are now forcefully assimilated to the Surma.²⁸⁴

The second factor for the diminishing role of traditional means of conflict resolution since the 1980s was related with the government effort to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts without the

²⁸² Informants: Tämänä Karba, Kasa Kābādā and Markos Bogalā

²⁸³ Informants: Getachew Majigāzhi, Bardula Lāmudigir and Kasa Kābādā.

²⁸⁴ Informants: Anyab Bāyitu, Bālay Bogalā and Markos Bogalā

involvement of these customary practices. Particularly, during the *Derg* regime, the government had the 'monopoly on the means of violence', mediating inter-ethnic conflict was seen as a task of the government. In the area it was done through the officials in Maji village, and through the local police and army chiefs of the three contingents stationed in the Surma area. Their most important task was to forcefully contain inter-ethnic violence. According to informants, these government institutions in the Surma area had undermined customary conflict resolution practices and the authority of elders and traditional leaders by making unilateral decisions about inter-ethnic violence without involving community elders or institutions.²⁸⁵

In fact it can be said that, let alone involving them, in its radical drive towards modernization, the military regime tried to abolish the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Informants recall that, the regime forbade the people's customary practices such as reconciliation rituals, notably homicide, as they considered them to be 'bad or harmful' customs or "anti-revolutionary."²⁸⁶

Thus, though there were different resolution mechanisms used by the people to resolve conflicts, they were not as such successful due to the aforementioned factors. Hence, my informants recommended that the only means of reducing inter-ethnic conflict between the Surma and their neighbors must be disarming the pastoralist peoples in the area, stationing

²⁸⁵ Informants: Barkomuru Otodu, Kasa Kābādā and Belogidangi Midireole.

²⁸⁶ Informants: Bardula Lāmudigir, Bālay Bogalā and Jayo Tsegaye.

guard along the official borders to defend the infiltration of ethnic groups from the neighboring Sudan and the revitalization of the traditional method of conflict resolutions.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Informants: Kasa Kābādā, Getachāw Majigāž and Burkutul Gurniro.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have examined the history of ethnic interaction between the Surma and the neighboring peoples from the year 1898 to 1991. The study has recognized that inter-ethnic relations have gone in a complex and delicate manner that challenged the simplistic view of ethnicity assumptions. It has been clear that right from the state expansion to the area, inter-ethnic relations have been complex and dynamic. The study has outlined that the major factor determining the pattern of interaction was the nature of center-periphery relation since incorporation to the Ethiopian empire in 1898. The presence of state administrative apparatuses and the imposition of its policies had been largely the cause of dynamic inter-ethnic relations in the area.

This study put forward that mechanisms should be found through which mutual trust could be reinstated among various ethnic groups in the area. It has demonstrated how conflicts arose because of mistrust, suspicion and the subsequent animosities across ethnic frontiers. Some of the mistrusts have some history of perceived injustice among the ethnic groups due to the process of incorporation, varied level of state administration and the heavy hand of trans-frontier trade in ivory, slave and armament. As a way forward, for mutual trust to be restored, first the real causes of the prejudice should be addressed more seriously within the context of state policies and fitting remedial measures undertaken in the area by the successive regimes soon after incorporation to the Ethiopian empire.

Yet, the thesis has also shown that cordial inter-ethnic relations and even integration in different socio-cultural aspects had existed right from the pre-incorporation period and continued up to the present time. In the area under study, this was demonstrated through intermarriages, practices of initiation rituals of age sets, ritual alliance in the issue of rain control and interaction in local markets. This good side of inter-ethnic relations should be relied on to resolve conflicts that gained momentum since the last three decades.

Besides, this study found that although competition for agro-ecological niches had been one of the major causes for conflicts, heightened inter-ethnic violence in this remote peripheral area of Ethiopia particularly since 1980 was much more complex than the dominant narrative of resource scarcity. Beyond resource scarcity, the impacts of Sudanese civil war and border openness, the proliferation of weapons and different cultural factors (retaliation and dowry payments) were indicated as major factors for the intensification of conflicts in the area. Thus, the peace building effort in the future should incorporate the historical lessons gained in dealing with the aforementioned issues in the past.

Moreover, regarding peace building efforts in the area, three important historical lessons are indicated in this thesis. The first lesson that emerges from the thesis is the adverse consequences of inadequate and partial disarmament, where ethnic groups may be left at the mercy of their neighbors and trust in the state may diminish. Thus, it calls for comprehensive disarmament measures to be taken by the state in order to undermine inter-ethnic violence in the area. Secondly, addressing the border issue is vital for stabilizing inter-ethnic relations in the area. Regarding the issue, this thesis, particularly, pointed an important lesson that the

government of Emperor Haile Selassie stationed permanent armed force in the Surma area along the national border with the current South Sudan that reduced inter-ethnic violence. Thirdly, in the past, the people tried to resolve conflicts through traditional resolution mechanisms. However, their role was diminishing since the 1980s. Thus, it points out that the government should empower traditional institutions and respect their values and autonomy. Thus, current efforts in strengthening cordial inter-ethnic relations in the area should incorporate all these lessons.

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3. List of Informants

| No | Name of Informants | Age | Date of Interview | Place of Interview | Remark |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|-------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1. | Abäbä Jämu(<i>Ato</i>) | 65 | 29/2/2019 | Jämu | He descendant of the Amhara settlers who came to the area during incorporation. He had served in various government posts during the <i>Derg</i> and has good knowledge on the pattern of Me'en interactions with Surma people during the period. |
| 2. | Aniyab Bäytu (<i>Ato</i>) | 60 | 25/2/2019 | Tum | He is a Dizi native from Kolu locality. He had served as chairman of Kolu <i>käbälé</i> for many years. In 1991 he came to Tum as refugee due to the Suri invasion of Kolu locality. He had also represented the Dizi people in |

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| | | | | | many reconciliation ceremonies with the Surma and Me'en people. He is an acknowledgeable oral historian in the society. |
| 3 | Bardula Lämudigir (Ato) | 76 | 18/3/2019 | Kéla (near Akobo river) | He is a native Surma and one of the retired <i>Rora</i> age grades of the people. He had invaluable knowledge on the history and culture of the Surma people. |
| 4 | Bargada Olisturi (Ato) | 52 | 20/3/2019 | Dimma | He is a native Surma and one of the <i>Gulsa</i> (traditional village head men) of the Surma .He had a good narration on the impact of proliferation of weapon on degrading the socio-cultural values of the Surma that contained the magnitude of violence in the past. |
| 5 | Barjala Olikibo (Ato) | 65 | 19/3/2019 | Dimma | A native of Suri who has a good narration about the traditional socio- political |

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|----|---------------------------|----|-----------|---------|---|
| | | | | | organization of the people and their role in regulating intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic violence among the society. |
| 6 | Barkoi Olisurba (Ato) | 63 | 31/3/2019 | Kibbish | He is a native Surma and has invaluable knowledge on the Socio-cultural history of the people. |
| 7 | Barkule Wolkoroi (Ato) | 72 | 31/3/2019 | Kibbish | He is native Surma and one of the recently resigned the reigning age-grade of the <i>rora</i> . He has good narration on the history of the people. |
| 8 | Barkomuru Otodu(Ato) | 74 | 18/3/2019 | Kéla | He is a native Surma and has invaluable knowledge about the history of Surma people relation with the state and the neighboring peoples. |
| 9 | Bartu Oligidangi (Ato) | 50 | 18/3/2019 | Kéla | He is a native Chai-Suri and has a good knowledge about the history of the people during the <i>Derg</i> regime. |
| 10 | Barkutul Gurniyo(Ato) | 48 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is a native Surma and served as chairman of |

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|----|----------------------------------|----|-----------|---------|--|
| | | | | | <p><i>Kokakäbälé</i> for many years.</p> <p>He has invaluable knowledge on the changing pattern of inter-ethnic relations in the area.</p> |
| 11 | Bartagi Barkori(<i>Ato</i>) | 56 | 31/3/2019 | Kibbish | <p>He is a native Surma and has good knowledge of oral history and about the Derg period.</p> |
| 12 | Bäqällä Läma (<i>Ato</i>) | 70 | 22/2/2019 | Maji | <p>He is the descendent of a Shewan Amhara who had come to Maji accompanying <i>RasWäldä</i> Giyorgis and has a significant knowledge in history of popular interactions in the area.</p> |
| 13 | Bäläy Bogalä (<i>Ato</i>) | 60 | 22/2/2019 | Maji | <p>He is a native Dizi and has worked in the Sudanese refugee camp, after the second Sudanese civil war, in Dimma. He has invaluable knowledge on the border issue and patterns of popular interactions in the area.</p> |

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| 14 | Belogidangi Midreole (<i>Komuru</i>) | 70 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He was the ritual figure, <i>Komoru</i> , of the Surma and possesses invaluable knowledge in oral history of the people. |
| 15 | Doltie Wolkoro(<i>Komoru</i>) | 70 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is ritual chief of the Surma .He represented the Surma in many reconciliation ceremonies with the neighboring peoples like the Dizi, Me'en and Nyangatom people. Thus, he had rich knowledge on the history of Surma relation with these peoples. |
| 16 | Getachew Majigäž (<i>Ato</i>) | 68 | 22/2/2019 | Maji | He is a native Dizi and one of the representatives of the people during different occasions of mediation talks with the neighboring peoples. He is an acknowledgeable oral history teller among the |

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|----|---------------------------|----|-----------|-------|---|
| | | | | | Dizi. |
| 17 | Jayo Şegay (Ato) | 65 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is a native Me'en living among the Dizi due to marriage ties and has an important knowledge on the patterns of ethnic interaction in the area. |
| 18 | Kasa Kăbădă (Ato) | 60 | 29/2/2019 | Jămu | A native Me'en and served in different administrative posts. He is knowledgeable in oral history of the Surma and Me'en . |
| 19 | Kabar Chich(Ato) | 54 | 21/3/2019 | Dimma | He is a native Surma and has good knowledge of Surma history. |
| 20 | Koro Gidangi (Ato) | 55 | 18/3/2019 | Kéla | He is a native Surma and has invaluable knowledge on the history of inter-ethnic relations in the area |
| 21 | Markos Tikai (Komurut) | 74 | 29/2/2019 | Jămu | He is a native Me'en. He is one of the <i>komurut</i> (ritual chief) of the Me'en people. He has invaluable oral information on the socio- |

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|-------|---|
| | | | | | cultural interactions of Me'en and Surma people in the past. |
| 22 | Markos Bogälä (Ato) | 77 | 21/2/2019 | Maji | He is a Dizi native and respected elder who negotiated the 1980s inter-ethnic violence with Surma people. |
| 23 | Marshi Adikyaz (Ato) | 82 | 22/2/2019 | Maji | He is a native to Dizi people. He had served in different government offices during the <i>Derg</i> regime. He also facilitated the kibish resettlement program. |
| 24 | Nagoldi Elegolegn (Woyzero) | 60 | 23/3/2019 | Dimma | She is a native Surma and a wife of one of the reigning <i>rora</i> age grade of the society. She has an invaluable knowledge on the cultural history of the Surma. |
| 25 | Narogi Olikibo (Woyzero) | 55 | 23/3/2019 | Dimma | She is a native Surma and a wife of the former <i>gulsa</i> |

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|----|--|----|-----------|--------|--|
| | | | | | (village head men) of the <i>Majaqäbälé</i> . She has an invaluable knowledge on the history of Surma relation with Me'en and Dizi people. |
| 26 | Olchagi Ouya (Ato) | 68 | 31/3/2019 | Kibish | He is a resident of Kibbish and a native Surma. He is the member of Parent-Teacher's Association of Kibbish primary school. He has a good narration on the socio-cultural aspects of Surma interaction with the neighbouring people. |
| 27 | SanbotTarm Kiyaz (<i>Wäyzäro</i>) | 43 | 22/2/2019 | Maji | A Dizi native who had an eye witness account on the tragedy of many Surma raids on Dizi people since the 1980s. She was also the organizer of Women's Associations during the <i>Derg</i> Regime. |

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| 28 | Tämänä Karba(<i>Asir</i> <i>Aleqa</i>) | 75 | 23/2/2019 | Maji | He is a native Dizi. He had served for many years as member of the local police force and possesses an important knowledge on the impacts of the proliferation of weapons on the pattern of inter-ethnic relations in the area. |
| 29 | Täka Mamo (<i>Ato</i>) | 89 | 23/2/2019 | Maji | He is the descendent of the Amhara settlers who had come to the area following the conquest. He had worked with different missionary offices in the area. He had an immense knowledge on the history of Dizi, Surma and Me'en people. |
| 30 | Tädäsä Niyang (<i>Ato</i>) | 72 | 1/4/2019 | Aman | He is a Dizi native who began his career as soldier during the time of emperor Haile-Selassie. He has important knowledge on the history of inter-ethnic relations in the |

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| | | | | | area. |
| 31 | Tilahun Täfära (<i>Ato</i>) | 65 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is a native Dizi and retired soldier. He has invaluable knowledge on the history of the Dizi and Surma. |
| 32 | Wäldä-Maryam Gäbräselasie (<i>Ato</i>) | 75 | 23/2/2019 | Maji | He was a notable local chief of the Dizi . He led different campaigns against the Surma raids. He has an important knowledge about the history of Dizi relation with the Surma and Me'en people. |
| 33 | Wolichari Säbakoro (<i>Ato</i>) | 76 | 1/4/2019 | Mizan | He is a native Surma and served as a soldier during the Derg and has a good knowledge in narrating the history of Surma-state relation during the <i>Derg</i> regime. |

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| 34 | Wolkoro Säbakoro (Ato) | 63 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is a native Surma who can communicate well in Amharic. He was the relative of one of the Surma <i>Komuru</i> (ritual leader) of the Surma, <i>Doleti</i> Wolkoro. He is an acknowlagable oral historian in the society. |
| 35 | Worku Bäyäne (Ato) | 69 | 24/2/2019 | Tum | He is a Dizi native and a retired soldier. He has good narration on how the Surma are continuously occupying many areas from the Dizi. |
| 36 | Yäwha Kuptalé (Ato) | 84 | 4/3/2019 | Jämu | A native Me'en and a respected elder in Bas <i>qäbälé</i> and has good remembrance of oral history of the people |

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ያገር ገዛት ዲጊቲቲ

ቁጥር 7/12129
ገንቦት 8/1964 ዓ/ም.

ለክብር ደግሞች ወሰኖ አገታላቢ
የክፍ ወ/ገዛት አገደራሲ
ፎቃ ፣

ክብር ሆይ:-

ከዓክቲት 1 እስከ መጋቢት 30 የገ 1964 ዓ/ም ድረስ ባለው ጊዜ
ወሰኖ በጸባ ወረታ የጥቅ ዘላናች ክፍርግና ዝግግር ስጦታ ገንቦት ገንቦት ስት ስጥ ህ
ይለፍ 34 በው ስገድሱ 3 ዓባባባቸውን የገለጸ ሠፊድት የወገጽ መከላከያና ጽርፈ
የና ጭራያ ጭምር 13/64 ዓ/ም በቁጥር 3/ጠገ/1/19 በተሰጠ ደብዳቤ ገልጾል
ናል ::—

በዘላቅ ስጦታ መከላከል በየጊዜው በጭራራ የክርስ በርስ ገጽቶች ም
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ፈ ከተጠቀ ሥር ለጭራራ ረጅም ጊዜ የጭምር መሆኑ በታወቀ ለአሁኑ ለወይራት
ም ይህን ለመሠላላት ድርጊት በጥሩ ተኝቶ ላይ አፋጣኝ አርጎች በመውሰድ የክፍሉን ጭ
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ገብርማርያም ገብራ
Gebre Mariam Gebre


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የሚከናወነው ነው።

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Table giving a brief Discription of Archival documents in order

| Roll number of the archive | Description of the Archive |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1A | A Letter from Colonel Asfaw Shähamit, a Governor of Maji <i>Awraja</i> to Colenel Tamirat Yigäzu, Governor of Kefa Province stating about the impact of the extensive possession of fire arms by the Surma and Tishana (Me'en) people on escalating inter-ethnic violence in the area. |
| 1B | A Letter from <i>Fitawärari</i> Häilämaryam , Governor of Kaffa Province to Emperor Haile Selasie stating about British colonial influence in the surma and Dizi area from the nighbouring colonial Sudan. |
| 1C | A Letter from Colonel Tamirat Yigäzu, a Governor of Kefa Province to the Ministry of the Interior, stating that the ineffectiveness of the government effort in halting the illicit arm trade in the area from the beginning was associated with the failure of the central government to issue legal frameworks to punish individuals who involved in the transaction process. |
| 1D | A Letter from the Ministry of the Interior to Colonel Tamirat Yigäzu, Governor of Kefa Province Describing that the central government was reported to have been in process of issuing a new proclamation on the issue of managing inter-ethnic conflict in the area. |

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| 1E | a Letter from Lägäsä Bizu, head of the Ministry of the Interior to <i>Däjjazmach Şehaye Enquselasé</i> , the Governor of Kafa Province,,stating about the measure of Emperor Haile Selassie regime to stabilize inter-ethnic relations in the area. |
| 1F | A Letter from Mitiku Dästa, the Governor of Mähäl Maji <i>Wäräda</i> to Maji <i>Awraja</i> Office, describing about a particular incidences of inter-ethnic raidings and the effort of the government in mediating the conflict. |
| 1G | A Letter from Mitiku Dästa, Governor of Mähäl Maji <i>Wäräda</i> to Maji <i>Awraja</i> Office, stating about the reconciliation process in the stydy area. |
| 1H | A Letter from Kasaye Mandäfro,a Governor of Kefa <i>Täqlay Gizat</i> to the Ministry of the Interior, <i>Derg</i> Regime stating about the response of the government to inter-ethnic violence between the Surma and the neighboring people. |
| 1I | A Letter from Mähäl Maji <i>Wäräda</i> to Maji <i>Awraja</i> Adiminstrative Office, stating that about the violent culture of the Surma. |

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| 1J | A Letter from Kābādā Gurum, Governor of Kefa <i>Kiflä Hagär</i> to the Ministry of Interior stating that the settlement of the Sudanese refugees in the south-west Ethiopia in the 1980s by itself had also its own impact on the instability of the area. |
| 1k | A Letter from Fākadu Dämsie, Head of Commission for Provincial Affairs to Illubabor <i>Kiflä Hagär</i> Administrative Office stating that Consequently, the central government was also reported to have commanded the concerned Illubabor <i>Kiflä Hagär</i> Administrative Office to take immediate action against the illegal arm trade activity of the Anuaks. |

Glossary

Glossary of Local Terms

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| <i>Buran:</i> | village or territory |
| <i>Donga:</i> | the name of the stick fighting contests |
| <i>Dofie:</i> | the reconciliation ceremony of the Dizi |
| <i>Géso:</i> | light alcoholic local beverage made of sorghum |
| <i>Golach:</i> | the collective name given for high land Ethiopians by the Surma |
| <i>Gulsa:</i> | a territory or village leaders |
| <i>Komorus:</i> | ritual leaders of the Surma |
| <i>Laalé:</i> | friend ship bonds |
| <i>Lusi:</i> | the first age-grade of the Surma (Children) |
| <i>Makara:</i> | village serving as a center for political participation in Surma society |
| <i>Nabo:</i> | the ancient name of chai |
| <i>Nagos:</i> | the ancient name of Surma |
| <i>Nitha:</i> | The initiation ceremony of the Surma society age-grades |
| <i>Rora:</i> | the reigning age-grade of the Surma(elders) |
| <i>Saginati:</i> | the name for stick fighting session |

Amharic Words

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|--------------------|---|
| <i>Ato:</i> | A title of respect given to ordinary people equivalent to Mr. in English |
| <i>Awraja:</i> | Administrative sub- province |
| <i>Balabat:</i> | Landlord or local hereditary chief |
| <i>Balambaras:</i> | A military title just below that of Gerazmach |
| <i>Chiqashum:</i> | village chief empowered to collect tax during the imperial regime |
| <i>Däjjazmach:</i> | A military title below <i>Ras</i> and shortened or abbreviated as <i>Däjach</i> |

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| <i>Fitawärari:</i> | the leader of front or the one who leads the army from the front side |
| <i>Gabbar:</i> | tribute paying peasant |
| <i>Hamsaläqa:</i> | A military title equivalent to commander of fifty. |
| <i>Käbäle:</i> | the lowest administrative unit of the government |
| <i>Kiflä Högär:</i> | Province |
| <i>Shifä:</i> | bandit |
| <i>Täqalay Gizat:</i> | an administrative unit during the imperial period equivalent to province. |
| <i>Wäräda</i> | Administrative unit below <i>Awraja</i> |
| <i>Wäyzäro</i> | A title given to married woman equivalent to Ms. in English |