

**HARAMAYA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**A HISTORY OF BURJI WOREDA, 1941-1991**

**MA Thesis**

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**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**A HISTORY OF BURJI WOREDA, 1941-1991**

**A Thesis Submitted to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, School  
of Graduate Studies, Haramaya University**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art in  
History and Heritage Management**

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**Haramaya, Ethiopi**

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A HISTORY OF BURJI *WOREDA*, 1941-1991

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## **DEDICATION**

For *Ato* Malticha (Hirbo) Ayla one of the Ethiopian patriots in Burji district.

## STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR

By my signature below, I declare and affirm that this thesis is my own work. I have followed all ethical principles of scholarship in the preparation, data collection, data analysis and completion of this thesis. All scholarly matter that is included in the thesis has been given recognition through citation. I affirm that I have cited and referenced all sources used in this document. Every serious effort has been made to avoid any plagiarism in the preparation of this thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This thesis investigates the history of Burji district from 1941 to 1991. 1941 is a turning point in the history of the district because of the restoration of the imperial regime while the year 1991 is a land mark due to the demise of the military regime. Based on relevant archival, secondary and oral sources, this thesis focused on reconstructing the history of Burji woreda from 1941 to 1991. It also offered background knowledge pertaining to the pre-1941 period. In short, the main objective of the thesis is to show the local changes that were observed in Burji district in the context of change in policy and government at national level. The thesis showed how the traditional socio-economic and administrative system of Burji has been affected by the incorporation of Burji into the imperial state of Ethiopia. The restoration of the imperial rule and the subsequent reforms that imperial government had introduced especially in relation to administration and land and the subsequent reactions of the people of the district to the introduced changes are the main themes of analysis for the period between 1941 and 1974. Thus, this thesis argues that the socio-economic and administrative changes made by Emperor Haile Selassie's government in the post-1941 period brought little improvement in the life of most of the local people of the district. The study also tried to examine developments that the Burji district had witnessed during the Derg regime (1974-1991). The military regime's attempts to place its power on a better position by introducing several measures at a national level had its own negative and positive effects in the socio-economic and political life of the people of Burji district. Therefore, I argued that the political, economical and social policies and reforms that had been formulated and implemented by the Derg government brought better changes in the life of most of the people of Burji district than the imperial government. Generally, the findings of this research work showed the dialogue between "history of events" and a "history from below".*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Burji *woreda* (district) is one of the five districts which constitute Segen Area Peoples' Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State.<sup>1</sup> The capital of the district, Soyama, is found south of Addis Ababa and the regional capital, Hawassa at a distance of 525 and 262 kilometers respectively. It is 145 kilometers east from the zonal capital Segen or Gumaiyde.<sup>2</sup>

The term Burji stands both for the people as well as the place where this people have predominately lived for centuries. The Burji belong to the East Highland Cushitic-speaking people who include languages like Alaba, Kambata, Tambaro, Sidama and Konso. The Burji are an agricultural population who live in various parts of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Unique Ethiopia*, No,1, November 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Abebe, p. 4; Eike Haberland, "Notes on the History of the Southern Ethiopia Peoples," *Colloque International Languages Couchitiques et les Peuples Quiles Parlent : Historie: rapport de prot Haberland: Centre National De La Recherche Scientifique*, 1975, p. 32; Herman Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.1, (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1988), p. 757; Hermann Amborn and Alexander Kellner, "Burji Vocabulary of Cultural Items : An Insight Based on the Field Works of Helmut Straube." *AAP*, No. 58, p. 14; Kellner Alex, "The Mythical Reflexivity of the Burji Presentation of an ethnological-linguistic methodology for interpreting oral literature", in *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Trondheim, 2009. "The, p. 425; Hussein A. Mahmoud, "Breaking Barriers: the construction of a new Burji identity through livestock trade in northern Kenya," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers No 113* Advokatenweg 36, D-06114 Halle/Saale, Germany (2009), p. 3; YeBurji Liyu *Woreda* Andegn Amist Amet (1999-2003) Yesine Hizb Programme BeFinance Economy Limat Tsfe bet Ye statistics ena Sine-Hizb Zerf, Sene 2000.

There are two views regarding the etymology of the term Burji. According to Abebe Argamo, the term is derived from “Burjie”, a person who is said to have led the exodus of the people from northern Ethiopia to Liban in southern Ethiopia.<sup>4</sup> The Burji call themselves “Dash”, most likely after Dashecha, one of the two Burji moites. The term also represents the people or an individual who speaks Dashate or Burji language. Moreover, the term has territorial dimensions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Abebe, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p, 3.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Ethiopian historiography has been criticized for giving too much emphasis to the state and other central political and religious institutions. Thus, the ordinary people had been marginalized in these studies. This is equally true of those populations who were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> One of the peoples of southern Ethiopia, whose history has not been studied well, is the Burji.<sup>7</sup> The scholarly works on Burji are limited in number and at best fragmented. Most of these works are produced by western scholars and only examine the cultural and linguistic aspects of Burji society in a synchronic fashion.

Other published and unpublished works on Burji people that were produced by foreign as well as Ethiopian researchers highlight the history of the people in a very limited fashion. In addition, these works do not raise pertinent questions on the characteristic features of the administration of Burji district and the major socio-economic changes Burji district experienced in the imperial and post-imperial periods. These questions need further examination. Besides these, most of the scholarly works that deal with Burji are characterized by both thematic and temporal limitations. With the exception of a few of these works, the majority of them do not deal with the period 1941-1991. Thus, there is a clear knowledge gap on the area, especially for the post-1941 period.

The study seeks to fill the gaps that exist in Burji history by thoroughly investigating and examining the history of Burji in general and Burji district in particular. Specifically, it investigates the genesis of administration in the *woreda*, the social and economic history of the *woreda* in the period 1941- 1991. The year, 1941 is a watershed in the history of Burji *woreda* because of the restoration of the imperial administration which had a profound effect on the

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<sup>6</sup> Alessandro Triulzi, "Battling with the Past New Frameworks for Ethiopian Historiography," in Wendy James, Eisei Kurimoto, Donald L. Donaham and Alessandro, Triulzi eds. *Remapping Ethiopia, Socialism and After*. (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), pp. 76-88.

<sup>7</sup> K. A. Mude, "The Amaro Burji of Southern Ethiopia", *Ngano; Nairobi Historical Studies*, Vol.1 (1969), p. 27.

administrative structure of the *woreda*. 1991, on the other hand, marked the end of the socialist regime which had significant impact on the life of the people of the district.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

As yet, we do not have a comprehensive scholarly study on the social, economic or political history of the Burji people or Burji district. Thus, a systematic and thorough reconstruction and examination of the history of Burji *woreda* is extremely important. First, it will contribute to historical knowledge production hitherto limited to few works. Second, it will be an important input for other researchers that are interested in studying the Burji people and its district. Third, since there is no comprehensive study of the various aspects of the life of the Burji people at this level, it is my expectation that the work will contribute in widening our understanding concerning Burji. In addition to these, this work will furnish additional materials for the reconstruction of the past of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples in general and Burji *woreda* (district) in particular.

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.4.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the research was to reconstruct the economic, social and administrative history of Burji *woreda* from 1941 to 1991.

#### **1.4.2. Specific Objectives**

In addition to the aforementioned general objective, the study had the following specific objectives:

- To examine the administrative history of Burji district from 1941 to 1991.
- To reconstruct the histories of agriculture and commerce in Burji *woreda* from the end of the Italian occupation to the demise of the military government.

- To examine changes in the areas like education, religion and other social issues in Burji *woreda* from.
- To illuminate the major economic impact of land grant systems of the pre-1974 and the land reform program of the military regime and the reaction of the local community to these changes.

## **1.5. Limitation and Scope of the Study**

### **1.5.1. Limitation of the Study**

This study has some limitations and they are discussed below:

- The problem of finding organized archival sources.
- The constraint of language on the side the the researcher. Eventhough the researcher has the ability to communicate in Burji, but a gap of communication was observed between the informants and the researcher during the field work.
- Finding some key informants who live outside Burji district in different parts of Ethiopia is one of the limitations of this research work.
- The paucity of secondary sources which a directly related to the history of Burji district.
- The far distance between the work place and the study area is another limitation of this study.

### **1.5.2. The Scope of the Study**

Any study from the early beginning will have its own scope to determine the level and extent of the study, similarly this thesis has also its own focus. It has spatial, temporal and thematic scopes. Regarding the spatial scope of the research, it is mainly focused on the history of Burji *woreda*. On the other hand, with regard to the temporal scope of the subject matter, the thesis

principally focused on the period between 1941 and 1991. Concerning to the thematic scope, the study and analysis mainly focused on the administrative, social and economic changes that were observed in the period under discussion.

## **1.6. Materials and Methods**

### **1.6.1. Description of the Study Area**

The study principally focuses on Burji *woreda*, which is found in Segen Area Peoples' Zone in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The capital of the district, Soyama is found at a distance of 525, 262 and 145 kilometers from Addis Ababa, Hawassa (the regional capital) and Segen (the zonal capital) respectively. According to the current political map of the country, Burji district is bounded by Amaro district in the north, Borana Zone of Oromia region in the south and east, and Konso district in the west. Astronomically, Burji *woreda* is located between  $5^{\circ}38'8'' - 5^{\circ}42'00''$  latitude north and  $35^{\circ}34'2'' - 37^{\circ}58'2''$  longitude east.

According to the 2007 Central Statistic Authority (CSA) census report, the total population of the district was 56,681. Of these, 50,495 and 6186 were rural and urban dwellers respectively. Burji district has the fastest population growth rate in the SNNPR. The population density of Burji *woreda* is 42/km<sup>2</sup>. The Burji ethnic group is the dominant group in the district. Other populations who live in the district include Amhara, Konso, Koyera, Gurage and Oromo. 42.8%, 35.8%, 20.9% and 0.5% of the district's population are the followers of Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and other religions respectively.

### **1. 6.2. Methods of Data Collection**

The study was conducted through the systematic collection and analysis of written primary and secondary sources. These have been cross-checked with oral sources so as to reconstruct in an in-depth fashion the history of the Burji in the period under discussion.

In order to identify the basic framework of the study, I have carried out an intensive reading of the relevant secondary materials. This allowed me to identify clearly the data gap in the existing literature, which in-turn guided the collection of the primary data.

Next, I consulted and analyzed the available official documents and statistics. Following the approval of the proposal, the first place where I conducted the archival research was at the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA) in Addis Ababa. At NALA, I especially focused on the collection of archival documents that focus on the administrative history of the district. Besides this, archival materials in Soyama town were investigated. These archives provided me with documents that deal with local administrative practices, economic life of the population and social change in the district.

In addition, I obtained oral information through interviews with informants that came from various ethnic groups, religious groups, occupations, sex and age and who live / have lived in Burji district and neighboring districts individually as well as in groups.

### **1.6.3 Methods of Data Analysis**

To undertake this historical research, I used qualitative method as the primary means of data analysis. The data which was collected by the aforementioned means was examined, checked and cross- checked for its credibility. The processed data has been presented in narrative as well as analytic methods to reconstruct an in-depth history of Burji district in the period under discussion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO BURJI WOREDA

#### 2.1. Physical and Human Background to Burji District

##### 2.1.1. Location, Area, and Population

The location of Burjiland has been discussed by various scholars. Some of these writers utilized natural features like mountains, rivers and lakes as points of reference in describing Burjiland while others described the area in relation to the location of neighboring peoples.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, some authorities simply used direction to refer to the whereabouts of the Burji. For instance, Arnold Wienholt Hodson, the British consul to Southern Ethiopia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, stated that the Burji lived to the southeast of Lake Chamo.<sup>2</sup> Ernesta Cerulli, on the other hand located Burji between Sagan and Bishan Guracha rivers.<sup>3</sup> According to Keneth Mude, the land of the Burji lies to the southeast of Lake Abaya and east of Sagan River.<sup>4</sup> But he does not describe the eastern and the northern extents of Burji.

According to one official letter, which explains the establishment of Burji *woreda* administration in 1965, Hagere Maryam and Amarro *woredas* share boundaries with Burji in the east and north respectively. Burka River in the south and southeast separated Burji and Yabello *woredas*. The Sagan River bordered Burji and Gamo Gofa *Teklay Gizat* (province) in the west.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Ali Dawa in 1984 situated Burji in Sidamo province in the northwestern part of Arero sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Dawa, "The History of Burji Ethnic Group" (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1989), P.1; K.A. Mude, "The Amaro Burji of Southern Ethiopia", *Ngano; Nairobi Historical Studies*, Vol.1 (1969), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold W.Hodson, *Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia* (London; Hazel Wattson and Vieny Ltd, 1927), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> E. Cerulli, *Peoples of the South West Ethiopia and Its Borderland* *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, Part III (London: International African Institute, 1956), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Mude, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> A letter numbered 3127/93/57: discusses about the establishment of Burji Woreda in 1957 E.C. The document is in the possession of Ato Getahun Addo. See appendix -A.

province. According to him, Burji is bounded by Mountain Barguda in the northeast; by the land of Koyra in the north; by Borana in the southeast and south; and by the Sagan River in the west.<sup>6</sup> Ali also failed to describe the eastern borders of Burji. At any rate, the descriptions of these scholars lack consistency and accuracy.

Besides the physical features, cultural features have also been used in defining the location of Burji. According to Mude, culturally, Burji is bounded by Gedeo ethnic group in the north, Konso in the west, and Borana-Oromo in the south.<sup>7</sup> Yet, in this description, Mude does not include the northern neighbor of Burji, Koyra; rather he adds the Gedeo who do not share boundary with Burji.

Like the relative location, the astronomical locations offered by various authorities have problems of accuracy and consistency. Cerulli puts the location of Burji at 5° 30' north latitude and 37° east longitude.<sup>8</sup> This is scientifically unrealistic. Since such a geographical unit cannot be stated in such a specific identification. Ayele Chuda, who cited the work of Cerulli, also repeated the same mistake. In similar fashion, Ali who followed the footsteps of Ayele, committed the same fallacy.<sup>9</sup>

In the post 1991 period, the location of Burji has gone through change. Accordingly, the Burji special *woreda* is found in the southeastern part of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. It is bounded by Amaro Special District in the north, Oromiya Regional State in the east and south, and Konso Special District in the west.<sup>10</sup> However, following the introduction of an ethno-linguistic based administrative structure, four *kebeles* which were

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<sup>6</sup> Ali, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Mude, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cerulli, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ayele Chuda, "Changes in Traditional Socio- Economic and Cultural Organization of the Burji Ethnic Group" (BA Thesis, Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Addis Ababa University, 1988), p. 1; Ali, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Aweke Amzaye, *Mosaic Culture and Peoples of Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State*, (Awassa: SNNPRS Bureau of Information and Culture, 2007), p. 44.

formerly part of Gumaiyde *woreda*, became part of Burji district. On the other hand, six *kebeles* were separated from Burji and integrated into Hagere Maryam district.<sup>11</sup>

The difference among scholars and other writers pertaining to the location of Burji appears to be the result of lack of ample information about Burji and the frequent administrative restructuring that took place with the change of government.

This thesis which utilizes the official maps of Burji and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State tries to avoid the confusion regarding the relative and astronomical locations of Burji. Based on these official sources, Burji is located in the Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, particularly in the eastern part of Segen Area Peoples Zone. It is bounded by Amaro district in the north, Borana zone of Oromiya region in the south and east, and Konso district in the west. Astronomically, Burji district lies roughly between 5°13' 8'' north and 5° 42' north latitude and 37° 35' E-37° 58' 2'' E longitude.<sup>12</sup>

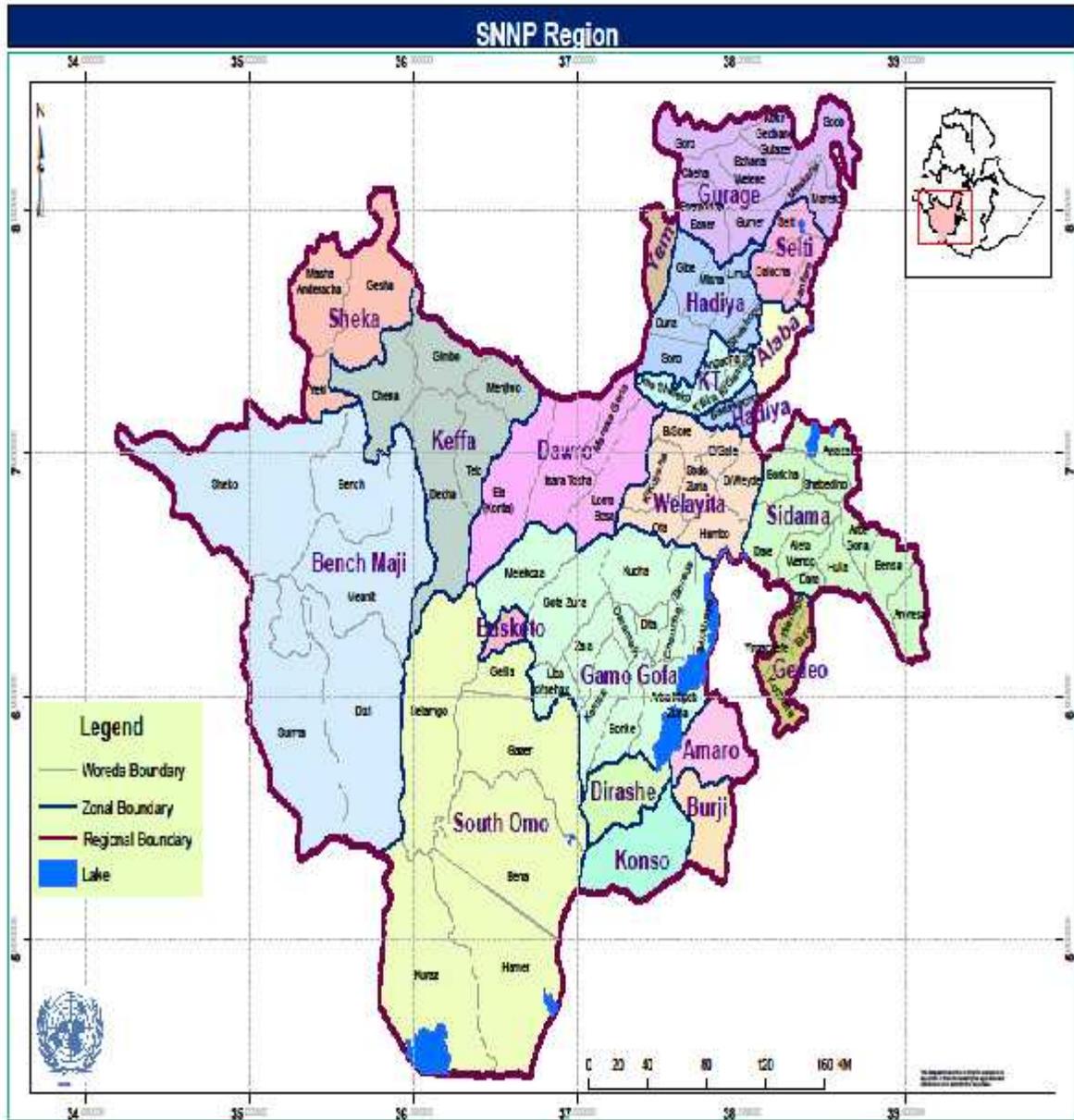
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11

Map of Burji *woreda* which is produced by Burji *Woreda* Culture, Tourism and Communication Office. As we can see from the map, *kebeles* like Benya, Berek, Gobeze and Tinswa Qeyate were formely part and parcel of Gumaiyde *woreda*. But after 1995, the *Kebeles* were integrated into Burji *woreda*. This was mainly because these *kebeles* were predominately inhabited by the Burji. In contrast, *kebeles* such as Medheba, Hidha-Korma, Soyama-Sorro, Sororro-Malka Jawe, Dheqona- Abekessa and Wolasso-Gossa were parted from Burji *woreda* and integrated into Hagre Maryam *woreda*.

<sup>12</sup> Map of Southern Nations Natinalties and Peoples Regional State. The new zone was established in 2011 by the amalgamation of Alee or Gawadha, Burji, Dherashe, Konso, Koree (Koyera), Kusmie, Masholiyita and Mossiya peoples.

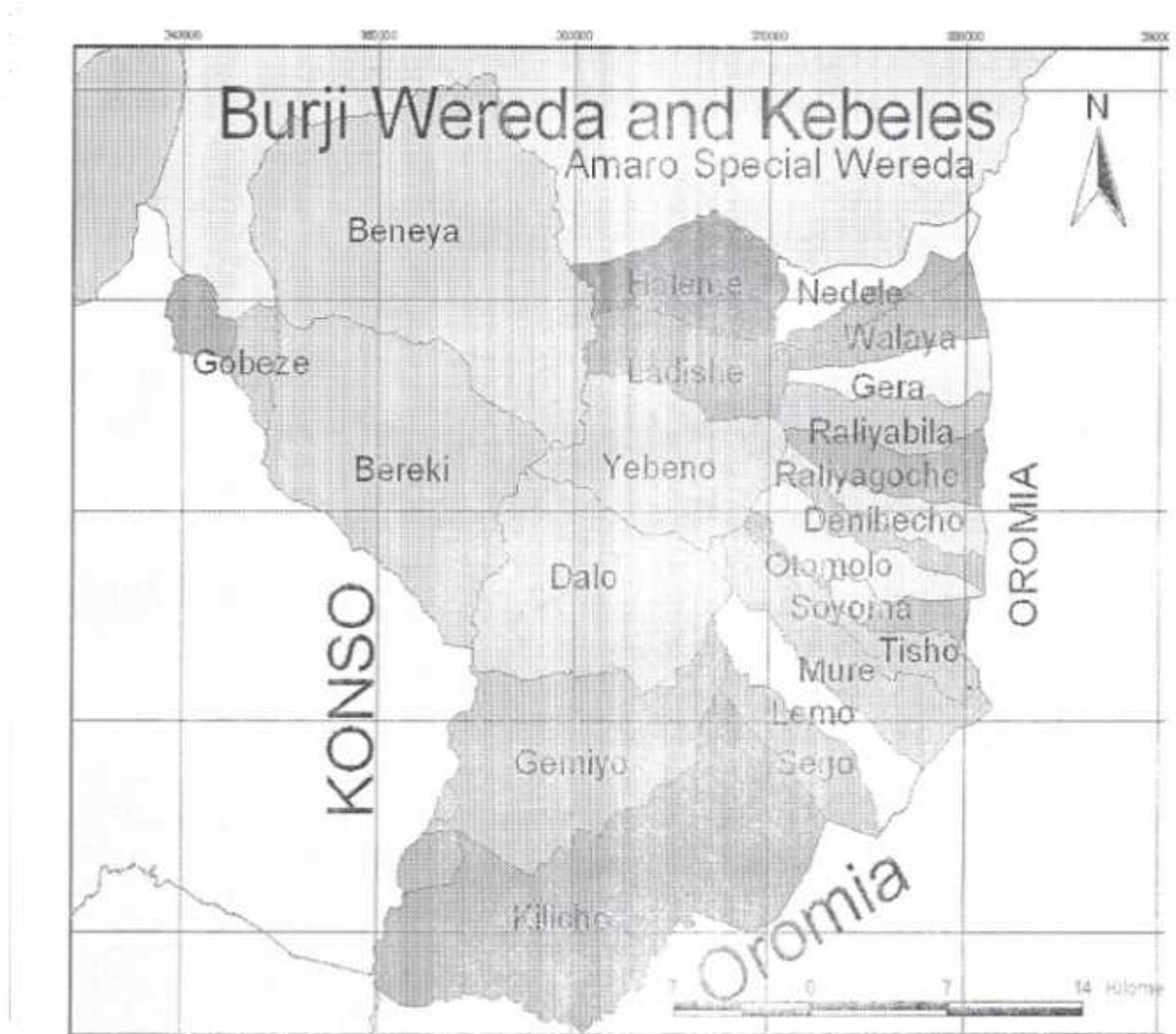
Map.1. The location of Burji in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State



Source: [Www. Snnprs. gov.et](http://www.Snnprs.gov.et).

According to a 1982 E.C government report, the total area of Burji district was about 1590.68 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the census study conducted by Burji Special District in 2008 shows that the total area of Burji Special District was 1783 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>14</sup> The variation in the figure, like the location of the district, is the result of the administrative restructuring of the district at different times in the past.

Map-2 Burji Woreda and its Neighbors



Source: Burji Woreda Culture, Toursim and Communication Office.

<sup>13</sup> NALA, Series No. 17 Province Code 16 Folder No. 06, File No. 02. See appendix-K

<sup>14</sup> *YeBurji Liyu Woreda Andegn Amist Amet (1999-2003) Yesine Hizb Programme BeFinance Economy Limat Tsfe bet Ye statistics ena Sine-Hizb Zerf*, Sene 2000.

According to the 1984 census of the Central Statistics Agency, the population of the district is 25,176.<sup>15</sup> The 1994 census report on the other hand, revealed that the total population of the district has reached 35,700.<sup>16</sup> According to the most recent census (2007), the district has 56,681 inhabitants. Of this, 50,495 and 6,186 were rural and urban dwellers respectively.<sup>17</sup> At the country level, the total population of the Burji ethnic group was 71,758.<sup>18</sup> The principal cause of the demographic discrepancy is the fast population growth rate of Burji district. Moreover, the administrative restructuring in the post-1991 period also contributed to the demographic change of the *woreda*. The current population density of Burji *woreda* is 42/km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>19</sup> According to Herman Ambron, the population of Burji who live in Kenya is greater than that of the Burji who live in Ethiopia. This is mainly the result of out-migration of Burji towards Kenya.<sup>20</sup>

Burji are the dominant ethnic group in Burji district. Besides the Burji, a large number of Koyra live in the district. There are two *kebeles* in the district that are predominantly inhabited by the Koyra. Moreover, members of the Konso, Amhara, Oromo and Gurage ethnic groups live in Burji district. In respect to the religious composition of the people of the district, 42.8%, 35.8%, 20.9% and 0.5% of them were Protestant, Orthodox Christians, Muslims and followers of other religions respectively.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Summary and Statistical Report of the 1984 Population and Housing Census* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority, 1985)

<sup>16</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. *Summary and Statistical Report of the 1994 Population and Housing Census* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority, 1995)

<sup>17</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority, 2008)

<sup>18</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority, 2008)

<sup>19</sup> YeBurji Liyu Woreda Andegn Amist Amet (1999-2003).

<sup>20</sup> Herman Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", in the *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.1, Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, (1988), p. 756.

<sup>21</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census* (Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Authority, 2008)

### 2.1.2. Topography and Climate of Burjiland

Topographically, most of Burji *woreda* can be categorized as a predominantly highland area. Burjiland or “Gara Burji” according to the Burji, is part of the Amaro massif which is found on the eastern edge of the Great East Africa Rift Valley. Altitude in Burji district ranges from 860 to 2560 m. a. s. l.<sup>22</sup> The highest point of the *woreda* is found around Nedele *kebele*, in the northern fringe of the district. Altitude decreases from north to south reaching its lowest point around Sagan River. The highland topography of the district forms the watersheds for small streams that flow into the Sagan River and other rivers which flow in an eastern direction.

According to Mude, Burji district’s mountainous topography had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the mountains served as a natural fortification against the attacks of their traditional enemy, the Guji-Oromo. On the other hand, the mountains acted as a natural barrier to cultural exchange with neighboring peoples.<sup>23</sup>

Not the whole of Burji land is a highland region. Most of the lowlands are found in the southern and western parts of the district. Like the highlands, the lowlands have different advantages and disadvantages for the people. Since the lowlands are mostly rich in wildlife, they had attracted many hunters into the region. The famous Italian explorer, Prince Russpoli died in Burji district in an elephant hunting expedition in 1893/4.<sup>24</sup> The first three lion’s cubs were brought from Burji to *Anbesa Gibi Zoo* in Addis Ababa showing the attractions of the lowlands of Burji for hunting of wild games. On the other hand, the lowlands were home to many dangerous big animals and poisonous insects which make the area hostile for human habitation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *YeBurji Woreda Yesine Hizb Programme BeFinance Economy Limat Tsfe bet Ye statistics ena Sine-Hizb Zerf*, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Mude, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 39-40; Informants: *Ato* Mussa Jillo and *Ansh* Salle Chotta. The Italian explorer was buried in Burjie-Kilicho *kebele*. During the Italian occupation period, *Woma* Shutte Ume was prized one iron-made box and alben-gun by Italians for the respectful deed of the Burji in the burying of the Italian prince.

<sup>25</sup> Informants: *Mussa* Jillo and *Salle* Chotta. *Mussa* Jillo, *Said* Iyicha, *Lolo* Malko and *Lande* Bonke were people who caught the cubs of lion from Sagan area. One of the cubs was called *Burjie*. They were offered to Emperor *Haile Selassie* by *Balambaras* Danche Chotta who was one of the *balabats* of Burji in that time.

Since altitude in the district ranges between 860 to 2560 m. a. s. l, the region experiences various climatic conditions. The highland part of Burjiland, which constitutes 6 percent of the total area of Burji, experiences a *dega* or cool climate condition. This highland area is cut by small gorges created by the upper course of perennial and intermittent rivers like Hartash and Galana Rivers that spring from this area.<sup>26</sup>

Parts of the district experience a *woina dega* (middle altitude) type of climate. This area is characterized by plain topography. It constitutes approximately 69 percent of the total area of the district. The extreme south and north east sections of the *woreda* experience a *kola* (hot) climate condition. This area accounts for 25 percent of the total area of Burji.<sup>27</sup>

There are two rainy seasons in Burji district. These are called *Karara* or *Badaysh* and *Hagaye* seasons. The *Karara* is the big rainy season while *Hagaye* is the small rainy season. The former season contributes the lion's share for the annual agricultural yield which makes sixty percent where as the latter season contributes forty percent of the Burji land's yearly agricultural output. In most cases, the big rainy season commences in late February and ends in mid May. The *hageye* rainy season starts in September and goes to November.<sup>28</sup> However, it should be noted that the rain occurs at irregular time. The highest amount of rainfall of the district recorded for the district is 1,000mm. Yet, the minimum amount of rain of Burji was recorded during the small rainy season.<sup>29</sup>

### **2.1.3. The Settlement History of Burji**

The present Burji settlement pattern is a result of historical and environmental factors. Herman Amborn believes that the Burji have lived in their present lands since the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that after the Burji left Abuno, a place which is found some fourty kilo

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<sup>26</sup> YeBurji *Woreda* Yesine Hizb Programme BeFinance Economy Limat Tsfe bet Ye statistics ena Sine-Hizb Zerf, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*; Abebe, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*; Abebe, p. 2.

meters north of Yabello town, they first settled in Barguda, in the north eastern part of Burji.<sup>30</sup> However, after a short stay in Barguda, perhaps due to the hot climate, the Burji moved into two directions. The first took a southeast route and came to settle on Mure Mountain. The second group moved in a west ward direction and settled on Hure Mountain.<sup>31</sup> Probably it was these movements which led to the division of the Burji into Burji Gaadi and Gubba. On the basis of this, some scholars have made the mistake of presenting Burji as two different peoples.<sup>32</sup>

Linguistic evidence reveals that the Burji have settled in different parts of Gumaiyde before the conquest of the area by Emperor Menelik. Place names like Kabbura, Maqqyla and Hayilota are etymologically Burji words. On the other hand, Hodson noted that Lake Chamo was named by Burji.<sup>33</sup> This may indicate that the Burji have settled near the lake in the past.

According to Amborn, the Burji distribution has the form of northern and southern settlement patterns. In the former, the population resides at an altitude of between 2,000 and 2200 m. a. s. l. and the settlements are scattered. This was because the residence and the farm lands are in the same place. In the south, on the other hand, the population inhabited areas with altitudes between 2, 000 and 1, 500 m. a. s. l.<sup>34</sup> They live in densely populated and walled villages which are further subdivided into wards (*geere*).<sup>35</sup>

As mentioned earlier, from the vantage point of strategy and climate, the Burji mostly used to live in the highland parts of the district. This can be proved in two ways. The oldest strong

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<sup>30</sup> Herman Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in 'Athiopienund Kenya unter Ver Wendung der Aufzeichnungen Von Helemut Straube with explanation of some cultural items in English* (Harrossowitz Verlag. Wiesbaden, 2009), p. XI; Markos, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Markos, p. 13; Informants: Tukke Hirbo, Getahun Addo and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>32</sup> Mude, p. 29; Hodson, p. 101; Ali, p. 1. According to these scholars there are two Burji peoples: one is Burjie and the other is Guba. Hodson specifically presented Burji people as Burji and Alga. This might be lack of the knowledge about the people. The northern neighbor of Burji, Koyra called the Burji Alga. According to oral informants, Burji Gaddi and Burji Gubba refer to the geographical identification of the people.

<sup>33</sup> Hodson, p. 32; Informant: *Ato Mare Dhade*. In Burji, the term 'chamo', is one of the commn names of a person. Such name is given for the child wose mother has suffered many problems during her the pregnance time. The term 'Kabura' in Burji, "mine is higher". Since the place is situated in the highland it may coincided with the naming. Besides this, in this place there is an old Burial site which is called Yeburji Meqaber (the grave of Burji). 'Haylota' in Burji, it means, belongs to Haylo, i.e. the name of a person.

<sup>34</sup> Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in 'Athiopienund Kenya unter Ver Wendung der Aufzeichnungen Von Helemut Straube*, p. XI.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: *Ato Samuel Barbe*; Map of Burji *Woreda*.

defensive wall built from stone are found in the highlands. The other important point that substantiates this point is that all the sacrificial places of the lowland villages are found in the highlands.

#### **2.1.4. Socio-Political Organization of the Burji**

The clan system is one of the most important institutions that determine Burji social life. Under this system, descent is considered only through the paternal line.<sup>36</sup> In Burji there are two major clan groupings called *Dashecha (Jirank Jorra)* and *Jire-male*.<sup>37</sup> There is no significant difference between the two moieties. The kind of animal sacrificed for ritual purpose is the sole distinction between the two groups. The former sacrifice lambs while the latter sacrifice goats. The two moieties have their own clans.<sup>38</sup>

There are different oral traditions regarding the origin of the Burji clans. Some of the clans are said to have been created by supernatural power while others are said to have always lived in today's Burji land. Still others claim that they came from Liban in Borana country. There are also clans that trace their origin from the various neighboring peoples.<sup>39</sup>

The Burji clans do not have distinctive clan territories. However, in general, most of the clans under the *Dashecha* moiety are found in the northern part of Burjiland while the *Jire-male* clans occupy the southern part. There are some clans which are confined solely to one *olcho* (administrative region similar to a *kebele*). For instance Annabura, Gamayo, Karama, Qdhado

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<sup>36</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Ato Wako Dulla and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>37</sup> Abebe, p.3; Markos, pp. 15-16; Informant: Ato Shano Wata.

<sup>38</sup> Informants: Shano Wata and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>39</sup> H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been .Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," *History in Africa*, Vol.33 (2006), p. 59; Informants: Mare Dhade, Wako Dulla, Ato Borro Wato and Yosef Tasew. In Burji clans such as Qdhado, Gamayo and Hanabura came from Liban where as clans like Bambale, Goda, Gullayish and Tamayi clans are found both in Burji and Koyira. Goda in Burji called as Kanae in Koyra. And they do not marry each other.

and Yabbi are found only in Burji-Kilicho *olcho*.<sup>40</sup> With the exception of this particular case, there is no specific area that can be said to belong to one or other Burji group.

Each clan has its own hereditary leaders called *gossang anaa* and *ansh* who have religious, social, and political duties. The *gossang anaa* is responsible for performing rituals. An important event for all Burji clans is the annual sacrifice ceremony. On this occasion, the *gossang anaa* prays for the fertility and well-being of the clan members. On the other hand, the *ansh* led in the resolution of conflicts within the clan members or with members of other clans. In politics the *ansh* served in the traditional administrative system called *womiso* as a member of the *ansh-gorsa* council (the general council of the *womisso*).<sup>41</sup>

The Burji clan system consists more than eighty five clans. There are more than thirty clans under the *Jirre-malle* while Dhashecha (*Jirank-Jorra*) has about forty clans.<sup>42</sup> Amborn argues that the “fusions and fissions” of clans was the main reason behind the presence of such a large number of Burji clans among the Burji unlike the neighboring peoples such as Konso and Dirashe each of which have only nine clans.<sup>43</sup> About fifteen Burji clans are said to have become extinct. Different sources commonly note that migration, diseases and inter-clan conflict were the principal reasons behind the extinction of these clans.<sup>44</sup>

Marriage among the members of the same clan is strictly forbidden among the Burji because it is believed that all members in a clan are considered as members of one family, *gaffa*.<sup>45</sup> New religions such as Christianity and Islam and modernization have not been able to break this deeply held belief of the Burji.

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<sup>40</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Shano Wata, Wako Dulla and Ato Wolle Tego.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Abebe, p. 3; Markos, pp. 16-17.

<sup>43</sup> Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in 'A'thiopienund Kenya*, p. XIII.

<sup>44</sup> Markos, p.17; Informants: Mare Dhade, Shano Wata, Wako Dulla and Wolle Tego.

<sup>45</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Shano Wata, Wako Dulla and Wolle Tego.

The Burji had a complex generation grading system called *hagi*. Rather than combining generation sets and age grades, which is the typical system among the Oromo, the Burji system is based on formal links between two generation set cycles called *hagi* and *gada*. *Hagi* in some respects resembles the Sidama system while the *gada* links the Burji with the Oromo.<sup>46</sup>

Burji elders claim that *hagi* was developed when the Burji were in Liban.<sup>47</sup> Some sources indicate that the *hagi* was started during a conflict between Burji and the Borana Oromo. Even though we have no concrete evidence on whether the Burji adopted the age set system from neighboring Borana or developed it on their own, it is difficult to neglect the influence of the neighboring population on Burji socio-political system. Eike Haberland contends that Burji and other neighboring peoples of Borana adopted and modified the *gada* system to their local needs.<sup>48</sup> Besides this, the congruence of five grades of Burji *gada* with that of Borana is another point that might support the argument that the Burji adopted the Borana age grade system.

The Burji *hagi* had eight generation sets. But there is a clear variation of time among different *olchos*. In Burji, circumcision was directly related to *hagi* cycles. Every youth from the age of 10 to 15 in each village underwent circumcision and became member of an age grade.<sup>49</sup> Before the circumcision took place, the young boys participated in physical training. Those young boys who demonstrated the best performance were elected by their group members as their leaders. These are known as *hayo*. The number of *hayo* (war leader of the respective *hagi*) elected for the age group depend on the number of *geere* (sub-division of village). The larger the number of *geere*, the more the number of *hayos* elected. All *hayos* collectively form a class called *luba*.<sup>50</sup> The leadership of *hayo* is for life. When a *hayo* was not competent enough to rule the group, he

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<sup>46</sup> H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been .Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," p. 59

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>48</sup> E. Habberland, "The Horn of Africa," UNESCO General History of Africa Vol. V (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), p. 718.

<sup>49</sup> Informants: *Woma* Aden Oshe and Salle Chotta. According to these informants, there is a clear vartion of time of the Burji *hagi* among *olchos*. For instance, in Burjie-Killichio *olcho*, there were eight age sets. Namely: *Chitawa-Kallala-Bale-Harbora-Kunbe-Yato-Motte—Burka*. In *Yabano Olcho* there were four age sets. Namely: *Sarro-Burka-Bale-Yato*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*.

would be dismissed from his position.<sup>51</sup> But it should be emphasized that position was not inherited.

The symbolic representation of circumcision rite was approving the age grade for social, economical and political roles they expected to play in the society. As a rule, after the circumcision, an individual had the right to marry. The age group is responsible for military defense. Apart from this duty, they are also responsible for the mobilization of the age group for social as well as economic activities of the society. Politically, the *hayo* of the *hagi* can represent their class, in the *anshgorsa* council of *womisso*.<sup>52</sup>

The Burji *gada* system had five grades namely: *Mudana*, *Halichisa*, *Aggole*, *Harmuffa* and *Robale*. One *gada* stayed in power for eight years. Therefore, forty years is the ideal year to complete one cycle. Membership in the *gada* was only through the line of the eldest son.<sup>53</sup>

In Burji the *gada* worked in collaboration with the *womisso* though it was not clear how this exactly functioned. Even the role of *gada* is not clearly stated. This is because the *gada* system has already ceased to function at least a century ago. However, Amborn tells us that the major role of the *gada* was ritual. Besides this, one of my informants claims that the *gada* played the role of an advisory body. The *gada* also checked whether the *woma* was working according to the tradition or not.<sup>54</sup>

At present time, the *gada* system has become extinct among the Burji. The *harmuffa* was the last grade that held office. Except the short period of revival of the *mudana gada* during the Italian occupation, the system has completely stopped functioning. It was only used for periodization purpose.<sup>55</sup> Many writers claim that the conquest of the Ethiopian state was the major reason for the demise of the system. Other sources, however, indicate that disappearance of the *gada*

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*; Markos, pp. 45-46.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Ato Mohammed Wolle; H. Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in A-thiapienund Kenya*, p. XIV.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Samuel Barbe.

<sup>55</sup> Informant: Salle Chotta; H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been. Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," p. 60.

system was not only due to external factors but also due to internal dynamism. For instance, Abebe argues that the tyrannical feature of the *gada* system was the main reason behind its demise in Burjiland.<sup>56</sup>

The other essential feature of the social organization of the Burji is the traditional religious institution called *genamo*. Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam to Burjiland, the Burji worshipped one Supreme Being called *Hamalle-Harshe* or *Wonto*.<sup>57</sup> The person who, officiated over the traditional religion of the Burji is called *gann*. It is believed that the *ganns* inherited special abilities like curing and blessing from their clan forbears.<sup>58</sup> Under the *genamo*, there are subordinates like *kallu* and *wooney* or *durbane*. The former is the messenger of *gann* while the latter is the wife of the *gann*. It is believed that she also has power in representing *gann* in the *genamo* institution.<sup>59</sup>

There are two senior *ganns* who have distinct powers and responsibilities. The *Segana gann* (the senior *ganns* alternatively hold the title of *woma*) is considered as a rain maker or father of rain while the *Banbale gann* is the father of disease, hunger, war, pests and wild animals. He is also responsible for the prevention of evil influences and for the well-being and fertility of the Burji people. Besides the senior *ganns*, there are also junior *ganns*. Due to their junior status, they do not hold the title of *woma*. Junior *ganns* have special abilities in various areas. The *ganns* are also clan leaders. But all clans do not have *ganns*.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been .Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," pp. 59-60Abebe, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup>Informants: Getahun Chewa, Abebe Argamo, Ato Bange Woche and Mare Dhade and Mohammed Wolle.

<sup>58</sup> Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in ·Athiopienund Kenya*, p. XV; Abebe, p.10; *Unique Ethiopia*, No, 1, November 2011; Informants: *Dyna* Achule Hirbo, Ato Bange woche and Mare Dhade.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Informants: Achule Hirbo, Bange Woche, Mare Dhade, Getahun Chewa and Wolle Tego.

Fig.3: Burji *Gann*



(Adopted from Herman Amborn, 2009)

In religious context, the *gann* acts as an intermediary between *Hamale Harsh* (the sky God) and the Burji people. It is believed that the *gann* has the power to curse or bring peace and stability to the people.<sup>61</sup> However, at the present time the the role of this traditional religion has been undermined by the universal religions especially by the spread of the Protestantism.

Burjiland is divided into eight different *olchos* (administrative regions) namely: Killichio-Lemo-Gemiyo, Geshara-Daldho, Ottomalo, Ralaya, Shay-Shay, Waleya-Ladishe-Gara, Wordeya and Yabano. Each *olcho* is further sub-divided into various villages.<sup>62</sup>

Until the advent of Menilik's force at end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these eight political units were ruled by Burji traditional form of governance called *womisso*. Although the Burji did not have a formal structure of government, the *womisso* traditional system of administration of Burji embodied three major institutions which are organized hierarchically. In this arrangement, the

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*; Alexander Kellhner, "The mythical reflexivity of the Burji," pp. 429-430.

<sup>62</sup> Abebe, P. 6; Informants: Getahun Chewa, *Ato* Yosef Tasew and *Ato* Wayo Shanko.

*woma* sat at the top of the hierarchy. Among the dignitaries in the *womisso*, he is the number one official. Below this office, there is a *dayna*, who is responsible to the *woma*. The lowest rank in the system is that of the *masha*. *Womisso*, *dynoma* and *mashooma* are offices that are led by *woma*, *dayna* and *masha* respectively. Under the respective councils of *womisso* there are *jaldhaba* (the assistants of the respective offices), *bitnch* (election officials) and *hayo* (the commander in chief) and others.<sup>63</sup>

Appointment to the office of *woma* had some basic restrictions. All Burji men did not have the right to compete for the office of *woma*. A person who wanted to compete for this office must be from one of the five clans: namely Hanabura, Yabbi, Karama, Gamayo and Qadhado which are exclusively found in Burjie-Kilicho.<sup>64</sup> In addition to this restriction, the personal qualities of the individual such as: the ability of persuasion, competence and leadership, acceptance by the society, good health condition and good economic performance are the principal criteria for election into the office of *woma*.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the position of *dayna* belonged to Gubaland specifically to five *olchos* namely; Gashara-Daldho, Ralaya, Wordaya, Ottomalo and Yabano. The remaining three *olchos* have no opportunity to get the position of *dayna*.<sup>66</sup> This might be because of three main reasons. The first is, Burjie-Kilicho-Gamyo-Lemo *olcho* had the right for the position of *woma*. The second reason is that Shay-Shaye *olcho*, which is predominately occupied by Koyera ethnic group has autonomous *dayna* who is not assigned by the Burji *woma*. The third reason is that Walaya *olcho* which is the set of *gann*, (traditional religious leader of Burji) the position of *dayna* is taken by its own spiritual leader.

The office of *Masha* is found at the bottom rung of the ladder under the *womisso* institution. Every adult male elder Burji can have the right to compete for *masha* position. *Masha* is appointed by *dayna*. But in Burjiegadi (southern Burji) he is directly assigned by *woma*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*; Dawata, *Burji Special Woreda Annual Megazin* (Hawassa: Toni Printing House, 1999E.C).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Aden Oshe.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Getahun Addo, Ato Wolde Gedo and Wako Dulla.

*Mashas* are found in all eight *olchos* of Burji. The number of *mashas* varies in *olchos*. This depends on the size of the population and territory. Large *olchos* such as Walaya and Shay-Shaye can have 3 to 4 *mashas*.<sup>68</sup>

The term of office of all positions of *womisso* office was only one year with the possible extension of one to two years based on performance and if his period witnessed good fortune. However, if the period of the appointee witnessed natural and manmade catastrophes, he will be dismissed from his post before the end of his term of office.<sup>69</sup>

Above all these, there is a general council called *ansh-gorsa*. The council of *ansh-gorsa* was composed of essential political, religious, social and military officials of Burji. It encompassed *anshs* (clan leaders), *gorse* (the retired officials of *womiso*), the incumbent officers of *womisso*, the representatives of *olchos* (the administrative region of Burji), the *ganns* (the traditional religion leaders) and the *hayo* (the commander in chief of Burji in times of war). The *ansh-gorsa* council has the power to elect and nominate *woma*. Besides this, it was responsible for approving the nominee presented by *woma*. Similarly, it has the duty to check the power of *woma*. In addition to these, when request came from the people, it can dismiss the *woma* from his position.<sup>70</sup>

### 2.1.5. Economic Activity of Burji

The economy of the Burji is mainly based on agriculture. The Burji are excellent agriculturalists.<sup>71</sup> As Hussein Mahmoud stated, “the Burji are talented farming communities in southern Ethiopia and were also successful farmers in northern Kenya.”<sup>72</sup> Hussein further noted

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Ambron, “History of Events and Internal Development, p. 757; YeBurji Liyu Woreda Andegna Amist Amet (1999-2003); Hermann Amborn and Alexander Kellner, “Burji Vocabulary of Cultural Items : An Insight Based on the Field Works of Helmut Straube.” *AAP*, No. 58, p. 14; Kellner, “The mythical reflexivity of the Burji, p. 425.

<sup>72</sup> Hussein A. Mahmoud, “Breaking Barriers: the construction of a new Burji identity through livestock trade in northern Kenya,” *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers No 113* Advokatenweg 36, D-06114 Halle/Saale, Germany (2009), p. 3.

that the Burji, in collaboration with Konso communities, exported crops out of Moyale to the border district to the neighboring districts.<sup>73</sup>

Since the climate, the landform and the soil of Burji is conducive for the cultivation of various agricultural products, the products of the district range from *enset* in the highlands to cotton in lowlands. *Teff*, wheat, barley and maize are the prominent cereal crops produced in Burji land. Even though *teff* was introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become one of the most valued cash crops in Burji.<sup>74</sup> The “Gumaiyde white *teff*” which is well known in southern Ethiopia and Addis Ababa is mainly produced in Burjiland.

Burji agriculture, which is subsistence in nature has been and is supported by the labor of family members. However, labor intensive activities, like ploughing of fallow land and weeding are worked by work groups called *haile* and *geba*.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to farming, the Burji are also engaged in raising different kinds of livestock. Domestic animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and chickens are raised in Burji. But due to the presence of hostile neighboring groups who raid cattle, the livestock population in Burji is not significant.<sup>76</sup>

Next to agriculture, trade is another important economic activity of the people. Together with other factors, trade pulled the Burji from their homeland to new destinations in southern Ethiopia and Kenya. The increase in trade activity resulted in accumulation of wealth.<sup>77</sup> A small number of Burji also practice bee- keeping in the lowland along the Sagan River.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Ambron, “History of Events and Internal Development,” p.754; YeBurji Liyu Woreda Andegna Amist Amet (1999-2003); YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 13. *YeBurji woreda woqetaw atadafi chigrochi R*

<sup>75</sup> Abebe, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> *YeBurji Liyu Woreda Andegna Amist Amet* (1999-2003); Informants: Ato Mekonnen Zegeye and Ato DullaHido.

<sup>77</sup> Ambron, “History of Events and Internal Development, p.756; Mahmoud, “Breaking Barriers,” p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Abebe, p. 25.

## 2.2. Historical Survey to 1941

### 2.2.1. The Origin of the Burji People

The early history of the Burji is unclear because of various reasons. First and foremost, since the Burji people did not have a written language, they have not kept a record of their own history. Second, no scholar has carried out a serious and sustained research on the history of Burji. Consequently, the written accounts we have on the early Burji history are very limited and fragmented.

So far no attempt has been made to examine rigorously the traditions of origin of the Burji people.<sup>79</sup> Most of the scholars who have studied the history of Burji simply accept whatever traditions of origin are offered by the people. They do not discuss why this people moved from their place of origin and in which direction they went and how they reached and settled in their present location.

There are three different traditions concerning the origin of the Burji people. The first tradition claims the areas where the Burji inhabit today in south central Ethiopia as their original homeland. This tradition asserts that the Burji have lived in this place since time immemorial.<sup>80</sup> The second tradition states that the original homeland of Burji was Liban in southern Ethiopia near the present Negele town in Guji zone. This tradition is strongly preserved in the memory of many elders and has many proponents.<sup>81</sup> A third account puts northern Ethiopia and specifically the region of Tegulat and Bulga as the homeland of Burji.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mude, pp. 28-29.

<sup>80</sup> Ceruli, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ali, p.6; Mude, pp.29-30; H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been .Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," p.54; Informants: Achule Hirbo, Bange Woche, Mare Dhade, Getahun Chawa and Wolle Tego.

<sup>82</sup> Aweke Amzaye, *Mosaic Cultureand Peoples of Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State*, P. 45; Informants: Getahun Addo; Harka Haroye, *KeNairobi Eske Iyubelyu Betemengst*, (Addis Ababa: Bole printing press, 1997 E.C), p.68.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, Cerulli contends that the original homeland of Burji is the present-day Garra-Burji area. He states that since time immemorial the people have stayed in their present day location.<sup>83</sup> However, this would be only true if one does not want to look into the population movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Horn of Africa.<sup>84</sup> Thus, even though Burji believed to be a small entity during that time, in one way or another they would have been affected by this episode. Therefore, the assumption that the original homeland of Burji is the present-day Gara Burji is not supported by substantive sources and arguments and as a result its credibility comes under question mark.

The second tradition identifies Liban as the place of origin of Burji. This tradition is supported by oral historians and other scholars. Most of the arguments of Herman Amborn and R.Schubert, which support this argument, are based on a study of oral traditions and a comparative analysis of social institutions and clans between Burji and neighboring peoples such as Borana, Dhirash and Konso.<sup>85</sup>

The oral tradition which supports the above view goes as follows. In the distant past, Burji lived together with the Borana and Konso in Liban. However, due to a misunderstanding that occurred among them, Burji were driven out by Borana from Liban.<sup>86</sup> The whole story was presented as follows:

Burji, Borana and Konso lived in Liban and used to carry out an annual ritual, *olasanto*, to keep the peace, fertility and wellbeing of the society. For this purpose, *holla faga* (lamb) was scarified in turn. However, during the turn of Borana, the sheep prepared for sacrifice was stolen and eaten by Konso. The Konso dumped the ingesta and threw away the bone in the village of Burji. In the morning, when they tried to find the *holla faga* for sacrifice, they could not find it. The Burji were accused by Borana and asked to a meeting to present the case. But Burjie refused to attend the meeting because he did not commit the crime. He also claimed that he was senior to both of them and therefore could not be accused by his juniors.

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<sup>83</sup> Ceruli, p. 53

<sup>84</sup> Merid Wolde Argay, "Southern Ethiopia and Christian Kingdom 1508-1708, with Special Reference to the Galla Migration and Their Cosequences" (PhD Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1971), p.156.

<sup>85</sup> H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been. Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," pp.53-84; Informants: Kashu Warre, Mussa Jillo, Tuke Hirbo, Getahun Addo and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>86</sup> Informants: Kashu Warre, Mussa Jillo, Tukke Hirbo, Getahun Addo and Getahun Chewa.

Consequently, Burji were ousted from Liban by Borana. Having left Liban, they settled in a place called Abuno. From there, they came to settle in Barguda. After a while, one group settled at Mure Mountain and the other at Hure Mountain.<sup>87</sup>

The above tradition suggests that Borana, Burji and Konso shared a common tradition of the migration of their ancestors from Liban. Even though Konso also claim the Liban tradition, the tradition is silent on the cause of the migration.<sup>88</sup>

The proponents of this tradition attempt to strengthen their argument by drawing support from other traditions and material culture. Abuno, the place where the Burji were said to have settled after their departure from Liban, carries a sentimental place in the heart of Burji. The term *abon* is still used by Burji as last word for final assertion of one's decision. The oral historians also claim that some relics like grinding stones and fire stones discovered in Abuno (a locality which is found 40 kms north of Yabello town) and in other parts of the present Borana Zone were used by Burji.<sup>89</sup> Although these artifacts are interesting, we would have to await detailed archeological research to corroborate the above tradition.

The third tradition identifies Tegulat and Bulga, in northern Shewa as the place of origin of the Burji people.<sup>90</sup> According to this tradition, the Burji who were led by their legendary leader, Burjie, moved from northern Shewa towards the south. After reaching the area around present day Alaba, they divided into two groups. One section separated from the main group and moved in a westward direction. This group was called Burjie Jaba. It is believed that this group lived somewhere in Kaffa or Bako area (West Shewa). The main group, of which the present Burji of southern Ethiopia are said to have descended from settled around the Gidabo River, near present day Yirgalem town. At some point in the past, these people left for Haro Walabu and finally to Liban.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> C.R. Hallpike, *The Konso of Ethiopia. A Study of the Values of An East Cushitic People* (Bloomington: Author House, 2008), p. 87; Shako Otto, "Traditional Konso Culture and The Missionary Impact," *Annale d'Ethiopie*, Vol.2 (2004), p.151.

<sup>89</sup> Ali, p.10; Informants: Kashu Warre, Mussa Jillo, Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>90</sup> Aweke Amzaye, *Mosaic Culture and Peoples of Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State*, p. 45; Getahun Addo; Harka Haroye, *KeNirobi Eske Iyubelyu Betemengst*, p.68; Ayele, p. 2

<sup>91</sup> Informants: Getahun Addo and Mussa Jillo.

Alexander Kellener, who has carried out extensive research on the oral tradition and language of Burji, provides the following modified version of this tradition:

The Burji were driven out by Mohammed Gagn and migrated to Liban where they met the Konso and Borana and where incident with the sacrificial animal occurred. But how did the north Ethiopians (*Kawee*) who had oppressed and colonized Burji, became part of the Burji's myth of origin.<sup>92</sup>

Though Kellener's comparison of the Liban tradition with the 20<sup>th</sup> century situation is not meaningful, he gives us indirect evidence that Burji had migrated southwards from some where north of the present Liban. Kellener highly surprised with the mythical change of Burji. The mythology of the northern Ethiopia origin is not unique to the Burji. There are also other ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia who laid claim to similar tradition.<sup>93</sup>

There are also other scholars like Amborn and Mude who indirectly tell us the northern Ethiopia origin of Burji. For instance, Mude tells us that there are clans of Burji that came from Wollo. Furthermore, he contends that some time in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "the Burji seem to have arrived from a northerly direction to Liban in south eastern Ethiopia."<sup>94</sup> In addition, he affirms that the Burji are an offshoot of Amhra people.<sup>95</sup> One needs to be very cautious and critical about the claim that the Burji are an outgrowth of the Amhra. In the absence of any similarity in linguistic, social institutions and economic activities between the two groups, it is difficult to take the suggestion that the Burji originated from Amhra.

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<sup>92</sup> Kellner, "The Burjis' Liban Tradition: an example of a practical interest in the past," p.131.

<sup>93</sup> E. Haberland, "Notes on the History of The Southern Ethiopian People," In *Colloque International Sur les Langues Couchitiques Etless Peoples Qui Les Parlent, Paris Center National De La Recherche Scientifique*, 1975, p.3; John H. Hamer, "The Origin of The Sidama: A Cushitic Speaking People of South-Western Ethiopia," Center for African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Paper for Discussion During the Conference on Ethiopian Origin, June 1977, p. 2; Ulrich Braukamper, "The Correlation of Oral Traditions and Historical Records in Southern Ethiopia: A Case Study of the Hadiya /Sidama Past," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Haile Sellassie I University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1973, p. 48; Norman J. Singer, "Some Notes on the Origin of the [Kambata] of Southern Shoa," Center for African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Paper for Discussion During the Conference on Ethiopian Origin, June 1977, pp. 1-7.

<sup>94</sup> Mude, pp. 28-29.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

Among the three traditions, I suspect that the Burji seem to have come from the area where the present Sidama are found. The Burji have many things which they share in common with various people who live far from them than the peoples closer to them. The Burji have closer linguistic, socio-political and economic similarities with Sidama than with their immediate neighbors Borana and Guji.<sup>96</sup>

The multifaceted relations of Burji with the Sidama can be used to illustrate this argument. There is no language in southern Ethiopia that shares closer similarity with Sidama than Burji. According to Klaus Wedekind, the Burji language has forty seven percent basic vocabulary similarities with the Sidama language. There is also a dialectical relationship between the two languages.<sup>97</sup> If there was no contact between these two peoples in the past, how could this linguistic similarity develop between them?

There is also resemblance of socio and political institutions between the Burji and Sidama. They have similar traditional administrative system with exactly the same name, *womisso*. In a similar vein, the two have also a generation set system in which the initiation ceremony is regulated by circumcision.<sup>98</sup> In the economic sphere, the Burji and Sidama practiced a similar kind of land tenure system called *tinto* or *utuba*.<sup>99</sup>

The oral tradition of Burji stresses that the Burji people at one time had lived with the Sidama people. There are some important indications of Burji inhabiting with the Sidama. For example, in the area near Chuko (southwest of Yirgalem town), there is a wide field that is called *Wora*

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<sup>96</sup> Klaus Wedekind, *Trends in Linguistics: Interrelations of Knowledge, Text variants, and Cushitic Focus Strategies*. Berlin: Mout de Gryter, 1990, pp. 40-48; Braukamper, "The Correlation of Oral Traditions and Historical Records in Southern Ethiopia: A Case Study of the Hadiya /Sidama Past," pp. 48-49; Alemaw Kifle, "A History of the Sidama People C 1889-1974," (M.A Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2005), p. VII.

<sup>97</sup> Wedekind, *Trends in Linguistics: Interrelations of Knowledge, Text variants, and Cushitic Focus Strategies*, p. 48; E. Haberland, "Notes on the History of The Southern Ethiopian People," p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> Alemaw, p. 43; Mude, p.29.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 47; H. Amborn and R. Schubert, "The Contemporary Significance of What Has Been Three Approches to Remembering the Past; Lineage, Gada, and Oral Tradition," p. 59.

*Worno* which in Burji means “The field of discussion”.<sup>100</sup> Another oral source also indicates that the Burji had lived with Sidama long before they moved to Liban. Before their departure towards the south-east, the memory they had about the Gidabo River, near Yirgalem town in southern Ethiopia is a good indication of the presence of Burji in the area.<sup>101</sup> The memory they had about Gidabo River has passed through generations. As a result, the statement *gidabo shae gadhanto* is used as a curse word to mean “May the Gidabo River drown or swallow you!”<sup>102</sup> Perhaps in their daily activities many Burji had been taken by the river.

Burji traditions of origin point to Tegulat and Bulga, Liban as well as the present Burjiland are not substantiated strongly by historical records. However, the assumption that the original place of Burji in south central Ethiopia (Sidamaland) then moved to south-east and finally to today’s area probably is meaningful. This is also better supported by linguistic evidences and similarity in socio-cultural institutions. Still we are not quite sure of the underlying factors and causes for the movement of Burji from their place of origin. However, a substantive multi-disciplinary research on the subject can bring better understanding.

### **2.2.2 Trade in Pre-1935 Burji**

Our knowledge regarding early trade activity in Burji is very limited. Some fragmentary sources indicate that the Burji had had trade relations north wards with Koyera, south wards with Borana and *Safar* (Somali), east wards with Jam-Jam (Guji) and west wards with Konso.<sup>103</sup> Since Burji economy was largely based on subsistence agriculture, trade was at a minimum. Most of these transactions seem to have taken through barter.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Informants: Kashu Warre, Getahun Addo, Mussa Jillo and Wako Dulla.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*; Ali, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Informants: Kashu Warre, Getahun Addo, Mussa Jillo and Wako Dulla.

<sup>103</sup> Informants: Ato Samuel Barbe, Ato Shanu Wata; Richard Pankhurst, “The trade of Southern and Western Ethiopia and Indian Ocean Ports in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (1965), pp. 37-38.

<sup>104</sup> Informants: Kidane Kotte, Shanu Wata, Samuel Barbe and Tukke Hirbo ; E. Cerulli, *Peoples of the South West Ethiopia and Its Borderland* *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, Part III (London: International African Institute, 1956), p. 56.

In Burji there were two important market centers where Burji and their partners exchanged various goods. Moshole market was found near the present-day Soyama town. Burjie-Kilicho market was located some five kilometers north of the present-day Burjie-Kilicho village. The former has served until the coming of Italians in 1936 while the latter continued to play a key role up to 1965.<sup>105</sup>

Agricultural products mainly cereal crops like, durra, peas, beans, wheat and vegetables and *enset* were supplied to markets by Burji. On the other hand, the Koyera who provided similar products supplemented the Burji markets. The Konso brought cotton and cotton made clothes- *buluko* (handmade cotton blanket) and *bado* (sheet of cotton-made cloth) and cotton thread (*mag*). Borana, on the other hand, brought cattle, goat, sheep, milk, butter, dry meat and salt. The Guji also supplied the same kinds of products brought by Borana except salt. The Somali were the main traders in beads, raw iron, jewelery made from ivory and brass in Burji markets.<sup>106</sup>

According to elders, Moshole market was renowned for its trade in slaves. In Moshole, the trade in slaves was carried out in two ways. The first is, slave could be bartered for cattle or *buluko*. The second way is the war captives were also exchanged for *buluko* and cattle.<sup>107</sup>

The slave trade was mainly conducted between Burji and Guji, and Burji and Borana. Especially, a planned and regular war between Burji and the Hoku-Mathe clan of Guji was the main source of slave trade in the area. There was a general convention between Burji and Huko-Mathe Guji on how the captives were to be treated. The person who was captured in raids and became a war captive should not to be killed. In addition, the war captive should be cared and fed for in a special manner. This was not for humanitarian reasons but rather for business reasons.<sup>108</sup> A captive who was treated well could bring more benefit to his owner when exchange was made later on.

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<sup>105</sup> Informants: Kidane Kotte, Shanu Wata, Samuel Barbe Tukke Hirbo and Getahun Addo.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*; P. T. W. Baxter, "Borana Age-Sets and Warfare," *In Warfare among East Africa Herders*, eds. Katsuyoshi Fukui and David Turton Papers Presented at International Symposium National Museum of Ethnology (Osaka, Sep.11,1977), pp. 72-73; Richard Pankhurst, "The trade of Southern and Western Ethiopia, p.56.

<sup>107</sup> Informants: Kidane Kotte, Shanu Wata, Samuel Barbe ,Tukke Hirbo and Getahun Addo.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*.

Many of war captives were brought to Moshole market guarded by their masters for exchange. The Burji slaves were bartered with Guji cattle. On the other hand, the Guji slaves were exchanged for Burji *buluko*. In the market if the relatives or the family of the slave appeared, priority was given to them to buy him or her back. If a person did not have enough *bulko* or cattle at the time, appointment will be given to do exchange another time. However, if the relatives or the family of the enslaved person was not in a position to buy, the captive could be sold to anybody. According to informants, the price of one slave ranged between six and ten cattle and the same number of sheets of *buluko*.<sup>109</sup>

The trade in slaves continued in Moshole up to the governorship of *Dejjach* Balcha. Since Balcha ruled Sidamo Province in three different times in the pre-1935 period, it is difficult to note the exact time when this trade came to an end.<sup>110</sup> However, sources reveal that slave trade was finally abolished in Burji during the Italian period.<sup>111</sup> According to informants, it was this transaction that in later times developed into a source of conflict between the Burji and Guji.

The other market center where lucrative trade took place in the pre-1935 was Burjie-Kilicho. Compared to Moshole, the market of Burjie-Kilicho was found in strategic position. Its ideal distance from Borana, Guji, Koyera and Konso made it attractive center for trade.<sup>112</sup>

As I indicated above, the main trade partners of Burji brought their respective goods for barter with Burji's agricultural products. Even though the Burji agriculture was subsistence in nature, they exchanged with respective goods of their trade partners. Besides agricultural products, the Burji brought ivory and rhinoceros horn which was highly demanded by Somali.<sup>113</sup> The work of P.W. Baxter also affirms the above reality as follows: "Some Borana bartered small stock for grain, locally worn cotton-cloth, tobacco and metal goods with Burji and Konso..."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Informants; Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Wolle Tego.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*; Awoke Amzaye, "The Kore of Amarro: A Historical Survey" (Senior Essay, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1985), p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*; Ali, p. 53.

<sup>114</sup> P. T. W. Baxter, "Borana Age-Sets and Warfare", pp. 72-73.

Burjie-Kilicho market had two different sections which were found apart at a distance not more than a kilometer. Merchants of Borana, Guji, Somali and Konso were not allowed to meet the suppliers of agricultural products directly in the market. To control transaction, the Burji divided the market into two sections. The northern part of the market was exclusively reserved for Burji while the southern section hosted Borana, Guji, Konso and Somali. In this arrangement, the Burji had a special privilege to make business in both parts of the market but others could not.<sup>115</sup> This was mainly to obtain better profit by making themselves the sole provider of cereal crops to their trade partner.

The market was strongly protected by the warrior age group (*hagi*). The *hagi* led by their respective leaders (*hayos*) were responsible in maintaining peace in the market area. Besides this, they also scouted whether the traders were in their respective place or not. The *hayos* also controlled the check point located at a place called Soralle, near the present Kilicho.<sup>116</sup> As sources indicate, the function of this check point was for dual purposes. The major function was to collect taxes from traders who came to Kilicho market. The other function of this check point was to control the movement of any enemy to Burjiland.<sup>117</sup> It was believed that the check point was established by *Woma Sode Guyo* who ruled Burji at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The following couplet which praised Sode affirms this reality:

<i>Sode Aba kella</i>	The guardian of the check point [Soralle],
<i>Soralle songa sessa</i> <sup>118</sup>	Sode scouted throughout the night.

Kilicho market center served as the main center of trade between Burji and its neighbors until 1965. However, after the center of Burji *woreda* was transferred from Burjie-Kilicho to Soyama, Kilicho's central role in trade declined.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Informants; Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Wolle Tego.

<sup>116</sup> Informants; Mussa Jillo and Samuel Barbe, Tukke Hirbo and Wolle Tego.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*; E. Cerulli, *Peoples of the South West Ethiopia*, p. 56.

<sup>118</sup> Informants; Mussa Jillo and Samuel Barbe.

<sup>119</sup> Informants; Mussa Jillo, Tukke Hirbo and Wolle Tego; Ali, p. 52.

### 2.2.3. Menelik's Conquest and Subsequent Developments to 1935

There are no sources which discuss in detail why, when and how Burjiland fell under the control of the Ethiopian state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the sources which deal with the incorporation of Burji by the imperial state are very shallow. Thus, it is necessary to weave the existing written records with oral sources cautiously to reveal the dynamics involved in the annexation of Burjiland into the broader Ethiopian political economy.

The expansion of Shewa towards the south, southeast and southwest had started long before the coronation of Menlik as *nigusenegest* in 1889. The expeditions carried out by Menelik and his generals on his behalf in the south were motivated by several factors.<sup>120</sup> The exploitation of the rich resources of the region as well as protecting the center from the European colonial threat by establishing a buffer zone were the principal reasons behind Menelik's expansion.<sup>121</sup> The desire to restore and reunify the ancient and medieval Ethiopian territories could have been additional impetus behind Menelik's southern expansion.<sup>122</sup>

The occupation of Sidamo, one of the southern provinces of the empire (in which Burji was found), by Menelik's army had a significant relevance for our discussion on Burji. According to Alemaw Kifle, the occupation of Sidamo province was first commenced by *Dejazemach* Besha Aboye in 1889 though he failed to effectively control the area. The second phase of the subjugation of Sidamo was made by *Dajjach* (later *Ras*) Luel Seged Atnaf Seged between 1891 and 1894. The third phase, which was carried out after the Battle of Adwa by *Dajjach* Balcha Safo involved the consolidation of earlier efforts.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles, 2002), p. 104.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105; Charles McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1988, pp. 18-19; Herman Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", pp. 751-752.

<sup>122</sup> Charles McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*, p. 3; R. Greenfield, *Ethiopia. A New Political History* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), pp. 110-118; Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution* (Review of African Political Economy, London, 1975), pp. 9-13.

<sup>123</sup> McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*, p. 37.

Since the first campaign did not reach Burjiland, it had no significant effect on the life of the Burji people. It was by the second expedition that Burji were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire. The entry of *Dajjach* Balcha after the victory of Adwa and the increasing settlement of the northern settlers in the subsequent years in Sidamo province in general and in Burji areas in particular tremendously affected the overall life of Burji.<sup>124</sup>

The incorporation of Sidamo province in general was accomplished with little or no resistance.<sup>125</sup> The occupation which was commenced by *Dajjach* Beshah Aboye reached its climax when *Dajjach* Luel Seged successfully controlled Konso by crossing the Sagan River in 1894.<sup>126</sup> It seems that the conquerors during this time followed the old hunters' route that run from Sidamo-Gedeo-Korre-Burji and Konso.<sup>127</sup> Charles McClellan describes the process of annexation as follows: "...Luel Seged left behind only a skeletal garrison town [Bule] and proceeded south, taking further submission. The Alabadu Guji surrender had coincided with that of Gedeo. There followed the Uruga Guji, Burji, Borana and Konso."<sup>128</sup>

As various sources indicate, the second phase of the conquest of Sidamo province involved large scale campaigns that covered extensive areas. The participation of individuals from formerly conquered neighboring peoples as soldiers, guides and translators greatly facilitated the conquest. A good example of these were the Guji Tekabo Gocho in the conquest of Amarro, Finkabo most probable a native of Siliti in the conquest of Burji and Gesaro of Sidama in the conquest of the Konso.<sup>129</sup>

It is, however, worth noting that contact between Burji and the northerners did not begin with the subjugation of the former by the latter in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was sporadic

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<sup>124</sup> Ali. p. 51; Alemaw, p. 42; Informants: Mare Dhade and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>125</sup> Ali. p. 49; Alemaw, pp. 36-39; Mulugeta Gezahagn, "A History of Yergacaffe Warada, 1934/35-1991," (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p. 13.

<sup>126</sup> McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*, p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> Wondu Argaw, "A historical Survey of Konso Woreda, 1941-1991," (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p. 18.

<sup>128</sup> McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*, p. 23.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 24; Hodson, p. 102; Alemaw, p. 36; Aweke Amzaye. "The Kore of Amarro: A Historical Survey," (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1985), p. 45.

contact between hunters from central and northern Ethiopia and the Burji along the lowlands of Sagan which had large herds of wildlife before the arrival of the imperial army in Burji. According to Burji oral tradition, the northern hunters who came to Burjiland mostly kept themselves and did not sought to live with Burji people. Their presence in Burji was also temporary. So, the arrival of the northerners in Burji land was not a new event, even though there was a difference of motives between the former and the latter.<sup>130</sup>

The conquest of Burji was effected by *Dajjach* Luel Seged. His name is remembered in Burji in its garbled form as *Lusagadi*, and his army as *Lusat qawe* meaning Luel Seged's gunmen. In Burji oral tradition, the phrase is used to curse someone: '*Lusat qawe shee muro*' that is to mean "May Luel Segede's army may cut you!"<sup>131</sup> Here, there are two important points to be noted. The first is that the Ethiopian conquest of Burji was carried out most probably between 1894 and 1895 by *Dajjach* Luel Seged before the Battle of Adwa. Perhaps the conquest of Burji preceded that of the subjugation of Wolayita. Tsehai Berhane Sellasie substantiates this idea. "By the time [Luel Seged] went to Wolayita, he also brought Gedeo and Konso under him."<sup>132</sup> Even though the Burji were not noted in the above quotation, there was no route that led to Konso by avoiding Burji. Moreover, as some sources indicate, *Dajjach* Luel Seged did not return as the governor of Sidamo after the Battle of Adwa.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> U Almagor, "Institutionalizing a Fringe Periphery. Dassanetch Amhara Relations," in Donham, D.L. and Wendy James (eds), *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. (Cambridge, London, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.97; Tsehai Berhane Sellasie, "Menelik and the Conquest of and Consolidation of the Southern Provinces," BA Thesis, Haile Sellasie I University, Department of History, 1969, p. 51; Informants: Mekonnen Zegeye, Tukke Hirbo and Mussa Jillo.

<sup>131</sup> Ali, 49; Mude, P. 40; *Ye Simintu Olcho Memeryana Metedaderya Denb*; YBWATM, Folder No. 12, File No. no, Ref. No. *Nehasse*, 14, 1956: A letter of complaint clearly shows, Burji was first occupied by *Dejjach* Luel Seged Atnaf Seged (look appendix-B). Besides this, the informants also recalled the arrival of the northern army chronologically; *Lusat Qawe, Balchat Qawe and Birrut Qawe*; Informants: *Ato Kifle W/Senbet, Ato Debebe Tasew, Ato Chanalew Bulcha and Mare Dhade*.

<sup>132</sup> Tsehai Berhane Sellasie, "Menelik and the Conquest of and Consolidation of the Southern Provinces", p. 25.

<sup>133</sup> McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and Ethiopia*, p. 39; Tsehai Berhane Sellasie, "The Life and Carrer of Djjach Balch Abanafso," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Haile Sellasie I University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1971, p. 180. This was because of two reasons. First, he was transferred to Bale as punishment due to his absence in the battle of Adwa. Second, Menelik's policy of relocating the former generals from their bases.

Therefore, on the bases of the above evidence, the arguments of some scholars that Burji, Amaro and Konso were annexed by Menelik after the Battle of Adwa, in 1897,<sup>134</sup> can not be substantiated with other sources.

According to oral informants and some secondary sources, the submission of Burji to the Ethiopian forces was peaceful. Having heard about the devastation of the Koyera people when they attempted to resist the Ethiopian force, *Woma Sode Guyo*, who was the leader of Burji at that time, peacefully submitted by presenting himself before the Shewan commander wearing his full regalia. He also advised *Hayo Bonaya* of Konso, the contemporary Konso military leader to follow suit.<sup>135</sup> Due to this action of *Woma Sode*, the Burji were saved from the devastation which the Koyera and Konso experienced.

Following the conquest, the Ethiopian governors were stationed in garrison towns called *ketemas*.<sup>136</sup> In Burji, the conquering army founded a local administrative post at Dano which was found in the northern part of Burji (now in Amaro district). Perhaps, the selection of this place was for two important reasons. First, since the area is found in the highlands, it provided a strategic position to control the district. Second, its cool climate was conducive for human habitation compared to the lowlands.

During the early period of the conquest of Burji, the people accepted the rule of the new governors without resistance. Consequently, they were not harassed seriously by the *nefetengas*. The people were divided among the soldiers of *Dajjach Luel Seged* and supplied the latter with rations and labor services. For the provision of these services, *Qita qorros* (bread suppliers) were assigned. During this time, the people were not obliged to pay tribute or corve'e labor individually.<sup>137</sup> The head of the family was expected to pay two bars of *digille* (copper-made money) which came from Somalia. This was paid annually.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Aweke Amzaye, "The Kore of Amarro: A Historical Survey," p. 45; Wonda, p. 45; Amborn, "History of Events and Internal Development", p.751.

<sup>135</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Tukke Hirbo and Mussa Jillo; Mude, p. 40

<sup>136</sup> Donald Donham, *Work and Power in Malle, Ethiopia* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1985), p. 33.

<sup>137</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet, Debebe Tasew, Chanalew Bulcha and Mare Dhade.

<sup>138</sup> Informant: Samuel Barbe.

Restoring the administrative structure in conquered lands was one of the political developments that witnessed in the post-Adwa period. This time the restoration of the peace and order was carried out by one of the best generals of Menelik and the hero of the Battle of Adwa, *Dajjach* Balcha. At this time, it is said that the province of Sidamo was offered to Balcha as a prize for his heroic deed in the battle of Adwa.<sup>139</sup> Thus, since Burji was one of the parts of Sidamo, the future fate of Burji was also determined by the decisions of the consecutive governors of the Sidamo province.

As sources indicate, during this campaign, unlike *Dajjach* Luel Seged's forces, *Dajjach* Balcha's army did not come from the direction of Koyera; rather they came by way of Hagera Maryam. At first, *Dajjach* Balcha's forces were stationed at Barguda, in the northeastern part of Burji. However, they stayed in Barguda only for a brief period. Balcha then established a garrison town at Dorro, which he later re-named as Shega Ager and is now identified in its corrupt form as Shacha, which is found west of Soyama town. It is believed that during this time, the first Ethiopian Orthodox Church of St. Gabriel was established in Morayu (Chulluse), in the northern part of Burji.<sup>140</sup>

As it had been witnessed in other southern parts of Ethiopia, the subjugation after the Battle of Adowa had a significant impact on the social, economic and political life of the Burji people. One of the most enduring consequences of the incorporation was the imposition of a new system of administration in the recently conquered regions of the south.<sup>141</sup> In line with this, the Burji traditional administration system (*womisso*) as well as the *gada* system ceased to function properly. Especially, in the case of the latter, the system completely stopped to function though there was some revival during the Italian period.<sup>142</sup>

The individuals who served in traditional Burji offices like *womisso*, *woma*, *dayna* and *masha* got additional titles and roles in the new government system. Consequently, the *womas* were

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<sup>139</sup> Tsehai Berhane Sellasie, "The Life and Career of Dajjach Balcha Safo", p. 180.

<sup>140</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet, Debebe Tasew, Chanalew Bulcha and Ato Sharuka Bullo.

<sup>141</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, pp. 87-92.

<sup>142</sup> Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development", pp. 754-755; Informant: Salle Chotta

promoted to the status of *balabats* while most of the *daynas* and *mashas* received the position of *qoro* (who were responsible in collecting taxes at village level).<sup>143</sup> Amborn notes the situation as follows: “a number of them [traditional leaders] gained a substantial increase in power by being appointed as *balabats* by the administration.”<sup>144</sup> The *womas* received additional titles like *balambaras*. Good examples of this was *woma* Hape Otte and *woma* Ume Shutte. Both were given the title of *balambaras* besides their traditional titles.<sup>145</sup>

The *balabats* and their subordinates, who acted as intermediaries between the new administration system and the society, were part and parcel of the exploitative and oppressive system. These local elites strove to maximize the benefits they obtained from the system.<sup>146</sup> John Markakis explains the situation at national level which coincides with what was obtained in Burji as follows:

The *balabats* were given Ethiopian titles, land and other privileges which distinguished their position from that of ordinary peasant in the south. Their authority over the peasantry is supported by the northern officials, and since traditional restraints are no longer effective, this authority is often abused<sup>147</sup>

Thus, the Burji who lived independently without any external imposition now fell under the merciless yoke of the *melkegna*. Mude strengthens this idea in the following manner: “In a very short time the Burji were reduced from proud independent to humble, depressed status of *gabbar* or serf: the entire ‘tribe’ was rounded up and counted divided up and allocated among the generals and soldiers free labour”<sup>148</sup>

The tenants or the *gabbars* paid *irbo* or 1/4 of their annual produce to the *melkegna*. They also paid annual land tax depending on the size and quality of their land.<sup>149</sup> Besides these, the

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Amborn, “History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster”, pp. 755.

<sup>145</sup> Informants; Getahun Addo and Salle Chotta.

<sup>146</sup> Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea, 1995), p.85; Markakis, *Ethiopia; Anatomy of A Traditional Polity* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1972), p. 135.

<sup>147</sup> Markakis, *Ethiopia; Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, p. 158.

<sup>148</sup> Mude, p. 41.

<sup>149</sup> Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, p. 85.

*gabbars* in Burji also rendered corve'e labor at the family level. The husband participated in several agricultural activities per week for the *melkegna*. He also fetched water and constructed and repaired fences. His wife, on her behalf, engaged in various home works for the *melkegna*. Above all these, carrying of millstones and a hot plate, made of clay to Hagre Selam, the administrative center of Sidamo province and Addis Ababa were the most back-breaking tasks for the Burji peasants of the time. Many informants indicate that more than the tribute and taxes they paid, it was the corve'e labor they rendered that was a very difficult task for the Burji.<sup>150</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, it was the desire to escape this harsh treatment, which led the Burji to migrate to different parts of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya beginning in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The introduction of land measurement called (*qalad* in Amharic) and attendant alienation of land was one of the economic features of early 20<sup>th</sup> century southern Ethiopia. As Donald Crummey noted: "Throughout the conquered territories, the state claimed two-third of the land, but in fact alienated less than that from peasant occupation. It focused its attention on lands which were lightly settled or not settled at all."<sup>151</sup>

In Burji *utuba* or *tinto* land which was found in the highlands were exempted from the *qalad* system. These were quasi-private lands that were transferred from generation to generation.<sup>152</sup> Most probably, the exemption of these lands from land measurement was due to their poor quality. On the other hand, the part of land of Burji which stretched from Barguda to the middle of the Mure Mountain was included under the *qalad* system.<sup>153</sup>

The reaction of Burji towards the *qalad* system ranged from fighting individually against the people who measured the land to cutting the rope used for measurement. *Balambaras Happe Otte*, who was the *woma* of Burji at that time, cut the rope which was used for *qalad*. As a result

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<sup>150</sup> Ali, p. 50: Informants: Achule Hirbo and Kifle W/Senbet.

<sup>151</sup> D. Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), p. 224.

<sup>152</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet, Debebe Tasew, Chanalew Bulcha, Getahun Addo and Salle Chotta.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

of this action, the land south of Murre Mountain was not included under the *qalad* system.<sup>154</sup> But I suspect that beyond the above action of the *balabat*, the relatively hot climate and infertility of the soil in the areas was the main factor that contributed to the exemption of the area from the *qalad* system.

#### **2.2.4. Outmigration in Burji**

The outmigration of the Burji to various parts of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya was one of the important changes that Burji district witnessed in the pre-1941 period. The presence of Burji communities in various towns and villages along the road from Hawassa in the north to Moyale in southern Ethiopia and beyond in northern Kenya from Nairobi and Mombasa is a good illustration of the importance of emigration in Burji history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>155</sup>

As oral sources and research works indicate, the outmigration of Burji was not a one time phenomena. It was rather a cumulative process that continued for a long time. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the migrants did not move far from their homeland. It was gradually that they went away far.<sup>156</sup> As a result, at present time, the majority of Burji live outside the district.<sup>157</sup> The first Burji emigrants were from southern Burji, Burjie-Kilicho. After this, large number of Burji from Wordiya, Lemo and Gamiyo areas moved out in search of better economic opportunities. There were also emigrants from northern Burji such as Garra and Chulluse.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Informants: Getahun Addo and Salle Chotta.

<sup>155</sup> Herman Amborn, "Rethinking One's Own Culture (Emic and Epic Considerations)," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth Conference of Ethiopian Studies New Trends in Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.2, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1994, pp.774-775; Ali, p. 52.

<sup>156</sup> Mude, p. 43.

<sup>157</sup> Alexander Kellner, "The mythical reflexivity of the Burji Presentation of an ethnological-linguistic methodology for interpreting oral literature," In *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Trondheim: 2009, p. 425; Amborn, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", p. 756; Herman Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in A'ithiopienund Kenya unter Ver Wendung der Aufzeichnungen Von Helemut Straube with explanation of some cultural items in English* (Harrossowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2009), p. XVI; Ayele, p. 18.

<sup>158</sup> Informants: Ato Duba Daresso, Kashu Warre and Mussa Jillo.

Most of the Burji who left their residence in the pre-Italian occupation time as well as in the years between 1941 and 1974 practiced agriculture in the place of their destinations. Considerable numbers of the emigrants also engaged in trade.<sup>159</sup>

One of the reasons behind the outmigration of the Burji was the *gabbar* system.<sup>160</sup> The *gabbar* system which was introduced at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century represented not only economic relations but also enshrined social and political relations.<sup>161</sup> As we have seen in the previous section, the *gabbar* system included collective tribute and individual tribute payment and patron-client relations. The tribute did not consider the actual ability of individuals to pay tribute. Beside this, the Burji has to pay corve'e labor which comprised carrying grinding stones and hot plate made of clay (*mitad* in Amharic) from Burji to Hagere Selam and then to Addis Ababa.<sup>162</sup> The introduction of *qelad* or land measurement resulted in the privatization of land. Many Burji were the victim of this system.<sup>163</sup> Consequently, many of them lost their lands. Generally, the Burji *gabbars* were ill treated.

As a result of these, migration became the reaction of the Burji who did not tolerate such maltreatments. Mude described the reaction of these Burji as follows:

They had either to move away or accept the situation and hope for an improvement. Many people took the decision to move and they began dispersing into the territories of neighboring [peoples]. Some went to Konso and Darassa country, others found their way into Yabello and [Hagere Maryam].<sup>164</sup>

The second factor behind the migration of the Burji was related to security. As I have noted previously, the relationship between the Burji and Guji was mostly hostile. The Guji who largely used hit and run tactic, killed Burji and raided their cattle. The Guji who earned better income

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Ambron, "Rethinking One's Own Culture ( Emic and Etic Considerations,)", p. 774.

<sup>161</sup> Tsehai Berhane Sellasie, "Menelik and the Conquest of and Consolidation of the Southern Provinces," BA Thesis, Department of History, Haile Sellasie I University, 1969, p. 25.

<sup>162</sup> Mude, p. 41; Ayele, p. 22.

<sup>163</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe, Tukke Hirbo and Wayo Shanko.

<sup>164</sup> Mude, pp. 42-43.

from animal sale were better armed than Burji.<sup>165</sup> The people who lived in areas such as Garra and Chulluse were especially exposed to attack by the Guji. Consequently, some Burji decided to leave their homelands in search of areas where they could get better security.

The other security problem in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that affected Burji migration was the instability caused by the “Tigre” in Boranaland. This event contributed to the gradual movement of the Burji towards Kenya.<sup>166</sup> Mude describes the situation as follows: “The Burji already much affected by the tyranny of the conquerors, fell prey to the ‘Tigre’. From Gara Burji, Yabello, and other areas of refuge, the Burji began to migrate southwards, settling for a while, but moving gradually until they had passed over Kenya.”<sup>167</sup>

As we shall see in the coming chapters, the outmigration of the Burji which started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had tremendously affected the out migration of Burji in the post-1941 period.

## **2.2.5. The Italian Period, 1935-1941**

### **2.2.5. 1. The Ethio-Italian War and Its Impact on Burji**

The conflict leading to the outbreak of the Ethio-Italian war of 1935 commenced on December, 5, 1934 at Wal Wal in the Ogaden on the border between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland.<sup>168</sup> In 1935 the Italians used their adjacent colonies, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland in the north and south respectively as springboard for the invasion of Ethiopia.<sup>169</sup> The war had significant effect on the social, economic and political history of Ethiopia.

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<sup>165</sup> Informants: Tamirat W/ Micheal, Male Dhahe, Getahun Addo, Aden Oshe; NALA, Province Code, 6, Folder No.20, File No.o8. See Appedix-D.

<sup>166</sup> Informants: Tukke Hirbo and Mare Dhade. The term “Tigre” nothing to do with the todays the Tigre ethnic group, rather it refers to the collective name for hunters who had come from northern Ethiopia and settled in Boranaland and some other southern parts of Ethiopia.

<sup>167</sup> Mude, p. 43.

<sup>168</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, p.153; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, p.139; Bahru, *Society, State and History Selected Essays* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), p. 377.

<sup>169</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, pp.153-157; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, pp. 142-144.

To weaken and divide the Ethiopian forces, Italy deployed its troops on two fronts. The northern front was first put under the command of General De Bonno and then under Marshal Pietro Badoglio. The southern front was led by General (later Marshal) Rodolfo Graziani.<sup>170</sup> The Ethiopian forces in the northern front were commanded by *Ras* Emiru Haile Sellasie, *Ras* Kassa Hailu and *Ras* Seyum Mengesha. The southern fronts of Ethiopian forces were commanded by *Dajach* Nessibu Zamanuel and *Ras* Desta Damtew. The Ethiopian forces under Nessibu covered the southeastern parts of the country, mainly the Ogaden. On the other hand, the forces under the leadership of Desta fought in Borana. Relatively, the northern forces were better armed and organized than the southern armies.<sup>171</sup>

The confrontation between the Ethiopian forces deployed in the Borana front and the Italian forces commenced on December 28, 1935 at a place called Amino. In this battle the Ethiopian forces scored a brilliant victory over the invading forces.<sup>172</sup> However, in the subsequent major battle fought at Genale Dorya from 12 to January 14, 1936, the Italian forces enjoyed absolute victory; the battle resulted in enormous casualties for the Ethiopian side.<sup>173</sup> This event was remembered by one of my local Burji informants in the following poem:

በደጃቸ ባልቻ ጊዜ ወልጄ ወልጄ፤	Under <i>Dejjach</i> Balcha, I had sons
በራሱ ብሩ ጊዜ ወልጄ ወልጄ፤	Under <i>Ras</i> Birru, I had sons
በራስ ደስታጊዜ ወይልጄ ወይልጄ። <sup>174</sup>	Under <i>Ras</i> Desta, I lost my sons!

The role of the Burji in the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935/36 and the subsequent occupation period (1936-1941) is one of the controversial issues discussed by scholars. Amborn and Mude argue that the reaction of the Burji to Italy's invasion and occupation of Burjiland was positive. They

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<sup>170</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, pp. 154-157; Bahru. *Society, State and History Selected Essays*, p. 380.

<sup>171</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, pp. 154-157; Tedla ZeYohannes, *YeEthiopia Tark, Italia BeEthiopia KeWelwel Eske Gonder, Ginbot, 1927-Hidar 1934* ( Addis Ababa: Mankussa Asatami Halafinetu Yetewosene Yegil Mahber, 2004 E.C), p. 33.

<sup>172</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, pp. 154-157; Tedla ZeYohannes, *YeEthiopia Tark, Italia BeEthiopia KeWelwel Eske Gonder, Ginbot, 1927-Hidar 1934* ( Addis Ababa: Mankussa Asatami Halafinetu Yetewosene Yegil Mahber, 2004 E.C), p. 33.

<sup>173</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, p. 158.

<sup>174</sup> Informant: Kifle W/ Senbet.

further contend that the Burji accepted the Italians as their liberators.<sup>175</sup> However, oral and some secondary sources reveal that the response of the Burji with respect to the Italian forces was dual in character. While there were “collaborators”, who worked with Italians there were also fighters who supported the Ethiopian army.<sup>176</sup>

The engagement of the Burji in the Ethio-Italian war is strongly printed in the minds of the participants. According to Buno Harshe, who first fought in the Ethiopian army but later defected to join the Italian army as *banda*, many Burji had participated in the battles of Dollo and Jebba Sirre, near Hagere Maryam.<sup>177</sup> According to the sources, Jebba Sirre was especially one of the last strong defensive battles that the Ethiopian army fought from the end of June 1937 to the beginning of October 1937, in the southern front and was a turning point in the Ethio-Italian war in the southern front.<sup>178</sup> After this battle, conventional warfare came to an end and the progress of the Italian army became swift. As a result, “the whole of Borana as well as the roads to Sidamo were opened to the Italians.”<sup>179</sup>

The battle of Jebba Sirre had also a significant consequence for the Burji. After this engagement, Burji land was used as a bridge by the Italians in their western march across the Sagan River. The Italians easily overrun Burji and established their center at Burjie-Kilicho in southern Burji. Burji became a springboard for the Italian forces who had expected strong resistance from the forces that retreated from Borana and reorganized at Gumaiyde, a place found west of the Sagan River.<sup>180</sup> To get the support of the Burji people, the Italians promised several offers to the Burji. According to one Burji informant, the Italian offer was contained in the following words: *Qawshee shee balsa, Bandiyte ambntaa bulukoo*: The *Qawee* (Amhara) cheats you but the victorious Italians will confer on you the best *bulukoo* (cotton made blanket).<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Amborn, “History of Events and Internal Development,” p. 752; Mude, p. 43.

<sup>176</sup> Informants: Kifle W/ Senbet and Buno Harsh.

<sup>177</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>178</sup> Seyfe Selassie Abbawolle, *Yetark Qirs* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1953 E.C), pp. 104-108.

<sup>179</sup> Belete, “Inter-ethnic Relations in Borana,” pp. 57-58; Tedla, *YeEthiopia Tarik, Italia BeEthiopia KeWelwel Eske Gonder, Ginbot, 1927-Hidar 1934*, p. 81.

<sup>180</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>181</sup> Informant: Achule Hirbo.

Due to this kind of overture from the Italians, and the exploitative social and economic relations that existed between the Ethiopian officials and the Burji at the time, many people in Burji collaborated with the Italian forces.<sup>182</sup> Alberto Sbacchi strengthens this idea by reference to the people of the south as a whole as follows: “The people of southern Ethiopia were indifferent to the Italian invasion. In fact, they submitted to them in order to avenge Amhara dominance and attack Amhara.”<sup>183</sup>

Consequently, many young men and adults are said to have joined the invading forces. Especially, in southern Burji all *Qunbe Hagi* (the warrior age grade of the time) joined the Italian army and worked as *bandas* (collaborators) in various military and administrative positions.<sup>184</sup> Hereafter, the conquering forces which were highly supported by the local collaborators and colonial soldiers crossed the Sagan River and occupied Gumaiyde and Gardulla.<sup>185</sup>

Following the conquest, the old Sidamo province including Burji, became part of the newly organized Italian governorship of “Galla-Sidama” and General Geloso became the governor general of the province.<sup>186</sup> Understanding the value of traditional rulers, the Italians adopted a system of indirect rule. They assigned traditional rulers as *balabats*. They appointed *woma* Shutte Ume as *balabat* and later also conferred on him the title of *balambaras*. *Woma* Shutte acted as a bridge between the Italian administration and the local people.<sup>187</sup> He coordinated the people for various administrative and political works. In addition, he organized the people against the anti-Italian resistance movement in Burjiland. On the other hand, the patriots who understood the position of *Woma* Shutte, secretly appointed *Gann Oda Olme* (the traditional religious leader of Burji) as a *woma* from northern Burji to get the support of the society.<sup>188</sup>

Moreover, to weaken the support of the patriots, the Italians used a divide and rule policy. They tried to polarize the society along ethnic and religious bases. They portrayed the northern settlers as colonialists and discouraged conversion to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by linking

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<sup>182</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo; Ambron, “History of Events and Internal Development”, p.752.

<sup>183</sup> Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness Ethiopia and Facist Italy 1935-1941*, p. 176.

<sup>184</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Alemaw, p. 74.

<sup>187</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>188</sup> Informants: Getahun Addo, Achule Hirbo and Wato Borde.

ethnicity and religion. Instead, they encouraged the local people to be converted to Islam.<sup>189</sup> It was during this time that many Somali and Garri *bandas* preached Islam in Burjiland. Consequently, this situation helped Islam to get a foothold for its expansion in subsequent decades in Burjiland. In a similar vein, many Burji returned to their traditional faith during this period.<sup>190</sup> By doing this, the Italians attempted to portray themselves as liberators and friends of Burji.

The Italian occupation period was marked by various social and economic changes in southern Ethiopia.<sup>191</sup> In Burji during the period between 1936 and 1941, the Italians abolished the *gabbar* system and slavery. They made themselves popular by paying for labor services rather than demanding *corve'e*.<sup>192</sup>

The Italians can be credited for the introduction of tax system in cash. In the areas of infrastructure, they also carried out some improvement; they were praised for the construction of a road for the first time that connected Burjie-Kilicho with Hagere Maryam.<sup>193</sup> In the later period, this route connected Burji with the international high way that joins Ethiopia with Kenya. Furthermore, it became the main trade artery of Burji which linked them with Gedeo and Borana.

Despite the flight of the emperor from the country in May 1936, the patriotic resistance did not give the Italians room to consolidate their power during the five-years of occupation period. Even though the patriotic resistance movement was mostly concentrated in central and northern

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<sup>189</sup> A.J.Barker, *The Civilizing Mission; A History of the Italo-Ethiopia War 1935-1936* (New York: The Dial Press, 1968), p.286; Greenfield, p.241.

<sup>190</sup> Informants: Wolle Tego and Ato Abdulahi Mohammed; Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development", p.752.

<sup>191</sup> Donham, *Work and Power in Malle, Ethiopia*, p. 37; Teshale, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*, p. 107.

<sup>192</sup> Amborn, "History of Events and Internal Development", p.752; Ali, p. 51.

<sup>193</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

Ethiopia, it was nation wide.<sup>194</sup> As Bahru Zewde stated “there was scarcely any province where the Italians ruled without challenge.”<sup>195</sup>

The patriotic resistance movement in southern Ethiopia, specifically in southern Borana and Gardulla areas, which has not received the attention from many scholars, had played a pivotal role in the liberation of Ethiopia from Italian rule.<sup>196</sup> The anti fascist-Italian movement in this area was led by *Lij* (later *Dejjach*) Tesfaye Wolde and *Fitawrari* Haile Degaga, who were both natives of Gumaiyde.<sup>197</sup>

The sphere of this resistance movement covered the area extending from Mashile in the west (a place south west of Gardulla) to Hagere Maryam in the east. Burji was also included in this area of operation of the patriots.<sup>198</sup> On some occasions, the force under this group led surprise attacks on fascist forces all the way to Sidamo around Gedabo River.<sup>199</sup>

The role of the Burji in the guerilla war waged against the Italians is one of the issues that scholars allude to but have not described in detail. These scholars unanimously label all Burji as “collaborators” with the fascist forces.<sup>200</sup> According to oral sources, however, the role of the Burji was much more complex and involved collaboration by those who wanted to maintain the status quo of the Italian rule and resistance by those opposed to the Italians.<sup>201</sup>

It might be possible to divide the reaction of the Burji people geographically. Most of the southern Burji were on the side of the conquering force. All of the *qunbe hagi* (warrior age

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<sup>194</sup> Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness Ethiopia and Facist Italy 1935-1941*, p.176; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, p. 171.

<sup>195</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, p. 171.

<sup>196</sup> Tedla ZeYohannes, p. 56.

<sup>197</sup> Informants: *Ato* Admasie Zegeye and *Ato* Geejo Solola. According to these informants, in the post liberation period, the former became the *enderasse* of Gamo Gofa Province and the latter was remembered in the place named after him in Gumaiyde and a primary school in Arbaminch town until it was changed its name in 1990s into Chamo Secondary School.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*; Tedla ZeYohannes, p. 86, 97.

<sup>199</sup> Alemaw, p. 89.

<sup>200</sup> Amborn, “History of Events and Internal Development”, p.752; Mude, p. 43.

<sup>201</sup> Informants: Getahun Addo, Achule Hirbo and Wato Borde

group) in Burjie-Kilicho and some southern Burji villages joined the enemy forces. They served in various capacities under the Italian administration.<sup>202</sup>

The storming of Burjie-Kilicho in the last days of the Italian rule in 1941 by the *fanos* could be taken as a good evidence of the support the southern Burji provided to the Italians. The special factor that motivated the Southern Burji to support the Italians was related to the death of *Woma Happe Otte*. According to informants, *Woma Happe Otte* quarreled with *Dajjach Balcha* on the issue of land measurement and was accused of having insulted Balcha as eunuch. To present the issue and to provide annual tribute, he went to Addis Ababa. It was believed that he was poisoned and died in Addis Ababa at a palace banquet. This issue might have been one reason why some Burji retaliated against northerners.<sup>203</sup>

The response of the highland Burji people to the Italian occupiers was mixed. In the day time, they supported the Italians and at night they encouraged the *fanos*. It is obvious that this was because of fear of retaliation by the fascists and the *bandas*.<sup>204</sup>

The killing of the two Dawe brothers, Damballa and Beyene and the son of Hirbo Ayla at the end of 1937 was a turning point in the opposition against Italians. The sons of *qoro* Dawe Kiwe were murdered in Gardula together with many patriots. Hirbo Ayla's son was rumored to have been killed by *Woma Shutte*.<sup>205</sup> After these incidents, most of the highland Burji started supporting the *fanos*. The other factor which forced the highland Burji to support the *fanos* was the imprisonment of *Gann Oda Olme*, the religious leader of the Burji who lived in the highland part of Burji.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>203</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo, Samuel Barbe and Tukke Hirbo. According to these informants, *Woma Happe Otte* quarreled with *Dajjach Balcha* on the land measurement and he was accused by a pretext of insulting Balcha as eunuch. He was arrested at Shisa and about ten guns were also confiscated by Balcha. To present the issue and to provide annual tribute he went to Menelik (Zewiditu?) court. In the palace banquet it was believed that he had been poisoned and died in Addis Ababa. First he was buried in Urael Church in Addis Ababa but later the corpse was brought to Burji.

<sup>204</sup> Informants: Getahun Addo, Achule Hirbo, Kifle W/ Senbet and DebebeTasew.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides individual engagement as fighters, the Burji provided the patriots with food, information and shelter. Maaricha Ume, Borro Addo, Majo Hirbo, Mamo Wordea and Hirbo Ayla were some of the natives of Burji who participated in the resistance as fighters.<sup>207</sup> Among these, it is important to note the prominent role played by Hirbo Ayla (nick named, Malitch Hirbo because of the trick he played on Italians during the last year of Italian rule). Hirbo was instrumental in freeing seven individuals including *Gann Oda Olme* who were ready to be executed by the Italians the following day. He dressed himself as a woman who provides rations and informed the seven individuals who were imprisoned at Burjie-Kilicho of the Italian plan to execute them. As a result of this, the prisoners managed to escape from prison with the help of *fanos*.<sup>208</sup>

In Burji, places like Shacha, Burka, Gallana, Barguda, Boncho and the lowlands of Sagan River were the main centers of patriotic resistance.<sup>209</sup> At the beginning, the Italians made some reforms and offered provisions to bring the people to their side. However, they did not win enduring acceptance from the people. After the people understood the cruel and racist rule of the Italians, they started to oppose the Italian administration.<sup>210</sup>

The Ethiopian patriotic war of resistance against the Italians intensified with the involvement of the British military in the campaign against the Italians from its adjacent colonies of British East Africa and Sudan in 1941.<sup>211</sup> As the news of the coming of Emperor Haile Sellasie reached Burji and other patriots in the southern front, the number of *fanos* increased. In Burji, on one occasion eighty armed-Burji *bandas* defected to the *fanos*.<sup>212</sup>

The Burji who migrated to British East Africa during the war time were also recruited by the British army. For instance, Damte Dawe (later *Grazmach*) fought on the side of British in Dollo in the liberation of the area from Italian forces. Due to his military contribution, in the post war period, he was appointed by Emperor Haile Selassie as *balabat* of Alga (northern part of Burji)

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* *Malticha* in Burji means trickery or cheater.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*; Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>210</sup> Informants: Kifle Wolde Senbet, Achule Hirbo and Debebe Damete.

<sup>211</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1991*, p.176.

<sup>212</sup> Informants: Kifle Wolde Senbet, Debebe Tasew and Samuel Barbe.

and Barguda with the title of *Grazmach*.<sup>213</sup> The patriotic war of resistance in Burji came to an end in 1941 with the release of prisoners, the assassination of *woma* Shutte, the storming of Burjie-Kilicho and the massacre of many *bandas* in this village.<sup>214</sup>

There is a general assumption among scholars that the reaction of the people in southern Ethiopian towards the Italians was one of collaboration. Scholars who have studied on Burji district also tell a similar story. However, a close study of the oral sources indicates that the Burji responded to Italian occupation both as collaborators and as anti-fascist fighters.

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<sup>213</sup> Informants: Debebe Damete, Achule Hirbo and Kifle W/ Senbet.

<sup>214</sup> Informants: Buno Harsh, Mussa Jillo, Getahun Addo, Achule Hirbo and Kifle W/ Senbet.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BURJI DURING THE IMPERIAL PERIOD (1941-1974)

#### 3.1 Administration

The return of the Emperor Haile Selassie to Addis Ababa on May 5, 1941 exactly five years after the arrival of Badoglio in Addis Ababa heralded the restoration of the country from Italian rule. Following this, the Emperor was preoccupied with consolidation of his power. He appointed ministers, started the restoration of provincial and local governments and also reconciled with the *bandas*.<sup>1</sup> This political organization of the state gave power to the emperor to control the peripheries from the center.<sup>2</sup> To this end within a short time, with the help of the British and the Americans, Haile Selassie embarked upon building a modern civil and military bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup>

The 1942 Land Proclamation theoretically brought the exemption of the tenants from corve'e labor. Besides this, the proclamation introduced land tax paid in money.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, new political structure was evolved. As a result of this political adjustment, the old provinces were divided into different sub-provinces (*awrajas*), districts (*woredas*) and sub-districts (*mikitil woredas*).<sup>5</sup> All these administrative and economic changes significantly shaped Burji district and its inhabitants between 1941 and 1974.

In 1944 Burji was organized as *mikitil woreda* or sub-district under Amaro district (*woreda*) in Darassa sub-province (*awraja*) of Sidamo province. Seven years later, Burji *mikitil woreda* was

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<sup>1</sup> John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1972), pp.205-206; R. Greenfield, *Ethiopia. A New Political History*. (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), pp.269- 272; J.Markakis, *Ethiopia The Last Two Frontiers*,( James Curry, 2011, USA), p. 115; C. Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government* (London: Longmans, 1969), pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History", In Donham, Donald L and Wendy James eds., *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*; Markakis, *Ethiopia The Last Two Frontier*, pp.119-121; C. Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government* (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Markakis, *Ethiopia The Last Two Frontiers*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, pp. 289-290.

put under Yabello *woreda* in Arero *Awraja*.<sup>6</sup> During this time, Ellale Sego, the part of Burjie-Kilicho which had served as the cultural and traditional center of Burji, continued as the administrative capital of Burji *mikital woreda*.<sup>7</sup>

According to sources, Ato Wolde Senbet Bulbula was the first governor of Burji *mikital woreda*. In Burji *mikital woreda*, administration and police offices were established. The governor of sub-district dealt with minor judicial issues. Burji continued with its *mikital woreda* status until 1965.<sup>8</sup>

According to John Markakis, in 1964, the Ethiopian administrative hierarchy was divided into fourteen provinces, hundred sub-provinces, four hundred forty four districts and one thousand three hundred twenty eight sub-districts. The governors of these political units were directly assigned by Emperor Haile Selassie.<sup>9</sup>

In 1965 when all *mikital-woredas* were cancelled and promoted to *woredas*, Burji for the first time became a *woreda*. In 1965, *mikital woredas* were abolished and additional *woredas* were created in many parts of the empire as part of the development effort.<sup>10</sup> The trend was to abolish *mikital-woredas*, which were economically poor (below \$17,000 tax revenue). In this restructuring, Burji district was put under Arero sub-province in Sidamo province.<sup>11</sup>

In 1965, the new administration decided that the center of Burji should be changed. As a result, Ellale-Sego was abandoned as the center of Burji district. Instead because of its central position for administration and trade, availability of river water, the moderate climate (*woina dega*) and suitable landform for urban settlement, Bader renamed as Soyama and became the center of

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<sup>6</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no, Ref. No.11761/44; NALA, Province Code, 6 Folder No. 20, File No. 19. See appendix-B.

<sup>7</sup> Informants; Ato Teshome Adare, Shamble Kifle W/Senbet and Ato Debebe Tasew.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*; NALA, Series No. 195, Province Code, 6, Folder No.11, File No.82; Personal letter in the possession of Ato Getahun Addo, Ref. No.3127/93/57. See appendix-A

<sup>9</sup> J.Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, p. 290.

<sup>10</sup> *NegartGazeta*, Administrative Order of 1973: No. 86, August, 1973, pp. 1-17.

<sup>11</sup> Personal letter in the possession of Ato Getahun Addo, Ref. No.3127/93/57; YBWATM, Folder No 15, File Number No, Ref. No.11761/44; Abayneh Girma, "The Nature of Administration and Development in Ethiopia: The Case of Wolamo Development," (BA thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1971), p.72.

Burji district.<sup>12</sup> *Grazmach* Damete Dawe played an important role in the nomination of Soyama as the center of Burji district. He offered a *gasha* of land for the establishment of Soyama as the center of the district.<sup>13</sup>

The territory of the new Burji district encapsulated the territories of three *balabats*. These were *Dayna* Chamo Chaala (the *balabat* of Nedele), *Balambaras* Donche Chota (the *balabat* of Burjie) and *Grazmach* Damete Dawe (the *balabat* of Alga and Barguda).<sup>14</sup>

According to Markakis, *woreda* governors were first recruited by the emperor and approved by provincial governor. In many cases, at the district level, many local elites who were non-Amhara had opportunity to be assigned as governors of districts.<sup>15</sup> However, when one examines the list of the governors of Burji district, there was no Burji native who was appointed as *woreda* governor and secretary throughout the imperial period. The only position local people attained was the position of *balabat*.<sup>16</sup> This clearly shows that the government system of the time neglected the involvement of the natives in higher position in the local governance system.

*Ato* Mekonnen Filatte who was the acting governor (*Tibiq-Geezze*) during the sub-district administration period (1963 to 1964) became the first governor of Burji district. Besides this, *Ato* Mandefro Kassa was also assigned as the first secretary of the new district. However, *Ato* Mekonnen served only for one year in 1965. Following this, *Qegnazmzch* Abebe Worku who was one of the patriots who struggled during the Italian period and a native of Gumaiyde was appointed as the governor of Burji district in 1966.<sup>17</sup> According to written sources, the district governor earned Eth \$150 monthly salary while, the secretary was paid Eth \$ 50 monthly wage by government in the period between 1965 and 1974.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Personal letter in the possession of *Ato* Getahun Addo, Ref. No.3127/93/57; See appendix- A. Informants; *Shambl*, Kifle W/Senbet, Getahun Addo and *Ato* Mekonnen W/ Senbet. The term *Soyama* named after 'a long and straight tree-soye' which was abundant in the area.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Debebe Damete.

<sup>14</sup> YBWATM, Folder no. 57, File Number, 233, Ref. No. 198/ 1962

<sup>15</sup> Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, p. 295.

<sup>16</sup> A chart which shows the governors of Burji *woreda* since 1965; YBWATM , Folder No. 57, File No.170, Ref. No. 170/58 ; Informants: *Dyna* Achule Hirbo and Kifle W/Senbet

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*; NALA, Series No. 195, Province Code, 6, Folder No.22, File no.07; YBWATM, Folder No. 14 File Number, 173, Ref. No. 173/60.

<sup>18</sup> YBWATM, Folder, No. 14, File No. 56; Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, p. 295.

Many scholars argue that the appointment of officials from the center by the emperor aimed at dissolving the local autonomy of regions and strengthening the dominance of the center.<sup>19</sup> However, when one looks this perception at the local government level, it is difficult to accept this idea as a whole. In some instances, the imperial government was tolerant of the traditional administration system. But it should be noted that no doubt the new system had challenged the very existence of *womisso*, the traditional administration system of Burji.

In Burji, the imperial administration combined traditional administration and modern administrative practices. At the top of the administrative hierarchy there was a district governor who was appointed from the center by the provincial governor. Under the governors of the *woreda* and *mikitil woredas*, there were government bureaucrats who facilitated administration. Below this, there were local traditional rulers who were appointed by the government as *balabats* and *qoros*.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned above, in Burji there were three *balabats*: namely *Dyna Chamo Chaala*, *Woma Donche Chotta* and *Woma Damete Dawe*. Under each *balabat*, there were *qoros*. The traditional rulers, besides their traditional titles, had titles such as *balambaras* and *grazmach*.<sup>21</sup> This reveals that the administration was a mixture of the traditional and modern administration systems.

It is important to note about the power and the responsibilities of the *balabats*. In Burji, the three *balabats* were responsible to different parts of the district. For instance *Balambaras Chamo Chaala*, the *balabat* of Nedele, was responsible for matters pertaining to Nedele, Haralie and Hallame areas. In a similar way, *Balambaras Donche Chotta* was responsible for issues concerning Burjie, Gamiyo and Leemo areas. *Grazmach Damete Dawe*, who was *balabat* of Alga and Barguda, was responsible to the areas, Gashara in the south and Barguda in the north. Even though the three *balabats* of Burji had similar responsibilities like collecting taxes, solving conflicts, working as judges at local level (*atibiya dangna*) and organizing the people for development work, but in various respects *grazmach Damete* emerged as the main representative of Burji *woreda*. This might be because of his close relation with the provincial government

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<sup>19</sup> J.Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>20</sup> Informants: Achule Hirbo, Kifle W/Senbet and Mekonnen W/ Senbet.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

officials and his active participation in the liberation struggle. He was also a godson of *Ras Adefresew*, the governor of Sidamo province.<sup>22</sup>

In Burji, the territories of the *balabats* were divided into *chiqas* (wards) that were ruled by *qoros*. The appointment of *qoros* followed the traditional administration system. As a result, most of the *qoros* were *daynas* and *mashas* that are individuals who had second and third rank in the *womisso* administrative hierarchy respectively.<sup>23</sup> The *qoro* reported to the police crime that cannot be solved at local level. Besides this, he helped the *balabats* to make sure that the people under his domain have paid their taxes. Moreover, it was his responsibility to maintain security. They were entrusted with informing messages that were forwarded by *balabats*. For the service they provided, the *qoros* received a percentage of the tax they collected from their areas.<sup>24</sup> According to *Ato Kifle Wolde Senbet*, a former *qoro* himself, the *qoro* got two percent of the total tax they collected from the tax payers. On the other hand, the *balabat* earned fifteen percent of the total tax he collected when he brought this to the *awaraja* treasury. However, there was *dejemetnat* or bureaucratic procedure which the *awaraja* officials and workers practiced to get bribes from the *balabats*. So, the *balabat* had to share some of the percentage that he would earn with *awaraja* officials and civil servants.<sup>25</sup>

The traditional rulers of Burji were transformed to *balabats*. Consequently, they acted as a bridge between the people and the state. By virtue of their status, they held large tracts of land. Besides this, they forced the people to provide them with various provisions. On different occasions, some of them abused their power unlawfully to obtain advantages or harm others.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is possible to argue that the traditional rulers of Burji were part and parcel of the exploitative and oppressive machinery of the state.

The modern administrative system had a clear impact on the traditional administrative system of Burji. As indicated in the previous chapter, the term of office of the officials in the *womisso* institution was only one year with the possible extension of one or two years based on the

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<sup>22</sup> Informants: Debebe Damete, Kifle W/ Senbet, Achule Hirbo and Sofaniat Worku

<sup>23</sup> Informants: Kifle Damete, Achule Hirbo and *Ansh* Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>24</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet, Debebe Damete and Achule Hirbo.

<sup>25</sup> Informant: Kifle W/senbet.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*: Informants: *Woma* Aden Oshe, Achule Hirbo and Wolle Tego.

performance of the official and if his period witnessed good fortune. However, during the period under discussion, for instance Damete Dawe, who was elected as the first *woma* from northern Burji in 1948/49 continued in this position until 1975.<sup>27</sup> This reveals how the Burji traditional leaders have worked in collaboration with government officials to maintain the status quo.

## **3.2. Major Economic Activities in Burji**

### **3.2.1 Land Tenure System**

Following his restoration to power, Emperor Haile Selassie passed various proclamations which were aimed to consolidate the political power and to increase government revenue. The proclamations formed the foundation for the post-war government of the emperor.<sup>28</sup> The 1942 land tax aimed at softening the heart of the people who were highly dissatisfied with the pre-1935 maladministration system of the imperial government. However, the reduced tax did not continue for a long time. Two years later, in 1944 a new tax decree was issued which increased the land tax by more than three hundred percent.<sup>29</sup> Both these proclamations sought to introduce, at least in theory, two important changes. The first was the abolition of *corve'e* labor and the introduction of tax in money while the second was the rationalization of state income.<sup>30</sup>

The standardization of land tax that was proclaimed by the imperial government in 1942 highly affected local people in Burji district. This decree led to two basic changes in the district. The traditional tax collection system in kind was replaced by payment in cash. First, each land holding head of the family was registered and land tax assessment was carried out. Secondly, the decree included all the cultivated and uncultivated lands occupied by the rural people of the

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Crummey, *Land and Society In the Christian Kingdom of Ehtiopia From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 200), pp.237-239.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*; Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

*woreda*.<sup>31</sup> According to the decree, the amount of tax imposed was 15, 10 and 5 birr for cultivated, semi cultivated and uncultivated lands respectively.<sup>32</sup>

Three kinds of lands existed in Burji district in the post-liberation period. These were private, state and church lands. The first type can be further classified into *utuba (tinto)* or ‘fire land’, *maderya* (a land given to officials or government workers instead of salary) and rented land.<sup>33</sup>

*Utuba (tinto)* land was initially land which was occupied by clan members by lighting fire in the area. As a result, the area which was touched by fire was considered as the possession of the clan members. When this tradition commenced is not known. Even though at first the land was held by members of the clan communally, later on this land was divided among clan members and therefore became private land held in private tenure.<sup>34</sup>

*Utuba* land is inherited through line of the eldest son of the family. Younger sons and females in general had no right to hold *tinto* land while the eldest son was alive. The special privilege that the eldest son enjoyed had adverse effect on the socio-economic status of younger sons.<sup>35</sup> As we shall see later, this was one of the factors for the outmigration of Burji to various parts of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya.

In Burji the area where the *tinto* land tenure system operated covered the area from Soyama town in the east to Sagan River in the west. Most of the lands of highland *kebeles* like Daldho, Ladishe, Ottomalo and Yabano were included in this system. Moreover, the western and highland part of Ralaya and Walaya *kebeles*’ lands were included under *tinto* land tenure system.<sup>36</sup>

Since *utuba* lands have been exploited for a long period, their fertility has deteriorated. The *gabbar* land holding system, which was introduced at the beginning of the twenty century, did

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<sup>31</sup> Achule Hirbo, Tukke Hirbo, Debebe Tasew and Kifle W/Senbet.

<sup>32</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*, p. 193; Crummey, *Land and Society In the Christian Kingdom of Ehtiopia From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, pp.237-239.

<sup>33</sup> Informants: Salle Chota, Getahun Addo, Mare Dhade , Sharuka Bullo and Wolde Gedo.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

not affect this system. The *qalad* or the measurement of land did not include areas under the *utuba* land holding system.<sup>37</sup> This exemption seems to have been due to the poor quality of these lands. As in the pre-1935 period, in the post 1941 period, *utuba* land holders paid tax individually according to the size and the quality of the land to the clan chief which was levied by the government collectively. The sole difference between the pre-war period and the post-liberation periods was that in the previous period the landholders contributed tribute in kind while in the latter they paid tax only in cash.<sup>38</sup>

The other form of tenure in Burji was the *maderya* land holding system. This was land granted by the state to individuals in government administration system instead of salary. Northern settlers who had the tributary right in the pre-war period have also pursued holding the land as their tenure in the post liberation period. A good example of which illustrates the process is the case of *Grazmach* Gizaw. He was one of the representatives of the imperial government in Burji in the pre-1935. In the post-1941 period he continued to use the land under his holding in the pre-war period. The other individuals who were embraced in this system were patriots, government officials and workers who did not get salary from the government. The Burji ruling elites also highly benefited from this system. As a result, people like *Balambaras* Donche and *Grazmach* Damete were granted six and ten *gashas* of land respectively.<sup>39</sup>

Ordinary Burji could rent half a *gasha* land from the government. Besides this, the people rented land from private land owners. In this case, the land owner who did not demand extra free service from tenants can have the potential to rent numerous tracts of land. However, those landlords who excessively demanded the free labor of the tenants, less number of tenants rented land. As a result, there were occasions when land owners returned the land to the government.<sup>40</sup>

In Burji there was a land which owned by the state called *yemengest meret*. This was extensive land possessed by the government. In areas like Barguda and Kilicho, the government held land

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*; YBWATM, Folder No. 12, File No. no, Ref. No. *Nehasse*14, 1956. See appendix-C

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*; YBWATM, Folder No. 12, File No. no, Ref. No.180/64.

<sup>40</sup> Informants: Achule Hirbo, Samule Fanje, Debebe Damte, Kidane Kotte and Chanu Bulcha.

as *yemengist yizota*. Most of the produce from these lands was taken to the government at the center.<sup>41</sup>

Besides the above land holding systems, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church also owned small tracts of land. According to one government report, compared to the above mentioned holders of land, the church's holding was very small. For instance, the Selassie Church in Soyama held only one *gasha* of land.<sup>42</sup>

The 1942 land-tax proclamation introduced land-tax based on the quality of the land. The three categories of land were cultivated land (*lem*), partially cultivated land (*lem-tef*) and uncultivated land (*tef*). The fixed tax rate on these lands per *gasha* (forty hectares) were \$ Eth.15, 10 and 5 respectively.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the 1944 land-tax decree raised the tax to \$ Eth 50, 40 and 15 per *gasha* on *lem*, *lem-tef* and *tef* lands respectively.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, anybody who had money could rent land. However, as many informants affirm, the tax in Burji was not concomitant with the tax fixed by the state at national level. In Burji, the land tax on fertile land was 73 to 75 birr; on semi fertile land 63 birr and, on poor land 20 birr.<sup>45</sup> Even though the land holders rented land according to the above price, in most cases they did not pay the rent from their pockets. Because most land owners shared the government land tax with the tenants who rented the land from them. As a result, there were times when the land owners made profit by demanding high rent from the tenants.<sup>46</sup> Generally, the government land tax reforms passed at various times did not change the life of Burji peasants.

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<sup>41</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet and Achule Hirbo.

<sup>42</sup> YBWATM, Folder no. 12, File Number No, Ref. No.177/64; Informant: Sharuka Bullo.

<sup>43</sup> Bahru ,*A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 191;*NegairtGazeta*, Proclamation No. 9, 1941, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Bahru ,*A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 192; *NegaritGazeta*, Proclamation No. 10, 1944, p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Informants: Kifle W/Senbet and Achule Hirbo.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.2.2 Agriculture

Agriculture in Burji during the imperial period continued to be characterized by production largely for subsistence and the utilization of traditional methods of production. However, some changes took place in the agriculture of the district in connection with the introduction of new crops and technology.<sup>47</sup>

Many of my informants underscore that agriculture has a long history in Burji. Burji tradition states that their forefathers brought different kinds of crops and plants with them when they migrated from Liban. Barely, durrah and wheat are among the crops which are said to have been brought from Liban. *Khat* also came in a similar way. *Enset* (false banana), coffee and cotton, however, were crops which were introduced to the area after they settled in the present Burji land. Maize, pulse and *teff*, on the other hand, were grains which were introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the conquest of Burji by the Ethiopian imperial state.<sup>48</sup>

The altitude of Burji ranges from 860 to 2560 m. a.s.l. This makes the district ideal for the growth and production of various agricultural products. In spite of these geographical and climatic advantages, the Burji yielded very limited amount and types of crops which adopted the high land climate.<sup>49</sup> This was because of three salient factors. First, the mid altitude (*woinadega*) and low altitude (*qolla*) areas which are favorable for the production of various crops were vulnerable to attacks by the Guji-Oromo. As a result of this, the labor and the land which was used for agricultural production was very limited. Second, the Burji utilized traditional techniques of production which did not enhance productivity. Third, the majority of the Burji settled in the highland parts of the district. The fertility of the soil in these parts of the district had deteriorated because of over cultivation.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, during the imperial period, the Burji were afflicted by periodic food shortage and disastrous famine.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Informants: Ato Mussa Jillo, Tuke Hirbo, Ato Buno Harshe, Mare Dhade, Kidane Kotte.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 13; Informants: Getahun Addo, Samuel Barbe and Mussa Jillo.

<sup>50</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Tuke Hirbo, Buno Harshe, Mare Dhade and Debebe Damete.

<sup>51</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Tuke Hirbo, Buno Harshe and Mare Dhade.

The Burji practiced highly intensive agriculture during the post-liberation period. To get better yield, they engaged in soil conservation methods. These consisted of terracing, manuring, mulching and integrated live stock rearing.<sup>52</sup>

In Burji agriculture, the basic unit of agricultural labor was the household. Activities like clearing the bush, digging and sowing were all carried out by men. Weeding and harvesting, however, was carried out by both men and women. Heavy tasks which demand large labor like ploughing of new land, weeding and harvesting were performed by work groups called *geba* and *haile*.<sup>53</sup> In the former system, members of the group worked in turn for their members. In the latter system, the members of the work group worked together when request for help is made. The bond between members of these work groups were based on neighborhood and economic benefits rather than on kinship ties. These organizations are essential for many reasons. From the economic point of view, these work groups guaranteed the availability of labor in time of critical demand. From the security point of view, the work group minimized the risk of sudden attack from their traditional enemies. Besides these, they contributed in consolidation of social bondage among the members of the work groups.<sup>54</sup>

During the imperial period, the Burji agriculture showed certain changes which favored the adoption of agricultural technology, notably ox-drawn plough and new crops- *teff* and pulses.<sup>55</sup> Burji agriculture depended on hoe cultivation. Originally, the hoe was made from sharpened acacia tree. But later this was replaced by iron-made hoes. Yet, it is not clear when this transformation took place. It was believed that Burji black smiths assembled this from iron which most probably was brought by *Safar* (Somali) traders. This was most probably in the pre-1941 period.<sup>56</sup> Since the price of iron hoe was expensive, the majority of the people did not use the hoe.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*; Ali Dawa, "The History of Burji Ethnic Group" (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1989), p. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Abebe, *Ye Burji Bhereseb Bahl Getsta Dasesa* (Hawassa: Tedi Printing August,2002 E,C), p. 23; Ali , p. 46; Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>54</sup> Abebe, pp.23-24: Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe, Tukke Hirbo and Wayo Shanko.

<sup>55</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>56</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe, Tukke Hirbo, Ato Siba Golja and Ato Samuel Barbe; Ali, p. 47.

Ox-drawn plough agriculture was introduced into Burji district by northern settlers following the conquest in the pre-1941 period.<sup>57</sup> Shutte Ume, *Woma* Gemiyo and *Ato* Daro Maya were the first people who used ox-drawn plough widely in Burji district. However, *Ato* Dawe who was technically the most skilled person in preparing yoke and *mofar* (in Amharic) was the person who benefited most from the introduction of plough agriculture in Burji district. The plough began to be used slowly in the 1930s and its use expanded in the post-liberation period.<sup>58</sup>

Amborn contends that the replacement of hoe-agriculture by the ox-drawn plough has adversely affected the agricultural system of Burji.<sup>59</sup> However, according to informants, one of the good results of the interactions of Burji with Amhara (*Qawe*) was the introduction of ox-drawn plough agriculture.<sup>60</sup> This can be seen from two important economic vantage points. The first is that the plough minimized labor cost while at the same time helping the peasant cultivate larger plot of land. The second point is the new innovation also brought a relief for the Burji peasants from a repeatedly sharpening of the wood-hoe which was a very laborious work.<sup>61</sup>

Even though in later times, the Burji merchants brought plough from Yergachaffe for sale, many people did not use plough for agriculture. As a result the effect of plough in raising agricultural productivity was not significant. This was because many people did not adopt the new technic immedietly. Beside this, due to the relative high price of oxen and plough materials, most poor pesants did not use widely.<sup>62</sup>

The other important feature of agriculture in Burji in the post-1941 period was the adoption of *teff*. At the beginning, the perception of the people towards *teff* was negative. This was manifested in the naming of *teff* as *gash* (Lit. “Sir”). This indicates that the Burji considered *teff* as a grain which only belonged to northern settlers.<sup>63</sup> However, such attitude did not stay for

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<sup>57</sup>Amborn, “History of Events and Internal Development, p.755; Ayele Chuda, “Changes in Traditional Socio-Economic and Cultural Organization of the Burji Ethnic Group” (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of Sociology and Social Administration, 1988), p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Informant: Mussa Jillo.

<sup>59</sup> Amborn, “History of Events and Internal Development, p. 755.

<sup>60</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Tukke Hirbo

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo and Tukke Hirbo.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*: Informant: Achule Hirbo.

long. The adaptability of *teff* to the climate and soil of Burji land was the principal reason for the change of the people's mind.<sup>64</sup> Besides this, the high demand for *teff* in the nearby towns encouraged many people to produce it. The praise which was stated by Afan Oromo to Ato Hirbo Danche, a person who produced *teff* extensively indicates how the mind of people has changed: *Hirbo Danche nachi qotte nachi Yabata*. Roughly this means, Hirbo Danche harvested *teff* and galloped white mule.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.2.3 Trade

During the period between 1941 and 1974, trade in Burji showed some changes. The major changes that were observed in trade in Burji district were the shift from local trade to exporting commodities to other places outside the district and importing trade items to Burji district which were not produced or scarce in Burjiland. This was the result of the shift of the direction of the trade from south towards north. This was the outcome of relative peace in the post-1941 period in the region; the construction of dry weather road by the Italians during the occupation period and the shift of the administrative center of Burji from Ellale-Sego to Soyama.<sup>66</sup>

Cloth and cattle were the dominant items of trade in Burji during the 1941 to 1974 period. Burji weavers produced *buluko* and *bado* at local level. However, since this product was not sufficient, Burji traders also went to markets in Konso such as Gocha and Fasho to supplement the local produce. After the merchants bought *buluko*, *bado* and *magi* from local markets, they exported these goods to Yergachaffe via Barguda-Hagere Maryam-Jebba Sirre.<sup>67</sup>

These commodities were transported by the traders by using pack animals like mules and donkeys or by using porters. It took merchants three days to make the round trip from Soyama to

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Informant: Achule Hirbo. According to Dayna Achule Hirbo, it was Ato Hirbo Danche who introduced *teff* cultivation in Burjiland. He brought it from Hagere Selam by hiding in his hair when he was carrying *teff* from somewhere to Hagere Selam.

<sup>66</sup> Informants: Ato Bora Kome, Senbato Duba and Siba Golja and Achule Hirbo and Mare Dhade.

<sup>67</sup> Informants: Siba Golja and Bora Kome; Ayele, p. 6.

Yergachaffe. While the majority of Burji merchants sold the goods in Yergachaffe, other traders took their wares to the markets of Yergalem and Hagere Selam.<sup>68</sup> Burji merchants usually took the commodities and delivered them to their business associates in the towns of destination. These were mostly Burji and Konso who lived in Yergachaffe. The *bulko* which was bought in four to six birr was sold in six to eight in Yergachaffe.<sup>69</sup> However, this does not mean that the price of commodities was the same throughout the period.

Before, the trade items reached Yirgachaffe, they were taxed at Torre (a place in Gedeoland near the border with Gujiland). The tax was one Ethiopian birr for those merchants who took cloth items on head. The tax put on traders who used animals for transportation was two Ethiopian birr per animal. Since one person carried up to twenty sheets of *bado* and the animals carried twenty *bulukos* and fifty sheets of *bado*, the tax was considered by the traders as fair.<sup>70</sup>

On their return from Yergachaffe, the merchants brought other essential goods that had high demand in Burji market. These included donkeys, mules, *abujedi* and plough. These would then be sold in Soyama, Chulluse and Kilicho markets. Among the traders who took an active part in this trade during the period the prominent ones were *Ato* Bora Kome, *Ato* Siba Golja, *Ato* Tukke and *Ato* Balu.<sup>71</sup>

Most of the time, the Burji merchants sold their commodities to their partners in credit at Yergachaffe and received payment during their second trading trip.<sup>72</sup> As a result of this, the merchants faced recurrent shortage of capital. The other challenge merchants faced was problem of transportation. During the rainy season, their trip was interrupted by flood. As a result, the trade was highly active in the period between September and April. In the remaining part of the year, the trade activity was slow. Still another impediment especially to the cloth trade was security. Especially, the travel from Soyama to Hagere Maryam was very dangerous because of attacks by the Guji in the area.<sup>73</sup> It was impossible for a merchant to travel alone during this time.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Informants: Siba Golja and Bora Kome.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: *Ato* Mohammed Lakew.

To minimize the problem, twenty to thirty people traveled together. However, the establishment of a police post at Barguda in the late 1960s, to some extent, eased the security problem.<sup>74</sup> After the road that connects Yabello and Bakawle started to function in the 1950s, however, the cloth trade route that passed through Konso-Burji-Hagree Maryam-Jabbasire-Yergachaffe declined.<sup>75</sup>

Trade in cattle was another important business undertaking in Burji district in the post-liberation period. The role of Burji in this trade can be seen from two points. First, Burji were engaged in the trade themselves. Second, they transferred the cattle that were brought from Borana by other merchants through Burji to Yirgachaffe.<sup>76</sup> This cattle trade route proceeded as follows: Teltele-Burji-Hagere Maryam-Jebba Sirre-Yergachaffe. Most of the livestock were bought from Teltele and Birndar in Boranaland.<sup>77</sup>

Most of the cattle bought from the market were heifers and bulls. The cattle that were bought for Eth.\$ 20 to 30 at Teltele and Birdar were sold for Eth.\$ 40 to 50 at Yergachaffe.<sup>78</sup> Informants told me that the price of cattle was not uniform throughout the year. Between the middle of May to the end of July, the price of cattle in Boranaland was relatively cheap. However, since this time is a rainy season in the region, buying large number of cattle was impossible. The price of livestock increased both in Boranaland and Yergachaffe between August and September. This was because of two reasons. The first was that oxen were highly demanded for agriculture during this time. The second reason was the celebration of the *Mesqel* holiday in the region, especially in the Gamo area during which time thousands of cattle were slaughtered. This made the price of cattle to increase significantly.<sup>79</sup>

The trip from Teltele to Yergachaffe took six to seven days on foot. The merchants usually commenced their journey at dawn. Trekking was the sole transporting means of the time. In one trip, up to two hundred cattle were trekked to Yergachaffe market. The trade route led to

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<sup>74</sup> Informants: Siba Golja and Bora Kome

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*; Wonda, p. 39.

<sup>76</sup> Informants: Mohammed Lakew, Bora Kome and Siba Golja.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>79</sup> Informant: Mohammed Lakew.

Yergachaffe was not free of hazards. There were robbers and theft. Besides this, during the rainy season, there was the problem overflow of rivers.<sup>80</sup>

After they sold cattle in Yergachaffe, the traders brought some oxen for slaughter, and donkeys and mules to Burji. Both the Burji and settlers participated in livestock trading undertaking. People like *Ato Befekadu Anno*, *Ato Dima Mudhe*, *Ato Dimamu Dheko*, *Ato Mohammed Lakew* and *Ato Tekka Birru* were the most prominent cattle merchants of Burji district during the period under discussion.<sup>81</sup>

Here, it should be noted that the Burji acted as the main agents of business transaction. They played the role of intermediary between the pastoral Borana and agriculturalist Gedeo. This linked major cattle raising society, Borana, with that of the major meat consuming peoples of the Gedeo highlands where large number of cattle are slaughtered each year on different occasions.

### **3.3. Out-migration in Burji**

According to scholars, there are two major factors which contribute to migration. These are push and pull factors. Push factors are mainly economic in nature. These include unfavorable situations which forced people to migrate from their place of origin to other places where they imagined having better opportunities. Economic variables which induce migration include: land tenure, lack of employment, poor or non-existent social and economic services and unexpected natural calamities. On the other hand, pull factors of migration entail better job opportunities, wages in money, good network of information and the access to other facilities.<sup>82</sup>

The principal push factors behind the out-migration of Burji from Burjiland during the period between 1941 and 1974 were mainly economic. Social, cultural and security issues were second

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Kidane Kotte.

<sup>81</sup> Informants: Bora Kome and Mohammed Lakew.

<sup>82</sup> Tesfaye Tafese, *The Migration, Environment and Conflict Nexus in Ethiopia. A case Study of Amhara Migrant Settlers in East Wollega Zone*, Organization for Social Science Research in East and South Africa (OSSREA) 2007, Addis Ababa), pp. 55-56; Seleshi Sisaye, "Urban Migration and Labor Movement in Ethiopia", in *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Chicago, USA, 1978,) pp. 680-682.

in importance. Some of the social and cultural causes that induced migration, however, were related to economic factors.<sup>83</sup>

The first cause behind the out-migration of Burji related to rural poverty. This emanated from several factors such as shortage of land and the degradation of soil quality. According to sources, the Burji have settled in Burjiand for several centuries.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, the Burji have ploughed the land for many years continuously. Although the Burji practiced intensive agriculture to enhance the quality of the land, the land had become over grazed and eroded. This made many Burji unable to provide the basic needs to their families.<sup>85</sup> As one informant noted, because of this many people were suffered from famine and starvation. As a result, most of the emigrants from Burji were from the areas where the soil was highly eroded such as Burjie-Kilicho, Daldho and Wordiya.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, economic difficulties in Burji compelled the people to search for better life in areas where abundant farmlands existed. As a result, migrants settled in areas where fertile lands exist in Boranalnd and Gujiland.

The second reason which contributed to the out-migration of Burji was the issue of inheritance. The Burji practiced primogeniture. In effect the eldest son of the family is the sole person who has the privilege to inherit land and other property of the family. Junior sons and daughters have/had no the right to inherit.<sup>87</sup> In Burji a man can marry more than one wife. This made the family to have more children. The marriage which was not concomitant with the limited resources made the issue of inheritance very hard. The competition over land between the eldest

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<sup>83</sup> Informants: *Ato* Duba Daresso, Kashu Warre and Mussa Jillo, *Ato* Boro Ake, *Ato* Simon Lole, Salle Chotta, Getahun Addo.

<sup>84</sup> Amborn, *Flexiblaus Tradition Burji in Athiopienund Kenya unter Ver Wendung der Aufzeichnungen Von Helemut Straube with explanation of some cultural items in English*, p. XI.

<sup>85</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 13, File No. no, Ref. No.16/2/70.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Kashu Warre and Musa Jillo, Boro Ake, Simon, Salle Chotta and Getahun Addo.

<sup>87</sup> Informants: Malle Dhahe, Getahun Addo, Aden Oshe and Pawlos Mamo.

son and his junior siblings became stiff. This led to quarrel and fighting between them and occasionally involved homicide.<sup>88</sup>

In this situation, if the eldest son was kind to his brothers, he would give them small plots of land over which they had only usufruct right.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the fragmentation and the shortage of farm land had to lead to economic hardship and gradual frustration with life. This, the gradual land shortage pushed many young men from Burji to move out of their land in search of better income opportunities.

Thirdly, the introduction of various tax decrees beginning in 1942 was another factor which exacerbated the already difficult life situation in Burji and encouraged migration. The 1942 and 1944 tax decrees which raised the tax on measured lands, the 1966 decrees on land, and 1967 income tax and other taxes which were imposed by the Ethiopian state were burdensome for Burji who were already suffering from poverty.<sup>90</sup> In addition, though forced labor was abrogated by the 1942 decree, the Burji peasants continued to provide different kinds of labor services to the landlords. As Kellner argued, it was this ill-treatment that forced the Burji to immigrate to Kenya in large numbers in the 1960s.<sup>91</sup>

The obligation to pay tax in cash was a heavy burden on Burji since as there was no sufficient source of cash at the time. Furthermore, there were fines and bribes imposed on them by *balabats*. The properties of those peasants who were unable to pay their taxes were confiscated.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, migration to new areas was one major response of Burji.

Fourthly, the work culture of Burji also facilitated the move out of the Burji. The Burji were not happy to work as laborers under the control of another person in Burjiland. According to the

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Proclamation No. 21, 1966. Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press; Proclamation No. 29, 1967. Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press; YBWATM, Folder No 13, File Number, 198/64, no Ref. No.

<sup>91</sup> Alexander Kellner, "The Burjis' Liban Tradition: an example of a practical interest in the past," In S.Uhlig ed. *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006, pp. 131-132.

<sup>92</sup> Informants: Bange Hayido, Shibru Hape, Malle Dhahe, Getahun Addo and Aden Oshe

attitude of the people, this situation made the person to be looked as inferior to others.<sup>93</sup> Thus, during the period under discussion and subsequent years, the Burji who wanted to work as daily laborers, house maids, car boys, shop boys and other similar employments left for new areas outside of Burji district.<sup>94</sup>

The fifth factor was related to security issues. As I have noted in the previous chapter, the out-migration of Burji in the pre-1941 was partly induced by the armed conflict between the Burji and Guji. This hostility continued in the post-1941 period and therefore acted as one impetus behind Burji migration. During this time, the Guji who earned better income from the sale of cattle were able to arm themselves with better weapons. This gave the Guji the upper hand in the conflict. Moreover, informants claim that the collaboration of the local *balabats* in hiding the Guji who committed murder and robbery, had exacerbated the conflict between the Burji and the Guji.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, the areas in Burji district that were exposed to the sudden attack of the Guji during the pre-1941 period also continued in the period between 1941 and 1974. Therefore, security problem continued as one of the rationales behind the migration of Burji from Burji district in the period under discussion.

In the movement of Burji towards different areas, the presence of abundant arable land in the new destination areas, the network of kinship and friendship, and the quest for better life were the main reasons that can be grouped under the pull factors that attracted the Burji to migrate to new places.<sup>96</sup>

According to sources, most of the Burji who were pushed from Burjiland arrived at places where arable land was abundantly available. Except Gedeo, the remaining destinations of Burji migrants were areas where pastoralism was practiced.<sup>97</sup> As oral sources and research done by scholar indicate, unlike other southern parts of Ethiopia, the occupation of Borana was not

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Informants: Malle Dhahe, Getahun Addo and Aden Oshe.

<sup>95</sup> Informants: Veteran Police Tamirat W/ Micheal, Male Dhahe, Getahun Ado, Aden Oshe; NALA, Province Code, 6, Folder No.20, File No.08. See Appedix-D.

<sup>96</sup> Informants: Kashu Warre and Mussa Jillo, Boro Ake, Simon Lole Salle Chotta, Getahun Ado and *Ato* Wolde Gedo.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

supported by large scale settlement of northern settlers and the establishment of an effective *gebbar nefetengna* system in the region. These situations made the Burji to be pulled to Boranaland.<sup>98</sup> In view this, when the situation in the home areas became harsh, the Burji moved to the area where the *gebbar-neftengna* system was weak and where farmland was abundant.

Besides the availability of farmland, the good reception of the people who lived in Boranaland who needed badly the agricultural skill and products of the Burji that made the areas center of attraction.<sup>99</sup> Most of the places where the Burji settled were Yabello, Teltele, Hagere Maryam and Hidi Lola which were conducive for agricultural activities.

In addition to this, there were social factors that motivated the Burji to migrate.<sup>100</sup> Migrants who settled first in the area of destination were good sources of information and inspired those who sought to emigrate.<sup>101</sup> In Burji, most of the later emigrants, moved along with the pioneers or followed the footsteps of the already established ones. The presence of relatives or neighborhood emigrants in the destination areas also enhanced the movement of Burji from their homeland. As many oral informants underscore, the early Burji emigrants were mainly from southern Burji area. As a result, many emigrants who dwelled in various parts of Boranaland and other places were from these parts of Burji district.<sup>102</sup> This mostly happened as the result of the assistance given to emigrants from relatives and fellow villagers who had already migrated from Burjiland.

The other motivational reason that attracted the Burji was quest for better life. The successful emigrants who came back to Burji for visit or as returnees inspired those who had the intention to move. The returnees showed off their wealth by buying oxen and other goods for family members. In addition, they paid huge bride price and spent large sums of money for marriage gifts. These activities of returnees highly motivated those who stayed at home to migrate.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Informants: Duba Daresso, Kashu Warre and Musa Jillo; Belete Bizuneh, "Inter-ethnic Relations in Borana (Southern Ethiopia): A Historical Survey to 1943", p. 37.

<sup>99</sup> Informants: Duba Daresso, Kashu Warre and Musa Jillo, Boro Ake, Salle Chotta, and Getahun Addo.

<sup>100</sup> Silishi, p. 681.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Informants: Duba Daresso, Kashu Warre and Mussa Jillo, Boro Ake; Mude, p. 44.

<sup>103</sup> Informants: Wolde Gedo, Getahun Addo, Shanu Wata, Mohammed Wolle.

In Burji there is a saying which motivated people to migrate to new areas and especially to Boranaland:

*Duromitta Hayadhamto Ormad gall*

If you want to be rich, go to Borana

*Sallaay Furay Hayadhamta Darassa Gall.*<sup>104</sup>

If you want to fill your stomach, go to Darassa.

Migration nearly affected all aspects of the lives of many emigrants in Burji district as well as those who remained at home. It was the cause of important social, economic and cultural changes.

### **3.4. Religion**

#### **3.4.1. Orthodox Christianity**

The introduction of Orthodox Christianity to Burji district has direct links with Menilik's conquest and the establishment of an early Christian settlement at Chullse in pre-1935 period. The first Ethiopian Orthodox church, St Geberiel was built in Morayu (Chulluse). Its service, however, was limited to serving the northern settlers and administrators. They did not attempt to baptize the local population or the traditional leaders unlike some of the conquered areas. As informants stated, only a few local people converted to orthodox Christianity. Of these, people recalled *Ato Darche Baho* as the first Orthodox Christian in Burji.<sup>105</sup>

The Italians took various measures that favored Muslims to undermine the position of Christians. The Italians portrayed the Orthodox Christians as colonizers for political reason. Understanding the adverse effect of this circumstance, in the immediate post-1941 period, Emperor Haile Selassie, officially supported the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to play an active role in the evangelization of people in southern Ethiopia.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Informant: Shanu Wata.

<sup>105</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade and Kifle W/ Senbet.

<sup>106</sup> Kifle W/Senbet and *Ato Wato Borde*. These informants were among the survived Burji Orthodoxy Christians.

To achieve this mission, in the post-liberation period, new Orthodox churches were built in different parts of Burji and the Burji were baptized in mass.<sup>107</sup> Oral sources indicate that Selassie Church was established in Shacha in 1942. The Shacha Selassie *tabot* is called as *Sidetegnaw* (the exiled). This was because the *tabot* has moved with *Memere Sahile Medhin Habte Wolde* from Arero to different areas as fugitive during the Italian occupation period.<sup>108</sup> Next to Selassie church, the ark (*tabot*) of St. Gabriel was transferred to Burjie-Kilicho and new church was established in this place in the early 1960s. This was due to the establishment of Burjie-Kilicho as the center of Burji *mikitil woreda*. In place of St Gabriel church, St Giogis was built in Chulluse.<sup>109</sup> The other church which was established in the post 1941 period is St. Michael of Nedele.<sup>110</sup> The construction of these churches was through the patronage of local *balabats*.<sup>111</sup> The establishment of these churches gave some impetus for the expansion of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity in Burji.

Despite the efforts of the central state and local *balabats*, however, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not realize its goals in Burji. This was because of several factors. Firstly, there was the problem of communication among the clergymen. Since all the priests have come from northern Ethiopia, their knowledge of the Burji language and culture was very limited.<sup>112</sup> As a result, the attempt to teach the new religion and convert the local people remained insignificant.

Secondly, the number of clergy who delivered spiritual service was very limited. There were only three priests who served the four parishes in the period between 1941 and 1974.<sup>113</sup>

Thirdly, the training of clergymen from the local people was not carried out. For instance, in the period between 1941 and 1974, there was no Burji who became a priest. *Ato Degu Shutte, Ato*

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<sup>107</sup> Informants: Kifle W/ Senbet and Sharuka Bullo.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Informants: Kifle W/ Senbet, Debebe Tassew, Sharuka Bullo.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*: According to these informants, the three clergymen who delivered service were Memere Sahel Medhin H/ Wolde, Mameer Bogale Bantwalu and Mamere Mamo. The first Burji who became a priest in Burji is Mamere Amare Sharuka in 1990s. This shows that the indignation of EOC was the major constraint for expansion.

Kebede Darche, *Ato* Kifle W/Senbet, *Ato* Mekonnen Befekadu and *Ato* Tadele Gume were the only Burji who got the title of deacon in the period under discussion.<sup>114</sup>

Consequently, in the 1950s when protestant missionaries came to evangelize the Burji, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church faced a strong challenge. Large numbers of its followers were converted to Protestantism.<sup>115</sup>

### 3.4.2 Protestantism in Burji

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the preaching of Protestantism was strongly discouraged by the Ethiopian state. This was owing to the fear of missionaries as a threat to the national integration. However, as of 1920s Emperor Haile Selassie approved the work of missionaries in southern Ethiopia. This was not entirely for the sake of evangelization but rather for the provision of resources and skills that were extremely important for the development of Ethiopia.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, in the post-1941 period, Emperor Haile Selassie vigorously helped the engagement of missionaries in the construction of various institutions in the south.<sup>117</sup>

The first missionaries arrived in Burji in 1950. The pioneers of Protestantism in Burji were Alex Paul and his wife Soysa. The former was an American while the latter was an Australian. They came under the banner of the "Sudan Interior Mission". Later, this church was given a local name, Qale Hiyowt Church with their Ethiopian followers from Gedeo, Wolayita, Kambata, Hadiya and Yem areas. They preached that all peoples and individual human beings were equal before God.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Elizabeth Watson, *Living Terraces in Ethiopia. Konso Landscape Culture and Development*, (Wood Bridge and Rochester: James Currey, 2009), p. 155.

<sup>117</sup> Donald Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution*. (Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California and James Curry, 1999), p.104. Donald Donham also strengthens the above idea as follows: "After the Italian occupation, Haile Silasie's government stepped up its pressure on evangelical missionaries to provide modern services particularly schools in the late 1940s.

<sup>118</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Bange Hayido and Malle Dhahe. The first two informants are the first converters of missionaries and local evangelists in Burjiland.

The first church was made of thatched roof constructed in a place called Gambo in the southern part of Burji in 1950.<sup>119</sup> It was from this place that the missionaries expanded their proselyzation activities to the remaining parts of Burji. At the outset, the Burji were skeptical towards the white missionaries since they related them to the Italians whom they remembered for their brutal actions. However, the involvement of Ethiopian preachers who came from Gedeo, Hadya, Kambata, Wolayta and Yem reduced this suspicion gradually.<sup>120</sup>

The evangelical mission of the Sudan Interior Mission was not easy. In the early years of their teachings, the protestant missionaries faced strong opposition from the Orthodox Christians and traditional religion believers. However, there were a few violent incidents between their converts and the people. There was, then, no idea among the converted Christians that the beliefs of their ancestors were bad; they were never heard reporting that they wanted to become Christians because the Burji religion was bad.<sup>121</sup>

The hostility of the Protestants was mainly directed against the possession of spirits called *wachi* in Burji language. These possession cults were introduced from the neighbor of the Burji, the Koyra at a recent time. The spirit possession cult threatened to life and dictated periodic sacrifices. During their moments of possession, individuals showed unusual types of behavior. The missionaries preached that their objective was to fight against these spirit cults and liberate the possessed.<sup>122</sup>

Protestantism expanded rapidly in Burji beginning in the middle of the 1950s. The opening of the first school and clinic in 1951 and in 1952 respectively facilitated the growth of the number of converts. The social services offered by the missionaries may be considered as the main factor for the conversion of the first generation Burji to Protestantism. At the beginning, the provision of education facilities was to all members of the society. But later, as the number of students

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Bange Hayido, Malle Dhahe and Argamo Shatto.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Bange Hayido, Malle Dhahe, Argamo Shatto and Yosef Tasew. Ato Yosef argues spirit possession tradition originally it was not belonging to the Burji. The good evidence of this is when the *wachi* left the person; the last word is '*sawo*' (I left) which is a Koyra term.

increased, priority was given to the children of the converts. Besides the Burji, these institutions hosted numerous people who came from the neighboring Amaro district.<sup>123</sup>

After the students received schooling up to grade four, they were employed as teachers and taught basic arithmetic and Amharic alphabet which were needed for understanding the basic knowledge of the Bible. Some of the students were employed as evangelists while a few of them joined government offices. Even though the Sudan Interior Mission were credited in the production of the first educated elites of Burji and Amaro, they were highly criticized by the local people for their policy of education which was limited only up to grade four.<sup>124</sup>

Generally, within the time of not exceeding a quarter of a century (1950-1974), the protestant missionaries were able to convert many people in Burji. According to a 1974 government report, the number of Protestant churches in the district had reached thirteen.<sup>125</sup> However, with these all achievements in the area of religion, many Burji Protestant Christians criticized the Qale Hiywot Church for the insignificant role it played in the sphere of development compared to the neighboring Norwegian Lutheran Mission or locally called Mekane Yesus Church.<sup>126</sup> Some informants like *Ato* Malle Dhahe claim that the church compared to the other Protestant missionaries, the Burji benefited very little from the Qale Hiyowt Church.<sup>127</sup>

### 3.4.3. Islam in Burji

The spread of Islam in Burji district in post-liberation period affected the social life of many people. Informants unanimously agree that Islam was introduced in Burji during the Italian occupation period (1936-1941).<sup>128</sup> One good evidence of this is that the first convert to Islam in

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<sup>123</sup> Informants: Argamo Shato, *Ato* Otte Kam'e, Samuel Barbe and Malle Dhahe.

<sup>124</sup> Informants: Mare Dhade, Bange Hayido and Malle Dhahe.

<sup>125</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 18, File Number No, Ref. No. 1320/67.

<sup>126</sup> Informants: Berhau Debalke, Malle Dhahe and Argamo Shato.

<sup>127</sup> Informant: Malle Dhahe. The informant was the first batch of Gambo elementary school. He was also a first Burji teacher in the same school.

<sup>128</sup> Informants: Buno Harshe, Wolle Tego; Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", P. 775.

Burji, *Ato Sage Lolo* (Said), who served as a collaborator with the Italian army was Islamized in Mogadishu.<sup>129</sup> It is important to note that the role played by Garri and Somalia soldiers who served in Italian army in conversion the Burji to Islam. The situation in Burji coincided with the Italian religious policy that favored conversion of Islam as counter check to Orthodox Christianity.<sup>130</sup> But the main spread of Islam in Burji took place in the post-liberation period.

The first seed of Islam in Burji was sown at Kilicho. It was mainly through Kilicho that Islam diffused northward up to Wordiya. The absence of Christian influence in these areas was one of the reasons for the diffusion of Islam in the area. This was because the land did not fall under the *qalad* system. As a result, the influence of the Orthodox Christians was insignificant.<sup>131</sup> As discussed above, the Somali and Garri were the main instruments in the expansion Islam in Burji. The involvement of these groups did not end after the liberation. In the post-1941, they engaged in the expansion of Islam in Burji as sheiks, and by making *dawa* (pilgrimages).<sup>132</sup> But this does not mean that there were no other people who participated in the islamization process. There were sheiks that came from Harar, Arsi and other parts of Ethiopia.<sup>133</sup>

Sheik Mahalim Ibrahim a native of Somali was the first sheik in Burji. Following the footsteps of Sheik Mahalim Ibrahim, a Yemenite Sheik Sharif Abdela arrived in Burji to preach Islam. The two were stationed in Kilicho and Wordiya respectively. The former married a Burji woman. This social adaptability mechanism of Sheik Mahalim Ibrahim significantly contributed for the spread Islam in the district.<sup>134</sup> The appointment of Mohammed Roge and Yusuf Sadeko the first Burji natives as sheiks in the late 1950s also facilitated the expansion of Islam in the district.<sup>135</sup>

Burji emigrants and traders were an important medium for Islamic teachings in Burji. Especially, the role of the former was significant. This situation considerably accelerated the spread of Islam

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<sup>129</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Wolle Tego. According to the naming tradition of Burji a person can have two names. For instance Said is the name of Sage. The first name refers to he is a Muslim while the later indicates his Burjiness.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*; Ambron, "History of Events and Internal Development. The Example of Burji Konso Cluster", p. 752.

<sup>131</sup> Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Wolle Tego.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Sheik Abdulahi Mohammed.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*; Ayele, P. 20

<sup>134</sup> Informants: Abdulahi Mohammed, Mohammed Wolle and Senbeto Godana

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*.

in Burji. The emigrants contributed for the spread Islam in three ways.<sup>136</sup> Firstly, there was a general tendency among most of the Burji who migrated to Hagremariam, Yabello, Moyale and Marsabet (a town located in northern Kenya) to engage in trade and convert to Islam. As a result, when they returned to their homeland, they greatly influenced the people around them. Secondly, the emigrants who became Muslims supported their fellows financially in the establishment of mosques and Quranic schools. Besides these, they were helpfull in the provision of sheikhs who taught the basic doctrine and teachings of Islam. Moreover, by making *dawa* they inspired their fellows.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Muslim merchants who came from Gurage and Wollo areas also helped the development of Islam in the district.<sup>138</sup>

On the other hand, the antagonism between Sheik Mahalim Ibrahim and Sheik Sharif Abedela on the basis of difference in Islamic teachings has negatively affected the development of Islam in Burji. Moreover, the expulsion of Sheik Mahalim Ibrahim from Burji in connection with his propagation against the state in the 1964 Ethio-Somalia war was one of the factors for weakening Islam in the later period in Burji district.<sup>139</sup> In spite of these barriers, according to a 1974 government report, six mosques were found in different parts of the district.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Mussa Jillo, Buno Harshe and Wolle Tego and Tukke Hirbo; Ayele, p. 20

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*: Informant: Mohammed Lakew.

<sup>138</sup> Informants: Mohammed Lakew, Borra Kome , Abdulahi Mohammed, Aden Oshe and Sheik Aden Hassen

<sup>139</sup> Informant: Abdulahi Mohammed.

<sup>140</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 18, File No. no, Ref. No. 1320/67.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BURJI UNDER THE *DERG* REGIME (1974-1991)

#### 4.1 The Immediate Post-1974 Political Situation of Burji and the Role of the *Zemach*

Due to multi-faceted factors, a popular uprising erupted in Ethiopia against Emperor Haile Selassie's government in 1974.<sup>1</sup> Following this, on September 12, 1974, the military group which called itself the *Derg*, dethroned Emperor Haile Selassie.<sup>2</sup> The *Derg* took political power and started to rule Ethiopia by naming itself as the Provisional Military Government *Derg*.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after this, the *Derg* issued several decrees to legitimize its power. On December 20, 1974, the *Derg* declared "Ethiopian Socialism" after it constituted itself around the 'Philosophy of Ethiopia *Tikidem*' (Ethiopia First).<sup>4</sup> To get the support of the public and recognition as a socialist government, the *Derg* took various measures. It sent out more than fifty thousand students and teachers of high schools and instructors of higher learning institutions to rural Ethiopia to organize the peasantry against the forces of the old order. Secondly, it nationalized principal national and foreign firms. Thirdly, in March 1975 it passed the Land Reform Proclamation, the most radical and popular of its measures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 –1991*(London, Athens and Addis Ababa University: James Curry, University of Ohio Press, Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), pp. 29-36.

<sup>2</sup> Gest Techane, *Neber Kifl Andi: YeEthiopia Hizb Abiyotina ena Derg* (Addis Ababa: eighth edition, 2004 E.C), p. 66

<sup>3</sup> Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987. A Transition from an Aristocratic To a Totalitarian Autocracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 86-87; Mulatu Wubeneh, "Development strategy and Growth of the Ethiopian Economy: A Comparative Analysis the Pre and Post- revolutionary period," in *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*, ed. Marina Ottawa (Praeger Publishers, One Maidson Avenue, 1990), p. 202; Negussay Ayele, " The Ethiopian Revolution: Political Aspects of the Transition from PMAC to PDRE," in *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*, ed. Marina Ottawa (Praeger Publishers, One Maidson Avenue, 1990), p. 15; Gest Techane, *Neber Kifl Andi*, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Negussay Ayele, "The Ethiopian Revolution: Political Aspects of the Transition from PMAC to PDRE", p.18; Andargachew, pp. 101-102 ; Mulatu Wubeneh, "Development strategy and Growth of the Ethiopian Economy: A Comparative Analysis the Pre and Post- revolutionary period," pp. 203-204; D.Crummey, *Land and Society In the Christian Kingdom of Ehtiopia From the Thirfeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 200), pp. 245-246.

Of all decisions made by the *Derg*, the *Edget Behibret Zemecha* or Development Through Co-operation Campaign and the March 1975 Land Reform Proclamation had a significant impact on the life of people in Burji district.

For the mission of the Development Through Co-Operation Campaign Ethiopia was divided into five *qetenas* (zones) on the bases of geographical proximity and administrative efficiency. Of these five zones, the whole Sidamo province, some parts of Bale and Arsi provinces were categorized under *qetena-amist* (zone-five). This zone was in turn, divided into *zemecha memeryas* (campaign command center) which were headquartered at the administrative centers of *awrajas* (sub-provinces).<sup>6</sup>

In accordance with this arrangement, the town of Yabello became the command center for Arero *awraja*. Arero *awraja* campaign command center embraced Arero, Burji, Dirre, Hagere Maryam, Teltele and Yabello *zemecha maikels* (campaign centers). Arero *awraja* campaign command center was commanded by Captain (later Major) Meba Tsion Ali and Dr. Tewdros Solomon. The Burji campaign center, which was part of Arero *awraja*, was coordinated by Sergeant Berhanu Debaleke and *Ato* Tadiyos. The former was a member of the police force while the latter was a teacher from Kokebe Tsbeha Secondary School in Addis Ababa.<sup>7</sup>

Although the personel as well as the materials for the campaign were allocated, the Burji campaign center did not start its work on time. The Burji campaign center officially commenced work only in June 1975. This was due to the inter-ethnic conflict that erupted between Burji and Guji in Burji district and its surroundings. As a result, the *zemachs* who were assigned first to Burji were distributed to other parts of Sidamo province.<sup>8</sup>

However, Berhanu who was not completely frustrated by the security problem in Burji district, initiated the campaign through his own personal effort. He described the situation of Burji district at the time as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Informant: Sergeant Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

After I had left for Burji from Yabello in January 1975, what I found in Soyama was burnt and ruined houses. There were only five police men and five teachers in Soyama. Except these people, there was no government body in Soyama. The residents fled to the highland parts of Burji.<sup>9</sup>

Following discussion between the coordinator and Burji and Guji representatives separately, the coordinator requested the support of campaigners from Hagere Maryam and elders of both ethnic groups from Hagere Maryam to conduct peace negotiation. A peace agreement was reached on March 18, 1975. It was after this peace concordance that twelve campaigners on loan from Hagere Maryam officially started their work in Burji district.<sup>10</sup>

In the next four months, the twelve campaigners were very busy in preparing the necessary materials and housing for the campaigners who will come to Burji district. They coordinated the people in the construction of houses for campaigners and for teaching the people and literacy campaign.<sup>11</sup>

One hundred and seventeen campaigners who were assigned to Burji district arrived on June 1, 1975 in Soyama. They were welcomed by a large crowd of people from Soyama and its environs and their compatriots at Soyama Elementary School.<sup>12</sup> Most of the campaigners who were assigned to Burji had come from Kokebe Tsebeha, Menen Secondary schools in Addis Ababa and Ras Desta Dametew Secondary School from Yergalem town. Besides these, there were four students from Addis Ababa University.<sup>13</sup>

The Burji campaign center was divided into Soyama, Burjie-Kilicho, Barguda, Chulluse, Ladishe and Soyama-Sorro sub-centers. The selection of sub-centers was on the basis of strategic locations they had for the distribution materials, communication among the *zemach* and the relevance for teaching and organizing the peasantry.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Ato Dejene Syum

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debalqe, Tarku Damete, Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo and Dejene Syum.

<sup>13</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>14</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debalqe and Aden Hassen.

Although the campaigners had enthusiasm for change and most of the people of Burji *woreda* were also eagerly looking for new changes, but the situation in Burji district was not favorable to realize this objective. At the beginning, the campaigners were engaged in restoring peace and order in Burji district. As discussed earlier, the district had fallen under a state of lawlessness since 1974. Thus, the principal duty of the campaigners was to fill the power gap left by the imperial government. The governor of Burji district lived in Awassa until the *zemacha* students restored peace in Burji district.<sup>15</sup>

Following this, the campaigners proceeded with the task of elucidating the “essence” of the Ethiopian revolution and the concept of the “Philosophy of Ethiopia *Tikidem*.” The students focused on the issue of the “backwardness” of the society. They pointed out that the exploitative and oppressive political and economic system of the previous regime was the sole factor for the backwardness of the Ethiopian people in general and the Burji people in particular. The campaigners often provided political explanation by comparing the old order with the alternatives offered by the new government. Furthermore, the campaigners taught that everybody was equal.<sup>16</sup>

The other important task the campaigners immersed themselves in was dismantling the political and economic power of landlords, *balabats* and *qoros*.<sup>17</sup> In various parts of Ethiopia, following the downfall of the emperor, northern settlers were killed and their property looted or confiscated by the local people.<sup>18</sup> In Burji, however, the landlords and the *balabats* were neither killed and nor were their property looted by the local people. On the contrary, the landlords who lived in Amaro district such as *Ato* Yasin Mohammed, *Ato* Negash Nigussie and *Ato* Assefa Eshete fled to Burji and received refuge there. This was because of three reasons. The first was that the Burji needed the *balabats*, the landlords and the northern settlers more than the latter needed them. Compared to the common people, *balabats*, the landlords and the northern settlers in Burji owned better weapons. This was badly needed to defend the people against the Guji who posed

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*; YeBurji Woreda Astedader Tshfet Bet Mezgeb Bet (YBWATM), Folder No. 12, File Number No, 177, Ref. No32/93/68; Informants: Tarku Damete, Dejene Syum and Almaz Getahun.

<sup>16</sup> Informants: Tarku Damete, Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo and Dejene Syum.

<sup>17</sup> Informants: *Dyna* Achule Hirbo, Kifle W/ Senbet and Samuel Fanje.

<sup>18</sup> Bisrat Lema, “A History Of Humbo *Woreda*, 1941-1991” (MA Thesis History Department, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p. 64. Wondu Argaw, “A History of Konso *Woreda*, 1941-1991” (MA Thesis History Department, Addis Ababa University 20110), p. 52.

a serious threat to the very existence of the Burji at that time. Secondly, most of the land lords and the *balabats* had social ties with local people. They had intermarried with the local people. Thirdly, according to Burji culture, looting and killing people under a non war circumstance was considered as anathema.<sup>19</sup>

Fig-5 Some of the *Zemach* students who engaged in development work in Burji 1975-1976.



Source: Berhanu Debalqe

Therefore, the task of disarming as well as punishing the landlords and the *balabats* was carried out by the campaigners. The landlords such as *Kegnazmach* Argaw Yemeru, *Ato* Gizaw and *balabats* such as Damete Dawe and Danche Chotta were imprisoned and their guns were confiscated by the combined actions of the peasant associations and the campaigners in 1975.<sup>20</sup>

The land proclamation of March 1975 coincided with the arrival of the *zemach* in Burji district. This decision of the *Derg* had excited the majority of Burji peasantry who had been seriously affected by land tax, unpaid labor service and other maladministrative practices under the old

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<sup>19</sup> Informants: Achule Hirbo, Kifle W/ Senbet and Samuel Fanje, *Ato* Pawlos Mamo, Malle Dhahe and Sargeant Yigezu Assegahagn.

<sup>20</sup> Informants: Debebe Damete, Tarku Damete, Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo, Samuel Fanje and Dejene Seyum.

system.<sup>21</sup> According to the Land Reform Proclamation of 1975, “All rural land was to be the collective property of the Ethiopian people.” The promulgation also stipulated that “All privately owned rural land was to be distributed to people who were willing to cultivate their holdings personally.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the promulgation made clear that land would become the property of the Ethiopian people.

The campaigners and the peasant association engaged in the realization of this proclamation in Burji. The campaigners together with the committee members of the peasant association actively participated in the distribution of land to the farmers of Burji.<sup>23</sup>

In Burji, most of the land which was ploughed by *chisegna* (tenant) reverted to the tenants. The large tracts of land of the landlords and *balabats* were distributed to landless peasants. The previous landless artisans were also given small plots of land. However, the *tinto* or *utuba* land was not included in the new land distribution program.<sup>24</sup>

The establishment of peasant associations was another important work accomplished by the campaigners. The *Derg* declared that the old *balabat* based system should be replaced by peasant associations. Though eighty *gasha* was to be one of the criteria to set up a peasant association,<sup>25</sup> based on the geographical, historical and traditional situations of Burji, the *zemach* in consultation with elders and committee members of peasant associations, thirty two peasant associations were founded in Burji district. Of these, six of them were settled by the Guji and four of them inhabited dominately by Koyra.<sup>26</sup>

The other important project to which the *zemecha* students were devoted was the literacy campaign. The *Zemach* taught basic Amharic alphabet and arithmetic to people who had previously no access to formal education. Moreover, the campaigners forced the people to stop

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<sup>21</sup> Informants: Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo, Samuel Fanje, Berhanu Debaleqe and Dejene Seyum.

<sup>22</sup> Andargachew, p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debaleqe, Getahun Chewa, Tarku Damete, Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo and Dejene Syum

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Andargachew, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debaleqe, Tariku Damete, Aden Hassen, Getahun Addo and Dejene Seyum; YBWATM, Folder 1952-1972, File No. 174 Ref. No16./12/67.

their ‘backward’ traditions like sacrifice to the spirit, *wachi*. All scarifies were banned, and individuals who previously officiated over these rituals were to be treated like other people. The campaigners were also involved in development works such as cleaning springs and offering medical services.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the positive changes the campaigners brought to the people of Burji, there were challenges which made the realization of their goals difficult. The challenges emanated either from local conditions in Burji district or from the internal situation of the campaigners themselves.

The political situation in the neighboring Hagere Maryam and Gumaiyde districts negatively affected the political situation in Burji district in 1975 and 1976. According to informants, Hagere Maryam and Gumaiyde were areas where the landlords highly challenged the land reform and other decisions of the *Derg*. Most of the *adhari* (“reactinaries”) of the two districts were involved in rebellious activities.<sup>28</sup> As a result, they killed people whom they considered as the supporters of the *Derg*. In Burji district, there were groups who secretly organized themselves and operated in similar way. In the name of Guji, the group killed people in different parts of Burji district.<sup>29</sup>

To control the situation, the campaigners arrested thirty people who were suspected of having connection with the rebels in Hagere Maryam and Gumaiyde. However, officials from Sidamo Province who heard about these arrests came to Burji in person and ordered the release of these people. The officials argued that the *zemach* had no authority to imprison people.<sup>30</sup> This reveals that there was a difference between some government officials and the campaigners with regard to accomplishing their mission. This situation became one factor for unsuccessfulness of the mission of the campaigners.

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<sup>27</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debaleqe, Tariku Damete, Getahun Addo and Dejene Seyum

<sup>28</sup> YBWATM, Folder 12, File Number , 177 Ref. No32./93/68;

<sup>29</sup> YBWATM, Folder 1958-1972 File, No.162, Ref. No 27/6/67; Informant; Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>30</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debalqe.

The second factor that made the work of the the *zemach* difficult and dominated the immediate post 1974 political situation of Burji was the outbreak of an intense conflict between Burji and Guji that I had referred to earlier. Following the demise of the government of Emperor Haile Selassie and the takeover of political power by the military junta on September 12, 1974, insecurity related to conflict between Burji and Guji reigned in Burji district. The conflict between the Burji and Guji continued up to March 1975 until a peace agreement was made between them through the mediation of the campaigners. Despite this, however, no sustainable peace was observed between the belligerents.<sup>31</sup>

The cause of the conflict was deep-rooted and was related to economic issues and tradition. As mentioned in chapter two, the conflict between the two groups was originally aimed at enslaving of one another for economic reasons. However, through time, the situation developed into the criteria for masculinity on the side of Guji. Besides this, the Guji practiced cattle raiding. In the pre-1974 period, the clash between the two was marked by intermittent raids and carried out by individuals or small groups.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, in the year between 1974 and 1976, the conflict between the Burji and Guji grew in a full-fledged war that involved hundreds of people. Especially in 1976, the massacre of twelve Burji who were returning from Gumaiyde after attending a mourning ceremony for *Ato* Argamo was a turning point in the conflict between the Guji and Burji. Following this, the Burji made a campaign against Guji. The Burji were not in a position to defeat the Guji. As a result, the conflict ended with large casualties and material destruction on the side of the Burji.<sup>33</sup>

To stop the war the *Derg* used military action against Guji. In 1976 the combined forces of the Fourth Army Division from Negele and *fetno derash* police (Rapid Deployment Police) led campaigns against the Guji.<sup>34</sup> In spite of the military measure taken by the *Derg*, sustainable

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<sup>31</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debaleqe.

<sup>32</sup> Awoke Amzaye, "The Kore of Amarro: A Historical Survey" (Senior Essay Addis Ababa University Department of History, 1985), p. 37; Tadesse Beriso, "Warfare Among the Guji of Southern Ethiopia," In *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.2, Addis Ababa, 1994, p. 313. NALA, Series No. 17.1, Province Code.6, Folder. No. 08, File No. 01. See appendix-H.

<sup>33</sup> Informants: Getahun Chewa, Ayele Hirbicha, Aden Hassen and Pawlos Mamo.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

peace was not restored in Burji district. As a result, the work of the *zemach* students was complicated. All *zemach* students left their centers and gathered in Soyama. No campaigner returned to his/her respective *zemecha* center after this.<sup>35</sup>

There was also internal division within the campaigners. It seems that the polarization among the campaigners manifested itself along ideological lines regarding the path of change the country should take. Some groups believed that the task of development should be commenced from empowering and organizing the urban dwellers. On the other hand, other groups argued that development priority should be given to rural masses.<sup>36</sup> Harka Haroye one of the *zemach* who was stationed in Burji at the time described how these two approaches played out in his station: "...after we held democratic discussion, the majority of the campaigners voted to leave the *zemecha* station and to start struggle in towns. A few campaigners, however, decided to stay in their *zemecha* station."<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, the young men, who were initially enthusiastic about change, left Burji individually or in groups. Eventually, when the formal evacuation of the *zemecha* took place by the government in 1976, the number of the campaigners in Burji was not more than fifty out of one hundred seventeen deployed at the outset of the campaign.<sup>38</sup>

Generally, the words as well as the actions of campaigners were initially greeted with enthusiasm by most people in Burji. The teachings of the *zemach* about the equality of all men resonated with the local people and many people embraced them. People in different social positions, of course, reacted differently. Those who could lose were strongly resistant while those who had most to gain supported the efforts of the *zemach*. However, the inspirational role they played at that time made the campaigners to be in the memories of many Burji people at present time.

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<sup>35</sup> Informants: Getahun Chewa, Ayele Hirbicha, Aden Hassen and Pawlos Mamo; YBWATM, Folder 1958-1972, File Number, 13 Ref. No. *YeBurji woreda Woqetaw atadafi chigrochi*. According to this account, Major Takele Wolde who was the administrator of Arero Awraja has ordered the massacre of numerous Guji and confiscation of a large number of cattle and other animals. However, according to informants, Takele was crucified by the decision of the *Derg* in 1976.

<sup>36</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debaleqe, Tarku Damete and Dejene Seyum

<sup>37</sup> Harka Haroye, *KeNairobi Eske Iyubelyu Betemengst*, (Addis Ababa: Bole printing press, 1997 E.C), pp. 65-66.

<sup>38</sup> Informants: Berhanu Debaleqe and Dejene Seyum.

## 4.2 Resettlement in Burji

According to various writers, resettlement was the most disastrous of all the economic and social transformation attempts made by the *Derg*. The implementation of the resettlement project was based on the use of coercive action, and as a result it was a dismal failure. Also it was ill planned, ill executed, and held little or no benefits for the peasant whose life it was supposed to improve.<sup>39</sup> There were, however, a few areas where resettlement was successful. One of these areas was Burji district.

At country level, there were two types of resettlement schemes organized by the Relief Rehabilitation Commission. These were Low Cost Settlement Schemes and Special Settlement Schemes. The former was characterized by the transportation and settlement of people over short distance while the latter was based on long distance transportation.<sup>40</sup> The Sororo Malka-Jawe Resettlement Project in Burji district was categorized under the first type of resettlement scheme. The Sororo Malka-Jawe resettlement scheme was established at a distance of 34 kilometers from Soyama in the north eastern part of the district.<sup>41</sup>

According to sources, the recurrence of famine in Burji *woreda* was the major factor behind the establishment of the Sororo Malka-Jawe resettlement scheme. In the period between 1974 and 1978, most parts of Burji district were hit by famine. There were three principal reasons behind the famine. The absence of peace and security in the district was the principal man-made cause of the famine in Burji. It resulted from the conflict between the Burji and Guji in the period between 1974 and 1977. The second man-made factor that induced the famine in Burji district was the Ethio-Somalia War of 1977/78. The deterioration of natural resources that resulted from demographic pressure was the main natural cause of famine in Burji *woreda*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (New Jersey: Red sea Press Inc Trenton, 1989), p. 65, 280; Alula Pankhurst and Francis Piguet, "Contextualizing Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia", in *Proceedings of the Workshop Held by the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists and the United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia*, eds. Alula Pankhurst and Francis Piguet, (Addis Ababa, July, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Adinew Abitew, "Political and Socio-Economic History of Assosa *Woreda*" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Department of History, 2011), p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> Informants: Natinael Hirbo, Samuel Barbe and Berhanu Debaleqe.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*; YBWATM, Folder 1958-1972, File No. 13.

As discussed in the previous section, in spite of the military measures taken by the *Derg*, sustainable peace was not restored in Burji district for over two years. Because of fear of retaliation, the majority of Burji refrained from moving down to the lowlands to farm their lands. Consequently, the normal process of ploughing ceased and the majority of the people in Burji were hit by famine.<sup>43</sup>

One of my informants, who was a *zemach* in 1975 and later returned to the district as governor in 1978 described the famine in Burji as follows: “Since the majority of the people seriously suffered from famine and became emaciated physically, when some of them greeted me I hardly recognized them.”<sup>44</sup>

The Ethio-Somali War of 1977 to 1978 was another factor that induced famine in Burji district. To realize the ambition of “Greater Somalia”, Somalia invaded Ethiopia in 1977. Within two months, Somalia’s forces penetrated deep into the Ethiopian territory and occupied the eastern and south eastern parts of the country.<sup>45</sup> The war in Burji district resulted in human casualties, material destruction and displacement of people.<sup>46</sup> Many people died of famine. Moreover, the absence of food aid by the government for the displaced people increased the death toll.<sup>47</sup>

The other factor behind the decision of the Burji *woreda* administration to implement settlement in the district was related to the degradation of the land that resulted from overgrazing and intensive cultivation. Since the people had settled and cultivated the highlands for a long time,

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* Informants states that due to the absence of peace in the district, the road that connected Burji with Hagere Maryam was closed by the Guji. As a result, to provide salary and for emergency work, the government used helicopters.

<sup>44</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>45</sup> Andargachew, p. 219.

<sup>46</sup> YBWATM, Folder 1952-1972, File No. 174. According to government report: on December 9, 1970 E. C, the Somalia ‘infiltrators have killed eight people and injured one person in Burji district, in Burjie-Kilicho *kebele* at a special place called Jirrer. In addition, they looted many cattle and destroyed ripe crops.”

<sup>47</sup> YBWATM, Folder No.1958-1972, File No.13, Ref. No. *YeBurji woreda Woqetaw atadafi chigrochi*. This source also states the sufferings of Burji district which resulted by the invasion of Somalia forces as follows: “Though the “reactionary Somalia” forces have attacked the whole people of Burji district, 1302 members of the peasant association including their families seriously attacked and displaced.” The same source also reveals that as a result of the Somalia invading forces, many people were displaced from their homes. Besides this, due to the shortage of the provision of food aids for the victims of the war, seventy people died in Wordiya and Gulle peasant associations in 1977.

the land had become highly eroded. The soil in the highland parts of Burjiland was not in good condition to produce sufficient yield that could support the people in Burji district.<sup>48</sup>

Hence, the famine which resulted from the above human and natural causes led to the dislocation of large number of people, destruction of family cohesion due to death of parents and displacement of children, the instability of community life, etc. Consequently, Burji *woreda* officials were strongly convinced that the resettlement of the people in Sorrow Malka-Jawe could provide a lasting solution to the hard pressed peasantry and particularly to the people whose resources have been destroyed and who have been displaced from their homes.

Once the administration was convinced of the need for resettlement in Burji, it proceeded to identify an ideal site for settling people. According to an oral informant, who was one of committee members of settlement of Burji district, prior to the selection of Sorrowo Malka-Jawe site, the Sagan lowlands were proposed by the committee as a settlement site. However, the inhospitable climate of the area, and the potentially high transport cost involved led to the abandonment of the proposal.<sup>49</sup>

The selection of Sorrowo Malka-Jawe for settlement was carried out by a Settlement Committee. The committee included the administrator of the district, *YeHizb Dirjit Guday Tsefet Bet* (Public Organization Affairs Office), the elders, agricultural experts and peasants' representatives.<sup>50</sup> One of the important qualities of Sorrowo Malka-Jawe is that it is an area richly endowed with natural resources. The area had access to water from the nearby Malka-Jawe River. The soil in the area was fertile. The area was also rich in pasture. Moreover, the land was not occupied by anybody.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to its rich resources, Sorrowo Malka-Jawe settlement center was chosen because the committee believed that the location could be used to bring peace and security among the peoples of Burji district.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> YBWATM, Folder1958-1972, File Number, 23 Ref. No. 3512.

<sup>49</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. no, File No. 62, Ref. NO. 35/71.

<sup>50</sup> Informants: Natinael Hirbo, Samuel Barbe and Berhanu Debaleqe.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Samuel Fanje and Aden Hassen.

<sup>52</sup> Informants: Samuel Barbe, Natinael Hirbo and Berhanu Debaleqe.

The most serious challenge in the establishment of the Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement project was the provision of infrastructure and clearing of the land. Sorroro Malka Jawe settlement station was situated at a distance of 34 and 47 kilometers from Soyama and Hagere Maryam respectively.<sup>53</sup> The government did not allocate budget for road construction. The construction of the road from Soyama and Hagere Maryam to Sorroro Malka-Jawe was one of the most difficult tasks for the Burji district administration. The road that links the settlement center with Soyama was entirely constructed by human labor. The road from Hagere Maryam to Sorroro Melka Jawe settlement station was built by human labor and machinery.<sup>54</sup>

The involvement of the society in the construction of the road was very impressive. Besides the people of Burji district, people from Gedeo *awraja*, Amaro, Hagere Maryam, Teltele and Yabello *woredas* were also engaged in the construction of the roads.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the Burji who lived in Boranaland, Hagere Maryam and Kenya provided financial support for buying fuel for the construction machines and the expenses for the machine operators.<sup>56</sup> This was because the machinery came on loan from the Third Livestock Development Project and the *Derg* did not have authority to control and order the project. The Third Livestock Development Project provided one bulldozer and a grader for road construction, initial soil clearing and preparation of the collective fields.<sup>57</sup>

As studies done at the national level show, the selection of farmers for various settlement schemes in Ethiopia was mostly carried out by force.<sup>58</sup> However, in Burji district, settlers were recruited voluntarily. The Burji district settlement committee in consultation with the members of peasant association recruited farmers who would settle in Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement center. As discussed above, the principal aim behind the establishment of Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement scheme was to help the poor who were the victims of famine. As a result, large family size, landlessness, inadequate land holdings and being a victim of inter ethnic-conflict or

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<sup>53</sup> NALA, Series No. 17.1, Province Code.6, Folder No. 08, File No.01.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*; Informants: Samuel Barbe, Natnael Hirbo and Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>57</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debaleqe.

<sup>58</sup> Adinew, pp. 61-63; Bisrat, p.49.

the Ethio-Somalia war were the major criterion in the selection of peasants for the resettlement. Old people were excluded from the selection process.<sup>59</sup>

The work of the establishment of Malka-Jawe resettlement program started at the end of 1979. After the construction of the roads, clearing the land for farming, and construction of houses for settlers was accomplished at the end of 1980, the first 550 farmers from different *kebeles* of Burji district were settled in Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement center.<sup>60</sup> The provision of clean water, school and clinic was carried out by World Vision Ethiopia, an international non-governmental organization. Until this time, there was no formal support from Sidamo Province for the project. It was after the establishment of the settlement scheme that the Sidamo Province Relief Rehabilitation Commission rendered support to the settlement project. Besides the above mentioned support, in subsequent years the World Vision Ethiopia also provided oxen for farming, selected seeds, farming tools and technical training for farmers.<sup>61</sup>

Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement program was not only limited to helping the farmers to become self-sufficient in food but also aimed to introduce modern agriculture production techniques. The Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement scheme had technical and vocational training centers which equipped the farmers with modern production techniques.<sup>62</sup>

The Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement scheme included cattle-breeding, poultry, bee-farming and rabbit-breeding. The main crops produced in the farm in the 1980s were grain crops (maize, wheat, sorghum etc), coffee and sugar cane, Citrus fruits, banana and tomatoes were grown in small scale throughout the 1980s, whereas grain crops, mainly maize and wheat were the dominant produce.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Informants: Samuel Barbe, Natinael Hirbo and Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>60</sup> Informants: Samuel Barbe and Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>61</sup> Informant: Berhanu Debalqe. The informant claims that even though the government did not allocate formal budget for the project, personally, the moral support of Major Teferra W/Tensay was significant. Besides this, the recurrent support of Major Meba Tsion Ali was crucial. The provision the bulldozer and grader was mainly facilitated by Meba Tsion. It is important to note that the former was the administrator of Sidamo province while the latter was the administrator of Arero sub-province.

<sup>62</sup> Informants: Shibru Happe, Dejene Seyum, Wolde Gedo, Samuel Barbe and Natinael Hirbo.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

The major problems in the resettlement center were related to health. This was because the area was highly exposed to malaria and other related diseases. Even though the Burji district administration attempted to include the local Guji pastoral society in the program, the number of people encompassed in the program was very small. As a result, the settlers continued to fear sudden attacks from the local Guji people. According to informants, however, until the Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement was disbanded at the end of 1991, there was no significant security problem in the settlement area.<sup>64</sup>

The Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement scheme which was commenced by Berhanu Debalke in 1978 continued under the general supervision of consecutive Burji district administrators until 1991. During this time the life of the settlers changed tremendously. The people became self-sufficient in food.<sup>65</sup> One of my informants described the change in the life of settlers as follows:

Many of the settlers became prosperous and their life changed dramatically. Of all changes I observed, compared to the pre-1978 period, the fertility of the Burji women increased; they gave birth to large number of children. Genuinely speaking, the Sorroro Melka-Jawe settlement station was “The Garden of Eden” which we tested in this world.<sup>66</sup>

Sorroro Melka Jawe settlement center became a model settlement center in Sidamo province and was visited by government officials, experts and farmers.<sup>67</sup> It is important to notice the song which praised by the settlers about the Sorroro Melka Jawe settlement center. *Shinak Maryam Kanak Mahbara Hada Malka-Jawe*: There [Hagre Maryam], here peasant association at the middle Malka-Jawe.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Informants: Shibru Happe, Dejene Seyum, Wolde Gedo and Natinael Hirbo. Even though the *woreda* administrators attempted to integrate the pastoral Guji in the project but only two Guji were embraced in the program.

<sup>65</sup> Informants: Shibru Happe, Dejene Seyum, Wolde Gedo, Samuel Barbe and Natinael Hirbo.

<sup>66</sup> Informant: Shibru Happe. He was one of the first nurses who was assigned in Malka-Jawe resettlement site.

<sup>67</sup> Informant: Natinael Hirbo. He was an administrator of Burji in 1983. He was also one of the committee members of the Malka-Jawe resettlement project. He argues the project was one the most effective resettlement program in Sidamo Province.

<sup>68</sup> Informant: Shibru Happe.

Several factors affect the success of resettlement projects in general. Lack of meticulous study and planning, the selection criteria of the settlement area and the availability of essential resources for settlers are factors that determine the success or failure of resettlement programmes.<sup>69</sup>

The success of the Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement program was the outcome of a combination of several factors. The first was the voluntarily based selection criteria of settlers. In Burji, all settlers of Malka-Jawe were recruited without force by the state. The second important factor that contributed for the success of the project was the selection of the settlement site. As mentioned above, Sorroro Malka- Jawe resettlement site was endowed with fertile soil, had access to potentially irrigable river (Malka-Jawe) and good pasture. Thirdly, the settlers received support from different institutions. Especially, they received donation from non-governmental organizations in the form of oxen, farm tools and provision of essential social services such as health care, education, food aid and until the settlers became self-sufficient. Experts also provided technical support which contributed for the success of the project.

Fourthly, the commitment, knowledge and leadership qualities of officials and experts at the *awraja* and *woreda* levels were important factors behind the success of the settlement project. For example, Sileshi Alemu, the main coordinator of the project, was trained in community engagement by the Swedish International Development Agency. Major MebaTSION (Jatani) Ali, who was the administrator of Arero *Awraja*, played a great role in facilitating the provision of support from the Third Livestock Project. Moreover, Beranu Debalqe, Samuel Barbe and Ayele Geldo devoted their time and labor for the success of the project. Lastly, as different scholars stated, the Burji are hard working agriculturalist in southern Ethiopia. This trait of the Burji may also have contributed for the effectiveness of the project.<sup>70</sup>

Following the overthrow the *Derg* in 1991 and the change of government the life of the settlers at Sorroro Malka-Jawe became insecure. Until the Transitional Government was set up, all settlers

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<sup>69</sup> Tadesse Berisso, “Modernist Dream and Human Suffering: Villigization among the Guji Oromo,” In *Remapping Ethiopia Socialism and after*, eds. Wendy James et al.,(Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p. 117.

<sup>70</sup> Informants: Shibru Happe, Dejene Syum, Wolde Gedo, Samuel Barbe and Natinael Hirbo.

evacuated Sorroro Melka-Jawe settlement site and the settlement was looted by the Guji.<sup>71</sup> This was mainly because of the long last traditional enmity between the Burji and Guji which erupted in such turmoil period.

### 4.3. Villagization in Burji

Villagization (in Amharic *mender misreta*) was first introduced in Ethiopia in Bale in 1979. Later, in 1985, villagization was also introduced to Hararge.<sup>72</sup> In Burji, the implementation of villagization program started in 1987/88. According to the program, the rural population who settled in highland villages of Burji were moved down to the lowlands which were favorable for the establishment of villages.<sup>73</sup>

As in various parts of Ethiopia, to commence the villagization program, the government excuated arranging favorable areas in the districts for the establishment of villages. Thus, the government assigned a group of individuals to select sites according to the criteria set by experts of the respective *awrajas*. To this end, a guideline that contained criteria of site selection were prepared and distributed to every *woreda* where villages were going to be established.<sup>74</sup> The guideline gave primary emphasis to the geographical features and environmental conditions of the potential sites. It emphasized that the settlement sites should be closer to water sources, have fertile soil and should have enough pastureland within the surrounding area.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, the guideline stipulated that the selection of sites should also take into account future changes and developments. In this regard, population growth, construction of houses with toilets and kitchens, government offices and public institutions were criteria which should be applied in the guideline.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia*, p. 250.

<sup>73</sup> Informants: Natinael Hirbo, Wolde Gedo, and Shibr Happe.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Even though the majority of the people in Burji district accepted the villagization program, there were some who resisted the program. According to informants, people resisted villagization for three reasons. First, the program dislocated people from their original home places to which they had deep-rooted cultural and sentimental attachments. The second was economic reason. When families moved into the new dwellings, they were not able to take permanent plants such as *enset*, coffee, *gesho* and other fruit trees with them. It was impossible and could not use them because of distance. The third reason was security. The Burji expected sporadic attack by their traditional enemy-the Guji. When the Burji settled in the lowlands, they had no natural defense to safeguard them from sudden attacks.<sup>77</sup>

The other problem regarding villagization program in Burji district was settlement land for villagers. In Burji each *olcho* has its own definite territory. The *kebeles* or peasant associations were also established in line with former territories of *olchos*. However, all the *kebeles* had no equal landforms which were suitable for village settlement.<sup>78</sup>

As a result, to tackle the challenges, Burji *warada* officials used two alternatives. The first is using peaceful means. The old people did not leave the original residence. The second option was applying force.<sup>79</sup>

Studies show that villagization program in different parts of Ethiopia was not effective. According to these sources, villagization programs failed due to the failure of the government to provide financial resources and skilled man power to fulfill its promises in the villages.<sup>80</sup> In Burji district, the villagization schemes were carried out based on a detailed study. The program took place up to 1990. All *kebeles* in Burji district were not included in villagization program. In the first round only ten *kebeles* were embodied by the project. For instance, *kebeles* such as Daldho, Ladiشة, Yabano and Halame were excluded from villagization program.<sup>81</sup> This was because the

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<sup>77</sup> Informants: Bange Woche, Ato Maryie Mekurya and Samuel Barbe

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Informants: Natinael Hirbo, Wolde Gedo and Shibr Happe.

<sup>80</sup> Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, P.209.

<sup>81</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 4, File No. 79, Reference No. 21/3/82: according to this account, in Borana Administrative Region, two crop-producing *awrajas* (Hagere Maryam and Burji) have been selected for additional villagization program. The government planned to settle 6512 head of households in selective 8 *kebeles* in Hagra

nearby geographical features and environmental conditions were not favorable for villagization scheme. There was no plain land in the nearby area which could be used for villagization. The first *kebeles* that were encompassed in the program were Tisho, HareWonji, Mure, Ottomalo, Wordiya-Billa and Wordiya-Gocha. On the other hand, except Soyama-Sorro, the remaining five *kebeles* inhabited by the Guji were not included in the villagization schemes. This was because the Guji practiced pastoralism and therefore could not be settled in one place.<sup>82</sup>

In the villagization program, the people who lived scattered in the highlands were brought together in the plain areas where large compact village construction was possible. In Burji, except Gamiyo *kebele*, the remaining *kebeles* established villages in their respective territories. Burji *woreda* officials did not force the peasants to move long distance from their original villages.<sup>83</sup>

The villagization program gave better opportunity to farm extensive lands for Burji agriculturalists. As one informant remarked:

Before Villagization program, the Burji peasants ploughed relatively small tracts of land. As the agricultural yield was not adequate even for one family, Burji was one of the districts which was hit by famine. To solve problem of the famine, the *woreda* officials bought maize from Shashemene (a town found 250 kilometers south of Addis Ababa) and Ajie (a district found west of Shashemene some 50 kilometers). However, after the introduction of villagization program, the peasants ploughed extensive lands. Consequently, the peasants yielded surplus production.<sup>84</sup>

This reveals that villagization schemes indirectly enhanced agricultural production. This was mainly because of two reasons. The first was that the villagization program gave the peasants access to farm virgin land. The second was that since the new villages were closer to the farmlands, it decreased the wastages of time that resulted from long travel from the farms to

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Maryam sub-province and 5 *kebeles* in Burji sub-province; Informants: Bange Hayido, Mussa Jillo and Samuel Barbe.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Informant: Natinael Hirbo.

home areas. Moreover, the farmers closely supervised their farms from destruction by wild animals.<sup>85</sup>

In Burji, the villagization scheme was successful. This was because the period after the establishment of villages, in different parts of Burji was marked by the alteration of the life peasants. One of my informants claims that as Berhanu Debaleke was praised for the establishment and successfulness of Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement scheme, Ayele Geldo the principal architect of Burji district villagization schemes was also credited for fruitfulness of villagization in Burji. It was after villagization program that the Burji became self-sufficient in food.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the selection of Burji district as *Tirf Amrach Woreda* or surplus producing district in Borana Administrative Region in 1990 is evidence which indicates the effectiveness of villagization in Burji district.<sup>87</sup>

At country level, as of March 1990, numerous peasants were very busy in dismantling their new villages and returning to their original village sites.<sup>88</sup> In the case of Burji, however, no single villager dismantled his house. The villagers have continued to occupy the same villages until the present time. The Burji peasants never moved back to their former places of residence.

#### **4.4. Service Cooperatives**

One of the organizations set up by the *Derg* to increase agricultural production were service cooperatives. According to Proclamation No. 71 of 1975, service cooperatives were to be formed by no less than three and by no more than ten peasant associations. Some of the objectives of service cooperatives were the provision of improved agricultural inputs, marketing service, renting out tractors and other farm machinery, supplying consumer goods, and storage and

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<sup>85</sup> Informants: Wolde Gedo, Natinael Hirbo and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>86</sup> Informant: Mussa Jillo.

<sup>87</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 13, File No. 44; Informants: Wolde Gedo, Natinael Hirbo, Ayele Hirbicha and Getahun Chewa.

<sup>88</sup> Tadesse Berisso, "Modernist Dream and Human Suffering: Villigization among the Guji Oromo", P.118; Crumme, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, p. 251; Alula Pankhurst and Francis Piguet, "Contextualizing Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia", p. 11.

saving services.<sup>89</sup> Overall, they aimed at protecting the peasants from exploitation by private traders by giving these different services easily and at lower cost.

In line with this, in Burji district, five service cooperatives were established by peasant associations. These were Chulluse, Ellale-Sego, Shulle, Soyama and Soyama-Sorro. The peasant service cooperatives were established in Burji district by combining four to seven peasant associations. In other words, twenty six peasant associations in Burji district established five service cooperatives.<sup>90</sup>

According to the 1990 Burji *woreda* annual report, the cooperatives in the district had a capital of Eth. \$ 148,885.64. The peasant cooperatives of Burji district had 2912 members.<sup>91</sup> Alongside the income they obtained from the business they made, the annual membership contribution was another source of income for the service cooperatives. The members of the cooperatives contributed Eth. \$ 5 to 15 annually based on their income.<sup>92</sup>

During times of food shortage, the cooperatives in Burji bought wheat, maize and *enset* from Shashemene, Ajje and Hagre Maryam areas and supplied this to peasants. On the other hand, when surplus yield was harvested, the cooperatives bought *teff*, onion, wheat and barley from the peasants at fixed price and sold them to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation. Especially in the 1980s, Burji district peasant cooperatives were the main suppliers of *teff* from Arero *awraja* to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation.<sup>93</sup>

The other important service provided by cooperatives was the selling of household consumer goods to their members such as salt and sugar. Besides these, peasant cooperatives, provided household commodities and different supplies like bed sheets, soap, matches, dry cell batteries, stationary materials, and distributed to their members at reasonable prices in their respective shops.<sup>94</sup> The shops of the service cooperatives were well organized and administered by salaried

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<sup>89</sup> Proclamation No. 71 of 1975, PP 108-109; NALA, Province Code, 6, Folder No.20, File No. 09.

<sup>90</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 15, File No. no, Ref. No.11761/44.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Informants: Aden Hassen and Samuel Fanje.

<sup>93</sup> Informants: Aden Hassen, Natinael Hirbo and Samuel Fanje.

<sup>94</sup> Informant: Samuel Fanje.

workers from members of the cooperatives. As a result, they were efficient in providing good service to their members and they were profitable.<sup>95</sup>

According to one source, the peasant cooperatives in Burji run profitable business. For instance, in 1987, The All Ethiopian Peasant Association of Burji district requested to buy a small car that would be used for development and business purposes of the service cooperatives.<sup>96</sup> This suggests that the service cooperative was run in good condition.

However, as sources indicate in the last years of the *Derg*, most of the peasant cooperatives in Burji hardly made profit and lost their reputation. Some of them failed even to open their shops on their fixed working days. They failed to deliver all the necessary commodities and satisfy their members as expected. The amount and varieties of commodities, which were available in the shops of these associations diminished and apparently prices also increased.<sup>97</sup> Finally, customers lost confidence in their associations and began to return to buying goods from private shops in town. The government order for peasants to sell their products through the quota system at fixed price exacerbated the problem. Furthermore, the intensification of corruption in these institutions played pivotal role for their failure of the peasant cooperatives.<sup>98</sup>

#### **4.5 Administrative, Social and Infrastructural Changes in Burji**

With the imperial government's demise and the assumption of power by the *Derg*, in Burji district new administrative and social changes were observed in the period between 1974 and 1991. The meaningful involvement of the Burji local elites in Burji district administrative sphere was one of the remarkable changes that was witnessed during the *Derg* period. Burji district experienced better peace and stability during the period of the *Derg* than the imperial period. The outmigration of the Burji towards Kenya caused by new factors was an important social

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<sup>95</sup> Informants: Aden Hassen and Samuel Fanje.

<sup>96</sup> NALA, Series No. 17.1, Province Code, 6, Folder. No.11, File No. 04. See appendix-J.

<sup>97</sup> Informants: Aden Hassen, Natinael Hirbo and Samuel Fanje.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

phenomenon in the period in the district. Moreover, the *Derg's* development policy showed better achievements in the areas of education, health and road construction.<sup>99</sup>

The administrative and political system of the *Derg* government in Burji district emphasized the inclusion of early educated elites and undermining the political role of the traditional leaders.<sup>100</sup> As discussed in chapter three, since the establishment of Burji district in 1965, almost all of the district governors and secretaries were appointed from the center. However, during the *Derg* period, for the first time, educated Burji took part in the administration of Burji district. Eleven individuals administered Burji *woreda* in the period between 1975 and 1991. Of these, five of them were natives of Burji district. These were *Ato* Tulla Oshe, *Ato* Debebe Hirbaye, *Ato* Ayele Geldo, *Ato* Hido Hirbo and *Ato* Natnael Hirbo. Besides these, all *kebele* chairmen were people who were born and grew up in Burji district.<sup>101</sup>

It appears that the involvement of the Burji elites in the leadership of the district was the result of the specific governance strategy adopted by the *Derg* in administrating areas where ethnic tensions and crises recurrently happened. According to a letter written by Brigadier General Desta Gemedo, the governor of Sidamo Province, to the Ministry of Interior in 1968 E C, all the proposed *woreda* governors of Arero *awraja* were selected on the basis of their local knowledge and their ethnic background. Especially, in the early years of the *Derg* administration, local knowledge and the issue of ethnicity for *woreda* administrators were taken as one of the solutions for addressing violent ethnic conflicts that occurred in Arero *awraja*.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the appointment of Tulla Oshe and Debebe Hirbaye and later Gemedo Woticha as the governors of Burji *woreda* was mainly related to this specific administrative strategy of the *Derg*.

As informants underscore, this policy of the *Derg* in the years between 1975 and 1978, did not bring significant change in the relation between the Burji and Guji. This was mainly because of lack of commitment on the side Burji district officials. The participation of the Burji elites in the administration of Burji *woreda* rather created new tensions among the educated elites of the

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<sup>99</sup> Informants: Ayele Hirbicha, Aden Hassen, Natinael Hirbo, Samuel Fanje and Tarku Damete

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> A chart which shows the governors of Burji *woreda* since 1965.

<sup>102</sup> NALA, Province Code.6, Folder No. 04 File No. 02. See appendix- F and G.

Burji. As a result, polarization was created among the administrative officials of Burji district. The division was on the basis of *kebele* identity and struggling for political positions among the elites of the district. This situation of Burji necessitated the involvement of other people who came from outside Burji district for leadership. For instance, *Hamesa Aleqa* Berhanu Debalqe who was the coordinator of Zemecha in Burji district between 1975 and 1976 was appointed as the administrator of the district by Sidamo province in 1978. The coming of this person has brought relative peace and stability in Burji district.<sup>103</sup>

In the period between 1981 and 1989, the people of Burji district better benefited from the involvement of local elites in the administrative system of the district. The Burji district administrators such as Hido Hirbo and Ayele Geldo brought better changes than the previous administrators. Especially, during the period when Ayele served as the administrator of the district, people claim that Burji *woreda* witnessed better changes in the administrative and economic spheres. Administratively, during this time, the ethnic conflict between the Burji and Guji declined. This was because of two main reasons. Firstly, the provision of firearms to peasant associations by the government brought balance of power between the Burji and Guji. Secondly, during this time criminals who committed homicide and cattle raiding were caught and decision was made immediately. Economically, the Sorrow Malka-Jawe settlement program was further consolidated. The new villagization program that started in 1987/88 brought better economic change to the people.<sup>104</sup>

Following the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) and the ratification of the new constitution in 1987, a new administrative structure was set up across the country. Under this structure, Ethiopia was divided into twenty four administrative regions (*astedader akebab*) and five autonomous regions (*rasgez*).<sup>105</sup> In this arrangement, the former Sidamo province was divided into Sidamo and Borana Administrative regions. Borana Administrative Region had eight *awrajas* under it. These were Arero, Burji, Dire, Dolo-Odo,

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<sup>103</sup> Informants: Kashu Warre, Mussa Jillo and Berhanu Debalqe.

<sup>104</sup> Informants: Ayele Hirbicha, Tarku Damete and Dejene Seyum.

<sup>105</sup> Andargachew, p. 280; Bereket Habte, " Empire and Constitutional engineering: The PDRE in Historical Perspective", in *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*, ed. Marina Ottawo ( Praeger Publishers, One Maidson Avenue, 1990), p. 126; Negussay Ayele, " The Ethiopian Revolution: Political Aspects of the Transition from PMAC to PDRE", p. 26.

Hagere Maryam, Liban, Moyale and Teltele-Yabello *awrajas*.<sup>106</sup> As a result of this arrangement, Burji *woreda* administration which was set up in 1965 came to an end and instead Burji acquired the status of an *awraja* in 1988.

Under the new administrative system, *Ato* Girma Bekele, *Ato* Derbe Kasske and *Ato* Azage Asene led Burji as administrator, vice-administrator and first-vice administrator of Burji *awraja* until the demise of the PDRE government, in May 1991<sup>107</sup>

The other political benefit that the Burji obtained following the introduction of the PDRE constitution was the representation of the Burji in the National Council (*Beherawi Shengo*). In the competition for the membership of the National Council, *Ato* Samuel Fanje won the contest in the electoral sub-province of Burji-Teltele by defeating *Ato* Hido Mado and *Ato* Jatani Unga.<sup>108</sup> This was the first representation of the Burji in the national legislature of Ethiopia.

The *Derg* administration in Burji was characterized by a rapid promotion and demotion of administrators. As various sources indicate, most of administrators of Burji district appointed by the military government stayed in office for less than a year. Berhanu Debalke, Ayele Geldo and Girma Bekele were the only administrators who stayed in position for more than two years.<sup>109</sup> This implies that the administration in Burji district was unstable during the period under discussion.

The other important feature of the *Derg* rule in Burji was the problem of maladministration and incompetence of local officials. The aggressive and coercive measures taken by cadres at *kebele* and *woreda* levels for minor civil and criminal issues was one the characteristics of *Derg* officials of Burji *woreda* in the period 1975 to 1991.<sup>110</sup> The hierarchical power structure of the government in most cases did not consider the right and freedom of the people.<sup>111</sup> In Burji, there were twenty six to thirty two *kebeles*. Each *kebele* was led by committee. Most of the *kebele*

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<sup>106</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no, Ref. No.11761/44. See Appendix-K.

<sup>107</sup> A chart which shows the governors of Burji *woreda* since 1965.

<sup>108</sup> Informant: Samuel Fanje: Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Informants: Malle Dhahe, Getahun Chewa, and Yosef Tasew; the Chart...

<sup>110</sup> Informants: Malle Dhahe, Getahun Chewa, and Yosef Tasew; Andargachew, pp. 261-262.

<sup>111</sup> Andargachew, p. 281.

chairmen as well as other government agents at *woreda* level gave more emphasis to the party discipline than to the needs of the people. The government agents and the local cadres worked together for the realization of the socialist production system.<sup>112</sup> This system of governance of the *Derg* resulted in the failure to win the trust of the common people in Burji district.

The people's worst memory about the *Derg* period was the military conscription that was carried out by the state. Initially, the conscription into army was voluntarily. However, as the fighting in northern Ethiopia got worse, voluntarily conscription dwindled and was replaced by a forceful one. Consequently, during the mid to late eighties, many young men were recruited coercively into the National Military Service, and went to fight in northern Ethiopia.<sup>113</sup>

In Burji, the *kebeles* were forced to provide the young men according to the quota imposed by the government. For instance, in 1990 Burji *awraja* contributed 163 young men to the National Military Service. In addition to this, the people in Burji *awraja* contributed grain and cattle for rations and Eth. \$ 20, 027.<sup>114</sup>

One of the ways by which people in Burji reacted especially to continuous army conscription and the maladministration of Burji *woreda* was outmigration, especially to Kenya.<sup>115</sup> As one government report shows:

Due to the natural calamity caused on the highlands, exceeding the previous years, in January 1978, hundred people out-migrated. Moreover, sixty eight young men who pointed out the maladministration of *Ato Debebe Hirbaye*, (Burji *woreda* administrator), fear of the retaliation that would be taken, out-migrated to Kenya.<sup>116</sup>

The above quotation indicates that the migration that has started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century intensified during the *Derg* period because of the old problems such as maladministration and new ones such as famine and conscription into the army.

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<sup>112</sup> Informants: Samuel Fanje and Pawlos Mamo: According to various sources the number of *kebeles* varies between 26 and 32.

<sup>113</sup> Informants: Samuel Fanje, Pawlos Mamo, Wolde Gedo and Samuel Tasew.

<sup>114</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no. Ref. No.11761/44.

<sup>115</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 14. Reference No; YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No.

13: Informants: Mohammed Wolle and Senbeto Bonaya.

<sup>116</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 13.

Other sources also reveal that conscription into the National Army induced the out-migration of young men of the Burji to Kenya. Archival sources strengthen this reality:

**በወረዳው የ1978 ዓ.ም. ብሄራዊ ውትድርናን ምክንያት በማድረግ ከሌሞ፣ ዳልኦ፣ ገምቶ፣ ሴጎና ኪሊቾ ቀበሌያት አያሌ ወጣቶች በመኮብለል ላይ ይገኛሉ። ለምሳሌ በ17/5/78 ዓ.ም. በተደረገው ሪፖርት ከገሚዮ ቀበሌ ገበሬ ማሕበር ሊቀመንበሩና ሌሎች 17 ወጣቶች ወደ ኬንያ ኮብልለዋል፤ ከዚህም በተጨማሪ ከዳልኦ ቀበሌ ሁለት አመራር አባላት ኮብልለዋል።<sup>117</sup>**

As a result of 1985/86 National Army Conscription, numerous young men in Burji district from Lemo, Daldho, Gemeyo, Segoo and Burjie-Kilicho *kebeles* have been migrating. For instance, according to the report on January 25, 1986, seventeen young men including the chairman of Gemeyo *kebele* out-migrated to Kenya. In addition to this, two committee members of Daldho *kebele* out-migrated.

The above quotation explains how events that happened at the national level affected the local situation in Burji.

Migration during the *Derg* period differed from the migration of the Burji during the imperial times on several grounds. Firstly, during the imperial period, places such as the Boranaland, Hagere Maryam, Gedeo and Kenya were destinations of the Burji emigrants, while during the military government period, Kenya became the sole destination for the outflow of the Burji. This was because the conditions which pushed the Burji from their homeland were also common in the other parts of Ethiopia where the Burji previously migrated to. Secondly, while people of different age groups migrated in the pre-1974 period, in the post 1974 period the young men were predominant emigrants.<sup>118</sup> Thirdly, compared to the pre-1974 period the number of emigrants in the post-1974 period was higher. According to the source that referred the emigration report, during the *Derg* period, up to 210 Burji fled each month to Kenya. “During the 17 years of the *Derg* regime, in each day seven Burji were migrating by crossing the Ethiopian boarder”.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> YBWATM, Folder No.. 1958-1980, File No.14.

<sup>118</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 13, File No, no, Ref. No.16/2/70; Informants: Kashu Warre and Mussa Jillo, Boro Ake, Simon Lolo, Salle Chotta, Getahun Ado.

<sup>119</sup> A report of *Ye smintu Olchowochi Metedaderiya Denbe*. The document is in the possession of *Ato* Kashu Warre.

Eventhough the credibility of this source come under question mark, the important point is the number of emigrants during this period was relatively high.

In most cases, the emigrants entered Kenya by using the Konso-Teltele-El Dima route travelling on foot. Some others used the Awassa-Moyale international highway and traveled by cars. They arrived in Kenya by saying that they were visiting their relatives in Yabello, Mega and Moyale.<sup>120</sup>

The out-migration of large group of people in the period under discussion had clear impact on the life of the people in Burjiland. Depopulation was the principal impact of the out-migration in Burji district. Especially, in southern Burji district, *kebeles* like Burjie-Kilicho and Gamiyo were seriously affected by depopulation. The impact was especially severe because most of the migrants were young men.<sup>121</sup> One of my informants, Tukke Hirbo, described the impacts of this migration as follows:

During the Derg period, the majority of the young men of the Burji fled to Kenya using different means. As a result of this, old men in Burjie-Kilicho remained without caretakers and mourners. In addition, large tracts of land lay fallow. Due to shortage of man power, during mourning ceremony, in some cases people from other *kebeles* had to come to provide help.<sup>122</sup>

The expansion of educational institutions and services in the *woreda* remained insignificant particularly before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. According to archival materials, in the history of the *woreda*, the construction of educational institution only began in 1951. In this year, one primary school was established in Gambo. The arrival of the Sudan Interior Mission in 1950 was said to have pioneered the establishment of the first modern school in Burji district after a year. The SIM opened the first modern school in the locality called Gambo in the southern part of

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<sup>120</sup> YBWATM, Folder No. 1958-1980, File No. 14. Reference No; Informants: Mohammed Wolle and Senbeto Bonaya.

<sup>121</sup> Informants: Mohammed Wolle, Senbeto Bonaya, Duba Garo and Wayo Shanko.

<sup>122</sup> Informant: Tukke Hirbo.

Burji. It rendered modern education from grade 1-4 only.<sup>123</sup> In 1970, the first government school was opened in Soyama town.<sup>124</sup>

Informants underscore that one of the areas of development for which the military government could be praised was in the expansion of education. In this period, the *Derg* government was significantly successful in reducing illiteracy among the peasantry and the town dwellers by expanding basic education for adults. Moreover, the military government worked vigorously in the expansion of formal education institutions.<sup>125</sup>

As a result, in the period between 1974 and 1991, there was a considerable expansion of schools and increase in number of students. According to a 1990 government report, the total number of schools in the district was fourteen. One additional school was expected to be opened in 1991. The report states that there were fifty seven class rooms in the district. In the same year, the total number of students attending their education in thirteen schools was one thousand five hundred seventeen. There were also sixty nine teachers in the district.<sup>126</sup>

During this time, the major problem of education was the absence of a secondary school in the district. Since there was no secondary school in the district, students who wanted to pursue their secondary education had to go to Gidole (the capital of Gardulla *Awraja*), Yabello and Arbaminch which are found at distance of 149, 83 and 175 kilometers respectively away from Burji.<sup>127</sup> Besides the long distance, the absence of reliable transportation system was one of the serious problems students from Burji who sought to pursue the secondary school education faced. As a result, the shortage of educated man power was one of Burj's major problems in the immediate post-1991 period.<sup>128</sup>

As far as development of health institutions in the *woreda* are concerned, there was relatively better improvement and expansion after the 1974 revolution than during the imperial

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<sup>123</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no, Ref. No.11761/44.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Informants: Ayele Hirbicha, Samuel Tasew, Yosef Tasew and Mariye Mekuriya.

<sup>126</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no Ref. No.11761/44; NALA, Series No. 17.1, Province Code, 6, Folder No.06, File, 02.

<sup>127</sup> Informants: Ayele Hirbicha, Mariyie Mekuriya and Wolde Gedo.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

government. It was only during the military government that additional health clinics were established in the town as well as in the rural areas of the *woreda*.<sup>129</sup> The newly established health centers were also not proportional to the number and distribution of the population. During the imperial period, a single health center in Gambo was established by the SIM.<sup>130</sup> The relative development of health centers was also associated with the 1970s and 1980s resettlement and villagization programs. In Burji district, there were three clinics in the period between 1974 and 1991. There were also only seven health assistants and one nurse in the district who delivered health services to the people.<sup>131</sup>

As it was the case in the other sectors, the remarkable expansion of transportation services was a post-revolution development. It was only during the *Derg* period that roads were significantly built. Only limited works in road were done by the imperial period after the 1941 liberation.<sup>132</sup> This is supported by Harka Haroye one of the *Zemach* students who, campaigned in Burji, describes that the infrastructure development in Burji district was very little in 1975.<sup>133</sup>

Throughout the *Darg* regime, transportation using vehicles was possible only during the dry season. The roads were neither asphalted nor graveled.<sup>134</sup>

There were four main dry weather roads spreading out in four main directions from Burji *woreda*. The first and the most important road that connected the *worada* with Addis Ababa through Hagere Maryam was used by small cars like land rovers and Toyota land cruisers frequently. It was a fifty-seven kilometer long road.<sup>135</sup> The second route which connected the *woreda* with the Yabello town had a distance of eighty seven kilometers. This road was built by the Third Livestock Development Project in 1980. The road was constructed by human labor and

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<sup>129</sup> Informants: Shibru Hape, Dejene Seyum and Shano Wata.

<sup>130</sup> YBWATM, Folder No 15, File No, no, Ref. No.11761/44; NALA, A Series No. 17.1, Province Code, 6, Folder No.06, File No, 02.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>132</sup> NALA, Series No 17.1, Province Code, 6, Folder No.1 File Number 71: See appendix-H: A letter written from Sidamo Province requesting the necessity of the construction of road in Burji district. The letter was written on 10/27/71 E.C.

<sup>133</sup> Harka Haroye, p. 67. Harka describes that in 1975 there was hardly availability of electricity, telecommunication, clean water, postal and medical services in Soyama town.

<sup>134</sup> NALA, Series No. 17.1, Province Code.6, Folder No. 08, File No.01. See appendix-I.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*; Informant: Ayele Hirbicha.

machinery.<sup>136</sup> The third road line which goes from Soyama and Baqawele (the center of Konso district) was predominantly frequented by the local traders using mainly donkeys and occasionally small government cars. The road was constructed by Mekane Yesus Church in 1983. It was a handmade road.<sup>137</sup>

The other two important roads were the road that goes from Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement station to Hagre Maryam and from Soyama to Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement station. As discussed earlier, the construction of these two roads was entirely related with the establishment of Sorroro Malka-Jawe settlement station.<sup>138</sup> The construction of these roads has a long lasting effect in promoting the economy of the district and changing the life of the people of Burji district.

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* Informants: Berhanu Debalqe, Kashu Warre and Natinael Hirbo.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*; Informants: Kame'e Otte and Siba Golja.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*; Informants : Samuel Barbe , Natinael Hirbo and Berhanu Debalqe

## CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to reconstruct the history of Burji *woreda* from 1941 to 1991. I tried to examine the impacts of decisions, measures, policies and reforms that were formulated at national level on the local people in Burji *woreda*. Although the thesis mainly focused on the description and analysis of the developments in the period under discussion, the study also shed some light on the period before 1941.

Burji was incorporated to Menelik's empire in 1894/95. After this, the Burji came under the influence of the newly introduced system of imperial administration. The traditional administration institution of Burji was replaced by imperial administration. As a result of this change, the traditional rulers of Burji lost their positions and took the position of intermediaries between the local people and the Ethiopian imperial state. The *gabbar-nefetegna* system and land measurement were two socio-economic events that shaped the relation between the local people and government administrators of the time. These two developments resulted in land alienation and development of tenancy in Burji.

During the Italian occupation period, the Burji experienced some major socio-economic and political changes. The Italians abolished the slave trade and the practice of unpaid-labor. They also encouraged the restoration of the traditional Burji administration system. Although previous research on Burji has argued that all Burji were supporters of the Italians, I showed that Burji response to the occupation was rather mixed and involved collaboration as well as resistance.

During the period between 1941 and 1974, significant changes occurred in the administrative, social and economic spheres in Burji district. Administratively, Burji became first as *mikitil woreda* (sub-district) and later a *woreda* (district). The new administrative structure neglected from using local elites in higher administrative positions in the district.

As the relationship between the northern settlers and the local people intensified, plough-oxen agriculture and the *teff* production became firmly rooted in Burji. On the other hand, cattle trade and cloth were economic activities that the Burji were engaged in actively in the period 1941 to

1974. However, both economic activities brought little fundamental change in the life of the people.

The most significant social changes that the district witnessed in the period were out-migration and the introduction and spread of new religions. Due to the ever increasing taxation, the hostility between the Burji and the Guji, the working culture and the availability of arable land many Burji flocked to different parts of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The expansion of Islam and the introduction of Protestantism were other social changes the people of the district experienced during this time.

The thesis showed that the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie and subsequent assumption of power by the *Derg* regime in 1974 was received by the majority of the people of the *woreda* with enthusiasm. I also showed that the policy measures and strategies which were implemented by the military government tremendously changed the life of the Burji. The land reform of 1975 liberated the Burji from socio-political oppression and economic exploitation by the feudal system. The administrative reforms of the *Derg* resulted in the inclusion of the native educated elites in administration for the first time. This measure of the military regime also led to the decline in conflict between the Burji and Guji.

The resettlement and villagization programs of the *Derg* also improved the life of the people in Burji *woreda*. Consequently, the majority of the people who were involved in the program became self-sufficient in food. Social services and infrastructural development in Burji relatively expanded under the military government. The construction of modern education and health services which commenced in the 1950s by the Protestant missionaries witnessed better expansion during the *Derg* period. The construction of roads in four different directions was one of the biggest successes of the *Derg* regime in Burji.

However, maladministration and especially forced recruitment of the youth for national military service were opposed by the people of the district. Consequently, these measures of the state became the major factor for the out-migration of the Burji to Kenya. They also contributed to the alienation of many Burji from the *Derg*.

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A chart which shows the governors of Burji *woreda* since 1965.

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## List of Informants

NO	Name of the informant	Sex	Age	Place and date of interview	Remarks
1	Abdulahi Mohommed (Sheik)	M	64	Soyama 12/02/13	A famous Quran instructor. Knows much about the spread of Islam in the <i>woreda</i> .
2	AbebeArgamo (Ato)	M	44	Soyama 19/02/13	He is a cultural expert in Burji <i>woreda</i> and published one monograph on the culture of the people.
3	Achule Hirbo ( <i>Dyna</i> )	M	83	Chulluse 20/02/13	He had been <i>qoro</i> during the imperial period. He is a remarkable informant on the general history of the region particularly on the administrative and social history of the <i>woreda</i> .
4	Aden Hassen (Sheik)	M	67	Wordiya 21/01/13	He was the first chairperson of All Ethiopian Peasant Association in Burji. Later he became one of the executive committee members of All Ethiopian Peasant Association of the Sidamo Province. He knows much about the historical development that Burji district experienced in the period between 1974 and 1991.
5	Aden Osshe ( <i>Woma</i> )	M	60	Burjie-Killichu 26/02/13	He used to a <i>woma</i> of Burji and has good knowledge about the appointment ceremony and ritual practices of <i>womisso</i> .
6	Admasie Zegeye ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	77	Gumaiyde October, 2012	Has a good knowledge about the patriotic resistance movement in the region.
7	Almaz Getahun ( <i>Wizero</i> )	F	45	Hagre Maryam 02/03/13	Grown in Burji <i>woreda</i> . She has good memory about the security problem of Burji 1976 to 1978.
8	Argamo Shato ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	57	Soyama 15/02/13	He is one of the early students educated in Gambo elementary school. He has good knowledge about the development contribution of Kale Hiwot Church in Burji.
9	Ayele Hirbicha ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	53	Soyama 22/02/13	A teacher in Burji since 1985. His knowledge about the development in the <i>Derg</i> time is sound.
10	Bange Hayido ( <i>Wonglawi</i> )	M	87	Yabano 27/02/13	He is one of the early members of the Kale Hiwot Church. Knowledgeable about the missionaries' movement in Burji. And some other early history of Burji.

12	Berhanu Debalqe ( <i>Hamsa Aleqa</i> or Sergeant)	M	67	Ziway (Batu) 05/05/13	First he was the coordinator of <i>edigetbehbret</i> campaigners in Burji. Later, he had been the administrator of the <i>woreda</i> from 1978-1981. He is a remarkable informant on the activities of <i>edigetbehebretzemecha</i> in the district and about the establishment of Sorroro Malka-Jawe resettlement station in Burji.
13	Bora Kome( <i>Ato</i> )	M	82	Soyama 21/01/13	Has a valuable source on the trade activities and the growth and expansion of Islam in Burji district.
14	Borro Ake ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	71	Gashara	One of the Burji emigrant who lived in Mersabet Kenya for many years. Now he lives in Burji. He has good memory about the outmigration of the Burji.
15	Borro Wato ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	58	Ottomalo 28/01/13	He has documented the administrative and religious history of Burji <i>woreda</i> .
16	Buno Harshe ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	97	Burjie-Kilicho 26/01/13	He is the only Italian <i>banda</i> who still alive in Burji. He has good knowledge about the Italian war in the region. Besides he is well versed in early history of Burji.
17	Chanu Bulcha	M	93	Soyama 04/02/13	Knows the early history of Burji.
18	Debebe Damete ( <i>Woma</i> )	M	62	Soyama 04/02/13	The eldest son of <i>Grazmach</i> Damete Dawe: he is a man of considerable knowledge on all aspects of the history of Burji during the period between 1941 and 1974.
19	Debebe Tasew ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	85	Soyama 22/01/13	A son of early northern settler and has a knowledge about the relation between local people and the northern settlers. Moreover, he has good memory concerning the administrative and economic history of the Burji during the imperial period.
20	Dejene Syum ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	63	Soyama 22/02/13	One of the <i>zemach</i> students. He has worked as a health assistant in Sorroro Malka-Jawe.
21	Duba Daresso ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	72	Soyama 05/02/13	He was born and grown at Idilola in Boranaland: he has good knowledge about the Burji who have lived in Boranaland.
22	Dulla Hido ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	81	Beneya in June 2012	Knows the conflict between the Burji and the Guji.
23	Gejo Solola( <i>Ato</i> )	M	95	Gumaiyde	He was one of very few patriots alive in Gumaiyde. He has good memory about the Italo-

				May,2012.	Ethiopia war in the region.
24	Getahun Addo( <i>Ato</i> )	M	63	Soyama 24/01/13	He personally devoted to the study of the history of Burji. He has collected various oral traditions; also an influential and useful informant about the various aspects of the history of Burji.
25	Getahun Chewa ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	52	Soyama 14/02/13	Oral historian of the Burji working in Culture, Tourism and Communication Office of Burji <i>Woreda</i> . He is highly interested in various aspects of the past of Burji.
26	Khashu Warre ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	64	Yabello 02/01/13	Born and grown in Yabello town. A graduate of AAU in History. Knows much about the oral tradition of Burji: the outmigration of Burji and the general history of the Burji in sound.
27	Kidane Kotte( <i>Ato</i> )	M	92	Soyama 06/02/13	He has knowledge on early history of the Burji.
28	Kifle W/Senbet ( <i>NechLebashShambe l</i> )	M	85	Soyama 22/01/13	He has a good knowledge about the relationship between the traditional and modern administration System. Since he served as a <i>qoro</i> during the imperial period, he is rich with the administrative history of Burji <i>woreda</i> .
29	Malle Dhahe ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	69	Soyama 10/02/13	Knows much about the development of SIM in Burji. He was the first teacher in Burji and one of the first batches of Gambo elementary school in Burji.
30	Mare Dhade ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	95	Yabano 27/02/13	The first member of the Burji Kale Hiwot Church; knows much about missionary activity in Burji. Moreover, he is the renowned oral historian among the Burji.
31	Mariye Mekuriya ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	47	Soyama 11/02/13	An informant with knowledge on the history of the education in the <i>woreda</i> .
32	Mohammed Lakew ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	75	Soyama 25/02/13	A Wollo merchant and a long time resident of Burji: has valuable information concerning the cattle trade in Burji during Emperor Haile Silassie Period.
33	Mohammed Wolle ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	48	Burjie- Kilicho 14/02/13	He has documented some important aspects of <i>womisso</i> and early history of Islam In Burji.

34	MokonnenW/Senbet (Ato)	M	76	Soyama 21/01/13	Knows about the history of Burji district during the imperial Period.
35	Mokonnen Zegeye (Ato)	M	76	Gumaiyde October 2012	Has a good knowledge about the patriots' movement in the region. He has also information about the relation between the Guji and Burji.
36	Mussa Jillo (Ato)	M	95	Yabello 03/01/13	He is the most knowledgeable person in various aspects of the early history and tradition of the Burji.
37	Natinael Hirbo (Ato)	M	55	Soyama 22/01/13	He was one of the administrators of Burji <i>woreda</i> during the <i>Derg</i> period. His knowledge about the <i>Derg</i> time is dependable.
38	Otte Kamm'e (Ato)	M	47	Soyama 07/02/13	A protestant missionary who worked as a development agent in Burji <i>woreda</i> since 1980.
39	Pawlos Mamo (Ato)	M	64	Soyama 09/02/13	He served in different public organization in Burji district. He is a valuable source about the <i>Derg</i> period in Burji district.
40	Salle Chotta (Ansh)	M	68	Hagre Maryam 01/03/13	He is a head of Goda clan and did intensive study regarding the culture of Burji. He also served as a field assistant with foreign scholars who made research in Burji.
41	Samuel Barbe (Ato)	M	62	Addis Ababa 14/06/13	He was a head of <i>YeHizb Dirjit Guday Tsefet Bet</i> of Burji district from 1977 to 1982. His knowledge about the <i>Derg</i> time is good and he has collected immense knowledge concerning the early history of Burji.
42	Samuel Fanje (Ato)	M	60	Chulluse 28/02/13	He is the first Burji who represented Burji in the National Legislation ( <i>BeherawiShengo</i> ) during the <i>Derg</i> period. His knowledge about the last years of the imperial regime is good and his administrative and social history of Burji <i>woreda</i> during the <i>Derg</i> period is dependable. He was also the secretary of All Ethiopian Peasant Association in Burji <i>woreda</i> .
43	Samuel Tasew (Ato)	M	63	Ladishe 20/01/13	He served as a committee member in All Ethiopian Peasant Association of Burji <i>woreda</i> during the <i>Derg</i> period. His knowledge in

					the developments of Burji in 1974-1991 is good.
44	Sanbato Godana (Ato)	M	53	Burjie-Killocho 26/01/13	One of the Burji who lives in Hagre Maryam. He has good information about the outmigration of the Burji.
45	Shanu Wata (Ato)	M	60	Soyama 28/01/13	He is highly interested in social organization of Burji. He collected various oral traditions of Burji.
46	Sharuka Bullo (Ato)	M	79	Ottomalo 04/02/13	One of the early Orthodox Christian of Burji. He has good information about the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Burji <i>woreda</i> .
47	Shibru Happe (Ato)	M	60	Soyama 24/01/13	A nurse who has served in the Sororo Malka-Jawe resettlement clinic. He is a valuable informant on the history of Sororo Malka-Jawe resettlement program.
48	Siba Golja (Ato)	M	84	Soyama 22/01/13	He was an influential cloth and cattle trader in Burji and a useful informant in the area.
49	Simon Lole (Ato)	M	50	Yabello 03/01/13	One of the Burji who lives in Boranaland. He has good knowledge about the outmigration of the Burji.
50	Sofaniat Worku (Woizero)	F	57	Soyama 04/02/13	She is the wife Debebe Damete, one of the sons of <i>Grazmach</i> Damete. She has good memory about the life of her father-in-law.
51	Tamirat W/Michael (Wotader)	M	67	Soyama 27/02/13	He served as police man in Burji. He was also assigned as a commander of the district police forces from 1973 to 1975 E.C. He knows about the conflict between Burji and the Guji.
52	Tariku Damete (Ato)	M	58	Soyama 25/02/13	He was one of the sons of the Burji <i>balabatGrazmach</i> Damete Dawe. He was one of the students who campaigned in the <i>edget behebret</i> program. He has good knowledge about the development that observed in Burji during the <i>Derg</i> time.
53	Teshome Adare (Ato)	M	73	Soyama 15/02/13	Has some information about Burji <i>woreda</i> during the imperial period.
54	Tukke Hirbo (Ansh)	M	92	Burjie-Killocho	He is a head of Hanabura clan and has a good knowledge about the early, political and

				26/01/13	economic history of the Burji.
55	Wako Dulla( <i>Ato</i> )	M	42	Soyama 19/02/13	He is a historian working in Culture Department in Culture, Tourism and Communication Office of Burji <i>Woreda</i> . He has a good knowledge about the traditional administration system of Burji.
56	Wato Borde ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	91	Ottomalo 26/02/13	Among the early Orthodox Christians of the Burji. He has good information about early expansion of Christianity in Burji and the Italian war.
57	Wayo Shanko( <i>Ato</i> )	M	67	Gashara 6/02/13	He has good memories about the traditional administration system of Burji and the history of Burji emigrants
58	Wolde Gedo( <i>Ato</i> )	M	80	Ottomalo 25/01/13	He is among the early intellectuals of Burji who is rich with the history <i>womisso</i> and the <i>Derg</i> period
59	Wolle Tego( <i>Masha</i> )	M	84	Burjie- Kilicho 26/01/13	He was a <i>masha</i> . He is a resourceful person in social and administrative history of Burji.
60	Yegezu Assegahagn (Sergeant)	M	44	Soyama 07/02/13	He is a son of one of the northern settlers in Burji. His memory about the situation of Burji in the immediate revolution period is good.
61	Yosef Tasew ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	45	Soyama 12/02/13	An oral historian whose knowledge in the tradition, origin and the clan relation of Burji with Koyera is sound.