

Review

The new Gojjame rule and the Oromo resistance in Abbay Choman, North East Wallaga, Oromiya, Ethiopia, 1850s-1882

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This paper deals with the new administration system under Gojjame rules and the Oromo people resistance to them in Abbay Choman, South of Abbay River from 1850 to 1882. The year 1850's was a turning point in the history of the Oromo of Abbay Choman Oromo because it was a period when the system was transformed into a semi-monarchical administration. On the other hand, the year 1882 was the period when Horro Guduru in general and Abbay Choman in particular came under Ethiopian feudal rulers. This paper focused on reconstructing the political structure of Oromo of Abbay Choman from 1850 to 1882. The main objective of this paper is to show the indigenous administration system of the Oromo area before Gojjame invasion and emergence of new system of government with new chiefs, at the expense of the indigenous system under Gojjame rule. The paper also shows the local resistance against Gojjame army from 1870 to 1882. The paper comes up with the idea that the Gojjame invasion of the area resulted to the whole destruction of Oromo people indigenous practice. Since historical methodology requires extensive collection, closer investigation and analysis of the available primary and secondary sources, the paper seriously took those into account in treating the new Gojjame rule and the Oromo resistance in Abbay Choman, North East Wallaga, Oromiya, Ethiopia from 1850 to 1882. The study used and explored both primary and secondary sources. For the paper, both published and unpublished works of scholars of diverse background had been identified.

Key words: Abbay Choman, Oromo, New Gojjame, Gojjame rule, Oromo resistance.

INTRODUCTION

The Oromo are among the largest groups in Ethiopia (Feyera, 1999). Linguistically, they are categorized under East lowland Cushitic sub-family. The linguistic evidence studied by Bender shows that present Cushitic peoples of Ethiopia are direct descendants of ancient Cushites of North East Africa, and that they have moved or migrated

from North towards the South and South Eastern regions. This movement and distribution eventually resulted in the formation of four branches of Cushitic speakers. Afaan Oromo is classified under the eastern Cushitic languages (Herbert, 1966; Tesema, 2006; Bender 1976).

The original homeland of Oromo people from where

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they started their expansion was an issue that was not agreed among scholars. There are different views and ideas about the origin of the Oromo people (Alemayehu et al., 2006). However, the idea which states that Oromo came from outside was criticized and opposed by different scholars. Some scholars place the original homelands of the Oromo in Ethiopia (Mohamed, 2012; Christopher, 2012; Tesema 2006).

The Oromo began to move massively into the Christian, Muslim and other neighboring areas of the region since the first half of 16th century (Tesema, 1986; Dereje, 2000). Odaa Nabee served as a permanent base for Machaaa and Tuulama Oromo. Odaa Nabee, which served as a permanent base during the Harmufa Gadaa (1562 to 1570) was an important land mark in the expansion of Tuulama – Machaaa Oromo branch. It was after Odaa Nabee that the Tulamaa and Machaa separated and became independent groups (Mohamed, 1990; Alemayehu et al., 2006; Yilma, 1959).

The history of the Oromo of Horro Guduru has begun with their separation from the larger Machaa Oromo and departure from Tutee Bisil (Cherinet, 1988). Their first entry into the Horro Guduru was spearheaded by cavalry and infantry (lafoo) units armed with spears. The Machaa Oromo who left Tutee Bisil settled in Horro Guduru and established their own new Gadaa centre at a central area of Horro Guduru at Odaa Bulluq (Dereje, 2000).

Traditions collected by Oljira (1994) claim that the present settlers of Horro Guduru were the original nine clans, all of them were the descendants of Jawwi, namely, Horro, Guduru, Jimma, Amuru, Kiramu, Jidda, Limmu, Ebantu and Challiya (Oljira, 1994). Another tradition states that, the present settlers of Horro Guduru belong to two ancestors. One of them was Obo, whose descendants were Guduru, Challiya, Sibu Leqa, Haru and Ilu and the other was Jaawwii whose descendants were Horro, Jimma, Amuru, Kiramu, Jidda, Limmu and Ebantu (Oljira, 1994; Desalegn, 2010).

There were three traditions which tried to establish the methods in the distribution of land to various clans who settled in Horro Guduru. The first one was fire-setting tradition, second was Ox slaughtering and the 3rd was related to the *korma* (Bull). This tradition indicates that each sons of Jaawwii followed their Bull (Desalegn, 2010). Abbay Choman district is one from Horo Guduru zone which was occupied by the *Machaa* Oromo during their expansion. Abbay Choman district was inhabited by the Oromo group known as *Akaakoo*. *Akaakoo* had three children. These were *Gobayya*, *Ganjii* and *Daragoti*. From them *Gobayya* was the eldest son. *Daragootii* had three children: *Hamuma*, *Halu* and *Buyya*. *Gobaya* had five children's: *Ebilcho*, *Minto*, *Warqe*, *Kubi* and *Qiltu*. *Ganjii* had twelve children: *Qetala*, *Daragoti*, *Qarree*, *Maaruu*, *Buko*, *Abdaaroo*, *Kushe*, *Diino*, *Botii*, *Ganjii Haroo*, *Abole* and *Habu*.

The activities and life of each and every member of the Oromo are guided by *Gadaa*. It is the laws of the society, a system by which Oromo administer, defend their

territory, rights, maintain and guard their economy, and through which all their aspiration are fulfilled. Under it the power to administer the affairs of the nation and power to make laws belong to the people. This *Gadaa* system continued until the 1850's when the system was transformed into semi- monarchical administration. However, it was completely declined in 1870's with the arrival of the Gojjame rulers to the area with monarchical administration system (*Gadaa*, 1988; *Giday*, 2000; *Alesandro*, 1975).

Although the aforementioned researchers conducted a research on certain areas of Wallaga and Horro Guduru. No comprehensive history has been conducted on the Oromo of Abbay Choman in particular in their relation with Gojjame people. Therefore, this paper attempted to fill the gap by answering the following questions:

- (1) What was the nature of administration in the Oromo of the area before the coming of the new Gojjame?
- (2) What was the nature of administration in the Oromo of the area after the coming of Gojjame rule
- (3) What was the role of local people against Gojjame rule?

METHODOLOGY

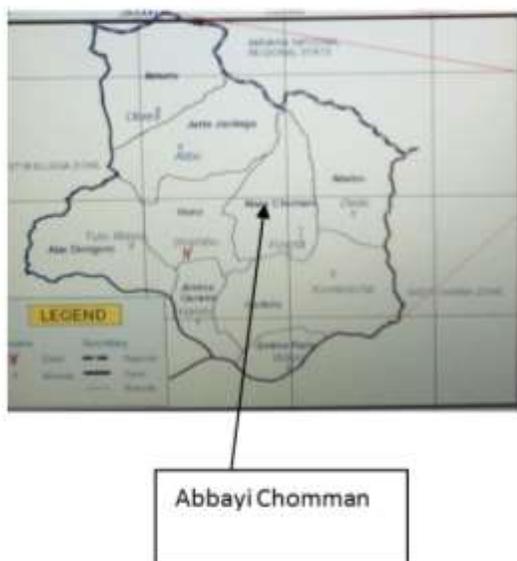
Description of the study area

Abbay Choman district shared boundaries with Hababo Guduru and Jardega Jarte district in the North, Horro district in the west and Hababo Guduru and Guduru in the east. The major rivers such as Nashe, Amarti and Fincha'a meet in the northern margin of the district. The major economic activity of the Abbay Choman is mixed farming system which is the cultivation of crops and rearing of animals since the time of their initial settlement. Besides trade, production of honey, wood working and iron works are also practiced in small scale. The total annual rainfall the district receives usually ranges between 1500 to 1900 mm. All parts of the district receives almost equal rain fall. The altitude of the district ranges between 244 ms and 1350 ms above sea level (*Gemechu*, 2009) (Figure 1). Since historical methodology requires extensive collection, closer investigation, and analysis of the available primary and secondary sources, the paper seriously took those into account in treating the political survey of the district. The study used and explored both primary and secondary sources. For the paper, both published and unpublished works of scholars of diverse background had been identified and utilized.

Indigenous administration of Abbay Choman Oromo under Gadaa System from 1850s-1870s

The activities and life of each and every member of the society are guided by *Gadaa*. It is the laws of the society,

Map of Abbay Choman in its Zonal setting



Map of Oromiyaa in its national setting

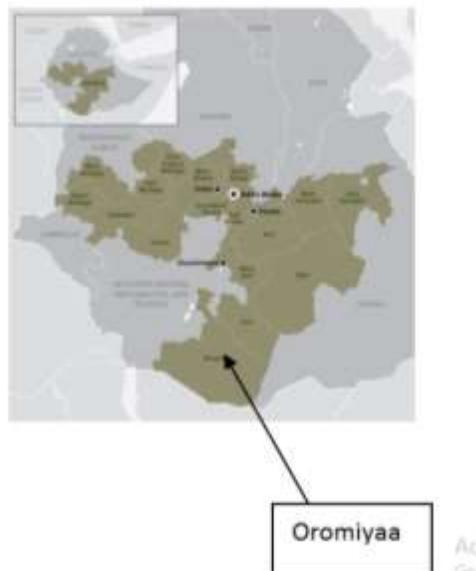


Figure 1. Map of Abbay Choman and Oromiyaa.
Source: Gemechu (2009).

a system by which Oromo administer, defend their territory, rights, maintain and guard their economy, and through which all their aspiration are fulfilled. Under it, the power to administer the affairs of the nation and power to make laws belong to the people. Every male member of the Oromo societies who are *Gadaa* grade (40 to 48 years of age) has full rights to elect and to be elected.

Luba or *Gadaa* grade is the most important class of the whole system when male between the above mentioned ages attain full status, and take up their position as the ruling *Gadaa* class. This *Gadaa* system continued until the 1850's when it was transformed into semi-monarchical administration (Alesandro, 1975). This multi-functional institution centre of Bulluq began to decline when Jaawwii clans beyond the Angar River appealed for separation. They requested the separation due to the distance that their area had from the centre Bulluq, convinced by the reason, the assembly blessed and allowed the separation which led to the establishment of new *Gadaa* centres (Desalegn, 2010; Cherinet, 1988).

Following the separation of the clans beyond the Anger River, the Guduru withdrew and formed their independent Odaa centre at Qobboo. The new centre was called Ejersa Qobboo, just south of Kombolcha town. In the same manner, Jimma left the political structure of Bulluq. Then Jimma established the new *Gadaa* centre called Ejersa yaa'ii Jimma. In the case of Akaakoo clan of Abbay Choman, the centre of *Gadaa* was established at Tullu Qafe. It was there at which *Gadaa* was carried on

by Abbaa Gadaa. The first Abba Gadaa of the clan was Naasaa Daadhii and his war leader (Abbaa Duulaa) was Mo'aa Beeraa. The second was Dajoo Gooroo. During this time, Abbaa Duulaa was Dabaloo Gannaa. The seat of Abbaa Gadaa was Birbirsaa Booruu. It was from this centre that Abbaa Gadaa drafted and passed the laws for the clan of Akaakoo. The Abbaa Gadaa formulated the following laws for the Akaakoo clan:

- (1) Seera safuu (laws against immoral action): This law is indicated for everyone to be ruled by Waaqaa and the individuals should respect their elders.
- (2) Seera dinagdee (economic law): This law was about how the people change their livelihood. This law was led by Abba Sa'a.
- (3) Seera hawaasaa (social law): This law indicate what people are supposed to do or not in the society.
- (4) Seera ittisaa (defensive law): This law includes how the people defend their territory from enemy. This law was supervised by Abbaa Duulaa. According to this law, a son should give service to the *Gadaa* and should pass through Raabaa (young boys enough to give military service). He should have Farda Raabaa (horse that will be able to give military service).

For some time after separation, each clan sent its representative to Bulluq and received the laws made there. The Shane of *Gadaa* went to Odaa Bulluq after separation to take the laws proclaimed and the one

drafted there. Even though they established their own Gadaa center later on, the law was drafted there for all. Ritual practices were also carried out there. All of the clans settled near or in a remote distance which has equal right to reach Bulluq from all directions.

The clans used to hold their assembly, celebrate *Buttaa* ceremony and elected *Gadaa* officials. The elected officials shared political responsibility and held limited power that was transmitted every eight years. The laws were formulated by the *Caffee* (assembly) every eight years under the new *Gadaa* officials which has guided them. Unless current situations of the region might have forced them to add more, the assembly regularly made five core canon laws. These are: *Seera nama ajjechaa* (laws against murder), *Seera hannaa* (laws against theft), *Seera sobduu* (laws against liars), *Seera sagaagalummaa* (laws against adultery) and *Seera kofa uummataa saaquu* (laws against treason).

After a long journey, the representatives promulgated the laws with great ceremony, locally known as *seera lallabuu*. Therefore this early separation was never aimed to change the system. Instead they formed a kind of federal system where all clans had used one supreme law made at *Bulluq*. Nevertheless, they allowed the clans to add some more laws based on local conditions and peculiarities. The separation and establishment of independent *Odaa*'s from *Odaa Bulluq* did not mark the end of republican system of government in the region. The *Akaakoo* clan of Abbay Choman Oromo who already established their own independent *Gadaa* centre had governed their people under the principles of the *Gadaa* system. Different clans seem to have had similar form of government. Although not for long, the eldest lineage from the clan continued to lead. Election was held every eight years as usual.

The Horro Guduru Oromo in general and Abbay Choman in Particular had lived with their traditional *Gadaa* system for a long period until the second half of the 19th century. Transformation of the system was late in Horro Guduru as compared with neighboring Leqas and Gibe Oromo. According to different scholars, the existence of trade, interaction with pre-Oromo settlers, change from pastoral way of life to sedentary farming. Christianity and Islam were considered as a factor for transformation. However the transformation of the system in the aforementioned areas of Oromo has not been influential in Horro Guduru. The impact of the pre-Oromo settlers that the Horro Guduru encountered in the region was insignificant. The existence of Islam locally called *Qalaatee*, established permanent settlements around market places of the region which did not seem to be a fundamental factor, because the number of *Qalaatee* settlers was insignificant in addition to their less ideological provision to the rulers. Thus, no clan chief of the region was converted to Islam. The other arguments, which state that the transformation of their mode of production as pastoralists to sedentary agriculture led to

the formation of monarchical institution in the region, which could be incorrect because they had already embarked on mixed farming economy during their early settlement in the area (Desalegn, 2010).

Therefore, internal dynamics such as changes in political structure and private land holding with its resources seem to be the basic factor for political transformation in the area. In their early history, cattle was a source of honor and prestige and for one to have lots of cattle's in display was important. Hence, land was a common property for the whole clan. With the transformation of land as a source of honour and prestige, each clan set out to fight each other's which aimed at incorporating other territory. The political transformation among the clans occurred while monarchical system of government among the neighboring states of Gojjam, Gibe, and Leqa Naqamte encouraged the local *Abbaa Duulaa*'s to regain similar status in their respective territories. The local *Abbaa Duulaa*'s received information about those chiefs through market centres.

Thus, the existing long distance trade route had contributed in facilitating the interactions among the people of different regions. Market centres in Abbay, which was attended by people from opposite sides, were the place where ideas, experiences and cultures were exchanged knowingly or unknowingly. Thus, besides its economic advantages, the information with regard to the wealth and power of Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam, Moroda Bakare of Leqa Naqamte and other Gibe chiefs was coming to Horro Guduru through trade. Information about an individual's absolute power over the whole matters of their region intoxicated the local *Abbaa Duulaa*'s to have similar status, which began to be exploited first by Guduru clan. Horro took second in the transformation process followed by others (Desalegn, 2010).

Herbert (1966) states that the powerful leaders who controlled land, market and trade with private armies caused political transformation among the *Machaaa* Oromo. Therefore, from the mid-19th century, the egalitarian socio-political organization of the *Gadaa* system was not so much influential as before and instead different political systems evolved among the Oromo clans of the area. Each clan had established a new hierarchical structure and a single person could appoint or dismiss officials. Although power emanated from a single individual which indicates aristocratic type of government, under the *Mootii* administration, criminals were punished in accordance with the *Gadaa* system. Thus, the republican form of government was not totally changed rather it was in the process and new structure with old laws of governance continued in Horro Guduru until the arrival of Gojjame into the region.

Although the opposition against the rule of the *Mootii* was elsewhere in the region, the arrival of the Gojjame had changed the attitude of the local people towards the *Mootii*'s. The local people had to choose one rule system

than aliens. Therefore, local people began to support the emerged *Mootii* against the Gojjame, realizing the formation of semi-monarchical system in the region only after the 1850's (Desalegn, 2010).

According to the oral tradition collected from the elders, all these laws of *Gadaa* system regarding different crime were declined later on. As the *Gadaa* system declined and the power of the *Abbaa Bokkuu* was taken over by the *Mootii* (kings) and later by the Gojjame conquerors, the use of *Kallacha* was diminished. The appeal for peace to the *Gadaa* officials *Abbaa Kallacha* was turned to the chiefs and later to the established court. Even though the tradition of making peace still exist under the established *mootii*'s (King), it was very rare and was more or less carried out when the killer relative was imprisoned or only after revenge was taken by victimized family.

New administration under Gojjame rule in Abbay Choman district in the 1870s

According to Dereje Hinaw, the earliest relation of *Machaa* Oromo with the Gojjame (Amhara peoples living in the north of Abay river) began since *Gadaa Roobale* (1570 to 1578) when an attempt was made to raid Gojjam. In the next *Gadaa Birmaji* (1578 to 1586), the *Machaa* registered great success in occupying vast areas in the north of Abbay. The relations which were mainly wars or conflict as well as peace full (trade) continued until the balance of power shifted in favor of the Gojjame in the second half of the 19th century. According to local informants, the expansion of Gojjam south of the Abay river had long distance traders. The pioneers into the area were in fact long distance traders and clergy men from Gojjam. The later approached the *Mootiis* and *Qoroos* of the area systematically to teach the notables the Amharic script, and for evangelization. In practice, both the long distance traders and clergy men served as spies for Adal Tesema of Gojjam and his feudal colonists. In the decade before the battle of Embabo, the Gojjame had already crossed the Abbayi and interfered in the internal struggles of Guduru and Horro, two neighboring Oromo states just below the Abbay River. However, as the inter-regional fighting was intensified among states of south of Abay river, the Gojjame appeared as arbitrators first in Guduru (Dereje, 2000). For example, *Dajjazmaach* Yimar, the Gojjame general managed to install his own puppets in power and through them succeeded in extending effective Gojjame political influence in a number of petty Oromo states, Jimma Rare, Ginda Barat etc. These states were reduced to the status of feudal dependencies of Gojjame and as effective political control and initiatively passed into the Gojjame army. The Oromo chiefs were Gojjamized that is, were created as *Qannazmaach* (Addis, 1975; Gadaa, 1988).

Following their success, the Gojjame encouraged the

emergence of new system of government with new chiefs, at the expense of the indigenous republican system. Since the Gojjame invasion of the area, loyalty became the best quality of leadership than ability, achievements or seniority in the clan. Local chiefs who resisted were gradually pushed out of the political space which was to reduce the influence and prestige of the former powerful chiefs. The already started system of one man rule by the local *Mootii* did not absolutely affect the tradition of the society and still the indigenous socio-culture continued except in political power. Therefore, the administration system which was run by the local *mootii*'s was by far better and supportive than the Gojjame rule that had impact over all aspects (Samuel, 1998).

The local chiefs who were retained in their position did not maintain the former title *mootii*. Instead they were given a new title called *balabbaats* which is the lowest hierarchical position of the Gojjame next to *Meslaanee* and *Abegaaz*. Other official titles (*Dajjaazmaach*, *Fitwaraarii*, *Qannaazmaach*) were provided based on loyalty of the governors. The Gojjame abolished the name and duties of local chiefs and local administrations which existed before their arrival. This marked the beginning of indirect Gojjame rule of the puppet *balabbaats* and *Meslaanees*. The new government established with the general frame work of collecting tribute, appointing and dismissing officials, assigned fixed number of soldiers to the peasants and forced the peasants to render labour services for these officials. Therefore, tribute payment was introduced for the first time to the region. The *Indaraasee* and the *Meslaanee* proposed the kind and amount of tribute to be collected from each *balabbaats*. Besides, the *Meslaanee* had the duty of fixing the number of soldiers for a given household. The already approved amount and kind of tributes were reported to the *balabbaats* who were responsible for its collection (Desalegn, 2010).

In general, the Gojjame brought hierarchical administrative structure to the region with them aim of reducing the local *Mootii*'s position being the first under the local government. These hierarchies were: Negus (Tekle Haymanot) followed by *Indaraasee* (Dajjazmach Darasu with his assistance *Fitwaraarii* Yimer), *Meslaanee* (at least one at each village), *Abegaaz*, *Balabbaats*, *Chiqashuum* (Oljira, 1994). The first target of Gojjame was destruction of the *Gadaa* institutions. Even though the political significance of *Gadaa* centres in the region began to decline by the local Oromo chiefs themselves, the institution was still influential in religious aspects. The power of the *Abbaa Bookuu* was taken over by the *Mootii* (kings) and later by the Gojjame conquerors, and the use of *Kallacha* was diminished. Systematic efforts were made by the Gojjame to destroy the institution. Thus, the Gojjame purposefully camped near the *Gadaa* centres seeking their gradual destruction.

Thus, as opposed to the earlier periods, the Gojjame started to stay and even to make other territories

tributaries. The arbitrators by giving titles of *Qannaazmaach* and *Giraazmaach* to the commanders in Guduru, they began to use their knowledge of the region to expand East, West and South. After controlling Guduru, the Gojjame forces and *Fitwaraarii* Yimar made constant campaigns against the *Mootii* (king) of Horro Abiishee to control the region from its base Embabo. Nevertheless, Gojjam expansion and domination did not pass unrestricted. Because of the protracted resistance, Abiishee was made, Gojjam expansion into Leqa was also blocked and even their influence in Horro was less until he was captured at *Kokor*. From Jimma Rare Qadida Wannabe attack, the Gojjame camp army was destroyed. However, Qadiidaa was captured in the second attempt and was made a puppet leader of his state and then after he participated in colonizing the Oromo by Gojjame.

Abiishee Garbaa's resistance against Gojjame army in 1870's

Abiishee Garbaa (the leader of Horro Guduru), who heard the coming of Gojjame to Guduru, marched there to control the trade routes and the road to block their entry into Abbay Choman. Because the Gojjame who crossed the Abay River controlled first Guduru and stayed there using it as a spring board to enter into other areas of Horro Guduru. He fought with the Gojjame at three battles in Guduru: battle of *Dhakaa Adii* (literary means white stone), *Dilaloo* and *Odaa Ganjii*. The three battles were concluded by the victory of Abiishee. After he got a victory at these battles, Abiishee said the following statements/ poems to the defeated side:

Oromo and Gloss
 Gojjee surreen qalqalaa
 The Gojjame whose trousers are as wide as a sack
 Sodaadheen gara gala
 I could not afraid and return back
 Fodooddoottin hirkise
 I benched them to the gorge
 Karaatti isheen hambise.
 I crippled them before their targets

In the year between 1872 to 1875, Yimar was only restricted to the area between Guduru and *Tulluu Booyyee* (strategic place for war). Rather than occupying other areas, he faced serious attack even in the area he invaded. Due to this, Tekle Haymanot added (appointed) another war general *Raas Darasu Abbaa Tebo* and ordered him to control the lands of *Machaa*.

However, Abiishee got victory over Gojjame forces led by *Fitwaraarii* Yimar and Darasu many times. Due to their defeat, the plan to invade *Machaa* land up to Gibe Enarya failed. When Darasu lost hope, he offered peace to Abiishee and wanted to capture him systematically. One of the measures he took was that he used modern weapons against Oromo people and recruited

collaborators from Oromo chiefs of the area. Through Darasu, Tekle Haymanot sent a gift for Abiishee. This gift was given to him by Qadida Wannabe the ruler of Jimma Rare. The Oromo chiefs of the area who competed among each other started to weaken the power of Abiishee and gave information to them.

Towards the last quarter of the 19th century, an alliance was formed between Jibat Busho of Guduru and Qadiida Wannabe of Jimma Rare. The two wanted to use their long commercial contact with Gojjam region and to help in eliminating their common enemy Abiishee. Jibat and Qadida who were under the rule of Abishe crossed over to Gojjam region, and allied with Adal Tasamma (ruler of Gojjam region). However, this agreement was an advantage for the Adal Tasamma of Gojjam than for the two rulers. Adal welcomed the two Oromo leaders and agreed to help them. He was also more interested with the agreement and saw it as an advantage to defeat Abishe that enable Gojjame army to seize the Oromo land of the area. When they went to Gojjam for agreement Adal Tasamma convinced them to arbitrate him with Abishe, because he was unable to defeat Abishe, he systematically tried his best to catch him. Therefore to achieve his objective, first he sent a gift for Abishe with *Dabtara* from Gojjam known as Walda Hanna. Walda Hanna was a *Dabtara* of Gojjame who worked with Darasu armies because they suspected Abiishee fought with devil/ evil power. This person worked with them to attack the evil power. However, their suspicion was not true because Abiishee who defeated them several times did not fight with evil power. All these measures were taken by Negus Tekle Haymanot due to the failure of Yimer to defeat Abiishee, to control available trade route and the fertile states of Horro Guduru.

The battle of Kokor

Kokor was the seat of Abiishee, which was located about 20 km from Doyyo. The centre of Kokor was a mountain known to be a strategic place for war. It was also a gate of trade at which tax was paid and through which the trade routes that passed to Amuru and Doyyo separated from each other. Raas Adal crossed Abbay river and camped at Kokor plain in Horro. Adal sent message to Abiishee through Jibaat Bushoo and Qadiidaa Wannabe promising to make him master of Gidda and Limmu areas besides Horro, and to provide him with fire arms for his own use. Abiishee heard that Gojjame has arrived, and they stationed at Kokor.

Dabaloo Gannaa with his sons and Dagaa Horro (both were *Abbaa Dulaa's* of Abiishee) were with him when he received the information about the arrival of Gojjame at Kokor. The received information indicated that Gojjame came with additional gift including cloth, worn by king locally called Qamisi. Abiishee mounted his horse and

began the journey to Kokor from Birbirsa Akajji from where he built his third residence. However, Dagaa and Dabaloo were not involved in the agreement made between Abiishe and Qadiidaa. Dabaloo with his nine sons and Dagaaa with few numbers of cavalry followed Abiishee. On the way to Kokor, both Dabalo and Dagaaa warned Abiishee not come to a compromise with the Gojjame because the kakuu (oath) which had been established with Qadida may not hold. Dabaloo expresses his suspicion telling Abiishee, Jaalako (means Abiishee my lovely friend), Gojjame fi Abidda harka jala hin qabatan” (Gojjame and fire should not be handled close to the body). Abiishee paid no heed to Abbaa Duulaas, Dagaaa and Dabaloo. While approaching kokor, Dagaa who hesitated with the agreement, warned his followers to keep their distance from the tents of Gojjame. Dabaloo also told his nine sons saying:

“miila keessan faanaa keessaa, luugama keessan afaan fardaa keessaa akka hin baaafne” (do not take your legs out of the stirrup of the saddle and the harness out of your horse’s mouth).

With his nine sons he prepared himself for war. As they arrived, the Gojjame invited Abiishee to get into the temporary tent. According to the culture of Oromo a person who comes for peace agreement does not hold any weapon and for this reason Abiishee entered the tent having nothing in his hands. After a few minutes, the Gojjame asked Dabaloo to enter into a tent. Nevertheless, he refused saying:

“inni lixe iyyuu hin baane” (the one who entered had not come out yet).

Following the negative response of Dabaloo, the Gajjame beat a drum signaling the commencement of war. As a result, the forces of Abiishee who were very close to the tent were wiped out, while the forces of Dabaloo escaped and Dabaloo was killed since he refused to surrender. Soon the nine sons of Dabaloo, who lost their father at the battle (kokor) fought and killed many Gojjame warriors.

The Gojjame army captured Abiishee around 1876/77 and taken to Gojjam, and he was prisoned at mount *Jabalii* and *Matarra* for a time being. Informants assert that Gojjame buried Abiishee alive (below his neck) and spray salt on his hair. Then after mules and donkey ate from the head of Abiishee and resulted to his death. After that his dead body was buried at Amanuel Church in Gojjam. Besides, Abiishee’s other relatives, cattle and other property was looted by Gojjame. He is said to have chewed up his fingers from anger and regretted his refusal of the advice of his war generals. The following poem is still remembered among the local people regarding this episode:

Oromo and Gloss

Waan hin yaadne taanan isa darbeef gaabbaa
He regretted his decision as unexpected things happened to him

Quba nyaataa du’e Abiishee ilmi Garbaa.
Abiishee the son of Garba died chewing up his fingers

Local resistance to Gojjame rule (1876 to 1882)

The capture of Abiishee and the occupation of his territories do not mean that local resistance had ended. The first resistance after the surrender of Abiishee came from the nine sons of Dabaloo Gannaa (the *Abbaa Duulaa* of Abbay Choman) (*salgan* Dabaloo Gannaa) namely Jallata, Nafabas, Ganji, Mute, Abu, Dirbaba, Idesa, Marara and Jabana. After the incidence of Kokor, *Salgan* Dabaloo (the nine sons of Dabalo) had led a *shiftaa* life in Wangelle forest, East of Shaambuu town. They fought against Gojjame as well as the puppet leaders of the region. They were led by their elder, Jallata. Jallata is said to have engaged in guerrilla warfare with his brothers at Wangelle forest around Daragoti near Fincha’a lake. This person killed several Gojjame even after the battle of Kokor. For instance, according to local tradition Jallata killed seven Gojjame at one place called Diggaa Arbaas. Until the year 1885 he continued his resistance in the forest. In 1886/1887 when Mahdists came to Ethiopia through Mattama, Jallata Dabaloo and Soorii Galaa supported Negus Tekle Haymanot. However, during the war, Jallata fought both Gojjame and Mahdist. It was in this connection that the following poem was said to have been compose about the victim of Abiishee and Dabaloo at Kokor:

Oromo and Gloss

Yommu Darbushii taate
If she was Darbush (Mahdist)
Gumaan Nugusaa baate
The avenge of the Tekle Haymanot was returned
Yommu Amara taate
If she was Gojjame (Amhara)
Gumaan Dabaloo baate
The Avenge of Dabalo returned
Gumaan Abiishee Garbaa achumaan hafuu taate
The avenge of Abishe not returned
Gumaan Dabaloo Gannaa Gojje Shantama taate
While avenge of Dabaloo became fifty Gojjame

The aforementioned poem indicated that Jallataa fought for two important purposes: one to defend the territory of Ethiopia from Mahdist attack on the side of Negus Tekle Haymanot. The second purpose was to avenge the blood of Dabaloo Gannaa, and he killed more than 50 Gojjame soldiers during the war.

Looking at the act of Jallata during the war, Amhara soldiers reported to Negus Tekle Haymanot as Oromo person who is called jallata killed Gojjame warriors rather

than the Mahadist Sudan. Then Tekle Haymanot called and asked Jallata why he killed the warriors of Gojjame. This was told to him through a translator because Jallata did not know Amharic language. Jallata said to him:

'yoggus maalittan lubbuu koo iyyuu of beeka asi natti fiigaa jirtiifan diina se'ee asii achi waraane kaa jedhe (I do not know even myself during the war thus I killed them when they run to me suspecting that they might be an enemy (Mahadist).

Oral tradition collected from the people indicated that the resistance movement put up by *Salgan* (nine) Dabaloo brought strong pressure on the Gojjame army and forced them to send reinforcement from Gojjam. However, the newly arrived Gojjame forces were also unable to defeat the resistance force led by Jallata. Thus, East of Shaambuu town particularly Abbay Choman area was under the domination of *Salgan* Dabaloo in the first half decade of Gojjame conquest. An attempt to cross the area was unexpected. Traditions indicate that about nine Gojjame soldiers lost their lives within three days in their attempt to cross the swampy area of Abbay Choman. The nine soldiers were strongly supported by the local people who provided them war equipments as well as information about the position of the enemy forces. The local people also misled the enemy forces. The Gojjame forces who were wrongly informed about the nature of Choman swamp moved to it for looting of cattle. Thus many of them sunk in the swamp and perished. The following poems in Amharic languages expressed the condition.

Amharic and Gloss

Ametalewu bilo tiltil joro bere
To bring oxen which have a sign of cut on their ears
Choman gebto qere ye Gojam gebere
The Gojjam peasants drowned in to Choman swamp

One of the Gojjame women who lost her husband at the time of the event expressed her anger by saying:

Amharic and Gloss

Berewun amtalign biyee
I sent my husband to bring me an ox
Sedije balen
I sent my husband to bring me a cow
(Oromo) qorto askere gimash akalen
But the Oromo cut apart half of my body

On the other hand, *Raas Adal* proposed a marriage relation with Jallata to pacify the resistance.

Jallata who learnt much from the past mistake refused the proposal for marriage alliance. Following this refusal, Tekle Haymanot sent two imperial agents who would act as spies in the area to collect information. They told the

people that they came as peace makers and that was why they were unarmed. However, their repeated question about the location and position of the rebel force made the local people to understand their real mission, *basaastuu* (spy). Even though the names of the two imperial agents are not mentioned by the tradition, a person called Bayan Boja, whose right hand was cut off at the Kokor incident, killed two of them by his left hand. He was the friend of Dabaloo Gannaa. The hand of this person was cut down by the Gojjame at the battle of Kokor. He lived alone in his own tent until the battle of Kokor, because the Oromo male and the horses prepared for wars they were given special care and not merged with the people and other animals. The Horro Guduru Oromo in general and Abbay Choman kept their horses at home for two important purposes: one was to energize the horse and the second one was for immediate action against enemy. Rather than using the horse to graze the field, they easily handle and mounted their horse and would take necessary action. The horses were used in shifts in time of fierce fighting. Therefore, they were expected to have at least two *sangaa fardaa* (war horse) and also required to raise other horses which did not reach the level of *sangaa fardaa* (Plowden, 1868). Food and other provision were prepared alone for Oromo male and *Sanga fardaa*. For this reason, Bayan Boja lived alone, and food and other provision were prepared alone for him. After he lost his right hand at the battle of Kokor by Gojjame soldiers, he did not live alone, and he left his house which was constructed separately for himself. Thus, he expressed his ideas through his best saying:

Oromo and Gloss

Yaa Bosuu yaa Bosonee
Oh, my mother Bosu
Manni ati ijaarte hin onee
The house you built became deserted
Anoo laman falame
I sprained twice
Egaahoo egetanaa namattan dabalame
After this on wards I merged to the society
Harka mirgaa awwaalun hin fida waanta caalu
Losing the left hands bring more good things
Boree nama qabsiisa
make a man to be energetic
Bitaa darba barsiisa
Teach the left hand how to throw

After Bayyan took this event, Gojjame killed many people as revenge. The families of Bayyan were killed and some of them were imprisoned. Bayyan took the revenge and then fled to Leqa. The death of the two individuals ended the wish of *Raas Darasu* to get peaceful submission of *salgan* Dabaloo. Instead, the hostile relation of the two aggravated *Salgan* Dabaloo created a hard time for *Raas Darasu* particularly in Eastern Shaambuu (Abbay

Choman and its surrounding) and continued their struggle until 1885. Therefore, it seems that only after 1885 that Ras Darasu succeeded in pacifying the rebels.

According to the oral tradition collected from the elders after the battle of Kokor, the Gojjame once took Jallata to Gojjam and gave him training in terms of writing, administration and the like. After they gave this training in Gojjam, Jallata returned to Abbay Choman. At this time, the brother of Jallata Dabalo, Ganji Dabalo expressed his opposition to this (Jallata's friendship with Gojjame) by saying:

Oromo and Gloss
 Ya Dabbee ya Dabaloo
 Oh, Dabbe, Oh Dabalo
 Jireenya maaltu jira
 Life become ended
 Erga ilmaan Dabbee duute
 Since the son of Dabbe died
 Hunduu dalga nu ilaalaa
 All looked to us horizontal/transverse
 Dugda ilmaan Harree guatee
 Mounting the back of donkey
 Utaalchi tokko taate laga ceesisu didde
 Jumping become only once and not enough for success
 Dhaloonni raatuu taatee booree deebisu didde.
 The generation become foolish and unable return avenge

Bayyan Boja the friends of Dabaloo Gannaa expressed his opposition to Jallata when he heard about his alliance with Gojjame in this way:

Oromo and Gloss
 Ya Dabbee ya Dabaloo
 Oh, Dabbe Oh, Dabalo
 Ya isa mormi yabaloo
 Who have a nice looking neck
 Ya jalalle ijollumma
 Oh, my friend from the beginning
 Ya jaala dargagumma
 Oh, love of adult ages
 Ijoollee ati dhalchite diina faana michoomte
 The son you born made friendship with the enemy
 Yoo michoomte haa michoomtu
 No matter if they became friendship
 Guman Dabaloo Gannaa
 The avenge of Dabaloo Gannaa
 Haa teessu garaa gamnaa
 Let it be sit in minds of brilliant/shrewd

To pacify the people's opposition, the Gojjame appointed Fandalala Garba from Gobaya clan over his own lineage, and Fitwarari Yimer Goshu married the daughter of Abiishee. However, this mechanism was not effective while he was hated by the Gobaya who expected him of gaining a revenge for Abiishee than collaborating with them.

Conclusion

Abbay Choman Oromo peoples are one of the *Machaaa* Oromo branch found in Horro Guduru Wallagga zone, Oromiya regional state, Ethiopia. A history of the Oromo of Horro Guduru has begun with their separation from the larger *Machaaa* Oromo and departure from *Tutee Bisil* (*Gadaa* centre of *Machaaa* Oromo) before they were separated and made their centre *Odaa Bulluq*. However, from the mid-19th century onwards, the egalitarian socio-political organization of the *Gadaa* system was not so much influential as before and instead different political systems evolved among the Oromo clans of the area. Each clan had established a new hierarchical structure and a single person could appoint or dismiss officials. Although power emanated from a single individual which indicates aristocratic type of government, under the *Mootii* administration, criminals were punished in accordance with the *Gadaa* system. Even though the political significance of *Gadaa* centres in the region began to decline by the local Oromo chiefs themselves, the institution was influential in different aspects until the year 1870's. In 1850's, the power of the *Abba Bookkuu* was taken over by the *Mootii* (kings) and later by the Gojjame conquerors in 1870's. The use of *Kallacha* was diminished. Systematic efforts were made by the Gojjame to destroy the institution. Thus, the Gojjame purposefully camped (settled) near the *Gadaa* centres seeking the gradual destruction of it, and became successful in destroying indigenous Oromo political system.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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