



Inter-Ethnic Relations in Jimma Zone, Southwest Ethiopia, with Special Emphasis on Sokoru, Tiroo-Afata and Dedo Districts: 1900s-2007

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Abstract

A careful investigation has been made on the pattern of the 20th century inter-ethnic relation in Jimma zone of the Oromia region focusing mainly on three of the districts: Sokoru, Tiroo Afataa and Dedo. The result proved that the inter-ethnic relation of the period under study was dominated largely by the harmonious relationship between Oromos of the region and basically those Omotic neighbors of Yam, Dawro, Konta and Kafa. The inter-ethnic relation with people of Yam dominated the two districts of Sokoru and Tiroo Afaata and the good attitude of particularly the king, Aba Jifar II, towards the Yam people constituted the bedrock of this peaceful interaction and integration with the Mecha Oromo of the region. The inter-ethnic relation with people of Dawro, Konta and Kafa, on the other hand, dominated the district of Dedo, and the fruit of the cash crop transaction of the region attracted a large number of these people to the study area. In both of the three districts, the inter-ethnic relations resulted in the assimilation of the Omotic neighboring communities into the Cushitic culture of Oromo of the study area making the Omotic communities bilingual in their languages and practitioner of mainly the doctrine of Islam in their religion.

Keywords: Inter-Ethnic; Peaceful; Relation; Assimilation; Interaction; Integration

Introduction

1. General Background and Statement of the Problem

Karl Popper (2002: 547) lucidly argues that political power success has been abusively elevated into popular mankind history given that what really happened within the realm of human lives, i.e. hopes, achievements, joys, sufferings, sorrows and deaths have been hardly ever touched. Popper further elucidates that power has been made the core since first power affects all individuals; second men are inclined to worship power; third those in power wanted to be worshipped and could enforce their wishes. To the worse of this idea, in the case of Ethiopia, most of the studies were obsessed with state institutions and government edifices until recently. Here, chroniclers and even some scholars (if not all), both

nationals and expatriates, were essentially concerned with chronological records of heroic narratives and deeds of great men like kings in struggle with rivals rather than broader issues on aspects of lives of ordinary mass. Thus, the overwhelming majority in Ethiopian Empire were only peripheral in historical studies. Concerning inter-ethnic relations which can exactly fit into social history, much of the sources at disposal are fragmented and misinterpreted.

In due course of looking for the data pertinent to the foregoing theme, oral information was heard from elders pertaining to revealing the complex pattern of mutual cultural influences that are by far superseding the ones that were supposed to be undertaken. Consequently, the researchers were convinced that the subject matter was not rendered the attention deserved since there was no historical study that dealt with spectacularly thrilling coalitions. Thus, as most of the sources so far produced on the subject were limited in time and space being fixated with writing on the conflicts, conducting a thorough investigation into the topic that has yet to be unearthed and filling the gaps became expedient.

Against such backdrops, this study has provided a departure in approach by incorporating the interconnectedness at the social level from historical perspectives. In doing so, it gives a comprehensive account of the region unraveling all the miscellaneous features which are obscured by the emphasis given to the wars. By selecting those vital facets which deemed noteworthy for the subject under study, this work has been devoted to investigating people's past by treating multiple macroscopic and microscopic episodes which affected the ethnic relations even within the same period rather than solely looking into their relations over the time. It is to undertake meticulously inquiry into a genesis of corollary of interaction, to use John Tosh's word, "taking the story back to its beginning is a useful corrective to the dangers of foreshortened narratives" so that we can decipher the past in its proper context and we can locate how the present situations have come about. The research endeavored to make nuanced wide array dealing on the boundaries of relations across various socio-political, economic and cultural aspects. Since it was written from grass root vantage point rather than hasty generalization or untidy abstractions from the center perspective, this research came up with new facts and hopefully takes a step towards the holistic history on this vast topic. The result can serve academicians and centers of African studies in general and Ethiopian study in particular as source material to make further research about the socio-economic and political life of the peoples under study.

This research had, therefore, the following baseline questions:

- How was the discourse of the inter-ethnic relations in Jimma Zone and what were the major trajectories that did affect the dynamism this inter-ethnic relation?
- How the indigenous principles of integration did play a role in sustaining inter-ethnic solidarity in Jimma zone for a long period of time?
- How policies of the different regimes did influence the inter-ethnic relations in the zone?

1.1. Research Objectives

The general objective of this research was to reconstruct one of the least studied themes in Jimma Zone: inter-ethnic relations and this was to be achieved through the following specific objectives:

- elucidating effects of population movements and expansions on ethnic relations;
- displaying how customary mechanisms contributed to harmonious coexistence;
- explaining the roles of trade and trade routes in enhancing ethnic interdependence of the area;
- closely probing effects of policies of various regimes on ethnic relations;
- explicating the current implications of the long-term interactions.

2. Theoretical Framework of Departure and Literature Review

Primordialist school of thought describes ethnicity as a group's natural self-ascription or by others to belong to a certain ethnic group on the basis of common ties such as kinship, language, culture, customs and sometimes religion. It presumed that ethnic community shares empirically verifiable similarities among themselves and differences with others. This perspective adopts an ethnocentric view of history of each community, for instance, as the community without collective interaction with other neighboring ethnic communities (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996). It is criticized for presenting a static view, lacking explanatory power. It leads thinking towards stagnant categories existing independently from any social processes. However, interactions among communities' members strongly cut across ties in socio-religious rituals, economic exchange, marriage, lifestyle and so forth. That is to mean that communities have similarities and differences, as they are living in an equally intermixed social environment where interests of communities need to be debated and ultimately socially resolved.

Conversely, the advocates of constructivist approach attribute the concept as an instrument of groups' instigation or mobilization for political and economic purposes. This paradigm, which is the recreation of ethnic boundary maintenance, assumes that past ethnic boundaries might be modified or replaced to meet the pace of social processes. Hobsbawm (1990) notes time-dimension in the maintenance of ethnicity that is not linear but is experienced in the legitimating of every day social interaction. Though ethnicity remains imprecise and fluid in processes of ethnicization, de-ethnicization and re-ethnicization as members move from one social situation to another. Constructionism has the potential power to explain inter-ethnic realities in relation to current burning global issues. It can significantly explicate dynamics of historical phenomena for plausible theorizing on ethnicity in the context of pluralistic communities. Similarly, ethnicity is not a fixed condition that equally unequivocally explains the construction of ethnicity amidst multiple, sometime conflicting, versions of culture and divergent life styles. However, constructivism is criticized for it reduces ethnic variable to an elite self-seeking entrepreneurial project.

Most of the earlier historical sources on southwest Ethiopia refer to warlike events which appear to be overrepresented in historiography since those martial relations between the Christian and Muslim opponents were given more exaltation by scholars and to leave inter-ethnic relations to cultural anthropologists who are more or less interested in history. Specifically, the chroniclers (both Muslims and Christians) give focus on the above issue than the long periods of peaceful negotiations, mutual cultural influences and trading activities. Even they interpreted the interstate conflict chiefly from the vantage point of religion which was brought to the limelight as can be discerned from their works. Counterfactual might help us here to instruct those who might argue that religion was the main cause of the war. What would have happened was that the region run from Gibe to Gojab and Dhidhheessaa had been fertile and rich in items of trade that reasonably made economy the major factor or moving spirit behind the conflict.

Ulrich Braukamper (2004) and Trimmingham (1952) are concerned with the study of Islamic states of southern Ethiopia between the 13th and 16th centuries, and the introduction and spread of Islam in Ethiopia respectively are some contributions to the historical reconstruction of this area. Though their treatment on Islam is really remarkable, their works do not offer a detailed account on courses of the inter-ethnic relations among various ethnic groups who had maintained peaceful relations and lived harmoniously over a long period of time apart from the conflicts that sometimes occurred. Particularly Ulrich Braukamper conducted a thorough anthropological investigation on Islamic history and culture in southern Ethiopia. He must be thanked not only for the study of Islam but also for the closer investigation of different ethnic groups which constituted different sultanates. His discussion on Islamization process is fascinating albeit the data he collected did not allow him to make an exhaustive discussion on them.

As a whole, the works of various scholars on inter-ethnic relations in Jimma Zone do not render sober treatment, and lack depth and breadth. However, this is not to dismiss the remarkable works so far

produced by some scholars. Their general backgrounds are praiseworthy, commendable and insightful. The available sources consulted serve as stepping stone to delve and look more into lines of relation. Some aspects of ethnic relations can be gleaned from their debates.

3. Study Methods

This study was based primarily on what John L. Gaddis called structure or certain residues that survive into present from which we can reconstruct processes inaccessible to us. However, it was principally relied upon oral sources, which are indispensable in the reconstruction of the history of societies where written documents are distorted and scarce or non-existent at all. Accordingly, guiding interview questions were prepared and in-depth interview was held with informants from different ethnic groups living in various districts chiefly Sokorruu, Tiroo Afataa and Dedoo. Likewise, focused group discussions were made. Oral data was catalogued into coded data archive.

To minimize the usual problems of oral sources, measures including careful informants' selection, conducting individual and group interviews at different times, cautiously taking detailed notes in fieldwork by using recording materials and interpreting oral data by making cross reference with written documents and vice versa were taken. The procedure involved following up leads in files to reformulate questions for interview and getting ideas about what to look for in documents from interviews. Given the numerous limitations of oral sources which are laden with some kinds of bafflings and overlapping tendencies as they can be affected by informants' attitude and memory, they were used in stringently controlled manner by means of internal and external source criticisms as well as cross-checking them with other oral information or other available primary and secondary sources. Personal experiences and observations of various sceneries and events were also extensively employed to supplement argaa-dhageettii (oral information).

To substantiate empirical data obtained from oral source, counter check was also made with the existing scanty written documents from private collections of prominent figures in the society as well as various offices and institutions. As the quality of written sources so far we came across was somewhat uneven, sifting was crucial.

In analysis, qualitative method was largely used, but not totally neglecting quantitative data especially for demographic data and statistical enumerations. Both descriptive and retrospective temporal narrative techniques developed by multi-disciplinary works, were utilized.

4. Results and Discussions

The region's Oromo societal organization was based on the centrality of kinship. In this relation, the smallest unit, nuclear family (*maatii*) developed into extended family (*warraa*) that in turn developed into closest kinsmen (*qaccee*) and then to clan (*gosaa*) with a wide network ties. The agnatic exogamous patrilineal kin eponyms were known as *sanyii* that primarily means seed, but could be interpreted as type, kind, genus, people, race, nation, clan, sib etc. The discrete sibs had recognized liaison through fiction of common ancestry. As to Alexander Bullatovich (1897: 99), all the land from Entoto westward up to Baaroo River and from Abbäy southward up to Kafa mountains was settled by Tuulamaa (mostly to the east of the source of Awash River) and Maccaa (to the west of it), which are major branches of the Oromo. Thus, great majority of the inhabitants of the area under study are the Maccaa branch of the Oromo.

Chart I: The Genealogy of Maccaa

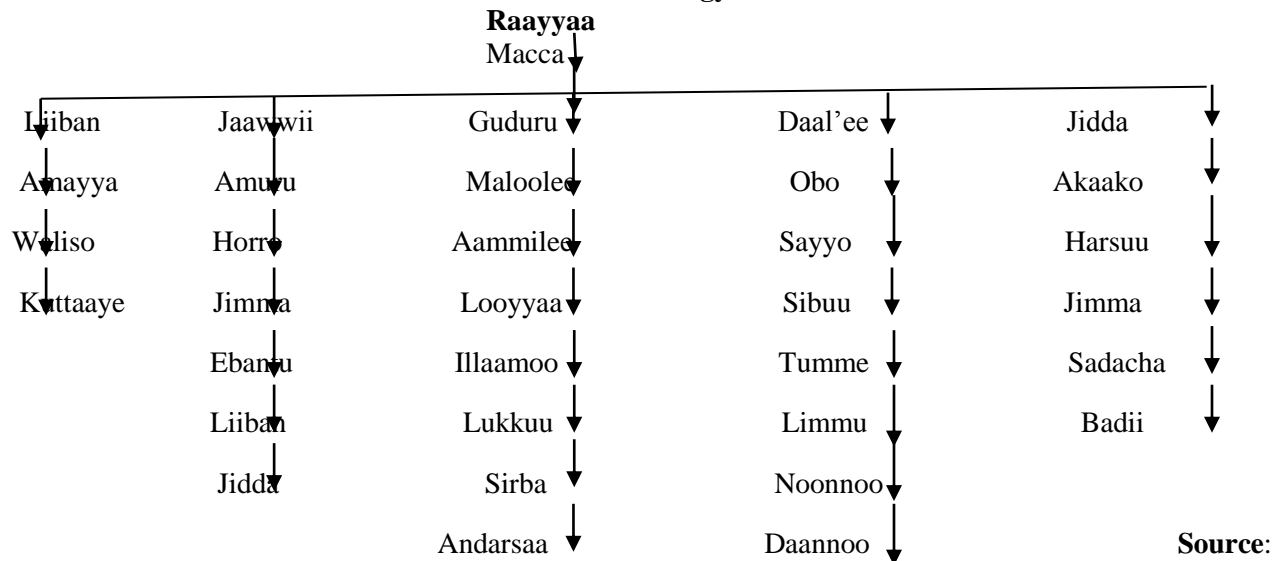
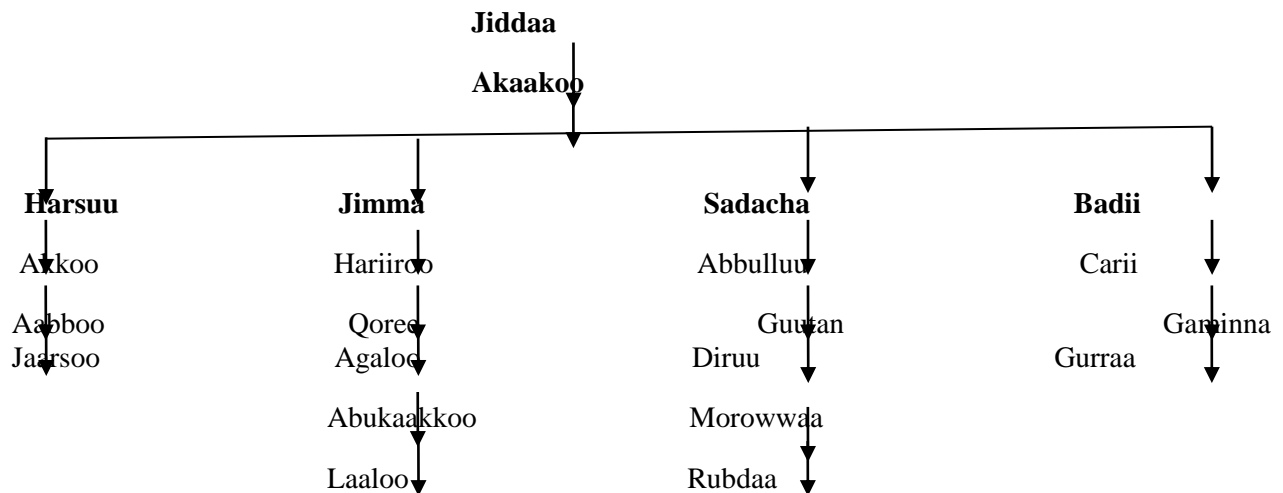


Chart II: The genealogy of the Maccaa sub-branches of the Study Area



Source: Biiroo Aadaafi Turizimii Oromiyaa, p. 156.

However, extended genealogies were less emphasized and the people living in the same area might interact irrespective of blood relationship. A family was free to move and settle in communities with members of other descent groups. Large groupings—perhaps forty to sixty homesteads more or less completed the local community that composed of people from various fluid groupings and was not necessarily congruent with or mirror to the formally demarcated boundaries. This structure remains basically unchanged as social institutions have activities extended to wider public socio-economic interests (Herbert S. Lewis, 2001:93-113).

Moreover, through extensive intermarriage and other institutions, the Oromo coalesced with many non-Oromo peoples. The Oromo ventured into vacated lands mostly without driving, but assimilating people sparsely settled in and around these lands as members of their own clan with all the

rights to share equally in the benefit of any achievement based on fraternity without any distinction. This was made possible by the fact that the Oromo were well equipped with genius flexible universalistic inclusionist qualities and seem to have manifested unique characteristics of adaptability with no slavery and servitude (Mohammed Hassen, 1994: 20-23)

One of the important institutions that facilitated Oromo adjustment to new conditions has been *guddifachaa*, traditional procedure by which a sterile foster parent has adopted a child and looked upon him/her as a real son/daughter and he/she enjoyed all rights of a true son/daughter. Even if foster parents got offspring of their own after they had adopted, the first remained *angafaa* (the eldest progeny) with all the rights and privileges, and this practice still exists. (Mohammed Hassen, 1994: 20-23)

The other has been *Moggaasaa (gosoomsuu)* or amalgamation of non-Oromo clan into Oromo. Amalgamating clan chief with other representatives undertook *kakaa* (unbreakable oath) with the amalgamated ones. The central figure, *Abbaa Gadaa*, slaughtered sacrificial animal mostly *korma qalaa* (slaying bull) dipping knife (signified readiness of clans to fight for reciprocal cause) in blood (symbolizing brotherly unity) of the victim and planted in the assembly being touched by the new members before the whole public. Then the *Abbaa Gadaa* said a prayer being repeated in chorus by the adopted. The amalgamated groups were given a special gift known as *andhuura* (literally means umbilical cord) to symbolize strong affiliation. *Andhuuraa* was given by father to his son at birth and was the only property over which the son has full authority before the death of his father, and hence in this context, any property given to the adopted members was untouchable by others. The weak Oromo or non-Oromo groups gained both protection and material benefit because at the time of adoption, the clan contributed whatever was available for the support of new members. Thus, *moggaasaa* was inspired by political, military and economic considerations on both sides (Mohammed Hassen, 1994: 20-23)

The Oromo used the term *dhalatta* (he who is born) that does not have anything to do with real birth, but only describes the ideal type of new relationship that should exist. The Maccaa used the direct and simpler term *ilma gosaa* (the sons of the clan or confederacy of clans) for the adopted individuals or groups. Here, the concept of belongingness was extended to embrace not only the adoptee clan, but also the clan's confederacy and the new members counted their ancestors several generations back to the hypothetical founder of the adoptee clan confederacy. The Maccaa also used the more popular prestigious term, *yahabbataa* ("those who are mounted") to distinguish the brave *gabaroo* (the conquered) cavalry from the other ordinary *gabaroo*. Probably, it was with the support of the *yahabbataa*, who swelled the ranks of their cavalry that the Maccaa won victories against numerous rebellious enemies (Mohammed Hassen, 1994: 63-65)

Yet, even though the Oromo were influential actors, they not only assimilated peoples whom they found on their way, but were also forced to make considerable concessions to their clients (*gabaroo*) and inherited those peoples' cultures. Since Oromo settled areas were contagious with other peoples or lived interspersed with other ethnic groups, they were sharing multifarious aspects with other ethnic groups continuously and constantly that have continued into our period. Many ethnic groups have undergone a process of integration and these resulted in ethnic change and continuity. Regular and random interactions between the Omotic communities and the Oromo had a profound impact on the subsequent socio-political history of the region (Oral Informants: Ambawu Bekele, Habte Banta, Na'im A/Giddii, and Nasir Sheh-Jamal).

The Inaaryaa were among the main people who were by and large assimilated by the Oromo. When they could no longer withstand the pressure of the Oromo expansion, mainly some ruling elites dispersed and fled south of Gojab, but presumably the majority remained behind. Those clans whose names begin with the prefix Hinna or Inna like Hinnaaroo, Innaangiyaa, Innaannuu, Innakaroo, Innamaasaa, Innaraataa, Innayaadaa and Innooqilloo were remnants of the former inhabitants of the

Inaaryaa kingdom and still live in various districts, but have been culturally and linguistically absorbed en masse by the Oromo clans (Aman Seifedin, 2006: 9-10).

The Booshaa/Garoo were the other major segment of Goongaa people and it is said that the Oromo leader Baabboo Koyyee got Odaa Hullee around *Ona*/deserted house remnant of Gaaroo leader Budoo, but the Garoo graciously permitted the Oromo to use Odaa Hullee. Then, Babboo Koyyee appreciated the compassion of the Gaaroo and declared:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Hardhaa jalqabee</i> | <i>Starting from today</i> |
| <i>Garoofti Oromoon tokko</i> | <i>Garoo and Oromo are one</i> |
| <i>Walii luki</i> | <i>They are united</i> |
| <i>Gargar hin ba'an</i> | <i>They cannot be separated</i> |
| <i>Ilmaan tokko</i> | <i>They are brothers</i> |
| <i>Qaccee fi gosa tokko</i> | <i>They are one lineage and one clan</i> |

The subsequent leaders of Shanan Gibee (the Five Gibe states) i.e. Limmuu-Inaaryaa, Guumaa, Gommaa, Geeraa and chiefly Jimmaa settled important Oromo personalities in Gaaroo and also brought influential persons from Gaaroo to live in their own domains, thus largely uniting the two polities. The bulk of Gaaroo clans like Amaaraa, Boosaa, Busaasee, Daamotaa, Ogataa, Onochinoo etc. were incorporated into Oromo clans through the above mechanisms of adoption and augmented the number of the Oromo. They forgot their mother tongue and fully adopted Oromo language, though until two generations ago, some people could speak the Gaaroo language and even influenced the Oromo to speak it. When the Oromo of the Gibe region accepted Islam, these Gaaroo clans were also Islamized and further Oromized. Nowadays, the Garoo have not claimed separate identity, but have considered themselves as sub-branches of the Oromo (Oral Informants: A/Duraa A/Fiixaa, A/Fiixaa A/Dhibbaa, Ahmad A/Milkii and Gudar Kabbada).

In areas between the Gaaroo, Inaaryaa and Yam, there were peoples belonging to the same Omotic stock including Koonch and Shat. There were also people related to Shakkaa under their chief Sattam Bittim. All these peoples were in the same way steadily Oromized as amalgamation was accompanied by Oromization (Oral Informants: A/Fiixaa A/Waarii and Awwal A/Maccaa).

The Yammaa also made both violent and peaceful interaction with the Oromo. A large number of men and children who survived the war that was conducted between Jimmaa and Yam Kingdoms chiefly from 1840-1893 were driven to Jimmaa as captives and distributed to the dignitaries. The Yam are said to have lost more than two thirds of their former proper realm that was restricted to a small district situated between 7° 30' N and 8° 30' N and 41° 30' E and 41° 55' E, covering only about 500 acres/*gashas* or 20, 000 hectares of land on 1, 300-3, 500 masl. This lingering terrain was pushed to the rugged land surface full of mountain ranges strictly circumscribed by cliffs and deep gorges that posed ecological problems and led to migration of the Yam to the districts of Jimmaa Zone (Getachew Fule, 1985: 1-3, 49 & 54-58).

However, Oromo-Yam relations in time and space involved meandering reciprocal alliances. The Yam were integrated into the Oromo as Booranaa means innocent or honest Oromo and are said to have been blessed by A/Jifaar II (r. 1875-1932) since they nursed him at his old age when he was deserted even by his own dynastic clan, Diggoo (Informants: A/Maccaa A/Milkii, A/Sanbii A/Waajii, Kasu Habib, Khalifä A/Foggii, Mohammad A/Tamam and Tesfaye Mamo)

Intermarriage has been mostly established between the male Oromo and the Yam women, who actively participated in the indoor and outdoor activities, while the Yam men were not allowed and did not prefer to marry Jimmaa women that undertook genital mutilation. If a Yam man married circumcised

woman, he was punished ritually slaughtering ten oxen and jumping into fire hole equal to his height for purification, but divorce was not virtually enforced upon the couples. If Yam women were circumcised, it would be very difficult for them to get husbands, but they had right to marry from outside (Nigusu Adem, 2015: 23, 40 & 46).

Most peoples in adjacent areas like Sokkorruu and Xiroo Afataa have spoken both Afaan Oromo and Yamsa (Yam language). However, Afaan Oromo has been more commonly observed in day to day conversation. From the total population of Yam, around 20% could speak only Afaan Oromo and 60% have been bilingual while most Oromo could not speak Yamsa (Nigusu Adem, 2015: 8 & 44-45).

Table V: Some Similarities between Afaan Oromo and Yam languages

| S. No | Afan Oromo | Yamsa | Amharic | English |
|-------|------------|---------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Akkam | Akan | እንዴት ነው | Hi |
| 2. | Ashamaa | Ashamni | ጤ ና ይሥጥልኝ | How are you? |
| 3. | Ayyaana | Ayyana | ቅዱሥ ቀን | Holiday |
| 4. | Gambaala | Gamala | የቤት በር | Door gate |
| 5. | Ittoo | Eto | ማባያ | Wat (souse) |
| 6. | Mammaaksa | Mamaka | ምሳሌያዊ አነጋገር | Proverb |
| 7. | Mi'iraamaa | Mi'era | በደል/ጭቆና | Right violation |
| 8. | Nagaa | Naga | ሰላም | Peace |
| 9. | Oduu | Odu | ዜና/ወሬ | News |
| 10. | Qoosaa | Kosa | ቀልድ | Joke/comedy |

Source: Nigusu Adem, p.8.

Table VI: Similarities in the naming of seven days of the week

| S. No | Afan Oromo | Yamsa | Amharic | English |
|-------|------------|--------|---------|-----------|
| 1. | Qajeeloo | Kajelo | ሰኞ | Monday |
| 2. | Qarsaa | Karsa | ማክሰኞ | Tuesday |
| 3. | Arbii | Arbi | ሐረብ | Wednesday |
| 4. | Kamisa | Kamisa | ሐሙስ | Thursday |
| 5. | Jamaataa | Jimato | ዐርብ | Friday |
| 6. | Xinnaa | Tina | ቅዳሜ | Saturday |
| 7. | Guddaa | Guda | እሁድ | Sunday |

Source: Geatchew, p. 83.

The Yam also used conventional bodies that moved in ascending order from *miila-shanee-reejji-xogoo-kurree-jigaa* in managing social issues like that of Shanan Gibe. (*Ibid:* 29-32).

From 1870s up to now, the Yam incessantly moved from their homeland to various parts of Jimmaa Zone because of geographical proximity and the absence of difficult natural barriers between the two. In due course, the Oromo and the Yam were pulled together and fundamentally intermingled so that today it is very difficult to distinguish some of the Yam from the Oromo since they speak the same language (*Afaan Oromo*), profess the same religion, Islam/Christianity and have physical similarity. Consequently, although the Yam special district (with capital at Saajjaa) is within Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State in the current federal structure of Ethiopia, huge number of the

Yam are living in Jimmaa zone. Yet, currently, most of the Yam in the study area prefer to connect their identity with the Oromo. (*Ibid.*: 1-2, 8 & 44-45).

One of the many groups of people who crossed the natural frontier, Gojab River and moved at different times into the area were Omotic Dawro, Kontä and Walayta speakers, who have been interrelated linguistic groups. There had been strong ties between Gibe states and homelands of these communities as a result of long-distance trade. Many thousands of slaves that constituted at least one third of the entire population were brought mainly from the home regions of these people alongside the Kafa and Yam as well as Bench, Maji, Malo, Dokko etc from 1870s to the 1920s. After the abolition of slavery, the manumissioned ex-slaves continued to reside in the Gibe states, engaged mainly in domestic work. During the Italian period, many of them served as laborers in the road construction projects. Due to population pressure and limited opportunities in their respective areas, many young men sought to improve their welfare by operating in the study area in the post liberation period chiefly during the 1960s. Poor communication with markets made it impossible for them to be beneficiary in their regions and migration became a way-out of growing poverty. Indeed, they made up the majority of the labor force that played an immense part in the development of coffee plantations in the region. A good number of the current inhabitants of the area are descendants of these people (Yonas Seifu, 2002: 59-60).

The districts that have proximity to homelands of Dawro-Konta and Walayta like Dedoo, Manchoo, Oomoo-Beeyyam and others have been more settled by those people than other districts even though they settled almost in all districts. Though they attracted each other and increased their number, through time they were also merged with the Oromo even if their accent influenced *Afaan* Oromo and even Amharic. If the members of those ethnic groups were converted to Islam, they identified themselves and were treated as Oromo, but if they remained Christian, they identified themselves with their own ethnic group (Oral Informants: A/Maccaa A/Milkii, A/Sanbii A/Waajii, Khalifa A/Foggii, Mohammad A/Tamam and Rattä Immaa.)

The Hadiyyä, Kambaataa and Tambäro also crossed Oomoo River, penetrated through south eastern fringes and pushed into other parts of the area. Some of them used to mine iron from Daakkaanoo and were also engaged in activities like carpentry, but mostly they moved as pastoralist herders of cattle and created a closer marital link chiefly with respected Gaaroo clans like Boosaa. They used crisis times like transitions from Hailesellasiye to *Darg* and from the later to Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front for their rapid migration. They were also successful in convincing local officials to give them tax receipts and register them as residents (Oral Informants: A/Giddii A/Galaan, Näsir A/Duraa, Nazif Sheh-Jamäl; Nazif Shekadir).

Amongst the main suppliers of some valuable commodities in long distance trade who visited the markets of the Gibe Region from the nineteenth century onwards were the Guräge and the Silte. However, their number actually residing in the region indiscriminately engaging in any trade before the Italian invasion was insignificant compared to other groups. A substantial number of them, being pushed by dense population with limited fertility of their homeland, came to obtain cash through migratory wage labor in the early 1930s. During the Italian occupation, they were involved in Addis Ababa-Walqixxee-Jimmaa road construction, also participating in numerous forms of employment mainly domestic and manual daily works, and handicraft settling first in the current *saratagna* Safar of Jimma town. The largest influx took place at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s that led to strong integration of them especially the Muslim Silte with the Oromo through marriage. However, they well reinforced themselves through their self-help and saving associations namely *iddir* and *iqqub* respectively. There were more than 43 *Iddirs* in Jimmaa in 1973/4 including *Mahal-katamä*, *Sar-safar Wandmamachoch*, *Turatagnoch*, *Sabatbet* and *Jamäl Kahyriya*. *Sooddo Marradäjjä* was setup in 1945/46 with presidency of Jirruu Badhaasoo and Secretary Garasuu Guyyoo, but outgrew to *Biherawi Andinat* in 1968. All *Iddirs* contributed about 8, 000 birr for maintenance of Mÿäziyä 27 School in 1972.

It was also the Gurage black smith Bä'uto Kereta/Abbaa Bädädag, who initiated *Iqqub* in Jimmaa around 1950 (Yonas, 2002: 60-61 & 80-84).

Amharic speaking traders established residential quarters in *Mandaraa* according to their places of origin like *Mandara Waloo*, *Mandara Gojjam*, *Mandara Gondar* etc from about the 1830s. After the decline of *Mandaraa* in c. 1920s, most of them transferred their seat to Hirmaataa. Moreover, there were about 1, 500 personal fortune seeker mercenaries being paid regular salaries and acting both as palace guard men and bodyguards (*Zabagnä*) of King Abbaa Jifaar II. (Yonas, 2002: 57-58). On the other hand, the number of Abyssinian troops stationed in Limmuu, Guumaa, Gommaa and Geeraa altogether was above 50, 000 in late 19th century (Guluma, 1996. 53-61).

The biggest Amharic speakers came in the wake of centralization drive by *Ras Tafari* (later Emperor Haile Selassie) in the early 1930s. Governors, soldiers, clerical workers, priests, tax collectors, judges and other civil servants as well as their dependents from central Ethiopia came as the flesh and sinew of the imperial control over the local people. Since the officials were mostly young males, they were forced to marry from the local people mostly by converting their couples to Christianity. Many of them joined the resistance movement since the anti-Amhara disposition of both the Italians and the local ruling families made the place inhospitable for the group during the Italian period (Yonas, pp. 58-59).

A major surge in settlers and resettlers of northerners in general and Amharic speakers in particular primarily from Eastern Gojjam and Southern Gonder (Baggemidr) came in search of better income, but to work in various capacities in the post-1941, chiefly 1950s and 1960s. This was with the improvement of transport and communication between Jimmaa, its surroundings and the rest of the country. Seasonal laborers also migrated to the area during harvesting season (October-December) to return back with startup capital or permanently settle as share croppers or purchasing and developing land with government incentive freeing from tax for certain period. These appear to have had a higher economic entrepreneurship than the previous ones (Yonas, 2002: 58-59).

The Amhara and Oromo from Abbichuu, Ada'aa Bargaa, Dabra Birhan, Insaaroo, Minjar, Shankora, Qimbibiit and other districts of Shawa were also pushed from their homelands by the landlords to settle in different parts of the study area in search of extra land. The majority of these transplanted farmers were also integrated into the local Oromo except for the minority who insisted on their distinct Amhärä-Christian culture. There were also more than 30, 000 migrant coffee pickers in the area in response to the severe drought and subsequent famine of the early 1970s and mid-1980s. (Gebeyehu Temesgen, 2002: 33-34).

There were also other minor immigrants from Tigray and Eritrea to settle in Xiroo Dullacha, Qarsaa and Dedoo districts, (*Ibid*) as Amhara officials in the area including village chairpersons gave plots of land to people other than the local Oromo. (Keiichiro Matsumura, July 20-25, 2003:141-149).

Consequently, in the 1994 census, the Oromo accounted 81. 6% of the total population of the study area followed by Yam (5. 3%), Amhara (4.9%), Dawro (2. 9%), Kaficho (1. 8%) and others (3. 5%). Yet, in urban areas, Oromo accounted 44. 2% followed by Amhara (20. 1%), Gurage & Silte (12. 5%), Dawro (9.1%), Kaficho (5. 3%), Yam (4. 4%), Tigray (2%) and others (2.4 %). (Jimma Zone Office of Planning...1991 E.C: 11).

According to 2007 census, Oromo accounted 86% of the population of the area followed by Amhara (4.7 %), Yam (3. 2%), Dawro (1.7%), Kaficho (1. 2%) and others (3. 2 %). In Jimma town, Oromo accounted 47 % followed by Amhara (17%), Dawro (10%), Gurage (6%), Kaficho (5. 4%), Yam (5. 1%) and others (9.5%). (Central Stastical Authority/ CSA, 2007 *Census Results for Oromia Region: Volume I, Part I: 253-254 & 277-278*).

4. Conclusion

The twentieth century inter-ethnic relations in Jimma zone were dominated by the ethnic interaction and integration processes between Oromos of the region and mainly the Omotic communities of the surrounding area and these interactions were characterized by both peaceful and hostile relations. Those Oromo communities of the two districts of Sokoru and Tiroo Afaata had a closer inter-ethnic relation with people of Yam, Hadiya, Kambata and Gurage, and the interaction particularly with people of Yam was so prevalent and age-old in these two districts. The strong rivalry between the two kingdoms of Jimma and Yam since the early 19th century may roughly be taken as a benchmark for the relation of the two societies and though this relation was hostile at this early stage, it was to become peaceful when both of the two competing states were brought under Emperor Menilik II's administration and when the Yam began to nurse the ailing king of the state of Jimma, Aba Jifar II, towards the end of his life. The inter-ethnic relation in the district of Dedo was, on the other hand, largely dominated by the harmonious inter-ethnic interaction between Oromo of the region and Dawro, Konta and to some extent Kaffa communities of the surrounding area, and their relation was largely peaceful basing initially on the fruits of the long-distance trade. Later, the economic boom created by the large-scale coffee production and marketing in Jimma province replaced and assumed the bedrock of this inter-ethnic interaction between Oromos of the region and the aforementioned Omotic communities of the surrounding region. Consequently, a large number of people of Dawro, Konta and Kaffa used to flock to Jimma zone in search of labor works mainly in the huge coffee plantation farms of the area and this pulling economic factor was to hasten the ethnic intermingling process with the Mecha Oromo of the region. In both of the three districts, the inter-ethnic relations resulted in the assimilation of the Omotic neighboring communities into the Cushitic culture of Oromo of the study area through both *Mogassa* and *gudifecha* assimilation mechanisms of the hosting community. This was, therefore, to make the Omotic neighbors essentially bilingual in their languages and practitioner of the doctrine of Islam in their religion.

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III. List of oral informants

| S. No. | Name | Age | Place of Interview | Date of Interview |
|--------|--|-----|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Abbaa Duraa Abbaa Fiixaa (<i>Obbo</i>) | 74 | Aalle | 22/9/99 E.C. |
| 2. | A/Fiixaa A/Dhibbaa (<i>Obbo</i>) | 72 | Shoonee | 5/10/99 E. C. |
| 3. | A/Fiixaa A/Waarii (<i>Obbo</i>) | 95 | Diimtuu | 16/8/2009 E. C. |
| 4. | A/Giddii A/Galaan (<i>Obbo</i>) | 62 | Daakkaanoo | 11/3/2000 E.C. |
| 5. | A/Maccaa A/Milkii (<i>Obbo</i>) | 68 | Dedoo | 2/8/2009 E. C. |
| 6. | A/Sanbii A/Waajii (<i>Obbo</i>) | 76 | Dedoo | 2/8/2009 E. C. |
| 7. | Ahmad A/Milkii (<i>Obbo</i>) | 51 | Bonayyaa | 19/9/99 E.C. |
| 8. | Ambawu Bekele (<i>Ato</i>) | 55 | Diimtuu | 16/8/2009 E. C. |
| 9. | Awwal A/Maccaa (<i>Obbo</i>) | 40 | Waaqtolaa | 23/9/99 E.C. |
| 10. | Gudar Kabbada (<i>Ato</i>) | 40 | Bonayyaa | 19/9/99 E.C. |
| 11. | Habte Banta (<i>Ato</i>) | 32 | Diimtuu | 16/8/2009 E. C. |
| 12. | Kasu Habib (<i>Ato</i>) | 40 | Addis Ababa | 3/ 3/2000 E.C. |
| 13. | Khalifä A/Foggii | 55 | Dedoo | 2/8/2009 E. C. |
| 14. | Makonnin Irko (<i>Ato</i>) | 49 | Asandaaboo | 5/10/99 E.C. |
| 15. | Mohammad A/Tamam (<i>Obbo</i>) | 30 | Dedoo | 2/8/2009 E. C. |
| 16. | Na'im A/Giddii (<i>Obbo</i>) | 40 | Diimtuu | 16/8/2009 E. C. |
| 17. | Näsir A/Duraa (<i>Obbo</i>) | 38 | Daakkaanoo | 11/3/2000 E.C. |
| 18. | Nasir Sheh Jamal (<i>Obbo</i>) | 39 | Diimtuu | 16/8/2009 E. C. |
| 19. | Nazif Sheh-Jamäl (<i>Obbo</i>) | 45 | Daakkaanoo | 11/3/2000 E.C. |
| 20. | Nazif Shekadir (<i>Obbo</i>) | 32 | Naaddaa | 8/9/99 E.C. |
| 21. | Rattä Immaa (<i>Ato</i>) | 28 | Dedoo | 2/8/2009 E. C. |
| 22. | Tesfaye Mamo (<i>Ato</i>) | 55 | Jimmaa | 1/2/2009 E.C |

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