

Full Length Research Paper

Destruction of Abbay Choman Oromo indigenous practice due to Gojjame invasion, north east Wollega South of Abay River, Ethiopia (1870s - 1882)

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This paper deals with the destruction of Oromo indigenous practices under Gojjame rule: the case of Abbay Choman Oromo, in the south of Abay River 1870s-1882. The year 1870's was a turning point in the history of the Oromo of Abbay Choman in particular and Horro Guduru in general because it was a period when Gadaa system with indigenous practice starts being destructed. The year 1882 was the period when Horro Guduru in general and Abbay Choman Oromo in particular came under Menelik Empire and the already started socio-cultural suppression was highly continued. This paper focused on reconstructing the socio-cultural change of Oromo of Abbay Choman from 1870's-1882. In short, the main objective of this paper was to show the socio-cultural condition of the peoples in the context of change in policy and administration system of Gojjame. The paper shows how the indigenous socio-cultural system of the Oromo of Abbay Choman has been affected by invasion of Gojjame. The study came up with the idea that Gojjame invasion of the area resulted to the 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 destruction of socio-culture. The study used and explored both primary and secondary sources. Both published and unpublished reports of scholars from diverse background had been reviewed during the study.

Key words: Abbay Choman, Oromo, Gojjame, indigenous practice, destruction.

INTRODUCTION

The inhabitants of Horro Guduru in general, and Abbay Choman district in particular belongs to the *Macha*

Oromo branch of the Borana Oromo that were separated from the Barentu probably long before the 16th century

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(Oljira, 1994; Regasa, 1988).

Historically, the Oromo had homogenous culture, common socio-political and economic organizations embodied in the *Gada* system. *Gada* system is the Oromo traditional institution involving political process, economical, cultural, ritual, spiritual, social and administrative system based on holistic ideas of participatory and representative democracy; principles in which power is both vertically and horizontally distributed, balanced, checked and controlled. Essentially, the system has been the constitution of the Oromo society through which the people administered themselves, defended their territory, maintained and developed their economy. Essentially, the system has been the constitution of the Oromo society through which the people administered themselves, defended their territory, maintained and developed their economy (Dereje, 2012a; Benti, 1999; Asmarom, 2000; Gadafa, 1983; Gada, 1988). Under the *Gadaa* system, the society has different clans connected to *Gadaas*. For instance, the clan where this particular study has been conducted is named the *Jaawwii* Oromo of Horro Guduru which has its own *gada* named *Gadaa Bulluq*. This *Gadaa* is named after

the *Gadaa* ceremonial center called *Odaa Bulluq*, about 10 km west of Shambu town with foundation that can be traced to the early 17th century (Asmarom, 1973; Ginbar, 2000). *Odaa* is a sycamore tree and is the center for two main purposes: for religious matters where communication between *Waaqaa* and the society was made possible and for dealing with the socio-economic and political matters under it (Dereje, 2012b).

In Horro Guduru, *Gadaa* system continued until the 1850's when the system was transformed into semi-monarchical administration. This multi-functional institution center of *Bulluq* began to decline when *Jaawwi* clans beyond the Angar River appealed for separation. They requested the separation due to the distance that their area had from the center (*Bulluq*). Convinced by the reason, the assembly blessed and allowed the separation. This led to the establishment of new *Gadaa* centers. 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 to or in the remote distance has been equal right to *Bulluq* from all directions. The clans used to hold their assembly, celebrate *Buttaa* ceremony and elected *Gadaa* officials. The elected officials had shared political responsibility and held limited power that was transmitted every eight years. The law formulated by the *Caffee* (assembly) every eight years under the new *Gadaa* officials has guided them.

However, 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

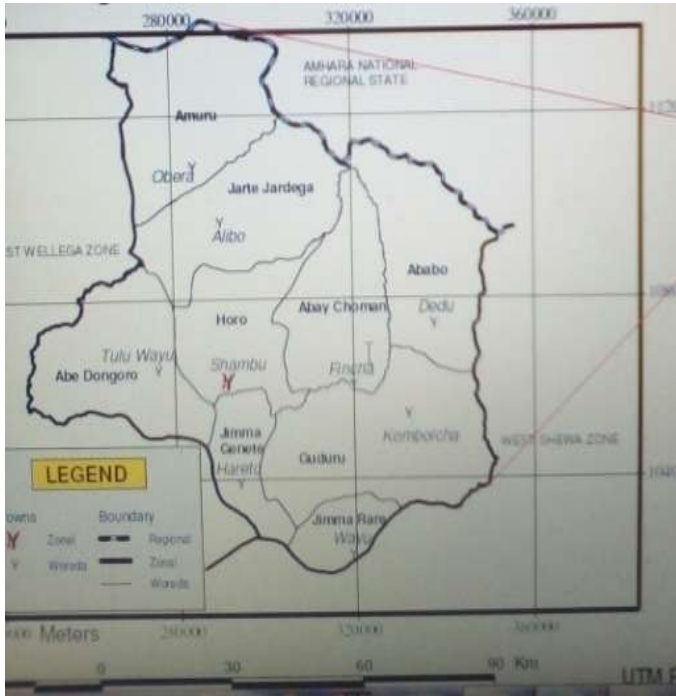
officials. Although power emanated from a single individual which indicates aristocratic type of government, under the *Mootii* administration, criminals were punished in accordance with the *Gadaa* system. Thus the republican form of government was not totally changed, rather, it was in the process and new structure with old laws of governance continued in Horro Guduru in general, and Abbay Choman in particular until the arrival of Gojjame into the region.

Nevertheless, all these laws of *Gadaa* system regarding different crime declined later on with the arrival of Gojjame. As the *Gadaa* system declined and the power of the *Abbaa Bokku* was taken over by the *Mootii* (kings), and later by the Gojjame conquerors, the use of *Kallacha* was diminished (Triulzi, 1975).

According to Dereje Hinaw, the earliest relation of Macha Oromo with the Gojjame began since 1570-1578. 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. The later, approached the *Motis* and *Qoros* 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 (Dereje, 2000).

In the decade before Embabo, the Gojjam had already crossed the Abbay River and were interfering in the internal struggles of Guduru and Horro, two neighboring Oromo states just below the Abbay as arbitrators. For example, Dajjzmach Yimar, the Gojjame general managed to install his own puppets in power and through them succeeded in extending effective Gojjam political influence in a number of petty Oromo states.

Thus, as opposed to the earlier periods, the Gojjame started to stay and even to make other territories tributaries. The first target of Gojjame was destruction of the *Gadaa* institutions, even though the political significance of *Gadaa* centers in region began to decline the institution was still influential in religious aspects. Thus, the Gojjame purposefully camped at near the *Gadaa* centers seeking the gradual destruction of its institution and to stop any indigenous ritual practice conducted by the society. The appeal for peace to the *Gadaa* officials *Abbaa Kallacha* was turned to the chiefs and later to the established court (Dereje, 2000; Desalegn, 2010). Therefore, with the arrival of the Gojjame to the *Macha* land in general and Abbay Choman Oromo in particular, the indigenous socio-cultural system such as indigenous religion, working habits and burial practices of the peoples were destructively changed. Previously, all these indigenous practice were practiced under the circuit of *Gadaa* system. Therefore, destruction of *Gadaa* system directly or indirectly resulted to the destruction of indigenous practice. In addition, the property of Oromo was confiscated and they were forced to feed Gojjame settlers.



Map 1. The location of Abbay Choman district in the map of Horro Guduru Zone and Oromiya region. Source: Lemessa (2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Description of the study area

The Horro Guduru landscape belongs to the fourteen offspring of Horro and seven offspring of Horro guduru. It has been identified with this name since the reign of haile sillase I (1930-1974). Currently distinguished as Horro Guduru wallaga zone, the landscape has diverse relief features. Within its total area of about 7869km², the area has an average elevation ranging from 1000-3300m above sea level. As indicated below in Map 1 presently the area has nine districts and one special administrative town, Shambu (Zone capital) ((Lemessa 2014). Abbay Choman is one of the districts in Horro Guduru Wollega zone of Oromiya Regional State in Ethiopia. The district is located in 48 km East of Shambu town, the capital of the zone, and 280 km from Addis Ababa. The district shares boundaries with Hababo Guduru and Jardega Jarte district in the north, Horro district in the west, Hababo Guduru and Guduru in the east. Major rivers such as Nashe, Amarti and Fincha'a meet in the northern margin of the district. The district has a total area of about 79,126 km² out of which cultivated land covers 28.4%, forest 13%, grass lands 6.1%, bush and shrubs 17.4%, wet land water bodies 17.5%, cultivable land 16.6% and bare land together with built up area covered 3.1% of the total area (Gemechu, 2009).

In this paper, the authors used both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data were collected

by assessing published and unpublished materials. To collect primary data, the authors employed about 30 individual for interviews and from them five were key informants like clan leaders, and *Abbaa Gadaa's* those who are more knowledgeable about the title. The informants were selected with the help of the society on the basis of their knowledge of the issue under study specifically and the Oromo indigenous practices in general. The researchers would cross-check the findings from oral sources with the other. Those from written documents would also be cross-checked to increase its validity. Historical reconstruction on a certain topic of oral community requires a close assessment of oral traditions using the available written sources for cross-checking. According to Dereje (2012a), “*All human history is oral in origin.*” Since the 1960s, generally in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia, significant uses of oral traditions have made the reconstruction of people’s past possible. Therefore, the current importance of oral traditions in the studies of African peoples in general and the Oromo in particular attests to the relevance of oral sources. The available oral traditions were used as sources of data in reconstructing the destructed Abbay Choman Oromo indigenous practice due to Gojjame invasion from 1870s-1882. After that, the data were described, expressed and articulated qualitatively. Therefore, in this study, all the data that would be collected through the qualitative techniques of data collection methods would be analyzed qualitatively. All the data were analyzed carefully and interpreted in accordance with the standardized canons

of the social science disciplines based on the nature of information obtained.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE UNDER GOJJAME INVASION IN 1870'S

Expansion of Christianity in place of indigenous religion of the Oromo of the area

Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions have facilitated systematic and organized cultural destruction and repression of Oromo culture for more than a century. All of these cultural destruction and repression have occurred to deny Oromos the free cultural spaces and political voices that are essential to create and build institutions that can facilitate autonomous social development. A free cultural space has been described as an "environment in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue." The overriding authority of the Ethiopian colonial state with the support of the imperial interstate system has tried its best to destroy the Oromo cultural identity, with resultant ramifications, by denying Oromos the freedom of having their own cultural institutions and developing an authentic Oromo culture. Oromos have been denied opportunities necessary for developing their own institutions and the Oromo system of knowledge that could have facilitated the transmission of cultural experiences from generations to generations (Asafa, 2010).

Generally, in the case of Horro Guduru, and Abbay Choman in particular, the indigenous practice was destructed before Menelik II expansion to the area. The destruction continued highly under Gojjame invasion from 1876/77. This period was during the reign of Yohannis IV when there was strong competition between Menelik II of Shewa and Adal Tesema of Gojjame to occupy resource full area of south west Ethiopia. Therefore, until the battle of Embabo (1882), Adal Tesema was successful to occupy the Macha Oromo land of South of Abay River. After 1882, the battle of Embabo Adal Tesema was defeated and Menelik II followed the footsteps of the Gojjames in suppressing the cultural and socio-political activities of Oromo people of the area (Triulzi, 1975).

With the arrival of Gojjame was accompanied by Orthodox Church to the region in the second half of 19th century, the traditional life of the Oromo society was affected and their institutions like *Qaalluu*, *Gadaa* and *Waaqeffanna* which have been interrelated in its function began to decline. They undermined the indigenous people and illegitimated their religion as 'pagan religion' to attack the believers psychologically and to implant their imported religion as quickly as possible for various benefits (Emana, 2015; Desalegn, 2010). They made systematic effort to destroy the institutions of *Qaalluu* and

Gadaa centers. It was the common objective of Gojjame to build Churches at the expense of the Oromo indigenous traditional religion. They purposefully camped near the *Gadaa* centers and established the Orthodox churches over the Oromo sacred areas (Mohammed, 1990).

Before the introduction of Orthodox religion to the area, the Oromo people had their own indigenous religion. The Oromo under *Gada* system believed in single Supreme Being called *Waaqa* or *Uma*. *Waaqa* for all Oromo believers was one and the same. According to the *Oromoo* beliefs, *Waaqaa* subscribed to one God who has a supernatural Force. The Supreme Being *Waaqaa* governed the daily life of an individual (Daniel, 1984; Asmarom, 2000; Gadafa, 1983). Among the believers, the one who is full of this spirit is named by *Qaalluu*. Hence, *Waaqeffannaa* (religion), as a religion of the Oromo people sprung out of the Oromo concept of *Waaqaa*. According to Oromo mythology, their early ancestors were inspired by *Waaqaa* and guided by the *Seera Waaqaa* (the laws of *Waaqaa*) which *Waaqaa* granted to them. Committing sins is considered as an attempt to disrupt *Seeraa Waaqaa* (the laws of *Waaqaa*) and the social order. The concept of *Waaqaa* is conceived in Oromo as a divinity whose character can be manifested in multiple ways. He, the *Waaqaa*, is the source of all life and every power; supplier of every character to nature subsuming man; guardian of truth and justice. For the *Waaqeffataa* (followers of the religion) Oromo, it is only *Waaqaa* who can give life, send rain and create human beings. The followers of this religion are called *waaqefataa*. The performance that *waaqefataa* underwent is *waaqeffannaa*. *Waaqeffannaa* of the Oromo is among such indigenous religions, which survived for a long period of time. *Waaqeffannaa* is a religion, while asking and blessing *Waaqaa*, as well as overcoming their problems: sick, headache, and other injuries). Hence, the moment of conception is perceived as a creative act of the Oromo divinity. According to *Waaqeffannaa*, *Waaqaa* is the source and guardians of all creatures. *Waaqaa* is omnipresent. His presence on earth is revealed through rain, fog and water (Jemjem et al., 2011; Aguilar, 2005; Lewis, 1966; Asmarom, 1973; Badasa, 2016; Bedru, 2002; Gololcha, 2015; Van de Leo, 1991).

As one branch of Oromo people, the Oromo of Abbay Choman lived with the indigenous religion, culture and the others for a long period of time. However, the conquest of the region by Gojjame abolished the indigenous religion of Wallaga Oromo in general and of Abbay Choman Oromo in particular.

Before the conquest of the 1870s, it was not clear how much Christianity was strong in the south of Abay River. But it was said that many Christians and Muslim had existed in Guduru since 1840s. Initially, this new religion was introduced to the neighbor district Guduru from Gojjam. Thus, Guduru became the first to abandon *Gadaa system in Horro Guduru*. In Guduru, many people

were converted to Christianity at this time. The people who abandoned *Gadaa system* and accepted the new one got a position and land to extend their former territory under Gojjame rule. However, those who refused were evicted and fled to neighboring area of Abbay Choman. Moreover, using Guduru as stepping stone, Christianity was spread to other areas of Horro Guduru. Before the battle of Embabo in 1882, the Gojjame succeeded in building five churches in Guduru and one in Jimma Rare. These churches were *Embabo Tekle Haymanot*, *Qawo Maryam*, *Qawo Giorgis*, *Ichara Abu*, *Illamu Sillasie* and *Loya Maryam* (Gada, 1988; Oljira, 1994; Desalegn, 2010). The priests who followed the Gojjame troops to provide religious services began evangelization. The merchants are also said to have served the clergy as spy. The clergy men soon after the occupation began propagating Christianity and evangelization. At the beginning, it was obligatory for the chiefs and other people to attend church ceremonies and to bury the dead at the distant churches since only three churches were built during earlier Gojjame rule in Horro Guduru. The first three Orthodox Churches established in Horro were *Abbo Tarii* at the place called *Daragoti* on the land of Amanu Abiishee, *Abbo Dongoro* at Abee Dongoro and *Barjii Maryam* at Tulluu Barjii. Instead of learning *Gadaa* rules and regulations with different rights and duties at *Odaa Bulluq* which was the usual practice before the conquest, people were forced to attend Church education (Oljira, 1994).

As the influence of Orthodox Christianity strengthened and its dogma was deeply rooted, the Oromo themselves became the agents for the further expansion of the religion. Particularly, the Oromo chiefs played an important role in the expansion of the church building. Initially, when the number of churches was few, the converts were obliged to make a long trip of a day or more to attend church ceremonies or to bury the dead. However, to reduce this hardship the Oromo chiefs began to bring new Arks of covenant from Gojjam with priests, who gave Church education to the servants of the Oromo chiefs. In addition, whenever the Oromo captives were carried to Gojjam they were converted into Orthodox Christianity and some of them who happened to live in the homesteads of influential families were able to join the traditional Church education. Later on, such individuals become important agents in the expansion of the religion in Horro Guduru in general and Abbay Choman in particular. According to tradition, after the battle of *Kokor* (1876/77) Gojjame established different churches in the district. These Churches were established at *Gadaa* centre where the Oromo society came together for *Gadaa* ceremony and celebrate different ritual practices. Their main ambition was to abolish *Gadaa* system and preach the new religion among the community in place of indigenous one. Though, they established Michael Church at Birbirs Boru, the *Gadaa centre* of *Akaakoo* clan of Abbay

Choman. However, to escape from restriction, the people shifted their *Gadaa* centre to Achane. Again, Gojjame established St. Marry Church at Achane. At Birbirs Boru, they confiscated two *Qalad* of land in the form of *Itanazur* for the church from the local Oromo people. Their armies were also stationed there near to the Church at the place today known as *Godoo Amaaraa* (the place where Amhara soldiers settled).

Even though some of the people were forced to accept this religion, some group of people continued to resist the establishment of the Church there, refused to accept the new religion and started to take harsh measure against them. They burnt down the church, killed the priests and other church workers. The peoples who took this measure were: Sanbata Ganjii, Imama Gashe, Kasasa, Dhibba Fayyisa, Dheresa Hordofa and Abbashu Bushan.

They burnt the churches, killed the priests and threw the arks of covenant on the road. However, after they took this action they were unable to live in the area and fled to Leqa Nekemte. In spite of this strong resistance from the local peoples, the construction of the Church in the district continued. As revenge, the Gojjame soldiers harshly punished the local people. They burnt down the house, property and killed many Oromo people. For instance, the families of Daga Horro were completely burnt in their house, attending of *Gadaa* system was strictly restricted and they forced the local people to baptize their families and accept Orthodox Christianity.

Destruction of Oromo indigenous working habits

The introduction of Orthodox Christianity affected the working habit in the region and the peasants were prevented from working on numerous religious days observed by Orthodox Christianity in the name of different Arks of covenant even not established in the area. Formerly, the peasants of the area had worked throughout the week except on Sundays, the day of reconciliation for the quarreled persons and visiting sick persons (Desalegn, 2010).

Abolition of indigenous burial practice

On the other hand, the Oromo in the area had their own burial places prior to the introduction of the new religions. It took place neither Churchly nor in Mosque. Each tribe, village or single family had their own burial place in common that was very near to their homestead (*qee'e*). The burial places were named after either the first person was buried or the elder member of the family. For example, the place at which the hand of Bayyan Boja was buried was named/called today *lafa biyyoo Bayyan* in Ganji. His hand was cut down by Gojjame soldiers at the battle of *kokor*. The hand of this hero was buried through burial ceremony. At the beginning, the Oromo people strongly hated Gojjame and they did not bury their

dead individual at the same place with Gojjame. There have been conditions when the Oromo of the area buried empty coffin in the quarter of Church and the real dead at their traditional burial places which were close to their village. On the other hand, they buried these in the quarter of Church at daytime to be free from punishment, took the corpses back at night and reburied these at traditional place [Cherinet 1988, Desalegn, 2010, Ginbar, 2000]. *Abbaa Gadaa* of Abbay Choman (*Akako* clan), known as Dajo warned his people not to mix his dead body (corpse) with the Amhara's and not to bury him at the Church compound. He gave this warning to the people before his death. For this reason, the people buried him on his own lands. The action showed how much the Oromo peoples of Abbay Choman were against and strongly hated the new religion introduced by Gojjame.

In spite of its socio-cultural significance, the burial culture was abandoned when Tekle Haymanot restricted the Oromo people not to use their own burial place. Accordingly, if the dead person was more than one year, they were forced to bury him at the Church. The declaration created hardship for the local people because there were only one or two churches throughout a district or a clan territory. For instance, in Horro, only three Churches were built that were very far apart. These were *Abbo Tarii* at Daragoti (in Abbay Choman), *Abbo Dongoro* at Abee Dongoro and *Barjii Maryam* in Jarte.

Once the Oromo people have been denied their traditional burial places due to the declaration made by (Adal Tesema) Tekle Haymanot, they were forced to make a long trip of a day or more to bury the dead or to attend the church ceremonies. Such hardships encouraged the people to develop hatred for the new religion on one hand, and had encouraged the local chiefs and peoples to build more churches on the other. The chiefs started to build the churches near all clans to solve the problem of long trip. For half of the Ganjii clan, one church was established for the Achane peoples (*Abboo Church* was established at Barto); for Gobayya clan, they established Tekle Haymanot Church at the seat of Abishee Garbaaa (Oljira).

Confiscation of property and quartering of Gojjame settlers

The type of food provided to them was another point of conflict between the local peasants and the Gojjame soldiers. An important cultural food and favourable food for Horro Guduru Oromo is called *Cuumboo*. In other words of the local people, '*cuumboon isa laatu kan kabachiisu, isa nyaatu kan gammachiisu nyaata aadaati*' (lit. *Cuumboo* is a cultural food that gives respect to the provider and satisfaction for the feeder). This cultural food is never free from daily products (butter and sour milk or *baaduu*). This was due to the fact that there was

no food restriction among the society throughout the year. However, the already arrived Gojjame soldiers who adopted to fast two days every week and long fasting days, which varied from fifteen days to two months, faced great challenge while the local peasants provided them food with milk and butter including those days. They appealed to the *Meslane* demanding compensation for the days that they had already passed without food. The *Meslane* in turn, reported to the *balabbats* through which the peasants were punished for the days that the Gojjame soldiers did not feed. The payment was either in cattle or a number of *soogidda* (bar salt).

Cuumboo, the cultural food which was prepared for the Gojjame was very thick. If not that they will face punishment, to eat the food prepared by Oromo people from the dish, the Gojjame were paid. The Oromo people took the Gojjame chiefs on the back of the mule to their house turn by turn to feed them. When they reach in front of the house, they took money from Oromo people before they dismount the mule. To stand on the back of the mule, they took one *Xagaraa* (Maria Theresa taler); when they stand from the back of the mule they took two *Xagaraa*; when they dismount they took three *Xagaraa*; and to get into the house of the provider (feeder) they took five *Xagaraa*. This means money was paid for every activity of the Gojjame chiefs by the local Oromo people. The next day, he appeals for the service he got from the Oromo people (house) to their master. If they were not satisfied with what they get, the people were punished.

The defeat of Gojjame at Embabo ended their further expansion to south and south west. It seems three years after the battle that the Gojjame increased the number of army to maintain the political and economic control in Horro Guduru. They arrived under the system called *Mirit*, which allowed quartering fixed number of soldiers to a given households. However, they preferred strategic and unoccupied areas than settling the Oromo villages. This was due to the fact that opposition from the local people has not yet ended as clearly seen during the battle of Embabo. Thus, Tekle Haymanot gave the Oromo of Horro Guduru to his armed settlers. The soldiers were neither paid salary nor engaged in productive activities. Rather, they were given Oromo peasants in lieu of salary. During the early period of their settlement, the army garrisons in one centre were getting their daily food from the house of their hosts. They took the property of the peasants and even ordered them to bring what they wish to eat or drink that might not be available (Desalegn, 2010). The Oromo of the region expressed the settler's behavior through their best saying:

Oromo and Gloss
Amarri kan ijaan argite dhuunfaa isheeti

All things Amhara saw with their eyes is taken as their private property
Kan ijaan hin argiin immo qixxeedha

However, what they could not see is regarded as being kept in reserve for future grabbing. In addition to confiscation of their valuable properties in and around homestead, the unruly behaviors of Gojjame soldiers were manifested through raping the daughters and wives of the peasants. Thus, the peasants appealed the case to the local *balabats* and proposed to change the system. Apparently, this caused the introduction of new system through which the host carried the necessary supply to where his quartered soldiers were garrisoned. The loss of both their cattle and its product as punishment and ration respectively forced the local peasants to take serious measure over the soldiers and running away from the areas to Leqa Naqamte and Leqa Qelam where they are relatively free from the system. Their defeat at the battle of Embabo and the arrival of Mahdist army at Gondar in the late 1880's were the factors that took the attention of Tekle Haymanot from strengthening his power in the region. This two events added to local opposition hindered effective rule of Gojjame in the region (Desalegn, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper attempted to document the socio-cultural change of Abbay Choman Oromo from 1870's-1882 under Gojjame invasion. The Oromo of Horro Guduru in general and Abbay Choman in particular were governed by *Gadaa* system. Essentially, the system has been the constitution of the Oromo society through which the people administered themselves, defended their territory, maintained and developed their economy. Under the *Gadaa* system, the society has different clans connected to *Gadaas*. The clan where this particular study has been conducted is named the *Jaawwii* Oromo of Horro Guduru which has its own *Gadaa* named *Gadaa Bulluq*. This *Gadaa* is named after the *Gadaa* ceremonial center called *Odaa Bulluq*. Even though the socio-cultural significance of *Gada* centres in region began to decline by the local Oromo chiefs themselves, the institution was influential in different aspects until the year 1870's. However, 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 in general and Abbay Choman in particular until the arrival of Gojjame into the region.

Nevertheless, all these laws of *Gadaa* system regarding different crime declined later on with the arrival of Gojjame. As the *Gadaa* system declined and the power of the *Abbaa Bokku* was taken by the Gojjame conquerors, the use of *Kallacha* diminished. Therefore, with the arrival of the Gojjame to the *Macha* land in general and Abbay Choman Oromo in particular, the indigenous socio-cultural system such as indigenous religion and indigenous burial places of the peoples were changed. In addition, the property of Oromo was confiscated and they were forced to feed Gojjame settlers during the time of occupation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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