CHAPTER II
THE HORRO GUDURU: GENERAL OVERVIEW

Genealogical Setup

Genealogically, the Horro Guduru belongs to the Macca branch of Raa; (Alemayehu 2006). Although Macca has got five major descendants (Liban, Jaaww Dalle, and Jidda), described here are only the Jaawwii and Guduru. Unless these two delineated, it would not be possible to understand the ways how the name Horro come to exist. Jaawwii is said to have had six immediate descendants: Amuru, Hoi Ibantu, Liban and Jidda. Guduru is said to have got seven descendants: Maloo Looyyaa, Ilaamoo, Lukku, Sirba and Andraasaa. The Jaawwii and Guduru had closely interlinked geographical areas in northwestern Oromia regional state of Eth 1). From the Jaawwii descendants the Horro had larger and closely linked geograph with Guduru of Macca. It is narrated by local elders that Emperor Haile Sellaasie I ( had relied on this geographic and genealogical setup to tag the Horro of Jaawwii and of Macca together as Horro Guduru in the second half of the twentieth century demonstrates the genealogical setup of Horro Guduru.

![Genealogical Setup Diagram](chart21.png)

Chart 2.1: Genealogical setup of Horro Guduru

History

Historical sources show that the name Ethiopia was not in common usage until the 1940s, and the dominant ruling power has been in the hands of Abyssinians (Mekuria 2002). According to hermeneutic biblical explanations, however, its usage dates back to antiquity. For the biblical hermeneutics, Ethiopia refers to the region near the southern horizon of Israel’s geographical knowledge, south of Egypt (Radmacher, Allen and House 1997). This interpretation was provided in ancient times based on the prophet Amos’ equalisation of Ethiopia with the “chosen” nation of Israel by God underscoring that the love of God for Ethiopia was as equal as His love for Israel (Amos 9:7).

Despite the once prevailed phony assumptions, example, the claim that the Oromo were originated from outside of Ethiopia (e.g. De Salviac’s translated work by Ayalew 2008), recent historical sources (Alemayehu 2006, Eshetu 2009) about the historical root of the Oromo reflects the indigeneity of this people to this classical Ethiopia of the Bible. Mekuria (2002), who centres his argument on Abyssinia in fact contends that Abyssinia refers geographically to almost the northern part of present Ethiopia and ethnographically to the Semitic-speaking peoples of current Ethiopia, particularly the Amhara and Tigréans who call themselves Habasha in contrast to the Cushitic-speaking Oromo and others. This means that Habasha or Abyssinia does not refer to all peoples and territories beyond the northern land of the Semitic-speaking peoples in present Ethiopia, whereas Ethiopia stands for all the peoples and territory of the current Ethiopia (Tenna 2009). Ethnographically, the word Abyssinia refers to a deeply rooted social and historical identity whose political culture has been defined by the Coptic Orthodox Christianity and monarchical rule. It also refers to the Christian state which conquered and annexed the Oromo land and that of others so as to create the modern Empire of Ethiopia, whereas the word Ethiopia denotes all the Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Nilotic speakers and their homeland as a whole (Mekuria 2002, Tenna 2009). The Oromo belong to the Cushitic speakers (Tilahun 1993).

The imperial and monarchical Christian rule building setup of the nineteenth century Ethiopia involved several entwined politico-religious strategies. In this sense, it could be argued that historical substances in Horro Guduru entail scars engraved on indigenous platforms by the past entwined politico-religious forces and strategies, which had been masterminded by centralised imperial administration of the Amhara Orthodox Tewahido Christians. The Amhara
rule in Horro Guduru was started in 1870s and continued till very recently. It could be best described as a colonial rule for the Oromo were enslaved and absolutely colonised by these intruders (Shell 2011). But the Amhara landlords and clergies masquerade that they had come to the area to civilise the people and the environment (so hereafter the civilados).

Based on interviews with local elders and observations of indigenous historical sites’ situations, it seems genuine to wrangle that the civilados had deliberately setup their entwined politico-religious institutions at numerous indigenous historical places in the area. A number of such set of entwined politico-religious institutions were strategically and purposely installed to damage indigenous historical legacies and cultural practices. Strategically, such politico-religious products, which were foreign to the Oromo, targeted indigenous historical and cultural scenes and currently appear at various indigenous historical scenes in Horro Guduru (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Some indigenous cultural environments bearing Amhara Christian cultural infestation in Horro Guduru

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous scene</th>
<th>Heritage designation</th>
<th>Superimposed culture*</th>
<th>Specific location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abiishee’s birth place</td>
<td>Historical**</td>
<td>Medhanealem Church</td>
<td>Shaambu town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abiishee’s palace scene</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Takla Haymanot Church</td>
<td>Dooyyo village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akkayyu moorland</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Kidanemihret Church</td>
<td>Akkayyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barji moorland</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Mariam Church</td>
<td>Aliiboo town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caabirra moorland</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Markos &amp; Garbiel Churches</td>
<td>Caabirra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dingoo spring</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Aabbo Church ritual center</td>
<td>Tulluu Waayyuu town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mambar ‘holy’ spring</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Michael Church</td>
<td>Shaambu town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saqalaa moorland</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Michael Church</td>
<td>Saqalaa town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushee moorland</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Beleigziher Church</td>
<td>Abuuna River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork, 2011. *Culture here stands only for Amhara Christian culture **Historical heritages also bear cultural ones or vice versa

Depicted in Table 2.1 are some Oromo indigenous historical and cultural scenes in Horro Guduru which had already been ruined due to Amhara Christian cultural superimposition. The latter had begun to be superimposed on the former since the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Caabirra is among the highest moorlands in Horro Guduru overlooked only by Giti loo Daalee and Burqituu Oborraa chain of mountains in its southwestern direction. It is surrounded by at least three major springs. These are those linking Corree sacred scene in the north, Qonge
River or Qonge natural forest in the northeast, and Gabar Iggum in the southwest. In Oromo worldview, both highland and spring have been known as qananii (respected) because the Oromo used to say “Tullun qananiidha! Burqaan qananiidha!” (Moorland is respected! Spring is respected!). Because of the suitable plain on its topographic peak, Caabirra has been used for military deployment during the Amhara colonial system. This was especially during the atrocities of feudal-imperial appointment of Bitwadded Mekonnen Damsaw (1916-1936). Prior to this, since the inception of the colonial conquest, the Horro Guduru were ruled under a notorious Gojjame Amhara, named Negus Takla Haymanot (1847-1901).

The Gojjame Amhara rule had in fact demonstrated vivid utmost initial sadistic oppression of the Oromo. It was during the cruel and notorious imperial rule of Negus Takla Haymanot of Gojjam that inhumane attack against the Horro Guduru was wrought. Takla Haymanot had pioneered in executing the uprooting of fundamental socio-cultural and historical basements of the Oromo by assassinating the heroic leader of Horro Guduru, Abiishee Garbaa, in the mid 1870s. Actually, Abiishee Garbaa had been taken to Gojjam (residence and political centre of Negus Takla Haymanot) and buried alive—below neck burial—in Dabra Markos (chief political centre of Gojjam).

Although the Oromo had been waiting for sympathetic release of Abiishee Garbaa and his return to Dooyyo (Abiishee’s residence and chief political centre in Horro Guduru), Takla Haymanot had brought to the scene Orthodox Tewahido Christianity church in his name. Thus, Dooyyo Takla Haymanot Church was established at the palace of Abiishee Garbaa. The clandestine purpose behind establishing this politico-religious institution (a church ordered by a Negus or king) had begun to replace the socio-cultural and historical system of Horro Guduru in general and Dooyyo village in particular. Discerned from this appalling episode in time could entail malice exchange of heroic human life with Judeo-Christian religious institution. As a result of the cruel assassination of the hero, the overall socio-cultural system of Horro Guduru had begun to exhibit entwined politico-religious “might” of the Amhara just instead of indigenous autonomy and practice. Within few years after Abiishee Garbaa’s merciless assassination in Gojjam, the socio-political system of Horro Guduru, particularly Dooyyo village at the beginning, had begun to witness transformation from obsession and marvel with Abiishee Garbaa’s enthusiasm to enduring the entwined politico-religious ambition wrought by the
colonial king through the church established after his name at the very residence village of Abiishee Garbaa.

The Barji moorland, besides its moorland spectacle which is also qanani, bears indigenous ‘holy’ spring with sacred Baddeessaa tree in southeastern basement. This had been revered by the Teessoo Qannoo lineage which used to venerate it through annual ritual observances with lavish feast and libation of biqila (local beer), damma (honey), aanan (milk), and dhiiga hirii (edible tame animal’s blood).

The Akkayyu cultural heritage of the Oromo was also a historical scene. Besides its moorland appearance in which it qualifies as qanani, the highland of Akkayyu bears Haroo Kallachaa so that it can be designated as Haroo Kallachaa (Lake of Kallachaa). Kallacha has been symbol of authority, strength and power to rule and required to be held on forehead by Oromo indigenous leaders or the Abbaa Gadaa as per the Gadaa system. Bearers of Kallacha had fortitude and resilience—as to the set of rules for relationships stipulated in the Gadaa system—that no one dares to defy them in whatever means. As a politico-religious symbol, Kallacha can be contrasted with the Hebrew symbol of horn in which they used to say God is their horn (Psalms 18:1-2) (Radmacher, Allen and House 1997). Likewise, Kallacha is believed to have been given to Oromo forefathers by Waaqa (God) in order it signifies possession of divine power and authority to rule through Oromo culture, which had remained democratic (Asmerom 2000).

The spring of Mambar was also among the qanani environments in Oromo culture. Cognizant of this fact the Amhara Orthodox Tewahido Christian colonisers transformed the Mambar spring (on the suburbs of Shaambu town) to their Orthodox Tewahido Christian religious ‘holy’ spring. Thus, since the latter’s advent it has been used as Orthodox Tewahido ‘holy’ spring where priests used to baptise infants and claim to heal human illnesses.

The Ushee moorland as Oromo cultural environment bears double indigenous heritages—Tulluu Ushee and Somboo Ushee. The Tulluu Ushee qualifies the notion of qananimii in Oromo customs and Somboo Ushee has been a sacred grove. Both had been transformed to Amhara Christian culture ever since the establishment (in 1985) of Baleigziher Church of the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity.
Saqalaa moorland bears a huge and old tree named *Birbirsa Saqalaa* (Plate 2.1). The spring of Dingoo Garbaa is situated amid sacred moorland known as *Tull* and *Goomoo* (ditch) Dingoo Garbaa (Plate 2.2). It had been revered (Burqaaan qamamii) Dingoo and his descendants until the beginning of the Amhara colonial conquest.

Plate 2.1: *Birbirsa Saqalaa* historical scene

The spring of Dingoo Garbaa is situated amid sacred moorland known as *Tull* and *Goomoo* (ditch) Dingoo Garbaa (Plate 2.2). It had been revered (Burqaaan qamamii) Dingoo and his descendants until the beginning of the Amhara colonial conquest.
Ditch of Dingoo Garbaa is locally named Jogolaa Dingoo Garbaa and it was aged virtually more than 180.

Ditch is not as such visible but its place has been occupied by the row of Bakkanna trees appearing in t
the arrows on Plate 2.1. The arrows indicate, the ditch links the cliff of Tullua Laftoo and the base of mo

After the conquest the spring of Dingoo Garbaa was sooner or later transf
Amhara’s Orthodox Tewahido Christianity ‘holy’ spring. Ever since 1880s it has been
religious purposes like baptising infants and observing Orthodox Tewahido Church
rituals, especially at Epiphany tabot (ark of covenant) celebration.
Therefore, these sites still bear double but incompatible cultural products. Indeed, some of these indigenous heritages especially sacred springs and moorlands have been used as places of worship, education and government by the Oromo of Horro Guduru. These Oromo cultural scenes were among those which had paramount socio-cultural and politico-religious importance, apart from the chief politico-religious centre named Odaa Bulluq (political institute and synagogue of Jaawwii Macca).

The Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church—the centralised regent and venerable agent of the imperial political system—adheres to prohibition of several practices which the Oromo used to practice. Some of the prohibitory practices entail enforcement of several doctrines. One, any form of religious practice other than that of the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity have never been allowed. Second, celebrating funeral ceremony at kistaana (forest-based funeral) has been banned. If this rule was not adhered to, the practitioners must have been liable to pay xagara lama (equal to 200 currency of Ethiopia called birr, currently about US$ 11). Third, farming on Orthodox Tewahido Christianity religious “holy” days which embrace and recycles on almost everyday of a month has been forbidden, particularly the dates which belong to churches in the names of “Saints” Mary, Michael, Mark, and Gabriel, as well as Baleigtifer were strictly observed. If not observed, the same penalty which applies for funeral at kistaana would have been functional. Fourth, slaughtering animals for meat consumption on every Wednesday and Friday has been outlawed. Finally, every subject people (the indigenous community) must abide with the will of their conquering lords (the Amhara).

These all politico-religious provisions were extraordinarily alien to the Oromo. These were not only nonsense to the people but they knew nothing about such politico-religious laws before their surrender to the Amhara imperial rule. Therefore, these laws were mere laws belonging to the imperial state and the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity church—which used to run imperial administration as regent. Ethiopian history endorses the role played by the Orthodox Tewahido Christian Church as venerable agent and regent to the state throughout the imperial era, implying that there was entwined politico-religious rule (Bahru 2001).

Change in names was also among the most widely utilised strategies during the entwined politico-religious administration. This was so to bring an end to indigenous predominance of historical and cultural heritages and their respective Oromo names. This ranges from dissolving
meaningful and popular native names given to places to attaching political and religious names to persons who had often assumed key indigenous cultural positions, mostly native religious specialists and political leaders. Some areas like spheres round Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church and a great deal of persons still bear foreign names rooted from entwined politico-religious forces. There are some personal and Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church ethic names which have been directly diffused from the Judeo-Christian world, nation of Israel at best, to Horro Guduru via the civilados. These include Abraham, Sara, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Zion, Daniel, Mikael, Gebriel, Mariam, Markos, etc. Besides these, some fascist oriented Amhara politico-religious names given to persons percolate the Horro Guduru people, both indigenous and non-indigenous people. Particular instances include Woldeyohannes, Woletemariam, Teshome, Mekonnen, etc.

These ways of giving names to places and persons had never been known to the indigenous people prior to the colonial conquest, which according to Samuel (1998) had gradually set into Horro Guduru ever since the period of ‘Talaqu Ras Haylu I (1777-1779). Names like Birbirsoo, Ayyaanaa, Hundee, Fufaa, Fayyisaa, etc. had been common among the Oromo of Horro Guduru prior to the colonial conquest. Thereafter names emphasising Amhara-Christian political culture pervaded the society till recent periods (early 1990s) when Oromo names were freely resumed to be used. Actually, some of the current indigenous namings tend to deviate from the original Oromo names for they appear to stress political and other socio-cultural connotations, example Bilisummaa (liberty), Fira’ol (more than any relative), etc. Although it needs independent study, it is useful to draw attention here that names in Horro Guduru, especially the ones given to persons had been tossed back and forth across historical eddies. The preceding explanations revealed three distinctive periods: indigenous ways of life prior to the colonial conquest, life during the imperial and Derg era, and situations in the current political system. All of these three distinctive periods appear to have been accompanied with corresponding changes in giving names to persons and places.

The civilados had employed several strategies to annihilate the Horro Guduru cultural milieu for excruciating period, more likely across all Oromo nation, too. Three strategies were worth expounding: mudslinging, reliance on European firearms, and exploitation of Oromo seditionists.
Mudsliding as chief civilados’ strategy needs some clarification as it appears uncommon in the hitherto approaches in the study of Oromo colonial experience. The literal meaning of mudsliding means making efforts or trying to damage somebody’s or some societies’ reputation, ideological or otherwise or cultural prestige by saying bad and mendacious things about them (Hornby 2005). It refers to the practice of making unscrupulous, malicious attacks against a competitor; an attempt to discredit on’s competitor by malicious or scandalous attacks. Religious leaders may appear in this domain of molest and make malicious charges and otherwise attempt to discredit a rival through eventful stages such as in religious preaching.

The civilados’ mudslinging strategy has been a practice of casting aspersions with intent to discredit Oromo indigenous knowledge systems. They had been using offensive gesticulations and gibberish speech against the Oromo throughout their imperial supremacy in Horro Guduru. Their gesticulations had always been offensive because they use discrediting gestures whenever they realise that their offensive speeches were gibberish—unintelligible or meaningless speech against the offended (the Oromo) as they barely hear and understand Amharic language. The campaign degenerated into non-mutual mudslinging, because the Oromo had seldom tried to tarnish Orthodox Tewahido Christianity clergies’ and their idiocy advocates’ reputation. They seldom dared to belie the reputation of alien religious practices though all occurred at the cost of their indigenous whim and wit, i.e., local notion and intelligence. For example, in the Gadaa system only men from indigenous people who accomplished all customary requirements have been eligible to serve as political or religious head. This has been reversed after the mudslinging wrought against indigenous knowledge systems in the form of horrific consideration of the latter as symbol of “backwardness”, and in some cases it was considered as demonic.

The foci of the mudslinging strategy used by the civilados against the Oromo entail origin, religion and ethnic name. Literatures unravel that one of the most vehemently debated themes regarding Oromo history is the original homeland of this people. Some European scholars (e.g. De Salviac’s translated work by Ayalew 2005, Eshetu 2009) and their Ethiopian advocates (e.g. Alaqa Taye Gebremariam, Atsme Woldegorgis, Azash Tino, and Takla Tsadik Mekuria) (Eshetu 2009) have remained furious to comply with the notion that the Oromo were indigenous to the Horn of Africa in general and to Ethiopia in specific. These writers, without reference to any historical fact, contend that the Oromo were alien to Ethiopia so that they ought
not to deserve indigenous right to the land. As Tenna (2009) rightly writes on the issue of Oromo origin, a statement about the origin of people without referring to any historical fact is none more than fictitious assertion.

As regard to some European writers like De Salviac, for example, present geographical regions of southern Europe was among the cited bogus original areas of the Oromo. While for some Ethiopian writers such as Takla Tsadik Mekuria the historical root of the Oromo was Asia. In contrast, recent and more critical studies by Oromo writers (Alemayehu 2006, Eshetu 2009) show that the Oromo are indigenous to Ethiopia. In fact, widely accepted wisdom based on genetic studies also show that the cradle of humanity was historically rooted in the Horn of Africa so that the Oromo are never exceptional (Eshetu 2009). This is to stress the difficulty to confirm the view that Oromo’s original homeland was outside this area of Africa. Eshetu contends that more reasonable origin of the Oromo was the vast environs traversed by the drainage basins of Mormor River (one major source of the Nile River in northern Ethiopia), which interconnects present Ethiopia and Sudan. For Eshetu (2009), some twelve remnants of the Orom-Durii (ancient Oromo), namely, the Jagaa, Ammumaa Sibuu, Dongoro, Manii Wanbarii, Shaaxiroo, Guutoo, Gundiboo, Noonnoo, Anuu, Billii, Iluu, and Andobo had lived in the Mormor environs around the host of Abbaa Munu (religious expert) in the fifth century. Some six centuries afterwards (in 1116) the Abbaa Munu had moved to the south and settled at Odaa Nabee—located at about 30 km southeast of Addis Ababa (Dessalegn 2010).

The point is to show that the phony assumptions about the historical root of the Oromo have already been refuted. The allegation that the people were alien to Ethiopia—which was often known as Cush, to which the Oromo belong, was a mere feeble speculation. The assertions which distinguish the Oromo as alien to Ethiopia are, therefore, epistemologically unscientific, logically unfounded and morally irresponsible (Tenna 2009). All the sham accounts about the original homeland of the Oromo engraved in the tradition of Ethiopian history had mostly been obsessed with imperial political approaches; it was unfair which wrongly thought the people as aliens to Ethiopia. The phony assumption was cunningly schemed and enforced more likely to deprive the Oromo of their indigenous rights to Ethiopia wherein bogus history has been used as a strategy to sustain imperialist benefits through oppression and coercion.
Numerous thorough studies (Mohammed 1990, 2007; Alemayehu 2006, Eshetu 2009) have later proved the original homeland of the Oromo as it belongs not to outside the Horn of Africa or Ethiopia. But the fraudulent facts, however, had served the Amhara to a great extent to downplay the citizenship right of the Oromo to Ethiopia. The Amhara were rubbing out legitimate status of the people through unreal and lurking utterances used to mudsling the Oromo as strange savages who must learn “civilised” thoughts and practices from Amhara clergies and landlords. The fact that the Oromo were considered strange savages from the vantage point of Amhara thoughts and practices was mainly rooted from the notion of divine anointed hereditary leadership and practice of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity. It could be taken as the main factor why the Oromo ethnic group have been called in the way they had never desired to be labelled. This brings the argument to the second obliterating fundament of Amhara’s mudslinging strategy, unfounded ethnic name, employed to erase Oromo identity and indigenous practices.

From time immemorial the Oromo people used to call themselves “Oromo” which means sons of Orma (Ayalew 2008, Tenna 2009, Eshetu 2009). This Orma is believed to have been layered out from Orma kiyya which signifies an all-encompassing tender love and affection among those who descended from the same affluent family but lived apart from each other as aliens in due course of history (Eshetu 2009). Nevertheless, the Amhara used to call the Oromo in rather strange name known as “Galla”. This term, though the researcher dare not to jot it again as it symbolises sheer hatred among the Oromo, shortly means inhumane savage. The Oromo were being widely deemed atrocious tribe which must succumb to “civilising” Amhara politico-religious force. The allegation, the Oromo were inhumane savages, was quite firm in the attitude of the civilados that the Oromo starting from their phony name (slung against them by the former) and including their indigenous practices must genuflect to the will of the civilising force. This was meant for uprooting Oromo identity and indigenous practices under the disguise of the fabricated name jotted so far.

Finally, the civilados had been casting mudslinging against every practice indigenous to the Oromo for more than a century. Including the comprehensive socio-economic, political, cultural and religious system of the Oromo (the Gadaa system) and their every indigenous religious practice, the civilados were rapacious to ambush the entire wellbeing of the Oromo under the mostly noticed mudslinging called heathen infidels, irreligious people. To this end,
alongside construction of churches in the area there was intensified conversion of the people to Orthodox Tewahido Christianity. Yet, the Oromo people considered their traditional beliefs and practices not simply as mere religion but also as part of their culture and general way of life (Samuel 1998). Hence, the Oromo found it hard to fully adopt the new Christian culture. Amhara officials, priests and the converted local balabats (local chiefs) denounced the Oromo traditional beliefs and practices as acts of sadistic system in an insulting manner. The few converts were advised by the priests to distance themselves from their “pagan” fellow countrymen and not even eat with them (Samuel 1998).

Why the resistant mass was named “pagan”? This was because the Oromo were regarded as believers of heretical or unorthodox religion who had not hitherto been overcome by the predominant religion of the Judeo-Christian world unlike the civilados. Indeed, it was more likely this latter assumption and mudslinging which has closely linked European colonial powers like Britain, France, Italy, Germany and others to lend their unswerving hand to the civilados so that they could access modern firearms to subjugate the Oromo. Overall, all these fraudulent stories had served the civilados to damage original reputation of Oromo identity, undermine Oromo’s native right to Ethiopia, and prowl as an onslaught against indigenous practices.

Besides this captivating strategy, mudslinging, the civilados employed two opportunistic strategies to subjugate the indigenous society. One was import of European firearms which almost coincided with the era of African colonial system and which the civilados utilised along the coastline of northern Ethiopia. The other was making use of treasons from the indigenous community. These two strategies were opportunistic as they were accessed based on proximity to the coastline which links them with coastal deployment of European firearms, and presence of willing seditionists among the indigenous community respectively. For the civilados, exposure to seditionists in the host community, and of course along with their willingness to serve against the well-being of their own society, had lingered almost equally important with their exposure to European firearms down the nineteenth century Ethiopian coastal areas such as Massawa. Having the willingness of seditionists, who have most often been nick-named by the native community as Gobanas (after the chief Oromo seditionist who had controlled large mass of the Oromo for Emperor Menelik), is indeed an incredible opportunity for the civilados, just amid their ambitious purpose to control the resourceful regions of the area. Table 2.2 summarises
some of the chief Oromo seditionists who had worked in favour of the civilados’ colonial zeal against their own people either for self-indulgent urge or obligation imposed on them by the civilados or because of both. “Seditionism” in fact was an express mutiny resulting due to either or both of these factors lurking into ages thereafter.

Table 2.2: Horro Guduru Oromo seditionists whom the civilados utilised to colonise the Oromo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seditionist</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gamaa Moraas</td>
<td>Negus</td>
<td>1860s</td>
<td>Ayalew 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goshuu Gamaa</td>
<td>Grazmach</td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Samuel 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ittichaa Jibaat</td>
<td>Fitawrari</td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Samuel 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadididaa Wannabee</td>
<td></td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Ginbar 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gissaa Warjii</td>
<td></td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Ginbar 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandalalaa Hurrubaa</td>
<td></td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>GT 2011**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiixee Wiirtuu</td>
<td>Fitawrari</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Olani 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biduu Horaa</td>
<td>Fitawrari</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Olani 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiferaw Geneti</td>
<td>Fitawrari</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Borana 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Samuel (1998) and Ayalew (2008). *The Guduru republics, (Torban Guduru or seven Guduru) were divided into two blocs by the Gojjame in 1872, three were mandated to Grazmach Goshuu Gamaa whose father Gamaa Moraas was parsonage of the Gojjame that came into Oromo land and adopted by the tribe of Guduru (Ayalew 2008) and four were mandated to Fitawrari Ittichaa Jibaat whose father Jibaat Bulshoo had been relying on the forces of Ras Adal Tessema (the later Negus Takla Haymanot of Gojjam) for military help against his Oromo rivals in Guduru. **The 2011 sources were personal interviews with the corresponding persons, example, GT 2011.

It was mostly by using the knowledge of these seditionists that the earlier civilados, the Gojjame Amhara, had begun to claim “legitimate” political superiority in Horro Guduru. Using the newly appointed chiefs and their knowledge of the region, they began to conduct series of expeditions to the east, west and south of their Embaaboo centre in Guduru against Ginda Barat, Horro, and Jimma Raaree (Samuel 1998). Had it been not because of the active role contributed by the seditionists, the Amhara would have not been able to traverse and easily dominate the Horro Guduru. For example, in one of their hush-hush attempt to travel across diverse dodged geographic features of Horro Guduru in search of the local communities’ resources such as livestock for meat, just without utilising any seditionist guide against unfamiliar environments they had been facing, some Gojjame Amhara were severed into a hazardous water body in the area named Coomman swamp. Evidence for this event is pervasive in the narratives of the Oromo of Horro Guduru.
In search of torn-eared ox (for slaughter);
The fool Gojjam remained there swallowed in Comman swamp.

From this longstanding narrative, one can realise the intensity with which the civilados’ desired to possess Oromo resources lured them until they were tragically entrapped. They were unfamiliar to the area and the swamp did not entice them. But they had chosen this way because they were more likely attracted by the desire to feast on Oromo livestock resources though certain contexts such as strangeness of the topography of the area had incurred them tragic cost.

The local Oromo chiefs who succumbed to the civilados were confirmed in their position with new Amhara titles. By way of this change in title, Amhara generals such as Dajazmach Yimer of Gojjam managed to install several puppets in power. Through the newly appointed puppets, the Amhara lords succeeded in extending effective Amhara entwined politico-religious influence in a number of hitherto sovereign Oromo states, which were relegated to the status of feudal dependencies of the civilados. Moreover, the Oromo chiefs in question were “Amharised” and ordained with different titles such as Fitawrari and Gagnazmach. But those chiefs who refused to succumb were removed from power, their lands were confiscated and given to Oromo seditionists, and their lives became victimised against persistent cynicism and onslaughts.

Narratives also show cases of mass massacre of those who had resolutely confronted the colonial system against enslavement and denial of right to use their own resources including land. The Tulluu Laaftoo (mount Laaftoo) environ in Abee Dongoro district had served the purpose of Oromo massacre and imprisonment during the earlier periods of the colonial system—before the death of Takla Haymanot in 1901. Pertinent local narratives which signifying notorious utterances of Amhara imperialists of the time regarding this episode reads:

*Wadila ina Dilanta ale le getachin [Negus Takla Haymanot],
Tulluu Laaftoo alechilin le ignam inde aqimachin.*
(Literally, “Our lord [Negus Takla Haymanot] had Wadila and Dilanta,
To our capacity, we also had Tulluu Laaftoo).

*Wadila*, desert area around Maqdala in northern Ethiopia, was used by king Takla Haymanot of Gojjam to jail opponents of his administration. *Dilanta*, desolate valley surrounded
For the Amhara lords, having the willingness of treasons lurk staggering. This is not only because it astounds both the natives and the civilados alike but also for it more capacitates the latter to get their mudslinging and other oppressive missions effectively operated deep into the society which they would otherwise be less familiar with. Hence, the civilados were determined to dwell in Horro Guduru and ransack whatever available resources not merely by relying on their superior weaponry but also by exploiting whatever means that could suit their insistent ambition. Here, strategies like wild utilisation of treasons or Gobanas and downplaying indigenous cultural practices—most significantly through Gobonas—as symbol of “backwardness” (what is called mudslinging) could be described as a sort of domestic policy the civilados devised to maneuver the Horro Guduru. These domestic strategies, apart from the other equally mandatory strategy called mulish possession of European firearms, had played pivotal roles to effectuate the civilados’ ways of life in the area, i.e., a nexus of imperial-monarchical-Orthodox Tewahido Christianity ways of administration which was always executed through rigidly ranked authority and power entrusted to clergies and imperial political leaders. By utilising such crafty strategies, the Amhara imperialists had able to colonise the Horro Guduru since the mid 1870s through the mid 1970s.

Persuasive parameters for understanding Amhara’s imperial administration in Horro Guduru as colonial in characteristics were several. First, prior to the colonial system of governance, the Horro Guduru had been ruled under indigenous democratic structure known as the Gadaa system. The chief centre of administration was Odaa Bulluq (perhaps since the early 1370s) and chief public administrators had always been called the publicly elected nine Oromo democratic government structure cabinet members known as Saglan Yaa’ii Boorana (the Nine Boorana Assembly). During the colonial period, however, both the democratic institution—the Gadaa system—and its government structures were altogether banned and entwined politico-religious institution, which had seldom dared to provide democratic system of governance as it had no element and concept of democracy, was superimposed on the Oromo instead. In the long aged Amhara colonial rule of Horro Guduru, kings were invariably deemed elect of God as opposed to the Oromo concept that rulers were publicly elected. For example, Emperor Haile
Sillassie I who appointed Bitwaddad Mekonnen Damesaw as his chief Amhara colonial agent in the western Ethiopian region including Horro Guduru was always known as elect of God. In view of Amhara imperialist leaders, who had considered their authority as if it was from God, recognising sovereign autonomy to colonised nations or delegating authority to them was not accepted.

Second, Oromo socio-cultural systems were basically rooted in nature, example, Odaa Bulluq as centre of administration was a natural environment rather than a man-made building. But that of the Amhara imperialist rulers’ was rooted in Judeo-Christian worldview, example, the concept of elect of God was diffused from Davidic and Solomonic divine anointment of kings over the nation of Israel some 900 years before the Christian era. Emperor Haile Sillassie I of Ethiopia was known as the last and most aged Solomonic king over the vast Ethiopian empire. This Judeo-Christian ideology served the Amhara imperialists as indomitable premise to subjugate and demonise nature-based indigenous socio-cultural systems in Horro Guduru. Third, speaking Afaan Oromo (Oromo language) had been considered demonic and a person who would rather have spoken it ultimately becomes wicked so that he or she ought to be sanctified through Orthodox Tewahido Christianity priestly intermediary for prayer and sprinkling of water over the “wicked”. The priests have resolute believe in sprinkling water that the wickedness caused because of speaking Afaan Oromo would be removed. Because of ideologies such as this, the Oromo had been feeling inferiority and sense of “impurity” to use their mother tongue for communication.

Fourth, nature-based Oromo religious institutions such as worshipping Waaqa at sacred forests, groves, trees, springs and moorlands as well as the right to use traditional burial grounds in natural forests were deemed heretic and demonic so that the Judeo-Christian belief system based Orthodox Tewahido Christianity institutions would have to be used instead, for worship and graveyard.

Fifth, prior to the colonial conquest there was no prohibition of working on days of a week. But after the colonial conquest plowing, weeding, and harvesting on Orthodox Tewahido Christianity religious holidays was strictly precluded and failure to abide with this creed was punishable by law and ostracism.
In general, the Oromo of Horro Guduru had lost the right to practice their political, historical, cultural and religious privileges and further to perpetuate their indigenous heritages to posterity, as a result of the superimposed Amhara-Christian culture during the aged colonial system, which in fact has begun to crumble in the 1970s. The crumbling was due to political ideological shift from entwined politico-religious regime rooted in Judeo-Christian worldview to socialist ideology during the military or Derg era. Although the socialist political philosophy, as adopted by the Derg regime by taking contemporary cases from Russia and China, had contributed pivotal spot in decimating the Amhara imperial system, it was not able to grant the right recommence of indigenous ways of life in Horro Guduru.

The Horro Guduru reality unfuls that the Derg regime has pursued a strategy of political administration furnished with Amhara elites and few educated Oromo. As it had remained too premature to filter out pro-feudal Amhara elites from political leadership, the Derg was not able to defend the well-being and comprehensive rights of the Oromo. This had enabled the Amhara to linger their longstanding imperial establishments even during the socialist Ethiopia wherein they had engaged in merciless assassination of Oromo educated leaders. Best example in this case was the late Immiruu Ibsaa (Plate 2.3), who had been assigned as the overall leader of Horro Guduru for the first time from Oromo origin since Abishee Garbaa’s merciless assassination by the Amahara in 1870s. Unluckily, Immiruu Ibsaa was also mercilessly assassinated by Nigussie Fanta of the Amhara origin. Nigussie Fanta was representative of the Derg regime in Wallagga, which then included the Horro Guduru. He was stimulated to assassinate Immiruu Ibsaa, along with his Oromo colleagues, apprehending that he would ensure basic rights for the Oromo that would otherwise endanger Amhara supremacy in Horro Guduru. Immiruu Ibsaa (the first western educated and Oromo leader of Horro Guduru after the 1870s-1974 civilados’ imperial rule) has in fact aroused basic development in infrastructure like all-weather road construction and use of mother tongue (Afaan Oromo) for socio-political purposes in the area. He has utilised educated Oromo youths who have completed high school education for literacy campaign and mission to eradicated Amhara landlordism in Horro Guduru. This has resulted not only in his eventual assassination but also general massacre of about seventeen Oromo high school graduates who were callously killed by Barambaras Ambaye in 1975 in Guduru.
Before his assassination, Immiruu Ibsaa had erected a monument for the school graduates who were murdered in Horro Guduru by Amhara imperialist named Barambo (Plate 2.3) in memory of their struggle against Amhara imperial rule. The martyrs comprised of both females and males and were sent to provide awareness creation on “Campaign for Growth through Work and Knowledge” running political slogan of the military regime—against the ills of landlordism. As Ambaye was chief landlord in Guduru he was inexcusably infuriate about the campaign for two main reasons: he was enraged about the ending landlordism and unwilling to provide awareness creation on the running political slogan of the military regime—against the ills of landlordism. As Ambaye was chief landlord in Guduru he was inexcusably infuriate about the campaign for two main reasons: he was enraged about the ending landlordism and unwilling to provide awareness creation on the running political slogan of the military regime—against the ills of landlordism.

Since the coming to power of the current federal government of Ethiopia, the Derg regime in 1991, significant beginnings have been underway. It was only period that revitalisation of indigenous rights such as the right to use mother tongue (administrative and academic medium) and the right to practice and develop indigenous and religious practices were being observed in diverse areas of Ethiopia including Horro Guduru. This research which mostly concerns the indigenous knowledge systems of the Oromo and the indigenous cultural practices and heritages. Had it been prior to the early 1990s, the research would no longer envisaged as the people among which this study has been done and their indigenous...
interacting with the natural forest environment were never granted the current indigenous ways of life they have been practicing and promoting ever since the early 1990s.

Nevertheless, as the revitalisation process is still in its formative years, a great deal of genuine research on indigenous knowledge systems and wise utilisation of the resultant findings is by far pending. Efforts being made by the current federal government of Ethiopia in general and Oromia regional state in particular did not appear to remove the scars engraved on the platform of indigenous knowledge systems by the past entwined politico-religious force. Plate 2.4 illustrates one of such lingering anomalies in Abee Dongoro district. It shows that some state sponsored modern development activities being carried out in Horro Guduru hardly recognise and respect sacredness of indigenous scenes but the religious institution diffused to Horro Guduru during the imperial era. Oromo sacred trees have been continued to be mistreated and chopped in the process of establishing modern infrastructures, especially telecommunication and electricity. Such modern development activities would have never disregarded the religious sphere of the diffused religious domains. Local elders mourn that experts who run and install these essential facilities seldom comprised of concerned personnel, and it was appraised that they were almost devoid of a person from Oromo. Most of the time telecommunication and electricity facilities are installed by foreign experts (e.g. Indians and Chinese) in Abee Dongoro district. These foreigners hardly ever knew about the wider socio-cultural environment of the area. Example, the electric wire across Harbuu Jaarii (sacred tree) was installed by Indian experts in 2009 to electrify Tulluu Waayyuu town. At the same time, it has resulted in cutting of one huge branch of the sacred tree as it hindered safe passing of the wires. In addition, the sacred status of this tree was almost damaged ever since the establishment of local livestock market under its shade in the last few years.

Facts about Somboo Bushuraa sacred tree (Plate 2.4) are almost similar with that of Harbuu Jaarii but one narrative. In 2009, Somboo Bushuraa was required to be chopped in favour of satellite dish installation on its safiuu (respected) surface for Tulluu Waayyuu town. People who belong to the Oromo group, especially the elderly, had warned not to attempt cutting the tree as it was believed to prompt divine retribution in time because the tree had been distinguished as safiuu tree for generations through indigenous belief system. Contrary to local community’s forewarning, though the whole tree was not chopped, one huge branch was cut by a
certain Walloyye Amhara of the area. Unfortunately, on that very date this Walloyy
his donkey by shooting a gun (bullet) and he was found mud eventually. The local el
associate these incidents with local belief system that the ayyaana (genius spirit) of th:
has caused the malice against the person (informants AA and FL).

In contrast to the indigenous sacred scenes, state sponsored development act
never been certain to violate the sacred status of Orthodox Tewahido Christian religio
the area. Furthermore, lands which belong to such sacred spheres did not hitherto si
reduction and damage but respect and recognition as genuine religious realms. The
effort to use sacred compound of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church, Genet K
(Plate 2.4), for pipe water establishment for Tulluu Gaanaa town residents was
rebuffed by syndicates of the congregation in 2010. This was so though water is equa
essential for life than telephone, market and electricity for rural villages. Rejecting su
proposal of the state and the latter’s refrain from interfering in the religious dom
version of Christianity afterwards appears not mere usual recognition and respect
Orthodox Tewahido Christianity of its sacred scenes. But more important reas
indication that apart from such religious institutions, which were diffused from ab
area, indigenous sacred scenes do not weigh the status of sacredness provided there exists such
diffused religious organisation.

Therefore, much more remain to understand the complex scenario pervading local
villages and indigenous religious institutions. Indigenous issues presumably have not been
valued both by the state and its local agents as well as experts who often run and establish
essential development infrastructures for rural communities in the midst of towering global
interconnection.

Geography and Environment

The Horro Guduru landscape has diverse relief features. It has elongated and rugged
mountainous panoramic views. The panoramic views give the impression that they are
continuation of the more than 200 km long chain of mountainous ridge that extends from
Calliyaa district in west Shewa to Horro district in Horro Guduru. This mountainous ridge, with
its unevenly blinking chain, covers the area along its way to the northwest from Calliyaa district
to Caato sacred forest in Horro district. That is, the Caato sacred forest complex, on the
northwestern end of this long and chained highland ridge, apparently blocks the ridge’s further
extension as if the latter was unable to withstand the locally believed sacredness of the forest. It
seems that Caato sacred forest buffets the chained ridge at a specific area named Tulluu Rifeentii
for thereafter across Caato sacred forest there is no such elongated chained upland ridge till one
observes the far away mountainous chain of Tulluu Bijjiiti. The latter extends from Loomica
village in Abee Dongoro district to Andoode Diichoo village in Giddaa Ayyaanaa district in
northwestern Oromia regional state.

According to Firdissa’s (2007) illustration, the Horro Guduru landscape, with a total area
of about 786,900 ha and average elevation ranging between 1000-3300 m a.m.s.l. (above mean
sea level), has a vast plateau land (58.56 per cent), a very small proportion of low lands (23.76
per cent), mountains (6.64 per cent), and other topographic features (11.04 per cent). The Horro
Guduru has many big mountains such as Balbala (3178 m), Dabisho (2980 m), Jaldessa (2950
m), Tulluu Gaddannee (2747 m) and Tulluu Korma (2820m). Most of the rivers and streams in
the area are sourced from many of these mountainous grounds. Some of the rivers are Qonge,
Abuuna, Garchi, Angar, Asatti, Nashe, Gabar, Dannabaa and Abjaar. The dominant soil types are
infertile red tropical soils. The wild animals in the area include gazelle, antelope, pig, buffalo,
leopard, tiger, hyena, fox, lion, rabbit, civet, porcupine, ape and monkey. The area has game reserves or sanctuaries for wildlife conservation or tourist attraction. Presently, nine aanaa (districts) and one special administrative town, Shaambu (zonal capital) (Horro Guduru has no asphalted road which could connect its rural towns with the latter with the national highway at Baakkoo town in west Shewaa zone km to the south of Shaambu town. It also lacks regularly interconnected all-weather road between some of its districts. Other infrastructures like electricity and drinking water are more or less available but are in fact quite limited to some districts’ towns. The zonal capital, Shaambu town is at a distance of more than 198 rural ganda (lowest administrative unit consisting of nearly 500 houses) km from the nine districts each having an average of twenty-two ganda (Lemessa, Sinha 2011). From the nine districts, the sample districts selected for this study were Abi Dongoro and Jaardaga Jaartee.

**Abbe Dongoro:** The total area of this district is 109,209 ha; 28,704 ha being (Fieldwork, April 2011). As illustrated in Appendix V and Table 3.1, Abbe Dongoro...
the most forest covered district in Horro Guduru. It would also qualify reasonable future natural forest and wildlife industry for its forest panorama appear relatively intact and its entire terrain is to a great extent sloppy which hitherto has hindered suitable settlement and agricultural activities. There are more than six forest patches with area range from 10 to 82 ha. There are also major forest complexes which range from 122 ha at Waaccuu natural forest to 16,686 ha at Tiilluu Lintofo protected natural forest. The altitude range of the district is between 1350-2572 m a.m.s.l. The mean annual rain fall of the district is about 2250 mm and the mean daily temperature counts between 15 and 27 degree Celsius.

**Horro:** The total area of this district is 77,997.7 ha; forestland being 17,318.56 ha. Horro district hosts Caato sacred forest, which is not only the second largest forest coverage in Horro Guduru but also the hugest ever known sacred forest in the area. The district, however, is startlingly left only with eleven forest patches (Appendix V), which ranges from 9 ha at Asatti natural forest in ganda (vicinity) Haroo Aagaa to 60 ha at Goshoo natural forest in Didibbee Kistaanaa vicinity. This figure is with the exception of Caato sacred forest which covers about 11,900 ha and the steadily receding Qonge natural forest which now covers about 120 ha. The altitude range of the district is between 1450 m and 2844 m a.m.s.l. The district experiences a temperate type of climate (baddaa), 49.8 per cent; semi-temperate climate (badda daree), 48.9 per cent; and semi-desert (gammoojji), 1.23 per cent. It gets mean annual rainfall of 1200-1800 mm while its average maximum temperature is 27 maximum and 18 minimum in degree Celsius.

**Jaardagaa Jaartee:** Total area of this district is 103,804.15 ha. The attitude range of the district is between 1400 m and 2700 m a.m.s.l.; whereas the mean annual rain fall of the district is about 1750 mm and the mean daily temperature is 25 degree Celsius. From its total area, forestlands constitute about 2,580.757 ha only. The forest environments of this district appear the most endangered environment from among forest environments covered by this study. It has been left only with numerous but unevenly fragmented forest patches which were mere residues of yearly emerging forest ecotones alongside agricultural fields. Areas covered by these exceedingly scattered forest patches range from 245 ha at Meexxii natural forest in Ceekaa vicinity to less than 10 ha at various minor forest patches (Appendix V). Recognising the startling disappearance of forest resources, the district’s land and environmental conservation office has pioneered to make thorough forest inventory of the remaining forest patches in Horro Guduru so that they
would be protected before they absolutely disappear. The startling disappearance of forests was made in this district very recently, within the last couple of decades, owing to unrestrained detrimental impacts of agricultural land expansion on forestlands. In response, about 134 forest patches were identified and conceptually bounded. That is, the boundary delimitation of these remaining forest patches of Jaardaga Jaartee district was based on traditional system in which most approximate and inaccurate forest boundary layout was utilised.

For example, the largest natural forest of the district, Meexxii (245 ha), was delimited in the following way: bounded in the north by farmlands of Tefera and Ababu and road for foot; in the south by farmlands of Ababu, Suwale and Masare; in the east by farmlands of Alibe, Yesuf, Sheikh Nuriye and Moges; and in the west by farmlands of Getachew, Teshome and Kasahun. Here, the boundary delimitation technique applied was crude and unscientific. It also hardly isolates the exact boundary fix of both the forestlands and farmlands, which used to make annual extension against the forest. Thus forest has usually been retreating for competitive farmland expansion against its ecozone. Although this pioneering attempt—in Horro Guduru—to know how many forest patches are at hand is encouraging, the method applied to delimit the forests was not. The same unreliable strategy was used to delimit about 134 forest patches in the district. Worse still, unlike other sample districts (Map 2.2) this district has no old growth plantations though some efforts are currently underway. Map 2.2 shows location of sample districts and six old growth forest plantations of the military regime, five of them in Horro district and the rest in Abe Dongoro district.
The Economy

Horro Guduru is potentially one of the richest areas in Oromia regional state. Agriculture is the acme of its economy. Yet it is still employing archaic methods where local peasants almost in a nadir livelihood that substantially expresses depths of despair of the rural mass, especially in times of crop failure. This subsistence economy, agricultural means of livelihood for more than 90 percent of Horro Guduru population. There are farm animals and crop plants embedded within this livelihood realm. Farm animals include cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, mules, horses, and chicken. The major crops being cultivated in Horro Guduru are depicted in Table 2.3. On the whole, one and in rare cases two crops are harvested annually from the same field. Because of its relatively favourable climate, normally there is little need for irrigation.

The forests of Horro Guduru are sources of significant timber. Although a portion of the forests has been destroyed, especially since the area’s occupation by the
some still remain in its western regions. However, this by itself was being threatened by mismanagement, particularly through the fast expanding agricultural lands and illegal resettlement activities. At the time of colonisation, a large part (more than three-fourth) of Horro Guduru was reportedly covered with forests. This has been reduced to the present less than 18 per cent. In addition to timber trees, medicinal and fragrant plants and trees producing different kinds of products grow in diversity. Myrrh and frankincense are gathered from wild trees by local women and sold at local markets. Forests, besides being sources of timber and medicine, are also useful in the conservation of water and soil, and as shelter for wildlife. This means that they underpin the subsistent agricultural economy. They also have important cultural, religious and aesthetic values.

Horro Guduru has important mineral deposits though hitherto unutilised. The Abee Dongoro district has large iron ore deposit—about 18 km x 18 km or 324 km²—at a place known as Walage, apart from its large mineral water deposit at a place named Hora Jayii. It has also large deposits of precious stones and sands. The Horro and Jaardagaa Jaartee districts also have large mineral deposits, especially clay soil and sand stone. The Horro district has also iron ore deposit at a place named Gilbixxee in Caato environ. In addition, tungsten ore deposit is said to have been found at Iccaaraa in Guduru district and at Dhagaa Roobaa in Jaardagaa Jaartee district. This mineral has significant application in armaments. When alloyed with nickel and iron or cobalt to form heavy alloys, tungsten is used in kinetic energy penetrators as an alternative to depleted uranium, in applications of ordinary small arms bullets. In general, these potential minerals of Horro Guduru could have served to bolster the local economy or it might have served as major sources of revenue for the state, should there have been scientific inquiry and exploitation using modern machinery.

Agricultural livelihood systems are at their stagnant or declining growth in Horro Guduru. One locally important cereal crop, xaaflii (Eragrostis), ultimately takes almost all the responsibility for static or deteriorating agricultural livelihood systems in the area. This is because the cultivation of xaaflii requires full exploitation of the highest labour possible. But its productive return appears extremely appalling. Peasants have to plow the land at least for seven rounds just keeping weeks interval based on suitable turns of rainfall and sunlight. Again, they have to thresh, with horde of livestock, the seven or more rounds tilled ground to make it
favourable for growth of this grassy crop. Still peasants have to engage in about two months
difficult weeding period of this crop for in some cases large sized weeds even tend to overwhelm
and choke this grassy crop. Furthermore, as compared to other more productive crops like maize
and wheat, harvesting and threshing as well as winnowing of this grassy crop takes more energy,
labour and time of the peasants. *Xaafii*, is an annual grass, a species of lovegrass native to the
northern Ethiopian highlands. Table 2.3 portrays some basic clues on the main agricultural crops
being cultivated in Horro Guduru.

Table 2.3: Area under temporary and permanent crops by crop type in Horro Guduru, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop Type</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Crops</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain crops</td>
<td>314,639.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>241,906.72</td>
<td>76.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses</td>
<td>18,767.32</td>
<td>5.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oilseeds</td>
<td>53,964.94</td>
<td>17.15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetables</strong></td>
<td>2,363.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head cabbage</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian cabbage</td>
<td>104.02</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>46.68</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green peppers</td>
<td>266.44</td>
<td>11.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red peppers</td>
<td>1,937.03</td>
<td>81.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Root crops</strong></td>
<td>3,440.14</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beetroot</td>
<td>18.87</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onion</td>
<td>95.38</td>
<td>5.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>2,682.67</td>
<td>77.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>157.59</td>
<td>4.58</td>
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<td>Sweet potatoes</td>
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<td>Taro</td>
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<td>1.22</td>
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<td><strong>Permanent Crops</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit Crops</td>
<td>1,162.23</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>667.89</td>
<td>57.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lemons</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mangoes</td>
<td>411.81</td>
<td>35.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
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<td>Papayas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stimulant</strong></td>
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<td>Chat</td>
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<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>Hops</td>
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<td>21.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other permanent crops</td>
<td>101.34</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>101.34</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Computed from Ethiopian agricultural sample enumeration (FDRE 2003),
results for Oromia region, Part IIIA, p. 49 and Part IIIB, p. 22.
A) Traditional Marriage Types and Practices

Basically the Oromo practice monogamy (a union of one man and one woman) marriage institution and exogamy (marriage outside seven blood generations). Polygamy (practice of having more than one wife or husband at once, bigamous or more), polygyny (polygamy in which one man has more than one wife at a time) and polyandry (a polygamy in which one woman has more than one husband at a time) are less or rarely tolerated as per the *Gadaa* system. But there has been limited adherence to the rules set by this system. In fact, the followers of Islamic and Christianity religions less abide in both the tradition of the *Gadaa* system and monogamy among the Oromo. Nevertheless, some Oromo religion followers also practice polygyny, implying declining adherence to the tradition of monogamy.

Marriage life is highly revered in Oromo custom, for several reasons, and when maintained in that spirit divorce is rarely available. First, in Oromo worldview an individual is believed complete only when engaged in marriage life; otherwise there believed to exist a mythical gulf in the life of an individual which makes him or her incomplete. There has been firm believe that it is only the marriage institution which makes unmarried man and unmarried woman complete by supplying the mythical missing link; the essence of being a social being lies to some extent in being husband and a wife. Second, the main purpose of perpetuating social life is believed to be met through marriage institution. Marriage in Oromo custom is expected to perpetuate and expand genealogical tree which could be met through procreation. Unless one engages in marriage life, procreation is unthinkable in the normal sense of Oromo marriage tradition which proscribes procreation through unexamined and culturally unacceptable practice. Finally, the most important reason why marriage is highly respected in Oromo culture seems lasting existence of the family and the society at large. Obviously, the family is the fundamental unit of the society yet the very nucleus of the family per se is the marriage institution.

The most desirable marriage type in Oromo marriage custom is named *naqata* (betrothal). In this type of marriage heed and critique has often been maintained through active engagement of the local elderly. The local elderly endorse the significance of the marriage to be concluded from cultural point of view. This marriage type is arranged according to the genealogical linkages of the parents, not necessarily according to the desires, interests, choices,
knowledge and tastes of the couples. It means the couples are made to live after their marital entitlement not the life of their own choice but that of their parents’ and the wider kinship. In actual fact, the taste of the offspring and that of their parents and kinship may not match in which it may create some marital problems. As the proposal for marriage seldom comes from the couples and as they hardly have active participation in the whole processes or decisions, the costs, burdens, and benefits which would happen in their marital life might be in jeopardy.

Precluding the couples from their marriage choice and decision in tradition was mainly because of fear of concluding marriage among kinship or clan members as the couples might not well knew their distant relatives and clan members. On these account, marriage is used to have been arranged by the family and elderly members of the community who exactly knew the genealogical setup. However, this trend has been increasingly waning nowadays because of cultural change mainly inclination to modern education and spread of Protestant religious doctrine. Modern education has “liberated” the youth from traditional “dogma”. Protestant religious doctrine has been inundating the Horro Guduru but it does not give consideration of any sort to traditional marriage practice as couples are expected to engage in marriage keeping the order set in religious doctrine. Marriage in Protestant doctrine must happen through honest love, prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and solemn oath to abide in marital life till death. The implication is that divorce is strictly prohibited in whatever ground unlike in the traditional case where, for instance, a woman who did not give birth to a baby for long for her supposed sterility can be divorced.

Urge for children could lead to divorce when the same is not achieved in traditional knowledge system, i.e., lack of expediency in having children. Because, children are source of honour for the wives and a lack of them is tantamount to disgrace. The wife feels that she is dishonoured for “her failure” to bear a child. Asmerom’s (1973) ethnography among the Borana Oromo witness, “The Borana woman wants children more than anything else in the world….” This chronic problem of a “barren” could be settled when she permits her husband to marry second wife—bigamy—and adopts the son of that wife. This implies also that polygyny could be tolerated on reasonable context in Oromo marriage custom though the husband need to engage in it with prior and heedful thought regarding whether he could fairly uphold all his wives and maintain a balanced social, economic, psychological and biological treatment for them.
Aseennaa (elopement) is another popular marriage type, especially by those who could less afford the arranged marriage. Other marriage types which less frequently allure public attention and favour include butii (abduction), sabbat marii (instant marriage) and levirate. Sororate is seldom practiced. Table 2.4 further illustrates the marriage types, their popularity, and noticeable trends witnessed in Horro Guduru’s hitherto traditional marriage history.

Table 2.4: Horro Guduru customary marriage types, popularity, and trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage Types*</th>
<th>Popularity</th>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Factor for the trend**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naqata (Betrothal)</td>
<td>highest</td>
<td>declining</td>
<td>less affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aseennaa (elopement)</td>
<td>higher</td>
<td>rising</td>
<td>more affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbat-Marii (instant marriage)</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>declining</td>
<td>less favoured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butii (abduction)</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>declining</td>
<td>legal ban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaala (levirate marriage)</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td>less favoured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gashaa (magico-marriage)</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td>Protestantism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigabii (concubine marriage)</td>
<td>unpopular</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td>less favoured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork, August 2010 and January 2011.

*Another type of marriage which need separate study so that it may be empirically ascertained is sororate (sister inheriting the husband of her deceased sister for the cause of her children), i.e., as a type of marriage a deceased wife’s sister inherits her husband for the purpose of nurturing her children; nowadays, it is almost non-existent though it has happened inBurqituu Oborraa of Baqqalee village in Horro district in 2008 (informant TG, April 2010). **These factors are the major ones.

B) Basic Features of the Oromo Family and Kinship Structure

The Oromo family structure is basically extended in type. One can hardly find nuclear family structure. Traditionally, the husband used to possess the overall authority, control and decision-making concerning matters pertaining to the family, particularly the ones away from home. The wife, however, shares fundamental responsibilities regarding the domestic spheres. Feeding the family and child rearing appears exclusive role of female members of the household. Whilst, the male members engage in farming and looking after cattle both in the day and night times, the labour away from the domestic arena. The family is the fundamental unit of nurturing kinship systems and terminologies and other socio-cultural environments among the society. Children usually gain first hand experiences about kinship and other life ways through the family institution. The extended nature of the family appears a merit towards avenue of holding intimate relations among kinships. This implies that kinship is basically structured by the family institution in Oromo socio-cultural systems.
In Oromo socio-cultural practices, adoption is common in which they used to adopt young and adults alike through the processes of guddifachaa (adoption) and harma-hodhaa (breast-feeding) within the family. After the colonial conquest they did also recognise kiristinnaa (kinship through Orthodox Tewahido Christianity’s baptism). The kinship structure appears to have two basic domains—agnatic and affinal or blood relatives on one hand and relatives emerging through marriage and other social bonds on the other. Kinship structure often resonate the fourteen Horro republics of the six or seven hundred years back. This had more likely composed of Horro’s own clan chiefs despite their common rule under the Odaa Bulluq Gadaa system and its assembly till their last Abbaa Gadaa known as Tooboo Mandiyaa. This Abbaa Gadaa had allegedly ruled the fourteen Horro republics from 1822-1830 and said to have been blessed by the last famous spiritual leader of the Horro republics named Guyyoo Mandiidaa. The later rulers such as Garbaa Hurruubaa (father of Abiishee Garbaa) were not Abbaa Gadaa but Abbaa Donlua (minister of defense) and his son Abiishee was claimed a usurper in Horro Guduru political history for he did not come to power keeping the law of the Gadaa system, but by force instead. Yet, Abiishee Garbaa has become the most political icon in the political history of Horro Guduru.

In Oromo culture, both the stability and serenity of the family and the kinship setup, just in line with the spirit of the Gadaa system, had decisive role in assuming and ensuring the wider political leadership in the society. The more the social status of the family and kinship was incongruent with the acceptable customs of the society and the higher the probability for a man from that family and kinship to miss holding political office. This is because the Oromo believe as reliable evidence that the family and kinship which cultivates men in resemblance with the customs of the Gadaa system could also manage the larger society keeping that experience. Thus, basic reference for ensuring and sanctioning one with societal and political authority usually goes to the realities and experiences traced back in the lives of the basic unit of the society, the family. The extended nature of the family in the culture could have served as important avenue for exercising desirable ingredients required for assuming and ensuring the political responsibility in the Gadaa system.
C) Ethnic and Religious Groups

I) Ethnic Composition

According to the 2007 population and housing census report of Ethiopia, the Oromo constitute the dominant ethnic group in Horro Guduru, comprising of about 500,000 or 13 per cent of the population. The Amhara constitute nearly 76,000 or 13 per cent of the population. The remaining percentage belongs to other minor ethnic groups (FDRE 2010).

II) Religious Composition

According to the 1994 and 2007 population and housing census reports of Ethiopia, different religions were being practiced in Horro Guduru: Orthodox, Protestantism, Islam, Traditional (Waqeffannaa) and “Others”. Figure 2.1 portrays the fluctuating trends of followers corresponding to these different religious categories within thirteen years (from 1994 to 2007). Within these thirteen years census gap, one can observe a dramatic increase in Protestantism (11.52 per cent rise) and significant fall in followers of the traditional religion (25.39 per cent fall) followed by that of Orthodox (11.25 per cent fall).

Figure 2.1: Trends in followers of six religious groups in Horro Guduru by per cent and 60.00%.

Source: Computed from FDRE reports of 1996 & 2010.
Figure 2.1 shows that out of the six religious categories in Horro Guduru, Protestantism extraordinarily raised from 7.76 per cent (31,916 persons) in 1994 to 42.98 per cent (245,050 persons) in 2007. This is a dramatic increase in Horro Guduru’s track record on the number of different religion followers, just within a little more than a decade. This figure even seems understimation vis-à-vis the observed overwhelming rise of Protantant population in Horro Guduru. This figure reveals that followers of Protestant Christianity constitute about 42.99 per cent of the total population of Horro Guduru. Nevertheless, series of casual and intentional observations of numerous religious rituals being attended at several places in Horro Guduru by this group show that the number of Protestants might be beyond two-third of the total population.

Attendants of the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity in Horro Guduru appear to have plummeted from 49.98 per cent (205,360 persons) in 1994 to 38.46 per cent (219,280 persons) in 2007. Yet, interview with religious heads of this religion and observation of annual ritual attendants show a severe dwindling in its number of attendants, thus it could be far below the figure reported by the state. Some other three religious categories have maintained more or less keeping the same pattern within this census period except for the traditional religious groups. The latter has increasingly declined nearly by two-third, just from 34.29 per cent (141,108 persons) in 1994 to 8.90 per cent (50,729 persons) in 2007.

Reasons for remarkable rise in Protestantism and significant fall in Traditional and Orthodox Tewahido Christianity followers in Horro Guduru could be:

1) Effective utilisation of freedom of religion in Ethiopia since the endorsement of the 1995 constitution;
2) Preaching of the gospel in mother tongue, Afaan Oromo;
3) Preaching of the gospel by indigenous people;
4) The assumption that most traditional religious practices or elements were castigated as demonic so that people need to resort to Protestantism;
5) The fact that some of its attendants viewed the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity as agent of the past colonial injustice such as prohibition of preaching of the gospel through mother tongue and agency of indigenous people; and
6) Rise in literacy rate, especially among the youth who constitute the majority of Protestant religion followers in Horro Guduru. Ability to read and write helped the young to read...
and understand the Bible on their own and disregard the role of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity priests for religious purpose.

All these factors had been enabling Protestantism to pervade Horro Guduru. Protestant religious congregations were being inundated with people newly converted from different religious groups including the Orthodox Tewahido Christians, Traditional and Islamic religions, i.e. from any walk of religious life. Conversions to Protestantism actually do not only comprise people who could read and write (literates) that they can measure and discern the facts of religious preaching. It also constitutes people who are non-literates, as they are in fact convinced through effective utilisation of freedom of religion and mother tongue for preaching the gospel by their kins—just converted individuals. This kind of Protestant percolation of Horro Guduru was primarily a phenomenon since some twenty years back though Tadesse (2010) contends that it was since the earliest advent of American Protestant mission in Giddaa Kiiramu in 1965.

D) Education

Modern education was a phenomenon in Ethiopia since 1908 and in Horro Guduru in the second half of the twentieth century. This implies that the history of modern education in Horro Guduru is very recent, which was because of Amhara imperial rulers’ unwillingness to provide access to modern education for the Oromo. After bitter struggle with strong determination, Oromo local elders were able to open the first primary school in Shaambu town in 1951. Today, educational access, particularly primary education is increasingly expanding throughout Horro Guduru to the extent of vicinity level but school for under-school aged (below 7 years) children is likely underrepresented. Overall, coverage and access to education is expanding recently in unprecedented manner, in which higher educational institutions such as technical vocational studies, one teachers college in Shaambu town (since September 2010) and a branch of Wallagga University in the same town (since September 2010) has been established.

According to the 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia, 51.2 per cent of the male population and 33.5 per cent of the female population were literates from the total 5+ years old population of Horro Guduru (FDRE 2010, report for Oromia region part II). This means that more than 84 per cent of the total population within 5+ years old are claimed to be literate.
E) Health Coverage and Accessibility

Horro Guduru as a zone has only one but under facilitated hospital, constructed under the military regime. During the periods before the military regime establishing health infrastructure for the people of Horro Guduru has never been thought, because its inhabitants were not favoured by those governments preceding the military regime.

F) Demographic Features

Migration: Except in the 2007 population and housing census report of Ethiopia, it is difficult to find consistent and reliable data on the migration dynamics in Horro Guduru over years. From the 2007 census report, the overall total population of Horro Guduru is about 57004 (2010). From this crude list, it was observed that the Abee Dongoro rural part has been the site of significant emigrant population from outside of Oromia region over years, though this is not documented in the official data. Regional resettlement is prohibited as per the current constitutional provisions of the federal government (Dessalegn 2008). These migrants flock to Abee Dongoro from Amhara regional state to the north, especially from parts of Gojjam, and make illegal resettlement there by clearing intact natural forests. Charts 2.2 and 2.3 present the migration dynamics in Horro Guduru and Abee Dongoro district respectively.

![Chart 2.2: Migrants in Horro Guduru in %, 2007](source: FDRE 2010, results for Oromia region; Part III, pages 75-76)
Chart 2.2 indicates that out of the total migrants recorded in 2007 in Horro Gudur than two-third (68.7 per cent) resides in rural areas while the remaining figure (31.3 live in urban areas. This implies at least two attention grabbing points. One, it implies t people used to migrate to rural areas than urban centres; and it also reveals that peoples rural areas could have got a significant impact on the well-being of natural resources lik The latter implication sounds most prominently in the context of Abee Dongoro district.

![Chart 2.3: Abee Dongoro district migrants in %, 2007](chart)

Source: FDRE 2010, results for Oromia region, part III, p. 75-76

According to Chart 2.3 the largest population (95 per cent) of migrants in Abee resides in rural areas and the remaining 5 per cent live in urban areas. This implies not existence of heavy pressure on natural resources such as land in its rural areas bi indicates that the district is almost a rural district with highly insignificant urban flavour.

Generally, the migration dynamics in the sample districts exhibit dissimilar figi Abee Dongoro case still maintained the largest share when one makes comparison amon districts and across the Horro Guduru total migration dynamics (Table 2.5). Certainly, t no significant variation in male and female composition of migrants both in Horro Gu sample districts.
Table 2.5: Migrant population of Horro Guduru zone and sample districts by sex, urban/rural and percentage, 2007

| Area                      | Number of migrants | Per cent |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                           | Female             | Male     | Urban    | Rural    | Total    | zone     | sample   |
| Horro Guduru              | 60169              | 59508    | 37422    | 82255    | 119677   | 100      | ---      |
| Sample Districts          |                    |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Horro                     | 3618               | 2849     | 1761     | 4706     | 6467     | 5.40     | 13.54    |
| Jaardagaa-Jaartee         | 4358               | 4079     | 3148     | 5291     | 8437     | 7.05     | 17.66    |
| Abee Dongoro              | 15980              | 16894    | 1643     | 31231    | 32874    | 27.45    | 68.80    |
| Total                     | 23956              | 23822    | 6552     | 41228    | 47778    | 39.92    | 100      |

Source: FDRE 2010, as computed from results for Oromia region; Part III, pages 75-76

As Table 2.5 demonstrates, slightly more than two-third of the migrant population of the sample districts currently exist in Abee Dongoro while the remaining, which together constitute roughly more than a quarter, live in Horro and Jaardagaa Jaartee districts. This endorses that Abee Dongoro district is mostly a home of migrants; it has been more inhabited by migrant population than the non-migrants.

**Fertility:** The 2007 census of report of Ethiopia reveals that Horro Guduru’s total number of fertile women within the age group of 15-49 was 129,719 while the total births from this group within 12 months prior to the census was 16,959. From this the number of rural women and the corresponding births was 111,860 and 15,699 respectively. Generally, the total fertility rate for the zone for this age group was 4.260 from which the urban and rural share comprises of 2.690 and 4.475 respectively (FDRE 2010, results for Oromia, part III, p.83).

**Mortality:** According to the 2007 census report of Ethiopia, out of the total number of children ever born (487,360) of the total number of women 10 years old and older (194,118), 86.61 per cent (422,113) were surviving while the rest 13.39 per cent (65,247) were dead. Out of the total number of children ever born of the total number of women indicated above, the total male children and their surviving correspondence were 51.79 per cent (252,405) and 44.20 per cent (215,461) respectively; while total female children and their surviving correspondence constituted 51.04 per cent (234,955) and 48.96 per cent (206,652) respectively. According to this census report, child survival status was higher in urban areas than in rural areas because of relatively better sanitary and modern health facility.
Health Care: Proper health care, particularly in rural areas of Horro Guduru is almost absolutely absent. Even there is only one hospital for the overall 570,040 total population of Horro Guduru, Shaambe hospital, located in Shaambe town. In fact, 42 health centres and 163 health posts were established in different districts from 2004 to 2010 and about 16 health posts were under construction (interview with local authorities, June 2011). This is a very recent story in the area’s health related developments, though different kinds of diseases especially respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and tuberculosis have been raging as common causes of death.

Currently, the Horro Guduru has about 179 vicinities from its total nine districts. Some rural villages are devoid of any health care and facility. Because of limited health facility coverage, the current health care is severely inadequate. Above all, it has always been quite difficult to find specialised health personnel in Horro Guduru. The trend in Shaambe hospital’s staff turnover alone is alarming which is because of poor facility and infrastructure available to health specialists. This has been putting the people in serious peril of health problems. Thinking about health facilities like ambulances is impossible in the area. Thanks to the forests of the area that the people have been using wooden stretchers, benches, chairs and beds to carry their patients to and from far-off health centres, posts and in some cases to the only hospital located in Shaambe town—roughly a hinterland of Horro Guduru.

A Glance at Some Features of Oromo Customs

The Horro Guduru as a people signifies Oromo ethnic group which have descended from the Macca-Tuulama fundament, one of the five fundaments of the whole Oromo people in Ethiopia. They are speakers of the Cushitic language family of the Afro-Asiatic super family of languages. In this sense, their specific language is known as Afaan Oromo which utilises Latin script for academic and administrative purposes since the downfall of the military regime of Ethiopia in 1991 (Tilahun 1993). The Oromo of this area invoke reference to common history, belief system, clothing, popular cultural foods, and ancestors. Hence, it is useful to demonstrate some important Oromo customary ways of life accessed from primary and secondary sources.

Dressing: the traditional male dress was named jilba jalee (a kind of trouser) but for females it includes full body size, locally made cotton dress often named wandaboo, qoloo, katee, etc. Children used to dress kittaa (dress). But these all have disappeared nowadays because of consuming cultural contact, especially since the last thirty or forty years. Instead, western style
dressings are common in Horro Guduru today. In the past five or so years females never wear jeans trousers but this has become common practice within the last few years which shows the speed how local cultural practices are being lost in favour of western style clothes. Nevertheless, some beginnings are in progress to return to indigenous and locally designed cotton clothes though it shows a kind of departure from the original ones in fashion—more modified version is preferred now.

Food: the most popular cultural dish of the Oromo is named *cumboo*. It resembles pancake but different in thickness and content—it is prepared from *xaafti diimaa* (red Ergoritis) and is eaten with butter and cheese. Generally, the Oromo are non-vegetarian category in dietary habit and mostly use cereal crops and vegetables—fruits, leaves and roots—for food. A carbohydrate staple of Horro Guduru diet often prepared from *xaafti* is named *buddeena*. *Xaafti* belongs to the cereal crops under the grain crops and it constitutes slightly more than three-fourth of food crops grown in Horro Guduru. *Buddeena* is a monotonous food and may involve more than 95 per cent of the food eaten in the area. Many other foods are eaten in small amounts as merely a garnish or snack. These include meat from wild and domesticated edible animals—cow or ox, sheep, goat, and hen or cock from livestock and antelope, bushbuck, pig, and partridge from the wild animals. Leafy greens, bananas, root crops, fruits, and nuts constitute some domesticated dietary components. Other protein sources in other cultures such as meats of horse, donkey, and mule; insects like earthworms, and millipedes, and rats and the like are not yet part of Oromo diet though they are part of diet in other cultures such the Papua New Guinea (Townsend 2008). This is perhaps for cultural prohibition. Preparing foods was the main work activity of the women. Women sift, winnow, and grind grain crops and then dough, bake, and serve with *ittoo* (stew) which they have cooked. Cooking *ittoo* per se demands the women to sift, winnow, and make partially or fully powdered grind of peas or beans, apart from preparing spicy ingredients of the same, *ittoo*. The most labourious cooking activity appears preparing consommé of hen or cock. It demands women to apply skill and patience to slaughter the hen into 12 “naturally” arranged pieces or body parts and thereby washing for some appreciable rounds and then soaking the raw meat with lemon juice and pea or bean powder prior to cooking. It also demands women to prepare large amount of onion—in most cases about 5 kg per hen—and considerable spicy materials before cooking.
Artifacts: Oromo artifacts are almost entirely forest products. Observation of household furniture, musical instruments and weaponry materials attest this assertion. In the past, when the people have been living their autonomous socio-political, economic, cultural and religious lives, even kettle and pillow have been prepared from woods. For instance, wooden pillow (boraatii) has been prepared by craftsmen from tree stems that it could be used always without a case, i.e. pillowcase or pillowslip as washable cover for pillow is not part of the design for boraatii. It has been used to rest ones head on in bed as crafted as it appears.

Grouped under these material cultures include dwelling houses, agricultural instruments, musical instruments, household assets, etc. The Oromo have rich man made cultural products, which are based on forest resources, most of which exist only as artifacts. That is, those cultural products made from woods by the Oromo for domestic purposes in the past now are trivially in use due to transformation from nature based technology to increasing use of modern technology products purchased from local or otherwise markets.

Ajjeesaa: this custom refers to a practice of killing dangerous wild animals, namely, lion and buffalo for personal fame and social prestige. It has been one of the most popular cultural practices among adult males of Horro Guduru. Nowadays, it happens in clandestine basis only, because killing lions and buffaloes or wild animals is legally banned in Ethiopia (Melaku 2008).

Jaarsa biyyaa institution: this is institution of local elders which has often been used for arbitration, reconciliation, mediation and negotiation. Arbitrations, mediations and reconciliations are made through this institution mostly to settle land disputes and other kinds of conflicts and disagreements happening among the community. Although it might not be as rigorous and intact as the jaarsa biyyaa institution among other Oromo, namely, the Arsii and Borana Oromo in southeastern and southern Oromia regional state in Ethiopia (Mamo 2006, Asmerom 1973, 2000; Bassi 2005), this institution has been playing important roles both in dispute resolutions and marriage negotiations in Horro Guduru. Defects in its rigorousness and intactness were as such not attributed to differences it might reveal in the very nature of Oromo customs. It was, however, due to prolonged and more successful entwined politico-religious rule during the Amhara colonial conquest which had seldom tolerated indigenous customary practices in the area.
Negotiations are made through this institution to arrange traditional marriage, typically *naqata*. In marriage issues per se, the *jaarsa biyyaa* institution as a customary institution plays pivotal roles in uprooting sources of potential conflicts between couples, relatives and others at the local level. For such resolutions, elderly members depend on marriage rules and regulation they devise and execute as relevant institutions which could preclude conflicts and social chaos. These include the two marriage rules of Odaa Bulluq explained below.

“Ilmi hiyyessaa fiudha malee haafa waan jirnuf, durhis manatti haafa waan jirnuf, kunimmoo rakko heddaa muraan gohaa waan jirnuf, seera gaa elaa keeyna keessatti gatiin durha tokkoo qarshii 116 qofa ta’ee seerri tumameera.” (Literally, “Whereas sons of the poor were living in abstention of marriage, whereas girls were remaining in their parents’ house for no one dares to marry them because of high cost of dowry, whereas these has been causing undesirable social-cultural consequences, now we declare our marriage rule that the dowry cost of a girl is only 116 birr (less than US$1 nowadays).

This marriage law was formulated under the auspices of Jaalataa Abbaa Namaa in 1967 at Odaa Bulluq considering that adult males were unable to marry because of high dowry demanded from bride’s parents. Dowry in Oromo culture is paid by the bridegroom’s parents. The consequence of high dowry is believed to be detrimental not only to financially non-affording males but also to girls as they would become vulnerable to remaining in their parents’ house without marriage. A girl who might have remained in her parent’s house without marriage is often ostracised in the name of *haftuu* (offensive name which damages her psychic and social status as a female).

The first *Abbaa Gadaa*—indigenous political leader of the Oromo—of Odaa Bulluq after colonialism, Dabalaa Dheekkamaa, has revised this law considering the effects of the past decision that it remains too rigid to suit to changing situations. Thus, the *Caffee* (council of elders and *Abbaa Gadaas*) of his time, eight years back from the June 2011 Gadaa Horro Bulluq ritual, has declared 1000 birr for dowry (about US$60). Addunyaa Daammamasaa, the newly elected *Abbaa Gadaa* of Horro Bulluq, in June 2011, was silent about this law for it was considered that youths have been not abiding with the customary decisions. Traditional marriage practices in general have been declining because of several reasons so that revising customary marriage rules would end up in futile as it has been the case to date ever since the last two
decades. The most significant factors for the decline include expansion of modern education, religious impact chiefly Protestantism and preference to municipality certificate.

**Forest Based Oromo Folktales**

Some Oromo mythologies unfolding in Horro Guduru for mere ethnographic arousal, i.e. to call for self-contained exhaustive ethnography included *auteete* (fecundity goddess), *ekera* (ghost), *cagginoo* (days on which working and borrowing domestic materials are precluded), *dhaabbata* (annual libation by non-Bacho Oromo to arrest rushing whirlwind spirit), and *booranticha* (annual libation by Bacho Oromo to arrest rushing whirlwind spirit), just to mention only a few. As these mythological domains of the Oromo customs are exceedingly disappearing in response to cultural changes, there is a need to at least engrave them on ethnographic platform.

What is rendered here is, nevertheless, one impressive mystical story in relation to dense natural forests in Horro Guduru. Although believe in sacredness of some ‘special’ forests, groves, trees, springs and mountainous areas in Horro Guduru could be understood as mere myths which need relevant description as part of Oromo mythologies, only one case is provided here. It is believe about *shankutaa*. Horro Guduru, predominantly abode of Oromo ethnic group, had some thick forest topographies which were almost impenetrable and unwelcoming on individual basis. *Caato, Hangar,* and *Garchi* present a good case in point. Qonge forest was the same in the past. In the former periods, attempt to traverse the Qonge forest topography on single basis was nearly unthinkable, particularly for females. Females did not try to penetrate thick forest topographies in the absence of at least one male attendant. There was one thought that cannot be easily verified empirically: it was the myth of *shankuta*. This myth signals a legendary presence of a man who has killed a woman and in consequence is believed to have inherited her menstrual cycle; thereafter he must live fugitive life in forests to escape social taboo. In other words, *shankutaa* stands for a mystical presence of a man who has murdered a woman and in consequence has allegedly inherited the monthly flow of menstrual cycle from the victim so that he had to live away from social space for he would become victim of possible revenge. Indeed, to purge off this female natural trait he had to murder another female by slaughtering her into five pieces, which locally means *shankutaa*. The most suitable avenue to do so could be the environs of thick forest topographies which had restricted quick movements and intermingling for possible reach while the victim echoes grief ululation for help against *shankuta*. For females,
the presence of dense forests on their way to fetch water or collect firewood reminds an impalpable presence of *shankuta* that it trembles or quakes them in their effort to pass through impenetrable forests. Some forests were believed to be abode of *shankuta*, which might be reasonable believe to scare travelling across them on single basis.

The myth briefly raised here was prevalent across the northern flank of the upper course of Qonge forest in former times. But now, as its appalling dense forests have been already removed for agriculture and physical inter-visibility has become easy in consequence, a person can cross its formerly awesome topographies. Yet, the story may be considered one reason why some uniquely nature-friendly customs have been developed in various pockets within forests and river valley ranges of Horro Guduru, as in some cases, the natural environment appears to have made the native community honest and cheerful to natural entities such as forests though the story of *shankuta* demonstrates the otherwise. Here one may discern that the customary life of the Oromo had been more dictated by the natural environment than the vice versa. Thus, dealing with such myths may help the purpose of delineating the vice versa impact of some local customs and some natural environments in shaping people-forest interactions.