



JIMMA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

**A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE MÄJÄNGIR PEOPLE,
SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA Ca. 1890-1974**

By

Abebe Getahun

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of History and Heritage Management of College of
Social Sciences and Law in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master
of Arts in History**

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Preface

This work covers the history of the Mājāngir people from about the last decade of the 19th century upto the downfall of the imperial regime in 1974. The story starts from the conquest and incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian empire and ends with the imperial regime. Chapter one deals with the location of the study areas, origin and settlement of the Mājāngir community, administrative division and re-division of the area. Chapter two discusses the incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian empire state, slave trade and the Italian rule in the area. As well as chapter three discusses about economic activities of the Mājāngir before 1974 under this agriculture, hunting and gathering, pottery making and apiculture are seen. Chapter four deals with the land tenure system; its influence on the Mājāngir people; the relationship that prevailed between the Mājāngir people and other ethnic groups who had moved to Mājāngir territories at various times and the introduction of socio-economic facilities to the area. Moreover, chapter five deals with socio-cultural history of the Mājāngir like clanship, marriage and bride price, funeral or burial ceremony, traditional beliefs and calendar, and dressing and food.

The main objective of writing this thesis is to reconstruct the history of one of the least studied areas and peoples of the country. Upto the writing of this thesis, there are few works of scholarly importance (published or unpublished) on the Mājāngir people since the incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian empire. Hence, this thesis is the first in its kind on the history of the Mājāngir people. Thus, it paves the way for further study on the community. It is also hoped that the thesis will serve as a source for further reconstruction of the history of the Mājāngir in particular and that of the southwestern peoples of Ethiopia in general. The attempts made to get archival documents or materials on the peoples of Mājāngir was not successful as this people lived in isolated way from the political and administrative system since the annexation of the area right up to 1974.

This material is reconstructed almost entirely from oral traditions. It has also been supplemented by a few available written sources and archives. Written sources were explored

from Addis Ababa university (IES and John of Kennedy) libraries and Jimma University. They were analyzed and used. Moreover to reconstruct the thesis with oral tradition filed work was carried out for one and half months. In this oral informants were carefully selected and interviewed. The time when the field work conducted was the time of coffee collection. So I experienced problems in convincing informants for interview sharing their time for free. Although one usually encounters various problems because of the shortcomings of oral traditions, it has proved to be an indispensable source in the reconstruction of the history of peoples like Mājāngir, where written documents are scarce or non-existent. Efforts have been made to overcome the problems by carefully taking detailed notes and interpreting the information transmitted by informants. The study is limited to the Mājāngir territory of the former Yäkki district. The present day, Yäkki district is in Southern, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region and the Mājāngir zone in Gambella Region.

The title of the thesis 'A Historical Survey of the Mājāngir People of the southwestern Ethiopia Ca.1890-1974' is used to indicate the location of the area. Otherwise, it does not cover the whole region where the Mājāngir community lived and still live. Almost all non-English words in this thesis have been translated and provided in the glossary.

Abstract

This study mainly focuses on the southwestern Ethiopian people of the Mäjängir. It starts Ca.1890 during the conquest of the area by Menelik's forces and goes all the way upto the end of imperial rule of Emperor Haile Selasie in 1974. The thesis attempts to analyze social, economic, cultural and some political developments of the area mainly inhabited by the Mäjängir. In this study, unlike other peoples of the southern Ethiopia the Mäjängir were not experienced the gebbar näfñäñña system. In addition, the area inhabited by the Mäjängir was incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in 1890. But they came under effective occupation of the central government after 1941. After these years, peace and security prevailed in Mäjängirland. Conflicts were reduced, raiding against them from their neighbors also stopped. Taxation was also imposed on the Mäjängir only after the 1950s. Beginning from 1964 the Mäjängir began to embrace Protestant Christianity. This influenced the later way of life of the Majangir. They realy experienced changes changes afterwards. They abandoned their traditional religion and practices at large.

Key to the Transliteration System

I. The seven sounds of the Ethiopian alphabet are represented as follows:

1 st order	በ	Bä
2 nd order	ቡ	Bu
3 rd order	ቢ	Bi
4 th order	ባ	Ba
5 th order	ቤ	Bé
6 th order	ብ	Be
7 th order	ቦ	Bo

II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

ሸ	Šä
ቸ	Ćä
ኸ	Ñä
ጸ	Jä
ዠ	Žä

III. Glotalized sounds are represented as follows:

ቀ	Qä
ጠ	Ṭä
ጨ	Čä
ጸ/ፀ	Şä
ጰ	Phä

IV. Consecutive vowels are usually separated by apostrophe.

Example: Gäbra'él	ገብርኤል
Edisa'él	ኤድሳኤል
Esmā'él	ስማኤል
Micha'él	ማካኤል

V Stressed sounds are usually represented by doubling the consonant.

Example: ገባር	Gäbbar
ከበደ	Käbbädä

VI. The alveolar, implosive dental stop (dh) is found only in Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan languages but not in Semitic. It could be read as follows:

Ato Majangiron	English	Example	English Meaning
Dh	Dh equivalent	Dhame	food
		Madh	fire
		Wadh	come on

General Examples

ጭቃ ሹም	Čiqa Šum
ወይዘሮ	Wäyzäro
ገሻር	Gaži
ነፍጠኛ	Näṭṭäñña
ቀኝ አዝማኝ	Qäñazmac
ታጺ	Taphé
ጨሚ	Čämi
ሰንበት	Sänbät
ሸዋ	Šäwa

CHAPTER ONE

1. PHYSICAL SETTING, LOCATION AND POPULATION SIZE

1.1. Mäjängir Zone

Gambella is one of the nine regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia established in 1993.¹ The region is situated around the confluence of Baro and Akobo river valleys. In the west it is bordered on a long international boundary with the Republic of Southern Sudan. It is also bordered in the south by Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPR) and Oromia Regional state to the north and east.² (see also appendix B) According to the 2007 population and housing census, the region has 307,096 population, of which 159,787 are males and 147,309 are females.³ The region is mainly inhabited by five different ethnic groups. These are: Añuak, Nuer, Mäjängir, Komo, and Opo. They all belong to the Nilo-Saharan language family. The Oromo, Amhara, Tigre, Gurage, Kambata etc are also settled in the region.⁴ Nowadays, the region has three zones based on ethnic groups distribution. These are namely: Nuer zone, Añuak Zone, and Mäjängir zone.⁵

Geographically, the Mäjängir zone is located in southwestern Ethiopia. In the north, the Mäjängir zone is bordered on Abobo district of Gambella region, to the northwest by Puñiwudo district of the region and to the south and southeast by Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State.⁶ (see also appendix B). According to the figures of 2007 population and housing census, the Mäjängir zone had 59,248 total populations, composed of 30,567 males and 28,681 females.⁷ The Mäjängir zone has approximately an estimated area of 1,939.33 square kilometers. The estimated population density of the zone is 22.22 persons per square kilometer.⁸ The great majority of Mäjängir zone population reside in rural areas, i.e. about 90.2%. The Mäjängir zone is also inhabited by other ethnic groups including the Amhara, Kafficho, Shäkacho, Oromo, Tigre, Bench, Shakko and others.⁹ Based on the 2007 population and housing census published in August, 2010, the Mäjängir were counted and registered by two different names in the country. The total population registered in the name of Mäjängir is 21,952 composed of 10,778 males and 11,173 females while the total population registered in the name of Mässängo is 10,871 composed of 5,649 males and 5,222 females.¹⁰ This had happened

apparently because the Mäjängir communities were known by different names in different parts of the country where they lived. These names are: the Mäjängir, Mässängo, Ujang and Tama.¹¹ These names were used by their neighbors. Despite their derogatory meaning, some of these names are still continued to be used as it is observed in the book published by national census. But the people prefer the name Mäjängir.¹² As for the etymological origin of the term, according to Wessen the name Mäjängir came from the Mäjängir words. According to him, the root of the word is “Majang”. It is used to ask whether someone has observed a hunter or honey collector in the forest. But this does not seem likely because both a hunter and honey collectors have different names in the Mäjängir language. In addition, Wessen acquired information about the name Mäjängir from a non-Mäjängir informant.¹³ According to Mäjängir informants, the name Mäjängir was derived from two Majangir words. “*Mak*”, which means go and “*Jang*” means forest. So in its linguistic origin, Majang means, ‘go to forest.’ Forest was everything for the Mäjängir community. Their life was associated with the forest. The Mäjängir would get from the forest honey, beasts to be hunted for their meat (since they were not breeders of cattle), water, green vegetables and root crops. Forest was the place where they would hide and escape from enemy at the time of wars and raids and etc.¹⁴

About 99.3 % of the Mäjängir communities, inhabit in the rural parts of the Mäjängir zone. Today majority of the Mäjängir are adherents of the Protestant religion; about 90 %. About 1.9% of them are adherents of Orthodox Christianity. Traditional religion claims about 8.1 %.¹⁵ Although the Mäjängir zone is found in the tropics and the Gambella region, its climatic condition is largely *woinadega* (temperate). The elevation varies from 900 meters to 2000 meters above sea level, with the variation of temperature from 13⁰c to 33⁰c and receiving mean annual rainfall amount above 1300 mm.¹⁶ Most parts of the Gambella region is plain in contrary with this, Majangir zone is predominantly hilly. Out of 192,200 estimated hectares of land, about 127,000 land is forestland and potentially cultivable land is about 65,200 hectares.¹⁷ The zone also has intermittent and perennial streams, rivers and mineral waters. In general, animal husbandry, crop farming, hunting, fishery (only for home consumption), logging are the main economic activities of the Mäjängir people.¹⁸

Formerly the Mäjängir were under the former Yäkki district of Mocha *Awraja*, in Illubabor *täklay gizat* (later *Kifle Hager*) province. (see also appendix E). Today, the Mäjängir zone has two districts: Godäre and Mängäshi. Mätti town is administrative head quarter both for Mäjängir zone and Godäre district administration. The administrative seat of Mängäshi district is Mängäshi. It is about 65 kilometers from Mätti town. Godäre district consists of 14 rural *kebeles* and Mängäshi district has 17 such *kebeles*.¹⁹

This zone is suitable for cultivation of different crops, vegetables and also for animal husbandry. Among the crops grown in the Mäjängir zone are: *moye* (coffee), *makälä* (maize), *ñidhiñ* (sorghum), *utti* (enset), different types of *shakoy* (taro) and variety of *kawn*, *babure/anshote* (yams, cassava), *bambi* (sweet potato), and fruits like mango, orange, papaya, avocado, banana etc and different vegetables mainly for home consumption are also grown.²⁰ With regard to forest cover, the Mäjängir zone is covered with large trees. To mention some of them; *dampai* (*Cordia africana*), *gomoy* (*Aninegieria adolfi-friederias*), *goje* (*Manilkara butugi*), *tangi* (*Antiaris toxicaria*), *Dokey* (*Ficus vista*), *padh* (*Ficus sycomorus*), *yagoy* (*Milleta ferraginea*), *kashoy* (*Albiza gummifera*), *Yuye* (*Trichilia dregeana*), *Koboy* (*celtis zenkiri*), *duwi* (*Baphia abyssinica*), *keyan* (*Blighia unijugata*), *Abbe* (*Ficus mucoso*), *Gebo* (*Trilepsium madagascariense*), *Woni* (*Mimusops kummel*) are some of the big trees that grow in the Mäjängir land.²¹

Previously, the Mäjängir zone had wild animals such as buffaloes (*miyadh*), rhinoceros (*komi*), leopards (*domon*) and elephants (*ange*). But nowadays, these animals have disappeared perhaps because of excessive hunting of these animals for their meat, skin and ivory. In the pre-1950s period the Mäjängir had no tradition of hunting big wild animals listed above. These animals were respected and kept untouched by the community.²² The other wild animals which still exist are bush bucks (*phowey*), antelope (*migun*), bushpigs (*kutur*), lion (*dhephe*), porcupine (*iyen*), civet cat (*phongaroy*), fox (*wangoy*), etc. Arboreal animals like ape (*dhiro*), monkey (*dhira*), *boji*, *todhi* and different kinds of birds are also found in the zone.²³ Oral sources show that, in the past this area was densely forested and endowed with variety of wild animals. However, today the area is highly deforested and the number of wild animals has declined so much. The reason for deforestation includes increment in number of population after the conquest. Migrant settlers also increased from time to time particularly after the 1940s.²⁴

Beginning in the the1940s and 1950s, coffee farming as cash crop was expanded in the area. As a result, large number of population began to migrate towards the Mäjängirland for coffee collection, daily laborers. After coffee collection, most of the migrants from different parts of the country remained there. Some got large tracts of land for cultivation of coffee as a gift or through purchase from the government. Since then, large forest lands were cleared for production of coffee, cultivation of crops and for construction purposes.²⁵

As it has been indicated, the Mäjängir communities heavily depended on forest.²⁶ They have indeginous knowledge in systematically exploiting forests for medicinal purposes, clothing and shelter, hunting and for gathering. The Mäjängir only hunted wild animals, which had nutritional value.²⁷ Some Mäjängir men started to hunt these animals (buffaloes, elephants, leopards) after the Italian occupation when they began to get rifles. The Mäjängir learned to hunt these animals from other people who settled there.²⁸ They did so after they had observed the economic importance of the skin and tusks of these big animals. But the hunting of these big and fierce animals by the Mäjängir community was conducted on a limited scale.²⁹

In the past, breeding of cattle, goats, and sheep was not practiced by the Mäjängir. With the coming of other settlers to the area, these animals were started to be kept by the migrant settlers little by little after 1950. Before 1950, the area where the Mäjängir population settled (Yäkki district plus Mäjängir zone) is believed by the settlers and their neighbors' as unsuitable for keeping domestic animals due to the presence of tse-tse fly. Until very recently horses, mules and donkeys did not breed in this areas.³⁰ According to Stauder, the area where the Mäjängir people settled was suitable only for them which their neighbors; the Añuak and the Oromo did not prefer to settle in. The Añuak preferred to settle in the savanna grassland and plain river valleys for fishing and transportation. Whereas, the Oromo were semi-pastoralists, and the area where the Mäjängir population settled was not suitable for their animals as it would be vulnerable to tse-tse fly.³¹ But this was not the only reason why they did not keep cattles. As some of the Mäjängir were living with other ethnic groups outside of the tse-tse fly zone, those who raised cattle. However, still the Mäjängir had reservation with live stock raising. Moreover, other ethnic groups like Añuak, who lived in the tse-tse fly zone also kept some goats and sheeps. But the Mäjängir do not raised these animals. They only kept dogs and chickens. The latter was considered as the property of women and children.³²

The Oromos recognized the tse-tse fly hindered cattle raising in the Mäjängir territory but the Mäjängir do not understand it. Instead, the Mäjängir considered the Oromos, the Amharas and the Ethiopian government as an obstacle for cattle raising.³³ From their experience the Mäjängir believed with some justified reason that other ethnic groups in their territory; government police, armed groups of Amhara and Oromo would try to steal, extort or tax them for whatever live stock large or small they would come to possess. As a result, the Mäjängir used to say why they worry raising animals, while neighboring societies under the same situation have continued to keep some animals despite degradation by outsiders and the government forces.³⁴

The fact is that, the Mäjängir were not interested in looking after livestock. This lack of interest was observed in different ways. Their shortage of vocabulary related to livestock is an indication of this. Lack of interest in livestock raising does not mean that the Mäjängir had not used or did not need livestock.³⁵ They rather appreciate any meat. Chickens were sacrificed for most ritual purposes. But a goat or sheep was needed in some occasions and in this case Mäjängir would buy from a neighboring community. They never kept it for long or tried to breed but for sacrifice. They disliked the bother of keeping domestic animals and the risk of losing them.³⁶

1.2. Yäkki District

Southern, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, Region (SNNPR) is one of the Federal Regions of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. According to the 2007 census it has 14,929,548 total population, of which 7,425,918 are males and 7,503,630 are females. Shäkka zone is one of the 13 Zones of SNNPR. This Zone has 199,314 total populations; 101,059 are males and 98,255 are females.³⁷ It has three districts. Yäkki district is one of these three districts and is part of my study area. The head quarters of Yäkki district is Téppi town. Yäkki district is bordered in the east by Kaffa Zone (Bitta district), in the south by Bench Maji Zone (Shäkkko district), in the west by Mäjängir Zone (Godäre district), and in the north by Shäkka Zone, Andäracha district.³⁸ (see also appendix C)

The 2007 population and housing census puts Yäkki district's total population at 134,519 of which 68,895 are males and 65,624 are females. Out of 22 *kebeles* of Yäkki district, the Mäjängir

communities largely reside in nine (9) *kebeles*. The Mäjängir and Shakko peoples are said to be the early inhabitants of Yäkki district. The district has 48,871.31 hectares of land. The climate of the district is about 70% *woinadega* (warm midland), about 15% *dega* (cool highland), and the remaining about 15% *qolla* (low land).³⁹ The following table shows the twelve years temperature data of the study area (1998-2009) in degree centigrade and millimeter.

Months	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Max. Temp.in °c	31.5	33.1	32.5	30.7	29.5	28.3	27.2	27.5	28.8	28.8	30.0	30.7
Min. Temp.in °c	13.3	13.6	15.5	16.4	16.0	15.5	15.3	15.4	15.0	14.5	13.2	13.3
Aver. Temp.in °c	22.4	23.4	24	23.6	22.8	21.9	21.3	21.3	21.9	21.7	21.7	22.0
Annual Perceptation in mm	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
	1768.1	1446.6	1477.6	1530.8	1287.2	1355.2	1502.2	1296	1714.5	1676.9	2414.6	1362.42

Source: National Metreology Service Agency Addis Ababa.

This is for the Majangir zone and Yekki district. With regard to crops grown, vegetation cover, animal husbandry and wild life, Yäkki district shared and does still share similarity with the Majangir Zone.

1.3. Origin and Settlement of the Mäjängir

According to oral tradition of the Mäjängir, the origin of human being is “Ler”, father of all men like Adam in Christianity or Adem in Islam. For them Ler is the father of all men on land who was sent by God (*waqoyo*). Hence, Ler is the origin of the Mäjängir people according to their tradition. Moreover, the tradition adds that, Ler trained the Mäjängir people how to grow maize (*makele*) and the way to prepare bee hives. Ler made hives of stone for himself where he lived around Bakko River, adjacent to Dildila waqa (to the south of the present day Teppi).

The Mäjängir also believe that Ler had two brothers, Walo and Damo. The three brothers went apart and divided the world between themselves. Walo moved to the south, while Damo to the east and Ler to the north and west for good. Ler is believed by the Mäjängir to have gone to the land of the *farangi* (Ethiopian names for the whites).⁴⁰ Ler is also believed to have been a wise man who taught the Mäjängir community: culture of cultivation, beekeeping and everything as a role model. The Mäjängir compared Ler with Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The Mäjängir also have another legend concerning the origin of the Melaneer clan, in which the Mäjängir claim that this clan (*komoi*) originally was not “Mäjängir”. Melaneer was one of the privileged clans of the Majangir from which their spiritual clan leaders (*taphadh*) usually came. According to them, the Melaneer clan was from the Mashier clan of Maji. There were two brothers who lived at Joati, a hilly land escape, south of the Akobo River. It is said that, one of these brothers was changed into rock. The moment his brother heard crying voice, he brought an axe and opened the rock and got a small child.⁴² Subsequently, goat was slaughtered as a sacrifice for the newly born child and he drunk its blood and grew as to a man. His name was Padhe. When the great *taphadh* called Joati (both the name of the place and the *taphadh* at today's Guraferda area) heard the news of the baby, he claimed the boy as his own son. Immediately Padhe became *taphadh*. Later Padhe accompanied the Mäjängir. On his journey, he slept with a Mäjängir girl from the Dabir clan. Then she gave birth to Padhe a son called Adube. Adube became the lineal descendant of the first Mäjängir, Melaneer *taphadh*. The later *taphadh* who succeeded him among the Mäjängir descended from him. This event is said to have taken place south of the Boma plateau before the 17th century while they were moving to their present day settlement.⁴³

Most probably, this legend was fabricated and spread among the Mäjängir community to get acceptance for the Melaneer clan's hereditary spiritual leadership. This is the same with Ethiopian emperors who claimed to be of 'solomonic descent'. Otherwise, the Melaneer clan was not alien to the Mäjängir, they were Mäjängir themselves.⁴⁴

Written sources cite two different versions as far as the homeland of the Mäjängir is concerned. The first version holds that the Nilotic people of the “river-lake plains” and the highland all belong to the “common homeland” in the southwestern fringe of the Ethiopian highland.

According to this idea, it was from this area that, the Nilotic peoples first moved to far west of the Nile and some even lost contacts with the other Nilotes due to different influences that affected them. However, this idea is not supported by tangible evidence and it fails to show how these different groups of Nilotes moved from southwestern highland of Ethiopia to the furthest Nile.⁴⁵ The second version is the reverse of the above one and it seems plausible as compared to the earlier. According to this view, the Nilo-Saharan language family was spoken thousands years ago “in the eastern Sahel” and in the Sahara between Chad and the Nile. They moved from this part of the Sahara “when it dried up” and entered also present western and southern frontiers of Ethiopia.⁴⁶

By linguists the Mässāngo[Mājāngir] were/are classified into east Sudanic language cluster. Negasso stated that, they came from the Sudan, “following the course of Abbayya and then spread southwards along the Dabus River after they had reached the confluence of the Abayya (Abbay) and Dhidhesa rivers.” Additionally, he stated that the “Shanqilla” who lived in the river banks of Jawee, Dilla and Dabus are in the same family as the Mājāngir.⁴⁷ Today all the Mājāngir population live in Ethiopia. By constant population pressure from the Sudan, they were pushed out and displaced by the Añuak and by the raids from others north of the Baro River. Then through time they were expanded to their presents settlements as I will mention later.⁴⁸

During the 17th century, the Mājāngir came from south and settled at a place called Maleñ. This area is around the border of Gambella Region. Due to successive conflicts with the Añuak, the Mājāngir moved from Maleñ to Dabe. This place was a bit far from the reach of Añuak. The other Mājāngir already settled at Joati.⁴⁹ After Dabe, the Mājāngir communities moved towards the north and settled there. The other group moved to a place called Dikuy where the Shakko peoples already settled. One cannot find these places today probably because their names were changed over time. Still other groups moved to Gurafarda and settled there. From Gurafarda, the Mājāngir people continued their movement and settled at Alamo.⁵⁰ Generally speaking, the Mājāngir community entered Ethiopia following the course of a river, the river which the Mājāngir community could not name, probably the Nile. Thereafter, the Mājāngir spread towards north to Joati, from Joati went to areas like Arogebirhan, Suphi, in Shakko district, Shimi and Bodi, in Semen Bench at Danbar. The other group flocked to Alamo; from there to Fide and Oppi. From the above places, the Mājāngir community continued their movement towards north

upto Godäre River and Gambella and upto some sites in today's Oromia. With the coming of the Oromo and Shakka peoples to the highland of Illubabor, the Mäjängir were pushed back and settled at their present day settlement. The settlement of the Mäjängir population was completed during the 17th century.⁵¹

According to the existing sources, the Mäjängir were the first settlers of the Gambella region. They were the earliest inhabitants of Gambella during or before the seventeenth century.⁵² The Mässängo [Mäjängir] were the early inhabitants of highland Illubabor prior to the arrival of the Oromo and the Shakacho people.⁵³ In their settlement in Gambella, highland Ilubbabor and other places, the Mäjängir never displaced other ethnic group.⁵⁴ Today, the Majangir settled in Wallaga around Dimbi Dollo⁵⁵ and in Ilubabor around Bure and Mätu following the Gabba river valley, in present day Oromia Region.⁵⁶ In Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPR), they live in two different zones (provinces) namely: Shakka Zone in Yäkki district and Bench Maji Zone in Gurafarda and Shätkko districts.⁵⁷ But today the Mäjängir people are largely found in Gambella regional state, where they constituted the Mäjängir Zone.⁵⁸ (for the whole settlement of Mäjängir see also appendix D).

Change of settlement was conducted by the Mäjängir before 1974 within their own territory. There were different reasons for the settlement shift by the Mäjängir. Among them, we have: decline of the fertility of the soil in their former settlements. As a result, new forest areas were cleared for agriculture. Another reason was that before the introduction of Protestant Christianity to Mäjängirland, there was security problem. There were killings and revenge killings among themselves. This was caused by drinking local alcoholic drinks like *tajan* (an alcoholic drinks made of grain known by others as *borede*) and *ogol* it is a kind of *tej* (*mead*).⁵⁹ In addition to these, before 1941, there was continuous raids from the Añuaks and other neighbors. Thus, to escape these raidings, they changed their settlement. These depredations were diminished after 1941, with the restoration of peace and order in the Mäjängir territory by the imperial government.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Mäjängir community changed its settlement in order to get protection from another *taphadh* in the case of the death of their former *tapadh*. It was also to forget their deceased *taphadh*. This tradition continued up to the 1970s. After the conquest of the area in 1890 and the introduction of the *qallad* (land measurement) after the 1905 to the area, there was land confiscation from the Mäjängir. They were forced to move from their early

settlement into densely forested pockets; leaving their original land to the settler soldiers, the *nāftāñña*, from the north.⁶¹

The Mājängir community settled in different regions, among different ethnic groups. But they share the same language, culture and living conditions. In stating this, Stauder has the following:

...The Majangir are sandwiched between 'Nilotic' peoples such as the Anuak and Nuer to their west on the savanna of the Sudan-Ethiopian borderlands; and 'Cushitic' peoples such as the [Oromo], Mocha [shakka] and Shakko-Ghmira [Bench], to their east on the high land plateau of Ethiopia. The Majangir are radically distinguished from the Nilotes and Cushites, their immediate neighbors, by language, culture, and physical appearance. The Majangir are nearest in these respects to their little-known black peoples (Suri, Mekan, Zilmamu, Tirma, Tid etc.) to their south, in Ethiopia and the Bom plateau region of Southern Sudan.⁶²

1.4. Administrative Division and Re-Division

The Mājängir settled in scattered settlement in the densely forested areas. In this scattered settlement, they had their own territory under different *taphas* based on the villages of their respective settlement. Since they had excess land, there was no competition for land possession. They had no territorial competition with other ethnic groups as well. The Mājängir had no organized system to defend their territory.⁶³

The forces of Menelik led by *Ras Tässäma Nadäw* conquered Illubabor in the late 1889.⁶⁴ Taking into consideration the local identity, the spread of ethnic composition, geographical areas and the fertility of the areas Menelik divided the Ethiopian empire into 34 *awrajas* (provinces).⁶⁵ Illubabor was one of these *awrajas* (provinces) of Ethiopia where Yäkki was included as district.⁶⁶ The governor of Yäkki district, after its conquest was *Fitawrari Mäshäsha Berča*.⁶⁷ The Mājängir people's reaction to the conquest of the area by Menelik forces was to flee into the forests. The administrative system after the conquest became so brutal against the Mājängir. Among others, they were successively raided by settler soldiers for slavery.⁶⁸ The campaign for slave raiding was sometimes waged by the higher officials including the governor of Illubabor *awraja Ras Tässäma Nadäw*.⁶⁹

Italians occupied Ethiopia in 1936. But they reached Ilubbabor in the late 1936.⁷⁰ After the Italians occupied Ethiopia, they named the region Italian East Africa (Africa Orientale Italiana). This colonial entity consisted of: Eritrea and Italian Somaliland and restructured the administrative regions of Ethiopia and Somalia into six different parts. These were Eritrea with its capital Asmera, Amhara with its capital Gondar, Harar with its capital Harar, Addis Ababa (later Showa), Somalia with its capital Mogadishu, and [Oromo] and Sidama region with its capital Jimma. The [Oromo] and Sidama region composed the southwestern and southern provinces.⁷¹ So Yäkki *Wäräda* was found under this region and within Ilubbabor.⁷²

After liberation from Italian rule, especially in 1943, the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie declared new provincial administrative structure. In this administrative division, the country was sub-divided into 12 *awrajas* (provinces), 60 districts (*wärädas*), 339 *wäräda mislänäs* (districts) and 1176 *meketel mislänäs* (sub-districts). In 1946, the name of these administration entities was changed. The *awrajas* were renamed *Täklay gezats* (provinces) and the *Meketel- Mislänäs* became *Meketel wäräda gezats*.⁷³ Yäkki was one of the *wäräda-Mislänäs* and Bächi, Zinki and Téppi became *Meketel-wäräda gezat* in Illubabor *Täklay Gezat*. In 1966 the *Meketel wäräda* administrative structure was eliminated and the name of Yäkki was changed to Yäkkina Godäre *wäräda* (Yäkki and Godäre district).⁷⁴ Yäkki was both the name of a district and the seat of a district administrative office.⁷⁵ During the tenure of *Qeñazmaé Fäläkä Zäläläw*, in 1945, *Däjazmaé Tassäw Walälu*, the Governor of Illubabor *Täklay Gezat* came to visit Yäkki. During his visit, he decided to shift the headquarters of the district from Yäkki to Téppi. From this time on, Téppi town became the center of Yäkki district and Yäkki was reduced to *kebele*.⁷⁶

Most of the names of *kebeles* in Yäkki district were either derived from the name of the Mäjängir *tapha* or the Shätko chiefs. Yäkki, for instance was the name of Shätko *balabbat* (chief) called Yäkki Yäshaw and Téppi is also the corrupted name of a Mäjängir man who lived there before the arrival of the Amhara and Oromo settlers. His name was Téphé.⁷⁷ This further strengthens that, the Shätko and the Mäjängir people are the early inhabitants of the area; prior to the arrival of other ethnic groups. Just after their arrival, the non-Mäjängir and non-Shätko peoples named different villages at Yäkki by the name of individuals or chiefs of Shätko or Mäjängir who lived there, whom they considered as natives. Otherwise, both the Shätko and the Mäjängir

communities had no tradition of calling their villages by the name of individual who once lived there.⁷⁸

This division and redivision of administrative entities had brought nothing to the Mäjängir people. Rather it was followed by appropriation of their land by the *näffäñña* settlers and taxation was imposed up on the people. Most of the officials of the district and the local *balabbats* and *qoros* were from the *näffäññas* or the northern settlers who came to the area for different reasons.⁷⁹ This could be evidenced by the governors of the district both before and after the restoration of imperial rule right up to 1974:

Fitawrari Mäshäsha Bärcä (c.1890—1907)

Fitwarari Dästa Wolle (c.1907---1917)

Fitawrari Endailalu Atrfew (c.1917-1936)⁸⁰

Qäñazmč Fäläkä Zäläläw (c.1942-1946)

Balambaras Dämisse Woldäyohanis (c.1947-1952)

Balambaras Lämna Fantaye (1952-1956)

Balambaras Gädamu Gizaw (1956-1964)

Ato Azänä Wubé (1965-1974).⁸¹

Based on the newly designed ethnic federal state under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Yäkki and Godärä district was split into two different administrative regions in 1993. Yäkki came under SNNPR and Godärä was put into Gambella regional state. Later the Mäjängir *zone* was established having only Godärä district. In 2007 Godärä district is divided into two, Godaré and Mängäshi districts under Mäjängir *Zone*. The administrative units later split into many districts formerly formed part of just Yäkki district.⁸²

Notes

¹Wessen Shiferaw, “Gender-Based division of Labour in Agricultural Production among the Majangir Community in Southwestern Ethiopia”, MA Thesis (IES, AAU, 2008), P.26.

² Bizuneh Beyene, “Historical and Political Origin of Conflict in the Gambella Region”, *The Journal of Oromo Studies* (vol.13 No. 1 &2, 2006), p.86.

³Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission Central Statistical Agency (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa, August, 2010), p.50.

⁴Bizuneh, p.88.

⁵Wessen, p.27.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Population and Housing Census...*, August 2010, p.50.

⁸Wessen, P.27.

⁹*Population and Housing Census*, August, 2010, p.84.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Jack Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society of A Southwest Ethiopian People* (Cambridge, 1971), p.1.

¹²Informants: Sainok Ranshaw, Yäwoijak Kaibab, Isrom Bananas and Awkin Lemtekan.

¹³Wessen, p.31.

¹⁴Informants: Wozeten Adrman, Samson Kognan, Fanos Péru and Edisa' él Wari.

¹⁵*Population and Housing Census*, August, 2010, p.84.

¹⁶National Metrology Service Agency, Addis Ababa.

¹⁷Wessn, P.27.

¹⁸Informants: Simon Yäwoijak, Tangät Lawke, Agilo Lawke and Simon Tuphatak.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Informants: Simon, Yosäf Tashu, Särawit Game, Feyisa Yobbi, Mulugeta Burbay and Girma Tamrasha.

²¹*Ibid; tangi (Antiaris toxicaria)*. The Majangir people used to prepare the bark of this tree as a night cloth and floor sheets. And *Yuye (Trichilia dregeana)* is another big tree. The Majangir community used the berries of this tree as edible oil. Its preparation involved immersing the berries into water and squeezing it and adding on *molon* (cabbages). Whereas other peoples used it as a mustard seed to grease the earthen pan for making *injera* (Ethiopian pan cake like traditional food).

²²Informants: Samson Kognan, Isrom Bananas and Märoy Burbay; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see appendix G. P.18).

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Informants: Dingetu Dästa, Sainok, Sharäw Shanta, Shamo Balambaras, Awkin and Simon Yewoijak.

- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid*
- ²⁷ Informants: Muté Engliz, Mathios Fidé and Särawit.
- ²⁸ Informants: Yäwoija Kaibab, Ejära Dhare and Girma.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No: Mocha Wereda Gizat Governor to Illubabor Awraja Gizat Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see appendix G. P.18).
- ³¹ Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.2.
- ³² *Ibid*, P.13; Informants: Sharew, Dingetu, Shamo and Serawit.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Population and Housing Census...*, August 2010, p.50.
- ³⁸ See the map of Yäkki Wäradä on the appendix-C.
- ³⁹ *Population and Housing Census...*, 2010, p.83; informants: Mathios, Muté, and Täkä.
- ⁴⁰ Jack Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir and their Relations with other Ethnic Groups of Southwest Ethiopia”, *In the Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Addis Ababa, 1970), p.107.
- ⁴¹ Informants: Awkin, Abraham Abate, Ejära and Ñamur Böldin.
- ⁴² Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...”, p.107.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Informants: Shamo, Mute, Ñamur and Isrom.
- ⁴⁵ E.S Atieno Odhiambo and Others, *A History of East Africa*, First Edition (Longman 1977), pp.38-39.
- ⁴⁶ Philip Curtin and others, *African History from Earliest times to Independence*. Second Edition (Longman and New York, 1995), pp.10-11.
- ⁴⁷ Negasso Gidada, *History of the Sayoo Oromo of Southwestern Wollega, Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886* (Frankfurt, Addis Ababa, 1984), p.85.
- ⁴⁸ Donald L. Donham and Wendy James, eds *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia* (Oxford, Athens, Addis Ababa, 2002), p.239.
- ⁴⁹ Bizuneh, P.89; informants: Shamo, Isrom and Awkin.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Bizuneh, p.89; Informants: Hawariat Banjän, Abraham, Yisak Däbärkan, Tialäm Banjän, Shamo, Fäyisa, Särawit and Yosäf.
- ⁵² Bizuneh, p.89.
- ⁵³ Yasin Mohammed, “A Historical Survey of the Land Tenure System in Highland Ilubbabor C.1889-1974.”, MA Thesis (History, Addis Ababa University, 1990), P.6.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ Negasso, p.85.
- ⁵⁶ Informants: Shamo, Mäkonen Mäbrate, Täkä Gänjäär and Feyisa.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Informants: Ñamur, Jenur, Samson and Abraham.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

- ⁶¹*Ibid.*
- ⁶²Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.1.
- ⁶³*Ibid.*, p.2.
- ⁶⁴Yasin Mohammed, “Some Aspects of Social History of Ilubbabor, Ethiopia ,Ca 1889-1991, PhD Dissertation (History, Addis Ababa University, 2009),p.120.
- ⁶⁵Ketebo Abdiyo, “Historical survey of the Arsi-Oromo Ca.1910-1974” MA Thesis (History, Addis Ababa University, 1999). P.93.
- ⁶⁶Informants: Hawariat, Tobél Konde, Mäkonnen and Ñante Boñe.
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰Yassin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, p.146.
- ⁷¹Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, Second Edition (London, Athens, Addis Ababa, 2002),p. 86; informants: Sharäw and Dingätu.
- ⁷²Informants: Tamiru Woldä Mariam, Dingätu, Sharäw, Simon and Shamo.
- ⁷³Ketebo,p.94.
- ⁷⁴Informants: Dingätu, Sharäw and Agilo.
- ⁷⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷Informants: Sharäw and Dingätu.
- ⁷⁸Informants: Sharäw, Täkä and Shamo.
- ⁷⁹Informants: Sharäw, Dingätu and Tamiru; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C(see appendix G,PP. 15,22-23).
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁸¹*Ibid.*
- ⁸²Informants: Dingetu, Sharew and Jänur Jikony.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THE MÄJÄNGIR PEOPLE UP TO 1941

2.1. The Occupation of the Area by Menlik's Forces and Its Impact to 1936

The end of 19th century and the dawn of 20th century was a landmark in the Ethiopian history. The capital of the administration was finally brought to the central part of the empire i.e Addis Ababa. Emperor Menelik II consolidated the Ethiopian empire he created.¹ Before 1889 *Ras* Tässäma Nadäw was the governor of Gumma. He was also in charge of “the conquest and incorporation of Illubabor.”² Through successive campaigns *Ras* Tässäma defeated the forces of Fatnsa Illu ,the ruler of Illubabor,at the Battle of Qarsa Gogila in 1889.³

With this victory, Illubbabor was incorporated (annexed) into the Ethiopian Empire. Following the conquest, *Ras* Tässäma Nadäw became the Governor of Ilubbabor and selected Gore as headquarters of his administration.⁴ After effective occupation was established, *Ras* Tässäma appointed different local governors under himself. *Fitawari* Mäshäsha Bärčä was appointed as the governor of Yäkki in 1889 and subsequently his forces arrived at Yäkki in 1890 and garrisoned there.Yäkki as a result became the center of the *näffänña* soldiers. It was later from this center that the *näffänñas* and other northern settlers expanded and controlled the rest of the Mäjängirland. The forces of *Ras* Tässäma did not face resistance from the local people of Mocha [Shakacho] and Yäkki. The natives or local population of Yäkki during the Šäwans arrival at Yäkki were the Shäko and the Mäjängir. These people had no organized system of defence except to accept any eventuality.⁵

Before the arrival of the Oromo in Ilubbabor, the Shakacho group under Bushashicho (the ruler of Shakacho) moved from Kaffa and settled in the highland of Ilubbabor and formed the Shakacho kingdom. Prior to the arrival of the Shakacho, the Mäjängir and the Shäko Omotic peoples were already settled there. After the arrival of Bushashicho, the Shäko and the Mäjängir involved in conflicts. The reason for their conflict was that the Shako people killed two young

Mäjängir hunters while they were hunting in the Gabba River valley. In revenge the Mäjängir attacked the Shako and killed many people. In this conflict, the Bushashicho sided with the Shako and organized them against the Mäjängir. As a result, the Mäjängir were defeated by the Shako and “pushed into the Birbir River valley.”⁶

The *näffäññas* or as locally known *Yägondäre särawit* made their settlement at Yäkki. *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha constructed St. Micha’él Church at Yäkki in 1890. In 1907, *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha was replaced by *Fitawrari* Dästa Wolle and the latter constructed the Church of St. Marry at Korcha *Kebele*. Later, in 1917 *Fitawrari* Dästa Wolle was replaced by *Fitawrari* Endailalu Atrfew. The latter was responsible for the construction of the Churches of Fide Eyesus in 1923 and St. George at Teppi in 1928. Each of this Church had twelve (12) *gashas* of *samon* land. In the wake of these churches construction, the inhabitants of the area left their land for the new settler. These new settler peoples were hunters, traders, soldiers and their family from different parts of the country. Since land was available in this area both the Shako and the Majangir did not feel the influence of the *näffäññas* at the initial stage.⁷ The *näffäññas* and migrant settlers from the north came with their own culture and religion. Subsequently, undermined the existing communities’ culture and way of life. As Donald Crummey noted : “Associated with and supported by the state were immigrants who brought with them a complete culture-Amharic speech, Christian religion, distinctive dress and a refined cuisine.”⁸

Since the time of the conquest and incorporation of the area, new settlers continued to immigrate into these areas. *Fitawari* Mäshäsha had created different hierarchical administrative titles for administrative purpose. These were: *abägaz* (sub-*wäräda* administrator), *qoro* (village administrator). These were in charge of maintaining law and order, collecting tribute from the peasants. The only local chief who was recognized as *balabbat* by the Šäwans was the Shako *balabbat* called Yäkki Yäsha, from whom the place had got its appellation. Except Yäkki Yäsha, there was no single recognized *balabbat* (chief) either from the Shakko or the Mäjängir upto the 1950s.⁹

The *näffäññas* appropriated the land of the Mäjängir in the area and marginalized them into the pocket settlements. The Mäjängir were cautious towards the existing administrative system for

they were victims of slave raiding at different times. Upto the Italian occupation no Mäjängir village was brought under effective administration of the *näffäñña* soldiers. When the *näffäññas* approached and tried to control the Mäjängir, they fled abandoning their old village for the new settlement. The Mäjängir did the same for the settler communities because they consider both as one.¹⁰

There was no social bridge connecting the Mäjängir with the *näffäñña* and the settler soldiers up to the restoration of the imperial rule. It was after 1942 that, the central government administrative units began to penetrate deep into the Mäjängirland to maintain peace and order, to collect tax and tribute. As opposed to other conquered peoples the Mäjängir people had not paid tribute either in kind or cash up to the early 1950s.¹¹

After the introduction of Orthodox Christianity in to Illubabor, the *balabbats* in different parts of the province were baptized into Orthodox Christianity. Some of the *balabbats* began to learn and speak Amharic language as it was/is an official language. This was primarily to get “promotion and rewards.”¹² But in the case of the Mäjängir, there was no such attempts. No Mäjängir had accepted Orthodox Christianity. They remained with their traditional religion upto the 1960s, till the coming of the Protestant missionaries.¹³

Coffee was a wild plant in Yäkki and its surroundings. According to our informants since the early times, coffee was forest product. But it was not grown by population of Yäkki upto the 1930s. In the early twentieth century, Yäkki was known by its cotton production. Cotton was produced and sold to traders who came from Gore. Cotton was filled in to the sacks (*quintals* made of *selen* (made of palm leaves)). The Mäjängir did not produce cotton. Cotton was produced by settler communities. The traders bartered at the time in ivory, civet, wax, honey, hides, sorghum, maize, cotton, *teff*, salt, *abujadid* (peace of garment) etc. In Yäkki, there were biweekly markets Saturday at Yäkki and Tuesday at Téppi.¹⁴ Traders came from Gore and Jimma to attend the markets and exchanged the mentioned items. At this time, Greek traders also came to Yäkki market from Gore. Besides, *Dhagara birr* (Maria Theresa thalers) was also used as a currency.¹⁵

The state had an interest in land and tax collection. So, the state introduced land measurement or *qalad*. With the introduction of *qalad*, the state claimed two third of the measured land.¹⁶ Up to this time, land was not appropriated from the existing community at Yäkki. This measurement of land gave a free access for the Šāwans to local peoples produce and labor as Yasin noted:

Thus measurement was executed tribute and taxes were levied on each house hold. The Shewan officials and soldiers who settled in Illu Ababa Boora was assigned to a number of peasant households depending on the rank and positions of the Naftxanyaa. A Dajjzmach received 1,000 peasant households, a Fitawari 300, a Qagnzmach 100 to 150, a Shamball 70 to 90, a mato Alaqa 40 to 60, a Hamsa Alaqa 25 to 35 and an ordinary soldier 5 to 10.¹⁷

Here the Mäjängir as compared with other people did not come under the *gäbbar* system. But they lost their land to the new comers. The Mäjängir community had no right to trade by themselves in items like ivory and skins. If an individual Mäjängir had got the aforementioned items, he was expected to hand over to his *taphadh*. The later in turn would sell it to traders for his own benefit.¹⁸

Ivory trade was a monopoly of *Ras Tässäma* in Illubabor, no one was allowed at the time to trade in ivory. He had his own agents who would collect ivory for him at a very cheap price from *balabbats*. Since ivory trade was reserved for *Ras Tässäma*, no one was allowed to trade for himself. If *Ras Tässäma* found someone trading in ivory for himself, his right hand would be amputated. There were however traders who secretly involved in ivory trade. *Ras Tässäma* sold the ivory at high price for his own personal benefit and paid tribute to Emperor Menelik.¹⁹

2.2. Slave Trade

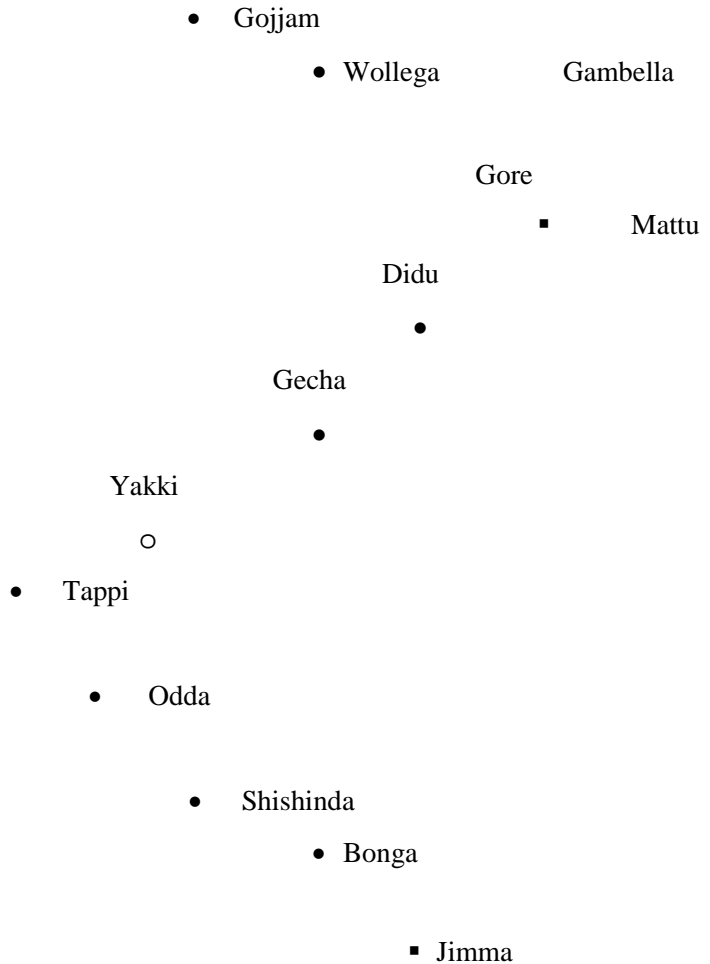
At the national level, Emperor Menelik was the biggest slave owner and trader as Teshale cited the works of Harold Marcus: “Emperor Menelik “Ethiopia’s greatest slave entrepreneur “who“ received the bulk of the proceeds, along with a tax for each slave brought into Shoa and one for every slave sold there.”²⁰ At the regional level, *Ras Tässäma* also monopolized slave trade in Illubabor. *Ras Tässäma* himself made slave raiding campaigns successively upto Yäkki and

Ghimira [present Bench]. His soldiers and the *Ras* himself caught thousands of slaves for themselves.²¹

Raiding of slaves was a serious threat to the Mäjängir people at the time. The Mäjängir communities were raided at different times by individual slave merchants, the settler soldiers and the governor of Yäkki and even the neighbors of the Mäjängir were among the raiders. This made the situation for the Mäjängir worse. Likewise the Añuak, the Ghimira [Bench], the Šäko, the Shakacho were also captured and sold as slaves. My informant's grandfather was taken as slave at the time. He added that, his father was young and handsome. By observing his attractiveness, *Ras* Tässäma took his father for himself. *Ras* Tässäma could simply claim and take the slaves he wanted.²²

During that time, traveling from Yäkki to Gore took more than eight days on foot. Then travelers were expected to have their provision and passed the night at the peoples' houses along the trade routes. Slaves from Yäkki were transported to Gäča; from here to Didu; next to Gore, from Gore to Bure; from Bure through Wollega to Gojjam particularly, Dangilla. Slaves were also sold at local markets. From Yäkki there was also another road to Jimma. Traders also came from Jimma and attended slave markets. From Yäkki, travelers went to Téppi from there to Odda and from this center to Šišinda. Šišinda was the resting and convergent place for slave merchants from Ghimira[Bench] and Yäkki. The place had got its name from Amharic phrase *Ši-šiwun nida* means (chase thousands and thousands of slaves). This market was the main transaction center of slaves who brought from Yäkki and the Ghimira[Bench]. Traders from Jimma also attended this market. From Šišinda slaves were transported to Bonga and Jimma to sell at high price.²³

One can imagine how far slave raiding was harsh. It was a process whereby the human beings were hunted as wild beasts, uprooted from their villages, transferred from one merchant or owner to another, forced to travel long distance and sold to another master to live on the will of their master in harsh condition under a heavy work load.²⁴



The above figure indicates the trade routes of the time. Small circle shows the headquarter of the district(Yäkki), Shaded square shows the seat of *Teklay Gizat* (Gore) and Jimma , the dot shows different trade centers and towns.

In 1917, the governor of Yäkki, *Fitawrari* Dästa Wolle was replaced by *Fitawari* Endailalu. During the governorship of the latter, frequency of slave raiding was increased against the Mäjängir and the Shako peoples. These successive raids devastated the Mäjängir and the Shako territories. As a result, the two peoples discussed and organized themselves to fight against the forces of *Fitawrari* Endailalu. Subsequently, war broke out in the early 1920 between the forces of the *Fitawrari* on one side and the Mäjängir and Shakko peoples on the other side. The result of the war was already known as the forces of *Fitawrari* Endailalu were superior in arms and discipline than the Mäjängir and Shako who had only spears and with other traditional weapons.

The war took place at a place called Bāči. The war lasted only for a short period of time. Large number of the members of Shako and Mājāngir peoples were killed. Still others were captured and sold into slavery by the forces of the *Fitawrari* and others made their slaves. Their villages were burned down by the order of the *Fitawrari*. Their chiefs from both the Shako and the Mājāngir were taken to imprisonment.²⁵

One of the Mājāngir *taphadh* known by the name of Oppi was captured and imprisoned. He was taken to Gäča and was chained. When Italians invaded the country *Fitawrari* Endailalu went to Ogaden front and died there. While he was traveling to Addis Ababa he released Oppi and other Shako chiefs. But Oppi died on his way back home in the Shakacholand. Thus, one can argue that, had it not been for the existence of dense forest that protected them as a shield, almost all the Majangir people would have been sold into slavery. The extent of slave trade with the Mājāngir population was very high. Slavery and slave trade put them under dark situation and disturbed their entire life until its end, in 1924 by law.²⁶

Slavery in Ethiopia became a critical international issue in the early 20th century. It put Ethiopia under pressure from the western nations, particularly, Britain. Initially, the case of slavery prohibited Ethiopia from joining the League of Nations during its foundation in 1919. The decree of March 31, 1924 prohibited slavery. But the actual end of slavery lasted for more than a decade after the issuance of a decree.²⁷ After the proclamation which prohibited slavery, smugglers continued slave trade. Hence, to prohibit this human traffic, posts were established at Yākki, Gäča and Gore to the north east and at Šišinda.²⁸

The merchants who possessed slaves were forced to set free them and the slaves were allowed to return to their homeland. But since slaves were mostly taken at night and also transported at night in disguise, the moment they were allowed to return to where they came from, many failed to return home. My informants described the case as:

There was one man who was captured by slave dealers repeatedly and escaped many times from Gore. This man did not know his father's name and the original place where the slave traders captured him. Hence, his name was Mängäsha Gore, Gore become as his father's name where he

was escaped from his owners time and again. Finally, he came and lived at Yäkki and he died there after he lived for many years as a free man.²⁹

2.3. The Mäjängir During the Italian Occupation (1936-1941)

Using the pretext of Walwal incident, Italy invaded Ethiopia.³⁰ The gevornor of Illubabor *Dejazmač* Mekonen Endalkachew mobilized around thirty thousand soldiers and marched to Ogaden.³¹ The Governor of Yäkki *Fitawrari* Endailalu also mobilized his forces and joined the forces of *Dejazmač* Mekonnen.³²

The Ethiopian forces led by Emperor Haile Silassie was defeated at the Battle of Mayčew on March 31st, 1936. Following the defeat, the Emperor left the country for Europe, England. Thus, the Italians entered Addis Ababa on May 5, 1936.³³ The Italian forces occupied the southwestern part of Ethiopia lately, particularly, Gore on November 25, 1936. Before Emperor Haile Silassie fled to Europe, it was decided that the center of Ethiopian government was transferred to Gore. Gore was selected as a center for its strategic importance.³⁴ Gore remained unoccupied for a few months after Addis Ababa and other towns had fallen to the Italians. Prior to the control of Gore by the Italians *Ras* Imiru went to Suphe and met the Black Lion forces.³⁵ The Black Lion organization was a resistance unity, incorporated military officers and civilian intellectuals led by Dr. Alämawärq Bäyyänä.³⁶ After the Italians occupied Gore, Captain Tilinti Calerbro, according to the Mäjängir, Shilentu, became the district commissioner of Yäkki. The Italian contingent under him were garrisoned at Yäkki and Téppi towns. Although, patriots' resistance in north and central part of the country was strong, there were sporadic forms of resistance in Yäkki. Patriots continued their resistance against the Italians. The Italians were also stationed at Gurafarda, Shako-Micha'él, Gäča and Gore.³⁷

These areas were relatively densely forested. This helped the patriots to move easily to attack Italians. The leaders of patriots resistance in these forest lands during the Italian occupation were: *Däjazmač* Käbbädä WoldäYohannes, *Fitawari* Gämta Gämäda, *Däjazmač* Gähähä Bärhé, *Shabambel* Woldyäs, *Balambaras* Käbbädä Hailu and *Balambaras* Gädamu Gizaw. This is just to mention some who organized patriots and fought the Italians during their occupation in Yäkki area.³⁸

During their occupation the Italians at Yäkki tried to divide and rule the people of Yäkki area. They tried to use the local population (the Mäjängir and the Shakko) against the settlers. They seriously punished the *balabbats* and settlers from the north and killed even some of them. Churches were burned down and destroyed. They tried to lure the Mäjängir and the Shako *balabbats*. They gave to these *balabbats* clothes and other gifts. For the ordinary Shakko and Mäjängir they employed for works like porting goods, daily labor and paid them. The Italians also created an opportunity of dancing and singing once in a week at the town with some incentives. The Italians did these to win acceptance from the local population.³⁹

Other than the Shako and the Mäjängir at Yäkki, the Italians distrusted other people. They suspected that these non-Shako and non-Mäjängir would support the patriots with provision and information. During the Italian occupation, the brutal administrative system of the *näḥḥäñña* was halted. The Mäjängir people were set free and won a number of rights. The local leaders were given recognition by the Italians. With this, the Italians during their stay were able to win the support of the Mäjängir.⁴⁰ The Italians during their stay at Yäkki forbade the inhabitants carrying matchet (*gajara*), spears and arms during day times. Those found carrying these weapons were either killed or be imprisoned or seriously punished in other ways. The Italian administration was more brutal against the settlers from the north.⁴¹

The Italians also introduced some other changes. They outlawed free labor service and freed slaves. They encouraged tanners, blacksmiths, weavers and others. During their stay at Yäkki, the Italians tried to supply drinking water to Yäkki by diverting Šai River through Zinki, one of the *kebeles* of Yäkki district located near the town of Yäkki. They also made plantation of different vegetables at today's Zink *kebele* using irrigation from the same river. After the liberation of the area, this water line was blocked and destroyed by Ethiopians for they suspected that the Italians may poisoned the water.⁴² Stauder put in a brief statement which would indicated the relation between the Mäjängir and the Italians during their occupation as follows:

...Towards the end of the Italian occupation the Italian in charge at Yekki, a man the Majangir call Shilentu, called together a number of Majangir tapa of the southern part of Majangir land. These were taken away to Bonga, in Kaffa province perhaps as an effort on the part of the Italian to enlist Majang support in the war. What actually happened, I do not know; but Majangir say that all these

tapa were killed poisoned by the Italians, for they never come back.⁴³

To liberate Yäkki from the Italians, the patriotic force under *Däjazmaé Kābädä WoldäYohannes* and other patriots, mentioned earlier fought the Italians. Many Italian soldiers were scattered and retreated to Gore. Some of them were captured on the way while fleeing Yäkki and on the way to Bonga.⁴⁴

The forces of *Däjazmaé Kābädä Woldä Yohannes* advanced to Ilubbabor and joined other patriotic forces led by *Balambaras Gädamu Gizaw* and *Jagama Källo*. They opened an attack against the Italians at Gore. The Italians were defeated and left Gore town and retreated to Sambe. Sambe was strategically important for the Italians. Other Italian forces, which could be around twelve battalion, also came to Sambe to escape through Gore to Gambella and thence to the Sudan. The patriotic force that liberated Gore led by *Däjazmaé Kābädä Woldä Yohannes* arrived at Sambe and fought for seven successive days. But the Italian force held its strong barricade.⁴⁵

The patriotic forces of *Däjazmaé Mesfin Sileshi* joined the patriots led by *Qāñzamaé Täshomä Tafesse* at Bedelle. The Italian contingents found between the towns of Bedelle and Mettu were defeated by the joint forces of *Däjazmaé Mesifin Sileshi* and *Qāñzamaé Täshomä*. These joint forces arrived at Gore on August 1941.⁴⁶ The two forces joined the patriotic forces at Sambe and attacked the Italians. Finally, the Italians were defeated and forced to flee leaving behind booties through Gambella. The Battle of Sambe concluded the Italian rule of Illubabor and Ilubbabor was liberated. So did Yäkki.⁴⁷

Notes

- ¹Yasin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, PhD Dissertation, P. 119.
- ²*Ibid*; P. 121.
- ³*Ibid*.
- ⁴*Ibid*; pp.120-124.
- ⁵Informants: Sharäw, Shamo and Dingätu.
- ⁶Yasin, “A Historical Survey of the Land Tenure System...”, MA Thesis, p.10.
- ⁷Informants: Sharäw and Dingätu, Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see Appendix G, pp. 22-23).
- ⁸Crummey, p.225.
- ⁹Informants: Sharäw, Awkin, Yäwojak, Ñamur, Hawariat, Abraham, Särawit and Simon Yewojak.
- ¹⁰*Ibid*.
- ¹¹*Ibid*.
- ¹²Yasin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, p.125.
- ¹³Informants: Shamo, Isrom, Yoséf, Méroy Burbay, Sainok, and Ñamur; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see Appendix G, p.23).
- ¹⁴*Ibid*.
- ¹⁵Informants: Dingätu and Sharäw.
- ¹⁶Crummey, 224.
- ¹⁷Yasin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, p, 126.
- ¹⁸Informant: Ñamur, Hawariat, Abraham, Yisak and Tialem.
- ¹⁹Yasin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, p.130.
- ²⁰Teshale, p.57.
- ²¹Yasin, “Some Aspects of Social History...”, p.130.
- ²²Informants: Sharäw, Dingätu and Yisak.
- ²³*Ibid*.
- ²⁴*Ibid*.
- ²⁵*Ibid*.
- ²⁶*Ibid*.
- ²⁷Teshale, p.63.
- ²⁸Informants: Dingätu, Sharäw, Fäyisa, Särawit, Awkin and Sharäw.
- ²⁹*Ibid*.
- ³⁰Crummey, p.233
- ³¹Amare Fantaw, “A History of the Shakacho from 1898—1974”, MA Thesis (History, AAU, 2007), P. 80.
- ³²Informants: Sharew and Dingetu.
- ³³Crummey, p.233.
- ³⁴Amare, p.80.
- ³⁵*Ibid*.

³⁶ Bahru, pp. 168, 174-175.

³⁷ Informants: Sharäw, Simon, Dingetu and Tangét.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Informants: Sharäw, Ñamur, Abate and Tialäm.

⁴⁰ Informants: Sharäw, Shamo and Simon.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Informants Sharäw, Dingätu and Täkä; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see Appendix G, p.20).

⁴³ Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...”, p.114.

⁴⁴ Informants: Sharäw, Isrom, Yoséf and Yishak.

⁴⁵ Yasin, “Some Aspects Social History...” pp.148-149.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE MÄJÄNGIR BEFORE 1974

3.1. Agriculture

Every year, the Mäjängir would clear fields for cultivation of crops like maize (*makele*) and sorghum (*ñidhiñ*). The newly cleared field for cultivation was called by the Mäjängir *gedhi*. In the clearing of fields (*purik* or *ragadh*), the Mäjängir used to cut the undergrowth and some trees by machet (*jamäi*) and axes (*kabbi*) which Stauder said big knives, which the Mäjängir used for clearing of fields in those days.¹

This was before the introduction of the modern machet. *Jamäi*, the older one, was a little bit larger than big knives; its handle was loose and not comfortable for operating. Sometimes *jamäi* would escape from the hands of the holder in the forest while chopping. It hurt those working at other side.² Most of our informants feel discomfort while they talk about *Jamäi* (the old one). The modern machet (*Jamäi/gäjära*) was introduced into the Mäjänigrländ by *Grazmac* Ayanew Woldämariam in the 1960s. He was the member of Parliament representing Yäkki district in the 1960s. At the end of his term of office, he brought with him the sample of modern machet from Addis Ababa. He taught the surrounding people and the Mäjängir to use the new machet in clearing fields and to improve productivity.³

After clearing forest the Mäjängir would wait for some days until the cut down grasses and leaves got dry. After this happened, they burned the field. This was called slash and burn technique. This would be made from January to March. The season was suitable for cleared fields to get enough sunshine to be get dry. The burning would reduce weeds, for in the past, the Mäjängir did not weed their farmlands.⁴

Maize (*makele*) was an important food crop among the Mäjängir for home consumption since it they acquired it. After 1974, the Mäjängir community also started to supply maize to the market. During farming field, for growing maize, males would clear and burn fields in the slash and burn method. Men did also dig the holes by stick and women and children put maize into the holes

and cover it helping men.⁵ In the previous times, the Mäjängir did not weed maize. Maize field was guarded against monkeys, apes, birds, warthogs and foxes since maize was eaten and destroyed by these animals from its planting up to its harvesting period. These animals were/are still highly present in the Majangirland. They destroy maize and other crops. According to 1941 E.C report of *Bejerond Temtime Wolde*, the Governor of Mocha *Awraja Gizat*, these wild animals could destroy three-fourth of the products of the peasants of the area. There were two types of maize grown by the Mäjängir, i.e. the one that got ripe within three months and the other would get ripe in four months.⁶

The consumption of fresh maize began in June and the harvest of dry maize was from July upto early September. The Mäjängir ate maize beginning from its fresh while on the field upto its harvest and storage. Maize was eaten roasted and after it was boiled. It was grinded by *pañi* (mortar) which was buried in the ground. Consequently, it was prepared into porridge (*šaptun*), the most favorable food among the Mäjängir.⁷ The Mäjängir also prepared soft and ball like bread made from fresh maize known as *kijo*. It was coiled by maize leaves and boiled. This was a common food prepared from maize; from when its in the field upto when it gets dry and harvested. Maize was also valuable agricultural product among the Mäjängir to make drinks (*tajan*). The function of maize among the Mäjängir as food crop is or was high since its freshness. Thus, the importance of maize among the Mäjängir community is/was very crucial. Maize is/was equally important food crops among the neighbors of the Mäjängir: Añuak, Ñuer and the Shako peoples.⁸

After maize was harvested, it was dried in the suns and stored over raised bed like built stage known as *palé*. This was to prevent maize from insects, which eat the germinating parts of the maize.⁹ Sorghum (*ñidhiñ*) was another important grain for food and the Mäjängir started to provide it to market very recently. Unlike the production of maize, whose field was cleared and burned ahead of time, the field of sorghum was cleared side by side during sowing. Then the grasses were left spread over the field for it protects the seeds from being picked up by birds. The Mäjängir sometimes sow the seeds of sorghum intermingled with maize.¹⁰

The season of sowing sorghum begins in mid May and continued into June and sometimes upto July. Its harvest is from November to December. After its harvest sorghum was stored on the *palé* like maize. Sorghum like maize is also important for food. After it was grinded, sorghum is (was) prepared for food by boiling and it was also important for porridge and preparation of drinks *tajan*. *Tajan* was prepared either from maize or sorghum with the addition of the germinated seeds of either of the two grains.¹¹ *Tajan* was important drink for the Mäjängir not only used its drink but also for it stops hunger. This drink was also prepared by others like the Shako, Galier or Habeshas (settlers). Others call it *Borde* and it was preferred not only for its alcoholic value but also for it fills the belly of the one who drinks it. For this, the Gallier /Habsha sometimes call this drink as *zur bä gone*.¹²

In the seasons of heavy rain, when the cleared fields could not be burned by fire, the Mäjängir would fall under the threat of famine. Even though one could not recount back the occurrence of famines in the Mäjängirland, informants tell us its frequency was high. Excessive rain before the cleared fields were burned would cause shortage of food among the Mäjängir. For it did not suit their cultivation methods.¹³ In this case, the Mäjängir depend heavily on gathering of forest foods. As most of our informants say, they could find what to eat in the forest even if there was shortage of food products in the past. Since 1974 and after villagization, the Mäjängir started the production of these crops using iron hoes and by weeding. But the tradition of slash and burn, shifting cultivation and cultivating continuously for three to five years and fallowing the land until its fertility regained remained the same.¹⁴

Coffee (Moyé) was a forest product since antiquity and it was an age old crop in the Mäjängir territory. But after the 1940s, most of the Mäjängir had no the tradition of coffee production. Some Mäjängir around Téppi started the production of coffee in small amount in the 1960s.¹⁵ But many Mäjängir started coffee production recently after 1974. Plantation of coffee by the Mäjängir had begun by those who had contacts with Gailer or Habesha. Wessen stated coffee production among the Mäjängir as:

Few Majang had been going to habasha villages where they saw coffee cultivation. During the time of Imperialregime, the Majangir had not known the use of coffee beans. At one time a certain Majang by the name

operos was imprisoned in the land of the Oromos. There he learnt coffee cultivation and consumption and brought the knowledge with him. Before this time, however Majang used to use the leaves of wild coffee to make kari. They had never been using the beans of coffee. But gradually many Majang began producing it for market and consuming the beans.¹⁶

Before they started coffee plantation, the Mäjängir got coffee leaves for the preparation of *kari* from the forest and from the Galier/Habesha fields either through gifts, exchange of goods or by paying in cash. Despite its recent introduction to the Mäjängirland, coffee spread and becomes an important cash crop. The preparation of coffee fields, planting the seedlings and weeding was and is still the activity of men. Harvesting of coffee is/was the responsibility of the entire family members. Land for coffee plantation was prepared in June and plantation takes place in July. Collection of coffee is conducted from the beginning of October upto the beginning of January.¹⁷

The Mäjängir produced or still produce different types of root crops such as taro (*shakoy*), cassava (*baburé* or *anshoté*), varieties of yam (*kawn* and *badéy*) and sweet potato (*bambi*). The production of these root crops was mainly for home consumption. But after 1974, they started to supply a small amount to the market.¹⁸ The Mäjängir people could also get some of these crops from forest. The production of these crops was carried out through vegetative propagation mechanism in the month of March. The roots for propagation was selected and put in house at a dry place. Since some of these crops are climbers, they need planting of wooden sticks on each side of the root crops. Some of these crops take eight to nine months for harvest. These crops were usually cultivated adjacent to dwellings.¹⁹

The above crops were not the only products produced by the Majangir. Earlier, the Mäjängir also planted tobacco near their homesteads and in far off fields. But later the importance of tobacco was declined among the Mäjängir. They also used to plant pumpkins (*koldé*) together with maize, cabbages (*molon*) near their homes. The leaves of pumpkins, cabbages and other greens were eaten. The Mäjängir also produced sesam (*ñumue*) in a limited amount, which was also eaten.²⁰

The Mäjängir had a tradition of cooperation during the sowing of crops and during other works. The cooperation of labour were of two types: pool labor (*Gamadh*) and labor sharing (*tokogn*).

Pool labor (*gamadh*) was an age-old system of working together among the Mäjängir. The Mäjängir prepared pool labor for building of houses and its maintenance, clearing of forest and harvesting of crops. The Participants entered into temporary ties of labour force. Members of the pool labor were mostly from the same villages.²¹ Most of the time, pool labor was organized by a household led by women, whose son was not fully grown to take part in the labor sharing. A household led by males had its alternative of labor sharing. Hence, they organized pool labour in rare cases for agricultural activities.²² Sometimes a well to do family head led by male could organize pool labor for they dislike to participate in labour sharing. From this, one can understand that, the labor gained in organizing *pool* labor was not strictly sought to be reciprocated. In the pool labor tradition, the organizer serve the participants with meal and drinks of *tajan* or *ogol*.²³ Most of the time, the number of participants in joint labour exceeded the expected number. This caused shortage of meal and drinks. Fearing of shortage of drinks and meal that would bring curse of participants, the one who organized the pool labor made the preparation of food and drink in excess. This was an extravagance which later caused lack of food in the family. As a result of the introduction of Protestant Christianity, drinking *tajan* and *ogol* was prohibited and working in mass among the Mäjängir became in a rare case after 1974.²⁴ This kind of labor sharig was also the tradition of other Ethiopians commonly known as *Debo*.

Another form of working in cooperation among the Mäjängir was labor sharing (*tokoñ*). Unlike the pool labor, here the number of participants was limited; usually up to six. In this case, individual participants would team up together according to their physical strength and age.²⁵ Here, giving labor and getting back the labor soon was strictly sought. The reason why the number of participants became less was to get and return the labor within a week, which was helpful to complete clearing fields, weeding and harvesting in time. Unlike pool labor, labor sharing was long lasting. For instance, if one of the members of *tokoñ* died, his fully grown son would succeed his father and join his father's friends in sharing labour. Labor sharing was not unique for the Mäjängir, it was also common among other Ethiopians known as *Dado*.²⁶

3.2. Hunting and Gathering

Hunting is perhaps the oldest economic activity of human beings. It is the case also for the Mäjängir. But hunting is an activity reserved for males. As I mentioned earlier, the Mäjängir did not breed domestic animals, like sheep and goat. So, in order to get protein from their diet, the Mäjängir depend on hunting.²⁷ The Mäjängir breed only chickens (*cookili*) in which one household may keep up to ten sometimes above. In the Mäjängir community, most of the time chickens were considered as females' property. The Mäjängir keep dogs (*war*), as dogs were important for hunting in the forest. Dogs were and are highly valued among the Mäjängir. They had the tradition of borrowing dogs from friends or neighbors. A Mäjängir man, who had no dog or want to add the number of his dogs for hunting may borrow dogs from a friend or neighbor. Killing of other persons' dog could cause conflict among the killer and the owner. Such conflict could be resolved by payment of compensation.²⁸

Most of the wild animals were hunted by the Mäjängir for their meat (*tar*). Some of these animals were porcupine (*Iyan*), antelope (*phowey*), bush buck (*migun*), buffalo (*miyadh*), bush pig (*kutur*). But animals like elephants (*angé*) and leopards (*domon*) were hunted and killed for their tusks and skins. These tusk and skin were highly needed as trading items. The Mäjängir exchange these items for rifles (*kawé*). And after the 1950s, the *tapha* of the Mäjängir also needed the tusk and skin for paying tribute to the Ethiopian central government.²⁹ During the ancient times, the tools used for hunting by Mäjängir was spears (*biya*). However, since the 1940s, the Mäjängir have started to get and use modern arms for hunting. Ever since some hunters began to hold rifles. But the use of modern firearms among the Mäjängir was limited. As Stauder noted "...Rifles are limited in use, for almost all of them require 8 mm. shells selling to them in 1966 at about Eth. \$ 3 (45 P, U.k) a piece- the price, in fact, of about four pounds of beef at [Oromo] markets near Mäjängir land."³⁰ For this reason Mäjängir did not depend much on rifles. The other reason why the importance of rifles was low among the Mäjängir for hunting was animals could simply hide and escape in the forests from hunters.³¹

The Mäjängir used two kinds of techniques in hunting. These were hunting by a surprise attack and chasing and killing the animals. This type of hunting was made usually during dry season (*mato*). At this time, leaves and grasses would get dry and fall. Hence, animals could easily be

exposed and it allows hunters easy movement in the forests. The Mājāngir hunt in group of two to three men in the forest. This was because one may lose direction (*badé*) in the forest and be liable to the attack of wild animals.³² The second type of hunting was done preparing different kinds of traps (*kangi, dape, gomoy*). This type of hunting was made in the rainy season (*bangi*). The traps, which were made from climbers plant strings (*mélti*) used to capture either the legs or necks of the animals. This kind of trap was called by the community *kangi*.³³

The other type of traps were made from wood in a platform form and loaded with different materials like stones. This is called *gomoy*. In this case, the trap would capture animals' full body as it was prepared to fall against the animals, the moment the animal entered it. Traps were made not far from homesteads. They were checked regularly in the morning and evening by the maker of the trap.³⁴ The meat of hunted animals could be used for home consumption and for ritual ceremonies. Hunters share meat of the hunted animals depending on who throws spears and killed, and the owner of the rifle that shot. These would get the lion's share. If the spear or rifle was borrowed, the owner of the rifle also gets share. The person who appeared when the animal was killed would also get share. The skin of antelope (*phowéy*) and bush buck (*migun*) were important for making leather cloth for females. The hoofs of these animals are also prepared into beads for women to be worn on their waist. It is called *sopholkoyir*. Among the Majangir wild beasts were also hunted for prestige and honor. So a good hunter among the society was respected, honored and feared as a brave hunter (*adamo yen*).³⁵

Before 1974 hunting was made regularly; two days or once in a week. But after 1974 the frequency of hunting among the Mājāngir declined; one or two days in a month. The reasons were that, the number of animals to be hunted were dwindled and some of them were completely disappeared because of excessive hunting.³⁶ The population increase in the area and deforestation also reduced the animals to be hunted. The other reason was that, the Mājāngir started to rear animals like goats and sheep for meat and sacrifice and the availability of cash to buy these animals.³⁷

Fishing was another field of activity for the Mājāngir men. Unlike hunting, fishing was made in the rivers around their home and it was individual activity. The Mājāngir used hooks and baskets for fishing. The Mājāngir did not waste much of their time on fishing as compared to hunting.³⁸

Gathering was another early economic activity of the Mājāngir. Gathering among the Mājāngir was practiced throughout the year. But it was highly practiced at the time of critical food shortage (*bangi*). The products gathered from forest were: coffee leaves, mushrooms, cabbages (*molon*), and a kind of taro (*dotne*). The last one is collected from around the river banks.³⁹ Other type of taro was either produced around home or gathered from forest; a kind of yam (*kawn*, *wakuyé* and sometimes *badéy*) were collected and used. Leaves of pumpkins (*koldé*), berries of *yuyé* tree; both for consumption and market were gathered and used. These products were collected exclusively by females and children for food. While different types of vines (*likiti*, *yakati*, *gelteñi*) were gathered by males for the construction of houses, for making different baskets (*kanta*, *kongé*, *yéné*) for various functions.⁴⁰ The Mājāngir used these baskets for carrying grain and clay and reserving food for males in their separate huts. They also used by males to carry seeds while sowing. Vines were and are still also important for making different size of trays (*paré*, *padhé*) for winnowing grains. The Mājāngir used these materials both for home chores and for sale. A group or individual may hunt or gather in any forest wherever they got animals to be hunted or forest products to be gathered.⁴¹ But hunting and gathering among the Mājāngir has been decreasing from time to time after 1974. The Mājāngir changed their living style to permanent settlement. The animals to be hunted and the products to be gathered were also reduced from 1974 onwards.⁴²

3.3. Pottery Making

The Mājāngir were(are) known for pottery making. This occupation was reserved for women. In order to make these pottery, women traveled over a long distances; usually for half a day in group to get a fine clay (*sophoy*). The clay for pottery was dug and brought to home in baskets carrying on their back. Then, the clay was ground with wooden pestle and subsequently made into different kinds of dishes, pots, and different kinds of pans. In the reports of 1939 E.C, the pottery materials made by the Majangir were stronger and decorated as compared to other places.

But the money gained from their pottery sale was only used for exchange of salt.⁴³ The Mäjängir also used the pottery for domestic service. However, they often complained the low cost they could earn from Galier/ Habesha in the past.⁴⁴ For a number of years, peoples in the Mäjängir territory had totally depended on the pottery made by the Mäjängir. But today, the importance of pottery was declining. Glasses, metal goods, and plastic materials of factory products have been replacing clay products. Even among the Mäjängir themselves, the usage of clay products came to steady decline.⁴⁵



Figure 1. A Mäjängir woman while making pottery
(Photo by Abebe Getahun, December 2011)

3.4. Bee Keeping (Apiculture)

Honey (*ätédh*) production is an age old occupation of the Mäjängir community. This economic activity was exclusively reserved for males. The Mäjängir prepared two types of hives (*dané*).

These were; the hives of basketry made from strong thin sticks bundled together interspersed and interwoven in a cylinder like shape. This hive was covered with clay. This kind of hive was not highly preferred by the Mäjängir because it could not resist heat and precipitation. This kind of bee hive could easily be destroyed by strong sunshine and rain.⁴⁶

The second and widely used hive was made from the logs of *dampéi* /*Cordia africana*/ tree. To make this hive, the Mäjängir hewed out the logs of *dampai* tree. It is about one and half meter long. The completed hive was pulled out and placed on branches of a tall tree. Once the beehive was placed on the branches of a tree, it was checked by the beekeeper regularly. Necessary care would be taken as well.⁴⁷ Among others, the branches of tree would be cleared to open entrance and ropes would be changed. During collection of honey, there is/was a risk of falling and loss of life while climbing big trees. The Mäjängir selected hive localities where there is abundance of water and flowers. The Mäjängir collect honey at least three times in a year. Stauder said the Mäjängir could differentiate above forty species of trees, bushes and grasses which are necessary for bees' nectar consumption.⁴⁸

The amount of honey to be yielded depends on the stability of the environment where beehive is kept. The flowers of these plants blossom at different times throughout the year.⁴⁹ Some of the most important flowering plants and trees were/are: *Gomoy*, *Gojje*, *keyan*, *Andi*, *geshi*, *Dampe*, *ñidhiñ*, *Šamppoy*, etc of all of these, the Mäjängir appreciate and say the honey of *gomoy* is the best. This was not in quantity but rather in quality and the durability of its honey when preserved without getting spoiled. Earlier, the Mäjängir communities were largely dependent on honey production for bartering. Honey was exchanged for trading goods like axe, spears, knives and others. But after 1960, the Mäjängir exchanged honey for some new European products.⁵⁰

Half of the honey collected by the Mäjängir could be sold whereas, almost the other half was used for preparation of honey wine (*ogol*).⁵¹ The preparation of this traditional alcoholic drink (*ogol*) among the Mäjängir community was different from that of the preparation of *täjj*(mead) by the Habesha /Galier. The latter needs several weeks for fermentation and addition of the leaves and stems of *gesho* plant (*Lhamnus prinoides*).⁵² Unlike this, the Mäjängir prepared their *ogol* by scrapping and taking the shavings of a tree bark called *keyang* (*Blighia unijagata*). The

shaving of this tree was boiled, squeezed and the squeezed liquid was put into earthen pot with honey. With the addition of water, the pot will be put on the side of fire. This was both for fermentation and to prevent bees according to them. As its process was easy, it could be made even by males.⁵³ But *ogol* was highly alcoholic than mead and *tajan*. After the 1970s, preparation of *ogol* was decreasing because of the influence of Protestant Christianity.⁵⁴

The collection of honey among the Mäjängir was made at night. Since the Mäjängir had their own separate forest sites for hive, they could pass a night in the forest. This was made repeatedly to collect honey from one's hives in a season of honey collection. For the collection of honey, the Mäjängir moved in group two to three. This was because there could be a risk of falling from a tree or a chance of being attacked by wild animals and even human enemy. The Mäjängir preferred nights for the collection of honey. At night, bees stinging capacity is weak. The Mäjängir used smoke for collection of honey. The smoke is/ was made up of bundles of sticks tied together and used as a torch.⁵⁵ The Mäjängir have long tradition of preparing beehives. In the past, a well-to-do Mäjängir may have upto 350 beehives.⁵⁶ The Mäjängir have the tradition of making bee hives, starting from boyhood.⁵⁷ The Mäjängir have a tradition of hive inheritance to their male descendants.⁵⁷

Stauder during his stay among the Mäjängir, estimated based on his observation that, the production of honey for an average Mäjängir for *ogol* and sale was more than 200 kilogrammes annually. But some Mäjängir men could collect more than 600 kilogrammes of honey in “a good year”. The price of a kilogramme of honey varied from 0.50 cent to 1.50 Ethiopian *birr* in 1966. Its price depends on the location or place where the honey was sold, the demand and supply of honey at the time.⁵⁸ Unlike the past, the number of hives one could possess decreased among the Mäjängir. Currently, the maximum number of hives one could have is up to 120 for Mäjängir. This was because of the introduction of coffee as a cash crop. Coffee came to be an alternative means of income earning for the Mäjänigr.⁵⁹



Figuer 2. Mäjängir men while making traditional beehives
(Photo by Abebe Getahun, December 2011).

Notes

- ¹Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp.26-28.
- ²Informants: Shamo, Mute, Särawit and Mathios.
- ³*Ibid.*
- ⁴Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp.28-30.
- ⁵Informants: Shamo, Mäkonnen and Täkä.
- ⁶Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp.30-31; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C;(see appendix F, P.6) informants: Ejära, Yäwoijak and Shamo.
- ⁷Informants: Ejära, Yäwoijak, Wozätän and Awkin.
- ⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁹*Ibid.*
- ¹⁰Informants: Simon, Tangät, Ñamur, Isrom and Ñante; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C;(see appendix F, P.5-6).
- ¹¹*Ibid.*
- ¹²*Ibid.*
- ¹³Informants: Täkä, Ñante and Shamo.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*
- ¹⁶Wessen, p.50.
- ¹⁷Informants: Särawit, Fäyisa and Mulugeta.
- ¹⁸Wessen, pp. 72-76; informants: Ejära, Täkä, Ñante and Simon Yäwoija.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*
- ²⁰*Ibid.*
- ²¹Wessen, pp.76-78; Informants: Yishak, Tialäm, Hawariat and Abraham.
- ²²*Ibid.*
- ²³Wessen pp.76-78; Informants: Jänur, Ñamur, Hawariat and Abraham.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*
- ²⁵*Ibid.*
- ²⁶Informants: Ejära, Shamo, Särawit and Fäyisa; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C;(see appendix F, P.5, see also appendix G, P.18).
- ²⁷*Ibid.*
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.18.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, p.16.
- ³¹*Ibid.*
- ³²Informants: Simon, Awkin and Yoséf.
- ³³Informants: Yoséf, Särawit, Girma and Fäyisa.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*
- ³⁵*Ibid.*
- ³⁶Informants: Ejära, Täkä, Ñante and Simon Yäwoija.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*
- ³⁸Informants: Jänur, Tobél and Ejära.

³⁹ Informants: Yäwoija, Awkin, Ñamur and Simon.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Informants: Ejera, Serawit and Mulugeta; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, and 1939 E.C (1946/47) (see appendix G.,P.19)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Informants: Ñamur, Simon Yewoja, Awkin and Yewoija.

⁴⁷ Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp.21-22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Informants: Simon, Isrom, Wozätän and Täkä.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Statuder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.20; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, and 1939 E.C (1946/47) (see appendix G.,P.18)

⁵² Informants: Ñante, Simon, Sainok and Méroy.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Wessen, p.70.

⁵⁶ Informants: Ñante and Täkä.

⁵⁷ Wessen, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.20.

⁵⁹ Wessen, pp.70-71.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. THE MÄJÄNGIR AFTER THE LIBERATION (1941-1974)

4.1. Land Tenure System and its Influence on the Majangir

According to the Mäjängir tradition, the occupation of land mainly depended on the effective investment of labor in clearing the forest. So, a family which initially cleared the forest had the right to the land until the fertility of the land is reduced and abandoned. When the latter happened the ownership right of the previous family group would end soon.¹

As mentioned earlier, land was excess resource in Mäjängirland. Hence, there was no serious competition for land (*do* or *dok*) to farm. The Mäjängir had the tradition to reclaim the previous land. This was possible as long as the previous land was not recovered by forest. If the previous land was not recovered by forest, the family who cleared it first had the right to the land.² In the past, the family had the right to sell the already utilized land at the price of one axe or two axes (*kabbi*). But this happened in rare cases. The axe was important to cut trees and was also important for the payment of bride wealth.³ In case a Mäjängir wanted to settle on a previously cleared land, he should get permission from the former owners (*duma*) of the land. Unless someone settled on land of another without securing permission, it resulted in conflict. It was also believed the land would be unproductive or cursed.⁴

Actually, the Mäjängir had little interest for already used land. The family which settled and cleared a forest land, near their farm field had the right to the forest land close to the home as a potential land to be cleared in the future.⁵ Neighbors would come into agreement on their boundary usually by mutual understanding. Traditionally, the Mäjängir fixed the boundary of land by natural features such as rocks, hills, river beds, ridges etc. Since the Mäjängir were shifting cultivators, their land for cultivation was always bordered by forest (*jang*) for their next clearing.⁶

In the Mäjängir tradition, women had no right to inherit land. If her husband died, the eldest son would inherit his father's land. If her son was not fully grown, his mother would take care of the son and the land, until the son would fully grow and inherit his father's land. In case a man had

no son, his brother had the right to inherit his deceased brother's land. The possession of land right was the monopoly of male folk. Men had the right to sell land or to transfer it through gift. It was totally men's decision even to shift from one cultivation area to another.⁷

The Mäjängir had also traditional right to beehives in the forest and other resources in the forest. The Mäjängir could simply collect and use forest edible products even on the farmlands of others, without permission, unless it was planted by the owners of the farmland. These products were like wild coffee, mushrooms, trees, root crops and fruits. The same was true for hunting. One could hunt wild animals wherever they live.⁸ Forest resources had no owners. The forest products belonged to those who would collect and use them. Fire wood collection also did not seek permission from the owner of the land. One could simply collect and take it to his home for fuel.⁹

Beehives were private property among the Mäjängir and so did the honey extracted from the hives. The area where a man put his hives could be claimed by the very person as his hive site (*jang*). This ownership right was also inherited by the sons of former claimants. As compared to farmland, beehives are owned permanently as far as a man keeps keeping hives in certain places.¹⁰ The Mäjängir had the tradition of transferring/passing in inheritance their *jang* (*forest*) rights to their children. They could also sell their beehives (*Dane*). Sometimes forestlands of hives were cleared for cultivation by other people. But those who clear the forest would take care of the hives and the trees which holds hives. Otherwise, it would cause quarrel among the owners and those who cleared the forest. This was because, according to the Mäjängir tradition ownership of the hive site was limited to "apicultural rights over an area."¹¹

The Mäjängir claim the land of their early settlement as *dok babak* literally meaning, "the land of our forefathers." They have also a tradition of calling the land after the first clan settled there. But there was no clan based boundary lines and occupation of land.¹²

They referred to the land as *dok Garrier rung*, the land of Garier clan, *dok Damuierung*, the land of Dumier clan. The Mäjängir also settle near their *tapha*'s land. Most of the time the Mäjängir did this to get the ritual services of the *tapha*. For this reason, the Mäjängir settled on the lands of

their *taphas* with the *taphas*' approval. In this case such settlement area of the Mäjängir was also called after the name of strong *taphadh*. But this depended on the size of land and followers of particular *taphadh*.¹³

The Mäjängir could also freely change their settlement. One or more household or all members of one settlement area could move. This would happen may be due to invitation from friends or kins or individual's selection of land. The trend of shifting cultivation and settlement area among the Mäjängir continued up to the late 1970s. After the late 1970s, the Mäjängir largely became sedentary settlers.¹⁴ The traditional land holding system of the Mäjängir remained intact until 1905, the introduction of the measurement of land as *qalad* (also cord with which land was measured). Following this measurement, the land was sub-divided into government land (*yämängist märät*), church land (*samon märät*) and land reserved for the balabbats or local supporters (*siso land*). It was from the government land (*Yämängist märät*) that many of the grants were made to the soldiers and officials as *madarya* land. *Madarya* was the land given for those in government services in place of salary.¹⁵

Hence, the government soldiers were granted government land according to their rank. Thirty to forty *gahas* of land was granted to a *fitawrari*, about twenty *gashas* of land was given to a *Qäñazmac*, about fifteen to twenty *gashas* of land was given to *Mato-aläqa*, about five to ten *gashas* of land was given to a *hamsa-aläqa* and about one to five *gashas* of land was given to an ordinary soldier.¹⁶

Samon meret was the land granted to church and cultivated by peasants. The first Saint Micha'él church was constructed at Yäkki by *Fitawrari* Mäshäsha Bärča. Later followed by the construction of other churches. It was said that the Ark of of Saint Micha'él was brought to Yäkki by *Ras* Tässäma Nadäw. The construction of these churches didnot played a significant role in the expansion of Orthodox Christianity to the Mäjängir people.¹⁷

Land was also granted to those who served in the church, i.e the clergy as follows: about five *gashas* of land was given to a priest, two to three *gashas* of land was given to a deacon, about two *gashas* of land was granted to *gäbäzi* and about one *gasha* of land was granted to a *däbtära*.

However, the measurement of land at the time was approximately done. Most of the land was covered with inaccessible forest and undulating gorges. Thus, the indicated figures were less accurate, it may be greater or lesser in actual cases.¹⁸ This land measurement and alienation segregated the Mäjängir from the settler community. The other sources of marginalization and segregation of the Mäjängir by the settler communities were diverse. The most extensively used reasons are the “adulterated (impure) eating” habits of the Majangir. They were condemned for eating wild pig, unslaughtered dead animals like sheep, goat, cattle, chickens and wild crops. Their dressing tradition of leafs and hides; and their traditional religion. These and other factors were the source of political, social and economic marginalization for the Mäjängir. This in turn resulted in the absence of urban dweller of the Mäjängir even today. The Mäjängir interaction with the new settler community was restricted only to exchange of their products like honey (*etedh*), pottery (*suphoy*).¹⁹ The Mäjängir used these products to exchange for salt (*moy*), a very important item for daily consumption among the Mäjängir, spears (*biyya*) and axe (*kabbi*) were other important materials. These items were important for clearing forests, hunting and for bride price. In the past, when there was shortage of salt, the Mäjängir had tried to prepare salt in a traditional way from a plant called *eyei*. Burning its leaves into ash and using its ash as salt as its tastes salty. But it was not of standard and could not satisfy their need.²⁰

The Italians during their occupation abolished the *gult* system and *asrat* (tithe).²¹ After liberation of the country in 1941, government land grant was more intensified. The grants were made to patriots, soldiers and civil servants.²² Government land sale was also increased.²³ Therefore, at Yäkki in the post- liberation period; one *gasha* of land was sold at a price of five Ethiopian Birr. Later, the price of land rose as the importance of land grew. In the early 1930s, peasants at Yäkki began to produce coffee in small amount. The Italians also encouraged peasants to produce coffee. In the 1940s, the production of coffee and its commercial importance had grown. This in turn led to the influx of people to Yäkki both in search of land and as laborers. Thus, those who could afford were able to buy large tracts of land from government, for the production of coffee. At the time a number of people largely came from Wollo, Gojjam, Šewa, and Kaffa. Almost all the peoples who came to Yäkki or Mäjängir area as coffee collectors and laborers had remained there after their arrival. This increased the number of population and land grab from the local

population. In the following years of the 1950s and 1960s the production and trade of coffee highly increased at Yäkki.²⁴

Since the introduction of coffee as “a large scale cash crop”, the Mäjängir in this area have been dispossessed of their land by the Amhara, the Oromo and other peoples and the government .²⁵

The cultivation of coffee needed intensive labor. The forest needed to be cleared, the soil needed to be dug and the seedlings needed to be planted.²⁶ Upto its growth the seedling should be protected by weeding. At the end, the collection season would follow. So, in all these the landlords were dependant on peasantry’s labor. In planting the seedlings lined arrangement and the space among the coffee trees was not kept. To dig the earth a stick with a sharp pointed end (*horda*) was used. Likewise, the collection of coffee was made in the traditional way known as *shimteta* (both the ripped and non-ripped collection) and the fallen ones from the ground. To dry the coffee fast, the collected berries were put on the ground together and enclosed with leaves for more than three days.²⁷

After peasants harvested coffee berries, they dried it and would remove its husks in a traditional way. The pure coffee bean was brought to the market. Incontrary to other areas where one *feresula* coffee was taken as seventeen (17) kilogrammes, here at Yäkki twenty (20) kilogrammes of coffee was sold as one *feresula* to merchants. Peasants sold their coffee at a low price for traders. Upto the early 1970s, the price of 20 kilograms (one *feresula*) of coffee had fluctuated between ten to twelve *birr* and sometimes below this. Merchants used pack animals or human porters to transport coffee product from Yäkki to Gore and Bonga. There was no other means for transportation until 1957, when air transportation was introduced.²⁸ The construction of dry weather road from Shishinda to Teppi and from Téppi to Gore had began in the early 1970 and completed by the effort of the Governor of Yäkki district, Azänä Wubé.²⁹

Before the coming of *Derg* to power, there were people who had large tracts of land both for food crop cultivation and coffee production. The following table shows some of the dominant coffee plantation owners in Yäkki district:

S.No	Name	Total land in hectar	Productive hectar	Kebeles
1.	<i>Belambaras</i> Gedamu Gizaw	--	--	Addisalem & Korcha
2.	<i>Ato</i> Abebe Mengesha	105	80	Indris & Korcha
3.	» Asfaw Tegegn	80	40	Baya
4	» Azene Wube	160	140	Korcha
5	<i>Ato</i> Abiy Kebede	40	40	Korcha
6	» Desta Gobena	40	40	Korcha
7	» Dawana Derbo	10	10	Korcha
8	» Birhane Assaye	40	40	Korcha
9	» Haddis Alemayehu	120	100	Shosha
10	» Kidanu W/giorgis	100	20	Korcha
11	» Leulseged Ayfokiru	40	40	Korcha
12	» Mehari Kassa	40	30	Korcha
13	Leul Mengesha Seyoum	120	120	Indris
14	<i>Ato</i> Sintayehu Getahun	45	45	Korcha
15	Sister Ayelech Wolde	40	40	Guri
16	<i>Ato</i> Lake Desta	30	30	Korcha
17	Sheik Adem Mohammed	40	40	Baya
18	Aba Gero	--	--	Komi
19	<i>Ato</i> Zewde Chere	120	120	Korcha
20	» Teklu Tessema	110	100	Indris

Source: Amare, pp.101-102.

During the *Derg* times, most of these land were nationalized and became the property of state coffee plantation. Nowadays, Téppi state coffee plantation is stretched from Yäkki district upto Mäjängir Zone in Gambella regional state. Its land holding is more than 10,000 hectares having more than 10,000 permanent and contract workers.³⁰

The 1944 decree raised the land tax for measured lands to 50 *birr* for *lem* (cultivated land), 40 *birr* for *lem taf* (semi-cultivated) land, 15 *birr* for *taf* (uncultivated) land per *gasha*.³¹ Tenants

were expected to deliver one third (*siso*) of their produce to their overlord. Tax was collected from each married peasant. In addition to payment of tax and tribute, Peasants were expected to construct houses and granaries of the landlords.³² They also gave labor services in planting, weeding and harvesting of coffee and food crops of the landlords. Peasants had a day in a week to cultivate, weed and harvest the lands of the landlords. The wives of the peasants would also fetch water, collect firewoods, and grind grains for the wife of the lord. Peasants were also expected to visit and present gifts to their lords during holidays.³³

In 1946, the central government sent a team to study the area. This team returned with its report, the pictures of the native or indigenous population. It is said that, in their report they included, the land was sparsely populated, (*taf* land) and even the ingenuous population of the area had no tradition of wearing clothes. According to the report, “they are naked, cover their private organs with grasses and leaves and some of them particularly females wear by scrubbings and smoothening the skins of bush buck to cover their private parts.”³⁴

Based on this report, the central government sold 400 *gashas* of land in Yäkki district to crown prince *Märid Azmaç* Asfawossen Haile Selassie. Subsequently, the Amhara agitated and convinced the local *balabbats* of the Shäko and Mäjängir to give away their land to the Crown Prince *Märid Azmaç* Asfa Wosssen Haile Selassie as bequeathal (*wurs*).³⁵ From among the Shäko *balabbats* *Ato* Altaye Yäkki, the son and successor of Yekki Yäsha and from the Mäjängir *Ato* Abate Fägälä were taken to Addis Ababa and bequeathed their land. Abate Fägälä was the only Mäjängir *balabbat* who for the first time was given recognition by the central government administration. Later Balti was also recognized as *balabbat* on his respective area. Some people say that, Balti was awarded a title of Qäñazmaç in 1960. This was to bring the Mäjängir people systematically under the central government administration. These local *balabbats* would serve the government as weapons to fully control the population for taxation and exploitation. Through *wurs*, Yäkki district became royal holding of the crown prince (*Béta rest*).³⁶

When these *balabbats* bequeathed their land to the crown prince, in turn they were given an award of title, tips, and arms. For their livelihood each of them were given five *gashas* of land. In general, they would get respect and privilege from the people in the name of *yalga worash*

awrash, literary meaning “bequeather to heir apparent or crown prince.” The heir accepted this land and assigned his own representatives.³⁷ From this time on, the Mäjängir people began to pay tax to the central government through their *taphas* and in some places through the representatives which the Mäjängir call *Šumi*.³⁸ According to the report of *Bejerond Tämtimé Wolde* of 1939 E.C (1946/47) the number of the Shakko and Mäjängir *balabbats* was fifteen. From this, the numbers of Mäjängir *balabbats* were five. These were: Fide Offi, Balambaras Fose, and Kormi in addition to the two mentioned above.³⁹

These appointees from among the Mäjängir and some *taphas* played intermediary role between the officials of the district and the Mäjängir people. They were responsible for collecting tax from the community and handing over to the government officials. They were also responsible in maintaining law and order in the region.⁴⁰ Stauder described the tax collection process as:

Systematic tax gathering among the Majangir was instituted only around 1960. Although the amount every able-bodied man must pay, from three to five Ethiopia dollars a year, is small, the income of the Majangir from their sale of honey is also small, and in any case they resent the money taken for what purpose they do not understand. The first tax-collecting expeditions met with some passive resistance, and the force they used to collect the taxes has left deep fear and dislike of them among the Majangir. However, with the passing of years it seems that the Majangir are learning to accept the annual necessity to give taxes and provisions to the tax collectors, and so force is becoming less necessary to extract them.⁴¹

Although most of the Mäjängir began to pay tax as mentioned, still some of the Mäjängir villages were inaccessible and out of the influence of the government officials.⁴²

4.2. The Introduction of Socio- Economic Facilities

As far as infrastructure is concerned, little or no socio-economic facilities were introduced to the area following its conquest. Of course, Ethiopian Orthodox churches were constructed in Yäkki district at different times. Since 1890 upto the early 1970s more than six churches were constructed in this area.⁴³ But their service was restricted to the *näffäñña* settlers, government officials and migrant settlers. Beyond serving these groups of people, these churches did not extend their evangelical activities to the indigenous population. Therefore, one could not find

convertees to Orthodox Christianity among the Mäjängir people.⁴⁴ The *näffäñña* soldiers had been stationed in the region to maintain peace and order in Yäkki since the occupation. But this role was not extended up to the Mäjängir villages. The Mäjängir communities were under pressure of raids from different directions and also from the *näffäññas*.⁴⁵

The Italian occupation in Ethiopia was noted for improvement of socio-economic facilities. But this was not the case in Yäkki. Of course, it is said that, in Yäkki the Italians tried to provide water to Yäkki. This was not successful by itself for the Italian rule itself was short lived.⁴⁶

It was after the Italian departure that modern education was introduced to Yäkki. In 1942 Bungul Wačila Primary School was launched in Yäkki town during the governorship of *Qäñazmaé Fäläkä*. Bungul Wačila is the name of known Oromo hunter at Yäkki at the time.⁴⁷ The name of the school was derived from this man. In 1945 another elementary school was opened in Téppi. These schools were elementary schools which taught students of grade one to six. Students had been obliged to go either to Gore or Jimma for their secondary school education. Although these schools were founded in Yäkki and Téppi, both in the Mäjängir land, the Mäjängir youth did not attend schools according to school sources and informants.⁴⁸ The Mäjängir began going to school in Godäre when the American Presbyterian Missionary, Harvey Hoekstra, established school there (for the Mäjängir). The number of students who attended this school itself had been insignificant. The Mäjängir started to attend schools largely during the *Derg* after the late 1970s.⁴⁹

Through time the population number in Yäkki increased. Subsequently, the district seat was shifted to Téppi in 1945. Another town Mätti was also established in 1958 during the governorship of *Balambaras Gädamu* (1956-1964). According to our informants, the name of the town of Mätti was derived from the name of individual who came from Bädälle area in today's Oromia and was living there during its foundation. His name was *Qäñazmaé Mätti*. A weekly Monday market started to be held there one year later in 1959. Before the 1950s, Mätti was nothing more than forest.⁵⁰

After the withdrawal of the Italians, Yäkki had been district administration center. It was in 1956 police station was established at Téppi by a police officer called captain Täsfaye Mamo.⁵¹ The establishment of police station and other government administrative structure helped the Mäjängir to have peace and security. They have been saved from the raids of their neighbors and internal conflicts. The government institutions also strengthened the power of the *taphas* and other *Šumi's* in the Mäjängir villages. The latter started to cooperate with government officials in collecting tax, in keeping peace and order.⁵² Peace and order was restored in the wake of the establishment of these institutions in the Mäjängirland. Stauder put this situation as: "...the Mäjängir have lost some freedom but have gained much security."⁵³

In the 1950s coffee production had increased in Yäkki and its surroundings. But the produced coffee could not get access to the central market for the absence of transportation in the area. To alleviate this problem in 1957, an open air strip was cleared and prepared to facilitate landing of aeroplane in Téppi during the governorship of *Balambaras* Gädamu. Since 1957 the town had got air transport service for both transportation of coffee to central market and passengers.⁵⁴ But air transportation served the landlords and merchants for their frequent contact with the center. The Mäjängir and non-Mäjängir peasants never used this transportation system. Merchants used air transportation as a pretext to fix the price of coffee in their own favour.⁵⁵

In 1964, Téppi town got postal service.⁵⁶ Azäne Wube was a popular governor of the district at the time. He mobilized the population for development and introduced important facilities to the town and its surroundings. Azene, himself operated a bull dozer in the opening of roads from Shishinda to Téppi. It was during his governorship that, the town also got generator light for four hours at night. Teppi as a town got its master plan in 1968. According to my informants, Azäne mobilized peasants for more production of coffee and cultivation of crops. He took a role model position in producing coffee and cultivations of food crops. It was said that, he ordered males for cultivation of crops at least for self-sufficiency. He also supervised markets. In his supervision, if males were captured buying grains, the one who was captured buying was punished by lashes in the market as a lesson for others. He did this to improve productivity and to discourage idleness of peasants. The first clinic was also opened in 1966.⁵⁷ Before the opening of this clinic, the people of Yäkki district were suffered from epidemic diseases such as malaria, typhoid, cholera,

smallpox and etc. In the report of 1948/49 there was a lot of deaths due to shortage of food caused by drought and an outbreak of epidemic diseases in the district. There was no support for the people from the central government, no trained personnel, clinics and medicines to treat the diseases.⁵⁸

Flour mills were initially planted at Téppi by Arab merchants. Later *Ato Azäne* added flour mills and dry coffee mills. During the *Derg*, these mills were nationalized and the latter became the property of the National Coffee Board.⁵⁹

4.3. The Mäjängir Communities after the 1960s

4.3.1. Protestant Christianity

The reason which made the 1960s a landmark in the history of Mäjängir was the introduction of Christianity to the Mäjängirland by a Missionary known as Odola by the Mäjängir, his real and full name was Harvey T. Hockstra. Odola was the most known white name among the Mäjängir up to these days. Odola went to Godäre after he got permission from Emperor Haile Selassie. He also got a letter from *Bétä rest*.⁶⁰ At the time, the area around Godäre was the *rest* land of the wife of the crown prince, Mädfäriashwork Abäbä. One of our informants, Sharäw Shanta was the representative of Mädfäriashwork Abäbä *rest* land at Godäre. He was ordered to grant four (4) *gashas* of land to Odola, the bearer of the letter from the *Bétä rest*. Accordingly Sharäw rendered to Odola four *gashas* of land on which Odola later established a missionary center.⁶¹ Odola started his missionary work in 1964 near the Godäre River deep in the Mäjängir territory, north of Mätti town, some 65 kilometers away from Mätti. Transporting his family and his belongings from Mätti town to his new missionary site and the journey as a whole, in 1964 described by Odola as follows:

It had taken us ten days on uncut trails with six mules, two horses and more than a hundred different carriers to get us to where, after dark, we ended our journey and slept on the rain soaked ground beside a grass-roofed hut to being living among the Majangir.⁶²

Before he transferred to Godäre, Odola was working as a missionary in the South Sudan among the Añuak and Murle people. The area began to be called traditionally Godäre mission after his missionary station was established. Now the area is called Mängäshi. Initially, Odola used twenty-five (25) men to pave trails, dig the roads and cut the logs of trees to clear roads to travel by Land Rover from Mätti to the missionary site (Mängäshi). It took them 17 days to arrive at

Godäre mission. Nowadays, this road has already been upgraded and took only 3 hours to travel by car.⁶³

After establishing his missionary post at Godäre; Odola constructed an airstrip, a school and clinic. Before he started his project, he also gained permission from “a powerful ritual expert (*taphadh*)”, in Godäre called, Balti to continue the missionary activities. Till the coming of Odola and opening of the clinic, disease such as small pox, malaria, typhoid, tropical ulcers and others were treated by traditional ritual experts, *taphadh*.⁶⁴ Initially, Balti, the *taphadh*, in Godäre discouraged his followers not to visit the clinic. But the surrounding people through time understood the curing capacity of medicines given by the missionaries and later Balti himself visited the clinic and had got vaccination against small pox.⁶⁵ Afterwards, the Mäjängir started to come from near and far areas. Those who came to get medical treatment at the clinic were preached Gospel side by side with the treatment. This was one method how Odola attracted some of the Mäjängir people.⁶⁶ The purpose of the construction of air strip was to transport the missionaries by air. But seriously ill Mäjängir people were also taken to the mission hospital of Mätu.⁶⁷

At Godäre missionary post, Odola also opened school, which taught from grade one to four. He taught the students of the Mäjängir in this school. It was in this school that, the Mäjängir students started education for the first time. After they had completed their primary education, Odola would send them for the next level of education either to Mizan Täfäri or Gore.⁶⁸ Some of the Mäjängir students who were taught by Odola include: Muse Adrman, who completed his education and later served in different administrative posts during the *Derg* regime, Dawit Admasu, Petors Bedikan, Redat Gebrekidan were among the first students. Initially Odola could not speak the Mäjängir language. To overcome this shortcoming, he brought with him one Añuak man who could speak Mäjängir language and helped Odola in translation.⁶⁹



Figure 3. The Missionaries Harvey T. Hoekstra (Odola) and his wife Lavina.

(source: [http:// www.assist news.net](http://www.assistnews.net))

Odola used different techniques in preaching Gospel to the Mäjängir. One was that, he tried to persuade them through tape recorder and by extensive use of cassettes in the Mäjängir language. The Mäjängir were surprised by the tape recorder as they heard their language. Then they started to gather and hear what the tape said. Odola used this because almost all Mäjängir by the time could not read and write to understand the Bible. Thus, this was the only option to reach them at the time.⁷⁰

The tape recorder he used at the time was solar tape recorder which works by ventilating air manually. Then Odola gave to the Mäjängir these recorders, telling them to bring it back when it stopped. The Mäjängir themselves carried these cassettes which had the news about Jesus to distant villages where Odola himself never visited. Odola arranged for the Mäjängir congregational praying programme on Sundays. Very often he used the tape recorder with microphone to chant from the Gospel. Then people adopted this and started to come and attend.⁷¹

Sato portrayed the expression of Odola about the Mäjängir reaction to the tape recorder as:

I wish you could have been there to see their reaction. Frequently, someone would hold his head or face tightly, turning the head from one side to other to hear more clearly. Some spoke back to the voice coming from the “box that talks”, exclaiming, Tia (I hear you) ‘moko nyun’ (‘It’s no lie’) or ‘yang jet’ (it’s sweet). It was marvelous to behold. They were hearing the saving message of God’s salvation.⁷²

Later, the idea of this tape recorder was developed by Odola into the Audio Scripture International to provide the Bible in Audio Cassette recorder. Nowadays, most of the Mäjängir carry and use the tape recorder which uses battery as a walking tape, also known as “ the Talking Bible”.⁷³



Figure 4 .The Mäjängir man, Elias, with his “Talking Bible.”

(Photo by Abebe Getahun, December 2011)

The other technique which Odola used to teach the Gospel was planting coffee around missionary post. Odola planted this coffee for females. The Mäjängir use coffee leaves for the preparation of *Kari*. *Kari* is a hot drink, an infusion made from the leaves (not beans) of forest coffee. It is prepared with addition of other items like pepper, herbs, garlic and salt. This was daily served by the Mäjängir, particularly, in the morning and at dusk. So, when women came to get these leaves in large number, Odola started preaching them about Christianity.⁷⁴

The acceptance of Christianity by the Mäjängir changed their life in such a way that, the Mäjängir abandoned drinking and smoking.⁷⁵ Before Christianity, it was a custom for the Mäjängir to smoke. They got the tobacco from the Oromo and Añuak in exchange for their goods. As they stopped drinking alcoholic drinks, conflicts, killings and vengeance killings had

been reduced or stopped.⁷⁶ Thirteen years later, in 1976 Odola and his family left Godäre mission.⁷⁷ When Odola left Godäre Mission, there were probably around two hundred to three hundred baptized Christians. But nowadays, it is estimated that about 90 percent of the Mäjängir people have become Protestant Christians. Thus, one can say that Odola planted the seeds of Christianity among the Mäjängir. But its fast expansion took place after Odola's departure. The spread of Christianity among the Mäjängir continued during the *Derg*. Consequently, many harmful traditional practices have been abandoned. For instance, when someone died, male mourners would cut part of their foreheads with sharp knives. The worship of traditional ritual *tapha's* was stopped in every villages of the Mäjängir. These and some other harmful traditional practices were not only eliminated by the introduction of Christianity, but also by the teachings of the *Derg* officials and cadres.⁷⁸

4.4 .The Mäjängir and Other Ethnic Groups

As revealed earlier, the Mäjängir were the early inhabitants of the area prior to the arrival of other ethnic groups. They had also early contacts with other Omotic groups like the Shakko and the Mocha [Shaka], the Nilo-Saharan group of the Añuak, the Oromo, Amhara and others.⁷⁹ The Shako people were equally early settlers with the Mäjängir, in the southern territory of today's Mäjängirland, present day Yäkki district. Presently, the Shako people are largely found in Shako district in Southern, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPRG) and Bench Majji zone of the same region. The Shako were mixed agriculturalists; they practice both farming and animal husbandry.⁸⁰

The Shakko also claim that they were the earlier settler before the Mäjängir's arrival whereas, the Mäjängir also claim they were the only and the earliest settlers before the arrival of Shako and other ethnic groups in the area. From this claims and counter claims one can understand that the two populations interaction could be traced back to antiquity.⁸¹ Therefore, both peaceful and hostile relationships prevailed between the two ethnic groups. The Mäjängir had a tradition of calling other ethnic groups by different names only known to them. As we have seen, they were also called by other groups or their neighbors by different names. The Mäjängir call the Shako people Danir and the Shakko's used to call the Mäjängir as Tama.⁸²

The Shako and the Mäjängir had marriage relations at the time of peace. As some of our Mäjängir informants claim, they assimilated with the Shako while they are (were) asked about to which clan they belonged they would reply *Danir*, means Shako.⁸³ The Shakko and the Mäjängir also had trading relations. The Shakko provided the Mäjängir with goods like knives, axes and spears.⁸⁴ The Shakko also got these products through exchange from other people. The Mäjängir exchanged these goods for honey (*etedh*), pottery (*suphoy*), and chickens (*cookili*). The Shakko also produced honey.⁸⁵ In the past, the Shakko and the Mäjängir had conflicted and fought so many times.⁸⁶ The Shako raided the Mäjängir for slaves. They raided into Mäjängir territory to capture their women and children and anyone they could capture. These raidings were the cause of conflicts and fighting among the two groups.⁸⁷ The last raid of the Shakko against the Mäjängir was after the Italian departure, in the transition period. During this time, the Shakko had acquired some firearms; during the war against the Italians, from the Allied forces. After the war, the Shakko used these arms against the Mäjängir. They killed many men and took the women and children of the Mäjängir.⁸⁸ In response to this attack, the Mäjängir made a counter raid against the Shako, destroyed the settlement of Shako around the Bakko river near Téppi town. Later, peace and order was restored by the Ethiopian government forces. Since this time, the Shako and the Mäjängir continued their peaceful interaction. The conflicts, wars, raids and counter- raids between the two ethnic groups stopped after the restoration of imperial rule in the area, 1941.⁸⁹

The Mäjängir had also long relationships with their neighboring Nilo- Saharan i.e. the Añuak people. Even though the Mäjängir were early settlers of Gambella, they were pushed and retreated in to their present day settlement by the pressure from the Añuak.⁹⁰ Despite this pressure, some Mäjängir communities were still remained in the enclaved settlements of the Añuak territory such as around the river banks of Gilo, Aluero and Siri. The Añuak were relatively better organized and superior in arms to the Mäjängir. The Mäjängir had also trade relations and marriage ties with the Añuak. But this marriage relation was only one side i.e. the Añuak would marry Majangir girls.⁹¹ The Mäjängir cooperated with the Añuak against the raidings of others. Douglass Johnson noted this relationship as: "...the Mäjängir become mixed with those who raided them, many joining their relatives who were captured and raised among the Añuak, even assisting Ethiopian Añuak in the raids against Sudan Añuak."⁹²

In their raiding, the Añuak captured the Mäjängir women and children. The women were either sold or married. The children were raised and adopted. The Mäjängir escaped from these raids through abandoning their settlement. As opposed to this, the Mäjängir did sometimes take refuge among the Añuak themselves. These Añuaks were either kins who were taken in the previous raids and raised by the Añuak.⁹³

However, most of the Mäjängir during my interview did not have positive memories of the past about their neighboring Añuak. As to them, ‘our (the Mäjängir) relationship with the Añuak was nothing more than disturbance and threat of raids coming from the Añuak against our children, women, grain, chickens and honey.’ The Mäjängir used to call Añuak Phrier whereas the Añuak used to call them Ujang.⁹⁴ Again the Mäjängir faced their last raid from the Añuak after the withdrawal of the Italian forces, during the transition period; until peace and security was restored by Ethiopian government. Since this time, the Añuak were no more threat to the Mäjängir and the Mäjängir stopped fearing the threat from the Añuak.⁹⁵

In spite of the above hostile relations, the Mäjängir had also peaceful relation with the Añuak at other times. The British established a trade post at Gambella in 1904.⁹⁶ This establishment of Gambella as a trade post, increased the interaction of the Mäjängir with the Añuak. The Mäjängir started to get goods like spears (*biyya*), knives (*are*), beads (*kedhefan*), axes (*kabbi*) and grounded tobacco (*taphé*) from the Añuak in exchange for their honey. This interaction was high between the Mäjängir and the Añuak who lived in the northern territory around the Godäre River. The Mäjängir of this area would travel through the Añuak territory to Gambella carrying their honey to exchange for other commodities.⁹⁷ With the opening of this trade post at Gambella, the Añuak became free to trade in ivory. When they faced shortage of ivory in their land, the Añuak got ivory from Mäjängirland in the 1920s.⁹⁸ The Mäjängir, particularly, those who lived north of the Godäre River had close contacts with the Añuak. This was due to the proximity of their territories. The Mäjängir around here could speak the Añuak language and vice-versa. Here socio-economic interaction of the two ethnic groups was/is high.⁹⁹

The Mäjängir had also age old contact with the Oromo, Amhara and other ethnic groups, whom the Mäjängir called “Galier” or “Habäsha”. The Mäjängir gave this name for all light colored people of the Oromo, Amhara, Tigre, Gurage and others. The Mäjängir also had contacts with the Mocha (Shakacho) and the Kaffa peoples whom they called Donjier. In the past the Mäjängir were called by these people ‘Mässängo’. Later the Oromo, Amhara, and other peoples adopted this name to call the Mäjängir. The early interaction between the Mäjängir and the Kaffa-Shakacho is full of obscurity.¹⁰⁰

The interaction of the Mäjängir with the Oromo, Amhara and others increased after the conquest of the area. The Mäjängir were also raided by these people for slavery until it was prohibited by law in 1924. After slavery was outlawed the interaction of these peoples with the Mäjängir continued.¹⁰¹ The interaction of the Mäjängir with these peoples declined during the Italian occupation. This was because Italians tried to use the Mäjängir and the Shakko peoples against other peoples.¹⁰² After the Italians departure, the interaction continued and even drew momentum. These peoples provided the Mäjängir with items like tobacco, salt, iron tools, beads, and clothes. The Mäjängir provided honey, wax, pottery and chickens. From among the above commodities, the Mäjängir highly valued salt (*moy*) for their daily consumption. The Mäjängir can withstand the absence of other commodities. But they could not tolerate the absence of salt. Salt was highly valued consumer good among the Mäjängir. Mäjängir also provided other peoples with wooden mortars, wooden trays, different kinds of baskets and trays using their indigenous knowledge in preparing these goods.¹⁰³

After 1941, the Mäjängir had served other peoples in clearing fields for coffee cultivation and porting goods.¹⁰⁴ The settler peoples described their socio-economic interaction with the Majangir as: “**ጨወ የሰጠን ጨርቅ የሰጠን ቀስ በቀስ ወደ ሠወ መጠጋትን አለማመድናቸዉ ንጂ ከዚያ በፊት በፍፁም ሰወ አይቀርቡም ነበር።**” Meaning, “ by giving them salt and cloth they gradually came closer to other non-Mäjängir people. Previously they never approached other peoples.” In this both the settler communities and the government officials considered themselves as a civilizing agent to the Mäjängir. This was observed in the report of 1941 E.C(1948/49). This report indicates the Mäjängir people and the area where they settled was full of resources like ivory and skins. But the area was untouched and not fully

exploited for the area was feared of its epidemic diseases I mentioned earlier. The report also suggests to the higher officials how to take these properties (ivory and skins) of the Mäjängir by convincing and giving these materials (salt and clothes) to them. But the earlier saying is partly unacceptable. For one thing, the Mäjängir communities were the early settlers of the area. Thus, how the late comers would train the natives. This is questionable. It was also the action of the *näḥḥāñña* and other settler communities from the north or elsewhere that made the Mäjängir suspicious of these people and subsequently alienated them. The responsibility for the marginalization and discrimination of the Mäjängir from the settler community lies on the shoulders of the latter.¹⁰⁵

There were also people who came for hunting purpose. The Mäjängir had also contact with these groups of people. The Mäjängir had the role of guiding these hunters in the forests. In return for these, the Mäjängir were given bullet by those who had arms, salt and the meat of hunted animals. The Mäjängir had close and early contacts with the Oromo.¹⁰⁶ This influence was observed in the Mäjängir language for they borrowed many words from the Oromo language for instance *waqoyo* (God), *kawe* (arms), *Adamo* (hunting) and etc.¹⁰⁷ Later, with the growing importance of coffee as a cash crop, the demand for land was also increased. Even though, the Mäjängir lost their land, most of them did not resent this as they had forestland. What initially embarrassed the Mäjängir was tax collected by the government officials from their low income of honey.¹⁰⁸

Notes

¹Informants: Isrom, Ñamur and Shamo.

²Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and society...*, pp.157-159.

³In formants: Awkin, Mäkonja and Wozätän.

⁴Informants: Tangät, Simon Tuphatak and Fäyisa.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.159.

⁷Informants: Agilo, Ejära, Sainok and Jänur Jikony.

⁸Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp,159-160.

⁹Informants: Ñante, Täkä and Shamo.

¹⁰ Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp,160-163.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Informants: Shamo, Mathios and Fanos péru. These were: *dok pidoyak* means the land of *taphadh* called piddoy around today's Fide kebele from where the kebele adopted its name, *dok oppiyak* means the land of the *taphadh* called Oppi, *dok Negiyak* would mean the land of the *taphadh* Shelen Negi, *dok Yodhintung* the land of the *taphadh* called Yodhin around Gelesha kebele today, *dok odumeyak* the land of the *taphadh* Odume, *dok koldewar* the land of *taphadh* konde, *dok baltekan* the land of *taphadh* Balte the well known *taphadh* around the Godäre River. These were some of the well known Mäjängir *tapha*'s in the Mäjängir territory of former Yäkki district. The present Yäkki district and Mäjängir Zone.

- ¹⁴Informants: Mathios, Shamo, Isrom, Ejära, Simon Tuphatak and Agilo
- ¹⁵Informants: Shamo, Sharäw, Dingätu and Tamiru Woldämarim
- ¹⁶Amare, p.68.
- ¹⁷Informants: Sharäw, Dingätu, Tamiru and Shamo; Archive No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (see Appendix G, p.23).
- ¹⁸*Ibid*; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C. (see appendix F, p.3).
- ¹⁹ Amare, p.108; informants: Särawit, Mulugeta, Abraham and Ejära
- ²⁰Informants : Ejära, Fanos, Samson and Edisa'él Wari.
- ²¹Crummey, p-234.
- ²²Bahru, p.192.
- ²³ Informants: Sharäw Shanta, Dingätu Dästa and Tamiru Woldämariam
- ²⁴ *Ibid*.
- ²⁵Staander, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, p.2.
- ²⁶ Amare, p.99.
- ²⁷*Ibid*, p.100.
- ²⁸Informants: Dingätu, Sharäw and Tamiru; *Téppi Andäña Däräja Temihrt Bét Yäwork Iyobeliyu Metshet*, 1987 (*Teppi Elementary school golden jubilee magazine*, 1995/6), p,13.
- ²⁹*Teppi Andäña Däräja Temihrt Bét Yäwork Iyobeliyu Metshet (teppi Elementary school golden jubilee magazine)*, p,13.
- ³⁰Informants: Tamiru, Sharäw and Dingät
- ³¹Bahru, p.193.
- ³²Informants: Sharäw, Dingätu and Tamiru
- ³³*Ibid*.
- ³⁴Informants: Sharäw and Dingätu
- ³⁵*Ibid*.
- ³⁶*Ibid*.
- ³⁷Informants: Ñamur, Abraham, Isrom and Hawariat
- ³⁸ *Ibid*.
- ³⁹Archive, No Box No, unnumbered: *Bejerond Temteme Wolde*. No file No: Mocha *Wereda Gizat* Governor to Illubabor *Awraja Gizat* Office, Meskerem, 1939 E.C (See Appendix G, p. 15)
- ⁴⁰Stauder: “Notes on the Hitory of the Majangir...”p.115.
- ⁴¹*Ibid*.
- ⁴²Informants: Sharäw and Dingätu
- ⁴³Informants: Ñamur, Shamo, Sharäw and Dingätu
- ⁴⁴Informant: Sharäw, Agilo and Särawit
- ⁴⁵Informants: Ñamur, Hawariat, Abraham and Yishak
- ⁴⁶*Ibid*.
- ⁴⁷Informants: Sharäw and Dingätu
- ⁴⁸*Teppi Andäña Däräja Temihrt Bét Yäwork Iyobeliyu Metshet*, 1987 (*Teppi Elementary school golden jubilee magazine*, Amharic 1995/6), PP.16-18; informants: Namur, Samson and Abraham
- ⁴⁹Informants: Abraham, Hawariat, Dingetu, Tamiru, Sharew and Shamo

- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*
- ⁵²*Ibid.*
- ⁵³Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...” pp.115.
- ⁵⁴Informants: Tamiru, Shamo and Dingetu; *Iyobeliyu Metsheet*, p.13.
- ⁵⁵Amare, pp. 98-99
- ⁵⁶*Iyobeliyu Metsheet*, p.13.
- ⁵⁷Informants: Tamiru, Sharaw and Dingatu
- ⁵⁸Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha wereda Gizat governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C.(see appendix F, PP. 6-8).
- ⁵⁹Informants: Sharaw, Dingatu and Simon
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁶¹<http://www.assistnews.net>, accessed date march 15, 2012.
- ⁶²*Ibid.*
- ⁶³*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴Ren’ya Sato, “Evangelical Christianity and Ethnic consciousness in Majangir”, *Remapping Ethiopian Socialism and After* (Oxford, Athens, Addis Ababa, 2002), p, 187
- ⁶⁵<http://www.assistnews.net>.
- ⁶⁶Informants: Namur, Shamo, Samson, Abraham, Tialem and Isrom
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*
- ⁷²Sato, “Evangelical Christianity and Ethnic Consciousness...” pp, 188-189.
- ⁷³Informants: Namur, Hawariat, Tialem and Yishak
- ⁷⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵Sato, “Evangelical Christianity and Ethnic Consciousness...” p.189.
- ⁷⁶Informants: Namur, Shamo and Sarawit
- ⁷⁷Sato, “Evangelical Christianity and Ethnic Consciousness...” p.189.
- ⁷⁸Informants: Yawojak, Tamiru and Awkin
- ⁷⁹Informants: Shamo and Sharaw
- ⁸⁰Informants: Ejara, Yawojak, Sainok and Simon
- ⁸¹*Ibid*
- ⁸²*Ibid*
- ⁸³*Ibid*
- ⁸⁴Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia. The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*, (Chicago, 1980), p.168.
- ⁸⁵Informants: Yawojak Kabiba, Sainok Ranshaw, Simon Yawoja.
- ⁸⁶Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...,” p. 111.
- ⁸⁷Informants: Sharaw and Yawojak
- ⁸⁸Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...,” p.111.
- ⁸⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁹⁰Donald N. Donham and Wendy James. *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, Editions (Oxford, Athens, Addis Ababa, 2002), p.239.

- ⁹¹Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...”,p. 111.
- ⁹²Donald N.Donham and Wend James, P.239.
- ⁹³Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...”,p.111; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C.(see appendix F, P.8).
- ⁹⁴Informants: Isrom, Agilo and Awkin
- ⁹⁵Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...”,p. 111.
- ⁹⁶Donham , p,239.
- ⁹⁷Informants: Tangät, Simon and Ñamur
- ⁹⁸Donald N.Donham and Wendy James, P.237.
- ⁹⁹Stauder, “Notes on the History of the Majangir...” pp. 111-112.
- ¹⁰⁰Informants: Shamo, Yäwojak and Awkin
- ¹⁰¹Informants: Dingätu and Sharäw
- ¹⁰²Informants: Sharäw, Shamo, Simon Tuphatak and Ñamur
- ¹⁰³Informants Dingätu, Yäwojak and Wozätän
- ¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁵Informants: Yoséf, Yishak, Wozätän, Abraham and Tobél; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C.(see appendix F, p. 9)
- ¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁷Informants: Awkin, Ñamur and Sharäw
- ¹⁰⁸Stauder, “Notes on the History of Majangir...” p.112.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SOME SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE MÄJÄNGIR

5.1. Clanship (*Komoyir*)

According to Odhiambo and others, some identified socio-cultural elements of the Nilotic peoples are: “the keeping of cattle, bleeding and milking of cattle with linear age sets and the removal of lower incisor teeth.”¹ But the Mäjängir were not cattle keepers and had no age set system. From the above characteristics, the Mäjängir only practised the removal of lower incisor teeth (*tikan*) upto the early 1970s for both sex. The removal of lower incisor teeth was undertaken when the children reached above the age of ten. The ideal time for removing these lower incisor teeth was when maize became ripe and still soft to be eaten easily. The number of teeth removed was usually two.²

The Mäjängir communities were organized into clans. Mäjängir clans had group responsibility in fighting and homicide. But clan structure among the Mäjängir was not well organized. As to Stauder clans “have no leaders, no representatives, no meetings, no joint activities.”³ In the Mäjängir communities membership of the clan was through patrilineal line. But kinship relation was determined both through father and mother.⁴ It was said that, the Mäjängir had more than 70 clans. So far, I have collected more than 40 clan names and it indicates that the clans may exceed or equal to 70.⁵ See some of the clan names are given in the appendix A.

Despite the multiple number of their clans, the Mäjängir clans had no political, administrative and council of elders. The only leaders were the *taphas* whose role was serving as ritual experts. The *taphas* existed in all Mäjängirland. The role of the powerful *taphadh* was restricted to traditional ritual practices such as: maintaining peace and order, removing evil spirits, provision of ritual protection from disturbance, healing illness, ending disputes among their followers. Among the Mäjängir almost all *taphas* came from Melaneer clan.⁶ The social organization of the Mäjängir was based on *komoyir* (clans). But their settlement was not along clanline. In the social structure, the *taphadh* was found at the top of its community but with limited power. The settlement of the community was around their *taphadh*. Every Mäjängir village had their own *taphadh* and there was no strong/powerful *taphadh* who would organize and control the other

taphas in the Mäjängir territory.⁷ Even though there were powerful *taphas*, based on their followers and the spiritual services they gave to their community; there was no powerful *tapha* who could serve the whole territory of the Mäjängir people.⁸ In the 1960s, there were approximately fifty *taphas* in the Mäjängir territory including the minor ones. Every Mäjängir had to visit his respective *taphadh* when he collected honey, to provide *ogol* and *tajan* in the annual spiritual ceremony held by the *taphadh*. An individual should also consult and get permission from the *taphadh* for settlement in his territory, for construction of homes, for hunting and to get blessing during illness of a family member.⁹ Every Mäjängir was accountable to their *taphadh* based on their respective village. The Mäjängir lacked strong political organization which would organize and administer these *tapha* into one administrative unit. Each villages of the Mäjängir with its *taphadh*, exercised its own independent life. A *taphadh* would be respected and feared based on possession of his ritual exercise that he rendered to his community not based on his ability of administration.¹⁰

5.2. Marriage (Wawan) and Bride Price (Kaññ)

Wessen noted that “marriage (*bobon*) is considered as an important rite of passage among the Majangir.”¹¹ Formerly, marriage among the Mäjängir community took place with the consent of the couples. The maturity of boys and girls for marriage was known by certain behaviors. The maturity of boys was related with his activities to go to forests alone and try to make beehives, some fishing and hunting activities on his own. The maturity of girls was related with her wearing beads (*sopholkoyir*) around her waist. Most of the time *sopholkoyir* was made from the hoofs of bushbuck and antelope. Girls also wore bracelets on their hands (*läjak*) and walk in the village. In addition, her family would construct for her a hut (*godoy*) for guarding fields from wild beasts. Sexual intercourse before the conclusion of marriage was prohibited.¹² Pre-marital conception was also forbidden. Those who committed pre-marital intercourse were condemned by the community. In case it happened, elders and sometimes traditional leaders would give advice to those youth who committed such unwanted acts, not to commit the same mistake again. This was because such misconduct was immoral and cursed one in the Mäjängir culture.¹³

The physical appearance of the girl was an ideal criterion for the boy to choose the girl as his future wife. The girls’ physical potential to fetch water, to collect fire wood, to prepare food and

drinks were seen as precondition to select the girl for wife. According to the Mäjängir culture, when girls reached the age of maturity (usually 14 years and above), huts (*godoy*) were constructed for her to guard maize and sorghum fields.¹⁴ In the selection of his future mate, the boy either directly contacted the girl or use mediator (*turtan*). If the boy was active in communication, he could go alone or with his friend and tell the girl about his interest to marry her. In this case, if the girl refused to accept the question, the boy would stop immediately the attempt. If the girl accepted the question of the boy, the boy immediately would start accompanying her when she would fetch water and collect firewoods and etc. Even it was possible for the boy to go to her family's house and sit nearby their homestead about three to four meters away from the gate. In this case, the girl's family would understand the boy's interest and send the girl to give him *kari* and/or tobacco. The boy did not accept the invitation, if it was brought to him by other family members rather than his fiance.¹⁵

The other strategy was, if the boy was not active and fearful, he may use one of the girl's friends or another active girl in the village as a mediator. The boy would send the girl's-girl friend as mediator extending greeting and telling his interest to marry her. The mediator was expected to explain about the boy's attributes such as his braveness in hunting, in cultivation of fields, beekeeping and etc. If the girl refused to accept or had already promised another person for marriage, the boy would automatically abandon his question.¹⁶ If the girl accepted the question of the boy, then the girl (mediator) would arrange a programme to bring together the would be mates. On the programmed day, the boy (*atin*) would go to the hut of the girl (*pétti*) with his friend. The girl would wait them with her friend (mediator) preparing coffee (*karri*) and tobacco (*taphé*). After the boy and his friend arrived at the house of the girl, they would take a seat about three to four meters away from the hut. Subsequently, the girl (*petti*) would bring to the boy *kari* and prepared cigarette for smoking (*mentan*). But the boy would not take either *kari* or cigarette immediately. He resisted for sometime and shown sign of pride in himself. After some minutes, the boy would accept and smoke the cigarette and drink the *kari*.¹⁷

At the end, after they drank *kari* and smoked cigarette, the mediator and the boy's friend would bring closer the would be couples. They would say to the girl, this boy would be your husband, so from now on whether he would come with friend or alone, prepare and serve him with *kari* or cigarette.¹⁸ Then the boy would go to the girls hut another day and make a rack bed (made from a

wooden stick called *yäyi*) in front of the girls hut about three to four meters away from the gate. This rack bed was a resting or sitting place for him while he would visit the girl. From this time on wards, the boy would regularly visit the girl and be served with *kari* and cigarette. During this time, the would be husband and wife would make discussion, chat and exchange love talks. This relation would continue at least up to three months and sometimes up to a year. But during all these contacts, except drinking *kari* and smoking cigarette the boy would not eat food from the girl's hut.¹⁹

Later, the mediator and elder women would interfere in the issue and arrange the day when the boy would take or kidnap the girl. After the date was decided, the boy (the would be bridegroom) would inform his family who would soon begin to prepare bride price (*kaññ*).²⁰ The bridegroom with three or four of his friends would go to take the bride. They hide themselves around the home of the bride and would be waiting for her coming out. Another three or four of the bride's friends including the mediator would go with the bridegroom. The mediator would enter the bride's home and would take her out.²¹ This was a kind of abduction (*obodh*) with the consent of the girl. Even though the bride could know her marriage she did not know the exact date. After the bride would come out of the hut, the would be bridegroom and his friends come and take the girl in collaboration with her female friends of the bride. Since an agreement was reached earlier there was no coercion and physical attack. Subsequently, they would take the girl and hide her somewhere at safe place. At night they would keep the bride in hut alone or with her female friends. This was for three days and the bridegroom would live in the other hut.²² Next, the bride would be smeared with traditional cosmetics; her body, face and hair. These cosmetics were made from the berries of castor bean (*boleer*) and rocks called (*goräy*). The castor beans were grinded and put into water and squeezed. Afterwards, the squeezed liquid (*boleer*) would be mixed with grinded rock and became ready for greasing. The grinded rock was also used for anointing of hair of both males and females even when there was no special occasion like marriage. When it was smeared on hair, it was called *jakäy* by the community.²³

When the news of the abduction of the girl was heard by the bride's family, it would cause anger. But the incident would often be settled by the neighbors. In the next two days, two elders would go to the bride's family house and tell where their daughter had gone and what happened was right as to the norm of the community.²⁴ Later, within three days, elders would return the girl to

her family's house. The elders (*gutarkan*) also negotiate the amount of bride price to be paid. The bride price usually included spears (*biyya*), axes (*kabbi*), beads (*kädhefan*) and bracelets (*läjack*). The amount of bride price depends on the capacity of the bridegroom. It usually ranged from two spears and two axes to ten spears and axes to the maximum.²⁵ The boy's family, relatives and even friends would contribute to cover the payment of the bride price. After the bride price was paid, her family would share it soon. Her father would take his own share may be one spear and one axe and the remaining go to other family member. Subsequently, it was assumed that, peace would prevail between the two families and the bridegroom had the right to take the girl any time and she was considered his wife since that day.²⁶

Before taking the girl to the boy's home, drinks (*tajan*) and foods of porridge (*Šapatan*) prepared at the boy's residence. Finally, some of the boy's friend and that of the girl's took the girl to the boy's house. They would drink and eat what was prepared for the ceremony. They would dance and sing in group making circle. At night, the boy's and the girl's friends took the girl to the boy's hut, counting her walk in feet. In this ceremonial walk, her friends would give false promises; her footsteps would be converted into gifts. This slow movement was a symptom of ups and downs of life after marriage.²⁷ When the bride arrived near the bridegroom's home, her friends would drag her away while bridegroom's friends (males) pulled her to the hut. Finally, the winners would be males and the bride would sit down. This action and counter-action was called *royan* by the community. Next, male attendants would bring firewood (*tutuk/madhuk*) and an axe (*kabbi*) together. One man would hold the fire and axe with water in his mouth and put the fire on the axe and would pour the water on it. The bride was asked to touch the charcoal. It was believed that, after the bride touched the hot axe and charcoal, she would become clever. When all these processes were accomplished the bridegroom did not wait the girl in the hut.²⁸

After all these processes were completed, the bridegroom would be brought and left in the hut. Then both his friends and her friends would leave the two couples alone. Until this days, sexual intercourse was not allowed between the two couples. It was after this, sexual intercourse would be allowed between the couples. The two couples would pass a week of honeymoon period. Thereafter, they start living their own common life. The bride wore leather dress (*tarman*) if available when she went to market, otherwise she wore *tangi*.²⁹ From this time on, the bridegroom would not eat food particularly porridge which was prepared by the boy's family.

This would continue up to one year or until she gave birth. Until this time, the bride was not considered as a relative of her husband's family. After she gave birth to the first child, there would be a ceremony of mixing up with her husband's family. In this ceremony, her husband's family would invite her porridge. After she tasted the porridge, she would condemn and curse his family for not giving such delicious food for the last one year. From this time on, she would become a full member of the family of her husband. There would be no sexual intercourse immediately after giving birth until the child reaches three or four years; up to when the child would begin to follow his mother. It was believed by the community sexual intercourse before this time would spoil (*mojéng*) the child. This type of marriage was abandoned after the 1970s in all parts of the Mäjängirland. This was the only type of marriage among the Mäjängir community before 1974.³⁰ The marriage of the Mäjängir had similarity and difference with their neighbors of the Shakko peoples and the nilo-Saharan Añuaks and Ñuer. In the case of marriage arrangement almost the three ethnic groups had similarity with the Mäjängir. While in the payment of bride price all had differences. The Shakko paid bride price with seven heads of cattle. Whereas, the Aäuak paid in cash and the bridegroom was punished with lashes. The Ñuer paid the bride price with thirty (30) heads of cattle and/or in the absence of cattle they used sister exchange marriage arrangement.³¹

But after 1974, the Mäjängir people abandoned the above type of marriage and adopted different kinds of marriage like forceful abduction (*obodh*). A marriage arrangement followed by premarital conception (today this type of marriage is widely practiced in the community) adopted probably from settler communities in their area as to them. These two types of marriage were alien to the community in the previous times. However, after 1974 the latter were the preferable and the only marriage types practiced by the Mäjängir. There were also marriage inheritance and polygamy among the Mäjängir before 1974. After the 1970s, the influence of the Protestant Christianity and modern teachings categorized these practices as harmful traditional practices that should be abandoned. They, thus, gradually abandoned them.³²



Figure 5. Skin of either of bush buck or antelope worn by Majangir woman in the past; stretched on the ground on it a rock called Goray used as cosmetic in past. (Photo by Abebe Getahun, January 2012).

5.3. Funeral (*takaw*) Ceremony

Funeral ceremony in the earlier times among the Mäjängir community had its unique characteristics. It was divided in to two: burial for an ordinary person and burial for the *taphadh* (ritual expert).

5.3.1. Burial (*takaw*) for an Ordinary Mäjängir

Unlike today's burial ceremony, in the past, when someone dies from among the Mäjängir community, he/she would be buried in front of the gate of home of the deceased. Following their settlement graves were scattered in the Mäjängirland. There were no fixed burial places. The Mäjängir say that, the reason why their burial was limited around their home was because the number of inhabitants in a given village was small.³³ In order to overcome the shortage of man power carrying the corpse long distance and digging the tomb they buried the dead body around

their home. The moment the death of a person was assured, his/her hands and legs would be bended and tied together. In order to bend easily the limbs of the dead person, when he/she died the Mäjängir began to massage the hands and legs of a person while he was in throes of death. Otherwise, the limbs of corpse would be broken and tied and made the corpse into the size of a child.³⁴ Then, the corpse would be wrapped by *tangi* and put into a stretcher made of sticks called *yäyi* and would be made ready for burial. The tomb would be dug in a circle shape and finally the corpse would be made to sit and buried.³⁵ This burial ceremony was similar with the funeral ceremony of Mé'énit people (today's Bench Maji Zone around Gurafarda).³⁶ Female mourners cried out throwing themselves on the ground repeatedly and this was called *Dhémädhék*. Male mourners would cut deep their foreheads and heads with spears or sharp knives. This was to express their deep sorrow. Most of our informants had committed this; once or twice in their life times. After this, the mourners would pass upto three months on mourning. Peoples from near and far places would come and express their condolence to the family of the deceased.³⁷

Grains, honey and other property of the dead would be consumed by the mourners and guests, who appeared to express their sorrow. This was conducted without leaving anything for the remaining family members. The dead's property was totally eaten up by the mourners. The extravagance was immense.³⁸ In case the mourners exhausted the property of the dead early or if the dead had no property, they would consume what belonged to the neighbor. From the death of a person upto the next three months, there would be no singing, no blowing and no playing musical instruments. A small racked hut would be constructed on the grave and a plant called *emuy* also planted around the grave. After a year, the area surrounding the graveyard would be cleared and the family of the dead would abandon the village of settlement. It was believed that, leaving the area where their beloved ones died and buried would help them to forget the deceased.³⁹



Figure 6. A traditional racked bed, also used as a seat and stretcher.
(Photo by Abebe Getahun, December 2011).

5.3.2. Burial ceremony for the *Taphadh*

In the case of shroud and digging graveyard, it was similar with that of the ordinary Mäjängir. If the dead *taphadh* was influential among his community, the news of his death would not be told to the community directly. Rather it was said “*larkono tutu akin*”, meaning: “that fire was extinguished.”⁴⁰ This was to mitigate the psychological disturbance of his followers. The news of the death would be disclosed step by step. During the funeral ceremony, there was no weeping as for other ordinary Mäjängir. Unlike the grave for the ordinary people, four stones would be planted on the grave. Two of the stones were placed towards the legs of the dead and the other two was put towards the head of the dead. Then the corpse would be put on a stretcher of *yäyi* and put on the stone. Finally, it was made to rest on it. Later the mouth of the grave was earthen and another stones (*gidhéy*) would be placed on the grave.⁴¹ At the end of the burial ceremony, an elder would stand and give blessings. Some of these were as follows:

Ato Mäjängiron (Mäjängir language)

English

Kat géwan jofa dokunk Bangé yä

let all of you get peace on land.

In bodiér jo bangé

let all the people live in peace.⁴²

This type of burial ceremony for *taphadh* would take place where there was no cave (*kaka*). In a place where there was a cave, the funeral ceremony would be made inside the cave.⁴³ In some places in the absence of caves; the burial of the *taphadh* took place in the openings of trees (*gombari*). They would put the dead body there. On the occasion of the funeral ceremony of influential *taphadh*, goat or hen would be slaughtered and left with the corpse at the cave. Unless this was made, they believed that “either the children of the deceased would be cursed or die; the spirit of the dead *taphadh* would come as a tiger (*domon*) and destroy their property and the land would be cursed.”⁴⁴ After the death of their *taphadh*, the Mäjängir community in one village would also abandon their settlement and move to the place where there was another *taphadh* to get protection. After the 1970s, these kinds of burial ceremony was abandoned totally among the Mäjängir community.⁴⁵

5.4. Traditional Beliefs and Calendar

The Mäjängir community had their own traditional beliefs. At the peak of the traditional belief was *waqoye* (also *God*). After they embraced Christianity, *waqoye* became the name used by the Mäjängir community for God. Although *waqoyé* was the general name of traditional spirit, there were different spirits called by different names under *waqoyé*. A person who possessed by one of these spirits had the power over the community and their property. Some of the spirits believed in by the Mäjängir are described hereunder. These were:

Waldéy spirit was a spirit which was believed to be senior. It was celebrated once in a year under plant called *emuy*. The plant of *emuy* was planted in circular manner and stone (*gidhéy*) was put in the circle.⁴⁶ This place of worship was called *saloy* by the community. *Saloy* was also prepared by individuals at their backyard. During the celebration of this spirit local drinks *tajan* or *ogol* would be prepared. A sacrifice of goat or chicken would also be made. The possessor of this spirit among the community was highly feared and respected. Usually the possessor of this spirit was the *tapha* and sometimes the possessor of the spirit was non-*tapha*. In the absence of rain or when the rain would be excessive, the Mäjängir communities presented sacrifices and pray to

this spirit. In the former times, almost all the Mäjängir communities prepared *saloy* at their backyard. They would provide their daily sacrifice including the first drop of coffee (*kari*) before it was tasted by them. They poured the coffee on the ground so that the spirit would drink it.⁴⁷

The other spirit believed in by the Mäjängir was called *Céin*. This spirit was believed to prevent them from death and other unexpected dangers.⁴⁸ *Ragaw* was a spirit, which was believed to be located at dirty places. It was believed that, this spirit would prevent children from danger while they were playing. When maize and sorghum became ripe for consumption, some amount of them would be given to this spirit and the first drop of coffee was also poured for this spirit.⁴⁹

Jokan was another spirit in which the Mäjängir community believed. These spirits were believed to be many in number as compared to others. Their purpose was to keep children, property of the community and the environment at large.⁵⁰

Citén was another spirit. It was believed that this spirit lived in water and on earth. This idol was believed to make a murderer unconscious. These all traditional gods were abandoned among the Mäjängir community due to the influence of the Protestant Christianity which started taking ground since 1965 as we have already seen.⁵¹

The Mäjängir community had no systematic calculation method of days, weeks, months and years. The Mäjängir simply understood the shifting of seasons with flowering of different trees. The coming of first drop of rain according to their understanding was associated with clearing of fields to be following by sowing crops.⁵² The Mäjängir count dates forward and backward by knotted strings. They tie knots of strings to remember number of dates passed or the time to come. They also count based on moon. The duration between the appearance of the first moon and the next would be considered as a month. Generally, the Mäjängir roughly identify about four seasons based on flowering of trees.⁵³

The season which covers approximately a period from June to September was called *tota*. This season was the time when trees like *kuree*, *dampäi*, *käyang*, *duwé*, etc would blossom their flowers. This season approximately overlaps with Ethiopian Summer season.⁵⁴

The other season was *kuo*. This season ranges from October to January. At this time, trees like *käyang*, *duwé*, *gojjé* would yield flower. This season is also roughly similar with spring season in

most parts of Ethiopia. *Mato* was another season known among the Mäjängir. This season was a dry season and it was a time when the Mäjängir community began to clear fields for maize. It was known through the flowers of trees like *gés*hi and the coming of rain which warned them about the end of the dry season and the coming of the rainy season. It approximately covers from February to March and more or less corresponds with Winter season.⁵⁵

The last season known by the Mäjängir was called *bangi*. This season spans nearly between April and June. This season was known among the Mäjängir community for its shortage of food. In this season the community would face serious shortage of food. Consequently, would depended on gathering of root crops and fruits. In this season trees like *käyang*, *duwé* would flowers. Until very recently, this season is known among the Mäjängir for its shortage of food supply. This season was almost related with Autumn.⁵⁶

5.5. Dressing and Food

Before the 1970s, clothes among the community were not known. They had no access to garments or they did not make clothes of garment by themselves. The Mäjängir rarely put on clothes. To cover their private parts, they only used the leaves of *emuy* plants. Sometimes women wore the skins of bushbuck and antelope.⁵⁷ This was also to cover their private parts. Almost all the community depended on the bark of *tangi*. The bark of this tree was carefully prepared; scratched and washed to make it ready for use. The ‘cloth’ prepared from the bark of this tree was also called *tangi*. It was used instead of night clothes; both as a blanket and bed sheet. The Mäjängir communities were largely depended on nature. In general, they lived in harmony with nature. They used their indiginous knowledge in exploiting their environment for source of food, clothes and also used the forest as a shield to protect themselves from their enemies.⁵⁸

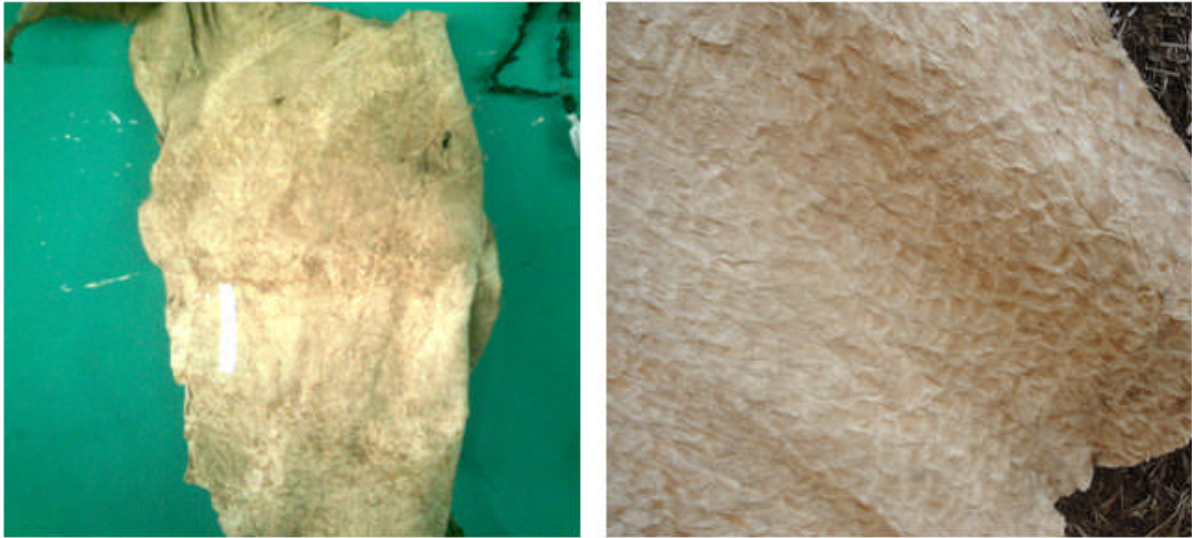


Figure 7. A traditional Mäjängir clothes used to be made from bark of tree, tangi.

(Photo by Abebe Getahun, January 2012).

The clothing tradition of the Mäjängir was changed after 1974. During the *Derg*, the Mäjängir were rewarded with free gifts of clothes, blankets and farming tools. The Mäjängir were largely depended on cultivation of crops both before 1974 and afterwards. They were also dependent on grain foods.⁵⁹ Porridge was a staple food among the Mäjängir which prepared either from maize or sorghum grains. The other food made from a grain of maize was called *kijo*, which we have explained earlier with its preparation in chapter four. This was also a favorite food among the Mäjängir. They also depended on varieties of taro (*Šakoy*), cassava (*baburé*, *anshoté*), varieties of yam (*kawn*, *badéy*) and sweetpotato, sesam (*ñume*), cabbages (*molon*) and others. For meat supply, they were dependent on hunting of wild animals.⁶⁰

With regard to drinks, the Mäjängir regularly prepared drinks in the morning and in the evening. They prepared *Kari* made of coffee leaves not of coffee berry. The Mäjängir considered the leaves of coffee as a blessed God's gift. Its preparation was also mentioned earlier in chapter four. The other alcoholic drinks the Mäjängir used to drink was *tajan* of grains and *ogol* prepared from honey. Their preparation was also mentioned earlier.⁶¹



Figure 8. A Mäjängir woman while peeling *wakuyé* (a kind of taro picked from the forest) and preparing *Kari*. (Photo by Abebe Getahun, December 2011).

Conclusion

The area where the Mäjängir population today live was occupied by them early in the 17th century. Their settlement was towards the north direction from the Gurafarda (today's Bench Maji Zone) areas upto Godare River and some fringe areas of Añuak lands (present day Gambella). The Mäjängir were segregated people from the economic, social and political administration. Their settlement was limited to inaccessible pocket areas; which were considered as hot land, periphery and highly infected by malaria and other epidemic disease. The Mäjängir people were also considered as “uncultured and unmanageable” to the existing rules of time.

At the end of the 19th century, the forces of Emperor Menelik led by *Däjazmač* (later *Ras*) Tässäma Nadäw occupied and incorporated Illubabor. In 1890 the forces of *Ras* Tässäma occupied Yäkki and its surroundings; the area where the Mäjängir populations largely settled. This occupation brought the Mäjängir population in to the modern Ethiopian empire formed by Emperor Menelik II. With this conquest, the näftännä soldiers, other settlers from the north and other places came and settled in the Majangirland. Through time, some influences began to be felt on the life of the Mäjängir caused by land alienation, raidings for slaves; both by the soldiers and the neighbors of the Mäjängir people.

During the Italian occupation, the Mäjängir had experienced some changes in their life; slave trade was abolished; the marginalization of the Mäjängir by other settler communities was stopped and they got acceptance. Despite these, there were no significant changes in the Mäjängir land during the Italian occupation with regard to socio-economic facilities.

After the restoration of imperial rule, coffee became an important cash crop in Yäkki district. Therefore, the flow of population to the area and land grabbing in the area highly increased. The Mäjängir were marginalized and kept away from the coffee products by the settlers. The source of marginalization was the Mäjängir were dependent on the leaves of coffee plant. Thus, they were seen as the one who destroy coffee plant.

It was after the liberation that some socio-economic facilities were introduced to the Mäjängirland like roads, schools, clinics and etc. But these were largely for the settler population than the Mäjängir. The Mäjängir communities began to experience changes in their life after the 1960s; the introduction of Protestant Christianity by Harvey Hockestra. The agricultural system of the Majangir was obsolete; no hoes, no oxen are used upto 1974. The only system was slashing and burn technique with shifting cultivation. Hence, the production of the Mäjängir population was not even hand to mouth. In order to overcome the shortage of food, the Mäjängir communities depended on hunting and gathering of food in the forest and river banks.

The Mäjängir community was divided into different clans. These clans were estimated to be more than seventy in number. Their marriage relation was arranged among different clans. The Mäjängir marriage system of the past was limited in number of participants and cost wise fair. This marriage culture should be protected and preserved by the community for the young and coming generation. But nowadays, this marriage culture was abandoned by them and by most of the young generation of the Mäjängir. This cultural asset, other indigenous knowledge and practices were eroded due to the influence of settler communities and Christianity. The Mäjängir claim that, todays culture of marriage was alien to them and it was a culture adopted from others. But this reason is partially true and partially not, because it was (is) upto them to prevent and preserve this culture and transfer to the next generation. The other forms of marginalization between the Mäjängir and other communities were reduced since 1970s and shows steady decline. But there were still some gaps which needs to be bridged between the non-Mäjängir and the Mäjängir. The burial ceremony of the past and the extravagance followed the death of individuals, the practices of crying by mourners were harmful traditional practices which should be abandoned. They were totally abandoned among the Mäjängir with the influence of Protestant Christianity after the 1970s.

The life of the Majangir population experienced major changes under the derg regime. As opposed to other parts of Ethiopia, which resisted villagization programme, the Mäjängir fully accepted it. The *Derg* collected the Mäjängir communities into villages near clinics, schools and other socio-economic facilities. With this, the *Derg* government supported the Mäjängir community by distributing clothes and by handing out grain once or twice in a year. Under the

Derg regime, the Mäjängir had been encouraged to send their children to school, increased productivity through cultivation. The Majangir were particularly given machet (*Jamai*) , hoes (*Gasho, Jabia*), axe (*kabbi*), salt (*moy*) and above all else the *Derg* cadres taught them to abandon harmful traditional practices.

This villagization programme brought the Mäjängir community to permanent settlement. It was also during this time that, the name Mäjängir was adopted as the only preferable name for the community. Because they were called by different names in the past by their neighbors. For this memorable contribution of the *Derg*, many Mäjängir people speak out the positive sides of the *Derg* regime openly.

The thesis has its own contribution in the study of the Mäjängir people. It helps as a reference for other researchers both on the people of the Mäjängir and other peoples in the region. Therefore, this thesis has tried to open the necessary ground for further study of the Mäjängir society.

Notes

- ¹Odhiambo, p.39.
- ²Informants: Awkin, Ñamur and Méroy
- ³Stauder, p.6.
- ⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁵Informants: Shamo, Wozätän, Samson and Fanos.
- ⁶Stauder, *The Majangir Ecology and Society...*, pp.6-8.
- ⁷Informants: Ejära, Simon, Samson and Jänure.
- ⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁹Informants: Ñante, Edisa'él, Agilo, Addisu and Simon Tuphatak
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*
- ¹¹Wessen, p.33.
- ¹²Informants: Ejära, Shamo and Yäwoijak.
- ¹³*Ibid.*
- ¹⁴Informants: Ñamur and Girma.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*
- ¹⁶Informants: Wozätän, Edisa'él and Tangät.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*
- ¹⁸Informants: Mathios, Mäkonnen, Mute and Shamo.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*
- ²⁰*Ibid.*
- ²¹Informants: Hawariat, Yäwoijak, Addisu and Mäkonja.
- ²²*Ibid.*
- ²³Informants: Ejära, Shamo, Yäwoijak, Wozätän and Fanos.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*
- ²⁵*Ibid.*
- ²⁷Informants: Simon Tuphatak, Abraham, Awkin and Ñamur.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹*Ibid.*
- ³⁰Informants: Ejära, Mathios and Fanos.
- ³¹Informants: Samson, Mäkonnen, Yoséf, Isrom, Simon, Yäwoijak and Sainok.
- ³²*Ibid.*
- ³³*Ibid.*
- ³⁴Informants: Agilo, Ejära and Edisa'él.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*
- ³⁶Informants: Särawit, Féyisa, Girma, Mulugeta and Yoséf.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*
- ³⁸*Ibid.*
- ³⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰Informants: Täkä, Ñante, Simon, Ejära and Awkin.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*
- ⁴³Informants: Shamo, Mute and Mathios.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵Informants: Serawt, Yosef, Girma and Feyisa.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰Informants: Hawriat, Tialem, Simon Tuphatak, Yäwoijak and Méroy.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Informants: Ñamur, Shamo and Mathios,

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*; Archive: No Box no, un numbered: *Bejerond* Temteme Wolde. No file No. Mocha *wereda Gizat* governor to Illubabor Imperial province, *Meskerem*, 27, 19 41 E.C(see appendix F, P.5&9, see also appendix G,P. 18).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Informants: Yäwoijak, Ejera and Sainok.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

Glossary

List of Amharic Terms

Algaworash --Heir apparent or Crown prince.

Awrajas-- a provincial administration above district level consisting of a number of districts. It has been phased out towards the end of the derg regime.

Awrash—bequeathor or the one who gave inheritance to somebody.

Balabbat--a title given to local rulers of the southern provinces.

Balambaras--commander of an *Amba* or fortress. These could also be commander of the guards, artillery or cavalry of a traditional Ethiopian force basically a man entrusted with important command.

Bētā rest-- literary hereditary land right of somebody.

ČiqāŠum--appointed from among the *gebbars* for one year. It's main task was the "collection of taxes and the enforcing of orders from superior officials". The *Čiqāum* also deliberated on judicial matters arising from local disputes.

Dābtāra--a class in Ethiopian Orthodox Church associated with the priests and deacons in assisting the services of worship. As an order of singers, it corresponds in some ways to the choirs in other Churches.

Dāga--Highland

Dājazmać-- Commander or general of the gate. Equates with a count.

Dārg--a Geez word in its origin meaning committee.

Dhāgārabirr— Maria Theresa Thaler currency used for exchange before the introduction of paper money.

Fārāsula--a unit of measurement of 17 kilograms of grains or coffee. In this paper it is used for 20 kilograms of coffee or grains.

Fitawrari-- a military title meaning commander of the vanguard of a traditional Ethiopian armed force. Equates with a baron.

Gābāz--a priest who is the treasurer, holding authority over the Church property.

Gāži --governor.

Gāšo-- plant used for fermentation of hydromeal/mead/ or *tella*(local beer).

Grazmać-- a military title meaning commander of the left wing a traditional Ethiopian armed force.

Hamsaalāqa-- a military title meaning head of fifty; equivalent of sergeant.

Kābālā--village administration below the district.

Lām--cultivated land.

Lāmtāf-- semi-cultivated land.

Madārya-- land granted to government officials in lieu of salary.

Matoalāqa-- a military title meaning head of hundred; lieutenant.

Nāfṭāñña--the one who holds gun/gun man/ in the past the name given to soldiers from the north.

Qārazmac-- a military title given to the commander of the right wing of a traditional
Ethiopian armed force.

Qallad—measured land, a traditional method of land measurement by rope or leather thong.

Qolla --Hotland.

Ras—literary “head” one of the Powerful non-imperial commander of an army.

Rest -- land held and transmitted hereditarily.

Samon mārēt-- land granted to church.

Shambāle--a military title equates with captain.

Siso--one third (1/3rd) of a product sharing in tenancy arrangement.

Tāf--uncultivated land.

Wofzāras-- reproduced by birds in the forest naturally.

Woinadāga--temperate zone (mid-altitude).

Wārāda--a unit of administration below the province; equivalent of district.

Yāgondārā Sārawit-- the northern soldiers traditionally also called by this name in the past.

Yāmāngist mārēt--land owned by the government.

Zone--an administrative unit below the region and above the *woreda* level.

Zurbāgoné--an idiomatic expression used by the settler communities to call *tajan/borde/ local*
bear made of grains for it satisfies hunger for the one who drinks it.

List of terms for Ato Mājāngir (Mājāngir Language)

Angé—Elephant.

Are—knife.

Atin-- matured boy for marriage.

Baburé-- Babure or Anshote in some places of the Mājāngir village to refer cassava.

Badä-- lose of direction or road.

Badey-- one of the varieties of yam in Mäjängir community.

Bambi—sweet potato.

Bangi—rainy season; a time of shortage of food among the Mäjängir community.

Boleer— both the plant and the berry of castor bean and also the traditional cosmetics made from its berry.

Cookili—chickens.

Dane—hive

Danir—the name used by the Mäjängir to call their neighbor;the Shakko people.

Dape—a kind of traditional strap used to capture wild animals by the community.

Dhemedhek—the action of women throwing themselves on the ground while crying on the death of their relatives to express their sadness.

Do/dok—land

Dok babek—the land of our father's, fore father's.

Domon—leopard

Donjier—the name used by the Mäjängir to call the Kaffa and Shakka people.

Dubi—weevil or moth.

Emuy— in the past the Mäjängir used to plant this plant on grave yards; to prepare worship places and its leaves to cover their organs.

Etadh—honey.

Eyei—a plant used to make salt in traditional way by the Mäjängir people.

Galier—*Galier* or *Habesha* the name used by the Mäjängir to call light colored peoples mainly the Oroms,the Amharas,Tigre, Gurage etc.

Gamadh—pool labor/association.

Gaso—a kind of hoe.

Gedhi—cleared/prepared field for cultivation.

Gelteñ—a kind of climber used as strings for tying, making different baskets and trays.

Gidhey—stone

Godoy—a hut

Gombari—it is also called by other peoples as *holqa*; an opening of a tree/wood through which sometimes the burial of a *taphadh* takes place.

Gomoy—a kind of traditional trap used to be made as a flat stage loaded with stones and other materials to capture wild animals.

Goray—a rock used for makeup after grinded and mixed-up with *boleer*.

Gutaré—elders.

Gutarkan-- negotiation through elders.

Iyan—porcupine.

Jakay—a hair sticked traditionally by the makeup of *goray* rock.

Jamäi—machete or sometimes called *Gajera*.

Jang—forest land, hive site.

Kabbi—an axe.

Kadhikan—sugarcane.

Kangi—a kind of traditional trap used by the Mäjängir communities either to capture the necks or legs of animals.

Kanta—a kind of baskets used for transporting goods, grains, clays etc.

Kari—a hot drink made from the leaves (not beans) of coffee with addition of other things, such as chilly or hot pepper, garlic, herbs and salt.

Kawé—rifle.

Kawn- Yam.

Kedhefan—beads.

Kijo—soft and circle bread made from fresh maize, rapped by leaves of maize and boiled usually made upto the harvesting of maize.

Koldä—pumpkins.

Komoi/komoyir—clan/clans.

Kongé—a kind of basket used for collecting honey.

Kuo—the season of harvesting sorghum.

Kutur—bushpig.

Likkitti—climber string used to make different kinds of baskets, trays etc.

Makälä— maize.

Mato— dry season.

Mälti—climber strings used for snaring, construction of houses etc.

Mäntan—traditionally prepared cigarette for smoking.

Migun—bush duckier.

Miyadh—buffaloe.

Mojāng-- a Mājāngir child spoiled or cursed for his family committed sexual intercourse before it become three or four years.

Molon—cabbages.

Moyā—coffee.

Ñidhiñ— sorghum.

Ñumue—seasam.

Obodh—abduction.

Ogol/ogoli—mead/ hydro meal a traditional alcoholic drink used by the community.

Padhe—a kind of small tray made from interwoven and interspersed forest strings used for winnowing grains while grinding.

Palé—racked flat stage made under the roof for storing grains.

Pañi—mortar used for grinding grains.

Paré—a kind of big tray made from likitti used for drying and winnowing grains.

Petit—matured girl for marriage.

Phowey—bush buck.

Phrier—the name used by the Mājāngir to call the Anuak.

Purik—*purik* or *ragadh* to clear fields for cultivation by chopping undergrowth.

Saloy—a place of worship for traditional belief; where ritual practices were made.

šakoy—a kind of taro.

šapatan—porridge

šumi— the name given to village representatives by the Mājāngir after the 1940s.

Sopholkoyir—made from the hoofs of either bush buck or dukiers used to be worn by Mājāngir women in the past around their waist.

Suphoy—the clay for making pottery or the products made of clay materials.

Tajan—also called *borde* by the settler communities. A traditional alcoholic drink made of either maize or sorghum with addition of germinated seeds either of the two grains.

Takaw—burial or funeral ceremony.

Tangi— a kind of garment made from the barks of tree also called *tangi* or *Antiaris toxicara*.

Taphadh— *taphadh* (singular) or *tapha* (plural) clan leader usually comes from the Melaneer

clan and a traditional ritual expert among the Mäjängir.

Taphé—tobacco.

Tar—meat.

Tarman—a skin of either bushbuck or dukiers used as clothing by Mäjängir.

Tota—the season when maize ripe for consumption and harvesting.

Tikan—the removal of lower incisor teeth by the community.

Tokoñ—labor sharing.

Turtan—meditor girl between the would be married couples.

Utti—false banana/ *Enset ventricosum*/.

Wakuyé—a kind of taro gathered from forest for consumption.

Waldéy—a kind of spirit used to be worshipped once in a year among the community.

Waqoyo/waqoye—the name given to different spirits in the past; today it is used to refer God.

War—dog.

Wawan— also *bobon* means marriage.

Yāné—a kind of basket used for preserving and providing foods for the Mäjängir.

Yāyi—a raked bed made from wooden sticks interspersed together used for sleeping, sitting on and as stretcher.

Yuyé— *Trichilia dregeana*, a big tree the Mäjängir used the liquid of the berry of this tree as edible oil adding on cabbages; while other settler communities used the berry of this tree for greasing the earthen pan, for baking *injera* (*Ethiopian pan cake like traditional food*).

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I did not get archival materials, which states about the Majangir in the study area. But I found some archives from personal possession of *Ato Amare Fantaw* in Mizan town. I have attached some of these archives selectively in the appendix.

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VI. List of Informants

No	Name	Age	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remark
1	Abraham Abate (<i>Ato</i>)	52	Goshiné kebele	02/ 01/2012 25/01/2012	He is a peasant, who belongs to the Gidhiér clan. He is the son of Abate Fägälä; Mäjängir <i>balabat</i> /chief. He has a good memory of the relation between the Mäjängir and the central government after the 1950s.
2	Addisu Impule (<i>Ato</i>)	51	Däpi Kebele		He is a Mäjängir peasant. He has a good memory of their traditions.
3	Agilo Lawkee (<i>Ato</i>)	69	Gäläša Kebele	31/12/2012	He is form the Melaneer clan and peasant. He knows more about the traditional way of life and settlement.
4	Awkin Lemtekan (<i>Ato</i>)	62	Čämi Kebele	26/12/2012	He is a farmer from the Šäwiér clan. He has knowledge of the past and the relationship between the Mäjängir and other ethnic groups. He had also knowledge about marriage and burial ceremony of Mäjängir.
5	Dingätu Dästa (<i>Ato</i>)	78	Mätti town 01 Kebele	01/01/2012	He is an Amhara. He was born at Gore and came to Yäkki after he was hired as an elementary school

					teacher in 1944 E.C. and remained there. He has the knowledge of näftäñña-gebbar relation in Gore and Yäkki. He related also about the slave trade and bartering. He calls the näftäññas as “yägondäre Särwit” and his grand father Qañazmac Gebre Mariam was the member of these soldiers at Gore.
6	Edisa’el Wari (<i>Ato</i>)	40	Gäläša Kebele	30/12/2011	He is from Baya <i>kebele</i> I made an interview with him at Gäläša while visiting his families there. He is from the Keshimier clan. He knows very well the difference between today's marriage and the past; the relation between his community and the Añuak.
7	Ejära Dhare (<i>W/ro</i>)	61	Čämi kebele	19/12/2011	She is a respected old woman in her village. She has good account of the culture of the community like marriage, burial, drinking, foods, dressing and traditional ritual practices.
8	Fanos Péru(<i>Ato</i>)	60	Gäläša kebele	30/12/2011	He is from the Phongir clan. A peasant. Who has good memory of former traditional marriage and burial ceremony.
9	Fäyisa Yobi(<i>Ato</i>)	90	Addis Birhan		

			(Goji) Kebele	24/01/2012	He is a peasant who belongs to the Šašier clan. He offered a good description of the land tenure system, the communities' ritual practices and about their settlement.
10	Girma Tamrasha(<i>Ato</i>)	65	Addis Birhan (Goji) Kebele	21/01/2012	He is from the Melaneer clan. He is a peasant. He has a clear memory of the past.
11	Hawariat Banjän (<i>Ato</i>)	63	Gošine Kebele	02/01/2012	He belongs to the Gedhér clan and a peasant. He has a good account of the past drinking and its causes of conflict; marriage and funeral Ceremonies.
12	Isrom Bananas (<i>Ato</i>)	55	Gäläsha	30/12/2011	He belongs to the Gongéir clan. In this regime he had served in different administrative positions but now he is a peasant. He has a good memory of the past; the relation with their tapha, the relation with the Anuaks and others. He is moved to his current settlement with his father while he was kid for security problem because of conflicts among the

					community.
13	Jänure Jikony(<i>Ato</i>)	55	Gäläša	31/12/2012	He belongs to the Šäwyer clan. He had served in the administrative position of Yekkina Godere during the derg and also served in Godere district in the EPRDF but now he is a peasant. He has a good memory of the past.
14	Mathios Fidé (<i>Ato</i>)	55	Addis Birhan (Goji)	17/01/2012	He is from a Melaneer clan and one of the son of known <i>taphdh</i> ; Fide. He moved from Fidé to his present settlement with his mother. He has a memory of the traditional ritual practices and has general knowledge of the past.
15	Mäkonja Dänäkä(<i>Ato</i>)	48	Däpi	25/01/2012	He is a peasant. He knows the tradition of the community very well.
16	Mäkonnen Mäbrate(<i>Ato</i>)	40	Addis Birhan (Goji)	17/01/2012	He is a peasant belongs to Kabulér clan. He has the general knowledge of the community what he is gained from hear say.
17	Méroy Burbay(<i>Ato</i>)	68	Sälam Ber (Kuki)	12/01/2012	He is from the Bajér clan and a peasant. He has the memory of the past about their community.

18	Mulugeta Burbay(<i>Ato</i>)	73	Addsis Birhan(Goji)	21/01/2012	He belongs to Bajér clan and he is a peasant.
19	Muté Engliz(<i>Ato</i>)	65	Addis Birhan (Goji)	17/01/2012	He is a peasant belongs Gariér clan. He knows about their previous settlement; the relation with other ethnic group.
20	Ñamur Bédin(<i>Ato</i>)	56	Gošine Kebele	02/01/2012	He is a peasant belongs to the Gidhiér clan. He has a memory of the communities' situation after the 1940s.
21	Ñañte Boññe(<i>Ato</i>)	55	Sälam Ber (Kuki) Kebele	12/01/2012	He is a Mäjängir peasant. He has a good knowledge of traditional economic activities and culture.
22	Sainok Ranshaw(<i>Ato</i>)	65	Čämi	26/01/2012	He is a Mäjängir peasant. He has the general memory of the past.
23	Samson Koñan(<i>Ato</i>)	62	Gäläša	30/11/2012	He is a peasant Mäjängir belongs to a Bajér clan. He has a good memory of the past particularly with protestant Christianity to their area. He was one of the

					students, who attended the school of missionary at Godäre.
24	Särawit Gamé(<i>Ato</i>)	63	Addis Birhan (Goji)	24/01/2012	He is a farmer belongs to the Bobién clan. He knows about the Italian occupation and the land tenure system.
25	Shamo Balambaras(<i>Ato</i>)	68	Addis Birhan (Goji)	17/01/2012	He is a peasant from melaneer clan. He has the general memory of the communities history and culture; about the settlement of the Mäjängir, the conquest of the area, the Italian occupation, and after Italian occupation.
26	Sharäw Shanta(<i>Ato</i>)	98	Mätti town 01 kebele	21/12/2011	He is a Shakko. His grandfather together with his father taken as a slave from Yäkki by the forces of Ras Tässäma Nadaw. Later his father was taken by Ras Tässäma as a slave. So he (sharäw) was born in Addis Ababa and later he came back with his father when he was child. His father came back as a soldier with the neftegna's. This man has an excellent memory of the past about the area; during the conquest and incorporation, the Italian occupation and after the Italian occupation and the land tenure system. He was the representative of the land of the wife of the crown prince. He is

					fluent speaker of the Shakko, Mäjängir, Oromo and Amhara Language.
27	Simon Tuphatak(<i>Ato</i>)	72	Kumi	05/01/2012	He is a peasant at Kumi belongs to Melaneer clan. He has general knowledge about the communities in the past.
28	Simon Yäwoijak (<i>Ato</i>)	62	Čami	26/12/2011	He is a peasant and adopted the culture of the Mäjängir among their village and claims himself Mäjängir. But he was shako in origin. He has the knowledge of the relation between the two ethnic groups and the culture and traditions.
29	Tamiru Woldämariam (<i>Ato</i>)	62	Téppi Town	29/01/2012	He is an Oromo born at Téppi town. He was a graduate of diploma in educational administration. He was served in Illubabor täklay gezat education Minister during the imperial regime and he was an administrator of Yäkkina Godäre in the <i>derg</i> . Now he is a trader. He has a good memory of the history of the area.
30	Tangät Lawke (<i>Ato</i>)	75	Gäläša	31/12/2011	He is a peasant and belongs to the Melaneer clan. He has a good memory of their past.
31	Täkä Gänjábär (<i>Ato</i>)	63	Sälam Ber	12/01/2012	He is a peasant Mäjängir and has

			(Kuki)		the memory of the past about their communities.
32	Tialäm Banjän (<i>Ato</i>)	53	Gošiné	03/01/2012	He is from the Gariér clan and he is a peasant. He has a good knowledge about the past.
33	Tobél Kondé (<i>Ato</i>)	59	Kumi	05/01/2012	He is a peasant from the Melaneer clan. He has a good memory of the past and traditional ritual practices.
34	Wozätän Adrman (<i>Ato</i>)	78	Gäläša	30/11/2011	He is a peasant from the Melaneer clan has the memory of their past; settlement, culture, traditional activities.
35	Yewoija Kaibab (<i>Ato</i>)	75	Čämi	19/12/2011	He is a peasant and Shakko but claims Mäjängir. He has a good Memory of the past culture, traditional economic activities.
36	Yishak Däbärkan(<i>Ato</i>)	51	Gošine	03/01/2012	He is a peasant from Ghidhiér clan. Has good memory of the past.
37	Yoséf Tashu (<i>Ato</i>)	55	Addis Birhan	20/01/2012	He is a farmer from the Kabulér clan. He has a good memory of the past.