



SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

A HISTORY OF CHARA PEOPLE, SOUTH- WEST ETHIOPIA

ca.1897 – 1991

By

ATNAFU MITIKU

OCTOBER, 2017

JIMMA, ETHIOPIA

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ATNAFU MITIKU

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ADVISOR: KETEBO ABDIYO (PHD)

CO-ADVISOR: TEMESGEN LEMESSA (MA)

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Approved Board Examiners:

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Advisor

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Examiner

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Signature

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Signature

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## **Abstract**

*The objective of this thesis is to study the socio-cultural, economic and political history of the Chara people in the period between ca1897 and 1991. The Chara presently live in Kaffa zone. The Chara are one of the Omotic languages speaking people, geographically located in the south western region of Ethiopia or in the former Kaffa kingdom later Kaffa Teqalay-Gizat. The neighboring people call them by different names, but the people call themselves Tsaratsa and they are commonly called by the name of Chara by the state. Like other peoples in the region, the social division of the society was based on clans. Accordingly, the Tata (the ruling groups of the society) were recruited from the clan named Buqasa'a. On the other hand, the occupational groups were represented in the lowest position of the society. The Chara were followers of the traditional religion, and they call their god Yeri which is equivalent to Yeroo of the Kaffecho people. Adubo was the leader of the traditional religion of the Chara. The economy of the society was based on mixed activities of hunting and gathering, agriculture, crafts and trade. The people have created relations socially, culturally, and in economic aspects with the neighboring groups of peoples like the Kaffecho, Na'o, Konta and Me'eenit. However, mostly their interaction with the Me'eenit was not peaceful. They were frequently clashed with them due to territorial expansion, abduction and also looting of cattle by the Me'eenit. The Chara were incorporated in to the Ethiopian empire in the year 1897. After the forceful subjugation and incorporation of Menelik II through his general Ras Wolde Giyorgis, the Chara lost their socio-cultural as well as economic prestige. New rule was introduced in the area and the roll of traditional rule of Chara was minimized. On the other hand, slavery and slave trade were widely expanded in the area. The people were one of the victims of slavery and slave trade. Most of the Chara people were sold in to slavery by the local governors. Due to this problem, their number was greatly minimized. During the period of Italian occupation (1936-1941) the Chara also faced forceful road construction by the Italians. After the occupation, the Chara were governed in the Kaffa Teklay Gizat together with the peoples of Kaffecho, and Na'o. They lost their local administration after the introduction of new rule by the imperial government. The land measurement of the imperial government in 1955 E.C (1963), was, followed by land grab and alienations. The government declared new tax amount after the land measurement. On the other hand, some rulers like Melerasha Tibebu abused the land measurement. Due to this, the Chara were forced to leave their fertile land. Regarding the infrastructural development, the Chara*

were s very far from Education, health center, road and other institutions. Because of lack of modern facilities, the people were greatly affected by epidemics. The sources that are used in this thesis are categorized in to three groups. The first groups of sources include manuscripts, thesis and dissertations. But these literatures are not specifically discussing about the history of Chara. They are also limited in number. The archival sources found in Jimma Zone Administration (JZA) and Decha woreda are not reserved properly. On the other hand, no archival sources were found at Wolde Meskel Tariku Memorial Research Center of Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) and National Archives and Llibrary Agency (NALA). Finally, I have tried my best to interview Informants from different groups of people. I have encountered various problems while conducting this thesis, basically lack of written sources, the archival sources in Kaffa zone are not simply available for researchers.



## **Preface**

The thesis deals with a History of Chara people from ca.1897 to 1991. It gives particular attention on socio-cultural and political aspects of the Chara during the study period. The year 1897 is used as a starting point. Because: the Chara were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in this year. On the other hand, the year 1991 signifies the fall of the *Darg* military government and the subsequent rule of Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

Basically, the historiography of Ethiopia neglected the history of the Chara and they were forgotten by historians. This thesis tries to fill the gap by reconstructing the history of the Chara people. It also used as a benchmark and guide for other researchers. On the other hand, it creates good opportunity to introduce the socio-cultural, economic, political and historical aspects of the chara people.

The thesis is divided in to five Chapters. Accordingly, the first Chapter gives emphasis to the physical location and settlement patterns of the Chara, the origin, the language, clan division, religion, and the economy. Chapter two provides a brief analysis on socio-cultural history of the chara. Chapter three gives a survey on the relation of Chara with the neighbors. Chapter four describes the socio-political history and the last chapter deals with the history of Chara from Italian occupation to 1991.

## **Acronyms**

AAU	Addis Ababa University
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
DWA	Decha Woreda Administration
E.C	Ethiopian Calander
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies
JZA	Jimma Zone Administration
KAA	Kaffa Awraja Astedader
KTG	Kaffa Teqlay Gizat (governorgeneral)
KZA	Kaffa Zone Administration
NALA	National Archive and Library Agency
WMTMC	Wolde Meskel Tariku Memorial Center
SNNPRS	South ernNations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State

## Key to Transliteration system

1. The seven orders of the Ethiopian alphabet are represented as

1 <sup>st</sup>	ሰ =	Bä
2 <sup>nd</sup>	ሱ =	Bu
3 <sup>rd</sup>	ሲ =	Bi
4 <sup>th</sup>	ሳ =	Ba
5 <sup>th</sup>	ሴ =	Bè
6 <sup>th</sup>	ሶ =	Be
7 <sup>th</sup>	ሸ =	Bo

2. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows ;

ሸ	Sh
ሹ	Ć
ሺ	N
ሻ	Zh
ሼ	J

3. Glotalized sounds are represented hereunder;

ቀ	Q
ጠ	T
ጪ	Ch
ጸ	S
ጰ	P

4. Gemination should be indicated by doubling consonants:

Example:	ወረዳ	Warada
	ደርግ	Darg
	ቀበሌ	Qabale
	ባላባት	Balabat
	አስተዳደር	Astadadar

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and Physical Setting

The people of Chara mainly lived in the highland forest areas of the former southern Kaffa kingdom. They are one of the Omotic speaking groups of people in south western Ethiopia. In the recent administrative structure of Ethiopia, they are placed in Kaffa zone, Decha woreda (district) of SNNPRS.<sup>1</sup>

Kaffa zone is one of the fourteen administrative zones in the Regional state. Currently the zone represents parts of the former Kaffa kingdom which prevailed until and after the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the past military regime, Kaffa and its neighboring peoples were organized under Kaffa administrative province (kifla-hagar). Since 1991 it has been zone.<sup>2</sup> The zone presently comprises of Chena, Cheta, Decha, Gesha, Gewata, Gimbo, Menjiwo, Sylem and Tello districts.<sup>3</sup>

The Chara mainly settled in Decha districts having forty four local kebeles and one town administration. However, other Chara districts people also live in Cheta and Konta Special Districts outside the zone.<sup>4</sup>

According to the report of Central Statistical Agency (CSA) 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia, the estimated number of the Chara population was 13,210.<sup>5</sup>

Decha district is one of the ten districts in the Kaffa zone and Chiri was formerly the seat of Decha Woreda, but currently Awrada is the administrative center of the district. It is located from

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Nationalities, *The Profile of South Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples* (Hawassa, 2008), p.214. Kaffa has been inhabited by the Kafficho, Chara, and Nao, the three indigenous ethnic groups and other non-indigenous peoples, who come to live later to Kaffa.

<sup>2</sup> Meseret Ayele, "Assessment of Food security Situation in Resettlement Areas. The Case of Decha woreda in Kaffa zone, SNNPRS, Ethiopia," Msc Thesis (Hawassa University, Agricultural Extension, 2011), p.16.

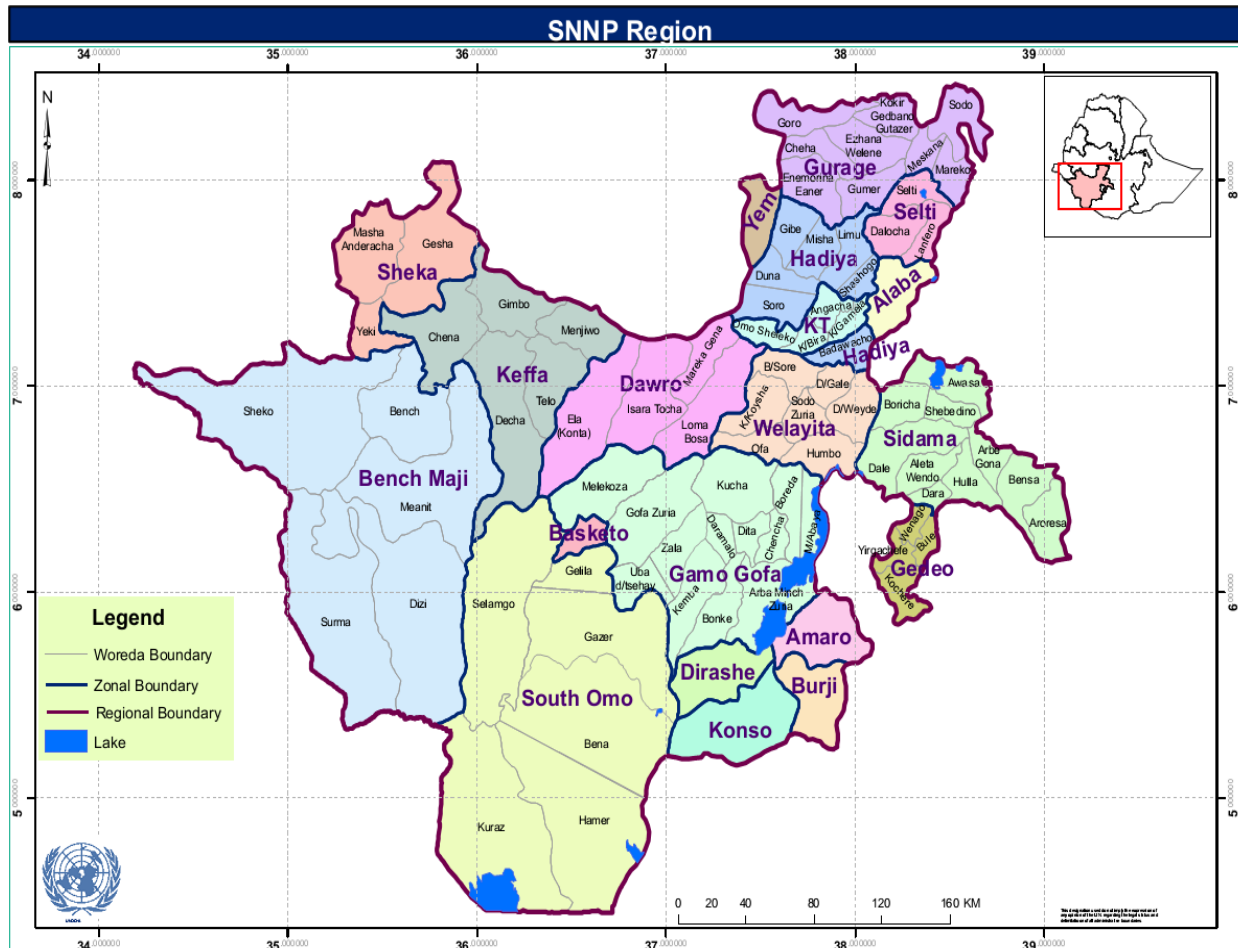
<sup>3</sup> Bekele Woldemariam, *The History of the Kingdom of Kaffa: The Birthplace of Coffee 1390-1935* (Addis Ababa, 2004), p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Tegest Bekele, "Unique Ethiopia (Yedebub Fertocho)", *Annual Magazine*, vol.1, No3 (2013), p.46.

<sup>5</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, *Population and Housing Census Commission* (Addis Ababa), p.87.

Bonga at 23 km and 528 km from Addis Ababa.<sup>6</sup>The district has common boundaries with Debub Omo zone in the south, Konta special Woreda in the east, Bench *Maji* zone in the West, Gimbo district in the north and Me'enit in the southwest.<sup>7</sup>

Map 1: Physical Map of SNNPRS



Source: Adapted from SNNPRS Profile of Nations and Nationalities.

The people of Chara with their neighbors' namely the Kafficho, Konta, Bench and Me'enit, before their incorporation into the modern Ethiopian state in 1897 E.C., were ruled under the former Kaffa Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> After the conquest, however, they were incorporated into the central

<sup>6</sup>Meseret , p.17.

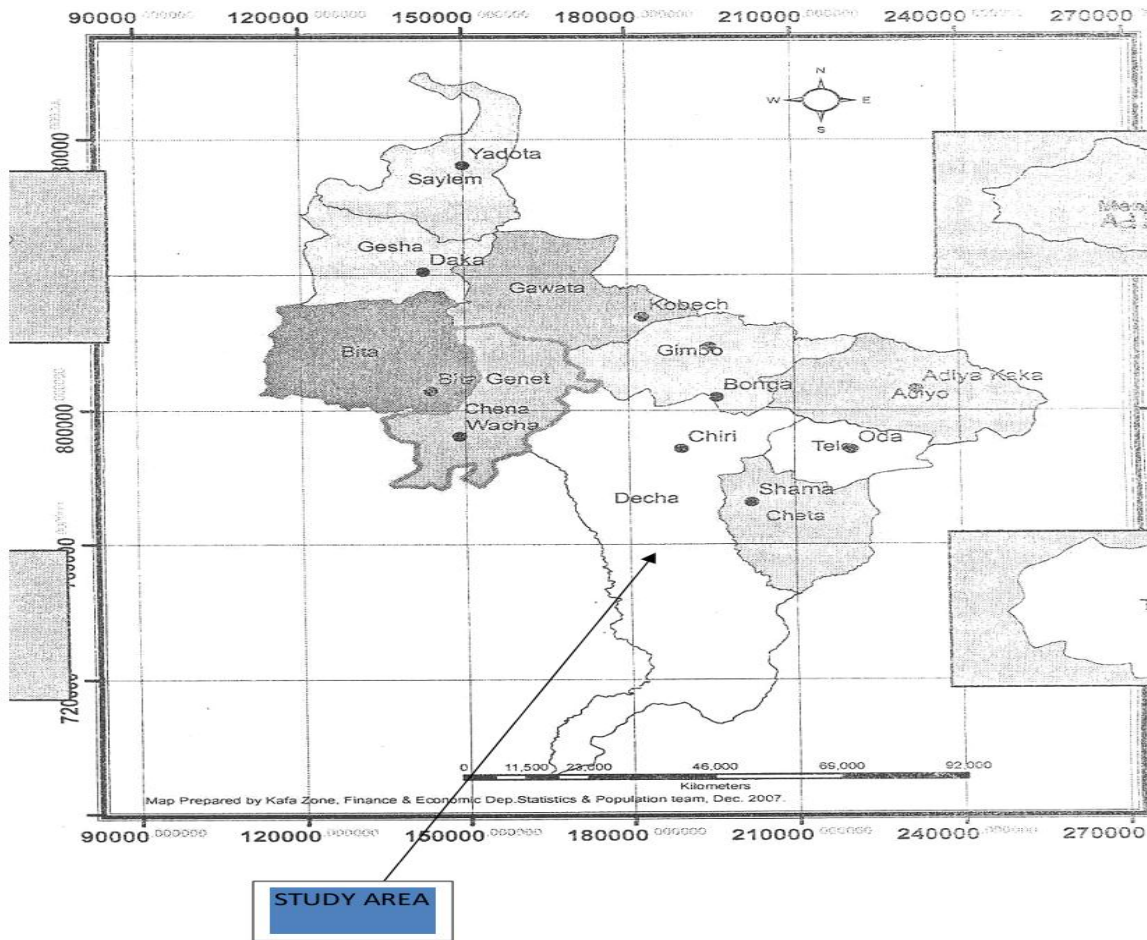
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,Ernesta Cerulli ,*Peoples of South-west Ethiopia and Its Border Lands Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (London,1965),p.87.

<sup>8</sup>Dena Freeman and Alula Pankhurst,*Living On the Edge, Marginalized Minorities Of Craft Workers And Hunters*

government of Ethiopia as a *warada*, with in Kaffa Administrative Province or *Teklaygizat* administered from Jimma town, present part of Oromia regional state.<sup>9</sup>

During the last years of the Darg regime, they were included under the Kaffa regional administration at Mizan-Teferi. Again, under the transitional government of 1991, the Chara were administered in Kaffa zone, Decha district together with other peoples.<sup>10</sup>

Map 2: Physical Map of Kaffa Zone



Source: Adapted from Kaffa Zone Administrative Office.

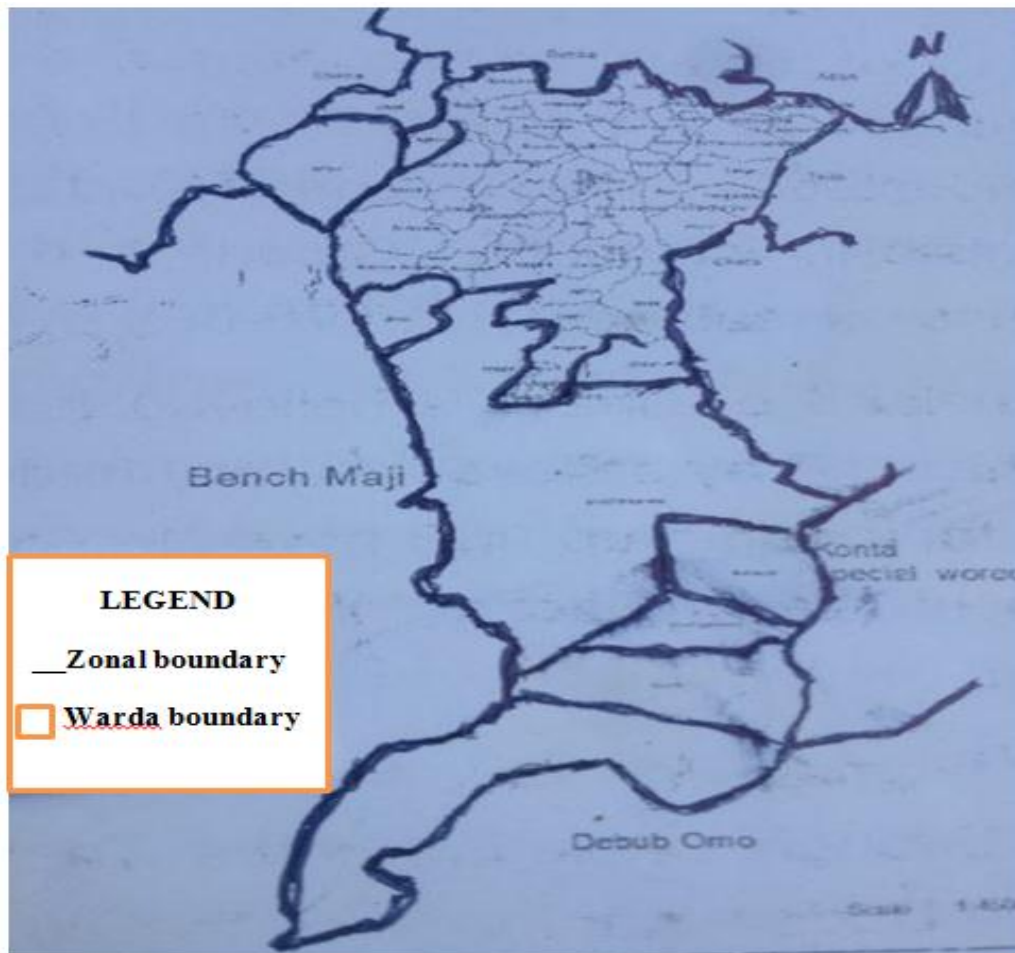
*In South-West Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 2001), p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*.

According to some sources, the people of Chara who live in the kaffa areas of decha district are one of the indigenous peoples. Geographically, they occupied the western part of the Omo valley and southern part of Kaffa province.<sup>11</sup> The topography of the area was characterized by dense forest and mountains of the southwest, between the altitudes of 1700 to 2600 meters above sea level.<sup>12</sup> Due to the dense forest cover, there is high amount of rainfall throughout the year. The mean annual rainfall ranges between 1775 to 1700 mm.<sup>13</sup>

Map3: Physical map of Decha Woreda



Source: Adapted from Addissalem, *Ethno-History of the Chara* p.16.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, p.73; Amnom Orient, "Refocusing on the History of kaffa prior to 1897," *Journal of AfricanhistoricalStudies*, vol.3, No.2 (Boston, 1970),p.60.

<sup>12</sup>Werner Lange, *Dialects of "Divine kingship" in the Kaffa highlands* (California, 1976), p.4.

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



## 1.2 Settlement Pattern

Before their movement the Chara people were settled in the area of *Kumba* district, which was located in the southern part of Kaffa province. The altitude of the area ranges between 1700 to 2600 meters above sea level. They are the ancient people who settled in the Omo valley before their movement in to their present location. <sup>14</sup>

They are closely related linguistically and culturally to the Bench, Mer, Se, Na' o, and the Maji peoples. The people are part of the Omotic language speaking groups that stretched from the Omo River in the southeast to Gojeb River in the north and to the edge of north western part of the Region. <sup>15</sup> The people mainly lived in the remote mountainous area of the southeast bordered with Sarmi River, which was difficult for communication with other peoples. <sup>16</sup> On the eve of Menilek II's conquest of the region in 1897 the Chara had occupied the area along the Omo River in the south, the Kaffa province in the north, the former kanta kingdom in the northeast, Gica River in the west. <sup>17</sup> The area they have settled was forested and mountain terrain. It is remote land rich with rainfalls. <sup>18</sup>

Currently, the Chara people live in Chocha and outside Chocha localities. Large number of Chara is also settled in Bunanta, Meshgebaz, and kumba, which are commonly referred as Chocha and at Shash localities in the warada. In addition they live in Cheta Kolla qabale in Cheta warada which is out side from Decha and Aggara kebele in Kanta special warada. <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes country in Transition 1896- 1898*, First edition (Asmara, 2000), p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia The Evolution of a Multi Ethnic Society*, second Edition (Chicago, 2000), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Bulatovich, *Ke Atse Menilik Serawit Gar (With Emperor Menilik's Army)*, Trans, Ambachew Kebede (Addis Ababa, 2001), p. 248.

<sup>17</sup> Freeman and Pankhurst, *Living on the Edge*, p. 73, Cerulli, "peoples of Southwest Ethiopia and its border lands" (London, International African Institute, 1965), p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Bulatovich, *Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes...* p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Tegest, "Unique Ethiopia (Yedebub Fertoch)", *Annual Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Hawassa, Nov. 2013), p. 46.

## 1.3 Historical Background of the Chara People

### 1.3.1 Origin

The etymology of the word Chara remains confusing among different sources. Some of the written documents and oral traditions of the Chara also vary in this idea. The people called themselves “Tsaratsa”.<sup>20</sup> The neighboring peoples refer this ethnic group by different names. Accordingly, they were called ‘Charicho’ by the Kaffecho, ‘Tom’ by the Me’enit, and ‘Tsara’ by the Na’o.<sup>21</sup> But they were officially known by the state as the people of Chara.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand different scholars also gave various names for the people. One of these scholars was Werner Lange. He classified most of the nationalities collectively as the “Gimira”.<sup>23</sup> However, the term “Gimira” was vague and derogatory in nomenclature, location and ethnic identity. It was not clearly known when and how the term “Gimira” had been used. Among the Chara, the term is unacceptable and derogatory.<sup>24</sup> In addition, other scholars like Orent Amnon and Cerulli named the people as Cara,<sup>25</sup> and zara respectively.<sup>26</sup> The meaning of the term Chara, according to Addisalem and Abera’s argument, is a word probably taken from the River which flows to the Omo. In the past due to the absence of road it was difficult to move for exchange of goods and items.<sup>27</sup> However, the name of the River was not indicated in the above source so the argument doesn’t indicate the meaning of the term Chara. Others also associated the term with the word ‘Gimera.’ which means honeycollector or tree climber.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities Study, *Short Guide to know nationalities in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 1978), p.19.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Council of Nationalities, *The profile of South Nation Nationalities*,...p.214.

<sup>23</sup> Werner Lange, “Gimira: Remnants of Vanishing culture,” PhD Dissertation (John Wolfgang Goethe university, Anthropology, 1975), p.37.

<sup>24</sup> Addisalem Melese and Abera Mekuria, *The Ethno – History of The Chara people* (Hawassa,2013),p.13.

<sup>25</sup> Amnon Orient, “Refocusing on the History of kaffa prior to 1897,” *JournalofAfricanHistoricalStudies*,vol. 3,No.2(Boston,1970),p.265.

<sup>26</sup> Ernesta Cerulli,, *PeoplesofSouthwest ...*p.97.

<sup>27</sup> Addisalem, p.13.

<sup>28</sup> Ethiopian Tourism Commission, *EthiopiansandtheHousetheyLivein* (Addis Ababa, 1975), p. 27.

Lange thinks that it was a name given by the Oromo and Amhara traders, which indicates the existing strong relations between the neighboring Na' o and Chara peoples. The word 'Tsara' according to Lange's analyses was derived from Na' o phrase 'Sara' which means clan or group of people.<sup>29</sup> So, the argument given by Lange seems plausible because it indicates the long co-existence among the two groups of people, however, it was not supported by the tradition of Chara peoples.

According to the argument of informants the word 'Tsara' was not derived from outside of Chara language. It is simply a word of Chara; its meaning is related with the word 'Twin.' According to tradition the first man and women were came out from the soil in Kumba. They were two in number. So, the meaning of the word was associated to this event. The argument forwarded by informants is most probably accepted idea by the people.<sup>30</sup>

To trace the origins of the people, the only means lies up on the analysis of oral information. The availability of written sources on this regard is insignificant. The area along the River Omo was known for the evolution of complex societies. According to the research of Haaland Gunar the people was known for the production of Iron which had been used as one of the means to expand ones territory.<sup>31</sup>

The traditional ruling class of the Chara, like some other societies in the region, claim that their origin to be at Dadina Kumba, a place located in the western part of the Omo valley.<sup>32</sup> According to the tradition, the Chara people lived in the above area since their origins until now. One of the informants in Kumba area narrates the origin of myth as follows:

The first man and women who gave our ancestors had come out of soil through a hole in Kumba, then, our forefathers had begun to live there since that time without moving to other areas. They ate root plants from the forest for survival. Through time, they had begun to practice agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Lange, p.130.

<sup>30</sup> Informants: Tekle Loti, Duchi Slite, and Bachi Woshani.

<sup>31</sup> Gunar Haaland", Smelting Iron: Cast And Its Symbolism In South-West Ethiopia," *Journal of African Archaeology*, Vol.2, No1(2004), p.66.

<sup>32</sup> Addisalem and Abera, p.17

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Both available written sources and the tradition of Chara people had similar opinion about the original land of the Chara people. However, according to Assefa and Aymro two ideas were reflected regarding to the origins of the people. The first idea says that, the primary ancestor of Chara named 'Gaydab' come out from the soil in Kumba with his wife, in the area located southeast of the present habitation.<sup>34</sup> The second argument however, confirmed that, their original home land was located in the south western direction from the present settlement areas.

According to the argument from the above area they were moved gradually and reached in to Shash localities.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the most widely accepted Chara tradition does not coincide with the above argument regarding their origins and movement. According to informants, the most widely accepted tradition regarding the original home land of Chara was DadinaKumba located in the western part of Omo valley.<sup>36</sup> As stated by informants the Chara and Me'nit were living together in the areas of Kumba which was believed to be the origin of Chara. But after some time, assort of contradiction was created between the two ethnic groups.<sup>37</sup> The cause of the conflict was cattle rustling by the Me'nit and frequent killings of each other. Thus, after a long time the constant raids of the Me'nit forced the Chara to move away from their original place of residence.<sup>38</sup> According to informants' analysis, in the first round they had moved from their original place and settled in Meshgebege locality. Later on, they also moved to Shash, Oshka and Agara areas. Finally they settled and lived in their present place.<sup>39</sup> In my openion the original place of Chara requires additional investigation. I don't accept the idea says the first ancestors came out of the soil. But the Chara were the indeginious people lived in the area westerenpart of Omo River.

### **1.3.2 The Language of Chara**

Most of the societies who live in the vicinity of the Omo valley have similar socio- cultural and linguistic identities. However, sources are very limited in this regard. On the basis of linguistic

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<sup>34</sup> Informant:, Oilibishi Shifi, and Bachi Woshani.

<sup>35</sup> Assefa G/Mariam and Aymro Gesese, "A short History of Chara people" (Kaffa Zone Culture and Tourism office, 2007), p.11. un published Amharic Manuscript available in the above office.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Informants: Kero G/Mariam, and Abraham Alemu.

<sup>38</sup> Informants: Selas Woraqi, Oibishi Shifi, and Bachi Woshani.

<sup>39</sup> Informants: Komadi Kabki, and Duchi Slite.

analysis, scholars have classified that many of the languages of the people who live in the area belong to one language family, i.e the Omotic.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, linguistically, the language of Chara is classified into Omotic language family.<sup>41</sup> The people also claim that their origins to be from the Omotic peoples. Werner Lange who studied the language division of Chara in 1975 argues that, the people have direct linguistic and cultural similarities with the peoples of Yem, and Bench languages.<sup>42</sup>

Based on Lange's estimation during the 1970(1978) the total number of Chara language speakers was about 2000.<sup>43</sup> However, according to the report of Central Statistical Agency (CSA) 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia the number of the population reached to 13,210.<sup>44</sup> Settled way of life can be taken as a reason for the increasing number of Chara language speakers. The language is used only as means of communication among the community. But, still it is not yet become medium of instruction and work language.<sup>45</sup>

It was said that, different factors can be taken as a reason for the problem. Some of them are in accessibility of the area and lack of infrastructural development in the region. On the other hand, schools were not expanded in the area because of its remoteness, and following this was absence of teachers who could teach in Chara language.<sup>46</sup>

### **1.3.3 Clans in the Chara Society**

Like most of the Omotic peoples, the Chara society was divided on the line of social, economic and religious directions. Clan division had been the main issue in the Chara ethnic group, which had been continued since the present time. As sources of Addisalem and Abera witnessed that the general society had been comprised in to three major clans namely Chara, Bacha and Dime.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1974* second edition (London, Athens, Addis Ababa, 1995), p.7.

<sup>41</sup> Harold C. Fleming, "Omotic and Cushitic a Reply to Lamberti", *Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.87, No.49, P.521.

<sup>42</sup> Lange, p.128.

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

<sup>44</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Population and Housing census Commission (CSA) (Addis Ababa, 2008), p.10.

<sup>45</sup> Tegest, "Unique Ethiopia"..., p.47; Gideon P.E. Cohen, "Language and Ethnic Boundaries; perceptions of Identity Expressed through Attitudes Towards the use of Language Education In Southern Ethiopia", *Northeast African studies*, Vol.7, No.3(2000), p.190.

<sup>46</sup> Council of Nationalities, *The profile of Nationalities*... p.215.

<sup>47</sup> Addisalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of the Chara*..., p.18.

These chief clans are also divided into sub-clans. Before their movement to their present territory, they were further divided into a number of clans.<sup>48</sup> However, it was unknown when and how the division took place. The division of Chara into northern and Chocha Chara was done by Lange. According to his division, the Chara clans who are referred to as 'the Northern' are those who live in Shash area near to Kaffa, whereas others who are named as 'Chocha' were those who live in distant areas of Chocha Mountain.<sup>49</sup> Based on his division Lange mentioned only seven clan names of the northern Chara. These were Zoa, Koyga, Noratsa, Arkasa, Zicatsa, Zamata, and Obeto.<sup>50</sup> Under the division of Chocha eight clans were mentioned. These are Zelakorocco, Dadingecci, Kidambaykasana, Moli, Arkata, Barti, Gasna, and Lugakaridulutsa.<sup>51</sup>

However, he was unable to mention the names of all clans correctly within the two groups. But, according to informants' argument about thirty seven sub-clans were listed on both groups. These are Du'asa, Bunsasa, Eutasasa, Zuya (Zuyasa'a), Koyga, Cheyasasa, Gireasasa, Arkitsasa, Beliyasasa, Moliyasasa, Bukasasa, Chapira, Murkasasa, Goreshasasa, Dugatisala, Gamasasa, Zamasasa, Gayeda, Betsasa, Chishatsa, Zoatsa, Beliasa, Zegilatsa, Bayzatsa, Oshikirstsa, Bentatsa, Zagitatsa, Boogatsa, Gayiasa, Dokinatsa, Gabishatsa, Hayiasa, Selekoratsa, Noriasa, Gayizina'a Shumatsa, and Marshatsa.<sup>52</sup>

According to Lange's argument, the social structure of Chara, unlike its neighboring Omotic peoples lacks the strong distinction between 'high' and 'low' clans. However, as he states, there existed slight variation of social status like the traditional ruling class and that of the very low occupational groups.<sup>53</sup>

Based on the tradition, the highly respected and most powerful traditional leader or Tata which means king in Chara language and Adubo the traditional religious leaders were nominated from Buqasasa'a clan, which was socially respected and high status group in the clan structure of the people, the position of leaders had been hereditary.<sup>54</sup>

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

<sup>49</sup>Lange, p.135.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Informants: Tamene Tesema, Tadese Oyshal, and Kero G/ mariam.

<sup>53</sup> Lange, p.134.

<sup>54</sup> Tegist, p.47.

It is said that, the traditional leader of Chara or *Tata*, had assistants who were selected from Duats'a and Molats'a sub clan members. As stated by informants the main role of each assistant was organizing Corvee labor, collect gifts in the form of cattle and grain from their respective localities. They had also played a significant role in the occasion of social and religious festivals. Most of the time, the sacrifice process had been organized by these assistants.<sup>55</sup>

Based on the tradition, the social division of clans in the Chara society was grouped into three classes. Accordingly most of the people or farmers were grouped under the second class of the division. They were expected to provide different services like- tilling the land, sowing cereals, and making fences of the traditional ruling class.<sup>56</sup>

The occupational groups were considered as inferior by the society. They were segregated in all social activities. Marriage relation was forbidden with them because the society considered them as impure. Among the society some of the lower groups like Dima (smith), potter, and hunters were seen as despised groups.<sup>57</sup> In the early times the Bandu (Manja) were considered as sub human, and not treated equal with others. One of the reasons they were looked down upon is their habit of eating bush meat something which was considered taboo by others.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand some progress has been observed regarding to the occupational groups. As informant argued that, since the Darg regime some attitudinal changes have been observed on the relation between smiths; hunter and potter. The main reasons regarding to this progress were several meetings held to improve their relation, the spread of modern education, and also the protestant religion.<sup>59</sup>

However, still the assistants of the traditional religious leader (*Adubo*) were also nominated from the sub clans of Duasa'a, Bezuyatsa, and Arcatsa. The group members of assistants were responsible to assist the *Tata* in their respective areas on the basis of religious power they took. The traditional religious leader and his assistants perform similar activities. According to

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.29, Informants: Oibishi Shifi and Kero G/Mariam.

<sup>56</sup> Addissalem, p.37.

<sup>57</sup> SNNPRS Communication Bureau, *Mahdere Debub*, Vol.1, No.15 (sept.2003), p.46.

<sup>58</sup> Informants: Bangur Shindemeri, and Duchi Sliti.

<sup>59</sup> Informant: Komadi Kabki and Selas Woraki.

sources, the religious leader had the power to see the issues of dispute or any social instability and, his decision was respected by the society.<sup>60</sup>

### 1.3.4 Religion

The Chara were adherents of the traditional religious practices, they call their god by the name of Yeri' (sky god) which was similar with 'Yere' of Anfillo, 'Yero' of Na'o, 'Char' of Bensho and 'Yero' of Kafficho people. The people also believed in and gave sacrifice to *Qole* which was a spirit believed by the people that would help the breeding of animals.<sup>61</sup>

This indicates that, the existence of strong relationship between the peoples around them with the same traditional belief. On the other hand it shows the influence of Kaffa beliefs.<sup>62</sup> The other type of traditional belief of the people in the early times was the special breeding and veneration of serpents. They raise serpents inside their homes, feed them milk and other foods and give them sacred respects.<sup>63</sup>

The people believe that Yeri is the creator of all things. All living things, the earth and the sky had been created by Yeri. The traditional religion of the Chara is named as 'Eqa' and the religious leader has been entitled the name *Adubo*. According to informant's argument, most of the socio-cultural activities and or conflicts were managed by *Adubo*.<sup>64</sup>

They believe that, *Adubo* was chosen by god or Yeri so, they respect and fear the orders of *Adubo*. Most of the time, he plays the whole responsibilities in the society. As informants claim, *Adubo* has a decisive role in the economic life of the people. Before any agricultural activities, the Charas' went to *Adubo* for blessing, after they visit *Adubo* the people can sow cereals and also plant crops and other agricultural activities.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand during the time of harvest, they do not consume anything before getting blessing from *Adubo*. According to the tradition in order to go to *Adubo* for blessing, any one

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<sup>60</sup> Informants: Wombere Passmer, and Banquru Shindemer..

<sup>61</sup> Addissalem and Abera ..., p.42, see also Ernesta Cerulli, *Peoples of South-West Ethiopia*..., p.114.

<sup>62</sup> Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition 1896-1898*, First Edition (Asmara, 2000), p.89.

<sup>63</sup> Ernesta Cerulli, *Peoples of South-West Ethiopia*..., p.114; See also Donald N. Levine *Greater Ethiopia*..., p.50.

<sup>64</sup> Informants: Kositi Arsani and Bangur shindemer.

<sup>65</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *Ethno-History of The Chara*..., p.39.



had expected to prepare *Geza* which was a kind of local beer prepared from cereals like sorghum (*Daara*), maize (*Blaka*), and Teff (*Gacha*).<sup>66</sup>

During the blessing ceremony *Adubo* gives *Geza* for his spirit in a sacred place where they present sacrifice. Then, he let the fire to smoke and drink *Geza* together with those who brought to be blessed by the religious man. The symbolic representation of the smoke was considered as the acceptance of the sacrification by the spirit of *Eqa*.<sup>67</sup>

After the feast, *Adubo* started to bless the participants of the feast and gives a kind of order for those who didn't bring sacrifice to the spirit. Then after, he gives blessing against death, evil spirit, famine, drought, and other social instabilities. On the next day *Adubo* also would slaughter the cattle and the feast ceremony started again. In the ceremony they drink *Geza*, then after the blessing also started. *Adubo* gives a kind of leaf for those who went to his home for blessing by saying "let my god *Yeri* make you as wet as this leaf".<sup>68</sup>

After their return, they put that leaf at the entrance of their home. In addition to leaf he would give them lemon for the participants of the ceremony. The meaning of giving lemon indicates by wishing well the *Yeri* let them as tasty solution for the other. He also bless them by giving onion by wishing that let spirit of *Eqa* make your behavior as smell as onion.<sup>69</sup>

According to informants, the people worshiped different minor deities side by side with their supreme being *Yeri*. *Garamanjo* was one of the deities which were believed to come from Kaffa. On the other hand, before the introduction of Christianity there was also another type of traditional belief which was the breeding and veneration of serpents in the house of the traditional religious leader. Whereas some few people were also adopted Orthodox Christianity. However, most of the people continued with their traditional religion.<sup>70</sup>

The role of women in religious ceremonies as leader and organizer was unthinkable among the *Chara*. They had no direct role in the ritual activities. According to sources of Addisalem and Abera, during menstruation, had sexual intercourse, it would become impure and unholy. This

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<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Informant: Gelpule Getachew, Oibishi Shifi and resh Altaye.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Addisalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of Chara.*, p.38.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, Informant: Assefa G /Mariam and Taddese oyshal.

was considered as sinful and taboo by the society. All the ritual ceremonies would be performed by the male ritual leaders. In general the women had no ritual leadership position in the society.<sup>71</sup>

According to Lange's argument the people had widely practiced the traditional forms of religion for a long time but to a lesser extent there was also orthodox Christianity. However, the sources of Lange failed to indicate the time when Christianity interred in the area.<sup>72</sup> Other sources indicated that Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity was introduced in the area during the war of Ahmed *Gragn* in the sixteenth century by the immigrant tribes from the north. They brought seven *Tabots* with them and established their first settlement in the Chiri area of Decha warada. The name of these *Tabots* were Kuti Mikael, Wata Mikael, Mera Mikael, Gidi Giyorgis, Baha Giyorgis, Sappa Gabriel, and Chiri Mikael.<sup>73</sup>

But, during this time Christianity had not been expanded in the Chara villages due to language barrier and remoteness of the region. Mostly it was only limited around the town and not able to expand in rural areas, because of the influence of traditional religion. Following Menelik's incorporation of the area in 1897 E.C. some few people in shash localities were baptized as Orthodox Christians. But most of the people were remained under their traditional beliefs.<sup>74</sup>

## **1.4 The Economy**

The economy of Chara people was based on mixed economic activities. They were predominantly agriculturalists, and also engaged in other economic activities such as hunting and gathering, crafts and trade.

### **1.4.1 Hunting and Gathering**

It is difficult to get written documents for the history of an illiterate society without proper record which gives some ideas about the society. Therefore, it needs to refer other sources written in the neighboring people and also oral information. According to the analysis of Lange in his book entitled as *Dialects of Divine Kingship* in the Kaffa High land, hunting had been one of the

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<sup>71</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of The Chara*..., p.38.

<sup>72</sup> Lange, "Gimira Remnants of...", p.158.

<sup>73</sup> Workineh Abebe, "Religious History of Kaffa", BA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, History, 1999) p.39.

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

economic basis of the Chara society. The area is relatively covered with high forests. Here; the rural economy was traditionally based on forest resources used for subsistence mode of life.<sup>75</sup>

The people of Chara had developed their own tradition of gathering different products from the forest, which includes fruits, wild coffee, honey, and spices for the domestic as well as household income generations. Before the expansion of Menilik, the Chara had used to hunt wild animals for economic significance. Hunters (Adagna) in the community mostly killed wild animals Lion, Buffalo, and Tiger. They used their skin for trade and meat for consumption. Among the wild animals Elephants were highly needed by hunters for their Ivory, which has high economic value.<sup>76</sup>

On the other hand, a person who killed big animals like Elephant and Lion would be proud in front of the people. He had been taken as a great and famous individual. Similarly a hunter who had killed more than ten wild animals; would be taken as a hero in the community, The people sang a song and dance a cultural dance for him; in response he should to show one of the body parts of the animal which he killed.<sup>77</sup>

It is said that hunters had used different materials to hunt wild beasts. Based on informants argument local equipments like; the net or trap made from sisal of Enset plant, spear, swords, and shields. Hunting, in the society had not been used only as an economic benefit but also it has cultural significance.<sup>78</sup> However, hunting was diminished in the area because of the increased protection of wild animals and forest resources enacted by the government in 1972 E.C (1980) so the people mostly depended on agricultural activities.<sup>79</sup>

### **1.4.2 Agriculture**

Agriculture is the most dominant sector of the country's economy. According to sources, its contributions could easily tell how dominant in the national economy. Agriculture is the major source of food for the urban population and for producers themselves, it is the most significant source of employment, where over eighty five percent of the population engaged directly or

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<sup>75</sup> Lange, "Dialects Of Divine' Kingship"... , p.4.

<sup>76</sup> Addissalem and Abera *The Ethno-History Of The Chara*..., p.71.

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

<sup>78</sup> Informants: Abraham Alemayehu., Oinagali Kechai and Eresh Altaye.

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

indirectly in the agricultural activities, and it provides raw materials for industries and for markets.<sup>80</sup>

Like other peoples in the region, the economy of Chara was also based on mixed economic activities of farming and animal herding<sup>81</sup>. As sources indicate that, the soil fertility and the forest cover of the area favored for the cultivation of different crops such as barley (*gose*), sorghum (*daara*), miller (*barja*), maize (*blaka*), and others. Among the root crops *Enset* (*uuta*), Yam (*goba*), and potato (*satije*) were widely produced by the people.<sup>82</sup> In addition the vegetables like pumpkin (*bota*) and onion (*tuuma*) are the most important items. Coffee and honey are also the major source of income for the society.<sup>83</sup>

However, the staple food items of the population are including *Kocho* made from *Ensete* root, porridge of corn (*belikagara*) and cassava.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, animal raising had also played a pivotal role in the economy of the population. Animals like cattle, goat, sheep and chicken are reared by the people<sup>85</sup> in other ways the society also used animals for paying tribute, marriage dowries and blood compensation.<sup>86</sup>

According to the traditional belief of the people, however, there was reservation up on certain food items. For example, according to the tradition of the people women didn't eat Chicken (*dera*), and others also didn't eat mutton meat, because they fear that they could die if they eat *dera* or sheep meat. But currently because of some changes the society had began to eat the formerly forbidden meal.<sup>87</sup> As sources argued that, the people had been endowed with different kinds of indigenous knowledge's whom they preserved from their fore fathers. Their long existing Iron work could be one of these examples. They produced various kinds of equipments for agriculture as well as for house hold activities.<sup>88</sup> Some of these materials were, *Gashta*

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<sup>80</sup>Wubet Alemu, "Land Tenure System Of Ethiopia Under The Derg", BA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, Political Science And International Relations, 2001), p.3.

<sup>81</sup> Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities Study..., pp.19-20.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History Of Chara...*, p.66.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Ernesta Cerulli, *Peoples Of the South-West...*, p.104.

<sup>86</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of The Chara...*, p.36.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67.

<sup>88</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of The Chara...*, p.36.

(digging hoe) and *dafa* (Bush knife) which used to clear their agricultural land. They also placed the grain in wooden plate known as *gonga*, which was similar with granary.<sup>89</sup>

Different labor organizations were common among the Chara society. Since agriculture requires intensive labor, the people practiced most of activities being in group. The major labor organizations were named as *Kitya*, *Yedah*, and *Gobsa*. However, when they practiced such activities in group they song different songs. *Yelemasiya* was a common type of traditional song during agricultural activities. They used such a song as an energizer while they are in harvest, weeding and tilling the land.<sup>90</sup> According to informants, such kind of song was done by an artistic expression like jumping and moving up and down in agricultural field. Some example of the song presented as follows:

<i>Yelemasya siyaba</i>	your farm is good
<i>Karba gotina siyaba</i>	Be strong in tilling
<i>Lelese kamana siyaba</i>	You are strong in tilling the land
<i>Mokach grarsa siyaba</i>	Also the local beer you prepared is tasty
<i>Faghaa gotina siyaba</i>	we drink and work hard
<i>Yelemasiya siyaba.</i> <sup>91</sup>	Your farm is so good.

### 1.4.3 Craft industry

It seems to be difficult to identify written sources on the history of craft industry among the Chara society. However, some sources in the area were used as a document. Although, the majority of the population had been practicing mixed economic activities of agriculture, some of them had been involved in craft industries.<sup>92</sup> Some group of people in the society had a skill to practice different kinds of crafts. One of these was Iron work or *mana* in Chara language. Which was an occupational specialization associated with social categories. Within that group people

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<sup>89</sup> Gunnar Haaland, "Smelting Iron: Cast and Its Symbolism In South-Western Ethiopia," *Journal of Archaeology*, Vol.2.No.1 (2004), p.66. See also, Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno- History of the Chara...*, p.65.

<sup>90</sup> Addissalem, pp. 55,65.

<sup>91</sup> Informants: Kero G/Marima, Gosh Fage and Dorpay Oyshal.

<sup>92</sup> Informant: Komadi Kabki, Tesq Shindemer and Gosh Fage.

had produced iron objects needed for agriculture, warfare, as well as spears for investiture of chiefs<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, Iron work had direct relationship with the state formation process. Because, it has significant values for expansion of a territory as well as to defend from external attacks.<sup>94</sup> The region south-west Ethiopia and the area along the river Omo was believed to be known for the evolution of complex states. Different Omotic kingdoms had flourished around this area at different time. Some of them were powerful and centralized like Kaffa, Dawro and Wolaita. Others like Chara and Male were small kingdoms.<sup>95</sup>

The people of Chara had developed their own indigenous knowledge and material culture on craft industry. According to sources some members of the society had a skill in producing different tools like digging materials, knives and spears. The materials were used for various day today activities and also for war.<sup>96</sup>

In the society the group of peoples who were engaged in producing these materials was called Dima. Their contribution was high for the development of economy. However, they were considered as despised groups of people. The society used the materials produced by Dima but they do not respect their profession.<sup>97</sup> In the similar way, as Lange states that, potters, weavers and others workers had a significant position on the economy of the society<sup>98</sup>

#### **1.4.4 Trade**

It is obvious that, trade had been the main source of income among the traditional ruling class of the Chara society. Long distance trade in the lucrative trade items remained the prerogative of the area. However, the informants' knowledge of external trade in the remote past is limited, which perhaps indicates that, long distance trade might have been insignificant in those days. On

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<sup>93</sup> Randi Haaland, "Iron Smelting- A Vanishing Tradition; Ethnographic Study of Craft In South-West Ethiopia." *Journal of African Archaeology*, Vol.2, No.1(2004), p.77.

<sup>94</sup> Randi Haaland, Iron Smelting, ..., p.66.

<sup>95</sup> Gunnar Haaland, Smelting Iron: Cast, ... p.80.

<sup>96</sup> Addissaleem and Abera, *The Ethno-History of The Chara* ... p.62.

<sup>97</sup> Lange, "Gimira Remnants of" ... p.134.

<sup>98</sup> Lange, "Dialects of Divine' Kingship" ... p.4.

the other hand, they are knowledgeable about what was the situation in the late nineteenth century.<sup>99</sup>

Here it is important to associate the development with the general framework of south western Ethiopia. The region where the Chara belonged was the principal source of lucrative trade items in the nineteenth century, which included Ivory, civet, coffee, hide, honey, slaves and several other agricultural products.<sup>100</sup>

This area was stretched from the southern bank of the Abay River in the north to Kaffa and included the lands between Baro and Omo Rivers in the south west.<sup>101</sup> The kingdom of Kaffa was noted for its significance in long distance trade. Bonga the capital of the kingdom was served as the center of the trade in the region.<sup>102</sup> Here in the area the Chara had been played their own share in the long distance trade activities. This was because of the geographical proximity with the route of long distance trade which passed through the Chara localities and also the richness of the society with different trade items or raw materials.<sup>103</sup>

The long distance trade had served to link the south-western Ethiopia to the northern part of the country.<sup>104</sup> The trade route which started initially from the Maji localities passed through Omo River and reached to the Chara area in Decha woreda specifically in the market of Gobadish.<sup>105</sup> From Goba, by gathering trade items like slaves, civet, honey, hide, cardamom and spices like ginger through Chara and Kaffa traders goes to Andracha the famous trade center, then to Bonga. From Bonga the route also passed in to Jiren, Saqa, Asandabo, Basso, Darita, Gondar, and Matama.<sup>106</sup> In the opposite direction, the long distance traders of the nineteenth century imported different items like salt, beads, cloth (Abojedi), and glass from the coast in to the south west. During, this time the exchange system was conducted by using amole (Bar of salt) and sometimes by bartering.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Informant s: Assefa G/Mariam, Oinagali Kechai and Tesq Shindemer.

<sup>100</sup> Bahru, *A history of Modern Ethiopia*..., p.22.

<sup>101</sup> William A. Shak, *The Gurage; A people of Ensete Culture* (London, Newyork, Nairobi, 1966), p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> Bahru, *A history of Modern Ethiopia*..., p.21.

<sup>103</sup> Informant: Tuqure Kanduka, Eresh Altaye and Gosh Fadge.

<sup>104</sup> Bahru, *A history of modern Ethiopia*..., p.22.

<sup>105</sup> Informant: Assefa G/Mariam, Dorpay Oypal and Oynagali.

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

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

On the other hand, based on the argument of Mohammed Seid, slaves were traded like other commodities in the market. It was known that the region southwest and Kaffa kingdom together with the Chara area was used as a major source of slaves. Most of slaves had been acquired by force full means of slave-raids and sold in open markets in Tifa near to Andracha, then to Jimma (Hirmata).<sup>108</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century Coffee become the major item of trade in the area.<sup>109</sup> However, traders were challenged by robbery when crossing the Omo and the dense forests of Kaffa kingdom. Sometimes there was killing of traders.<sup>110</sup> The trade items traded in the local markets, after the incorporation of the area was cattle, sheep Goat, butter, honey, coffee cotton, and others.<sup>111</sup> In the local markets of Boya, Zaf, Shash, and Dura, different commodities were exchanged.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Mohammed Seid, "A Social Institution of Slavery and Slave Trade in Ethiopia: Revisited," *African Journal of History and Culture*, Vol.7, No.3 (Turkey, 2004), p.85.

<sup>109</sup> Addissalem, *The Ethno-History of The Chara...*, p.69.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction To The Economic History of Ethiopia* (London, England, 1961), p.315.

<sup>111</sup> Informant: Alemayehu Ambo, Tamene Feyisa and Ashenafi Alemu.

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



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2 SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE CHARA PEOPLE

It has been difficult to get written sources regarding the clan organization of the Chara society. The existing very few materials were fragmented and not in a position to express the social organizations in detail. However, the accounts of oral informants and the tradition of the society have given some highlights.

Based on the hierarchal structure of the society the top position was occupied by the traditional kings and the religious leaders. Farmers or peasants were arranged in the middle position or second class which includes the mass of the population. In the third or the last level different occupational groups were arranged as a lowest group of the society.<sup>113</sup>

The highest political power in the Chara society was exercised by the *Tata* or king of Chara. Similarly *Adubo* was the head of the traditional religious leader. Both of them were nominated from the *Boqas* clan and had equal power. But the king had expected to give tribute in kind to the spiritual leader annually.<sup>114</sup>

The power of the ruling class was based on the line of hereditary or through the membership in a particular clan in the society. Both the *Tata* and *Adubo* were appointed from the clan in the highest position. However, according to the argument of Tegist, the king of Chara had mostly held political power, where as the *Tata* also exercised mainly religious power, he was believed by the people that he had the power to bless the society through different occasions.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, sources argued that the role of the *Tata* was not clearly listed, even sometimes there was confusion regarding their power and authority. For example, the *Tata* or king of Chara, as Addissalem stated, considered himself as a religious leader and sacrifices cattle to avoid famine, drought and other instabilities<sup>116</sup>. But informants believed that the *Tata* was the king of Chara with the highest political power. He was considered to have a divine power.<sup>117</sup> On the other way, as Lange argues he had been regarded as ‘aking of the sky and Thunder’, so, was

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<sup>113</sup> Lange, “Dialects of Divine Kingship”...p.4.

<sup>114</sup> Tegist, “Unique Ethiopia”...p.46.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Addissalem and Abera, *The Ethno- History of The Chara*...p.33.

<sup>117</sup> Informant: Tamene Tesema, Wombere Pasmer and Gelpule Getachew.

accepted by the people that he avoided the illness by praying to yero. Due to this the people provided him with gifts of sheep and goat<sup>118</sup>.

Similarly, *Adubo* the religious leader sometimes exercised political power out of his prerogative right this led to conflict between the two powers. On the other hand, the religious leader had been nominated after the spirit of *Ego* (the highest spiritual power) entered in to him and which was accepted by the local people. According to sources, immediately after his appointment he had also descended his power for the two selected persons of *Buraza* and *Bokeadbara* (the two most important power structures in the traditional religion).<sup>119</sup>

Regarding to the power transition of the rulers, most of the time a deceased *Tata* had been succeeded by his eldest son. In the absence of a son, his brother would inherit him. The heir was not only held the power but also all the properties of the deceased ruler including his houses and ring which was used as symbol of royalty.<sup>120</sup>

According to the social division of the society the ordinary people or the mass were hierarchically arranged in the position of middle class. They were considered as servants or subjects of the king and obliged to give different services to the king. As informants confirmed that the subject people had obliged to work in the harvest of crops in every harvesting time. In addition the people also participated by giving labor service to the kings, on the other hand they have also to give tribute in kind. The tribute was collected by the assistants of the king. Mostly, the item of tribute was sheep and goat. Sometimes honey and grain was used as an item of tribute.<sup>121</sup>

## **2.2 Occupational Groups**

Like other societies in the region the Chara had also classified in to various occupational groups. According to the tradition they were relegated to the lowest level of social division.

### **2.2.1 The Manja (Bandu)**

According to Randi Haalands, in the society some of the occupations like Potter (*kontena*), Hunter (*Yidi*), and smiths (*dima*) were performed by the *Manjas*. However, these groups of

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<sup>118</sup> Lange, "Gimira Remnants of" ..., p.148.

<sup>119</sup> Tegest, "Unique Ethiopia" ..., p.47.

<sup>120</sup> Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia* ..., p.57.

<sup>121</sup> Informants: Alemayehu Ambo and, Assefa G/Mariam.

people were existed at the lowest level of the social structure. They live in the forest by hunting animals for their subsistence and gathering fire wood for making charcoal. They were segregated and despised by the rest groups of the population. Economically, as well as politically they were also in the lowest stage of development.<sup>122</sup>

The *Bandu* were considered as a sub human being, had to sit on the ground near the door, got food presented in leaves because plates touched by them could not be used by others. Similarly, there were restrictions on greetings, communal labor and burial grounds. One of the reasons they were looked down upon was their habit of eating bush meat like wild pigs and bushbuck which was not ritually slaughtered and considered as taboo by others.<sup>123</sup>

However, before the *Darg* era the *Bandu* was engaged on hunting wild animals and gathering food for their living. But the increased protection of wild animals and forests by the government changed the living condition of the *Bandu*. On the other hand during the *Darg* period they started working on their plots of land because they got the right of land ownership which was not possible before the 1975 E.C (1983) declaration of land. So, the *Bandu* entered on the cultivation of Coffee as a cash crop and root plants for house consumption similarly, they keep bees, cows, sheep and goats. Despite, their economic status had been improved still they live in separate villages and had no marriage relation as well as social interaction between other peoples.<sup>124</sup>

### **2.2.2 Black Smith (Dima)**

This was another occupational group of the people who were discriminated like the *Bandu*. The Chara call them *Dimamana* because they believed that they were originated from Dime area in the near southwestern part of the Omo valley. Although, they had been played important roles in the society, they were at the low status and excluded by the majority.<sup>125</sup>

According to Randi Haaland's analysis, the *Dima* made different objects like axe, spear, and knives and other agricultural objects. However, they were socially segregated as a result of their

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<sup>122</sup> Randi Haaland, "Iron smelting"..., p.66.

<sup>123</sup> Informants: Kero G/Mariam and Tadesse Oyshal .

<sup>124</sup> Sayuri Yoshida, *The struggle against social Discrimination: In the Kaffa Zone of southwest Ethiopia* (Osaka university, Japan, 2013), p.8; Tesfaye Zergaw, *A survey History of World, Africa and Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 2001), p.333; Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Demise Bongo.

<sup>125</sup> Gunar Haaland, "Furnace and pot"..., p.149.

occupation. On the other hand, the *Dima* were segregated from the non *Dima* peoples and settled in a lower lying part of the village.<sup>126</sup>

In the society the *Dima* was not treated as equal with others, and even the people would not allow a smith to come near to his home. They were mostly segregated during all communal eating or drinking occasions. A *Dima* was not even permitted to seat near a non-smith house, let alone to enter in it. As the tradition indicates that, marriage relationship between them was not allowed and the society believes that it leads to pollution of high ranking group of peoples, but the marriage between the same groups were acceptable.<sup>127</sup>

Previously, they were not allowed to own their own land, property, and livestock. But after the 20<sup>th</sup> century, following some socio-political changes their livelihoods were changed. Due to progresses, some of them were started farming and rare different animals. In addition, their relationship with the majority groups of farmers in the area was also changed.<sup>128</sup>

### **2.2.3 Potters (Kontena)**

Pottery was another type of traditional craft in Chara society. Potters are mostly prevalent in *Chocha* districts than northern Chara. This was because the raw material or clay soil was available at *Chocha* localities. Like other ethnic groups, it was an occupation of one section of a society.<sup>129</sup> According to Lange's argument, the wives of the smith functions pottery. The potters are called *Kontena* in Chara language. They made items like small and large pitchers, coffee pots, grinders and other objects. The materials were sold in the local markets.<sup>130</sup>

The society enjoys the materials which made by the potters. But potters were despised and socially separated from the other people in different social activities. Marriage relationship was also not allowed between these occupational groups.<sup>131</sup> Even though potters were the main agents of technical innovation in the area, they were despised and out casted. However, due to attention from the military government and their ownership right of land, as well as some attitudinal

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<sup>126</sup>Randi Haaland", Iron Smelting a Vanishing Tradition", ... p.66.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid*, p.66. See also Lange, "Gimira Remnants of" ..., p.137.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup>Getachew Sineshaw, "An inventory of The Intangible Cultural Heritage of The South and Southwestern Nations and Nationalities", *Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Vol.3, No.3 (Addis Ababa, Dec, 2009), p.169.

<sup>130</sup>Lange, "Gimira Remnants of" ..., p.135.

<sup>131</sup>Getachew, "An Inventory of The Intangible" ..., p.169.

changes, the problem against them was minimized. This does not mean that they have completely lost out of social influence. They are deprived in the participation of any communal issues such as religious and social affairs.<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, women potters have stopped making pottery as a way to generate income and only they made these materials for their own use at home. One of the reasons was the wide spread use of kitchen materials made of aluminum and plastic decreased the demand for pottery. Another reason was the potter believed that, their practice of pottery was one of the causes that discriminated them.<sup>133</sup>

### 2.3 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism

Traditionally, the Chara had developed their own indigenous conflict resolution methods. This way of traditional problem solving mechanism had continued up until the incorporation of the area by the forces of Menilik II. After the conquest, modern administration structure was introduced. On the other hand, the indigenous cultural values and methods which were used to resolve conflicts had been minimized and new type of local administration were followed.<sup>134</sup>

On the other hand, the highest judicial power in the Chara society was exercised by a traditional religious leader or *Adubo*. He played a significant role in solving various conflicts through peaceful and traditional means. The decisions passed by *Adubo* would be the final and no appeal at all<sup>135</sup>.

The process of conflict resolving methods among the society had followed mainly two steps. As informants argued that, in the first step minor cases like theft and, insult, were managed. In order to judge and deliver decision for these issues *Adubo* gave power and order for the council of elders. The members of the council (elders) were chosen from sub clans of *Busho*, *Olman*,

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<sup>132</sup> Sayuri Yshida, *The struggle against...* p.8: Informants; Bangur Shindemer, Kero G/Mariam and Tades oyshal.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Jon Abbink, "Authority And Leadership In Surma Society (Ethiopia)", *Journal of North East African Studies*, Vol.13, No number (Addisababa, Ethiopia, 1997), p.320, Zegeye W/Mariam, "Change and Continuity in The Indigenous Institution of Qoollee Deejoo Ritual Practice and Its Forest Resource management Among The Kafecho", *Journal of History and Culture*, Vol.9, No.3 (Mekelle, Ethiopia, 2017), p.16.

<sup>135</sup> Addissaleem, *The Ethno-History Of the Chara...* p.35.

and *Gindeb*. The criteria used to choose these individuals were their wisdom and ability to speak. Accordingly, they have responsible to see minor cases in their respective localities.<sup>136</sup>

It was belived that the most illegal action or the highest crime had been managed by *Adubo* himself. According to informants, some issues were settled through the process Known as *Inisa*. *Inisa* had its own steps. As the tradition of the society indicates that killing is one of the major illegal actions and considered as a sin by the traditional religion. However, the issue of killing was not judged by the council of elders, but the case could be seen by *Adubo*.<sup>137</sup>

On the other hand, the immediate family of the killer would run to report the case towards the religious leader in the area. Accordingly, *Adubo* decided to see the case. He also set the time and gave appointment, which would be suitable to both groups. The assistants of *Adubo* would also facilitate the condition to be held in a successful manner.<sup>138</sup> Then, during the day of the appointment the families of the deceased in one side and the killer on the opposite direction being in the middle with *Adubo* they sat in front of the house of *Eqqo* or spirit of traditional religion. Then the process of investigation would continue. According to the Chara belief a person who had committed killing should never deserts his action, which is why they sat near to the spirit house.<sup>139</sup>

Based on the decision of *Adubo*, the murderer has to give more than three cattle and a girl for the family of the deceased. According to the tradition of the society, the girl would be given in marriage to a relative of the victim. When there was blood relation the lady would be given to grow up in the home of the deceased families. As informants argued that, this was done because they believed that the women would give birth and “replace” the dead person. When she was old enough to marry, her bride wealth was given to the family of the victim. So, she would be taken as a member of the family and no animosity between the two groups would be granted.<sup>140</sup>

On the other hand, during the process of conflict resolution, cattle would be slaughtered and the blood flown on the ground. Then, the two parties were ordered to jump the blood by the assistants of *Adubo* and they crossed on their opposite direction. After this process, all of them

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<sup>136</sup>Informants: Tamene Feyisa, Wombere and Kero Belachew.

<sup>137</sup> Council of Nationalities, *The Profile of SNNPRS*, ... p.216.

<sup>138</sup> Addissaleem, *Ethno-History Of The Chara*... p35.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid*, Informants: Ashenafi Alemu and Tamene feyisa .

were instructed to sit on the ground. Finally, both of the families eat the meat and drink Geza together to indicate their agreement<sup>141</sup>

## 2.4 Marriage System in Chara

Based on the social division of the society, the people have been classified in to high and low clans. Among the high clans, *Boqatsa*, *Duasa'a*, *Arkatsa*, and *Bezuyatsa* were considered as the royal clans and they have a leading position in the socio-political life of the society. On the contrary, some clans like *Bandu*, *Bacha*, and occupational groups were seen as the lower clans. They were not allowed to marry with the members of the royal clans.<sup>142</sup>

As Addisalem stated that, there are five types of marriage (*Komitteeba*) arrangements which were practiced by the people. These are *Zorta* (negotiation between two groups), *Aashiti* (arranged marriage), *Jaqita* (abduction), *Worasha* (levirate marriage), and marriage with the traditional religious leader.<sup>143</sup>

*Zorta* has been the most widely practiced types of marriage among the Chara society. According to sources, it has been formed with the consent of a boy and a girl. No one is allowed to guide them, even their family could not have a right to interfere between them. Similarly, this type of marriage has been practiced when a boy loves a girl. He selects a girl at wedding or at a market place.<sup>144</sup>

After the negotiation and discussion between the two spouses become over, the boy sends a group of elders to her family. The elders then enter in to the girls homestead and explain the purpose of their visit and ask the parents to give their daughter to the asking family by describing the social and economic status of the boy with his parents.<sup>145</sup>

After a brief discussion on the issue, they arrange an appointment for a week later. The purpose of this appointment was in order to inform the issue for the close relatives and families of the girl. During the second visit again, the two groups discuss on the issue in detail and at the end,

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Informant: Kero G/Mariam and Bangur shidemer.

<sup>143</sup> Addisalem, p.46.S

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Council Of Nationalities, *The Profile...*, pp. 148-149.

the girl's parents accept the elders demand. Finally, they arrange a time for the bride wealth, according to culture of the society a popular gift was a cow, cloth and one hundred birr.<sup>146</sup>

The other type of marriage which was practiced by the Chara was known as *Aashitieba*. In this type of marriage, the boy who wants to marry the lady runs to take away the Jeweler from her neck and hide him in the bush. When any one, the family of a girl had not able to take Jeweler back to the girl, a boy would marry the lady. However, the boy had been stayed in the bush until the elders negotiated her family. This process was known as *Gizzabartsa*.<sup>147</sup>

After her family agreed the boy who hides in the bush could come to his family home and started to arrange the bride wealth. As a custom of the society during the presentation of dowry various traditional foods, coffee, and *Geza* were served for the elders. In the middle of the feast, the female bride's parents allow to enter their home. He has to kiss her parent's feet, however, the bride was not given immediately after engagement, and she has to stay for a year in her parents' home before the wedding ceremony.<sup>148</sup>

The third type of marriage was named as *Jaqita* (Abduction), which would be done without the interest of the girl through forceful means. Formerly it was a common kind of marriage among the society; however, currently *Jaqita* was greatly minimized. Some of the reasons, as sources indicated that, after the period of 1975 E.C. because of awareness development activities of the government, and the acceptance of the society which rejected the custom of *Jaqita* and it was considered as a crime.<sup>149</sup>

Based on informants argument, in the event of abduction process there was conflict between the families of the girl and the boy. Sometimes even loss of life had been happened. However, even the groom wins in the struggle during *Jaqita* the tradition was not allowed him to make love with the girl before he pays the dowry.<sup>150</sup>

There was also another type of marriage arrangement among the Chara which was known as *Worasha* (Inheritance). As informants states that it was a marriage that took place when the

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<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>Tadesse GebreTsadik, "Buno," *Annual Magazine*, Vol.1, No.8 (KZCI, 2008), p.34.

<sup>148</sup>Getachew Senishaw, *An Inventory of the Intangible...*, pp.164-165.

<sup>149</sup>Tadesse G/Tsadik, "Bunoo",...,p.36.

<sup>150</sup>Informants : Tadedese Oyshal, Gosh Fage and resh Altaye.



husband dies. The immediate brother of the deceased would marry the women. When the deceased had no brother, his nephew marries his wife.<sup>151</sup> Again, when he had no brother and nephew, the nearest relative would be expected to marry the women. The reason behind such type of marriage according to informants was, to protect the children of the deceased and his properties being used by another person who had no blood relation with them<sup>152</sup>

The last form of marriage was a marriage which was formed with a traditional religious leader. As sources indicated that, this kind of marriage had been arranged without the bride wealth or dowry. When a lady was sick her families took the lady towards the religious leader to get cure the lady. The people believed that the religious man had a power to cure the sick person. So, after she become free from her illness, she would be given to the religious man.<sup>153</sup>

The wedding ceremony of Chara had a unique feature from other ethnic groups in the area. According to sources, in the occasion some traditional foods like "Kochie" which would be prepared from cassava, "Chumo" or a kind of drink made from coffee leave, and *Geza* or traditional Beer served for the guests. The ceremony completes only by drinking *Geza* and firing a gun.<sup>154</sup>

It is said that, married women of Chara had a custom to wear *gizza* or multi-color glass beads, earrings, silver bracelets and anklets. They also apply "shallo", an ointment made from red soil and castor oil, on their hair. On the other hand, unmarried young girls had also shave off their hair leaving a little at the crown of their head and paint with red clay soil. It was easy to identify their age and marital status simply by looking at their dress and wearing styles.<sup>155</sup>

## **2.5 Death and Burial Ceremonies**

The morning ceremony of Chara would be done based on age, sex and social status. The ritual performances vary for the death of members of the traditional ruling class, religious leaders and common people. During the event when the traditional king of Chara or *Tata* become severely ill,

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<sup>151</sup> Getachew Senishaw, *An Intangible...*, p.165.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Addissalem *The Ethno-History of Chara...*, p.48.

<sup>154</sup> Council Of Nationalities, *The profile...*, p.217.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, Getachew, *An Inventory...* p.166.

he sends one of his assistants (*Halafa*) to call his elder son with the member of the royal family. The king would tell them whom he wishes to succeed him. This should be his eldest son.<sup>156</sup>

The death of a king had not been immediately announced to the public, but the members of the royal family began to prepare some food like *Kochie*, and *Geza*, a cultural drink. In addition the Ox to be killed during the ceremony also prepared. The body of the deceased king has been placed on a new bed, when visitors come to visit the king, they had not been allowed and told that, he was a sleep and very ill.<sup>157</sup>

Based on the custom of the people they understand the message, so spread the news rapidly. However, they do not explicitly state that the king has passed away, but the appropriate saying was “he is lost” or symbolically “the mountain has fallen”.<sup>158</sup> At this time, the elder son of the deceased king began to wash the dead body with blood of sacrificed cattle and placed it in the skin of cattle and prepared the corpse for burial.<sup>159</sup>

It is said that, during the ceremony the successor of the *Tata*, the elder son of the deceased king had been started to wear *Boya*’ jewelry of his father made up of bead. It is an indication of peaceful transition of traditional administration from father to son; his sister also put Gona up on his neck, which was a kind of thread made from animal hide.<sup>160</sup>

However, before the funeral ceremony, of the deceased king, the mourners hit and killed black oxen on its head and put its skin around the successor’s shoulders. The candidate is now in the process of becoming a king, but it is not so yet. During the funeral ceremony, more cows were killed from the herds of both the old and new kings.<sup>161</sup>

In the next day, according to sources, messengers were sent out to call people, and a bullet was also fired in honor of the deceased to officially open the funeral ceremony. Accordingly, the mourners arrived based on their village units, and perform elaborate rites. Each village member

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<sup>156</sup> Addissaleem, *The Ethno-History of The Chara...*, p.51.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Lange, “Gimira Remnants of”... p.144.

<sup>160</sup> Addissaleem, p.51.

<sup>161</sup> Getachew, *An Inventory of The Intangible...*, p.166.

enters as a unit, and its men do not use the foot path. However, they walk on the bush, together with their village members by holdingspears and crying.<sup>162</sup>

The mourners suddenly run through the grass by yelling and threatening to stab the king's kinsmen. Their entry appears to suggest the disorder and hostility of a kingdom without a king. After a complex symbolic exchange the new king stands up wearing the black cow skin. In this process the mourners dances a cultural dance known as *Ilonga* around the new king and also sing songs. By doing so, they gave their public assent to the choice made by the old king.<sup>163</sup>

In the evening the relatives of the deceased carry the dead body which was wrapped in an Ox skin and took it to the burial place which was located at Zazi in Chocha area.<sup>164</sup> The new king also accompanies the body of the old king, and the people dance in honor of both the deceased and his successor.<sup>165</sup> Three instruments were used in the ceremony of dancing, these were, *Kulla* or drum, *Dokauca* or Ivory trumpet and *Korkora* or Iron bangles which tied around the thighs.<sup>166</sup>

According to tradition, the dead body of the king was placed in to a hooking position in a normal -sized grave. It was poured by the blood of cattle. Containers full of milk and honey was also placed on the top of the grave. Based on the tradition the spirit of *Ego* would consume the blood and honey<sup>167</sup>

After the funeral ceremony, the new king remains seated on the stone near to the grave holding in each hand an *Ensete* leaf , which shows good hope for the future of his reign. The officials also kill cow and gives the king the bottom half of each leg to hold in the leaves. During this process the king may not feed himself, but feed by his assistants. In the night he washed his body on River. According to the belief, he was now free to eat using his hands.<sup>168</sup>

As a sign of mourning, all adult males shaved their heads and cut their fore heads. However, female adults shaved only their fore heads. According to sources the coronation ceremony of the

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<sup>162</sup> Informants:Komadi Kabki,Duchi Sliteand Oibishi Shifi.

<sup>163</sup> Informant:*Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Lange, "Gimira Remnants Of" ... p.144

<sup>165</sup>Getachew, p.167.

<sup>166</sup> Lange,p.145.

<sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Informant:Bachi Woshani and Oibishi Shifi.

king may stay for a month. The family of the deceased king took a piece of thread made from Ox skin, which was worn for one year to show the death of the king.<sup>169</sup>

Informants stated that, three periods were significant after the death of the king and its aftermath. These were the funeral day, the seventh day ceremony, and the termination of the mourning. On the funeral day, the relatives of the deceased king sacrifice and honor the king by their mourning. Again on the seventh day, they celebrated the day by sacrificing and eating meat.<sup>170</sup>

Finally, it was said that, in the last occasion the nephews of the dead king pour ‘geza’ on the burial place of the king, this was the event taken as teskar for the dead king, and it was may be borrowing from the neighboring Kaffa tradition. After all of this process, the people would burn any kind of crops around the house of the deceased king including a tent made from local materials for the ceremony.<sup>171</sup>

## 2.6 Holiday Celebration

It is said that, the people had a tradition to celebrate holydays during the harvest period. As Addisalem states that, the people had developed the habit of working together through voluntary labor organizations. Every hamlet had its own labor groups which perform agricultural activities like harvest.<sup>172</sup>

During the process of harvest the people sung a type of song named as *Lerko* which was a kind of song used by the group members who finished their harvest before other groups. Its aim was to instigate others to be strong and finish their harvest like them on time. Some part of the song presented as follows:

<i>WO...ho...lerko, lerko</i>	We finished before others...
<i>Wosta woxambe lerko</i>	We completed our work first...
<i>WO...ho...lerko</i>	We finished the harvest while others not finish..
<i>Geza wosembie</i>	We harvestd from one end to the other..
<i>Gafa kayembie lerko</i>	your geza was enough and we are happy...
<i>Geshete kokembie lerko.</i> <sup>173</sup>	So, we can rest now...

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<sup>169</sup> Lange,p.145.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Addissalem,p.52.

<sup>172</sup> Addissalem,p.54.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*,pp.57-58.

After the harvest had been over, the people went to *Eqqo* to perform their thanks and to give sacrifice to the spirit of their god. According to informants, they took bread and *geza* from the first yield with them; they believed that the food had been consumed by the spirit of their ancestors. In the spirit house *Adubo* conveyed his words of blessing by saying: “My father’s spirit, maintain my environment, my house and people. Let our people harvest Much yield, breed cattle”...<sup>174</sup>

However, due to the influence of Christian teachings the cultural holiday and ritual ceremony had been declining from time to time, and the people had started to celebrate the occasion in their home by preparing food and drinks.<sup>175</sup>

## **2.7 Slavery and Slave Trade**

Similar with others, the Chara was one of the victims of slavery and slave trade. Due to the negative consequences of slave trade the number of population was diminished and severe social crisis were followed in the area. As sources indicate slaves were the most important trade items during the nineteenth century. The practice of slavery was continued until the first half of twentieth century.<sup>176</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the region of southwest Ethiopia was the main source for slaves. According to literature, the trade was facilitated by feudal administrators (*balabats*) and merchants. Local rulers were produced slaves and sold to near by markets. Most of slaves were hunted by raiding, kidnapping as well as war captives, particularly, in the areas of Kaffa, Chara, Dawro, and yam slaves were kidnapped and sold in the nearby slave markets in Jimma.<sup>177</sup>

According to the argument of Mohammed Seid, Emperor Menilik II’s expansion in to the southwestern territories were produced large number of slaves, particularly his war with Kaffa in 1897 E.C. and the resistance he faced by the local people, Menilik ordered his soldiers to enslave the residents of the area by forceful means.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Informant: Gelpule Getachew and Tamene Feyesa.

<sup>175</sup> Council of Nationalities, *The Profile*...p.149.

<sup>176</sup> Mohammed A. Seid, “A Social Institution of Slavery and Slave Trade”,...p.85.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, p.87, Donham and James, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986), p.

<sup>178</sup> Mohammed, p.87.

By the time, many thousands of local inhabitants was deported and sold in to different parts of the country as slaves.<sup>179</sup> However, Menilik's policy of the abolition of slavery was failed.<sup>180</sup> Two factors were responsible for the failure of his policy. The first and the most important one was his south ward expansion of new areas, due to the continuous wars in the region Menilik himself participated a massive enslavement of the captives of war<sup>181</sup>. The other reason for the failure of Menilik's policy regarding to the abolition of slavery was his highly dependence on foreign traders for his importation of firearms. These traders inturn operated on the good will of the coastal chiefs who collected taxes on slaves. Menilik well aware of the situation and interferences with the slave trade would ultimately affect the imports of fierearms failed to stop slavery.<sup>182</sup>

The kingdom of Jimma was the largest center of slave trade during the reign of Abba Jiffar II; this was due to the geographical location and proximity of the area for trade coming from the southwest.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, Jimma had main markets that slaves sold openly like other commodities, among them Hirmata was the largest of all markets founded near to the palace and held on every Thursday.<sup>184</sup>

Emperor Menilik was succeeded by his grand son *Lij* Iyassu; however, the new king did nothing for the abolition of slavery and slave trade. He even participated in slave raiding. According to sources, in 1912 he had captured and raided many peoples in south western areas. There was no effort to abolish slavery during the reign of Iyassu.<sup>185</sup>

On the other hand, based on informant's argument, during the reign of Menilik II and Iyassu manypeoplewere sold in to slavery by forceful kidnapping.<sup>186</sup> As they reported that some of their ancestors were stillliving in Addis Ababa. On the similar way, as informants states that during

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<sup>179</sup> Herbert S. Lewis, A Galla (Oromo) Monarchy of Jimma Abba Jifar, Ethiopia 1830-1932 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1964), p.66.

<sup>180</sup> Jon R. Edwards, "Slavery, The Slave Trade and The Economic Reorganization of Ethiopia 1916-1935, African Economic History", Vol.no, No.11 (Wisconsin, 1982), p.5.

<sup>181</sup> Mohammed, A social Institution of Slavery...., p.89.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Lewis, p.49.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>185</sup> Mohammed "A Social Institution of Slavery"...., p.89.

<sup>186</sup> Informants : Tuqure Kanduca, Wombere Passmer and Oinagali Kechai.

this time some clan members like Zaqita were raided and sold the other clan members or Gaizatsa.<sup>187</sup>

A very decisive measure regarding to the abolition of slavery was taken by Tafari, the regent in 1923.<sup>188</sup> By this time Ethiopia had been applied for the membership of the League of Nations.<sup>189</sup> However, the league forced Ethiopia to stop the slave trade based on its international declarations.<sup>190</sup> So, Ethiopia proclaimed the trading of slaves as a crime punishable by death.<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, it was not so easy for Haile Selassie to convince his own southern governors that they should stop their profitable slave trading, because their economy had been mainly based on slave trade.<sup>192</sup>

Max Gruhl states that, slavery was the act of immorality, Max Gruhl, who passed from Jirenn south to Kaffa in May 1930; put his eye witness accounts regarding slave trade as follows:

Terrible day the worst we have experienced up to now. My hearts bleed in mud and water. We were scarcely recognizable as human beings when along a path that was in reality a swampy water course we saw approaching a procession that defies the ablest pen to portray. Were they human? One could hardly believe it ... men and women practically naked chained to one another, leading a naked children by the hand or carrying them like bundles on their backs, dragged themselves through the filth and were driven like cattle by heartless captors. slaves; a slave train in the twentieth century: no figment of an over head fancy, but human beings that had been torn from their homes and dragged away to meet an unknown fate often falling by the way side like sick animal ... if i had been able, i could have shot the slave dealers as i would mad dogs...<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Informants : Selas Woraqi, Alemu Mulaye and Mengesha Keto.

<sup>188</sup> Edwards, "Slavery, The slave Trade" ...p.7.

<sup>189</sup> Cynthia Salvadori, *Slaves and Ivory Continued Letters of RCR Whalley British Council, Maji, SW Ethiopia 1930-1935* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2010), p.18.

<sup>190</sup> Mohammed, p.90.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Guluma Gameda, "Subsistence, Slavery and Violence in The Lower Omo Valley, Ca. 1898-1940s" *Journal of North East African Studies*, Vol.12, No.1 (1990), p.6.

<sup>193</sup> Max Gruhl, *The Citadel of Ethiopia, The Empire of the Divine Emperor* (London, 1932), p.21.

In the similar way as Lange's argument, the Chara had been affected by the legacy of slave trade, and the area was served as an important source of slaves for traders.<sup>194</sup> Based on the accounts of informants Arab merchants were also participated in the slave trade of the area, in the Market of Tifa near to the palace of Andracha Arab merchants were traded with slaves and other items. Near to the market there was a Mosque named as Tongola founded by Arab slave traders and it has seven hundred years old.<sup>195</sup>

The act of slave trade, however, continued from the conquest of Chara in 1897 E.C. up until the time of Tafari the Reagent in 1923 E.C. On the similar way the trade by slaves had been continued through armed traders in the area specifically in Gaki village. Because of slavery the people had been suffered the problem of extinction in consequence, it was true that slavery was not disappeared from Chara during the period of 1920s.<sup>196</sup>

However, after the period of 1930s E.C the subsequent decline in the supply of slaves encouraged the reorganization of the economic base from slaves to Coffee and hide.<sup>197</sup> However, the total abolition of slavery had been appeared in April 1936 by the Italians who freed thousands of slaves in different parts of the country.<sup>198</sup> They were deliberately used the issue of slavery as a means to advance in Ethiopia, they claimed to justify their pre-war propaganda against Ethiopia, Publicizing the existence of slavery in Ethiopia and the violence in the southwest region. Actually, this helped them sweep the ground for the five year occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1940).<sup>199</sup> After this period the Italians were created a job opportunity for the freed slaves in the construction infrastructure of the country, on the other hand Ex-slaves of the south west were allowed to settle in the village near the town in Jimma.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup>Lange, p.132.

<sup>195</sup> Informant: Assefa G/Mariam and persi ganderi; *The profile of SNNPRS*, ...p. 133.

<sup>196</sup> Lange, p.131.

<sup>197</sup>Edward “, Slavery, The Slave Trade”..., p.10.

<sup>198</sup> Mohammed, p.90.

<sup>199</sup>Guluma, p.15.

<sup>200</sup>Mohammed, p.90.



## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. RELATION OF CHARA WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS

#### 3.1 Chara and the Kaffecho

The relation of Chara with the neighbors in the past had not clearly been known, this was due to lack of written sources which deals with the interaction of different groups of people. Until the incorporation of Chara into the Ethiopian empire in 1897, they had developed the socio-economic and traditional administration system stabilized a small kingdom in the area.<sup>201</sup>

However, this doesn't show that there was only peaceful interaction with the neighboring peoples. They had been formed good relations with some of their immediate neighbors and hostile relations with others. According to sources, the Chara had maintained more or less **good** relations with the kaffecho people. This was due to their closeness and common cultural similarities between them.<sup>202</sup>

On the other hand, it is said that in the last quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century the Chara had been included in to the Kaffa kingdom by the rule of Shagisherecho (1765-1768) since this time the Chara and Kaffecho relations were laid down and gradually developed in to the highest stage through the same local administration<sup>203</sup>

On the eve of the conquest of Menelik II the Chara people were one of the tributaries of the kingdom of Kaffa. They had retained the independence of their internal rule and their relation by paying the annual tribute to the Kaffa kingdom.<sup>204</sup> According to informants the traditional rulers of Chara had collecting item of tribute like cattle, honey, cardamom and coffee from their respective localities and gave to the rulers of Kaffa kingdom.<sup>205</sup> It was said that, the Chara and Kaffecho had developed their good relations through their common traditional belief and annual visit of Ibedogoda which was head of all traditional religions located at Adiyowarada Shaka

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<sup>201</sup> Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia The Evolution of...*, p.38.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Manoel De Almedia, *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646, The History of High Ethiopia or Abassia* (London, 1954), p.Ix.

<sup>204</sup> Bekele Woldemariam, p.13.

<sup>205</sup> Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Gerkisho G/micael.

qabalein Kaffa province. According to their belief, all the traditional religious leaders of Chara had obligation to visit the head of the traditional religions.<sup>206</sup>

During their visit of Ibedogoda they give some gifts like grain and honey by the name of their respective people of traditional religious believers. After this process they get recognition from Ibedogoda and only they are legal to continue their customary religious activities.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand trade was also another way which created or facilitated strong relations between the people of Chara and Kaffecho. Informants states that in the local market of Gobadish, Angela, Tifa, and Chiri the two groups were traded with different items of trade. Mostly agricultural products like, grain, honey, spices, milk, cattle, sheep and others were presented by the Chara traders.<sup>208</sup> The Kaffecho traders on their part also traded with some industrial products like cloth, salt, soap, oil and other items.<sup>209</sup>

As far as the relation of Chara and Kaffecho was concerned there was no marked difference between them on the social aspects of life. However, language is the only variation which distinguishes the two groups of people.<sup>210</sup> Sources indicate that, the commonalities are more noticeable than the differences. There were similarities on the cultural practices, clan structure as well as religious practices. After Menelik's incorporation of the region however, the two groups of people were extended their relations based on neighborhood, social co-operation and even marriage relations.<sup>211</sup>

On the other hand according to Lange's argument in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the relations between the two peoples were deteriorated this was due to slavery and slave trade. The powerful Kaffa rulers were used the Chara as a slave source for their trade activities. They sold some the Chara peoples by using their force.<sup>212</sup> Informants also agreed by this idea, accordingly, they reported that most of our relatives and families were sold in to into slavery using forceful means. Mostly, the slave trade was conducted by the rulers and some merchants who formed alliance with the Kaffa

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<sup>206</sup> Amnon Orent, "Refocusing on the History of Kaffa prior to 1897: A discussion of political process", *Journal of African Historical studies*, vol.3 No.2 (1970), p.280.

<sup>207</sup> Informants: *Ibid*, Assefa G/mariam and Gerkisho G/micael.

<sup>208</sup> Institute Of Ethiopian Nationalities Study, *Short Guide*,... p.19.

<sup>209</sup> Informants: *Ibid*, Assefa G/mariam and Gerkish G/micael.

<sup>210</sup> Orent, p.267.

<sup>211</sup> Addisalem, *The Ethno-History*..., p.33 ; Informants: Assefa G/mariam and Alemayehu Ambo.

<sup>212</sup> Lange, *Gimira*..., p.131.

rulers. So, according to them the slave trade was one of the problems in the past which had negative consequences on the number of the Chara population.<sup>213</sup>

Similarly, the Chara people and GakiSherecho (1890-1897 E.C.) the last king of Kaffa kingdom had not in a good condition, this was because the later sold the people in to slavery, practiced maladministration problems, and land alienation on the Chara people. For the purpose of revenge the Chara had been sided and cooperated with the forces of Menelik II. Even they served as a guide for the forces of RasWoldegiyorgis by showing the way in to Kaffa in 1897E.C.

By the response one of the local rulers of Chara named Guli was given the title *Fitawrari* by Menelik II and he continued as a puppet ruler in Goba the center of his rule.<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, after the conquest, however, the Chara people had been ruled under KaffaTeqlaigizatandcontinued their existed relationship again in the same administrative structural organization.<sup>215</sup>

It is said that there was mutual cooperation /alliance/ against their common enemy. Informants state that during the period of Italian occupation of 1936- 1941, the Chara people had fought the invading forces by creating alliances with the Kaffecho people. One of my informants Tamana states that, we the Chara people by the order of our traditional leader, Tata Soiny we marched in to the areas of Bonga, Cheta, and even Maji to fight the Italian forces using spear and sword.<sup>216</sup>

Regarding to strategies of fighting, the Chara people had similar tradition like the Kaffecho. Sources statethat, the two peoples have had ahabit of producing fortress or ditch known as *Boka* which was used to defend themselves from external enemies and invaders. *Boka* was deep trench equivalent with the height of a man, served to hide warriors and their equipment during the time of fighting. According to informants, one of the *Boka* which was served during the period of Italian occupation had been still alive in Mesh and Kumbi localities.<sup>217</sup>

### **3.2 Chara andthe Na’o**

The relation between Chara and Na’o was peaceful and continued up until the present time. Both of them are omotic language families and they can communicate in both Chara and Na’o

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<sup>213</sup> Informants: Kosit Arsani and Tamene Tesema.

<sup>214</sup> Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Tekle Luti.

<sup>215</sup> Dena Freeman and Alula Pankhurst, *Living on the Edge, Marginalized minorities of craftworkersandHuntersinsouthwestEthiopia* (Addis Ababa, 2001),p.81.

<sup>216</sup> Informants: Tamana Feyisa and Gelpule Getachew.

<sup>217</sup> Informants :Alemayehu Ambo Assefa G/Mariam and Tamene Feyisa.

languages with minor difficulties. More over the two peoples were lived together in the same areas together by cooperating each other through different social issues.<sup>218</sup>

According Donald L. Levin, the two peoples inhabited relatively small region near to the Omo River to the south of Kaffa province. Their relation was basically formed by neighborhood interaction in the same geographical location and the same administrative province of Kaffa and GemuGofathe former centers of administration.<sup>219</sup>

It was said that on the eve of Menelik's incorporation of the region the two peoples were participated in worshipping the same god *Yero*, which was also believed by some other Omoti peoples of the area. However, after Menelik's incorporation of the area most of the Na'o peoples were converted in Christians, whereas most of the Chara had been continued by their traditional believes with minor changes.<sup>220</sup> On the other hand most of the Chara people made marriage relations with the Na'o people. According to informants, marriage was one of the unifying force which created strong attachment and co-existence between the two peoples.<sup>221</sup>

Trade was also another means which facilitated inter relation of the two groups. The people of Chara had trade relations and exchange of goods with the Na'o peoples .Since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> c they practiced bartering system or exchange of goods by another item. For example, sheep and goats from Chara were exchanged by cow and ox from Na'o in the local markets.<sup>222</sup> Similarly, traders from the localities of Chara traded with honey coffee, grain and cattle. The Na'o also brought to market beehives, house furniture, cereals and root crops. With this and other items the two peoples were exchanged each other.<sup>223</sup>

It was saidthat, the traditional administration of Chara some after the decade of the conquest was controlled by the Na'o people from the *Bushasho* clan members. The *Bushasho* was ruled both the Chara and the Na'o peoples together. So, the local administration was again used to strengthen the interaction of the two groups.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Informants: Demisse Bongo, Komadi Kabki ,Duchi Slite.

<sup>219</sup> Donald N. Levine, *GreaterEthiopia The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (Chicago and London,1974),p.38.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, p .48; Informants; Gekisho G/Micael, and Demise Bongo.

<sup>221</sup> Informants: *Ibid*.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>224</sup> Council Of Nationalities, *The Profile...*p.201.

The relation between Chara and Na'ò, according to informants was developed during the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> c when the later expanded in to the northern directions of the Chara areas crossing the Omo River. This was followed by the practice of cultural values that played vital role in creating friendly relations between the two peoples. Members of both groups were participated with the celebration of Garamanjo which was the medium of Ibedegoda.<sup>225</sup>

As far as the relation of Chara and Na'ò concerned, different agricultural activities were performed by collective groups of the two peoples. Similarly both of them had established good relationship for a long period of time and it continued since the present; they help each other during different occasions. Sources states that the two peoples have developed several forms of voluntary associations in time of cultivation and house construction this association was named as *Gobsa* in Chara language.<sup>226</sup>

Regarding to the administrative division, since the imperial regime and until the last years of the military government, both of them were ruled under the same administrative organ of the former Kaffa province. The Chara and Na'ò lived together in the same territories; they share common form of local administration in the grass root level, which would be directed by community elders or councils. The council of elders was elected from both groups and managed some issues by traditional way of arbitration.<sup>227</sup>

According to the tradition, both groups have similarities regarding to the role of women. Mostly women are exclusive in all ritual activities. Both of them have a roll to prepare food for the family, take care of children and keep properties of the family. However, a woman of Na'ò had a unique role in the society. According to sources the wife of a *balabat* or local leader *Koyuni* had play the role of arbitration. The people believe that through the arbitration of *Koyuni* some big problems in the community could be solved. But this type of role of women was not existed in the Chara areas and this was the variation between them.<sup>228</sup>

The relation of Chara and Na'ò would be expressed in different ways. For example during the time of drought they used to eat and drink together and also borrowed crops one another.

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<sup>225</sup> Informants: Daki Gudi and Assefa G/ Mariam.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid* Informants: Demisse Bongo, Assefa G/ Mariam , Daki Duki; Council of Nationalities, *The profile...*, p.202.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>228</sup> Council Of Nationalities, *The Profile...*, p.202; Informants: Demissie Bongo and Tamene Feyisa.

Informants states that in the famine of 1967 the people of Chara and Na'o was sharing food together.<sup>229</sup>

### **3.3. Chara and the Konta**

The people of Chara and Konta are the neighboring peoples inhabiting the southern side of Kaffa province and the vicinity of the Omo basin. They have had a long history of cooperation, interdependence and friendship. Their relation goes through sharing common economic activities as well as socio- cultural practices.<sup>230</sup>

According to Addisalem, before their movement to the present location, the Chara people had been lived in Konta districts of Oshka and Aggara localities.<sup>231</sup> On the other hand their relation was strengthened after the conquest; one of the factors which helped to form good relations was Ironworking. The Chara people have knowledge and skill in Iron smelting technology and production of different materials.<sup>232</sup>

However, the iron or the raw material was located in Oshka Dencha of Konta about 30 km south east of Amaya town. The people of Chara frequently went to this area in search of the mineral, so this process facilitated the strong relation with the people of Konta.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, after they produced different equipments using iron ore they exchanged in the market with the people of Konta.<sup>234</sup> The Chara people had similar history with the Konta regarding to slavery. Sources described that, in the area of the two peoples slaves had been raided and sold in the markets like other commodities. According to sources most of slave traders were local rulers who had connection with the central rulers. So, the people of Chara and Na'o were victims of slavery and slave trade.<sup>235</sup>

### **3.4. Chara and the Me'enit**

The Chara and Me'enit people were neighbors in the western part of the Omo valley to the south of Kaffa kingdom. However, socio-economic relations were full of contradictions and

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<sup>229</sup> Informants: Demise Bongo, Alemayehu Ambo and Assefa G/ Mariam.

<sup>230</sup> Teferi Abebe, *The Ethno-History of The Konta people*, SNNPR State Bureau of Culture And Tourism (Hawassa, 2013), p.45.

<sup>231</sup> Addisalem, *The Ethno – History...*, p.15.

<sup>232</sup> Teferi, *The Ethno-History...*, p.145.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> Gunar, "Smelting Iron"..., p.77.

<sup>235</sup> Teferi, *The Ethno- History...*, p.22.

confrontations. Different factors are responsible to their disagreement. Some of them are the need of territorial expansion, cattle raiding, and abduction girls by the Me'enit.<sup>236</sup>

It was said that the nature of their relation consisted of little more than constant war and bitter strife.<sup>237</sup> Informants from Chara states that ...our ancestors were left their original home land due to conflicts and killings with the Me'enit pastoralists. The frequent clashes were forced us to stop inter-ethnic bond and friend ship relations. <sup>238</sup>

According to informants explanation cattle raiding by the Me'enit was the basic reason for the conflict between the two groups. During and or after the time of conquest, the Chara people had been regularly raided by the Me'enit people. Due to this reason their relation goes from bad to worse.<sup>239</sup>

On the other hand informants confirmed that, apart from cattle raiding the girl of Chara had also abducted by the Me'enit. The basic reason behind the abduction of Chara girls by the Me'enit was related with the Burden of the bride wealth. According to the tradition of Me'enit a person had been expected to give up to thirty eight cattle as dowry for the families of a girl which was very difficult for some people to get such huge number of cattle. However, in the contrary, the amount of dowry in the Chara was very low. So, the Me'enit used this opportunity as a good advantage and frequently abducted girls from the Chara villages. This was another cause which created fighting between two groups.<sup>240</sup>

Informants states that, during the 1930s the relation of Chara and Me'enit was continued with confrontations. Moreover, after the event when Hakumu Boshu, the member of Boshu Me'enit, the prestigious low Lander group murdered by the Chara in 1933 the two groups were fought against each other. At the battle of Gola Eccii in Chocha Chara the Me'enit were massacred by the Chara and retreated to their natural base in the low land areas<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> John Abbink, "Tribal Formation On the Ethiopian Fringe: Towards a History of the 'Tishana', *Journal Of Northeast African studies*" , Vol.12, No.1 (1990), p.25.

<sup>237</sup> Lange, "Gimira Remnants Of," ... p.134.

<sup>238</sup> Addisalem, *The Ethno-History*, ... p.34.

<sup>239</sup> Informants: Mekuria Yazgez and Alemayehu Ambo.

<sup>240</sup> Informants: Oyba Boshe, Taysi Karamolo, and Wosemu Baroliya.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid* ; Jon Abink, "An Ethno-Historical Perspective On Me'en Territorial Organization (South-West Ethiopia)," *Journal of Anthropos*, vol.87, No.4 (1992), p.358.

However, the conflict was settled by the traditional method of arbitration by elders between the Chara and Me'nit. So the groups started to live in peaceful way for a short period of time and even they started to work together in some areas like Chocha. Again their trade relation was continued as usual.<sup>242</sup>

On the other hand, however, the BoshuMe'nit and their allies were waged a massive attack against the Chara to revenge for the murder of Hakumuboshu. Similarly the Chara who was lived in relatively close proximity with the Me'nit groups in Chocha areas were spent several times in constant strife with the Me'nit groups<sup>243</sup>. According to sources in the localities of Shorum valley which was located in the southern part of Chara district, the forces of Me'nit were attacked the members of Chara and snached their territories<sup>244</sup>

According to informants, the Chara people had defended the frequent attacks of the Me'nit by building the defensive trenches and through their traditional way of protection. Due to this they had able to save their independence and identities since this day. But, on the other hand most of their territories were taken by the expansionist groups of the Me'nit people.<sup>245</sup>

Moreover, the ability of the local people to acquire rifles through trade increased the level of the confrontation between the two neighboring groups. During the time of the Darg in 1974 E.C. (1982) again they were fighting each other and the situation was reached to high stage. One of my informants and representative of Chara during that time narrates the event as follows:

In the summer of 1974 E.C.(1982) the forces of the Me'nit marched against the Chara areas and made occasional attacks, killing, burning houses and plundering livestock in the areas of Oshk, Chocha, and Agara localities. By the order of Kaffa *awraja* with sixty armed forces we marched to stop the confrontation. As a result the Me'nit was retreated back and some settlements were created.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Informants; *Ibid* , Oyiba Boshe, Taysi Karamolo and wosemu Barolya: Decha Woreda Archive center, Chiri: Folder No.140, Tekaligne Woyesa File No.842 Kaffa Awraja Astedader to Decha Woreda Astedader, Hidar, 1972 Ec(1979).

<sup>243</sup> Lange: Gimira...p, 134.

<sup>244</sup> Abink," An Ethno- Historical",...p.358.

<sup>245</sup> Informants: Selas Woraki and Tamene Feyisa.

<sup>246</sup> Informants: Alemayehu Ambo, Komadi Kabki, and Duchi Slite.



Similarly other sources states that some of the Chara clans like Zelacortsa were live among the Me'enit people in Boro areas. Even though, they were living closely, their relation in the past was not based on peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation. Their inter-ethnic communication interred in to difficult conditions.<sup>247</sup>

During the last period of the *Darg* regime the relation between Chara and Me'enit was obviously spoiled and their inter-ethnic communication came to an end. The basic reason was abduction of girls and looting some cattle, sheep, and goat by the group of Me'enit from the Chara localities ofshash and chocha.<sup>248</sup>

It was said that in the year 1980 E.C. (1988) again the conflict was continued, because of the murder of two Me'enit peoples by Tadesegunimery a Chara man. After killing he was immediately managed to escape and hide himself in the forests of Tepi.<sup>249</sup> However, the two groups living in the neighboring areas were interred in massive confrontation. On the other hand the officials were tried to investigate the case, but it was not concluded and also Tadesegunimery was obscured.<sup>250</sup>

The Me'enit according to their tradition claimed to receive a homicide payment or *Asha* seven cattle and a young girl which was used as a compensation of life with life from the families of the killer, however, the case was not accepted by the court as well as the military government. After such events the situation was continued as it was.<sup>251</sup>

Consequently, the Me'enit was disappointed by the measure of the revolutionary justice system. They opposed and criticized its weakness and inability to manage the conflicts between them. Moreover, they criticized the unjust and biased administration of the revolutionary government because they feared that the Chara was provided with weapons by the authorities for self-defense, but according to them the Chara was used the weapons to attack against the Me'enit.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Lange, Gimira ,...p.134.

<sup>248</sup> Addisalem, The Ethno-History..., p.34.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Informants: Mecuria Yagigez and Alemayehu Ambo.

<sup>251</sup> Informants: Oyba Boshe, Taysi Karamalo and Wosemu Baroliya; Addisalem, The Ethno-History, ..., p.34.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

Similarly informants from Chara supported the ideas of the Me'enit informants. According to them, during the last period of the *Darg* regime some selected individuals in the village were given weapons for the purpose of protecting and keeping the security of the *qabales*. But because of killing and related problems the weapons were taken by the authorities. However, due to the remoteness of the area some people have had their own weapons purchased by themselves.<sup>253</sup>

During the period of 1985 E.C. (1993) and onwards the pastoralist groups of the Me'enit people were moved over the river valley of the Omo and reached to Shorum areas near to Chocha and Kaffa in the south. According to informants, conflicts were common in all time when the Me'enit snatched the Chara territories.<sup>254</sup> As a consequence the Chara people were forced to change their settlement. Formerly the people who lived in the areas near to the Omo valley was now moved in to the top of mountains in Chocha and settled there. The village of Chocha and its environ was encircled by mountain ranges and geographically it was significant to protect from enemies. Sources states that in the foot of the mountain ditches were made and people assigned for the surveillance of the area.<sup>255</sup>

Due to these long and intermittent clashes the two peoples considered each other as enemies. But after the discussion of the representatives of the two groups and clan leaders, to some extent peaceful relations was started so the people had continued their exchange and trade in the same market of Goba.<sup>256</sup>

But this was not along lasting solution for the problem. Because of the nature of their relation as well as the subsequent revenges, again their relation goes into unexpected clashes. Other Archaival sources indicate the state of their relation and consequences as follows:

በጎባጫራ በጮጫ በዩሊዮ በኦዳ በጎጫመሰቀላ እና በጉንደራ አካባቢ የሚገኙ ዘላን የሻንቅላ (ሜኤኒት) ጎሳዎች...በአካባቢው ህዝብ ላይ ብዙ የማጥቃት ዘመቻ አካሂደዋል. ጥቂቶቹን ለመጥቀስ ያህል፤ በ1967 አም.በጎባ አካባቢ አንገላ ቀበሌ ሁለት ልጆች (ጫራዎች) ገድለው ሁለት ከብት ወሰደዋል፤ በ 1969 አም.ቀዳ ቀበሌ ኦዳ አካባቢ ሰላሳሰባት አርሶአደሮችን ገድለው በርካታ ከብቶችን ዘርፈዋል ፤ በ 1970 አም.አምስት ከብት ዘርፈዋል እንደገና በዚህ አመት በጎባ አካባቢ የሁለት ቀበሌ ገበሬ ማህበረ የቀንድ ከብት ዘርፈው ስምንት አርሶ

<sup>253</sup> Informants: Mekuria Yagigez, and Mekuria Mamo.  
<sup>254</sup> Abink, “An Ethno”... p.358; Informants, Selas Woraqiand Abreham Alemayehu  
<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*: Decha Woreda Administration Archive Center, Chiri: Folder No 140, Tesfaye W/Giyorgis File No121, Decha Woreda Administration Office to Keffa Awraja Administration Office , yekatit, 1972Ec. (1979).  
<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*.

አደሮችን ገድለዋል አካሄድ የሻንቅላ (ምኔኒት) ጎሳዎች በአካባቢው አርሶአደሮች ላይ የሚያደርሱት የማጥቃት ዘመቻ ዘረፋና ግድያ በዳር አካባቢ የሚኖሩ ጎሳዎችን አስከፍቷል<sup>257</sup>

In English:

the pastoralistShanqila (Me'enit) tribes who lived in Gobachara,*Chocha, yiliyo, Oda, Gobameskela* and *Gundira* areas were committed attacks and campaigns, to show few of them...the pastoralist *shanqila* (Me'enit) tribeswho lived in Gobachara , Chocha, *Yiliyo,Oda,GobameskelaandGundira* areaswere committed much attacks andcampaign againstsChara ,to mention few of them; in 1967 E.C (1975) in the area of GobaAngela *qabale* they killed two children (Chara) and took two cattle's; in 1969 Ec. (1977)In *Qeda* qabale Oda area they killed thirty seven farmers and looted many cattle'sin 1970Ec (1978) they looted five cattle, again in this year in Goba areaBy killing eight farmers they looted the cattle from two farmers associations. So, the attack and killing by these *Shanqla (Me'enit)* tribes were discontented the people who live in the periphery areas.

However, due to the sensitiveness of the issue one team which was led by the Decha woreda administrator reached in Gobachara on 15/5/72 .C. and discussions were held. According to the report of *warada* administration after the discussion of the two groups the problem was avoided and they lived together. <sup>258</sup>On the other hand after the discussions held and problems were settled the pastoralist Me'enit people also continued their customary actions of territorial expansion, looting cattle, and murdering peoples.

According to the witness of some written documents thefrequent disagreement and confrontation between Chara and Me'enit created unstable condition in the woreda. Due to this inconclusive problem different team werewent into the area to made peace between them. Accordingly, based

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<sup>257</sup> DWA Archive center, Chiri: Folder No.140, Hailu Benti, File No 18 Decha Woreda Astedader to Keffa awraja Astedader office,Pagume ,1971 Ec (1978).

<sup>258</sup>DWA. Archive center,Chiri: Folder No.141,Tesfaye Wolde Giyorgis File No 33, Decha woreda Astedader to Decha Woreda Police office, Hidar, 1971 Ec (1978).

on the report of police, the case would be solved through teaching the pastoralists in order to develop their consciousness level.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder number 143, Girmaye Hagos No file number, Keffa Awraja Police to Keffa Awraja Abyotna Zemecha Astebabari Committee, Tahsas, 1973 Ec, (1981).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. SOCIO – POLITICAL HISTORY OF CHARA AFTER MENELIK'S CONQUEST

#### 4. 1 Chara on the Eve of the Conquest of Menelik II

As discussed in the socio-cultural history of the Chara people, long before Menelik's expansion by the time he conquered the area they had already lost their native institutions due to the influence of Kaffa and Me'enits. The people engaged in settled agricultural life and produced different crops.<sup>260</sup> These institutions helped the people to resist the intermittent attacks, territorial expansion by the Me'enit and even the socio-cultural domination of the Kaffa people and its kingdom.<sup>261</sup>

Since the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the kingdom of Chara lost its former territories and went in to decline in political and economic aspects. This was due to external and internal factors. As a result, the kingdom became small in size. During this era, the Omo River in the south became the border of the kingdom; the Gica River in the northwest separated the kingdom from the Na'ò. The Konta kingdom in the northeast became the limit of the Chara. In addition the northern border of the area reached to Kaffa.<sup>262</sup>

As indicated by Addisalem, the people of Chara had confronted various challenges and impositions. Formerly they were independent people with their own kingdom. But under various political as well as social influences, they fell to the status of the tributary of Kaffa kingdom. On the eve of the conquest, politically they were very weak and dominated by the strong Kaffa kingdom. Most of officials from Kaffa were assigned to govern the Chara people.<sup>263</sup>

According to informants, the rulers who appointed over Chara during the time of the former Kaffa kingdom were accused for slave trade and maladministration. One of these rulers was Ato Temesgen who was participant in the slave trade. Even he used as a facilitator of slavery and slave trade. In addition when he went to the village to collect tribute with his guards; he used

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<sup>260</sup> Ye Ethiopia Behereseboch Tinat Institute, Achir Ye Ethiopia Behereseboch Mawoqia (short guide to know Ethiopian Nationalities) (Addis Ababa, 1978), p.19.

<sup>261</sup> Lange, Gimira..., p.133.

<sup>262</sup> Ernesta Cerulli, *Peoples of South-West Ethiopia And Its Border Lands Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (London, 1965), p.133.

<sup>263</sup> Addisalem, *The Ethno- History*, ..., p.25.

force and took the cattle of farmers. On the other hand, during his stay in the village he forced peasants to slaughter sheep or goat for his consumption.<sup>264</sup>

## 4.2 The Conquest

After the victory at Adwa in 1896, Menelik II who acquired more guns sent his army under the leadership of Ras Wolde Giyorgis to conquer Kaffa province in 1897 E.C.<sup>265</sup>. Based on the argument of Tesfaye, the south western region was incorporated into the central government of Ethiopia during the third phase of his policy of expansion.<sup>266</sup>

However, the conquest and incorporation of this region including the Chara areas was basically motivated by the ambition of wealth accumulation as well as consolidation of the imperial power.<sup>267</sup> On the other hand it was desired to secure the flow of resources such as coffee and slaves which passes through this area.<sup>268</sup>

It was said that, in 1897 E.C. the Chara people was included in to the central government of Ethiopia together with the neighboring peoples of Kaffa and Na'ö.<sup>269</sup> Regarding to the conquest of Chara written documents are not available which narrates the event, however, informants reported that during that time the Chara had been discontented by the rule of Gakisharochowwas the last king of Kaffa kingdom (1890-1897 E.C.). The cause of their disappointment was land alienation, maladministration and the practice of slave trade which destructed their social and economic life.<sup>270</sup>

Due to these problems one of the local rulers of Chara by the name Guli, cooperated with the forces of Menelik II by opposing Gakisharacho's rule. He also served as a guide to Ras Wolde Giyorgis. By the response Ras Woldegiyorgis gave the title Fitawrari to the local leader of Chara named Guli. Fitawrari Guli of Chara created alliance with the forces of Menelik II and against Kaffa.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Informants: Ambes Dobole, Alemu Mulaye and Getachew Buski.

<sup>265</sup> Alemseged Abay", Diversity and State Building in Ethiopia", *Journal Of African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No.413 (2004), p.594.

<sup>266</sup> Tesfaye Zergaw , *Asurvey History of World, Africa, and Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa , 2001), p.311.

<sup>267</sup> Jon Abbink", "Tribal Formation" ,...p.29.

<sup>268</sup> John Markajis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy Of Atraditional Polity* (New York,1972), p.71.

<sup>269</sup> Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Ambes Dobole; Tesfaye Zergaw , *A survey History*,... p.311.

<sup>270</sup> Informants:*Ibid*; Amnon Orent, "Dual Organization",...p.229.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, Informant: Assefa G/Mariam and Getachew Buski.

According to Bulatovich Russian officer of logistics, who campaigned with the forces of Menelik II states his eye witness account, after the forceful and brutal subjugation of the whole area, the Chara people was given for Ras Woldegeyorgis to be ruled under his governorship .<sup>272</sup> The conquest was the last event for the Chara self rule. Some of the local rulers, such as, Fitawrari Guli of Goba district were submitted and appointed to work as officer of intermediary between the conquerors and the local people. The main reason for the peaceful submission of Guli was his opposition against the former Kaffa rulers. But his role was only limited to tax collector and at the same time used as guidance for the new rulers.<sup>273</sup>

It is said that immediately after the control of the Chara localities, the new rulers had issued the declaration which banned hunting wild animals, murdering people, enslaving, and committing crime. These new rules also followed by the introduction of *gabar* system in the area. Consequently, the Chara people were obliged to pay annual tribute. The amount of tax, according to informants was divided in to three, based on the social status of the people, accordingly relatively the highest level of people was forced to pay four Maria Theresa Thaler, a middle level paid two and the poor people paid only one.<sup>274</sup>

However, informant's states that, there was no receipt for the payment, simply the officials were collected and took the amount from each locality and sent to the central treasury. Nevertheless, most of the tax collectors were corrupted and who worked for their individual benefit. One of such officials was Agerasha Selemal of Goba district who collected the tax without any receipt.<sup>275</sup>

The Chara was one of the autonomous people of the region who established a small kingdom in the area. They had governed their people and land before the arrival of Ras Woldegiyorgis. Unfortunately, their autonomy and self rule was disappeared by the forces of Menelik II with his empire building process.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes Country In Transition 1896-1898*, First edition (Asmara, 2000), p.89.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, Informants: Assefa G/Mariam, Ambes Doble, and Tanene Tesema.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>276</sup> Dena Freeman and Alula Pakhurst, *Living On the Edge*, ... p.73; Addiaslem, *Ethno-History*, ... p.25.

Similar with the other parts of the region Menelik's territorial expansion and incorporation of the Chara had long term effects both positively and negatively on the political, economic and social aspects of the people. Following the conquest, the indigenous system of administration of the Chara became subordinate to the newly established Feudo-military rule. However, in the initial years of the new rule, the *Tata* was included in the system and served as a means for the indirect rule of the invader.

But practically the traditional administration system and leaders of Chara was avoided and another administrative structure and administrators were introduced especially for the Chara people. However, due to the remotness of the district after 1897 E.C. Menilik established new center in Gobadish town to govern the Chara people.<sup>277</sup>

On the other hand, the influence and power of the traditional *Tata*, which they owned before the conquest, were maintained. Informants states that the *Tata* was continued only as the leader of the traditional religion, although he lost his political power and authority. They continued as agents of government in their respective provinces. They were responsible to keep peace and order, also assigned to collect tribute.

The initial years of the conquest did not bring radical change in the traditional administrative structure of the Chara people.<sup>278</sup> Tribute payment and slavery had strong attachment in the Chara area. A person who failed to pay the tax on the fixed date, his child or wife would be taken and sold in to slavery. Due to this problem most the poor people's of Chara were raided as slaves by cruel rulers of the time. This was a common means of acquiring the slaves in the area. The local rulers were used as agents to slavery.<sup>279</sup>

Moreover, the incorporation process basically affected inters- ethnic relationship between Chara and the neighboring groups of people, particularly with the Me'enit. Therefore it is essential to look at some of the socio- cultural changes that occurred in Chara following incorporation.

The introduction of modern administration system had greatly affected the long existed traditional conflict resolution method, which enhanced the cohesion and harmony with in the

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid*, Informant: Assefa G/Mariam and Assefa Bongo.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>279</sup> Lange, Gimira, ..., p.131 ; Addisalem ,*The Ethno-History*,...p.27.



people of Chara, was avoided. Similarly following the arrival of new administrators, the process of celebration as well as the ritual ceremony of the traditional religion of Chara and the prestige of religious leaders or *Adubo* and his officials was significantly declined.<sup>280</sup> In the economic sphere too, the conquest highly reduced the subsistence level of the people by imposing tribute on them. A people who suffered because of poor agricultural technology and low production which was not enough even to cover the consumption of their family exposed for another economic challenge.<sup>281</sup>

Finally, the conquest had some positive impacts regarding to the development of local trade. Following trade, some villages were developed in to the level of small towns, such as Angela, Shsha and Dish. Before the conquest, trade was not supported by the facilities of Road as well as keeping security. But after the conquest markets were expanded in every locality among the Chara people and some armed people known as *Tuga* was assigned to keep the market. On the other hand, exchange of commodities with commodity was avoided and the currency system of trade was introduced, which made the trade system ease. Similarly, most of the markets were served as the center of trade for the people. Some of the markets like Angela and Shasha were known for the trade items like Ivory and spices. Informants state that, Ivory was traded from the Melmel area which was near to Maji and traded through the markets in Chara via to Bonga.<sup>282</sup>

However, according to informants since the imperial regime in 1962 E.C. trade activities were continued with some improved infrastructures. But after the period of 1965 E.C. the trade items of Chara was changed. Accordingly cotton, coffee rifles were substituted the items of ivory.<sup>283</sup>

### **4.3 Traditional Administration of the Chara**

The Chara people had their own administration system. In the past they were ruled by kingship, which had absolute power over the people and land. The power succession had been followed through hereditary line. Informants states that, the coronation of the new king or *Tata* would be announced after the death of the reigning king. Kingship was strictly reserved only for the

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<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Assefa Bongo.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>282</sup> Informants: Selas worqi, Tqure Kanduka and Kero Bulele; Lange, Dialects Of...p.4.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*.

member of ruling clans.<sup>284</sup> Similarly, according to sources the traditional administrative power of the *Tata* was only allowed for the male children of the traditional king. The legitimate successor of the king was the elder son of the deceased king. Based on the tradition the female of Chara had no leadership role.<sup>285</sup>

According to Lange's argument, however, the traditional administration was not uniform among the inhabitants of Shash and Chocha districts. In the northern Chara or across Shash the rulers were named as Gimira Guda or Ukara both terms had been used interchangeably and translated as the chief of the Chara.<sup>286</sup>

On the other hand the leadership among the Chocha districts was known by the name Tata. It was said that the Chara had been ruled by the form of traditional kingship; however, still it is not clear when they started to be ruled by Kingship. Based on the tradition and informants analysis, Tata Damoty was probably the first traditional king of Chara. He was claimed to be Konta origin. But informants had no knowledge the time when Damoty became King of Chara. On the contrary they state that he was autocrat and who took our lands forcefully, so was deposed by the opposition of the people.<sup>287</sup>

Regarding to the traditional kings of Chara, sources are very limited; the only alternative lies up on the accounts of informants. Accordingly, informants have listed seven names of the traditional kings, all of them are presented according to their ascending order 1, Tata Damoty, 2, Soini 3, yiri 4, Dambali 5, Kodi 6, Grach Zoini and 7, Grach Worki. The last king was Grach Worki, according to Lange; Worki was died in 1971 E.C. (1979) and left a son too young to assume the highest responsibilities of his office.<sup>288</sup>

All of the traditional kings have used the title known as *Tata* which indicates their commonalities. The power and leadership role of *Tata* was more of religious than political figure. The *Tata*, sometimes act as a religious leader and sacrifices cattle for the spirit of *Qole*.

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<sup>284</sup> Informants: Mekuria Mamo and Kassa Bamir; Addisalem, *The Ethno –History*,...,p.29.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>286</sup> Lange, Gimira, ...,p.139; Addisalem, *The Ethno-History*, ...,p.29.

<sup>287</sup> Addisalem, The Ethno- History, ...,p.29; Informants : Ambes Doble and Alemu Mulaye.

<sup>288</sup> Informants: *Ibid*; Lange, Gimira... p.143.

He used *Shakama* wooden material used some time to sit during sacrifice and on the other time to offer sacrifice.<sup>289</sup>

It was said that, the traditional kings were considered as a divine power by the people. According to the belief of the people, kings had been acquired their status after the spirit of their god or *Ego* entered into them and which accepted by the people. Due to their position, the decisions passed by them were respected without any complain.<sup>290</sup>

According to the tradition, during the event when some problems had occurred in the area the people would send a message through the ritual assistant commonly named as *BokeAdbarato* inform the Tata about their difficulties. The Tata up on hearing the message gives order for *Adubo* to praise and bless them instead of the king. Based on the order of the king, *Adubo* would bless the people for the avoidance of some problems such as drought, war, famine, and evil spirit. In the contrary he also praised for good production, and peace in the area.<sup>291</sup>

The Gimira guda or the chief of the northern Chara, his area of jurisdiction was not extended further south than the Goradi River. He had a tradition of wearing silver ring or *birregwa* on the little finger of his right hand, the Band or hagua worn around for head, was the symbol of authority. In addition, umbrella or data of palm tree leaves, colorful cotton trousers or *kormesata* were the symbol of the leaders.<sup>292</sup>

Similarly Lange states that, the chief had a tradition that he ate secluded him behind a curtain or *manzelata*. His food server by the name *yerikisi* or hand of yeri puts the food in to the hand of the chief the chief placed in to his mouth. Regarding to drinking, also similar procedure was followed. The assistant handed the cup and gives to the chief.<sup>293</sup>

On the other hand the traditional ruler had many servants who assisted him with different titles. Some of the servants were *Biti* or the fetcher of fire wood, *Halafa* or who were, the caretaker of all household treasures and the leader of household servants, *kelleneNaga* or the gatekeeper, *FereseNagna* or the caretaker of the horses, and *obtata Nagna* or the care taker of the compound.

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<sup>289</sup> Addisalem, Ethno History...p33. According to my opinion the traditional kings of Chara had exercised the power of both religious and political. So, it was similar with the theocratic form of rule.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Mekuria Mamo and Kassa Bamir.

<sup>291</sup> Informants: Kero Gebgemariam and Assefa G/ Mariam; Addisalem, Ethno – History,..., pp.37-38.

<sup>292</sup> Lange, Gimira,..., p.140.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*.

When the guest announced for the gate keeper he would inform the case to the king through the assistants of the king. When the visitor was allowed to enter the gate keeper facilitates the order.<sup>294</sup>

Werner Lange had limitations to elaborate the authorities of the northern Chara chiefs. But on the contrary the name of some chiefs were listed, accordingly the most important of them were Maci, Magi, Gowery, Marti, and Mangati. According to Sources, Magi had been lived at the time of the Italian invasion in the year 1896. Similarly Goweri had also lived during the time of the Conquest or in 1897 E.C. (1905).<sup>295</sup> However, the ideas of informants were not coincided with this concept. Even they had no knowledge regarding to these chiefs.

#### **4.4 Local Administrative System**

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the land of Chara was one of the twelve administrative units of Kaffa kingdom.<sup>296</sup> But after 1897 E.C., a new arrangement of administrative structure and center was established. Informants state that, during this time the administrative division was Miketil *warada* (vice district) with its administrative center at Gobadish. In addition the territorial limit of the local administration was also demarcated by the imperial government. Accordingly, in the south Omo River, in the east Me'enet and in the North Kaffa was bordered with the Chara.<sup>297</sup>

Sources have no detail information on the early history of administrative divisions of the area. However, under this sub title attention was given on traditional military organization, and justice system. The people of Chara under the long history of traditional administrative system had developed the structure of local military organization. Which was recruited and organized based on the line of clan and province from peasants. Each province had its own army named *Tuga*. The role of *Tuga* was keeping the security of his respective province as well as peace. However, each *Tuga* was responsible and accountable for *Tamerasha*.<sup>298</sup>

The traditional military organization and its strategies had similarities with the Kaffecho. Like many other traditional societies the army was equipped with spears or *maita*, knives or *chufa* and

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<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, Addisalem, The Ethno – History, ..., p.30.

<sup>295</sup> Lange, "Gimira, ..., p.142.

<sup>296</sup> Bekele W/Mariam, *The History of the kingdom*, ..., p.180.

<sup>297</sup> Informants: Assefa G/Mariam and Demise Bongo; Cerulli, Peoples of South... p.106.

<sup>298</sup> Informants; Tamene Tesema, and Kero G/Mariam; Bekele W/Mariam, *Ye Kefa Hizboch ina Mengist Achir Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 1996), pp.164-165.

shields or *jafa*. These equipments were made by Iron workers in the area. On the other hand the *Tuga* had used various methods of fighting or protecting the provinces. Among them the most widely employed tactics were the digging of deeper ditches or *Boka* in some selected areas. Inside of the ditch they put sharp wood facing up, this was hoped that an approaching enemy may fall in to it.<sup>299</sup>

According to informants the *Tuga* had no any payment for the service he provided, but land was given for his services. The community ploughs his land, keeps his cattle and also constructs his houses. However, the office of *Tuga* was not permanent, but it was temporary and the members had been changed according to their performance.<sup>300</sup>

On the other hand after the introduction of modern administration during the imperial regime, the traditional military system was rejected and new forms of modern arrangements were substituted the office of the traditional army. Again during the subsequent military government the *Milisha* was introduced. This was unique by its structure as well as role from the former traditional system.<sup>301</sup>

Informants state that the *Chara* had also established a traditional justice system, which had contributed in maintaining their internal integrity as well as unity of the people. It has four levels. The levels were created based on the degree of cases and the weight of the issues. The first and at the grass root level were managed by the *Tamerasha* or village head has its own council of elders and *Tuga* or local army. Elders in each clan were entitled to manage or settle conflicts in day-to-day relations like disagreement between spouses and family members. On the other hand, since its closeness to the mass the *Tamerasha* were used as a channel to transmit messages up and down.<sup>302</sup>

The second level was presided by the *Tatisho*. Here the *Tatisho* were appointed to see cases that are not solved by the capacity of elders. More over, the *Tatisho* had responsible to judge over the issues like theft and conflict on abduction. The third level was the highest and found at the provincial level. In this level the assistants of the king was appointed to preside over cases in

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<sup>299</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Informants: Mecuria Mamo and Alemu Mulaye.

<sup>302</sup> Informant: Gerkisho G/Micael, Assefa Bongo and Mekuria Mamo.

their respective jurisdiction. The *Goberasha* had managed problems that were remained unsolved by the *Tatisho*. Some of the cases that can be seen in this level are killing and looting.<sup>303</sup>

The fourth level was the last and held by kings. Some of the cases that were judged by kings included serious problems that were not solved by the first three levels, such as border conflicts, security problems with the neighboring people, and rape of women by another ethnic group. Sources state that, the seats to judge these cases by wearing different kinds of beads made from Tiger teeth, and Iron bell. The decision of the king had no appeal. Based on his approval he would excommunicate criminals from the society.<sup>304</sup>

However, the traditional system and its components were existed until 1897 E.C. (1905) after the period of Meneilik's forceful invasion of the area all the traditional administrative organs disappeared from their posts. Subsequently the modern type of administration was started. On the other hand during the Darg period the system of the rule was abandoned and some of the rulers were accused. Informants state that one of the traditional leaders of the area by the name Gobersaha Temesgen was murdered by the Darg in 1971 E.C. (1979)<sup>305</sup>

On the other hand according to informants because of the absence of traditional rule and the avoidance of local administration, conflicts were occurred between different groups of people in the region, which was the consequence of the forceful incorporation of Menelik II. The new administrative system of the central rule was not accepted by the local people.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Informants: Demisse Bongo and Assefa G/Mariam

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5 CHARA FROM ITALIAN OCCUPATION TO 1991

#### 5.1. Chara and Italian Occupation

During the period of European scramble for Africa, Ethiopia scored brilliant victory at Adwa in 1896 against the Italian colonialists resulting in Ethiopia's successful preservation of independence. When Benito Mussolini and his fascist party rose to power in 1923, with the plan of restoring the old Roman Empire, he also added an interest in colonization. Moreover Mussolini intended to avenge the humiliating defeat at Adwa.<sup>307</sup>

After attempting attack from different angles, Mussolini needed a pretext for the invasion of Ethiopia, so, the walwal incident was used as a pretext for the outbreak of Italo-Ethiopian war of 1936 E.C. The invasion was launched on 3 Oct 1935 E.C. in two fronts.<sup>308</sup> The Italians set out a general invasion towards Adwa, from North of Eritrea and from Italian colony of Somalia in the south. Unlike Adwa, the Ethiopian patriots were defeated in the campaigns of 1935/36.<sup>309</sup>

As far as occupation was concerned the Chara opposition to the Shawan rulers continued in the initial years of the Italian occupation of the area. Moreover, opposition of the people against the oppressive rulers created a favorable situation for Italian occupation. However, the Chara people submitted to Italians with little resistance, this was due to their opposition against the rulers. It was said that the Chara people were victims of the slave trade. Most of the Shawan rulers sold the people into slavery. Because of this problem the people had discontended by the oppressive rule of *Ras Wolde Giyorgis* as well as some local rulers like *Grazmach Temesgen*.<sup>310</sup>

On the other hand, to avoid excessive exploitation and oppressive nature of rulers, the Chara not only peacefully submitted but also collaborated with the Italians. The Italians also promised to avoid the grievances of the Chara people against the former ruling classes. They considered themselves, as liberators of the people and made many promises including the abolition of

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<sup>307</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A Modern History of Ethiopia*,...p.115.

<sup>308</sup> Tesfaye Zergaw, *A survey History of*,..., p.321.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*, p.322.

<sup>310</sup> Informants: *Ibid*, Demisse Bongo and Assefa G/ Mariam ; Alexander Bulatovich, *Ethiopia*,...,p.89.

slavery and the customary land ownership rights. Accordingly, the Italians gave to the people relief from slavery as well as the burden of taxation during the initial years of the occupation.<sup>311</sup>

However, the political administration of the Italians in the area was introduced several months later; this was because of the lack of transportation and inaccessibility of the area. From their head quarter Bonga they further proceeded in to Chara through the Gobadish. In Goba, Angela and Shash they settled for a short period of time. During their stay, the Italians had turned to be oppressive. They targeted the influential individuals of Chara, mainly the traditional rulers because; they feared that they agitate the people against them.

They requested the contemporary *Tata Suki* to collect weapons and bring to them; however he reported that no weapon is available in our area. Again they forced them to accept their rule and to convince the ordinary people.<sup>312</sup> During this time, in the area of Chara there was no Road which helps to move from one area to another. Due to this problem the Italians were interested on the road construction of the area. According to informants, however, because of the forced labor of road construction many people were died. The road from Goba to the Omo was constructed by human force. On the contrary the Chara people got relief from the burden of hard work after the Italians were defeated and left the land in 1941 E.C.<sup>313</sup>

## **5.2 Administration of Chara in the Post Liberation period, to 1974**

After the event that the Italians defeated and left the area, the Chara People were opposed against the restoration of the imperial rule. Different reasons were responsible for the opposition of the Chara against the establishment of the imperial rule. Some of the reasons were the absence of representative officials of the Chara people in the government, the practice of slavery and slave trade, lack of infrastructure in the area like schools and health centers.<sup>314</sup>

On the other hand, the failure of Haile Selassie's government to re-establish its central rule in the area until the late 1942 encouraged the traditional clan leaders to lead their people in their

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<sup>311</sup> Informants: Getachew Buski and Assefa Bongo.

<sup>312</sup> Informants: Mecuria Mamo, Demise Bongo and , Assefa G/Mariam

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Kaffa Zone Astedader, ye Chara behereseb limat...p.11.



respective localities. Accordingly, Moli, Barti, Ketershsa, Aduso and Solmon were able to rule and govern the people through their traditional administration power over their land.<sup>315</sup>

It was said that the temporary delay of the central government to re-establish its own administrative body gave a sort of freedom to the people. In reference to this, informants states that the Chara people were freed not only from local balabat taxation as well as slave trade.<sup>316</sup>

However, in 1942 E.C. (1950) the imperial government was established a new administrative structure which included the peoples who live round the Omo area (Chara, Na' o and Kaffa) in the same administrative center from Jimma. Regarding to the Chara people, informants states that during this time when Haileselesse formed fourteen administrative provinces or Teqlaigizat and six *Auraja*, the Chara people was included under the Kaffaawraja with other peoples.<sup>317</sup>

Because of its remoteness the central government established another center at Gobadish for the Chara people, in addition also assigned a person who follows the issues of Chara at the center *Goba* and *Chiri*. This governor was assigned from the central government by the name of *Nechlebash*. From this time onwards the Chara people was governed under *mikitil* woreda status.<sup>318</sup> However, the role *Nechlebash*, according to informants was much minimized because of language barrier and absence of infrastructure. Their only role was controlling the tax collection, out of this there was no possibility to work for the development of the area. On the contrary, governors assigned from the central government were used military force to collect tribute from the Chara people. According to informants the tax were collected without any receipt.<sup>319</sup>

It is said that, the Chara people was affected more than any other people, because of lack of civilization. According to the analysis of Addisalem because of absence of health institution the people forced to march 18 hours long journey on foot up to Chiri to get medical treatment. Many people died because of lack of health institutions in the area, and also forced to use traditional medicines.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Informants: Ambes Doble, Mecuria Mamo, and Demisse Bongo.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, Informants: Bekele W/Mariam, and Getachew Buski; *Ye Keffa Hizboch*, ... p.128.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, Informants.

<sup>320</sup> Addisalem, *Ethno – History*, ... p.72; Informants: Assfa G/Mariam and Assefa Bongo.

Regarding education, the imperial government has not given due attention for the development of education, the children of Chara had not get access for education. According to informants, there was no modern education system in Chara. It is only goes back to 20<sup>th</sup> century that modern education was introduced in the Chara areas.<sup>321</sup>

Similarly some other sources states that the expansion of schools in Chara had been complicated with the number of challenges, due to this the people lived out of education; this was be reported by the government officer in 1973 E.C. as follows:

በደቡብ ወረዳ የሚኖሩ የጫራ ጎሳዎች ትምህርት በማጣታቸውና እጅግ በጣም ወደኋላ በመቅረታቸው የተነሳ በጣም አስቃቂ ኑሮ ይኖራሉ እነዚህን ጭቁኖች ለማስተማር ለማንቃትና ለማደራጀት አካባቢው በጣም ከመራቁም በላይ የአካባቢው ጸጥታ አስተማማኝ አንዳልሆነ ጉባኤው ተገንዝቦ ቀደምሲል ...ትምህርት ቤት እንዲሰራ በመንግስት መፈቀዱ ይታወቃል ይሁንና እስካሁን አልተሰራም ተጨማሪ የጫርኛ ቁዋንቁዋ የሚችል መምህር የተገኘ ሰለሆነ በጀትይፈቀድልን።<sup>322</sup>

Translation:

The Chara clans who lived in Decha woreda, due to absence of education they were forced to live a backward and miserable way of life. to teach, train and organize these oppressed people, their environment is very far and its security is also not trusted, so, by considering this the council have to look again its former decision to construct school in chichi *qabale* and it was the government allowed materials. However, still the school was not constructed, in addition a teacher who teaches in chara language is also gained but its budget could be allowed.

### 5.3. Land Measurement and Taxation

Land was the economic base of the Chara people. They used the land to cultivate different crops. The high productive potential of the land was hardly realized by primitive means of production by the Chara people.<sup>323</sup> However according to sources of Wubet Alemus, before 1974.E.C. (1982) land reform, the land holding systems were characterized by a complex set of land tenure system. In the northern part of the country there was the *rist* system, where peasants had access

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> DWA. Archive center, Chiri: Folder No 140, Hailu Benti, File No 114 ye Decha Woreda Astedader to Kaffa Awraja Mirtna Plan Gubae, Meskerem, 1973 E.C. (1981).

<sup>323</sup> Lange, Dialects of Divine, ..., p.4.

to control over their land. The peasant inherited the land from his ancestors, which made him as *gabar*.<sup>324</sup>

On the other hand in the Chara localities most of the peasants were alienated from their land, because the land was distributed to settlers who came from the northern areas and settled in the region. These new comers used the fertile land of the area for cultivation of crops by snatching from the local people. As a result the tenancy system of production was introduced in the area.<sup>325</sup>

Due to its agricultural significance, land in a traditional society had played decisive roles; because of this in 1955 E.C. the imperial government of Ethiopia had launched a new strategy to land measurement and taxation. Accordingly, the Chara area and land holding was measured by individuals or officials who assigned by the imperial government. One of these individuals was MelerashaTibebu G/Wold the governor of GobaCharaMikitiWoreda. Who abused the land measurement and accused by a crime. Some archival sources indicated most of the official in the area had used the land by illegal way;

“ስለ 1955 አም.(1962) ለመሬት ግምት ከተሰማሩት ምክትል ዎረዳ ገዢዎቻቸው የጎባጫራ ምክትል ወረዳገዥ መለራሻ ጥበብ/ወልድ በተሰማሩበት የግምት ስራ ምክንያት አድርገው የግል ጥቅምን በመሻት መንግስትና ህዝብን በድለዋል በቀረበባቸው ክስ ምክንያት ከስራታግደው ለፍርድ እንዲቀርቡ ተደርገዋል መለራሻ ጥበብ ከፋዕወራጃ ፍ/ቤት ቀርበው በወህኒ ቤት ዕንድቆዩ ተደርጎ በቀጠሮ ቆይተዋል.<sup>326</sup>

In English:

The case was about 1955 E.C (1962) land measurement and estimation that, MelerashaTibebu G/Wold governor of Goba Chara mikiti woreda, by seeking his personal Benefit harmed the government and the people. So, because, he was accused, then he would stay out of his post. Melerashatibebu was presented in to kaffa Awraja court, and then decided to be stay in jail.

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<sup>324</sup> Woubet Alemu, Land Tenure System of Ethiopia Under the Derg, BA Thesis (Addis Ababa University, 2001), p.10.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*; Bahru, A history of Modern ,... p.87.

<sup>326</sup> JZA, Archive center: Folder No 120, Kegne Azmach Ayele G/Meskel File No 55 kafa Awraja Gizat Governor to kafa Teklai Gizat Inderase, miazia, 1955 ec (1962); JZA, Archive center: Folder No 120, Worku Alemayehu File No 55 Kffa Awraja Gizat Governor to Kaffa Teklai Gizat Inderase, miazia, 15, 1955 ec (1962)

Informants also states that during the 1950s E.C., most of the officials in the Chara area were corrupted and accused by the government. On the other hand they controlled large amounts of land by using their power of government. In the contrary peasants were leading poor life because of shortage of land as well as problems related productivity.<sup>327</sup>

It was said that, the basic objective of land measurement was in order to increase the amount of tax which had been collected from peasants. Regarding these informants confirmed that, after the land measurement of 1955 E.C. the highest amount of tax was decided to be Ethiopian six birr and the lowest amount was seventy five cents.<sup>328</sup> However, the Chara people strongly opposed the land measurement activities, sources states that some of the officials were biased and even received money and cattle from farmers as a bribe. Similarly they gave and register some of the lands to their relatives and families. Eventhey also sold some tracts of government lands to individuals.<sup>329</sup>

Similarly sources also confirmed that the team members of the land measurement in GobaChara localities received a cow and an ox from MekuriaBelay and gave to him additional land through illegal way. Again in Ogai qabale they collected birr eighty from fifty two peasants as bribe. It can be said the land measurement in GobaChara was full of crime and created discontent among the people.<sup>330</sup>

On the other hand the land in GobaChara ares had been used as a salary for the patriots who served their country during their life. According to sources after the 1955 E.C. land measurement the government started to give land which was registered as idle land. Since the time of the former Kaffa kingdom the Goba Chara district was served as settlement areas for the government courtiers.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Informants: Mengesha Keto and Demise Bongo.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid*, Informants; JZA, Archive Center: Folder No63, Shaleka G/Tsadik Tessema File No 58 Keffa Awraja Police Azage to Kaffa Awraja Gizat Office, megabit, 1955 Ec(1962).

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> Informants: Assefa G/Mariam And Demise Bongo; JZA, Archive Center: Folder No63, Dejazmach Kifile Dadi FileNo 80 Kefa Teklaigizat to kafa Teklai Gizat Inderase, Sene, 1956 Ec.(1963).

## 5.4 Famine and Epidemics

Some section of the area specifically the southern part of the Chara which was adjacent to the Omo valley was affected by the outbreak of drought .It is said that in the year 1967E.C. during the reign of MengistuHailemariam drought was occurred in Chara localities. The drought was stayed for about seven months. The localities greatly affected by the drought of this time were Odadishi, Meshgebeg, kumba, Shalo, Bunanta, and Menish.<sup>332</sup>

According to sources due to the influence of the drought the subsistence life of farmers was disrupted. They were uprooted and forced to leave their areas in search of food and better living condition. Subsequently farmers from the southern districts migrated into the highland areas of the Northern provinces, which considered as internal migration.<sup>333</sup>

On the other hand because of the drought famine was also expanded in most part of the areas. The drought was not influenced only the life of human beings but also some of the cattle was died with shortage of food. According to informants the people was tried to avoid the problem through traditional means. They went to their traditional religious leader and prayed to avoid the evils consequence of the famine. They also offered sacrifice to their god.<sup>334</sup>

In most of the areas shortage of food became the basic problem in Chara during the famine of 1967Ec. According to arcaival sources the reason for the 1967 famine was drought and rain based system of agriculture. Because of the drought and shortage of water farmers were stopped their farming. On the other hand, the officials of the time reported to cultivate maize on Gojeb state farm and planed to resist the shortage of food in the areas.<sup>335</sup>

According to Lnges argument, drought and famine was not only occurred in the area of Chara in 1967 E.C, it was also in the year 1973 E.C. again another famine breakout in the area.<sup>336</sup> Informant's states that, the military government was launched its plan of villagaization as a solution for the danger of famine; in addition the government also gave training for the farmers

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<sup>332</sup> Informants: Tamene Fesisa And Alemayehu Ambo.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> JZA, Archive Center: Folder No 63, Dr. Mekonen Kebret File No 58 Kafa Kiflehager wana Astedader to Birhanu Geleta yekatit, 1967; Informant: Alemayehu Ambo.

<sup>336</sup> Lange, Gimira... p.146; informants: Mecuria Mamo and Alemayehu Ambo.

through agricultural professionals. The training was focused on how to survive the drought and increased productivity.<sup>337</sup>

On the other hand, following to famine the epidemic disease was happened in Chara for several times and killed the life of the people. Based on the official report in the year 1970 E.C. for the first time the epidemic disease ordiharia was occurred in GobaChara and menishlocalities. The main cause for the out break of the epidemic was lack of sanitation. Consequently, fifty individuals were sick and ten others died due to the epidemic disease.<sup>338</sup>

Again in the next year of 1971 E.C. the epidemic disease was also happened in Chocha localities, during this time, according to the report of *warada* administration office more than eighty individuals were lost their lives. However, the response of the government was not so fast and it didn't able to control the epidemic and saved the people.<sup>339</sup>

On the other hand the controlling and protecting strategy of the government had been paralyzed by various challenges. Some of the obstacles that hindered the government to protect the disease was the security problem of the area and lack of transportation to move from place to place and give medical treatment without any fear. Due to this problem the responses was very late. According to the official reports the security challenge of the area was the main obstacle to give medical treatment as well as prevention.

የጫራ ብሄረሰብ አባሎች ከሰፈሩበት ቦታ ተላላፊ በሺታ ገብቶ ከ80 በላይ ህዝብ እስከ አሁን በተሰበ በሽታ መሞታቸውና የህክምና ዕርዳታ እንዲደረግላቸው የካቲት 29 ቀን 71 አም በተጻፈ ደብዳቤ መጠየቁ ይታወቃል ይሁንና ተካላ ለተባለው በሽታ የህክምና ዕርዳታ ለማድረግ ሙሉ ፈቃደኛ ብንሆንም ጸጥታው አስጊና አስተማማኝ ያለመሆኑ፤ የሚያሥተባብር ካድሬ ከሀኪሞች ጋር በጋራ ያለመመደ ብቸግር ጉዳዩን በተጨማሪ አሳሳቢ አድርጎታል።<sup>340</sup>

In the area where the Chara peoples settled, the epidemic was occurred and more than 80 peoples were died it was asked in yekatit,29/71 E.C (1979)to give them

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<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>338</sup> DWA, Archive Center: Folder No 140, Tilahun Demisi, File No 46 Tena mekonen to Chiri clinic, miazia, 1970 Ec(1977).  
<sup>339</sup> DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder No 166, Anagaw Belay File No 449, Yedecha woreda Astedader to Ato Alemu Ambo representative of Chara nationality, megabit, 1971 Ec(1991).  
<sup>340</sup> DWA, Archive Center, Chiri: Folder No 166, Asmamaw Abate File No 456 ye Chiri Clinic to Decha woreda Administration yekatit, 1971 Ec.(1978).

medical treatment. However, we are volunteers but the security problem and also lack of coordination between physicians and cadres created additional obstacle.

Similarly, according to eye witness account of informants, in the year 1971E.C. the epidemic was created fear and disturbance on the people. Most of the farmers were out of their work and slept on the bed. In addition, children and their mothers was also affected by the epidemic disease,<sup>341</sup>

Lack of infrastructure and the remoteness of the Chara area were exposed the people to health related problems. In the area, even there was no clinic close to the center of the population. Similarly no transportation service as well as road which connects local districts to the woreda center. Due to infrastructural challenges and the spread of epidemic disease many people died. The official reports were limitations to indicate the exact number of peoples who died because of the epidemic disease. However, according to informant's estimation more than 256 people lost their lives from the year 1971-1973 E.C.<sup>342</sup>

Even though the security situation of Chara during the 1970s had been difficult, Kaffa *awraja* Administration was decided to visit the Chocha Chara district by health professionals. Accordingly, in *Megabit* 15/71 E.C the team members were moved into the district of Chocha. The team members visited the area and also evaluated the influence of the epidemic. During their visit they gave medical treatment for 2425 patients. After the visit was over the team reported the situation of the epidemic<sup>343</sup>.

Finally the Chara people were greatly affected by the epidemic disease, more over no body was given attention for their problem. They were forgotten by the past regimes.

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<sup>341</sup> Informants; Alemayehu Ambo and Mekuria Mamo; DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder No 140, Asmamaw Abate, File No 194, Tikimt, 1971 Ec. (1978).

<sup>342</sup> Informants: Ibid; DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder No 113, Ketema yashu, File No 46, yekefa Awraja Astedader to Decha woreda Astedader, megabit, 1974 Ec. (1981).

<sup>343</sup> DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder NO 113, Yawrajaw Astedader Agelgelot halafi, File No 252, Yekefa Awraja Astedader to Decha woreda Astedader miazia, 1971 (1978).

## 5.5 Some Developments in Chara

Chara and its environment are rich in various natural resources such as wild coffee, ivory, civet, honey and livestock. However, before 1970 E.C, due to the mountainous nature of the area and rugged geographical features, the development of the area was hindered. So, these resources had not been effectively exploited. On the other hand, the basic problem of the area was lack of infrastructure like road to facilitate the movement of goods.<sup>344</sup>

Because of its terrain difficulties as well as lack of consideration during the imperial government any sign of development was not observed in the area. On the other hand, however, after the 1970s, there had been some progresses in some aspects of infrastructure. For example, road construction was a recent phenomenon. It was started only in 1971 E.C. Arcaival sources states that, the road that connected the Goba Chara districts to the center of the *warda* town Chiri was constructed by the participation of farmers who lived into sixteen *qabales* of farmers associations.<sup>345</sup>

Farmers were actively participated in the road construction activities. On the other hand some sources states it was decided by the committee of *Abiyotnazamacha* for the first time, in 30/7/71 E.C. to bring car in to Dish one of the districts of Chara. However, before the car interred in to the area farmers were mobilized to adjust the road with their local materials.<sup>346</sup>

Regarding schools sources state that, in 1973 EC (1980/81) the first school was designed to be constructed in Chocha kebele. However, due to the absence teachers who able to teach in Chara language the construction of the school was delayed and the chance was given to another kebele out of the Chara districts. This indicates the deep rooted problem of the Chara. In the past two regimes the Chara people and their areas were forgotten in all aspects of development, they were

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<sup>344</sup>Kaffa Zone Administrative Office,” Ye Decha worwda, Chocha Chara Akababi limat guay” unpublished Amharic manuscript available in the kafa zone Administration office, 1986 Ec.p.12.

<sup>345</sup>*Ibid*; DWA, Archive center, Chiri: Folder No 66, Tesfaye Woldegiyorgis File No 82 Yedecha worda Astedader to Keffa awraja Astedader, yekatit, 1971 Ec (1978).

<sup>346</sup> DWA, Archive center, Chiri; Folder No 24, Mengistu Tilahun FileNO .87, Ye Decha worwda Astedader Ateqalay Geberewoch mahiber to Gebere mahiber agents ,Ter,1971 Ec.(19780).



the least known peoples of the region. In the area there was no school, no teacher so development was unthinkable.<sup>347</sup>

On the other hand, AreroDuke was the first teacher who teaches in Chara language, who himself was in grade nine and hired with one hundred twenty birr. However, out of his teaching activities he was also expected to organize and train his people.<sup>348</sup> The security problem played its negative role for the expansion of schools. Accordingly, in the year 1975 Ec the school of Goba Chara was closed down because of the conflict between Chara and the Me'arit. The two groups of people were always conflicted each other and also created a hostile situation in the area, which had negative consequences on development.<sup>349</sup>

Not only schools were absent, but also health institutions like clinics were not available in the area. Due to the absence of clinics and medical treatment epidemic disease were frequently occurred in the area and killed many people. However, the capacity as well as the commitments of the government in 1973 E.C (1981) to protect epidemic diseases was very low and insignificant.<sup>350</sup>

Some of the local institutions like *qabale* administrative centers, markets, grain mill and others were very far from the center of the people. To meet these institutions the people has to walk half a day from the border of the south to the center. On the contrary, since the time of the Derg some services like electric power, Telecommunication, and pure water was unthinkable. The people were not benefited to these services.<sup>351</sup>

However, after the year 1975 EC.(1982/83) the sign of development was started to be observed in the area. , New market centers like Boya, Zaf, Shasha, Angela and Shalo were opened in the nearby areas of the people. In addition, the local administrative unit, or kebele were established by

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<sup>347</sup> DWA,s Archive center,Chiri: Folder No 82, Hailu Benti File No 140 ye Decha worda Aetedader to kefa Awraja temehrt Betoeh tsehfetbet, meskerem,1973 Ec;DWA, Archive Center,chiri: Folder No 82, Argaw Belay File No 140 yedecha worda Astedader to Arero Duki, Tahsas,1971 Ec.(1978).

<sup>348</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>349</sup> DWA, Archaive center, chiri: Folder No155 Hailegebrrel Demise File No211 ye kafa awraja Astedader to Decha warada Astedader, *Tikimt*, 1975 Ec (1991).

<sup>350</sup>Kaffa Zone Administration office, "YE Decha worda",...p.10; DWA, Archive center,Chiri: Folder No ፳-1 Asnake G/Giyorgis File no 449, kaffa Awraja Astedader Office to kaffa Kiflehager Administration Office, yekatit,1974 Ec(1991).

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid*; kafa zone Administration office," ye Decha worwda"...p.11.

considering the settlement of the people. These market centers were also connected by gravel dry season roads constructed by human labor.<sup>352</sup>

It can be said that, schools were a very recent phenomena, except the school of *Chocha* which was established in 1973 EC. (1981). However, the then military government tried to expand adult education in some districts like Angela and Goba. So, few people acquired basic education. But the majority people were out of reach of adult education.<sup>353</sup>

Regarding the establishment of towns, attention was not given for some of the small towns emerged in the area. It was only between the years 1978-1990 EC. (1986-1998) some few villages centers were established as towns. Informant state that Goba and Angelacan be taken as small towns emerged during this time<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Informants: Alemayehu Ambo, Assefa G/Mariamand and Demese Bongo.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The Chara are one of the indigenous nationalities of the south western region of Ethiopia. Before their movement to the present areas, they lived in the Omo area with other neighboring groups of people. However, due to external pressure mainly from the Me'etit, they left their original Aras of Kumba and settled in Chocha districts.

Their economy is based on mixed activities of hunting and gathering, agriculture, crafts and trade. The Chara used the traditional conflict management known as *Insa*, through this system; most of the conflicts in the society have been solved. So, this good value of the society requires protection and transmission to the next generation. However, after the conquest of the area in 1897EC, the traditional method of conflict resolution was avoided and substituted by modern system of rule. Before 1897 EC, the area were used as a source for slavetraders. Slavery had evil consequences for the socio-economic development of the people.

The Chara had developed good relations with the neighboring peoples of Na'o, Kafficho, and Konta. Their relation with the Me'etit, however, was not peaceful in the past. Due to the expansionist nature of the Me'etit, their relation went from bad to worse. So, the Chara lost most of their territories to the Me'etit.

The conquest of Chara by the forces of Menelik II in 1897 E.C. introduced a new type of administration. Their traditional way of administration and conflict resolution were abandoned. In 1942 E.C (1950) the imperial government of Ethiopia established its rule in Goba Chara district to rule the Chara as mikitil warada (vice – district). After 1950 EC (1958), the Chara people faced different challenges like land measurement and consequently, famine, and epidemics. The development of infrastructure is a recent phenomenon in the area.

## **Glossary**

<i>Adubo</i>	the traditional religious leader of Chara
<i>Bushi, Olman, and Gindeb</i>	religious functionaries under Adubo
<i>Boka</i>	fortress or ditch
<i>Boya</i>	ajewelry used by leaders
<i>Chocha</i>	a mountainous land located in Decha district
<i>Dish</i>	rural town near to Chiri
<i>Ego</i>	name of Chara religion
<i>Gantsa</i>	ring used by religious leader
<i>Gonga</i>	a jewelry made from animal hide
<i>Geza</i>	acommon cultural drink among the Chara
<i>Goberasha</i>	highest judge
<i>Goba</i>	administrative center of Chara
<i>Insa</i>	traditional conflict resolution
<i>Melerasha</i>	title of rulers
<i>Mikitolworeda</i>	administrative structure next to the kebele
<i>Tuga</i>	local army
<i>Tamerasha</i>	village head

## References

### A/ Unpublished Documents

#### I. Archives

##### A/Decha Woreda Administration (DWA)

Folder Number	File Number
140	121/72
140/72	18/72
141/71	33/71
143/73	NO
140/73	114/73
140/70	46/70
166/71	456/71
140/71	194/71
113/74	46/74
113/71	252/71
66/71	82/71
24/71	87/71
82/73	140/73
82/71	140/73
155/75	211/75
1/74	449/74

##### B/ Jimma Zone Administration (JZA)

Folder Number	File Number
12/55	55/55
120/55	55/55
63/55	58/55
63/55	80/55
63/67	58/67

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### III List of Oral Informants

S. No	Name	Sex	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	Abreham Alemayehu (Ato)	M	50	12/7/09 E.C ( 2017 )	Meshgebez	He is a teacher in shello and member of the chara nationality who helped on the history of chara and their relation ship with the Me'nit.
2	Ambes Doble (Ato)	M	66	12/7/09 E.C (2017)	Shasha	He was a farmer who had knowledge on Administration of chara in post liberation period.
3	Alemayehu Ambo (Ato)	M	71	12/7/09 E.C (2017)	Angela	He was representative of the chara nationality during the imperial government, who helped by given various information on famine and epidemic.
4	Alemu Mulaye (Ato)	M	60	12/7/09 E.C (2017)	Odadish	He was a wealthy merchant who gave valuable information on the local administration of chara
5	Assefa G/Mariam (Ato)	M	76	13/7/09 EC (2017)	Bonga	He was retired government official his profession was a

						history teacher, who supported by providing various information on the relation of chara and kafecho peoples
6	Ashenafi (Ato)	M	50	13/7/09 EC (2017)	Bonga	A professional in FM Radio transmission on chara language, who helped by giving information on Traditional conflict resolution method.
7	Bangur Shindemeri (Ato)	M	53	13/7/2009E.C (2017)	Shasha	Member of woreda Council gave valuable information on cultural aspects.
8	Bachi woshani (Ato)	M	51	13/7/09 E.C (2017)	Chocha	A farmer who know the tradition and the origin of chara people
9	Tekle Loti (Ato)	M	56	15/7/09 E.C (2017)	Angela	Chair man of the kebele, who gave his ideas on the meaning of the word chara
10	Oili Bishi Shifi (Ato)	M	60	15/7/09 E.C (2017)	Kumba	He is a farmer who helps by providing necessary ideas on the origin of the Chara.
11	Kero G/Mariam (Ato)	M	50	15/7/09 E.C (2017)	Bonga	Professional of FM Radio transmission who gave valuable information on clan organization.
12	Selas Woraqi (Ato)	M	52	15/7/09 E.C (2017)	Shash	He is member of the woreda council who support by giving necessary ideas on the cause of conflict b/n m'ecnit.
13	Komadi Kabki	M	51	15/7/09 E.C	Kumba	Afarmer who had knowledge

	(Ato)			(2017)		on the early settlement of the people.
14	Duchi Sliti (Ato)	M	50	18/7/09 E.C (2017)	Kumba	He is a farmer who gave his ideas on the origin and settlement of the people
15	Tamena Tesema (Ato)	M	67	18/7/09 E.C (2017)	Shalo	He was a traditional leader in shalo who provided me valuable concepts on clan structure of chara.
16	Wombere Pasmer (Ato)	M	50	18/7/09 E.C (2017)	Jati	Leader of traditional religion who supported by giving some information on the religion of Chara.
17	Banquru Shindemer (Ato)	M	53	20/7/2009 E.C (2017)	Jati	He is a farmer who helps by giving necessary points on Religion.
18	Kositi Arsani (Ato)	M	55	20/7/09 E.C (2017)	Shalo	A family of balabat who gave us important views on religious ceremony.
19	Gelpule Getachew (Ato)	M	49	20/7/2009 E.C (2017)	Dish	He is a police officer who supported me by giving important ideas on conflicts and traditional administration.
20	Tuqure Kanduka (Ato)	M	58	20/7/09 E.C (2017)	Shash	He helps by offering important and valuable accounts on Trade.
21	Tamene Feysa (Ato)	M	55	20/7/09 E.C (2017)	Dish	He is the member of kebele Administration who supported giving necessary information on traditional conflict

						resolution methods.
22	Tadese Ayshal (Ato)	M	51	28/7/09 E.C (2017)	Boisa	A farmer who gave valuable information on marriage of chara people.
23	Gerkisho G/micael (Ato)	M	50	28/7/09 E.C (2017)	Oda dish	He was a trader who provided significant information on trade.
24	Demise Bongo (Ato)	M	75	28/7/2009 E.C (2017)	Bonga	He was a chairman of Angela kebele and member of Na'o, who support by giving ideas on the relation b/n Chara Na'o.
25	Daki Gudi (Ato)	M	54	3/8/2009 E.C (2017)	Boisa	A farmer who provided valuable concepts on the relation of chara neighbors
26	Mekuria yazget (Ato)	M	55	3/8/09 E.C (2017)	Shasha	He is a farmer, who had knowledge on the relation b/n chara and me'eenit.
27	Oyba Boshe (Ato)	M	65	3/8/09 E.C (2017)	Nada	He was one of the local balabet in Nada and member of Me'eenit nationality, who support by giving various information's on the relation of chara and Me'eenit.
28	Tysi Karam (Ato)	M	67	3/8/09 E.C (2017)	Naburu	He was a chair man of naburu, who gave some ideas on the cause of conflict b/n chara and me'eenit.
29	Mosemu Baroliya s (Ato)	M	69	5/8/209 E.C (2017)	Mada	Afarmer supported me providing necessary information the relation b/n

						Chara and Me'enit.
30	Persi Gdanderi (Ato)	M	62	5/8/09 E.C (2017)	Garamuja	He is a farmer who gave various in formations on marriage and related problems.
31	Mekuria Mamo (Ato)	M	68	5/8/09 E.C (2017)	Chiri	Aretired official who supported by giving necessary ideas on traditional administration
32	Getachew Buski (Ato)	M	51	5/8/09 E.C (2017)	Shashmer	He was a farmer who helped by providing valuable information on the conquest of chara.
33	Kero Bulele (Ato)	M	52	5/8/09 E.C (2017)	Shasha	A trader who support me by giving important issues on trade.
34	Kassa Bamir (Ato)	M	52	6/8/209 E.C (2017)	Chiri	He was professional in culture and turism office who provided necessary information on traditional administration of Chara.
35	Mengesha Keto (Ato)	M	50	6/8/09 E.C (2017)	Angela	Afarmer, who help in providing significant information on land measurement.
36	Kero Belachew (Ato)	M	54	7/8/09 E.C. (2017)	Jati	He is atrader and has knowledge on the economic activities of Chara people.

37	Oinagali Kechai (Ato)	M	52	7/8/09 E.C. (2017)	Kumba	Afarmer who gave valuable ideas on occupational groups.
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38	Eresh Altaye (Ato)	M	50	8/8/09EC. (2017)	Shalo	Afarmer who had understanding on the clan structure of Chara.
39	Gosh Altaye (Ato)	M	55	8/8/09 E.C. (2017)	Meshgebeg	A member of qabale administration who gave information on slave trade.
40	Dorpay Oyshal (Ato)	M	51	8/8/09 E.C. (2017)	Boiza	Who is a farmer and gave ideas on the conquest of the area.
41	Tesq Shindemer	M	50	8/8/09 E.C. (2017)	Jati	Afarmer gave me necessary information on the relation between different groups of people.

## Appendices

Appendex No	Heading	Date	The highlights of the archive	Remark
1	Keffa Awraja astedader	5/6/72 E.C (1980)	Letter written from Tesfaye W/Giyorgis to keffa Awraja astedader, Issues regarding to the security problems and visit of chocha district	
2	Keffa Awraja astedader	5/13/71 E.C (1979/80)	Letter written from decha worda astedader to kaffa awraja astedader, issues report on security problems and consequences.	
3	CAA	4/3/71 E.C (1979)	Letter written from Tesfaye W/Giyorgis to Decha worda Police, issues about looting and killing problems.	
4	Keffa Awraja Police	25/4/73 E.C (1981)	Letter from Keffa Awraja police to kaffa aweraja abyotna zemecha committee.	
5	CAA	19/1/73 E.C (1981)	Letter written from DWA to kaffa awraja mirtena plan Gubae, issues the problem of lack of Education and teacher who teaches in chara Language	
6	Keffa Teklay Gizat	8/8/55 E.C (1963/64)	Letter written from kegne Azmach Ayele G/Meskel to keffa Gizat inderasie, issues, about 1955 land measurement x its problems.	
7	KTG	22/8/55 E.C (1955/56)	Letter written from Worku Alemayehu to keffa teqlay gizat, issues, land measurement Of Goba chara and the abuse ment melersha Tibebu.	
8	Keffa awraja police office	23/7/55 E.C (1963/64)	A letter written from kaffa awraja police to Ethiopia Niguse Negest mengist, issue, crime	



			on the land measurement and its investigation.	
9	Keffa Teqalay Gizat	23/10/56 E.C (1964/65)	A letter written from kaffa Teqalay Gizat to fitawrari Zekarias, issues, about patriots and giving land for patriots.	
10	KTG	20/6/67 E.C (1975)	Letter written from Dr. mekonen kibret to keffa kifle hager issues, about famine and a plan to cultivate farm.	
11	KTG	30/8/70 E.C (1978/79)	A letter written from health officer to chiri clinic, issue, about the epidemic disease the death of ten peoples	
12	KTG	7/7/71 E.C (1979/89)	Letter from Anagaw Belay to Decha Woreda Astedader, Issue, report on the spread of Epidemic in the areas of Chara and the death of Eighty peoples.	
13	KTG	29/6/71 E.C (1979)	A report written from Asmamaw Abate to Decha woreda Astedader, issues the spread of the epidemic and its controlling strategy.	
14	Keffa kifle Hager	1/7/74 E.C (1982/83)	Letter written from ketema yashu to Decha woreda astedader, issue the epidemic created serious problem in the area.	
15		24/8/71 E.C (1979/80/)	A letter was written from yawrajaw astedader agelgelot halafi to Decha woreda administration. Issues, the epidemic was still dangerous for the life of Chara peoples.	
16		5/6/71 E.C (1979)	Letter written from Tesfaye w/Giyorgis to keffa awraja astedader, issues, about road construction and the participation of the people.	
17	Decha woreda	2/5/71 E.C	A letter sent from mengistu Tilahun to	

	farmers Association	(1979)	Farmers agents. Issue, to made campaign on Road construction.	
18	Decha woreda Astedader	23/1/73 E.C (1981)	Letter written from Hailu Benti to Kaffa awraja school offices issues, about school construction in chocha areas.	
19	Decha woreda administration	14/4/71 E.C (1979)	A letter written from Argaw belay to Arero Duki, issues about Arero's activities of education and recognition by the woreda astedader.	
20	Keffa awraja Astedader	29/2/75 E.C (1983)	Letter was written from kaffa awraja astedader to Decha woresa astedader, issues, about the security challenge and the school of Goba chara.	
21	Kaffa kifile Hager	18/6/74 E.C (1982)	A letter written from Asnake G/Giyorgis to kaffa kifile Hager astedader issues about the epidemic and problems related to the prevention and controlling strategy.	

