

**The Quest for Autonomy and Politicisation of Differences in  
Ethiopia: The Case of the Alle Ethnic Minority**

**Yacob Cheka Hidoto**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree: Master of Philosophy in  
Peace and Conflict Transformation**

**Centre for Peace Studies**

**Faculty of Social Science, University of Tromsø**

**Norway, Spring 2010**

**The Quest for Autonomy and Politicisation of Differences in  
Ethiopia: The Case of the Alle Ethnic Minority**

**Yacob Cheka Hidoto**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree: Master of Philosophy in Peace and  
Conflict Transformation**

**Centre for Peace Studies**

**Faculty of Social Science, University of Tromsø**

**Norway, Spring 2010**

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank all those who supported me in writing this thesis. I would like to say, thank you, to my supervisor, Christine Smith-Simonsen (Dr.) from the University of Tromsø for her insightful suggestions and feedbacks that were invaluable for my thesis. I am very grateful to your continued encouragement in my emotional and difficult times.

I am thankful to the Norwegian State Education Loan Fund (Lånekassen) for financing my education here at the University of Tromsø. I also want to thank the CPS board for financial and administrative support during the fieldwork activity, and all through the period I wrote my thesis.

Special thanks to my wife, Rahel, who gave me encouragement in the hard moments, while you are living under stress. I always thank God for all the blessings He gave us in our lives, specifically for our son Bereket.

I also show my gratitude towards my informants in Dirashe, Alle, Konso, and Hawassa for crucial role they played in the process of collecting the data during the summer of 2009. At last but not least, I am indebted to all our family members as well as my friends, fellowship members and classmates for their constructive influence in my life.

## **Table of Contents**

**page**

List of maps.....	iii
List of abbreviations.....	iii
Glossary.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	
1.1. Research Theme.....	1
1.2. Objectives.....	3
1.3. Research Questions.....	3
1.4. Outline.....	4
<b>Chapter Two: Field Experiences and Methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Reflection on Research Design and Safety Measures.....	5
2.2 Negotiating Access.....	6
2.3 My position as a Researcher, the Informants, Social Context and Techniques.....	8
2.4 Reflection on Secondary Sources.....	10
<b>Chapter Three: Theoretical Frames.....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Intergroup Conflict.....	12
3.2 Identity, Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Identity.....	14
3.3 Politics of Identity/political Ethnicity.....	17
3.3.1 Politics of Identity and Ideology.....	18
3.3.2 The Conception of Minority and Indigenous People, their Claims and African Context.....	21
<b>Chapter Four: General Setting.....</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 Ethiopia State Formation and Making of Minorities.....	25
4.1.1 Shewa as Unifying and Disintegrating Constituent.....	29
4.2 Socialist Regime, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalist Movements.....	32
4.2.1 Land Reform and its Implication to Ethnic Minorities.....	33
4.2.2 Bloody Civil Conflicts and Nationalist Movements.....	34
4.3 Ethnic Minorities under Ethnic Federalism.....	35

4.3.1	Post Socialist Democratic Transition and Constraints.....	35
4.3.2	The Place of Ethnic Minority in Ethiopia Current Constitution.....	38
<b>Chapter Five: The Case of the Alle People.....</b>		<b>41</b>
5.1	The Alle people and their Neighbours.....	41
5.2	Continuity from the Past.....	47
5.3	The Association of Ethnic Identity and Institutions.....	49
5.3.1	Mobilization of People along Ethnic Identity.....	50
5.3.2	Contested Alle Ethnic Identity and its Implication.....	51
5.3.3	Claims for Self-Administration and Containing ‘Narrow Nationalism’/tebabenet/.....	54
5.4	Violence, the Intervention of Security Forces and the Implications.....	55
5.5	Identity and Insecurity among the Alle People.....	57
<b>Chapter Six: Concluding Discussion.....</b>		<b>63</b>
References.....		66

## **List of Maps**

**page**

1: Administrative map of Ethiopia.....	25
2: Administrative map of SNNPRS.....	40
3: Sketch map of Alle-Konso-Dirashe areas.....	42

## **List of Abbreviations**

ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
SNNPRS	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front

## **Glossary**

<i>awraja</i>	territorial division, middle level (applied until 1987)
<i>derg</i>	Committee; the ruling committee 1974-85
<i>etanta</i>	peasants/farmers (Konso, Alle, Dirashe)
<i>gada</i>	system of age cycles of the Oromo, Gedeo, Konso,
<i>gebar-</i>	literally 'the who pays tribute', farmers paying tribute to the landlords
<i>hawd'o</i>	artisans/traders (Alle, Konso and Dirashe)
<i>kebele</i>	the lowest administrative unit during the <i>Derg</i> and the EPRDF
<i>neftenya</i>	landlord, usually of northern origin; literally 'man with gun'
<i>poqolla</i>	clan chief (Alle, Konso)
<i>tekelay gizat</i>	province (applied until 1987)
<i>woreda</i>	lower administrative unit

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the quest for autonomy by the Alle ethnic minority and changing relationships in Konso-Dirashe-Alle areas of Southern Ethiopia. It also examines the causes of violent clashes between the Alle peasants and the security forces in 2008.

Alle people with many other diverse peoples were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire state in the late 19th century but living without equal entitlement as citizen of a political community. Glimpse of hope came in 1991 when current government constituted by the Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) made a radical restructuring of the Ethiopian empire state into an ethnic based federal state with an aim to end suppressive centralized control, redress grievances of different peoples and transform conflicts in the country. A new constitution which was put into practice in 1995 guarantees human and collective rights, such as rights to develop and use one's own language, culture and history as well as to establish government institutions in one's own territory.

Even if the theoretical framework of the constitution is minority friendly, the Alle ethnic group have not experienced the practical constitutional provisions. They continued the quest for autonomy and self-expression. They also continued their grievances. The purpose of the ruling government among the Alle people, on the other hand, has been marked by priority to get political support and strength its party base. The politics of difference that the local cadres of the ruling government use has almost ruined the peaceful intra-ethnic and interethnic interaction among the Alle and their neighbours. The Alle ethnic minority sense of insecurity has increased due to the policies from above which affect not only their individual and collective identity and relationships, but also their survival as human beings as their land is continued to be given to private investors. Thus, this thesis presents the subjective views of the Alle people in their continued quest for autonomy and self-expression. The possible violation of human and collective rights is implied. This thesis also calls for the enforcement of the existing constitutional provisions on human and collective rights for peaceful interactions and expressions of identities, particularly for ethnic minority.



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Theme

This thesis explores the quest for autonomy by the Alle ethno-linguistic minority against their marginalized status, exclusion and suppression of expression by the collective state actors. The Alle people with other diverse peoples were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were denied of equal entitlement as citizen of a political community. In other words, the modern governance instituted in the country since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was not able to accommodate the demands of the newly incorporated peoples for socio-cultural recognitions, political representation and fair access to collective resources. The institutional tradition of the country put different peoples in a hierarchical relationship which gave a precedent to identity-based conflicts that dominated the scene of the country in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Glimpse of hope came in 1991 when current government constituted by the Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) made a radical restructuring of the Ethiopian empire state into an ethnic based federal state with an intension to “arrest strong and suppressive central governmental structures and to redress ethnonational grievance among many ethnic groups in the country” (Tronvoll, 2008: 49). The government has made a concerted effort to mobilize ethnic groups in line with self-rule. A new constitution which was put into practice in 1995 guarantees collective rights to develop and use one's own language, culture and history as well as to establish government institutions in one's own territory. In order to make people central in governance, the constitution was also framed in order to devolve political, economic and administrative power to ethnically defined regions, and further into zones, districts (*woredas*) and neighbourhoods (*kebeles*).

Nevertheless, my study among the Alle ethnic minority in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPRS) shows that, after near two decades, the constitutional provisions on individual and collective rights are not real experience to them. The Alle people have continued the quest for autonomy and self-expression. They continued their

grievances. The purpose of the ruling government among the Alle people, on the other hand, has been marked by priority to get political support and strength its party base. The politics of difference that the government uses for such purpose has almost arrested peaceful intra-ethnic and interethnic interactions among the Alle people and their neighbours. In other words, in the context of current decentralized ethnic based federalism, the quest for autonomy has been associated with violent conflicts. The conflict happened in 2008 which involved security forces and the Alle peasants resulted in the deaths of forty individuals, much more injuries, imprisonment, repression and summary dismissal of some members of Alle from public jobs<sup>1</sup>.

My interest to do my master studies on southern Ethiopia was developed with my own experiences in some of conflicts in the region. My reading of some research works on different cases of the conflicts in the region by scholars (eg. Lovise Aalen 2008; Sarah Vaughan, 2006; Asebe Regassa, 2007) also encouraged me to focus in the region. But the specific selection of the case of the Alle people was initiated by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council report.

Thus, in this thesis using perspectives from studies on politics of identity/political ethnicity and peace studies, I examine the continued grievances and quest of the Alle people and the rise of conflicts and violence in the area. The data consists of secondary sources chiefly from historical and ethnographic studies, and my own interviews, observation as well as experiences from other conflicts among their neighbours, i. e between Konso and Dirashe peasants.

I made my effort to search this case despite the fact that an official permit on politically sensitive issues in the country is very limited. Even when such permission is available, there is limited access to the conflict context owing to its peripheral location with limited means of transport.

---

<sup>1</sup> On 2008 Special report by Ethiopia Human Right Council (<http://www.ehrco.org/>) and my informants also confirmed the report.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The overall objective of this thesis is to examine the place of Alle ethnic minority in Ethiopian institutional orders in an ongoing state building process in the country. But a particular focus is given to the continued expression of grievance and quest for autonomy despite current constitutional provisions on individual and collective rights, and causes of conflicts and violence in their land.

The specific objectives of this thesis are to:

- Examine aspects of intra-ethnic and interethnic relationships and interactions of the Alle people
- Discuss basic sources of grievances and continued quest for autonomy despite constitutional provisions on individual and collective rights.
- Examine the onset of violence and its implication

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This study argues that the grievance of the Alle people have to be placed in historical-cultural, socio-economic, political and spatial contexts. This can enable us to analyse the extent of grievances: continuity and change over time. More importantly, it has to be seen from impact of current state policies and power on conditions on life and expectations of people but also from specific debate and interactions, internal factions within the Alle people and in their interethnic relation, ordinary people, clan elders, traders, politicians and bureaucrats and their relatives and associates. Thus, in this thesis I will seek answer to the following questions:

- What did the Alle intra-ethnic and interethnic interaction look like and what change is taking place?
- Why do not individual and collective rights provided in the current constitution redress the grievances of the Alle people?
- How was violence created, and what were the implications

## 1.4 Outline

The remaining parts of the thesis are organized into five chapters. The second and third chapters deal on methodological and theoretical issues, respectively. In the methodology chapter, I give special attention to how I have gained access to information in my research context where official permit is not easily achievable and that research fields are remote and inaccessible due to lack of transport. Here, I have also tried to implicate the nature and usage of secondary data pertinent to this study. In the theoretical chapter, concepts such as intergroup conflicts and violence, identity/ethnic identity, politics of identity and minority are examined and analysed. Even though I adapted a specific *transactionist* model in my case studies, a particular focus is given to show how institutional traditions affect the interactions. Thus, in the fourth chapter, I have reviewed and analysed institutional traditions of the Ethiopian state, i.e how state building affected the interaction, identities and relationships of individuals and groups of peoples and the implications of conflicts and violence, particularly in current Ethiopia. The fifth chapter presents discussion and examination on aspects of intra-ethnic and interethnic interaction, implications of past governance, the gulf in the constitutional provisions and the continued quest of Alle as well as the causes of conflict and violence in the area. The examination in this chapter also implicates possible violation of basic human and collective rights. The last chapter revisits the theoretical issues, general background and empirical discussion in line with the research questions and derive the relevance to peace studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO: FIELD EXPERIENCES AND METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on pre-fieldwork research design, my field experiences, and methodological aspects and nature of secondary sources. I have to note here that my methodological inspiration comes from peace studies that focus on integrated approaches based on empirical, critical and more importantly constructive insights.

### **2.1 Reflection on Research Design and Safety Measures**

I was made aware of some important precondition before going into the field in a course designed for such purpose at the peace centre. Thus, I was conscious of risks inherent in the field, specially in cases that involves conflict. I was also made aware to design my research in line with ethical guidelines, to share ideas with my supervisor and my fellow students. I believe it was a critical phase to my field work because it enabled me to make a realistic calculation of potential risks associated with the field site. It also helped me to consider an alternative research plan and practical measures that should be taken before data collection. Thus I made significant changes to my original research design. Scott Meyer (2007:113) echoes this need for caution. Having himself experienced a dire and emotional situation during his fieldwork, he urges the importance of research design before leaving for the field.

One of the important insights that I have got from the research design is the issue of ethnical guidelines. The guidelines are of course of a general kind but I think it made me aware of specific local ethical ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ in the field work. It also helped me to focus on the actual research rather than creating my own safety measures on the site. It also increased my confidence to decide on issues to minimize risks. In fact, I was expected to comply with ethical guidelines. When I left for fieldwork I brought an official letter from the University of Tromsø. I found it very important in my negotiation with officials at all levels in order to get access; but it is also important to rethink the content of the letter. For example, I met strong challenges from regional officials in Ethiopia for the existence of the term ‘conflict’ in my research topic in the letter from the university. The implication of this challenge is that research access on an ongoing conflict is limited to researchers. Once I was in the field I met a new ongoing conflict between Konso and Dirashe peasants. Even if my study focus was on

the quest and conflict related to Alle people, which was earlier than this conflict, I also gained experiences from this new conflict. This issue is important to me in relation to the Alle case in order to understand the local dynamics conflicts in the areas.

Another important point is that it is nearly always necessary to revisit original conventional research design that focuses on fixed or orderly collection of data in line with predefined theory. Such method assume ideal field situation in which the researcher enjoys trust, stability, security, order etc (Meyer, 2007). However, in contexts like my research site, such conditions rarely exist as there are high degrees of personal and public insecurity in the area due to an ongoing conflict. Thus apart from use of the conventional techniques I also used informal tactics and skills to negotiate with the dangerous circumstances, while keeping in mind both the sensitivity to the local culture and theoretical frame at hand during the design.

## **2.2 Negotiating Access**

Securing access to fieldwork has great implications on the confidence of the researcher and cost and time usage in the field. For a beginner, negotiating access is not an easy task. Inability to do this can lead to frustration and even to the cancelation of a research topic (Gokah, 2006: 9). Even when access is negotiated, some officials might postpone their meeting time and/or refuse to be interviewed. As Theophilus Gokah (2006) asserts, such cases are very common in sub Saharan African Countries where officials often refuse to share some key data because of political repercussion, fear of being labelled as anti-government and its consequence. Even if I am ‘familiar’ with the general context of the region being from the same region, I faced tough challenges from both officials and some bureaucrats. In this aspect, Gokah (2006: 5) rightly assert that even if familiarity with research site is advantageous, risks associated to a ‘familiar’ researcher in the field work are unpredictable because of risks associated with suspicion, political climate and local culture. Even what is considered ‘insider’ is not true in a country with diverse ethnic groups. In such context, the notion of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ have a little significance as categorization on ethnic, religious, and political lines makes the interaction among them difficult even compared with the outsider.

Constitutionally, current Ethiopia regions are autonomous. Thus I did not waste time to secure access from federal government. Rather, I decided to negotiate with regional officials to carry out my research. I thought their explicit support is of paramount importance for access to any interviewees, the foreseeable and inherent risks to my safety at the fieldwork. But my effort to get an official letter in local language was not successful even if they gave me implicit support to access the field. In this aspect, key officials in the region do not want to take responsibility in my research. Even those who were accessible were not willing to be interviewed for fear of political repercussion. Some of the regional officials blamed publication of research on websites by different individuals on sensitive issue like conflict, or excused for the existence of term ‘conflict’ in my letter from the University of Tromsø or the existence of ongoing conflict in the field. As Dermot Feenan (2002: 151) underlined, my contact with various NGOs and civil servants was important to me. Through a local NGO working with USAid on conflict in the region I was able to get invaluable information and informants as well as using the ‘snowball’ technique to access potential respondents. I was also able to get official views and policies at the conference held in Arbaminch, administrative centre of Gamo Gofa zone. This conference was arranged by NGOs and officials with an aim to end ongoing conflict between Konso and Dirashe peasants. Even if they are not empowered to do research on ongoing conflicts, my negotiation with SNNPRS council’s conflict prevention research theme was vital to get some of their inquiry on the issue and access to their library.

To me negotiation with local officials was not as complex as on regional level. Both in Dirashe and Konso, officials were willing to be interviewed. But I did get important records or access to interview within local prisons. Their preoccupation with the ongoing conflict did not allow me to interview them in depth. But my participation at the local conference helped me to get their general views about the conflict in the area. They also directed me cooperated with me directing to elders and civil servants for interview. Even though my newness to the communities, lack of regional official support, and news of ongoing violence increased the sense of insecurity to me, I was able to find field assistants and informants among civil servants and others who shared their story or indicated key informants. Some of them are those who knew me in my home Dilla University where I have served as assistant staff, others were attracted hearing my research theme just to share their story. Despite a wide suspicion and mistrust among members of different ethnic groups, especially between

members of Dirashe and Alle ethnic groups, my being from outsider was relevant to me to win their confidence. In my personal relationship with some of the teachers, I was able to meet with students from rural areas and through them members of their community such as elders, clan leaders and others who otherwise are deeply suspicious of any outsider. Since Amharic is spoken by most people in the town areas in the region, I did not meet any significant challenges in my negotiation or interviews. In a few instances, I relied on translators of local languages.

### **2.3 My Position as a Researcher, the Informants, Social Context and Techniques**

In this section I will attempt to illustrate my role in the field as a researcher, how I managed to collect data in a context where there is mutually exclusive interpretations of the event, fresh memory of violence and ongoing conflict. I think social context/reality being studied, the nature of relationship between the researcher and the subject or what can be known and the method that researcher go about finding out whatever he or she believe can be known are very crucial in any social science research.

I believe my presence as a researcher cannot be said value-free. Thus, in line with social constructivist approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105), meanings are constructed in the interaction with others. Unlike an old naturalist view that presupposes zero level interaction between researcher and social reality, knowledge in fieldwork is thus created through a personal interaction with those who are researched in a certain context. The position I adopted in my fieldwork was interpreting the action and behaviour of the subject in relation to the issue under study. I made my effort to understand the experience of various informants rather than imposing my view on them. In this aspect, I attempted to see the theories I employed in light of the experiences from the fieldwork. In other words, the fieldwork I carried out was not designed to test the theories even though I highly depended on the theory to interpret my data.

However, studies on social issues are not doomed to be utterly subjective and relative. Whatever relative language one might employ to justify one reason or method over another, as Johan Galtung (1996: 15) asserts there is always public scrutiny by others on bases of observable or reasonably justifiable means. I believe there is no need to use ‘language game’



or relativity to favour an oppressive institutional order/power, or to know or justify death and injure or to hide suffering of people.

Thus, my position as a researcher in the field was with an explicit rational and value of peace which influenced my interaction with my informants. In line with many peace researchers, my selection and analysis of theoretical frame for the study and my interview with the informants were not desired to reflect dualistic and logified views. But rather to highlight the importance of the ongoing interactions, intersubjective realities, in which each views and actions are contested, negotiated and compromised for the creation of peace. Thus the intent of peace study is to influence culture in nonviolent ways using a progressive, pragmatic and holistic method that are based on empirical, critical and constructive insights (Thoresen, 2007: 154). Thus my data include those that range from descriptive to interpreted one such as feeling and emotion of the informants.

In fact, research on a conflict context pose a serious challenge to a researcher owing to divergent views that people hold on the same issue. In such context, as Anthony Robben (1996) assert, it is a difficult to talk to victims of violence on one occasion and to perpetrators on the another, while keeping significant detachment (cited by Baumann, 2007: 7). I avoided too much association with every impression of the informants. By so doing, I also attempted critically to interview my informants about their reasons or justification of event that could be construed as cause of the event. My study relied on interviews from officials, civil servants, traders and 'ordinary' citizens. I have also included views from members of opposition party and local based NGOs. My relationship with them was abided by the ethics of 'do no harm' to the safety, dignity or privacy of the informants.

I was conscious of a gender dimension of my informants during my fieldwork. This helped me to avoid 'male bias' in fieldwork that claims 'males in other culture are more accessible to outsiders (especially for male outsider) for questioning' (Reiter, 1975 quoted by Moore, 2000: 171). But I did not escape the other type of bias-the one that is inherent in the society being studied. In my field setting worldview of men and women are considered similar. Women are rarely expected to express their views. In fact, I had interview with some women who expressed their views on the issues. I also got chance to get their insight during the conference.

In my attempt to find out data in the field, I employed various qualitative data collection techniques. I chiefly used interview, focused group discussion, observation and informal conversation and textual analysis. The interview I conducted included chiefly open ended ones. I made focused group discussion with civil servants who belonged to the Alle ethnic group. Even if the issue does not directly implicate the Alle case, I participated as a passive observant in the conference held in Arbaminch. My use of recorded media was very limited owing to sense of insecurity of my informants. I have included statistics related to population. The fieldwork covered only two months from June 2009 to first week of August 2009.

## **2.5 Reflection on Secondary Sources**

My study on the quest for local autonomy by the Alle ethnic minority focuses on the period after the 1991 political reform, with a particular emphasis on constitutional rights of ethnic groups, especially minority ethnic groups and their practical expressions. The study also investigates intergroup conflict and violence between Alle and Dirashe ethnic groups. Moreover, this study is placed on historical context of the country.

In my effort to consult secondary sources pertinent to Ethiopian context, I met tough challenges. The past political, historical and cultural accounts of the country are based on the point of view of “the imperial ruling class, chiefly northerners<sup>2</sup>, essentially the Amhara” (Aalen 2008: 28). The ‘imperialist view’ which has been dominant from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 1980s mentions little about the dominated groups who were victim of empire creation process. However, as of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this view has been challenged by an alternative point of view by educators from competing ethnic groups and others who, radically or constructively reflected on cultural, political and economic lives of dominated groups. The 1974 popular revolution of the country which ended the monarchical political ideology of the Ethiopian empire state has reinforced the growth of the alternative view. In reality both interpretations usually present polarized and ideologically laden views. It is true that history can only be written from present perspective and no one claim freedom from ‘ideology’. But in the Ethiopian context, as Christopher Clapham (1975: 281) rightly

---

<sup>2</sup>, In this thesis the term ‘north’ is in reference to ‘Christian kingdom’ or ‘Abyssinia’ / Amhara-Tigray nation state in contrast to ‘south’ which stands to different peoples that were incorporated into the Ethiopia empire state.

put it: “the reading of the past... appear to be coercively linked to the different expectations each group is advancing for its own imagined self in the country’s future”. Those dominant and alternative interpretations do not highlight the importance of constructive relationship and interdependence of the peoples. Thus, it is difficult to find written sources on the point of view of minorities on the conquests of northerners towards the south in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, other than in the memory, which has been the key means of transferring information in those areas.

Nevertheless, one can find accounts of foreign scholars or travellers who witnessed the conquests in person or sometime after. Rich ethnographic studies in southern Ethiopia came chiefly as after the Second World War though such studies carry old theoretical views, i.e, essentializing ethnic groups or even sub groups as a ‘stable’ and ‘bounded’ cultural communities, thereby deemphasising the link between ethnic groups as well as between ethnic groups and state actors. With the 1991 political reform, which is based on the idea of ethnic federalism with an intended aim to end power imbalance between ‘dominant groups’ and ‘dominated ones’, most emerging studies focus on opportunities and challenges of this reform. Many scholars have studied on institutional frameworks and its practice (eg. Lovise Aalen, 2006, 2008; Assefa Fiseha, 2006; Merera Gudina, 2003). In anthropological inspired literatures, this period also marked a significant shift from deemphasising the link to focusing on the relationship between groups. Recent anthropological literature is also a significant contribution to conceptions such as ‘marginalized minorities’ or “occupational outcast” in the countries (eg. Hermann Amborn, 2009; Elizabeth Watson, 2006, 2009). Thus, the discussion on the general setting came from diverse sources, with various views and ideologies. For my research work on minority, I got invaluable insight from different works by Kjetil Tronvoll, especially on ‘a Minority Group Report entitled: ‘Ethiopia a New Start?’ (2000).

I could not find detailed historical or ethnographic studies on Alle people. In fact, I was able to find some unpublished sources and surveys on sociolinguistic aspects of the Alle people. Part of my writing on specific culture of the Alle came from comparative ethnographies in areas of Konso, Dirashe and Alle.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMES**

This chapter sets the theoretical framework for the empirical investigation. The main concept that I used as analytic tool is politics of identity/political ethnicity, thereby emphasising its roles in modern state making processes, its relation with ideologies, and its impact on the interaction between different peoples, especially ethnic minorities within modern political state. Different concepts, models and controversies which are associated with politics of identity are reviewed based on insights from the methods of peace studies which, as I have already described in the previous chapter, emphasise integrated approaches based on empirical, critical and more importantly constructive insights so that it may help us to understand intergroup conflict and violence that emerge in state-ethnic group relation or between different groups within the same state structure. Thus, this chapter is divided into four sections, respectively, reviews and analysis of the conception of intergroup conflict, identity/ethnic identity, politics of identity/political ethnicity and its relation to ideology, and conception of minorities in an African context.

### **3.1 Intergroup Conflict**

The concept of conflict is ambiguously applied in innumerable contexts. Conflict may range from ‘intrapersonal dilemma’ to violent confrontation which can lead to an elimination of another person or groups of persons. It is ever-present phenomena in the societies of people and it is almost impossible to get rid of it. It may be viewed that conflict may serve as sources of development. But such conception is helpful as long as conflicts are limited to interactions among different groups or individuals who have conflicting interests or goals rather than violent conflicts between them.

Conflict has ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ dimensions which are intricately interwoven with each other. On the objective side, it may appear as conflicts over power or resources. Subjectively, it can be seen as expressions of emotion, identities and symbols, etc (Hewstone and Cairns, 2001: 325). Thus, intergroup conflict involves two or more groups with enduring features of interests or goals, which may be expressed as material or in other ways. In his ‘triangular’ model of conflict and violence Galtung (1996) maintains that there exists an

intergroup conflict if there are evident violent behaviours, contradicting attitudes and goals simultaneously. Even if it is usually difficult to find the goals from competing attitudes and interests in violent contexts, his model of violence shows that violence takes place in the context, where there is denial of access to resources for survival or well being; when there is political repression, detention, marginalization and expulsion; and interference in one's need to identity or socialization or equal citizenship (Galtung, 1996: 197). Galtung also assert that violence has an ideological origin in attitudes or beliefs in aspect of 'culture' (i. e in adopted beliefs of politics, economic, religious, expression, etc) which in turn legitimize institutions and direct use of forces, essentially to keep one's own position of privileged status and eliminate individuals or groups that are conceived as a threat to the existing 'social structure' or 'institutionalised order'. Seen from this perspective, dominant actors' focus on ideology that sustain suppressive institutions/structure is essentially to create an impression on the dominated individuals or groups that institution/structure are 'natural', while such institution/structure can be reformed and remade based on the interests of a given people.

I need to emphasise here that intergroup relationships are embedded in complex setting. Conflict and violence that emerge in such setting do have temporal and spatial dimensions that shape them in unique ways. Conflicts emerge as a result of different backgrounds and trigger events. Each context is distinctive and has a particular relationship with its historical setting. According to Hugh Miall (2007: 33) social change or restructuring social lives brings emergent conflict and threat of violence if it is not handled carefully or transformed peacefully. In other words, social restructuring that is destined for ideological consumption rather than for collective goods is likely to create emergent conflict between polarised groups and subgroups. This is because such groups and subgroups are defined on bases of interests, spatial position, values, identity and do react to change in the society in different ways. In fact, the reaction of different individuals or groups is not confined to the actions and policies of state actors but also in relative moves and positions of other groups, and such responses are "shaped by their past history which they carry with them" (2007: 34).

In spite of the nature of group (eg., ethnic, class, gender, civic group, etc), I argue that the perspectives analysed above are very essential to critically examine conflicts that involves state structure/authorities and different interactive groups within state.

### **3.2 Identity, Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Identity**

These concepts are marred by controversies. The meanings of identity, ethnic groups or ethnic identity have changed over time. In original sense, in psychological and anthropological or sociological literatures, identity (self) or ethnic identity implied 'sameness', i.e 'selfsameness' in reference to personality characters established in the early childhood, and 'ethnic sameness' as expressed in sharing of the same language, culture etc. The two conceptions are not contradictory, rather mutually complementary and in both senses imply unity and similarities. However, this fixed view has been reconceptualised since both 'selfsameness' and 'ethnic sameness' are influenced in the relationship between agents and structure/power, and contributing to the creation of multiple identities and differences (Söckfeld, 1999: 417). Despite the challenge that arises due to fluidity and flexibility of identity and controversies on its normative expression, identity is an important analytic tool for conception of social interaction and construction of society and culture (shared norms, code of conduct and practices).

Identity or identification process enable humans to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively "...[to] know who's who and what's what" (Jenkins, 2008: 13). The process of identification entails categorization of things and persons and associating oneself with something or someone though such process it not neutral as it opens a way for dichotomization, creation of similarities and difference at the same time. Identity does not determine human behaviours nor does it allow one to predict who do what. This is because a social agent works on hierarchies of identification; and these hierarchies are not always expressed in consistent ways, and the relationship between interests and identification is too complex to make easy prediction about the individual behaviour (ibid, Aalen, 2008: 191, Schlee, 2009: 1).

Thus, viewed from individual perspective, there are varieties of identities, which mean that the individual belongs to several categories and groups of people at the same time or at different times. When a certain category or label becomes a major form of group formation, then it serves as a group or collective identity and can create a social bond between individuals and the group, which may vary based on time and space. Such collective identity may also assume a contested category by members of the group or by outsiders.

Richard Jenkins (2008) in his reading on the theories of Erving Goffman, Fredrik Barth and others gives an important model that is important to my study. Jenkins note that the world as constructed and experienced by humans can be viewed from three distinct and yet unified ‘orders’: the ‘individual order’ that is the human world as made up of embodied individuals [i.e within space and time] and what-goes-on-in-their mind; the ‘interactional order’ that is the relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people; the ‘institutional order’ that is world of pattern and organization, of established-ways-of-doing-thing (Jenkins, 2008: 39). Thus, humans and their actions can be seen from different perspectives, ‘paying attention to different stuff: the embodied individual, interaction and institutions, respectively’. The embodied individuals are unique and variable, i. e flexible individuals who, as Goffman (1969) theorized, present uneven or variable ‘self’ in private and public arenas (cited by Jenkins 2008: 42). The ‘institution order’ implicates creation of frame for interaction between different individuals and collectives, i. e it constitute the values attained in intersubjective or by mutual consensus between different individuals and collective involved in the interaction. Here, it is important to note the difference between Barth and Jenkins that Barth (1969) focuses on subjective views which can be attained in the interaction, while Jenkins (1994, 2008) focuses on external categories mainly by authorities who control the collective institutions which is more consequential than identification processes that entails individual and interaction orders. Barth’s view is more oriented to shape the future constructively based on the interests of the people than explaining the current reality while Jenkins’s focus is to show realistic effects of structural factors on the people. In my case study, I employ the *transactionist* (subjective) model of Barth. I also consider the effects of institutional order on the views of the peoples as what is being ‘observed’ helps us create what is ‘desirable’ (Galtung, 1996: 15). In this aspect, I focus both on historical and present process of creation and recreations of institutions in Ethiopia. The aim is just to show how the processes of institution building in the country have influenced existing identities, interactions and their contribution to rise of conflicts and violence.

The implication from identification process is that ethnic identity focuses on only one particular type of categories, i.e ethnic that is seen as a key marker of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is relational as it is defined in relation to other groups or identities (Eriksen (1991:264). Ethnic identity often used to refer many socio cultural phenomena. However, in this thesis, in line with Fredrick Barth (1969) ethnic group is simply referred to as a group of

people who is self-ascribed and recognized by others. Important elements in ethnic identity are language and a notion of 'shared ancestry'. As Jenkins (2008) notes language has a strong link with identities in early socialization process and it is one of the identity marks though it is an unreliable mark of ethnicity (Cohen, 2006: 171). It is well known the works of Barth (1969), et al. that there is no one-to-one relationship between culture, language and ethnicity. In this aspect, cultural differences cut across ethnic boundaries, and ethnic identity concerns only socially sanctioned notions of culture differences or 'shared ancestry'. This notion explains cases where different ethnic groups can have the same culture, and members of the same ethnic group can have different culture. Here, it is important to review some of the debates that have existed for sometime among social scientists especially in the field of anthropology and political sciences on conception of culture, ethnic identity and its relation to state. There are different variants of debates, but I consider two: i. e "primordialism" versus "instrumentalism" and "essentialism" versus "constructivism" which are related to each other.

### **Primordialism versus Instrumentalism**

The "primordial" view which is based on the conventional perception that members of ethnic groups share common culture, language, religion, history and tradition. This view focuses on the binding power of ethnic identity (Eriksson, 2001: 44). The implication of a primordial point of view is that "cultural commonalities of ethnic group members, which are seen as stable and constant, are the main characteristics and the reason for common action of the group" (Aalen, 2008: 29). An instrumentalist defence to these views was that political entrepreneurs manipulate kinship and cultural symbols to mobilize people seeking political gains (Eriksen, 2001: 44). In reality, as Günther Schlee (2009: 1) notes, both these conceptions need each other to exist. An attempt to manipulate identities for political and economic interests start from pre-existing identifications, and the exiting options of those who have means to shape the form and social identities at any time is limited by social givens which in turn are reconstructed.



## **Essentialism versus Constructivism**

The “essentialist” and “constructivist” debate involve a question whether ethnic or national communities are constructed more or less consciously or whether they grew out from pre-existing organic cultural communities. Prominent scholars on nationalism studies hold different views on the issues. For instance, Anthony D. Smith (1991) argues for both pre-existing ethnies and influences of modernity on it, while Ernest Gellner (1997) argues for a view that nation is purely a modern creation via industrialization and modern state formation. While definition of nation by Gellner work for “ethnic groups who either control a state or who have leaders wish to do so”, the definition of nation based on a view of abstract ‘imagined community’ by Anderson (1983) does not necessary link nation with a specific ethnic group. They agree that by the very definition nations are linked with state, whether they are imagined or based on a common ethnic identity (cited by Eriksen 2001). To my conception the process of definition/ construction is relevant as it cannot be considered inconsequential; i. e the definition involves various degrees of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, here below I review the politics of identity definition or construction and its implication to conflict and violence.

### **3.3 Politics of Identity/Political Ethnicity**

Since ethnic identity is relational, it is marked by *differences* and *similarities*, which are in fact interwoven with each other. Politics of differences and similarities between individuals and collectives have a potential to exclude significant others as it is related to interests, material or otherwise. Indeed, as psychologist M. P. Brewer (1997) suggest it may be manifested as a common element of any group in a conflicting context (Hewstone and Cairns, 2001: 324). In such context, despite internal difference all members of the group are seen similar to self, which in turn express in-group favouritism and in-group-out-group social comparison based on competition rather than focusing on similarities with out-group. Collective actors exercise various degrees of inclusion and exclusion, i. e people can identify with other people as the same or different in wider or narrow sense. They can define wider relationship with others when it is advantageous to individual or collective actors. For example, they may emphasis aspects of relationship with significant others who may influence their status, in other sense “it may be preferable for a group to keep their own

numbers small, when they do not wish to share their resources” (Schlee, 2009: 1). Thus, as Günther Schlee (2009: 1) note, successful politics of identity involves inclusion and exclusion and “the capacity to switch from one of these discourses to the other”. In reality, collective identifications may not be simply explained by interests. This is because change in their composition may lead to changing perceptions of shared interests.

In this thesis, in line with the definition given by Eriksen (2001: 43) politics of identity is understood as “political *ideology*, organization, and action that openly represents the interests of designated groups based on ‘essential’ characteristics such as ethnic origin or religion, and whose legitimacy lies in the support of important segments of such groups. Membership in such groups is generally ascribed, unlike membership in other political groups (like socialists, liberal and trade union, etc)”. The concept of ‘ideology’ has double implications. On the one hand, ideology serves to legitimize a particular power structure. On the other hand, ideology has a potential to mobilize people since it makes sense of the immediate experience of the followers. Thus, ideologies entail values and ideals, and as systems, they create logical connection between ideals, justify structures and promise betterment to the followers. Even if ideology is essentially modern in its conscious expression via human agents, i.e. political leaders and social activists develop and utilize ideologies to mobilize people, its essence can also be traced in traditional contexts whereby traditional leaders mainly using culture mobilize the members of the group. In contemporary period, most societies exist within modern state structure; thus here below focus is given on modern political state and its ideologies and the implication in a multiethnic context. My general view is that people must be freely exposed to various ideologies from which they can choose since, as Eriksen (1991: 264) remarks, experience of ideologies is not confined to the major political actors but is embedded within the interaction between different people.

### **3.3.1 Politics of Identity and Ideology**

The politics of identity/political ethnicity presupposes ideology of modern nation-state and its practical realization, i. e. nationalism. Ideally, nationalism emerged as a dominant ideology of nation-state which spread with growth of commerce, industrialization, evolution of weapons of warfare and globalization in western world since 17<sup>th</sup> century. The process gradually subsumed local identities within a larger state identity, thereby integrating different peoples

economically, culturally and politically. In most context, nationalism appeared aggressive and expansionist. Since the modern state is ideally ‘ethnically’ uniform, that ideal has spread all over the world as well. In an ‘imagined’ sense, nationalism appeals to universal norms such as justices and equality to citizens. It also promises to give equal education, jobs, health and security etc. Nationalism characterise what Eriksen (1991) call ‘binary’ division in which social categorisation is made only between citizen and non citizen. Nation state present itself as fair and just, and operate on a principle of impersonal loyalty democratically and bureaucratically. Nation state also monopolizes legitimate use of violence over its sovereign territories.

The ideal of nation state inherently entails ‘ethnic conflicts’ as individual and collective identities are reshaped and reformed in the process of state creation. That is, the rise of nation-state as an ideal is itself one of the causes of identity based conflict. Nevertheless, as this ideal of the nation-state came to be seen as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’, the persistence of ethnically distinct groups within states came to be seen as problematic, and its ordinary members and elites were suppressed and discriminated through political and bureaucratic structures (Wimmer, 1997). In reality almost all states in the world are ‘multiethnic’; nevertheless, not all states had experienced conflicts that involve social identities, specifically ethnic identities. Eriksen (1991: 268) argues “such conflicts involves when agents act according to particularistic systems of segmentary oppositions, which either contribute to inequality or are justified by perceptions of inequality, and where invocations of cultural differences can serve to account for such strategies”. The system of segmentary opposition<sup>3</sup> is related to allegiances based on particularistic family ties, clans, lineages, ethnic identity, etc. Segmentary ideology is narrower than binary ideology that has been advocated by nation states. The former entails degree of inside and outsideness while the latter has mutually exclusive categories (insider and outsider). Even if segmentary ideology is incompatible with the ideal of modern states, it can have positive values for peaceful expression of cultural differences in a multiethnic context as long as the state apparatus is not politicised or monopolized by a single group (Eriksen, 1991: 276). As I will discuss in chapter four, the ideologies of nationalism and ethnicity have a particular importance in Ethiopia both in

---

<sup>3</sup> A model originally developed by Evans- Pritchard (1940) in his research among Nuer of Southern Sudan, see Eriksen, 1991: 268. Eriksen developed it and contrast it with ‘binary ideology’ which is better because of its degree of inclusiveness.

historical and current contexts, especially in current context where the essence of ‘binary’ and ‘segmentary’ ideology operate formally in the country.

Studies of political identities and group conflict in modern societies have shown that conflicts between different groups invariably involve perception of scarcity and struggle to retain or attain hegemony or equality (Eriksen 2001: 46; Wimmer, 1997: 651). In this view what is often called ‘ethnic conflicts’ emerge during struggles for economic, political, legal and symbolic resources of modern nation-state. Political conflicts among different political actors shape into ethnic forms when the resources of modern state are unequally distributed along ethnic lines, particularly when minority groups are excluded. This gives room for politicisation of ethnic identity, which in turn associates political loyalty into ethnic membership and affiliations. This is because individuals are usually forced to identify with ethnic category which is now become politically relevant. Such a context also restricts expressions of multiple identities.

Two types of majority-minority relations are often identified: context where there is clear-majority state as can be exemplified from most Western states. The experiences from many western state show that historically minorities were in most cases forced to assimilate with the mainstream societies or segregated from social and state lives. In such context stability secured via forceful imposition or via instrumental manipulation such as offering job and post to members of minorities (Niemi, 2006: 23-24). In current context, however, western states recognize and endorse ‘multinationalism’, connecting prime significance to human rights and civic equality in line with notion of binary ideology and at the same time recognizing and giving some form of autonomy to minorities and/or indigenous people. Even if not all countries in the west endorse it in the sense that “each national group is able to maintain itself as a distinct and self-governing society and culture”, according to Will Kymlicka (2006: 33) the shift to a democratic ‘multinational federation’ with especial right to minorities or indigenous people is explained in terms of increased confidence among the mainstream societies that minorities could not become a national threat, a confidence enhanced with improved cross border security. Kymlicka also note a crucial factor which is stressed by many other researchers (Wimmer, 1997) that most states in the west offer social security, legal protection and welfare for all citizens irrespective of their ethnic background. Thus, political elites in west almost do not rely on ethnic group for political support and legitimacy.

The other type of relationship between different peoples within a state can be exemplified from the African context where there are major competing ethnic groups, which are varying in size but does not alone assume majority in a state. In this context, ethnicification of bureaucracy takes a form of both ethnic and informal (especially patronage) network which cut across ethnic alliance. In the poorest states, owing to limited resources or misuse of the existing resources, political elites engage not only in competition over resources but also in reshaping or redefining collective identities and legitimation (Wimmer, 1997). My worry is that the prevailing conception of majority-minority in Africa which only recognizes the competing elites than existence of ethnic dominance does overlook the relative position of ethnic minorities in Africa. To further elaborate this view, I have presented below the conception of minority in African context.

### **3.3.2 The Conception of Minority and Indigenous People, their Claims and African Context**

The conceptions of ‘minority’ and ‘indigenous’ are contested. Here I consider some selected definitions and claims associated to minority or indigenous rights with particular reference to the African context. Minority Rights Group (1990: xiv) defined minority as: ‘...a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members-being nationals of the state-posses ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language’ (quoted by Eriksen, 1991: 320). The problem of this definition is that it tends to directly associate the size of people with power which is relevant only in a ‘democratic’ context where majority views are accepted without affecting the rights of minority. It is suggested (see Eriksen 1992: 320, Henrard, 2001: 21) that this definition does not reveal cases where a minority group dominate over majority or the condition of a majority in such context. Henrard (2001) further suggest that the reference to ‘the rest of the population of a state’ does not necessary be a monolithic group (as most cases of western state), but the concept minority can be applied to a multiethnic or national state (like the African context) where there is no group that alone constitute a majority of the population. In such context various distinct non dominant groups in state are minority as far as they want to keep their separate identity.

The concept 'indigenous' people is a more contested one. However, in historical term, there is general consensus that "indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who occupied a given territory that was invaded, conquered or colonized by white, colonial powers", essentially in straightforward reference to context of white colonial settler societies in North and South America and Australasia (Saugestad, 2001: 303). Although this view seem challenging with reference to an African context where all native Africans (mainly by decision makers but not necessary the people concerned) see themselves as 'indigenous' after independence from colonialism, Saugestad argue that linking the concept with a special kind of colonizers left us no analytic tool to deal with internal relationship that continued in Africa after liberation among different groups where distinct cultural and ethnolinguistic minorities found themselves in inaccessible and socially marginally position in relation to dominant groups who were often identified with the state. Saugestad (2001: 305) argue that the criteria being used by the United Nations Working group on Indigenous Populations can serve as a crucial frame to understand various cases of indigenous or minority people, especially when the concept is to be used flexibly. These criteria are: a priority in time in settlement or use of land, volunteer act to perpetuate cultural distinctiveness, experience of subjugation, marginalization dispossession, and self-identification.

Another essential ingredient that Saugestad suggest in the conception of indigenous people to minimize definitional confusion in Africa, is viewing it within relationship context. Basing her argument on the relational approach of Frederic Barth (1969), Saugestad note that the concept 'indigenous' is a relative term, especially in relation to state. I support this view, but it is also simplistic to dismiss minority claims relating it as claims of 'blood and soil'. Such attitude underestimates their capacity to live peacefully with others. It also ignores the historic rise of minority movements against discriminatory institutional practices that denied them 'equal treatment', essentially because of their identification with different social category than dominant model of nation state (Eidheim, 1969: 39-56; Niemi, 2006: 24). But Saugestad rightly note that the question of minority or indignity in Africa is intricately related with existential issues. Ethnic minorities in an African context exist in condition of poverty and deprivation, and have been denied access to basic social services and collective resources, and relegated to the bottom of the society in economic terms. This has been implicated in varied conflicts over basic economic resources such as agricultural land, pastures, forest and water as well as in struggles over the state to control key posts to

determine the course of societal relation. However, to argue that their needs are only political and economic interests is to deny their need to collective identities such as language, culture and religion, etc which were often suppressed by state policies. In spite of their agreement to binding international conventions for positive discrimination towards individuals belonging to minority or in their expression of collective identities (Cholewinski, 1988), most African national legal traditions do not genuinely conform to those conventions, or commit to its application in the context (Campbell, 2004: 6). Indeed, as Vesselin Popovski (2004) remark, most states in Africa or elsewhere focus on sovereignty at the expense human and collective rights of minorities which in turn further deteriorated their chance of survival.

As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter Ethiopia was not colonised by external European colonial power except for the Fascist Italian occupation of the country from 1936-41. But the nature of the Ethiopian state formation had shared some substance of the colonialism elsewhere in Africa. Currently, the country is experiencing competing ethnic nationalisms, in which ethnic identity has attained political relevance in the interaction of different peoples. My use of the concept minority/indigenous people is in relation to ethnic minority though it also applies to ethnic majority who have sustained minority status in modern Ethiopia state.

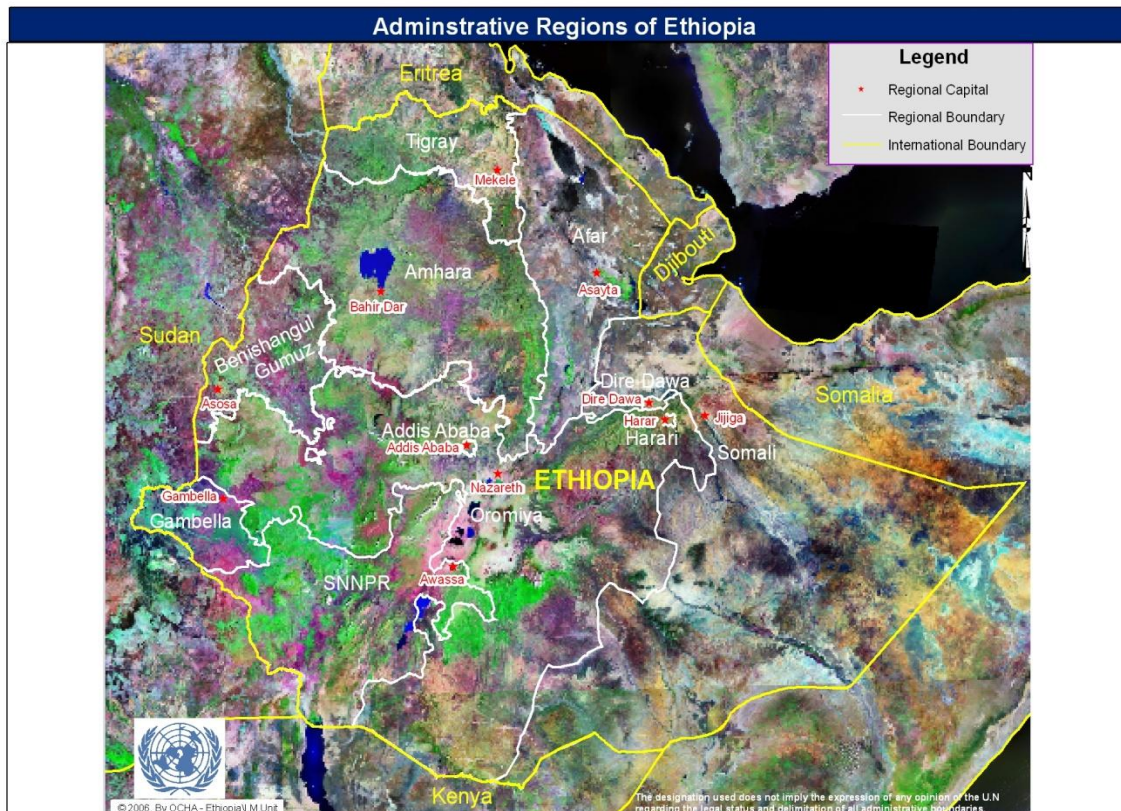
## CHAPTER FOUR: GENERAL SETTING

The aim of this chapter is to review and analyse ‘macro’ historical and political trends in Ethiopia. An important point of reference for our understanding of the creation of minorities and political ethnicity in Ethiopia is the expansion of the Christian Kingdom, often referred to as Abyssinia, from the northern part of the country to the southern and western regions which led to later the formation of the Ethiopian Empire state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the other words, even if Ethiopia avoided external white colonialism, thereby defying Italians attempt, the country has realized its current political boundary in a series of conquests by Christian kings, at the very time of scramble for Africa by colonial powers. Like other African countries, the Ethiopia state does not have ethnic or national groups that alone make majority; rather it has major and minor ethnic groups as well socially defined minorities.

Exclusion, marginalization and suppression of different identities and the struggle for self-determination or autonomy, conflicts between the state and different groups that were organized along ethnic or regional lines were features of the modern Ethiopian state. The restructuring of the Ethiopian state in line with ethnic federalism since 1990s by currently ruling party (EPRDF) came as a justification to address such problems and transform conflicts. Thus, in this chapter, I introduce a generalized review and analysis of how the process of definition of state or its creation have shaped the interaction between different individuals and groups of people in the past state order that relied on nationalism, and particularly in the current context where ‘redefined’ nationalism operates along with segmentary ethnic ideology and the implication it has for ethnic minorities in southern part of country including the Alle people that have been experiencing violent conflicts since 1990s. Thus, I divided the chapter into three diaconically reviewed and analysed sections that pay attention to significant aspects of the understanding of grievances, conflicts and violence among ethnic minorities: the Ethiopian state creation and imperial rule, the reconstruction of the imperial order by a socialist military regime since 1974 and radical restructuring along ethnic lines since 1991. I shall note here that the attention I paid to review essential past is to implicate the continuity that affects different individuals and collectives.



Map1. Administrative map of Ethiopia (source: UN OCHA)



#### 4.1 The Ethiopian State Formation and Making of Minorities

The modern Ethiopian state was created by an extension of the Amhara-Tigrayan nation state over other different peoples in eastern, southern and western parts of today's Ethiopia. The architect of the expansion and conquest was emperor Menelik II (1889-1913). He started the conquests from his Shewan province in which he enjoyed autonomous rule under the reigning Tigrayan Monarch, Yohannes IV (1872-1889). The resources he had from conquered peoples enabled him to buy more firearms from Europeans and stand as major runner to power and, after taking power from emperor Yahannes IV, to further extend the conquests to create a vast empire state (Adhana, 1994: 24). The advantageous access to firearms enabled Menelik to disrupt, in most instances violently and bloodily, different peoples and states with varying sizes. Thousands of Christian arms and civilians joined the campaign for economic reasons, essentially fleeing famine in the north. Resistance from the indigenous peoples was

corresponded by disruption and burning of their country, merciless killings or enslavement and looting animals (Marcus (1969) in Tronvoll, 2000: 13). No wonder, many authors claimed that Ethiopia avoided colonialism because its leaders engaged in it. The issue is also one of the key ingredients in current Ethiopian politics; i. e the conquest is being interpreted as ‘colonisation’ by those who aim for withdrawal from the state or ‘inclusion’/ ‘reunion’ by those who stand for the integrity of state. This debate is the discourse of political entrepreneurs from major ethnic groups who want to shape the state in their desired routes. As I present in different section of this chapter, ethnic minorities have not been allowed to express their views, rather minorities were collectively exposed to economic exploitation, socio-cultural and political domination by the Ethiopian leaders.

In the early decade of the 20th century, the newly incorporated peoples were chiefly administered by the nobility who helped to conquer the peoples and their lands. Even if in the Christian kingdom nobilities possessed only the rights to collect tribute from peasants, in the south they were given the land and the peoples they conquered (Adhana, 1994; Pausewang, 1994, 1997). These governors paid fixed tribute to the emperor exploiting tradable resources such as gold, ivory, coffee, slaves and civet musk in southwest and western parts of the country. Remote areas of the empire thus became the hunting ground for slave trade in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indigenous peoples were also forced to pay tribute such as livestock or honey and daily labour to governors and others court associated officials, tribute collectors, soldiers and civilian settlers. Policies of land alienation and settlement implemented among indigenous people made them landless and tenants for decades to come. The governors established different garrison centres [later emerged as town/*ketemma*] among the indigenous communities and administered the people, usually appointing local people-powerful families in the area or ritual leaders- to facilitate tribute and labour service [also referred as *gebar* labour] (Schlee and Watson, 2009: 24-25).

The empire builders brought to the indigenous people competing identities rather than building up on the existing ones. They imposed Amhara-Tigrayan<sup>4</sup> values (Orthodox Christianity, social custom and ideology, Amharic language) which were accepted or rejected in various degrees. This imposition was partly realized as the spread of those values and

---

<sup>4</sup> Amhara-Tigrean speaks Semitic languages; Christian kingdom had its own minorities such as Cushitic speaking people of Agew and others such as Falasha and Woyto

practice were corresponded by stereotyping values, culture and identities of different peoples in south (Blackhurst, 1980: 55). The stereotyping produced different derogatory labels, which in most cases had racial tone like *shanqilla* referring to all ‘black peoples’ in the south remote parts of the country in contrast to light skinned colours of the conquerors. In this aspect, Oscar R. Neumann, during his journey via southern Ethiopia in 1902 wrote in reference to parts of Alle and Mussiye people living west of the Gardula/administrative centre of Dirashe Special *woreda* that “Abyssinian... killed a lion, elephant, rhino, giraffe, or buffalo, and even a poor *shanqilla*, that is to say, any of their large game. I may here mention that the Abyssinians call *shanqilla* not only the tribe called Beni Shongul by the Arabs, living on [the Ethio-Sudanese borders], but all the Sudanese and black people living in the countries around Lake Rudolf and near the Omo. That is, all dark-colored people with the exception of the Somali and the [Oromo]” (Neumann, 1902: 385-86). Even though stereotyping have declined in subsequent decades, many of the stereotypes and discourses about ‘others’ persist and are also being used by peoples who were victims of such labels against each other. A wide scale settlement continued for decades, and shaped the construction of identities in south. With this process, the Amharic language, spread over the country, spoken chiefly in towns, and stood as the single language of court and administration as well as language to be learned and medium of instruction for students below the secondary level all over the empire (Merera, 2003[a]: 66).

The imperial rule only halted during the five year occupation of the country by the Fascist forces of Italians [1936-41]. The presence of Italian forces were welcomed by many peoples in the south as they disrupted the deeds of landlords and their associates to get legitimacy from the peoples as part of their plan to colonize the country. They built modern buildings in most of the towns already developed as garrison towns and linked them by roads. But their intervention did not affect much the construction of identities. Rather, the activities of a few missionaries from North America and Europe which were very limited in pre-Italian occupation had a far more reaching effect in shaping the identities in the south as an alternative to imposed identities. Evangelical Christianity was adapted by a few individuals in the southwest prior to Italian occupation, then rapidly spread among different peoples via activities of the native missionaries. In the same manner, Islam which had strong base in eastern and south central parts of the country was further cemented among the followers. But most peoples in remote areas continued to identify with their values and collective identities (Clapham, 1975).

The most intense form of modern state creation with inherent consequence to conflicts over identities was taking place in post Italian period. After the Italian were forced to leave the country by local patriotic resistance and support of the allied force of Second World War, Hailesellasié, who had been crowned as emperor in 1930, retook the throne after returning from five years exile in Great Britain. He furthered the modernisation process by encouraging education, industries, establishing health care and creating centralized tax system in place of tribute (Bahru, 1994: 34-35). He introduced modern administrative bureaucracy, created effective police and security forces and better information network and hence effectively restored the control over the peoples incorporated in the empire. He also used these institutions to control the nobility who had become rich and powerful over conquered regions and in other areas. This institution further consolidated his power which was already sanctioned in the first modern constitution he introduced in 1931 (Clapham, 1969: 113).

Nevertheless, the ideal of nationalism and modernization was built in a context where different peoples were brought into the empire and living under unequal terms. The industrialization policies of imperial regime further affected the indigenous people. The onset of commercial agriculture and cash crops evicted tenants from their remaining lands. Such programme also further enriched privileged nobility or officials and associate peoples from the centre who controlled trade activities in the country. The administrative bureaucracy also served members of the ruling groups, especially Amhara, essentially Shewans and relatively privileged provinces such as Tigray and Wollega (Clapham, 1975: 75-76). Ethnic minority areas that were divided into geographically defined administrative province (*tekelay gizat*), sub province (*awraja*) and district (*woreda*) were filled by individuals appointed by the emperor or his associates, but ‘outsider’ to the indigenous peoples. These individuals exercised personal powers and were least interested in development and even discouraged or stereotyped activities like blacksmithing and tannery (ibid).

Thus, despite their duty to the government, newly incorporated peoples especially in the remote areas of the country were denied basic services. The essence of ‘equality’ which was expanded with the modernization process bridging the gap between state and minorities in Western Europe or North America in inclusive sense almost did not exist in Ethiopia. In this aspect, public institutions during emperor Hailesellasié were confined at core areas in the country or towns settled by armies or settlers from north. The historian Harold Marcus (1983)

has noted that “by 1960...of the county’s 620 government elementary schools, 38 were in Addis Ababa, 126 were in Eritrea, and most of the remaining were in the north mainly in Amhara regions or in towns populated largely Amhara”<sup>5</sup>. In fact, there were some missionary schools in some areas of southern Ethiopia. However, they were confined to limited areas and non-existent among pastoral communities. Marcus (ibid) also identified similar trends within health services. He emphatically noted that “...there was the cloying and distressing fact that clinics, hospitals, orphanages and other social services were relatively over represented in the north and in Addis Ababa, and probably paid for by the southern tax monies”. The imperial system justified itself among indigenous peoples inducing reverence to the emperor, governors and associates, colourful discourse of the ideology of nationalism and unity, as well as systematic use of coercive mechanisms against any resistance from minorities in the name of sovereignty of the state (Clapham, 1969: 111-112).

In reality, due to excessive centralization measures by emperor Haileselassie, his rule marked the worsening of life for the northern peasants despite their relative degree of autonomy compared with southern counterparts. In relation to this, John Markakis (1973: 370) emphatically wrote that “...the northern Christian group is commonly referred to as being dominant in Ethiopia, a fair statement as far as it goes. To include the northern peasant masses in the designation ‘dominant’ is a gross distortion; however, they belong to this group in cultural and psychological terms only.” This note genuinely depicts the northern peasants as excessive taxes as well ecological hazards further deteriorated their life. Indeed, northern peasants were forerunners in defying authoritarian rule of the monarch.

#### **4. 1.1 Shewa as Unifying and Disintegrating Constituent**

In order to understand the continuity and change in the Ethiopian politics, it is significant to review the emerging nationalisms in the last days of imperial rule. After failing to fulfil its ideal, the Ethiopian state turned into a battle ground for competing nationalisms in which different ethnonational groups fought for collective state resources or to define their own state. In this emerging politics of identity, the place of Shewa is significant as the roles played by Shewans can be viewed as both unifying and disintegrating.

---

<sup>5</sup> Most in Eritrea were due to Italian colonialism (1890-1940) and later of British Military administration (1940-1952), i. e not due to the Ethiopian rulers construction.

Shewa was one of the Amhara provinces, relatively isolated from the centre in Gonder that was established in the northwest part of Ethiopia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Shewan province was weakened in different wars that Christian kings made with Muslims and Oromos in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Christian communities in Shewa developed their own local dynasty, aspects of localized identities, yet maintaining shared values such as the Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity. Menelik's conquest increased the interaction of different peoples in Shewa, producing mixture of different people in the area. Generation of mixed parents, particularly of Amhara and Oromo background including emperor HaileSELLASIE and his successor Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, who both came to dominate Ethiopian socioeconomic and political developments, were Shewans. Most of the Shewans who settled among ethnic minority areas, especially in towns, intermarried with locals.

Nevertheless, Shewa also emerged as a symbol of exclusion and domination to many nationalists such as the Tigreans, Oromo and other nationalists and minority groups who dissociate not only from Shewans but also from the Shewan created Ethiopian state. In terms of their relevance to current Ethiopian context, I present here Tigrean, Amhara and Oromo nationalisms.

The Tigrayan nationalism is significant because in the current context Tigrayan political actors have key roles in the Ethiopian state. The idea of ethnic federalism was also introduced by EPRDF, a coalition of four ethnic based political parties created and dominated by Tigrayan political actors (Aalen, 2006, 2008). In current context, the Tigrayans constitute about six percentages of about 74 million inhabitants in Ethiopia (2007 Eth. Census). Tigray province was centre of the ancient Christian kingdom Axum, where Orthodox Christianity was introduced and expanded. Despite their key role in the old Christian kingdom, since the death of emperor Yahannes IV in 1889, the Tigrayan elites have played secondary roles in modern Ethiopia and the people were marginalized especially after the creation of Tigrayan nationalism since 1970s. The Tigrayan nationalists dissociate themselves from the Shewan created Ethiopian state (Adhana, 1994). This implicate clue to power politics to be discussed later, as the Tigrayan people had common identities with the Christian kingdom. On the other hand, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Amharas in general and essentially Shewan political actors and academicians engaged in the construction of a dominant model of Ethiopia state exclusively based on the existing identities of Christian kingdom, which incorporated specific

Amhara collective marks, particularly language and customs (Crummey, 1980: 119). Since the introduction of ethnic federalism in the country in 1991, most Amhara elites engaged in deconstructing Amhara an ethnonational identity (Tegegne, 1998: 121). Amhara constitute about 20 million (27%) inhabitants of Ethiopia people (2007 Eth. Census).

Oromo nationalism has been a front runner in challenging the dominant model of the Ethiopian state, paving the way for competing nationalisms since 1960s. Oromos constitute the largest group, about 26 million (35%) inhabitants of current Ethiopia people (2007 Eth. Census). In reality, Oromo people make up the largest size of peoples and the richest region of the horn of Africa and a significant portion of Oromo live in refugees due to state repression against Oromo nationalists who started fighting against the ‘state people’ to end their minority status in the Ethiopian state. Paradoxically, Menelik’s conquest against the largest portion of Oromo in south and west part of modern Ethiopia was facilitated by Oromo regional rulers in Shewa and Wollo, who were themselves conquered and subjugated by the Christian kings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Paulos, 1998: 96). In their remembered history, Oromos were governed under a unified egalitarian political, social and legal institution (referred as *Gada* -age based system) and religious institution (*Qallu*), institutions that sustained among Boran and Gujji Oromos (Asebe, 2007). The Oromo are less united than the Amhara and Tigrayan both religiously and socially. The latter are cohesive mono-confessional people with a high degree of ethnic identification. In the process of their long existing interactions with the Christians, Oromos were able to push back the Christian rulers since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In such process they incorporated different peoples and adapted different religions such as Orthodox Christianity and Islam and different political systems. Some branches of Oromo were able to control the central posts in the Christian kingdom in the period dubbed by historian as ‘era of princes’ [Zemena Mesafint] (1889-1885). In counter-measures of Christians which came to create the Ethiopian empire state and which was assisted by imported firearms, Oromos came to assume minority status. As pointed out above, in modern Ethiopia assimilated Oromos were active contenders towards the Amhara in the collective state. P. T. Baxter (1978: 284), in his article entitled ‘Ethiopian’s Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo’ noted that “much of the history of Ethiopia can be viewed as a struggle between the Amhara and the Oromo”. Oromo nationalism was late to develop. Oromo nationalists were able to mobilize peoples appealing to collective identities such as language, myth of common descent, and indeed using symbolic relevance of *Gada* and *Qallu* institutions as well

as using immediate experiences of economic exploitation, cultural and political domination by the Amhara-Tigrayan defined state (Paulos, 1998). The radical Oromo nationalists reject not only the Shewan unifying role, but also the Amhara-Tigrayan defined Ethiopia state.

The three divergent nationalisms that were being constructed in the second half of the 20th century are significant to understand the post imperial period, particularly the current context and the place of ethnic minorities, though they were not the only forces that shaped the Ethiopian state.

#### **4.2 Socialist Regime, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalist Movements**

In 1974, when the rigid feudal-bureaucratic rule of Haileselassie, by this time an old man, fell apart in midst of growing political unrest, economic problems, inequality and famines, the imperial army deposed the monarch and controlled state power. The army formed a provisional government, which was referred as the Derg [i.e. ‘council’/ ‘committee’]. The Ethiopian army had been a loyal instrument to the imperial order. Nevertheless, due to absence organized political party tradition, except students who were the vocal of popular discontent, the military emerged the first to assume the state apparatus during the 1974 popular surge. The council itself became a battle ground among military officers belonged to the Amhara, Oromo and Tigrayans (then included also those in Eritrea). The *Derg* consolidated centralized control, and introduced an aggressive form of state nationalism which limited the options for multiple identities. The *Derg* regime defined Ethiopian problems in terms of class, and hence adapted socialist ideology. A decade after they took power, the Derg converted into formally governing body: Workers party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1984, and introduced the first republic named *People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* in 1987. Yet the regime continued to rule by spontaneous declarations and coercive means (Merera, 2003[b]: 151). From the point view of ethnic minorities, the process of land reform was significant though once again they ended up as servants of the state and its huge military-bureaucracy. The following is a brief reflection on the process of land reform.



#### 4.2.1 Land Reform and its Implication to Ethnic Minorities

The land reform of 1975 played a key role to the *Derg* in order to get legitimacy to their control of state apparatus and to mobilize peoples. The land issue was the core of the 1974 revolution. The *Derg* had taken away land from landlords/nobilities especially in conquered areas in the south and given it back to the peasants though shortly all rural and urban lands were nationalized. Siegfried Pausewang and Dessalegn Rahmato (1994), who have been studying Ethiopian peasantry, note that the process of land reform was participatory and created conditions for local autonomy as the peasants were allowed for the redistribution of land and self-administration. Thousands of students were sent to various villages in order to assist peasants' efforts to assume local autonomy and form self-administered and independent local bodies which emerged as peasant *kebeles*. As Pausewang (1994: 210) remarks, this policy created a genuine democratic experiment. In the south where the reform was welcomed, peasants demonstrated heightened consciousness, sense of responsibility, enthusiasm and initiative for development and efficiency of peasant associations. In fact, in some southern provinces peasants had attacked landlords and traders in towns, which in turn caused food shortage in towns that were largely settled by 'outsiders'. However, excessive socialisation measures such as state nationalization of land, collectivization, resettlement and villagization curtailed peasants' revived hope to self-rule/autonomy (ibid). In the name of cooperatives, state farms, and poverty reduction, thousands of peasants were resettled into different areas and villages. These measures made many peasants landless and multiplied the growing discontent in rural areas. Most peasants in newly resettled areas were decimated from diseases or found themselves contesting with indigenous or semi-pastoralist societies who claimed the land right (ibid). Administratively, peasant *kebeles* had become the executive organs of the state and were no longer democratic organs of the peasants (Pausewang, 1994: 216). Leadership of peasant *kebeles* were filled by largely inexperienced youths and opportunists who got the post only due to their political commitment rather than their agricultural skills. Genuine servants in fact found it difficult to serve the public while committing to unpopular policies from above. Peasantry life was further deteriorated by growing population, decreasing size of individual plots, environmental degradation, deforestation, famine and drought and forced military recruitments. In 1980s the peasants were worse off than before revolution (Pausewang, 1994: 216).

#### 4.2.2 Bloody Civil Conflicts and Nationalist Movements

Meanwhile, Colonel Mengistu, who won the internal fight for the leading office in the council as chairman of the Derg, started a war against the oppositions towards his government, such as the urban based opposition which was decimated by violent massacre and torture in what has been named the 'red terror' (Tronvoll, 2000: 14). The *Derg* regime led series of campaigns against nationalist and regionally based movements, whose number were increased rapidly towards the end of *Derg* regime. The strongest of these oppositions was the *Eritrean People's Liberation Front* (EPLF). EPLF emerged a dominant force in Eritrea, expelling Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) that started the insurgencies against the imperial order in 1960s as a result of the undermining of Eritrean autonomy after its federation with Ethiopia. EPLF was able to take control of the larger part of Eritrea at the end of 1980s, which proved a crucial step in their later independence.

Other significant nationalist movements were the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). They emerged as well-built rural based oppositions in the Tigray province and in various Oromo inhabited provinces, respectively (Merera, 2003[b]). As I already implicated in previous section, they were able to mobilize their respective peoples along ethnic lines. These ethnationally defined movements accused the Derg for its policy of nationality, i.e in its failure to stop the continuation of Amhara cultural and national domination over other peoples and posing it as Ethiopian nationalism. Both TPLF and OLF entertained political agendas ranging from withdrawal from the Ethiopian state to participation in a democratic Ethiopian state. The leaders of these movements were initially Marxist inspired students who openly raised the issues of ethnic or national identities in response to the dominant model of Ethiopian nationalism. These movements were significant factors to the demise of the unpopular military regime.

In general the Derg's era was marked by continuity of imperial order as it denied expression of different peoples, thereby contributing further contradictory construction of identities by political actors of major groups. The Derg's policy of ethnicity did not ease the discontent related to identities. Of course, the Derg established the 'Institute for the study for the Ethiopian Nationalities' with intention to get knowledge about various ethnic groups in the country which was supposed to allow cultural expression of ethnic groups. But the initiative

was not put into practice and indeed further exploitation of ethnic identity for political purpose (Aalen, 2008: 67). Instead, their policy to instil Marxist Leninist consciousness among different peoples, they erased some cultural practices sustained in local areas among minorities and restricted religious freedom. Their attempt to devolve power to local/regional levels remained symbolic. Though the *Derg* officials had presented themselves as dedicated to equality of every individual and group, in reality their discourse of equality was limited by requirements like knowledge of Amharic and patrimonial practices embedded in the social relation built during the imperial regime, and slow the pace of the spread of education in remote areas.

### **4.3 Ethnic Minorities under Ethnic Federalism**

#### **4.3.1 Post Socialist Democratic Transition and Constraints**

The demise of Mengistu's regime in the 1991, which came after the intensive war between his government and ethnic and regional based fronts in 1980s, revived the hope for a peaceful transformation of conflicts in the country, and redressing historical injustice to the peoples who were denied rights to be equal with fellow citizens. This was seen when different ethnic based movements such as EPRDF, which controlled the capital after the escape of Mengistu to Zimbabwe, OLF and other groups adapted a transitional charter that set a foundation for a federal state and frame to devolve power to regions and local levels. The charter included packages of individuals and collective rights. The agreement between these political groups created a transitional government led by EPRDF and its leader Meles Zenawi, who is in power since then.

Seen retrospectively, the transition to peaceful interaction that favour expression of multiple identities was constrained from the very beginning as the political actors of major ethnic groups fall back to continuity from past. Firstly, the endorsement of ethnic identities was opposed by pan-Ethiopianist opposition essentially led by Amhara political actors for reasons related to ideology and sovereignty. The second constraints came from the uneasy relationship between major ethnic based parties, particularly between EPRDF and OLF, during the transitional time. The EPRDF is a coalition of four ethnic based parties created and dominated by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Aalen, 2006, 2008; Young, 1998).

In late 1980s, when the *Derg* regime came under fire from different ethnic or regional based fronts, TPLF made alliance with Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) to form EPRDF. The two other members of the coalition are the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), which was created from prisoners of wars in 1990, and Southern Ethiopia People Democratic Organization (SEPDO), which was in turn a coalition of several ethnic based people's democratic organizations (Pausewang, 1994). Even if EPRDF and OLF were the major parties that endorsed the transitional charter, as Pausewang (1994: 220) remarks, the legal partnership immediately deteriorated during the process of 1992 regional and local election that was marred by rivalries, mutual distrust, accusations and intimidation between the OLF that was active in Oromo inhabited areas and EPRDF which was also competing in Oromo inhabited areas via OPDO. This kind of rivalries was also repeated in other areas where EPRDF placed its cadres in local offices, denying alternative political actors in the areas. Thus, such hostility led to denunciation of the election by OLF, which since then have kept small scale armed struggle, as well as by other opposition parties.

A third constraint to transition into peaceful interaction in the post socialist era came from the nature of governance adapted by EPRDF which has dominated the collective state since 1991. As Lovise Aalen (2006: 250) who has done extensive studies on Ethiopia Ethnic federalism, note that EPDRF which was created and dominated by TPLF "has not been able to demonstrate a general will to share power with other political forces in a democratic manner". As Aalen (2006, 2008) wrote the dominance of EPRDF has been marked since the transitional period when their ideas dominated the transitional charter and the constitution adapted in 1995. Although EPRDF allowed expression, the two national elections in 1995 and 2000 did not show genuine competition between the government and the oppositions. A competitive national election of 2005, in which oppositions challenged the government including the rural areas where EPRDF claims as its strong support base, turned into post election violence that took the lives of more than 190 individuals (Aalen, 2006; Abbink, 2006). As Aalen (2008) noted, the dominance of EPRDF has caused lack of clear check and balance of power of the federal government and dependence of regions on the federal government for financial and various policies and decision despite the wide range of autonomy that the constitution accords to regions. The federal executives, i. e EPRDF, has also been controlling regions via its allied or affiliated parties, promoting upward

accountability to the party and blurring the distinction between party and state bureaucracy, which was in fact the characteristic features of previous regimes.

Ideologically, EPRDF adapted a Marxist version of ethnic identity. As already pointed in the previous section, TPLF which created and dominated EPRDF was created by Marxist inspired students. Their idea of non-imperial Ethiopia has relied on Marxist-Leninist interpretation of revolutionary change: to stop what is referred as class conflict, ethnic groups should enjoy varying degree of autonomy under a strong multiethnic party in power (Aalen, 2008: 68). Thus after controlled power, TPLF/EPRDF applied a Marxist understanding that best suited to contradicting nationalisms that was emerging since 1960s, i. e. “nations, nationality and peoples” which is understood as ethnic groups can be ‘objectively’ identified from their ‘essential’ characteristics. In reality, EPRDF uses ethnic identity instrumentally to keep unity of state and control. In this aspect, segmentary ethnic ideology is pragmatically used both to reconcile contradictions between the dominant model of the Ethiopian state and the demands of other nationalists, essentially Oromos, so as to keep unity of the state, and to further dichotomise such historical experiences of different peoples when deemed necessary. EPRDF redefined nationalism in the sense that it excludes both ‘narrow nationalism’ and ‘chauvinist nationalism’, labels that have been applied respectively to ethnonationalists including OLF and pan-Ethiopianist. In reality, these labels also include moderate individuals and political parties. As Poluha (1998) notes, lack of space for negotiation and dialogue for moderate oppositions have reflected EPRDF’s primary commitment to control power rather than transforming ethnic conflicts as claimed by the party leaders (cited Aalen, 2008: 71).

Even if the official discourse of EPRDF has focused on economic progress, as I indicate in my case study, ethnic ideology is still potent forces being by local cadres of EPRDF among peasants that constitute more than eighty percentage of the Ethiopia peoples. In fact, under the leadership of EPRDF the country has made a significant macro economic progress which is recognized by international institution such as IMF and the World Bank (Abbink, 2009). EPRDF introduced agriculture-led-industrialization policies, i. e. priority industries that invest on agriculture. EPRDF took important measures to improve the livelihood of peasants and agriculture that contributed more than 90% of export earnings (Pausewang, 2009). The federal constitution gives every peasant the rights to access land even if ultimate ownership resides on state. Government also made broad campaign for education and preventive health

strategies in rural areas. In reality, in spite of these measures, many peasants still depend on food aids. Better health care, education and social security are still vital needs on rural areas.

#### **4.3.2 The Place of Ethnic Minority in Ethiopia Current Constitution**

Many educators argue that the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is minority friendly, though recognizing that practice is detached from the theory (Assefa, 2006: 131, Pausewang, 2009, Tronvoll, 2000, 2008). The constitution made a radical departure from the past. Unlike constitutions under previous imperial and Derg regimes, the new constitution has created a federal state. It also adapted a multiparty order unlike the single party *Derg* regime. The constitution gives protection to individual and collective human rights and guarantees the implementation of international covenants and instruments on individual and collective rights that the country ratified. It also gives the controversial right that every ‘nations, nationalities and peoples’ in Ethiopia has unconditional right to self-determination, and including secession. The constitution primarily recognizes collective/ ‘a nation, nationality and people’ as the smallest unit, defined in the constitution as “...a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory” (article 39.5). It conceives all ethnic groups in equal terms, does not recognize the existence of ‘minorities’ (ethnic or other). Thus, it does not accept specific minority rights<sup>6</sup> (Tronvoll, 2000). Some other significant rights of ethnic groups are:

*Every group has*

*The right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture, and to preserve its history (article 39.2),*

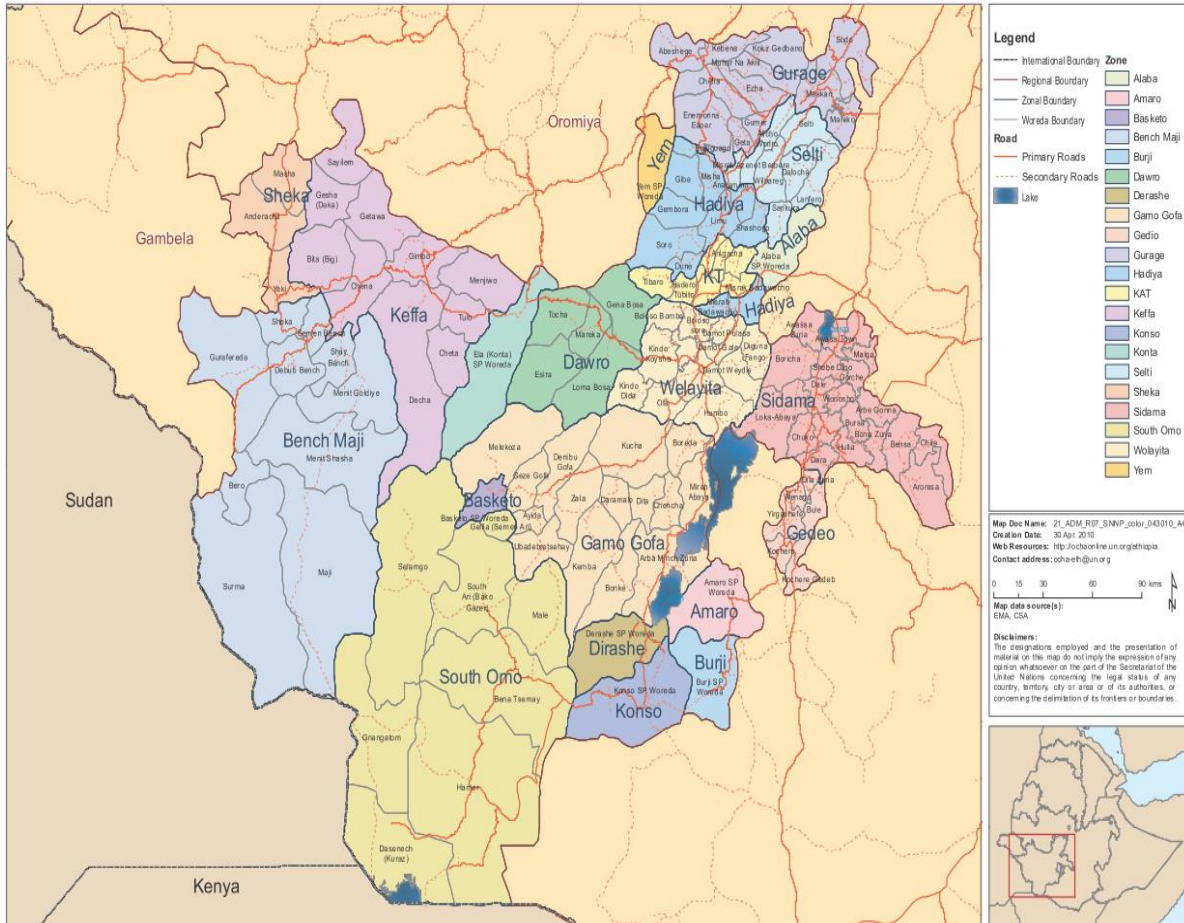
*The right to full measures of self-government that includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and federal governments (article 39.3)*

---

<sup>6</sup> Ethnic Minorities have 20 seats in the House of People Representatives/HPR (highest authority with legislative and other functions) automatically reserved for minority groups whose size is below the number of people needed for a single electoral constituency. HPR has 548 members of five year term elected representatives. The other people representatives office is House of federation/HF [serves as constitutional court in case of Dispute]. One member of all ethnic groups is represented in HF, and in case of majority, addition is based on one million people, i.e on bases of numbers of millions of people.

In reality, the federal state of Ethiopia has only nine member states and two cities administration [the capital and disputed DireDawa). Six of them are named after the dominant ethnic group in a given territory: Afar, Amhara, Harari, Oromo, Somali and Tigray. The Benishgul-Gumuz, SNNP, and Gambella people's regions are multiethnic with groups of varying sizes. Each region has its executive, legislative and judiciary branches and operates on a unitary inclusive principle. Each region, except Gambella people's region which lack zonal category, has three sub administrative divisions: zone, *woreda*/districts and *kebele*/neighbourhood. *Woreda* is basic administrative unit in the country. In multiethnic SNNPRS, some zonal administrative boundary corresponds to the ethnically inhabited areas, while other zones do not reflect such correspondence. There are also special *woredas* in some regions. In SNNPRS there are eight special *woredas*. Administrative border of some of these special *woredas* correspond to ethnically inhabited areas, while other special *woredas* contain more than one ethnic group. Disparities in the relationship between administrative boundary and 'ethnic land' has been one of the main factors for conflicts and violence in the SNNPRS, as some relatively major ethnic groups claim regional status, while different ethnic groups under a multiethnic zone and special *woredas* need their own ethnic zone and special *woreda*. Chapter five will present the case of the Alle people in the multiethnic SNNPRS.

**SNNP REGION - Administrative Map**  
30 April 2010



Administrative map of SNNPRS (source UN OCHA)



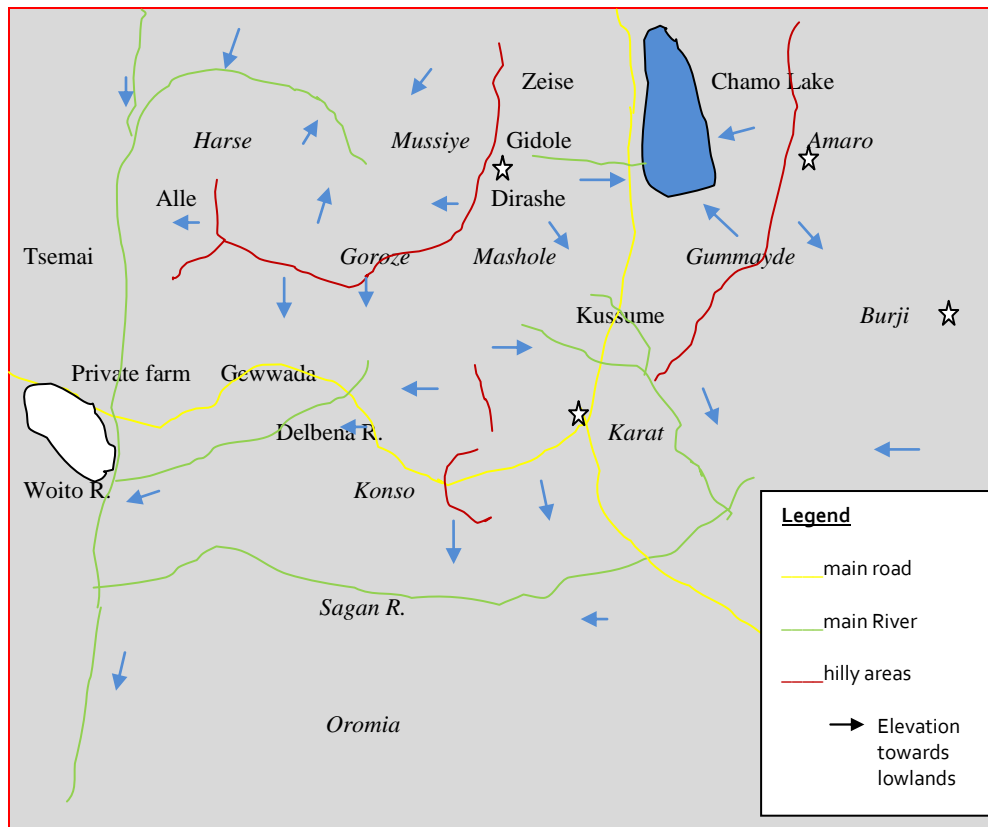
## CHAPTER FIVE: THE CASE OF THE ALLE PEOPLE

The aim of this chapter is to examine the empirical evidence in my case study on the quest for autonomy by the Alle people. As I present below, the Alle constitute great internal complexity as well as extended relationships with their neighbours, and they were exposed to the historical experiences that affected the peoples of the south. Thus, their general experiences are more or less similar to other peoples who were exposed modern governance. In this chapter, I examine their intra- and interethnic relationships, the specific legacies of past institution building in the area that sustained grievance, the continued grievances in spite of collective ethnic rights as laid down in the current constitution, and the mobilization based on ethnic identity and its implication on conflict and violence affecting the Alle and their neighbours.

### 5.1 The Alle People and their Neighbours

The Alle people live in the Konso-Dirashe adjacent areas, which are combined hillsides and lowlands north of Delbena River, and in the northern part of Alle, i.e the area that border with Omotic peoples (see sketch map below). The total Alle population is about 68 600 (2007 Eth. Census). Of these more than 90% live in rural villages. Literally, the term ‘Alle’ refers ‘cold area’ or ‘people who live in cold areas’, referring to the hillsides where most of the Alle people live. As I will explain later, prior to the ethnic federation established after 1991, the name ‘Alle’ was seldom used even by the Alle people themselves, and does not exist in literature. At official level it has been in use recently by the regional government, and in a contested administrative division, the Alle belong to the Konso and Dirashe special *woredas*. The Alle people in Konso Special *woreda* call their area Gewwada which is administratively divided into seven peasant *kebeles*. Alle people in the Dirashe Special *woreda* are spread over ten *kebeles*, and call their areas Goroze, Warase/Harse and other specific names. Local officials and other peoples in the Dirashe special *woreda* call them collectively Dobase, a name disputed by the Alle people. However, as my Alle informants note, there is no derogative meaning attached to it. In the early 1990s, when the state was restructured along ethnic lines, some of the Dirashe officials held the view that those in Konso and Dirashe

special *woredas* were distinct, and disputed the name ‘Alle’. The name ‘Alle’ as a marker of one people had little importance in the past, partly due to lack of collective consciousness and organized resentment by this group, but also because of the presence of alternative identities such as clan identity, and being farmers and craftsmen/traders. Also, past governance had discouraged the expression of local collective identity. This got relevance only with the current government.



Sketch map of areas of the Alle people and their neighbours (name such as Harse, Goroze and Gewwada are specific areas of the Alle people).

Alle people are said to inhabit also the bordering areas across the Woito/Dullay River under the South Omo *woreda*. The Ethiopian Human Rights commission in its 2008 special report on violence in the Alle area reported ten Alle *kebeles*. I also found a similar account from an unpublished undergraduate paper by Mulugeta Lakew (2007:1). Mulugeta, though far from clear, mentions more than ten *kebeles*. Some of my informants of the Gewwada area told me

that there are more than five *kebeles*. In reality, the lowland areas west of the Woito/Dullay River, which administratively belongs to the South Omo zone, are largely occupied by private investors and the nearby Woito village is chiefly settled by workers and people from ‘outside’. The indigenous people here are cattle herding Tsemai people who live moving over a wider hotland. Four among seven clans of the Tsemai trace their origin to the hilly sides of Alle (Lakew, 2007). Tsemai people, who count about 20 046 (2007 Eth. Census) are closely related to the Alle both linguistically and in aspects of culture. They do not practice traditional circumcision of males nor females. Linguistically, both peoples speak dialects named Worize/Dullay, pertaining to the lowland Cushitic language category (Bender, 1971; Black 1976; Amborn et al 1980s, see on Girard, 2002: 3). The Alle people in lowland areas such as Karkarte and Diginity east of the Woito/Dullay River and the Tsemai are almost indistinguishable from each others. Tsemai cross the river and take wives from the Alle in the lowland areas, and produce crops around the river. Agriculturalist Alle in highland areas in the Dirashe special *woreda* see Tsemai as their relatives, and claim that they speak similar language. They do not take wives from Tsemai, however, pointing to a saying that ‘a stone move from the hillsides to the lowlands, not the other way round’. Similar dissociation stories were reported in a linguistic survey on the Alle by Tim Girard (2002). According to Girard, Alle people in the western part claimed that they speak the same language and share culture with the Tsemai, but that they were different in the sense that Tsemai do not wear modern clothes, using only leather/skins. Some of the officials and agricultural assistants of the Alle highlight the similarities with the Tsemai. As I will elaborate later, their growing feeling of association with the Tsemai corresponds with the dissociation from other Cushitic neighbouring groups in the northeast and southeast, with whom they have been in conflict since the 1990s, and with the growth of a new interest in land in northern tributaries of Woito by private investors from the centre of the country. Thus, my study focuses on conflict and violence in relation to these people.

The Alle people share many aspects of culture with their Cushitic neighbours such as the Mussiye, Mashole and Dirashe in northeast and the Konso in southeast.<sup>7</sup> Even if Alle

---

<sup>7</sup>Population figures as presented by the 2007 Eth. Census; Konso: 250 430 in the Konso special *woreda*; Dirashe: 71 181; Mussiye: 19 698; Mashole: 10 458 in the Dirashe Special *woreda* which also include Kussume people: 7 470, who are not direct neighbour to Alle. The Kussume/Gato are Konso people but they choose to be administered under the Dirashe Special *woreda* for reason of their role in the traditional governance with the Dirashe people. These population figures also include those people who live in other parts of the country.

language is distinct from Cushitic languages related to Oromiffa in varying degree (Tim Girard, 2002), Alle people who live in border areas speak these languages as well as Oromiffa. Oromiffa is widely spoken in the rural areas of Dirashe and especially among the Konso, whose language relate more than 46% with Oromiffa (Hansamo, 2001: 21; Watson, 2009: 179). Most of Alle people who dwell in urban areas speak Amharic. Thus, because of the population mobility in the region, there is a mixture of cultures and languages in the area. For example, all the peoples mentioned above, including the Alle, have nine clans that are related to each other. Interethnic clan symbols are used to show similarities between clans and distinction from other clans, which has importance for alliance making and search for marriage partners. Some of the clans of the Dirashe and Konso claim their origin from the Alle. However, unlike Dirashe and Konso, who have some clans that have memory of exodus from Liban or Boran Oromo (Amborn, 2006: 71), the Alle do not have such origin myth. The extent of relation between Konso and Dirashe is that the leaders of the two traditionally powerful lineages, *kala* of Konso and *titipa* of Dirashe, are said to come from the same father, Mato (Hansamo, 2001: 39). However, the extent of interethnic clan alliances indicates strong interaction between the peoples. Alle's traditional form of governance also shares elements from their neighbours, especially from the Dirashe. The Dirashe people developed a centralized type of governance, the *d'aama* institution (power associated with rainmaking), which was traditionally dominated by the *titipa* lineage. Likewise, the Alle had a chief leader named *Ollo* over all clan chiefs (*poqolla*) and his associate rainmaker *ahado* (Lakew, 2007: 17). In fact, the *d'aama* of Dirashe had strong presence outside its territory (Amborn, 2006). The Alle people in Gewwada have a modified form of *mora* (elders' council) that is also the dominant institution of the neighbouring Konso. Presence of elements of centralized governance in Alle and Dirashe indicate their relation with northern Omotic people who had elaborate hierarchies of traditional governance (Hansamo, 2001: 21). This make them distinct from the Konso who have kept the *gada* (which is age system), which in turn implicate their sustained relation with the Boran Oromo people who also practice the *Gada* institution. In reality, traditional institutions of governance weakened with the Shewan conquest or existed only in the shadows until the 1991 reform. The post-1991 period has seen increased revival of traditional institutions, especially the clan identity within the Alle and Dirashe. As I will indicate later, some of the clans in each area started competing with each other for control of local authority and the resources that they so far had shared.

The most important category/identity of the Alle and their neighbours such as Konso and Dirashe are farmers (*etanta*) and craftsmen (*hawd'o*). Intensive permanent agriculture has been the main features of the hillside farmers in Konso, Dirashe and Alle. Because of relatively low population density, agriculture is less intense in Alle compared with Konso and Dirashe. Apart from producing highland crops such as barely, wheat, *enset* and others, some farmers get income by selling honey, wood and salt from the vast Adoshaby plains and adjacent areas west of Gardula Mountain. The lowland Alle produce cotton, millet and other crops using irrigation around the Woito/Dullay River. The social construction in Alle-Dirashe-Konso areas was in favour of the farmers, in that farmers developed stereotypes towards craftsmen/*hawd'o*. Farmers do not marry craftsmen/artisans, though such attitudes are now changing in towns such as Karat and Gidole (Amborn, 2009: 114- 131; Ellison, 2006: 674). In fact, unlike settled cultivators, craftsmen have been mobile throughout southwest Ethiopia linking different peoples in the region, and they were traditionally dominant in trade and money, and the making of musical instruments, agricultural tools, spears, etc. They were known for remembering past and advising chiefs or kings. Farmers and craftsmen/artisans sustained exchanges between them for centuries, though this was affected negatively by attitudes constructed towards them, particularly since the 19<sup>th</sup> century conquests of Menelik. Most of the *hawd'os* of the Alle are active in towns such as Gewwada, Gidole and Karat (administrative centres of Dirashe and Konso Special *woredas* respectively), as well as in other towns. The *hawd'os* in Karat are more active in trade activities than those in Gidole where the infrastructure offers less such opportunities. Most of the *hawd'os* in Gidole thus engage in crafts like weaving, butchery, tannery, smithing and pottery making.

Like their neighbours, Alle people adhere to various religions. Most people in small towns like Gewwada and some of the villages in the highland areas of Alle are affiliated to the Ethiopian Orthodox church. The presence of Orthodox Christianity has been facilitated by people locally collectively named Gojjame, a label for a group of people who has immigrated from the north at different times since the conquest of Menelik. The label applied in other areas of Dirashe is *Shewa*, in direct reference to the descendents of the soldiers of Menelik and others who settled at different times. The first batch of soldiers who came to the Dirashe and Konso areas were chiefly Shewan Oromos (Hansamo, 2001: 120). This category is evident in alliance making in an ongoing conflict between Konso and Dirashe peasants.

Evangelical Christianity is also present among highland farmers and lowland semi agriculturalist Alle (Hansamo, 2001: 67; Lakew, 2007: 18). The Evangelical church has had a strong presence in the Konso-Dirashe rural areas since the 1950s. The changing state policies on religion and culture has enhanced the diversity of belief systems and the resuscitation of traditions in these areas, and have been playing active roles in the changing identification, diversification and conflicts in rural areas. As I will elaborate on later, the revival of traditions is overtly seen as a significant trigger of violence in the area of Alle, Dirashe and Konso.

In the understanding of Alle people, the ‘culture of gun’<sup>8</sup> is essential. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there has been an influx of guns into remote pastoral areas in lower Omo valleys. Agriculturalists in the upper Omo area do not own guns. Peasants in Konso, Alle and Derashe, however, have equipped themselves with guns, allegedly because of their direct contact with gun owning pastoralists. The guns range from old types to newer ones like AK. The culture of gun is a common masculine culture in rural areas enticing that every male member of a household should own a gun. Among the Alle guns are common, and represent a variety of functions, both practical and social. They are used for hunting, in funeral ceremonies as a way of showing respect for the dead relatives, and as a form of status showing that one is strong and able to make family and to be a respected man in society. Their experience of guns started when Menelik’s soldiers conquered their land and used guns to hunt for animals and slaves in their area. They got their own guns when the Italians gave them some guns to persecute northern landlords from the area. The larger influx of guns came during the last days of *Derg* regime when many soldiers sold their guns to peasants in the south, and via illegal trade that was active in the area. I was told that bullets can be bought from open markets in the area between Alle and Kamba, where there are no roads. The culture of gun has an important role in the emerging violence and changing relationships in these areas.

---

<sup>8</sup> For a better understanding of gun culture in the lower Omo valleys in southern Ethiopia, see Masuda, Ken (2009): ‘Resistance and Bravery: On Social Meanings of Guns in South-West Ethiopia’ in Günther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson (ed.): *Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa: Volume I: Kenya and Ethiopia*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

## 5.2 Continuity from the Past

In this section, I present the experiences of the Alle people of past governance, which appear repeatedly in their current grievances. Their general experience during imperial and Derg regime did not differ from other peoples in the area. In the initial period of the conquests from the north many individuals, especially artisans, were enslaved by the conquerors, leading to a significant decline in population. The Alle lowland areas became a hunting ground for animals such as elephant, rhino, giraffe or buffalo, and for slaves in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Neumann, 1902: 385-86). The agriculturalists were divided between the governors who settled in the garrison centre at Gardula Mountain near current Gidole town, and endured heavy burdens of *gebar* labour. They were virtually reduced into tenants until the 1974 land reform. The Alle got temporary relieve from these landlords when Italian forces controlled the area. Their initial relationship with the Italians was amicable, but it soon turned into non-cooperation when the Italians forced them to labour services, and opposition to the cutting of their forests for timber. In the post-Italian period, the Alle people were further isolated and marginalized from modernization programmes, despite their obligations to the government. Thus, current grievances of the Alle people partly get its expression in a rural-urban imbalance embedded in policies of past governance and in the suppression of cultural expression which was further complicated by their relative geographic isolation from administrative centres in the area. The lack of government institutions, including social services, in Alle areas under previous regimes play a significant role in understanding the grievances over the post-1991 reforms where institutions are associated with ethnic identities.

The earlier garrison Gidole at Gardola Mountain emerged as a significant administrative centre in the area. Gidole is situated on a hillside, and as a matter of fact, most towns in southern Ethiopia that grew from a garrison centre are in hilly areas. The location of these garrisons was strategic, i.e to control local peoples from higher places. Successive officials of the central state have administrated different peoples from Gardula/Gidole. The Italian forces also established their centre in Gidole, where they built some institutions and linked it by road with others towns. In 1942, the modern administrative-bureaucratic entity Gardula was a sub province (*awraja*) under the Gamo Gofa province (*tekelay gizat*). It also served as centre of the Gamo Gafa province until the administration transferred to Chenchä in 1956. The

successive appointed governors of Gardula *awraja* administered five *woredas*: Konso, Kamba, Bonke, Gardula and Gummayde<sup>9</sup>. These districts were reduced to three by the *Derg* regime by its administrative rearrangement in 1987: Gardula *woreda* that including Gardula and Gummayde; Kamba *woreda* including Bonke and Kamba, and Konso *woreda* which incorporated some of the adjacent Alle people.

An observable weakness of the imperial administrative divisions and policies in the Konso-Dirashe-Alle areas is that the existing institutions and social services such as schools, health stations, water supplies, etc were concentrated in Gardula/Gidole where many of the appointed officials and the ‘outsiders’ resided. The early activities of missionaries (among them Norwegian Lutheran missionaries), like building hospital and schools, did not extend beyond the town of Gidole and its vicinity. While the Gummayde district, established by a few settled ‘outsiders’ in the midst of farmland categorized as ‘state land’ 30 kilometres from Gidole, had some of basic social services, the quite remote rural villages of Alle in southwest of Gidole had virtually no basic social services such as health station and schools. The Alle people had no access to education or education associated means of control. Later, the Derge regime established primary schools in rural areas of Alle and established villagization around the Woito/Dullay River for irrigation farming, but this scheme was dissolved and abandoned. Even after the establishment of schools in rural areas of the highland, the rate of illiteracy has been very high and the interest for education was very low because of problems like language (the teachers were not familiar with the Alle language), higher taxes, agricultural labour and recruitment to the army. In many cases, schools have been closed as the pupils abandon to work on the land instead (Tim Girard, 2002: 15). The remote and lowland areas of the Alle are exposed to severe diseases that infected both animals and humans. Tim Girard (2002) noted that infection from dead animals constitute a serious health problem, and has caused deaths and decline of the population of the area. In case of serious health problems, the people have no chance to get health service, though some try to walk two to three days to reach Gidole. These problems are further complicated by the hilly nature of most of the areas

---

<sup>9</sup> The Konso *woreda* almost fitted Konso inhabited areas, while Kamba and Bonke *woredas* were established among the northern Omotic people. Gardula *woreda* included Dirashe, Mashole, Mussiye and most of the Alle people east of the Woito/Dullay River. Gummayde was established for landlords and settlers from the north in the midst of farmlands near Lake Chamo, within 30 kilometres from centres of Konso and Gardula *woredas*.



where the Alle people reside. No attempt has been made to link these remote areas with Gidole by road.

Meanwhile, though Dirashe people in the vicinity of Gidole town had relatively better access to social services such as health and education since 1950s than others in the *woreda* (Hansamo, 2001: 150), the town has declined in relation to other growing towns such as Arbaminch (replaced Chenchu as provincial capital in 1964) and Karat. Then the construction of a road that link Arbaminch with the coffee growing areas of Jinka via the lowlands of Dirashe further isolated Gidole. Since Gidole is located on a hilly side and have no all weather road, it has been extremely difficult to manage transport in the winter seasons. However, at the time of my fieldwork, the federal government was constructing an asphalt road that will link the main road with Gidole. Konso people used to come to Gidole for schools and to get social services, but since the establishment of the main road and the spread of basic social services, the mobility for such services decreased. The strategic location of Karat on the main road that links trade routes from Kenya via Moyale and the lower Omo valleys has made it an important centre for commerce. Compared with Gidole, the progress of Karat has been remarkable, especially in the post-socialist period. The impact of the road is easy to see when one compares the different rural villages of the Alle. For example, Gewwada town is linked by the main road to Jinka and is in better status than other areas of the Alle.

### **5.3 The Association of Ethnic Identity with Institutions**

In this section, I introduce the reactions and concerns of the Alle people to the changes of the political context in current times. The post-socialist government uses ethnic identity in order to mobilize people in line with the idea of self-determination of nationalities. Collective identity has also been used as criteria for administrative division. This association of collective identity with institutions, i.e. with administrative structures and by implication also social institutions, plays a significant role in the changing social relations and the violence in Konso-Dirashe-Alle areas.

### 5.3.1 Mobilization of People along Ethnic Identity

After taking power in Addis Ababa in 1991, EPRDF forces marched towards the south. The forces were led by *ex-Derg* regime soldiers from the south, who had been captured and trained in the north during the last days of the *Derg* regime (Aalen, 2008: 119). The basic message of EPRDF to the peoples of southern Ethiopia was to liberate the nationalities from the oppressive *Derg* regime. They told the southern peoples that “ethnically defined communities should be allowed to govern themselves, to use their own languages and to promote their cultural practices” (ibid). Even if the coming of thousands of EPRDF soldiers to different southern areas initially created mistrust and a notion of just another form of control from the north over southern peoples, their use of native individuals who spoke the native languages and the allowing of elders to organize themselves and protect their villages, gained local trust and revived hope for equality and democracy. However, EPRDF then instrumentally engaged in recruiting local cadres to realize the traditional central control. This was despite their rhetoric of democracy and human rights. The individuals involved were graduates and teachers who had no direct commitment to the previous Workers Party of Ethiopia. At *kebele* level, some individuals who were popular were temporarily kept in their position. In this way, the Konso and Dirashe elites were invited into the new governance. The Konso and Gardula *woredas*, brought under greater North Omo administration under the previous regime in 1987, were given their Special *woredas* in 1993, as the Konso and Dirashe officials emphasised that their culture and languages differs from the Omotic people (Watson, 2009: 179). The same status was allowed to ethnic minorities such as Amaro, Burji (both bordered with Konso and Dirashe) and Yem (near Jimma). Meanwhile, the Southern Nations and Nationalities and People’s Regional State (SNNPRS), originally five different administrative regions, was merged to form one region in 1992. This was in spite of the idea that major ethnic groups were to form their own region. Claims for separate zones or special *woredas* saw a surge in the late 1990s. To some extent, these claims corresponded with violent conflicts, as was the case in North Omo and Kaffa-Sheka zones, subsequently disintegrated into new zones and special *woredas* (Vaughan, 2006: 189; Aalen, 2008). Thus, more claims for new administration proliferated with all the more flexibly constructed identities by ethnic elites in order to secure authority and resources within the new frames offered by the policy of ethnic federation.

### 5.3.2 Contested Alle Ethnic Identity and its Implication

When the Konso and Dirashe elites were invited to establish their respective special *woredas*, the situation of the ethnic minorities within these *woredas* such as the Alle, Mussiye and Mashole were not emphasised by the officials, and none of them were consulted as to their need for administration. However, when different ethnic minorities appeared in the subsequent population census in 1994, EPRDF made further effort to identify various ethnolinguistic minorities within the various zones and special *woredas* to ensure their representation at federal, regional and local councils. It was within this context that the collective identity of the Alle emerged as a controversial issue, at least in the eyes of the officials who did not know the people. As one of my informants recalls, the issue appeared when the Alle minority in Gewwada was presented as distinct ethnic group by the Dirashe officials in a conference of different ethnic parties at Hawassa, the regional capital, in late 1994. The informant [member of Alle], who is now an employee of the agricultural bureau of Konso, explained the issue:

*I was at the conference. During the process of counting ethnic groups, Kagnalew [representative of Dirashe] reported that the Dobase constitute a distinct people. But the Konso representative knew this people and opposed his idea and told attendants of the conference that Gewwada and Dobase are the same people. Abate Kesho [the then SNNPR president] asked if anyone knew the people. I raised my hand. I assured we are the same people, and have the same language and culture. After the discussion, Eyob Odda [president of North Omo zone] was delegated to verify the case. (My translation from an interview in Amharic).*

In reality, the dispute on the Alle identity gave an important opportunity to the construction of collective identity to the Alle people and the rights associated with it via a series of official meetings addressing disputed identities. The delegates held local conferences with the elders within Alle and with their neighbours at different times. As my informants recall, the most important one was a discussion that the regional officials made in Tosho, an Alle village, in which more than fifty individuals [included elders, women, urban dwellers and school attendants] from each of the peasant *kebeles* inhabited by Alle participated to give their

views. As participants in my group discussion has noted, elders and educated individuals used this conference not only to give witness to the similarity in culture and language between Gewwada and Dobase, but also as an opportunity to ask their own special *woreda* in name of Alle. As I indicated in the first section of this chapter, in the context of past governance that excluded Alle as a social category, the identities of clan adherence or being farmer, craftsmen, trader or artisan were the markers engaged in alliance making, interethnic relations and the selection of marriage partner. The changing context forced them to redefine their status on ethnic terms based on primordial marks, such as language and culture, in order to get the provisions stated in the constitution. The quest for autonomy appeared as a surprise to the delegate who came to verify the Alle identity. As my informant noted, the quest was appreciated, but they were informed that the number of educated individuals was insufficient to establish self-governance, an argument already in use for the merging of the southern peoples into one region (Aalen, 2008: 121). According to my informants, the people accepted the importance of education for the establishment of self-governance, and by official pledge for new administration, they continued to participate in local governance with others. However, the recognition of their self-identification won the seat reserved for ethnic minorities in the federal and regional councils, i. e after the subsequent 1995 and 2000 elections they were represented by two individuals at the Regional council, House of People Representative and House of Federation.

The difference in report between Konso and Dirashe officials towards Alle were in line with the development of the interethnic relationships in the area since 1990. These relationships are important clues to understand recent developments in the two Special *woredas*. As I indicated in the first section, Konso and Dirashe are much more related linguistically and in aspects of culture than the Alle people relate to them. Both groups have relatively better educated people. Politicising of differences and revival of culture at social level was evident since 1993, when a conflict and violence arose in the two peasant *kebeles* of Dirashe [Ateya and Keyema], between groups who identify with Dirashe and Konso, respectively. The core of dispute and violence was a burial place and the building of a house for war heroes, both of symbolic importance. In Dirashe oral tradition, the burial of people symbolized power transfer from one clan to another (Hansamo, 2001: 45). In the same manner, the house of war heroes constitutes a symbol of power and ‘superiority in Konso tradition (Shako, 2005: 164). As my informants recall, this violence at *kebele* level was preceded by an interpersonal

dispute in the 1960s between two individuals belonging to the two villages. Otherwise the inhabitants of the villages intermarried and lived peacefully.

While I was in the field, this confined conflict over culture extended to include collectively used resources. As I observed, the conflict sufficiently reflected the wider political and economic changes. Apart from politicisation of difference since the early 1990s, formal and informal administrative redrawing has contributed to the situation. Formally, on the rationale of collective identity, the former Gummayde *woreda*, merged with Gardula *woreda* [i.e. Dirashe], was re-divided into Amaro, Burji, Konso and Dirashe special *woredas* in 1996. As I have already pointed out above, Gummayde emerged as a settlement of northern landlords on the farmland in adjacent area of these *woredas*. But the lowland areas of Gummayde, i.e. the farmlands south of Lake Chamo in the Rift valley, were intermixed. Pastures, water and forests were used collectively by Dirashe farmers in the west side of the Rift valley and by Konso farmers and others from the north on the east side of the Rift valley. As I observed at the conference in Arbaminch, claims over these collective resources and land around the lake shores are now at the centre of intergroup conflict. The conflict involved alliances of Ateya and other Dirashe peasants *kebeles* such as Onota and Holte one side, and Keyema and its allies, the Haybena peasant *kebele* that was added to Dirashe special *woreda* from Gummayde (include both Dirashe and north-Shewan farmers) and some Konso peasants *kebeles*. The conflict was further affected by a need for land by Gummayde town dwellers who had lost their administrative jobs following the loss of their *woreda* status, and the increase of the prices of the main crop, *teff*. The perception of Konso and Dirashe peasants in the area was also influenced by the redrawing of the map by leaders of the Konso People's Democratic Union (KPDU, opposition party), that included most of the lowland area under Dirashe administration, including Lake Chamo. From a Dirashe perspective, this move is presented as an ambitious Konso move to control Dirashe agricultural land. Konso cadres of the ruling party, however, dismiss the move as propaganda by the KPDU for recruitment and mobilization purposes. At the conference, most peasants were blaming the local cadres of the ruling party, especially those of the Dirashe special *woreda*, for not responding to minor cases of conflicts emerging at local levels. In the ongoing conflict, local security police and officials from both sides were the major actors mobilizing people for violent conflict. This is despite recent talk between Dirashe and Konso officials to merge the two *woredas* to become a zone, an agenda that failed on the issue of where to locate its administrative centre.

These changing relationships between Konso and Dirashe have its effects on their relationship with the Alle, and indeed for the quest of the Alle people. The attitude expressed by Konso officials on the Alle collective identity was cemented in the subsequent relation that Alle have with Konso, i.e. Alle elites and peoples have shown partial association with Konso while dissociating from Dirashe. The subsequent Konso officials represented positive attitudes that encourage the quest of Alle self-governance. The relationship between Dirashe and Alle officials have deteriorated and turned into conflicts and violence, as the Dirashe officials did not support their quest. In reality, in the Konso special *woreda*, the numbers of Alle are few, whereas in the Dirashe special *woreda*, the numbers of Alle are higher. As one of my key informants, an elder Alle at Gidole town noted, after the failure of the talks to merge the two *woredas*, the Konso elites developed an interest to organize a zone with the Alle people instead, a prospect that the Alle members in Gewwada did not accept.

### **5.3.3 Claims for Self-Administration and ‘Narrow Nationalism’, *Tebabenet***

In 2001, the Alle people organized a committee to request their own *woreda*. As my informants note, the committee wrote letters to the regional and federal governments, including the Office of the Prime Minister. The justification for organising the committee, according to my informants, was that the elected representatives who were supposed to deal with the quest of the people became unpopular as they were more committed to party goals. However, many claims of self-governance had been taken seriously, giving precedence for related claims. The late 1990s saw a surge in claims for separate administration in the regions. For example, though a much worse scenario, claims for separate zones and special *woredas* among Semein Omo and Kafa-Sheka zones were successful. The development within Dirashe and Konso Special *woredas* had its impact on the continued demand of the Alle people. At national level, this period saw an internal division within the TPLF leadership, and subsequent renewals (*tehadiso*) of the party’s ideas and organizational structures and rhetoric (Aalen, 2008). The party leaders categorized internal opponents as opportunists, who used ideology for personal political and economic gains. In the south, *tehadiso* was used to prevent the use of ‘narrow nationalism’, *tebabenet*, as a tool in the struggle for resources among the political leadership. It was argued that “the political leaders in various ethnic groups in the region had mobilized the people to get separate administrative

units in the name of national self-determination, only as a cover-up for seeking personal benefits through positions and separate budgets” (Aalen, 2008: 127). In 2001, different ethnic based parties were merged into one party names Southern Ethiopia People’s Democratic Movement (SEPDM). In 2006, SEPDM made a decision to separate the issue of identity from purely administrative cases. The party officials decided that claims for separate *woreda* on bases of collective identity should not be heard. In reality, as Aalen (2008) argues, this move is not to abandon ethnic ideology, which is still significant to the party at state level to create balance between contending major ethnic groups, but a pragmatic consideration to contain mobilization and conflicts in multiethnic SNNPR.

In the Dirashe Special *woreda*, the essence of *tehaddso* aimed to contain ‘narrow nationalism’ and strengthen the party base has resulted political conflicts between Dirashe and Alle officials. As one of my informant note, Dirashe officials use derogative rhetoric like ‘*tebabe*’ (‘narrow minded’), ‘you are not educated’ etc, which in turn encouraged Alle officials to mobilize their people. Since 2005, the relationship between Dirashe officials and Alle people has deteriorated, resulting among other things in Alle people paying taxes directly to the region rather than to Dirashe *woreda* officials. The situation was worsened by actions taken by local cadres of the EPRDF after its defeat in the 2005 election in the Dirashe and Gewwada constituencies (Gewwada case was disputed). The post election period saw division within the Alle people between those clans who supported the government and those who supported the oppositions.

#### **5.4 Violence, the Intervention of Security Forces and its Implications**

The political conflict between local party cadres goes down to *kebele* level. Towards the end of 2007, conflict arose in one of the Alle peasant *kebeles*, namely Dega Mashile in Dirashe Special *woreda*. As informants recall, it was initially a dispute between a formally elected *kebele* chairman and the *kebele*’s public relation officer who was ordered by the *woreda* president to replace the chairman and use the *kebele*’s seal. This offended not only the other members of the council of the *kebele*, but also the members of the community. This small dispute turned into a conflict between the clan of the newly replaced chairman and the others clans. The reaction of *woreda* officials to this communal conflict was a request for regional security forces, which in turn asked for the intervention of the federal police. As informants

told me, police forces entered the rural villages of Alle and imprisoned some *kebele* officers and elders. The people were offended by the intervention of police force for minor case at *kebele* level.

In reality, this was a minor case from the people's perspective, as conflict of such kind was not new to them. Also, the elders had already made an attempt to reconcile the *kebele* officials. In line with the tradition fined the former public relation officer for his failing responsibility to serve them, though he did not pay it. From the government perspective, the case was not regarded as minor as there were already political conflicts between officials at the *woreda* on the issue of Alle self-determination. At this time, the ruling party was making renewed attempt to win the confidence of the people after the failing election in this *woreda* and elsewhere. Specifically, the ruling party was empowering individuals or groups who supported the party. In this aspect, recruiting politically committed *woreda* officials was not a difficult task, as such a post guarantee sufficient salary. At the *kebele*, however, leaders were usually peasants who were loyal to the people and would not take unpopular commands from above. In fact, for the last three years, *kebele* chairmen have been replaced by young people with some educational background, and getting a fixed monthly salary. Another important factor that encouraged the intervention of security forces was the presence of OLF forces near this area. Indeed, some of my informants told me the appeal for security forces by the *woreda* officials got quick answer as Dirashe officials reported that the OLF had entered into the Alle area, though that was not the case. Since the conflict was not violent, no individuals died, but the people resented the imprisonment of elders and *kebele* officials and the presence of security forces at rural villages, resentments expressed in appeals to the regional officials. The case was enough to instigate a greater intergroup conflict with Dirashe people.

Meanwhile, another conflict arose between two nearby peasants *kebeles* [Tugano and Nalo], inhabited by Alle and Dirashe peoples respectively. This time, the conflict arose by the burning of grass and adjacent grains at a farm belonging to Alle. Even if I can not verify who actually burned it, as there was claims and counterclaims from both sides, the incident caused wider intergroup conflict between Alle and Dirashe peasants, a conflict fought with guns. The reaction of the government was to send more security forces into the area. However, the culture insensitive intervention of security forces only extended the violence over the whole



area. The security forces targeted and captured local elders and elites of the Alle, who were active in forwarding the quest for administrative *woreda* in order to contain the inter communal violence. These measures were not confined to the Dirashe area but also to the lowland areas of Gewwada in the Konso Special *woreda*. Night time interventions and searching of houses for individuals caused great resentment in a people that were barley integrated into state structure. The small scale inter communal conflict was turned into a conflict between Alle famers, equipped with guns of more social value than firepower, and regular security forces. During this conflict, more than forty individuals were killed, including security soldiers, and more than fifty people were injured (see details from EHRC, 2008). As my informants recall, women were forced to give birth in the forest where they took refuge from the violence in the village.

Even if the regional president, Sheferaw Shigute, held a conference with the people to win their confidence towards the government, resentment was high while I was in the field. This conference also occurred in a context where many of the elders, civil servants and officials were in prison, and some of the officials from the *woreda*, including the Dirashe *woreda* president, were promoted to the regional council. The people lost confidence not only towards officials, but also towards the elders, and the violence deteriorated further the relation between Dirashe and Alle peoples. However, as I observed, the regional government started to fulfil some of the promises that Sheferaw had made to the people, such as the making of roads to rural areas and concerted reform in the *woreda* to ensure fair representation of all groups in political and public offices.

### **5.5 Identity and Insecurity of the Alle people**

Apart from ethnicisation of the political conflicts among local government cadres at the Dirashe Special *woreda*, there were observable factors that enhanced the grievances for the Alle people. As already mentioned above, the effects of EPRDF mobilization along ethnic identities in the early years of the 1990s, which associated institution with collective identity, has created a scenario where every group has their own ‘something’ at expense of others. The implication of such mobilization in the south has resulted in the replacement in local government of individuals of northern origin by members of indigenous people in the south. Accordingly, many individuals who were sidelined in the previous regime got a chance to get

employed and participate in governance, particularly from groups who had access to education. The Dirashe, for example, were relatively better educated compared with the Alle, who had almost no educated people at the time. Accordingly, most political and public positions were filled by Dirashe elites, as there were almost no educated people from other ethnic minority in the *woreda*. However, these preconditions have gradually changed as more Alle have received education arranged by the government for marginalized regions. More schools were established in the rural areas of Alle, even if the interest for education remained low, mostly due to the language issue. In fact, even if mother tongue have replaced Amharic at nursery and first cycle [i.e grade one to four] in the schools serving the major ethnic groups in the region, in ethnic minority areas including Dirashe Special *woreda*, Amharic is still the language of instruction at these levels. Lack of interest in education is also associated with problems related to distance from remote rural villages to the high school at Gidole, accommodation costs, and the need to work the land which decrease the performance of students, and which in turn discourage others to attend schools as those who attended come back to work on the farm. The peoples of Alle that I interviewed were concerned about the disunity among different clans, and lack of support from government to develop their culture and language despite legal provision of such rights.

Incidents of favouritism were a main grievance expressed by Alle educated people. This problem was further complicated by traditions of clientelism and corruption within local governance. There are little alternative jobs in the Dirashe Special *woreda*, other than employment in public sectors. As already mentioned, Gidole town do not have the same opportunity to trade activities as other towns like Karat, that has been able to integrate its growing population and change the perceptions by the farmers towards artisans and traders (Watson, 2006).

More important sources of insecurity, both to the Alle people in particular as well as to others in the two *woredas*, are the serious flaws in rural resource management, particularly land ownership and other resources that people use collectively. The Alle people claim that their collective lands were given to private farming displacing them from their settlement. This is the case in the hottest lowland areas of Alle around Woito/Dullay River, where the Derg regime attempted to resettle highland Alle and Konso for irrigation based farming. Under the current government, this area was given to private agricultural investors. As one Dirashe

anthropologist I interviewed note, indigenous peoples living around this farming, i.e Tsemai and Alle, were largely not engaged. In the current context of continued grievances, new lands around the tributaries of the Woito/Dullay River are also being given to private investors. Nevertheless, as I observed from the complaints of the farmers in the Arbaminch conference, the main problem is the conception and action of officials regarding rural resource management. The official conception is based on a fixed notion of ethnic identity and territory. The following quotes are from the discussion on the causes of violence among Konso and Dirashe peasants at the conference, and explain some of the official conceptions especially at woreda level. I selected the views of six participants:

Quote 1: Farmer from Konso, female:

*...you know our relation. We are known by unity. Our animals are mixed and grass on the same field. Dirashe marry Gummayde. We eat together. We go to the same market...but we burnt each other's grain. Now there is no rain...no grain. We brought each other loss. We achieved nothing by burning the grain or by the death of people. I pray to God to restore our former relation.*

Quote 2: Farmer from Dirashe, male:

*...in our tradition, Dirashe and Konso kings were from the same family. They separated from each other at sometime. We lived together peacefully. Whenever a Dirashe king died, a Konso king came with black animals to bury him. We went to the Konso market. We stayed there with our relatives. Now we have conflict. There are people who organize Konso and Dirashe for fighting. Personal conflicts extended to all of us. Now we live in insecurity.*

Quote 3: Federal Official [from another area], male:

*...there are people who say 'I am Gummayde' or 'I am Oromo' while living at Dirashe. This is source of conflict. Konso received people who were displaced from Dirashe but have not sent back to their villages. This is interference with each other's affairs. Find out the main problem. Unity is not the solution.*

Quote 4: Keyema Kebele official of Dirashe Special *woreda* (kebele members affiliated with Konso), male:

*..We live within Dirashe. Our kebele is near to Gidole. Our neighbours burnt our village again and again. We reported to the woreda. We did not get any answer. We appealed to the regional government because the woreda officials did not hear us. After the destruction of our property and life, nobody talked about it. Our grains are taken or burnt...*

Quote 5: Dirashe Special *woreda* official (speech in relation to Keyema kebele and Gummayde), male:

*...how federalism has been implemented? It is narrowly conceived [tebabenet]. The source of conflict between Keyema and Ataya is mora [traditional Konso institution]. Keyema rebuilds 'witchcraft' houses to show the war superiority of Konso. There are problems in the traditional institutions. ...there is neftegna [Shewan landlord] thinking in Gummayde. Hybena [former Gummayde peasant kebele mixed with decedent of Shewan origin] was determined to eliminate the Holte [one of the Dirashe peasant kebeles]. ...Abuto is part of Kore/Amaro Special woreda. During the drought in Konso, they went there for animal pasture and farming, but do not want to leave the area.*

Quote 6: Konso Special *woreda* official, male:

*...local conflict resolution institutions are underestimated. They are important to development. Kebele leaders are causing of conflict. Hybena famers do not believe in current political structure. They continued in their old idea. Abuto belongs to Amaro. People entered there do not give recognition to the Amaro woreda. They do not follow laws.*

In this conference, I saw various degrees of emotions and feelings expressed by the different speakers. Some famers were expressing anger towards the officials. One can detect from the

quotes above that the flexible identities and the adaptability employed by the peoples/farmers, including some of the more popular *kebele* officials (as can be inferred from quote 1, 2 and 4), were restricted by imposed fixed conception of identity and categorization of people (as it can be inferred from quote 3, 5 and 6). For example, *mora* is a typical traditional institution among Konso being used by people to discuss their common issues (Shako, 2005: 152). However, the same institution, used by people in Dirashe who affiliate with the Konso, was a source of conflict, primarily because of intolerance of expression and politicisation of difference. As already described above, the discussion in general reflects the continuing problem that officials continue to impose fixed forms of identity and relationships from above and categorize people, as well as sponsoring and organizing conflicts that arise from politicisation of ethnic relations among the people. This was clearly seen in the participation of the two *woreda* police forces by in the ongoing conflict between Konso and Dirashe peasants by order of officials in order to protect their ethnic members respectively. This problem has been further aggravated by the growing competition among different peoples who exclusively control collectively used resources such as pasture lands, water, and roads. This competition occurs in the context of frequent droughts and poverty as a result of erratic rainfall and ecological changes in the Konso-Dirashe-Alle areas, despite their tradition of adaptability [like hillside terracing to keep soil fertility, burying extra grain in the ground for time of drought, etc] to the ecologically vulnerable dry belt of the Rift valley in southern Ethiopia.

As I have discussed above, the same kind of relationships have been maintained between Dirashe *woreda* official and popular *kebele* leaders as well as the people as a whole in Alle inhabited peasant *kebeles*. Conceptions based on a politicised view of identity was at the core of the communal conflicts over resource use among Dirashe and Alle peasants that turned into violent confrontations between Alle farmers and security forces. The impact of such violence has been expressed by the dissociation that the Alle people have made towards Dirashe officials as well as Dirashe people. The ruling party cadres in the Dirashe special *woreda* were blamed, not only by Alle peasants but also by Dirashe farmers who live in relatively peaceful areas of Dirashe. In this aspect, one of the elders in the Arguba *kebele* in the Dirashe Special *woreda* that I interviewed expressed his views on *woreda* officials that: "...they do not have the skills and abilities to administer us. They have power and resources, but they do not listen to the problems of people. Their speech and actions does not convince

us". The politicised conception of identity by the officials has further weakened the roles of social and private actors in the area. Social relations that crosscut ethnic identity and corresponding social institutions are discouraged, despite rhetoric on freedom of expression. One of my informants, who reported on the roles of constructive local institutions at the reconciliation conference between Dirashe and Alle, expressed to me his dismay after the dismissal of his report by the officials. I also observed in the Arbaminch conference how officials initially appreciated the roles of social institutions such as religious institutions and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. In the end, however, the officials placed the entire problem with these institutions, despite the fact that their own arrest of expression of identity and interaction of peoples has a major share in the ongoing conflicts and insecurity.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The quest of the Alle people for autonomy and self-expression is based on grievances that are observable and justifiable, as these grievances are deeply rooted in exclusionary, discriminatory, patrimonial and dictatorial governance of imperial and socialist military regimes. The Alle people were enslaved, denied of their resources and reduced to tenancy, exposed to racial stereotypes, forced to serve in the military etc without equal entitlement as citizen of a political community. They constitute a minority within minorities, are little associated/integrated with state structures as result of their settlement area being inaccessible hillsides and hot lowlands that has little interest for past administrators, and were thus devoid of basic social services such as schools and health stations which are confined to towns largely settled by northerners. All of this made them more vulnerable in the changing political context in the post-socialist era as the new system emerged associating collective identity with institutions, both administrative and social services, thereby creating a scenario where everyone own 'something' in their area or land, that something which the Alle people did not possess. They are hence weak competitors with other relatively dominant groups regarding social relationships and governance built on personal relationship and loyalties.

Nevertheless, as Fredrick Barth (1969) emphasised, in the context of past institutional frames defined exclusively on the interests and values of the dominant group, the intra-ethnic and interethnic boundaries they made with their neighbours were very crucial to their survival, both individually and collectively. Some of these relationships are evident in the clan alliances they have with their neighbours such as the Konso, Dirashe, Tsemai, Mussiye and Mashole, through the sharing of clan codes, practicing intermarriage, enjoying economic exchange, etc, which unifies all these peoples across ethnic affiliations, religious adherence and other boundaries. Even if each of these groups were differently affected and responded differently to past administrators appointed from 'outside', the fact that they were all exposed to dominant forces made their relationships and interactions more demanding and peaceful. Prior to the Menelik conquest there were also stories of both friendly and conflicting relationship, however, which are remembered in the oral tradition. The Alle people also mixed with the dominant group. People originally from the north long settled among the Alle intermarried with them, though such relationships has been limited due to racial dimensions

and the hostile reactions that the Alle people took against them during the Italian occupation of the country. This kind of relationship represented an important opportunity to be accepted as equal and to get jobs within the state bureaucracy.

Even if the re-invention of the Alle collective identity using primordial marks came as a response to mobilization from above, constitutionally guaranteeing individual and collective rights such as right to life, right to own property and land, right to use and develop native language, culture and history, the revived hope of the people take part in this process was restricted by the instrumental application of such marks by the ruling party. Since the reform essentially came as a result of the contradiction between the ideology of establishing a collective state and the hegemonic struggle in order to control state power, rather than as a reform to secure cultural concession to marginalized and excluded peoples, it has little to offer ethnic minorities like the Alle. Thus, the Alle people are expected to support the power at the centre, and are denied their quest for self-expression and autonomy. The effect of this contradictory approach by the ruling government, the Alle experienced not only continued grievances, but changing intra-ethnic and interethnic relationship. For example, their peaceful interaction with Dirashe people has deteriorated and been replaced by hostility and violence. On the other hand, the Alle people are seeking alliance with other neighbours such as the Tsemai, who culturally and linguistically relate to them, in order to enhance their bargaining power. The reaction of the Alle was also in response to an increasingly hostile relationship between the Dirashe and Konso elites, who mobilizes their peoples against each other, thereby deteriorating the peaceful interaction between peoples. The Alle people have continued to be instrumentally mobilized by the ruling party through local officials, as flexible definitions of identities are used to divide the Alle clans for political support, but at the same time flexible definitions of identity by the people themselves in order to associate with each other and to identify with opposition parties were restricted. The continued mobilization of collective identities, the categorization and the arresting of fluidity and flexibility of identities implies restrictions on intra-ethnic and interethnic relationship and interaction that the Alle people maintained in the past. No other factors sufficiently explain the conflicts and violence in Alle and neighbouring communities than this arresting of multiple identities, which not only restricts interaction between peoples but has resulted serious flaws of rural resource management in these ecologically vulnerable areas. As a result, dispute over resources increased in Dirashe-Konso-Alle areas, in most cases violently.



The Alle ethnic minority sense of insecurity has increased due to policies from above which affect not only their individual and collective identity and relationships, but also their survival as human beings as their land is continued to be given to private investors. As Galtung (1996) remarks, violence express itself in the Alle areas by the restrictive and divisive ideology that is being used to mobilize them to support the power structure at the centre, and in the direct use of force in the name of keeping order and sovereignty. This indicates continuity of governance in the country, i.e. denial of self-expression, use of repressive actions to put down popular demands and expression of identity.

To make the existing constitution an instrument to transform conflicts and human and collective rights, it has to be genuinely applied and experienced by the people. In this regard, peaceful interaction and self-expression of the people, especially by ethnic minorities, must be recognized and valued. This is of vital importance for cultural and social development, especially to social groups such as women and children in the societies that were least exposed to education.

I believe my study to be of significance to peace studies. In the current globalized context no minor dispute at village level is confined to that locality. The causes of such dispute and effects are embedded in wider networks, as we can see in the flow of guns and in the potential violence of identity politics spread over wider regions and becoming serious security dilemmas. My case also highlights the importance to recognize self-expression of minorities and redress historical imbalances which are all important to peaceful interactions and identification of individuals and collectives. The importance that people attach to flexible definition of identity highlights its importance to transform conflict.

## References<sup>10</sup>

Aalen, Lovise (2006). 'Ethnic Federalism and Self-Determination for Nationalities in a Semi-Authoritarian State: The Case of Ethiopia' *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 13: 243-261.

Aalen, Lovise (2008). 'Institutionalising the Politics of Ethnicity: Actors, Power, and Mobilization in Southern Ethiopia under Ethnic Federalism' PhD Dissertation, University of Oslo.

Abbink, Jon (2006). 'Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 election crisis in Ethiopia and its Aftermath' *African Affairs*, 105/419.

Abbink, Jon (2009). 'The Ethiopian Second Republic and the Fragile "Social Contract"' *Africa Spectrum*, 44, 2.

Adhana Haile Adhana (1994). 'Mutation of Statehood and Contemporary Politics' in Abebe Zegeye and Pausewang, Siegfried (eds.) *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*. London: British Academic Press

Amborn, Hermann (2009). 'Mobility, Knowledge and Power: Craftsmen in the borderland' in Gunther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson (eds.): *Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa: Volum I: Kenya and Ethiopia*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Amborn, Hermann (2006). 'The Contemporary Significance of what has been. Three Approaches to Remembering The Past: Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition' *History in Africa* 33.

Asebe Regassa (2007). 'Ethnicity and Inter-Ethnic Relations: The 'Ethiopian Experiment' and the Case of the Guji and Gedeo'. Mphil Thesis, University of Tromsø.

---

<sup>10</sup> According to the Ethiopian literary tradition, the first name of the Ethiopian authors are used

Assefa Fiseha (2006). 'Theory Versus Practice in the Implementation of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism' in David Turton (ed.): *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, James Curry.

Bahru Zewde (1994). 'Hayla-Sellase: From Progressive to Reactionary' in Abebe Zegeye and Pausewang, Siegfried (eds.) *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*. London: British Academic Press.

Barth, Fredrik (1969). 'Introduction' in Barth, Fredrik (ed.): *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture of Difference*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Baxter, P.T.W (1978). 'Ethiopia's Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo' *African Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 308.

Baumann, Marcel M. (2007). 'From Peace Research to Peace science: Relating Theory to Ethical Dilemmas by Researching Violent Conflict' University of Tromsø, CPS, Working Papers No. 10.

Blackhurst, Hector (1980). 'Ethnicity in Southern Ethiopia: The General and the Particular' *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 55-65

Campbell, John (2004). 'Ethnic Minorities and Development: A Prospective Look at the Situation of African Pastoralists and Hunter-Gatherers' *Ethnicities*; 4; 5.

Cholewinski, Ryszard (1988). 'State Duty towards Ethnic Minorities: Positive or Negative?' *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol 10, No. 3.

Clapham, Christopher (1975). 'Centralization and Local Response in Southern Ethiopia' *African Affairs*, Vol. 74, no 294.

Clapham, Christopher (1969). 'Imperial Leadership in Ethiopia' *African Affairs*, vol. 68, No 275.

Cohen, Gideon (2006). 'The Development of Regional and Local Languages in Ethiopia's Federal System' in David Turton (ed.): *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, James Curry.

Crummey, Donald (1980). 'Abyssinian Feudalism' *Past and Present*, no. 89.

Dessalegn Rahmato (1994). 'The Unquiet Countryside: the Collapse of 'Socialism' and Rural Agitation, 1990 and 1991' in Abebe Zegeye and Pausewang, Siegfried (eds.) *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*. London: British Academic Press

Eidheim, Herald (1969). 'When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma' in in Barth, Fredrik (ed.): *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture of Difference*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Ellison, James (2006). 'Everyone can do as he wants' *Economic Liberalization and Emergent forms of Antipathy in Southern Ethiopia*. *American Ethnologist*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 665-686

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1991). 'Ethnicity Versus Nationalism' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol, 28, no.3.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1992). 'Linguistic Hegemony and Minority Resistance' *Journal of peace Research*; vol. 29

Feenan, Dermot (2002.) 'Researching Paramilitary Violence in Northern Ireland' in *International Journal of Social Science Method*, 5, 2.

Galtung, Johan (1996). *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage Publication

Gokah, Theophilus (2006). 'The Naive Researcher: Doing Social Research in Africa' *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9, 1.

Günther Schlee (2009). 'Introduction' in Gunther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson (eds.): *Changing Identities and Alliances in North-East Africa: Volume I: Kenya and Ethiopia*. Oxford: Berghahn Books

Guba, E. G and Lincoln, Y. C (1994). 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research' in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *Hand Book of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hansamo Hamella (2001). *Culture and History of Dirashe people: Ancient to 1974* (intr. originally in Amharic). Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

Henrard, Kristin (2001). 'The Interrelationship between Individual Human Rights, Minority Rights and the Right to Self-Determination and its Importance for the Adequate Protection of Linguistic Minorities', *Ethnopolitics*, 1:1, 41-61.

Hewstone, Miles, Cairns, Ed (2001). 'Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict' in Chirot, Daniel, Seligman, Martin (eds.), *Ethnopolitical Warfare. Causes, consequences, and Possible Solutions*. Washington DC: American Psychological Associations.

Jenkins, Richard (2008). *Social Identity* 3rd ed. Routledge press.

Jenkins, Richard (1994). 'Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 17, no. 2.

Kovats-Bernat, Christopher (2002). 'Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork amid Violence and Terror' *American Anthropologists* 104 (1).

Kymlicka, Will (2006). 'Emerging western Models of Multinational Federalism: are they Relevant for Africa?' in David Turton (ed.): *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, James Curry.

Marcus, Harold G. (1983). *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States (1974-1974): The Politics of Empire*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Markakis, John (1973). "Social Formation and Political Adaptation in Ethiopia", *The Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3.

Merera Gudina (2003a). *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalism and The Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000*. The Hague: Shaker Publishing.

Merera Gudina (2003b). 'The Elite and the Quest for Peace, Democracy and Development in Ethiopia: Lessons to be Learnt' *Northeast African Studies* Vol. 10, no. 2

Meyer, Scott (2007). 'Safety in the Field: Experience and Recommendations', University of Tromsø, CPS, Working Papers No. 10.

Miall, Hugh (2007). *Emergent Conflict and Peaceful Change*. New York: PALGRAVE MACHILLAN.

Moore, Henrietta L. (2000) [1998]. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mulugeta Lakew (2007). "Social History of Alle People: from 2nd half of 16th century to 1990s" (BEd thesis, Dilla University).

Neumann, Oscar (1902). 'From the Somali Coast through Southern Ethiopia to the Sudan' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 373-398.

Niemi, Einar (2006). 'Ethnic Groups, Naming and Minority Policy' in L. Elenius and C. Karlsson (eds) *Cross-Cultural Communication and Ethnic Identities. Proceedings II from the Conference Regional Northern Identity: from Past to Future*. Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University.

Paulos Chanie (1998). 'The Rise of Politicised Ethnicity among the Oromo in Ethiopia' in M.A. Mohammed Salih and John Markakis (eds.) *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa*. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.

Pausewang, Siegfried (1997). 'Can National Identity be built on Local Democracy?' Working paper 8, Chri. Michelsen Institute, Development Studies and Human Rights, Bergen.

Pausewang, Siegfried (2009). 'Ethiopia: a Political View from Below' South African Journal of International Affairs, vol. 16, No. 1.

Pausewang, Siegfried (1994). 'Local Democracy and Central Control' in Abebe Zegeye and Pausewang, Siegfried (eds.) Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy. London: British Academic Press.

Popovski, Vesselin (2004). 'Sovereignty as Duty to Protect Human Rights' UN Chronicle [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1309/is\\_4\\_41/ai\\_n13803088/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1309/is_4_41/ai_n13803088/)

Saugestad, Sidsel (2001). 'Contested Images: 'First Peoples' or 'Imagined Minorities' in Africa? ' in Alan Barnard and Justin Kenrick (eds.) Africa's Indigenous Peoples: 'First Peoples' or Marginalized Minorities?. University of Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies.

Shako Otto (2005). 'Traditional Konso Culture and The Missionary Impact', Annales d'Ethiopie, Vol. Xx: 149-180.

Söckfeld, Martin (1999). 'Debating Self, Identity and Culture in Anthropology' Current Anthropology Vol. 40, No. 4.

Tegegne Teka (1998). 'Amhara Ethnicity in the Making' in M.A. Mohammed Salih and John Markakis (eds.) Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.

Tim, Girard (2002). 'A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Werizoid Dialect Chain' SIL International.

Thoresen, Albrto Valiente (2007). 'Some Philosophical Considerations for Peace Studies: The Value of pragmatism' University of Tromsø, CPS, Working Papers No. 10.

Tronvoll, Kjetil (2008). 'Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia: When Ethnic Identity is A Political Stigma', 15 (1). *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 49-79.

Tronvoll, Kjetil (2000). 'Ethiopia: A New Start?' *Minority Rights Group Report*.

Vaughan, Sarah (2006) 'Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia's Southern Region' in *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. D, Turton, Oxford, James Curry.

Watson, Elizabeth. (2006). 'Making A Living in the Post Socialist Periphery: Struggles Between Farmers and Traders in Konso, Ethiopia' *Africa* 76 (1).

Watson, Elizabeth (2009). 'Debate over Culture in Konso since Decentralization (1991)' Gunther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson (eds.): *Changing Identities and Alliances in North-East Africa: Volum I: Kenya and Ethiopia*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Wimmer, Andreas (1997). 'Who Own State? Understanding ethnic conflict in Post Colonial Societies' *Nation and Nationalism* 3(4).

Young, John (1998). 'Regionalism and Democracy in Ethiopia' *Third world Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2.

(2008). *Ethiopian Human Rights Council 107th Special Report*.

(2008). 'Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by age and Sex, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission'. Addis Ababa: UNFPA.