

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

AN INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL MECHANISMS TO PERIODIC
DROUGHTS: - A LESSON FROM EAST GUJI OROMO PASTORALIST
COMMUNITIES, SOUTH ETHIOPIA

Kuli Abee Tura¹, Kefale Getnet², Mengesha Robso³

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, Bule Hora University,
Bule Hora, Ethiopia

^{2,3}Senior Lecturer, Department of History and Heritage Management, Bule Hora University,
Bule Hora, Ethiopia

Email: ³mengewaja@gmail.com

Kuli Abee Tura, Kefale Getnet, Mengesha Robso: An Indigenous Survival Mechanisms To Periodic Droughts: - A Lesson From East Guji Oromo Pastoralist Communities, South Ethiopia -- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 18(1). ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Drought, famine, indigenous knowledge, survival mechanisms, traditional knowledge, pastoralists, East Guji Oromo.

ABSTRACT

This manuscript tries to explore the continual droughts and its phenomena's in the Southern Ethiopia East Guji Oromo pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities that exhibit periodically via examining the possible root causes which fuel for periodical disasters and pestilences occurrence, and communities age old practice of indigenous acquired skills and wisdom's in the face of hardship as a means of coping and surviving mechanisms. Like, Raagaa [prediction the future] practice as drought detection or early warning mechanisms], Hirba, Dabare and Haqaaqqi [drought recovery local mechanisms] resistance mechanisms of periodic drought, cop up several disasters, for centuries with in the East Guji zone pastoral Communities. In this regard, since Ethiopia has many number pastoralist, semi-pastoralist and food unsecured communities that are prone to any time drought and unexpected disasters, the case of East Guji zone Oromo societies experience and traditions would serve as a lesson for those drought vulnerable groups of people.

1. Introduction

Drought can be defined as the highest stage of scarcity and shortage of production and consumptions which would result in famine of catastrophic destruction and wide spread death both for human and livestock population (Amarthya, 1981). It occurred throughout history in this dynamic world at different times and place through various causes and factors. In its long history Ethiopia witnessed large numbers of drought, epidemic diseases, famine, pestilences and starvation (Mamadou, 2006). As Peter (2010) argued that drought is not new to Ethiopia; the history of drought and famine in Ethiopia goes back to the first half of the ninth century. In those days, drought was regarded as God's punishment for the sin of human beings.

In response to this drought, people had done nothing except invoking their Lord and praying in their religious institution to avoid it from them. As a result, large number of affected people and cattle were perished. However most of the drought was not documented well till the sixteenth century (Mamadou, 2006). As Alula (1992) stated that, between 1888---1984 more than 31 major drought resulted famines occurred in Ethiopia and more than a million people died. Of the main causes for drought was shortage of rain, crop failure, locust invasion or plague and cattle disease.

In the history of modern Ethiopia, the 1888-92, 1973-74 and 1984-85 major drought resulted famine and starvations left a bad scar on the whole Ethiopian people. The three major drought and famines claimed the lives of many people and cattle Solely the 1888-92 [great famine] or 'Evil days' that which was caused by cattle diseases called Rinder-pest, alone destroyed almost 90% of the country's cattle population and killed one-third of Ethiopia's population (Alula, 1992). The 1973/74 drought and famine was also equally severe. According to Vijay Gupta (1986:34) "The 1973/74 drought and famine was almost serious because it perished 200,000 peoples, 650,000 cattle, 525,000 sheep, 450,000 goats and 50,000 camels, without the world even knowing about them, since Emperor Hayila Sellasie turned a deaf ear to the suffering peoples" (Alula, 1992).

In addition to this more than seven million out of forty million Ethiopian people were affected by the 1984/85 drought resulted famine. But, later through the collaboration efforts of communities' age old local hardship mitigating mechanisms, foreign donors, non-governmental and governmental organizations the catastrophic effects of the two major droughts were reduced (Peter, 2010).

For instance, as response to the 1984/5 drought and famine, affected Ethiopian ethnic groups used several coping systems and later European donors donated them more than \$80 million and 900,000 tons of relief food (Peter, 2010).

So, since the Southern Ethiopian people particularly the theme of this study focused East Guji Oromo pastoral communities also parts of those above mentioned incidents they faced different catastrophic challenges. Thus, to know the level of drought outbreak frequency/durations? the causes of occurrence to those hazards in the study area?, to grasp local communities home grown ways of response and mechanisms to survive their lives and animals from the hazards? Assessing the general overview of drought history in the study area is very crucial.

2. Overview Of Drought in East Guji Pastoral Areas

As Ayinalem (1998, p.34) and Gemechu, (2002) explored that, previously the whole Ethiopian people from north to south and east to west did not escape the catastrophic effects of drought at different times. The northern, north western, southern, south eastern and central parts of Ethiopia have a long history of drought and famine occurrence than the rest parts of Ethiopia. But, the western and south western parts of the country have experienced no devastating drought (Alula, 1992).

However in the minds of most Ethiopians there is almost an equal scar regarding the effects of drought. Many Ethiopians have experienced drought, famine and starvation at one time or another.

But, due to linguistically and ethnic difference among the Ethiopian people, every ethnic group has its own unique words of expression, belief, ways of understanding, anticipation system, and experiences towards the term drought and famine (Ayinalem, 1998). For instance as Alula (1992) and Ayinalem (1998) noted that, the Wolayta people use the word *Namiissaa*, the Amhara people use the word *Diriq-Rihihab*, the Afar use the word *Ululu*, the Tigre call it *Timiet*, the Guraghe use *Gajea*, Somali call it *Habbaahe*, the Oromo *Hongee-Beela* and other Ethiopian ethnic groups use their own customs and languages to understand and conceptualize the word drought (Alula, 1992).

The southern Oromo Eastern Guji people periodic drought and famine history use the word *Hongee-Beela* [to refer to the term of drought and famine] in different time and again. In support of this, Ayinalem (1998) stated that, the Guji people have a good culture of documenting and memorizing historical events in their mind simply through relating with *Abba Gada's* [local chiefs] name and period. Due to this reason, the Guji remembered or memorized those occurred droughts and famines in unforgettable manner (like via referring to by different *Abba Gadas* name and period) (Gemechu, 2002).

As Dhedecha (2006) stated that, before they were incorporated to the central government (i.e. at the ends of the nineteen century) and the introduction of feudalism and *gabbar* [a person who pays tax to the Emperor] system, the lands of Guji was so green and suitable and conducive for life. Honey, milk, butter and meat were the day to day meal of the Guji without any shortage,

since there was no extended gap between poor and rich in holdings of cattle and land (Jamjam, 2007).

But through the division of lands among the warlords or *Naftagnas* [the Emperor troops and native local officials] and implementation of tribute and tax system, was soon followed by cutting of trees or deforestation in needs of expanding fertile farming land. Various environmental, socio-cultural and economic changes took place among the previous Jamjamtu [the current East Guji] land and settler people (Ayinalem, 1998). For instance, drought occurred in the lands of East Guji in the late 1930s through climatic changes, and large numbers of livestock perished as a results of water and pasture shortage for an extended periods of time; some people died due to various climate changes and diseases like-diarrhea and others. And forty years later in 1972/4 another drought occurred in Guji lands which were followed by another catastrophic famine. The Guji people called that the *Bule Dababasa's* drought [Bulé was the 1970s Guji peoples *Abba Gada*] (Gemechu, 2002). According to Jamjam (2011) the 1970s drought was the other worst and devastating one next to the 1984/85 (which affected many areas) drought (Jamajam, 2011).

According to Gemechu (2002) the 1984/5 was caused by seasonal shortage of local rain fall and it was more serious than that of Bule's drought. Because there were no Guji lands which were not affected by it but its effect was so high among the peoples of Adola or Kibra Mangest, Liban and Dolo-Odo. Particularly, large number of people among the areas of Adola pastoralists and peasants faced an acute shortage of food. And, based on the then times *Gada* leaders' name, Guji calls it *Hongee-Beela's of Boru* [Drought of Boru Guyo]. Since 1991 another two serious famines was occurred (i.e. in the year 2000/2001 and 2009). Those two droughts are locally called *Goba Bule's drought* (Jemejem, 2011).

Generally, the Guji lands witnessed various numbers of extended and catastrophic drought and famines. Between 1972 and 1993, more than ten droughts (i.e. 1972/4, 1976, 1977/8, 1982/85, 1992/93/97) and two major catastrophic famines (like, the 1972/74, 1982/4/85) seriously affected the whole areas of Jamjamtu/Guji (Gemechu, 2002).

Due to the occurrences of frequent droughts, hardships and famines the East Guji communities considered themselves as people born and grow in hardship, lead a life of misery, and thus enabled them to develop various home grown hardship surviving mechanisms and tactics (it includes from detection of forecasting of future occur-able droughts through considering different issues, challenging/ tackling ways of occurred droughts and famines, and native recovering mechanisms to restart life again and to re come back to former living situations after occurred droughts and famines was ended) (Ayinalem, 1998).

However, for long periods of time both Ethiopian and foreign researchers, writers and scholars like Peter, (2010), Alula (1992), Of Can etal. (1996), Clark (2000), John etal. (1987), Vijay (1986) and etc. focus of polio-

economical and socio-cultural studies were the northern and central parts of the country. And, during those times the rest Ethiopian ethnic groups studying history was verily marginalized. Even, those scholars attempt was mainly religious, politics and famine history. Community's cultural wisdoms, traditions, customs, home grown skills in a form inquiry, assess, explore and to enabled known by others did not get any enough attempts. Especially, Southern Ethiopian peoples like, the East Guji Oromo pastoral communities home grown hardship coping wisdoms and skills in scholarly ways. Of course, writers like Jamajam (2007), Dereje et al. (2011), Asbe (2007), Tadesse (2004), Dhedecha (2006), Ayinalem (1998) and others tried to discussed the various aspects of Guji Communities lives but they did not give due attention and focus the pastoral communities native hardship mitigating mechanisms in detail.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to assess and explore the outstanding East Guji Oromo home grown periodical drought surviving mechanisms in a brief and clear manner.

3. Material and Methodological Approach

The approaches through which this study conducted were both ethnographic-case study with **descriptive methods** which is considered heavily in field work and includes observation, interview, and other data collecting procedures. For scholars, the basic purpose of ethnographic research is to determine the physical and social environment in which the individuals understudy live and work.

For instance, Best and Khan (1993) stated, in cultural study research, ethnography has been used to study the culture, experiences and traditions of communities that inhibit them. Likewise, descriptive methods also attempts to describe systematically a situation, phenomena, and program or provide information about, say, norms, values, the living conditions of a community, or describes towards attitudes and issues (Kumar, 1996).

Likewise, the data input for the study was both secondary and more primary sources. Like interviews, unstructured observation and focused group discussion were used as tools of primary data collection with purposive sampling techniques of **qualitative data's**.

The primary consideration of the writers was to Judge the participants who could provide the best information to achieve the objective of the study. The researcher, then, tried to use interviewee of local elder informants from East Guji Oromo pastoral communities those who have the required information and willing to share it. Therefore, the required information which could enable the researcher to start with, was collected from qualified and knowledgeable informants; and also secondary published and unpublished materials and sources.

4. Result and Discussions on the Findings

Before, directly discuss to issues of the survival mechanisms of East Guji pastoral communities in the faces of drought and famine hazards, to have a clear understanding and picture about why those people develop such mechanisms, it is better to know the fundamental causes that fuel to the outbreak of those incidences in the study area.

Underlying Causes of Drought in the East Guji Zone Pastoral Areas

The incidences of drought and famine cannot occur by themselves at here and there, there are several economic, environmental, political, social and natural factors, which would be considered as a fuel for the occurrences of drought and famine in Ethiopia (MARC, 2007). The same was true for the southern Ethiopia Guji Oromo people. In the lands of East Guji mainly there were three major causes which have been playing their own negative role or which made the Guji people susceptible for the occurrences of drought and famine for long time. These were climate changes, ethnic conflicts, and the local peoples' sources of livelihood /i.e. pastoralism and semi-agro pastoralism (Gemechu, 2002).

Climate Changes

Climate change refers to a change in climate that is caused by both human beings and natural factors which occurred mostly in average once in 30 years. Change in temperature, rainfall, and precipitation is now becoming common phenomena in this universe (John, 1987). Both developing and developed countries have witnessed the effects of climate change like, flooding, severe coldness, drought, famine and erratic rain fall. There is a general agreement that climate change is caused by excessive emission of greenhouse gasses. Developed nations and the fast growing ones like- China and India emit more than 95% of the greenhouse gasses (MARC and etal, 2007).

However unlike developing countries, developed countries have a good mechanism and played an active role in reduction of the results of climate changes. In addition to this, some developed countries are now supporting those under developing countries in financial, technical and material forms and ways to enable them, to protect themselves from the effects of climate changes and to adapt new phenomena in a systematic and scientific manner. Among those developing countries Ethiopia is the one which her largest population is suffering from the miseries effects of climate change (Peter, 2010).

As Alula (1992) stated that, the Ethiopia carbon dioxide emission is minimal as compared to other developed and fast developing countries of the world. But climate change in Ethiopia is getting worse from time to time. For example, MARC and etal (2007: Xi) stated that, Rainfall is the most variable and unpredictable climatic factor in Ethiopia having the highest (up to 89%) coefficient of variation. Evidences show that annual rainfall over Ethiopia has exhibited a general decreasing trend. Unusual

rainfall occurrences in terms of amount and distribution usually lead to poor harvest or complete crop failure, and shortage of pasture and animal feeds. Decreasing livestock number and productivity, reduction of soil fertility, death of cattle, extreme hotness and coldness, reduction in soil fertility, and expansion of epidemic diseases are among the major results of climatic change in Ethiopia. Such extreme conditions ultimately result in drought with a resultant depletion of assets, societal vulnerability, mass migration, and loss of life (MARC and etal, 2007, Xi).

Ethiopia stands first in Africa and tenth in the world in her cattle populations' number but not quality. Since the late nineteenth century, Ethiopia has been losing a millions of cattle due to the effects of climatic changes. More than 64% of her cattle are found in the lowland areas of the country (Alula, 1992). Among these lowland areas the Guji Zone is the one which has been always affected by erratic rain fall. Like any other similar pastoral areas of the country, there is high climatic variability in the area and it is a drought-prone and seasonally and recurrently food insecure area (MARC, 2007).

The amount of rain fall and precipitation varies from place to place in the Guji Zone and even there are areas that receive as low rain as 400mm per year (Dereje and etal, 2011).

The erratic rain fall and unreliable nature of rainfall during the main rainy seasons has resulted in recurrent drought, extended dry seasons and famine. In addition to this, the decrease in total amount of rainfall and associated increase in temperature reduce the availability of feed and water to the pastoralists and the livestock (MARC, 2007). This situation has caused severe erosion of assets and chronic vulnerability of households to food insecurity as well as serious human sufferings during drought years and dry seasons' too.

As Ayinalem (1998) stated that, Guji culture does not encourage the selling of livestock. It is rather advisable to keep as many animals as possible, because the ownership of many livestock is one way of securing different social values and family needs.

Besides livestock wealth is a means to secure daily sustenance for family, asset for the next generation or children, social prestige and honor, leadership in the community and ability to give gift [locally called *Hirba* and *Dabare*] for the poor, etc (Ayinalem, 1998).

Therefore, no animal is reared for market except chicken (80% for sale). However, when the local climate is changed and drought occurs, the local people are forced to move in search of pasture and water for their cattle. As a result, human and animals' health condition deteriorated due to drinking of unclean water and due to this reason epidemic cattle/human diseases may break out. During drought and famine the price of cattle usually declines while; the price of grain increases (Jamjam, 2006).

A cattle disease also depletes cattle population within short time. During this time the East Guji pastoral local people may face acute shortage of food

because their daily food consumption is solely depend on animal and animal products. The challenges to the pastoralists nowadays are not only increase in price of grains, but also scarcity in the market due to that unexpected climate changes (Jamjam, 2006). As Ayinalem (1998) indicated that, due to climate changes, the frequency of the occurrence of drought and famine in Eastern Guji areas has been getting shorter and shorter from time to time; and also the extent of damages prevailed during the droughts has been increasing from time to time. For instance, the major drought and famine that occurred in the last four decades were due to the local climate changes (i.e. 1972/74, 1976, 1977/78, 1982, 1984/85, 1992/93, 1996/97). Therefore, there was at least ten years of recognized or local drought years in the last forty years of East Guji people history (Ayinalem, 1998).

One can understand clearly from these scenarios that the frequencies of climate changes and drought and famine occurrences have been enormously shortening. This situation has greatly affected the livelihoods of communities in the area, which are predominantly pastoral and as the recovery period has been getting shorter and shorter the enduring capacity of the community has been decreasing from time to time.

5. Livelihoods in the Eastern Guji Zone

Pastoralism and Agro-Pastoralism

Ethiopian peasants have been practicing agriculture, pastoralism and agro-pastoralism for centuries. More than 85% of the country' population is engaged in farming and related practices (Alula, 1992). In addition to this, pastoralism also provides the main livelihood for close to 15 million people spread across seven regions of the country. Pastoralism is practiced among arid and semi-arid areas of eastern, southern, and south eastern parts of the country (Gemechu, 2002). As Dereje and etal, (2011) explained that , pastoralists are always affected by unpredictable climatic conditions, recurrent conflicts and inhospitable environment; the pastoralists are among the poorest of the poor in terms of disposable income, access to social services and general welfare (Dereje and etal, 2011).

Human development indicators and poverty rates among pastoralists are uniformly worse than non-pastoralists in Ethiopia. Mainly the peoples of Afar, Somali, Dire Dawa, SNNP, Guji, Borana, Karayu, Gambella and a little bit the peoples of Beni shangul practiced the activities of animal rearing for a long time. The Guji of southern Ethiopia are engaged in this ways of economic activity for centuries. Currently, the economic activity of the northern and western portion of Guji land is agro-pastoralism and pure agriculture while those living in the southern and eastern parts practice pastoral mode of life. The Guji peripheral lowlands are historically known by their special breeds of cattle known as Guji Zebu (i.e relatively high milk production cows) (MARC, 2007).

More than 65% of the East Guji people practice animal rearing or pastoralism as a major economic activity. Goat, sheep, camel, donkey, horse, mules and cattle, mainly zebus are the main livestock types up on which the livelihood of pastoralists is depended. However, the livelihoods of the pastoralists is characterized by vulnerability and food insecurity mainly because of recurrent drought, land degradation, high population pressure, high livestock population and market prices fluctuation contexts and trends (Jamjam, 2007). In times of drought and hardship, those pastoralist people always move up to 60 km far away from home and families in search of available water and grass or pasture for their livestock, since their life is solely depends on livestock survival.

In the areas of Guji there are bi-modal rainy season throughout the year: two rainy seasons and two dry seasons (Ayinalem, 1998). The main rain starts in the middle of March and lasts in late May [locally called *Ganna*] while the smaller rains usually appear between September and October [locally called *Hagayya*]. The total duration of dry period in the area is usually 7-8 months in a year; the long dry period runs from November to mid of March [locally called *Bonna*], while the shorter dry season runs from June to August [locally called *Adollessa*]. The annual average rainfall of eastern Guji is not more than 600mm (Jamajam, 2011).

Gemechu (2002) argued that, the life of the Guji society is highly interconnected with their cattle because cattle have strong social and ritual values besides the great economic advantage. The social status of a person has been expressed in terms of the number of heads of cattle he owns. The owner of many heads of cattle up to one thousand is respected and honored. In Guji society marriage was/is closely dependent on the level of wealth (the number of cattle one possesses) and honor a person achieves. Cattle are paid as compensation for crime. Ritually, cattle are used for sacrificial purposes in addition to serving as food during prolonged ritual ceremonies like invitation ceremonies during transition in *Gada* grades (Ayinalem, 1998).

Unfortunately the east Guji zone cattle have been suffering from acute shortages of pasture in dry seasons and various types of cattle diseases. In addition to drought, there are around three common types of Guji cattle diseases which they resulted in large number of cattle death for long time. Thus are Anthrax, Foot and Mouth Diseases, [locally called *Hoyyale*] and other bleeding diseases (Jamjam, 2007). Sources like Alula (1992) and Ayilam (1998) indicate that since the nineteenth century due to the effects of drought and various types of contagious cattle diseases, a large number of cattle in the Eastern and southern Guji land were perished and large number of pastoral people suffered from unexpected food shortages due to lacks of milk and milk products and decline of cattle price in the market (Ayinalem, 1998).

For example, regarding to the 1888-92 cattle disease and its calamity affect up on the Guji pastoral cattle, Ayinalem, (1998) narrated the story via her a

well-known East Guji informant from Goro Dolla Werada, and called Obbo Boru expressed it as follows:

“I have a little information about the earliest cattle disease which was occurred during the times of Abba Gada Bona Dukale and it was known as Abba Gorbaa or locally Dina Looni [enemies of cattle]. As I heard from my grandfather, it was the most disastrous and worst one cattle killer disease followed by the 1970s Abba Qallus cattle death. My grandfather always told me with regret about that day, he spoken that, he himself has lost---more than 70 cattle and his wife’s father around 120 cattle and his two brothers also lost more than 165 cattle. Even now when I think about that, I feel so sad because you know our cattle’s are our life” (Ayinalem, 1998, 56).

In addition to this as Jamjam (2007) indicated that, in 1971/72 a cattle disease broke out in the former Jamjam Awraja. In addition to the disease, lacks of rain also increased the death rate of cattle, and around 36,800 cattle perished in Jamjam Awraja alone. Besides, the local peoples were also affected by acute food shortage. As a result, the local people unable to pay tax for government and later they were forced to migrate to adjacent areas in order to save their life from famine and their cattle from death. Similarly, during the 1984/5 famine there was also uncontrollable cattle epidemic diseases which claimed the lives of 176,214 cattle from Dolo Odo, Adolla, and Liban waradas and qabales (Alula, 1992; Jamajam, 2007).

And even after the current government came to power the Eastern Guji peoples can’t be rescued from recurrent climate change droughts and losing of large numbers of cattle.

For instance, as Jemejem (2011), in 1992/93, 1996/97, 2000/2001 and 2009/10 short and prolonged droughts occurred that claimed the lives of thousand cattle with minimum human beings effect. All this indicates that depending on pastoralism as the only means of livelihood has a great effect for the lives of human being, because, mostly pastoralists have not any reserve or restored food or cereals in their home and granaries for times of hardship. Due to this reason they are always susceptible for all bad effects of climatic changes. From this we can understand that pastoralism has playing a great role for the occurrences of drought, famine and starvation among the Eastern Guji pastoral communities (Ayinalem, 1998).

Ethnic-Conflict

Conflict can be defined as the material and morale clashes between two opponent parties which results in social insecurity, instability and displacement of inhabitants (Asebe, 2007). The Guji areas, in addition to the Guji themselves, there are other ethnic groups like the Amhara, Arsi, Somali, Guraghe, Gedeo, Borana, Tigre, and Burji. Sometimes conflict broke out between the Guji and other neighboring ethnic groups’ peoples over farming and grazing land (Jamjam, 2007). For instance, there have been incredibly several conflicts of different nature during the last 100 years decades within the two Guji Zones and along the border with the adjacent areas. Mainly the conflicts arose between the native Oromo (Guji, Borana and Arsi), and Gedeo, Burji and the new comers who are clans of Somali backgrounds (Gari, Gura, Marihan, Digodi and Gabra) (Asebe, 2007).

There were also several conflicts between the Guji Oromo clans and governmental bodies at different times. However, except in some exceptional wars, most of the time the government party was not directly involved in the conflicts but it was directly or indirectly facilitating or promoting the conflicts. Since the late nineteenth century many short and prolonged wars were conducted between the whole Guji people and government bodies due to the harsh *Gabbar-Nafftagna* [tax payer and tax collectors] relationships (Asebe, 2007; Dhadacha, 2006; Clapham, 1969).

For instance, there was a conflict called *Magare* [conflict from 1938-44, caused by exploitive nature of the tribute collectors] between the Guji socially organized people and the government troops who were organized by the Sidamo province governor *Ras Adafirsu*. After five years instability, the conflict was concluded through peaceful means (Jamajam, 2007). Since then government officials and tribute collectors were using different derogatory words to refer to the Guji like *Shifta* [i.e bandits] and others. Even after 1974, the Guji people were seen as bandits. In 1975 there was also a conflict known as Soyama between Guji and the government soldiers under the leadership of Major Takle Woldie (Dhadacha, 2006).

The conflict was caused by the new land proclamation policy of dividing and distributing the lands of *Ballabats* [land owners]. Major Takle and his troops received more than 3,000 heads of cattle by the local people. In return the people received some areas from the Guji after the conflict. Because of that conflict, 1,500 Guji and 110 government troops died and many people were displaced and faced shortage of food. Due to this, and the 1977/78 Ethio-Somalia war, and the 1977 and 1992 Guji--Government's conflict, the Guji in particular are still portrayed as warriors and trouble makers. Still the current government sees the peoples of Guji with suspicious eye. Attempts were made to incite conflicts between Borana and Guji and Gedeo and Guji and others (Clapham, 1969; Asebe, 2007).

According to Jamajam (2007) and Ayinalem (1998), the government incited ethnic conflicts mainly due to the following reasons:-

1. Detecting, torturing, beating or killing of individuals suspected of supporting an opponent party (OLF), or forcing the community to hand over OLF members to government. This condition was creating social instabilities, insecurity and displacement in the area for several decades.

2. Due to suspicion that OLF might have harbored along the borderlines and some remote inland areas, the government was creating instability and distrust between the Oromo and other clans in the area so that they will be watchful to each other and no refuge to OLF.

3. Parceling and sharing or tempting for referendum in favor of the new comers up on historically and economically important areas belonging to clans, and the ideas of regionalism have also created the sense of territory expansion in each individual community's minds (the pastoralists) who have been border less all over the world for centuries (Jamajam, 2007).

As Jamjam (2007) mentioned that, there were more than 60 conflicts during the last hundred years. In other words, there was more than one conflict in every year between Guji and Borana, Guji and Somali tribes, Guji, and Arsi and Guji with Gedeo or Darasa and Burji. And there were also more frequent conflicts, between the Guji and Gari, Digodi, Garba and with Marihan. According to Asebe (2007), the government was also participating in one way or another (either facilitating or triggering or at least played some role), in those seven conflicts happening between Guji and government in the area during the last five decades.

According to East Guji elder informants, like Galgelo, Haro and Jarso, in the case of Guji-Borana relation for example, because of their occupation of strategic geographical landscapes around Ethio-Kenya borders, successive Ethiopian governments used divide and rule policy so as to make the groups preoccupied in intra-ethnic warfare rather than creating a common front against the state. This indicates that the government is one of the important parties facilitating conditions for conflicts (Jamajam, 2007). As Jamajam, (2011) and Dhadacha, (2006) stated that, in 1969 and 1972 conflicts broken out between the two clans and both conflicts were solved through governments' intervention and through both elders reconciliation [locally called, *Gondoro* system] program (Jamajam, 2011; Dhadacha, 2006).

According to Asebe (2007), when these ethnic-conflicts broke out many people lost their lives in the clashes and much property was destroyed. Looting or raiding of different livestock and looting of stock grains as well as the robbing of house furniture were common during conflicts and social instabilities. In addition to this, there were also a serious border conflict between Guji and Gedeo during the periods of Emperor Hayle Sellasse (Asebe, 2007).

As Asebe (2007) stated that, during the times of Emperor Hayle Sellasse and *Darg* regimes both the Guji and Gedeo were placed under Sidamo province. In 1968 there was an uprising by the Gedeo in opposition to the government's high taxation system.

In an attempt to cool down the uprising, the government allowed the Gedeo to take land from the Guji pastoralists. In support of this Asebe (2007:77) also stated:

"...Following the termination of the conflict (the 1968 Gedeo uprising) Hayle Sellasse's government announced that there was an idle land in Guji territory and declared that everybody in Gedeo was entitled to take quarter of a gasha (1 gasha= 40 hectares) from this excess land. Such a declaration opened the door for the Gedeo to occupy the Guji land.... There was thus uneven resource distribution as both the government and the Gedeo felt" (Asebe, 2007:77).

Since then, conflict arose between the Guji and the Gedeo. In pastoralist way of life there is no land left free from grazing. The conflict was finally solved through the traditional system of *Gondoro* practice (Asebe, 2007). Similarly, after the current government came to power, there was conflict between Guji and Gedeo peoples in 1995 and 1996/97, which was caused by governments' areal adjustment policy. Because some Guji areas were

given for the peoples of Gedeo through the 1995 corrupted, unfair and biased referendum, areas like; Wanago, Cicu, Galma Xallu, Oddo, Yirgachafe and Kochore were given for Gedeo, and Bule hora (i.e Hagara-Mariyam) districts for Borana (but now it is backed to the Gujis) (Asebe, 2007).

Still now the 1994/5 referendum resolution creates recurrent conflict between Guji, Gedeo and Borana many times. According to Jamjam (2007) and Asebe (2007), the major causes of the conflicts in the area occurring during the last five decades were political such as motives for territory expansion, referendum or any plan to permanently occupy areas, suspicion of supporting political parties, and the like (Jamjam, 2007; Asebe, 2007).

More than 30% the total conflicts during the last five decades had political objectives. The other cause of the conflict was the ownership and utilization of resources such as grazing ground and water points. And this types of resource based conflicts account 70% of the total clashes in the area (Asebe, 2007).

Generally, those periodical conflicts between the Gujis and neighboring peoples have their own effects in the long run up on both conflicting clans. These included migration and internal displacement of citizens, shortage of pasture and water (improper utilization of range resources), social instability, intensification of urban settlement or increment of rural-urban migration, acute food insecurity, chronic urban food insecurity, prevalence of underlying poverty, susceptible to drought and famine.

6. Indigenous Survival Mechanisms of the East Guji Oromo People in the Faces Of Periodic Droughts

Ethiopia peoples have a good knowledge, experience and native coping mechanisms about the hardships of drought and famine since they were passing through this waves and have an age-old relationship with it (Gemechu, 2002).

Similar to their conceptual understanding difference about the terms of drought and famine; their local early prediction ways and systems regarding to the occurrence of drought and famine and local coping mechanisms in faces of famine also may vary from region to region and place to place with minimal similarity (Mamadou, 2006). However it is true that those areas people which are severely strike by drought and famine have a good early indicator, tackling and recovery mechanisms in faces of hardships. As sources indicated that, particularly the remote edges and northern parts of Ethiopia have a good drought and famine experience history with effective indigenous survival mechanisms. Among thus remote edge areas, South Ethiopian Eastern Guji Oromo peoples are publically known for their cultural methods of drought occurrence detection, survival mechanisms and cultural remedy process after the occurrences of drought and famine (Ayinalem, 1998).

The East Guji pastoral peoples are always attacked by periodical droughts and acute food shortage. As a response to that, the Guji communities use various mechanisms to predict the occurrence of drought, famine and starvations. And this early detection system locally called *Raagaa* [means early prediction of drought] helps them to prepare, adjust, equip and ready themselves, livestock and families before they face the occur-able drought and famines impact (Jemjem, 2011).

For instance, Gemechu (2002) stated that, when hyena is barking in sad for long periods of time in the midst of night the Guji peoples culturally predict that it would indices old and known personal death or the occurrence of hardships like drought and famine. Similarly, when donkey and birds (particularly, crow) are always barking repeatedly starting from the eve of the morning up to sun rise, the East Guji community use it as one of the major indicator of bad times occurrence. In addition to this, based on their cattle urine avoidance style the Guji communities also try to predict the futuristic time. Example, when cows release urine in their sleep position it is considered as a bad fortune both for human and livestock population (Jemjem, 2007). And peoples used it as an early warning system to their pastoral life wellbeing for centuries. Although among the agrarian Guji peoples there are crop related indicators of hardships occurrence such as shortage of rainfall or heavy rains which would hamper cultivation, absence of land preparation, shortage of appropriate seed at appropriate time, lacks of farm tools and agricultural inputs, late cultivation or sowing, crop loss due to heavy rains, hailstorm and pest infection or land sliding (Ayinalem, 1998).

In addition to this, as Jemejem (2007) stated that, Guji peoples also try to forecast hardships occurrence through market related indicators and anticipations. Among thus, increased of price or scarcity of staple food and grains on market, unusual decline of livestock price, massive trail of livestock to local markets (increase of market volume of livestock) and others. All of the above mentioned events are considered as anticipation of crises or hardship. When those types of event are occurred to save their life and livestock from hardships the East Guji people began use several systematic measures and mechanisms (Ayinalem, 1998).

Like decreasing their daily consumptions of meat or grain (for example, eating twice a day and buying cheap grains in large quantities through selling two or more of cattle with expensive prices), disseminating information for the whole Guji land communities in market days and in every types of meeting about the signs they saw and the events that would be occur, through collecting information that at what distance and where available pasture and water is found to easily migrate and settle when hardship is occur, praying in their religious institution and places through saying *Yaa Waaqaa gara fulduratti, Ilman, Warra, Loonifi, Laffa keenya Beela fi Hongéén Akka hin Hubamne nu Eegi....* [Means Oh!! My Allah/God Please!! Please!! Save our livestock, children, family, clan and

lands from harsh effects of drought and famine], and others are among some of their preparedness mechanisms for any occur-able hardships (Gemechu, 2002).

The East Guji societies have also various indigenous survival or coping mechanisms when drought and famine is occurred. They use the term *Malloota Ittisaa Hongee* [to say coping mechanisms]. The Guji survival mechanisms in faces of famine are not an overnight systematic result rather they adopted it from their past generations, and still they are employed by the whole East Guji communities to survive from crisis and to prevent their families and livestock from drought and famines devastating impact (Ayinalem, 1998).

As Ayinalem, (1998,142) stated that, those current applying Guji drought and famine survival strategies are used by the sixteen century drought/famine affected Guji predecessors. It indicates how much the Guji peoples' way of life, custom, culture and other beliefs transferred from one generation to the coming generation with minimal changes. Among the age-old Guji drought and famine survival systems (besides to their local early anticipation mechanisms) are as follows:-Primarily, after the occurrence of drought and famine the East Guji pastoral peoples change their feeding style (both in amount and quantity)(Gemechu, 2002).

That means they started to adjust and decrease their households' daily amount of meal and quantities of grain consumption. For instance, they began eat only once or twice a day and if it is necessarily, mothers, fathers other elder family members began jump or skip either their breakfast, lunch or dinner or all of them for one or two days. However, pregnancy woman, children, sick personals and other old members of a family can eat twice a day with decreasing in amount only from the normal times until the end of household's stored food and grain. Affected peoples began buy and eat cheap items of grain (through transferring from quality towards quantity) which may not be used as a food during normal times. Secondly, through gathering wild fruits and hunting wild animals the Eastern Guji society's tries to pass bad times until good times are come. Gathering or collecting of wild fruits, leaves, roots, seeds and other parts of eatable trees is not only used during a times of famine and drought but they are also use and eat by the Guji community in normal times (Ayinalem, 1998).

Although, the Guji women and children sale those wild fruits on market days even in good harvesting times. For women these wild foods are an important source of income to buy important non-food items such as soap. Because among those wild fruits, roots, leaves and seeds some of they are so sweet in taste and rich in vitamins and calories. The East Guji pastoral societies have a good knowledge regarding to which types of roots, leaves, fruits and seeds are sweet, vigor, bitter, eatable or poisons. Then during the times of hardship members(particularly children and women) of an affected family move to the surrounding dense-forests and they can easily collect those fruits, seeds, leaves and roots (through digging their deep roots)

(Gemechu, 2002). After backing to their home, they use wild foods sustainably through saving and eating half spoil leaves, roots, seeds, and fruits. Guji men's on their part also hunt wild animals and birds in the forest. Generally, affected peoples eat all those kinds of wild fruits and animals which may be considered as taboo during normal times. Thirdly, the Eastern Guji peoples also use migration to neighboring unaffected peoples as a major survival mechanism for long periods of time (Ayinalem, 1998).

When drought/famine is occur peoples move or migrate with their livestock, family and clan into adjacent rich area peoples which have available pasture and water. Until the ending of bad times they live for long times where they migrate; because the Guji communities' movement and migration is always on the bases of their kinship relations. However in normal times peoples also move from rural to urban areas to get job opportunities and better facilities to live a better life. Fourthly, particularly after the years of 1960s the Guji communities also adopted relief organizations assistance or aid as parts of their survival system. Onwards of that time the Guji pastoral communities are also use governmental and non-governmental organizations continuous aid for their periodical drought and famine (Gemechu, 2002).

However besides its negative impact (makes the local peoples aid dependent) currently the numbers of donated and the amounts of distributing wheat, maize, haricot bean and sorghum did not matched, because the increments of assistance dependents and the vulnerability of the distribution process for corruption and other mal-administration. Because some distributors did not distribute the allocated aid for those affected, poor, pregnancy women, orphans and oldest womens (those who have not any child) correctly rather sometimes they skip or jump that family less donators and replaced them by their close relatives and distribute it unfairly. And sometimes it did not reach for the areas of assisted peoples rather it is always looting by corrupted higher governmental officials (Ayinalem, 1998).

Generally, the Guji people use all those types of survival mechanisms during times of famine and drought and to save their lives and properties from calamity death and distraction (Jamjam, 2007).

As Gemechu (2002) and Jemejem (2011) that, after the ending of drought and famine time the Guji survival peoples have their own recovery system which aimed at assisting and promoting those highly affected peoples (who those lose their cattle all in all during bad times). Based on their severity level they aided (cattle, goat, sheep, camel and other livestock) them to have a starting point to own cattle and to live a normal life. There are around three types of cultural assistance systems among the Guji communities. The first level of assistance is called *Haqaaqqii*, [meaning life-saving through emergency assistance]. Here the needy will be assisted with any kinds of edible foodstuff come in hand or available around to save the life of the victim at that moment. However, the appropriate beneficiary of the

haqaaqqii [life-saving assistance] is only the victim of a special severe disasters (like famine, war and fire). During this time the whole communities have expected to give small-livestock (goats, sheep and others), housing material (like, flour, furniture, knife, mat, and others) and grains for those profoundly famine affected peoples who are living in destitute life. The second level assistance is called *Dabare*, [meaning relief assistance] (Jamjam, 2011).

This type of assistance is meant is to provide the famine affected beneficiaries with daily subsistence requirements. The needy will be loaned milking animals (cow is most appropriate) for a limited duration of time (until the affected person construct home again and began helping himself and households) until the cow gets dry or until the family will have its own milking cows. However, in Guji, *Dabare* is not something unique to drought and famine affected destitute or poor rather than it can be given to relatives or friends depending on the closeness or relationship between the donor and receiver, whenever the family faces seasonal shortage of milk, but not necessarily depending on the level of wealth. The third level of cultural assistance is called *Hirba*, [meaning rehabilitation of the needy]. This type of assistance is given to enable the households get out of dependency on others for its livelihood needs (Ayinalem, 1998; Gemechu, 2002; Tadesse, 2004; Jamjam, 2007)

Screening of donors will start from relatives, and then depending on the number of appropriate needy and availability of resource, it may go to the sub clan or (if it is serious) and members of the clan will be obliged to contribute animals to rehabilitate the needy, and to integrate him to the community and return him back to pastoralism. It is to make the person/household economically stable and run his own business (livestock rearing) so that he will be self-sufficient and independent. In fact, in all communities, there is a cultural norm regarding to this type of assistance but what makes unique *hirba* is there should be a well-known and justifiable reason of the household for being a destitute and to be eligible for *hirba*. If the poverty of the household has happened as the result of some unjustifiable reasons such as laziness and extravagancy the household will be automatically exempted from this type of assistance plan (Ayinalem, 1998; Gemechu, 2002).

7. Conclusion

As writers like Alula (1992), Ayinalem (1998) and others, shows that drought is not new to Ethiopia. The history of drought and famine in Ethiopia goes back to the first half of the ninth century. In those days, ill documented droughts were regarded as God's punishment for the sins of human beings. In response to this drought, people had done various measures starting from invoking their Lord and praying in their religious institution to avoid it from them and up to efforts of practicing their age old

hardship survival native skills and wisdoms. Even though, large number of affected people and cattle were perished and some of them survived it through local copying wisdoms.

The worst thing is, for many centuries using and giving of recognition to Ethiopian communities' indigenous knowledge were segregated from all spheres of governmental development and growth policies and strategies. And they were also seen as against of the constitution and other rule-regulations, and this view made some of them to be inactive and others to be bounded merely in specific localities. Even the former Ethiopian emperors did not include them in their drafted constitutions. Rather they supported to write various rules and regulations to outlaw such types of traditional skills and wisdoms, and other similar discriminatory activities

But even if Ethiopian kings and rulers were against of them, various native knowledge and skills played a significant role in the long history of Ethiopia both in times of peace, conflict and hardships. Unfortunately, their history is not well recorded and documented. However, few scholars like Ayianeleme(1998), Alula (1992), Gemchu (2002), Jamjaam, (2011) and etc., have published a book, article and journals on them through tracing the history of Ethiopian tribal groups and socio-cultural and politico-economical diversified natures, settings, norms, traditions and age old hardship surviving mechanisms'. Of course, it is true that every society has own cultural wisdoms and traditions, and is vary from society to society and region to region. Relatively, the center of this study, Southern Jamjatu/Eastern Guji Oromo peoples (they were under Sidamo province until 1991) culture (i.e. *Gada* system) of periodical drought-famine and communities indigenous coping mechanisms of those hardships and difficulties.

For a long period of time, *Gada* system (i.e. post of 1900s) governs the whole life of Guji and Borana communities, and unlike other Ethiopian people's cultural system, *Gada* system gives special places to issues of hardship and mechanisms of controlling it. Still this traditional system is practiced mainly among the Guji, Borana and other Oromo peoples of Ethiopia.

The last one century witnessed periodical drought and famines to East Guji area, which was caused by climate changes, ethnic conflicts and pastoralism and semi-pastoralism modes of life. In the last 100 years more than ten recognized or local droughts occurred in the lands of East Guji zone.

So to save their lives as well as livestock, the East Guji communities practiced an age-old traditional system of drought and famine local copying mechanisms called indigenous survival techniques which they adopted from their predecessors. Like early warning system of *Raagaa* [means early prediction of drought], helps them to prepare, adjust, equip and ready themselves, livestock and families before they face the occur-able drought and famines impact.

As a survival strategy, in faces or after the occurrence of drought and famine the East Guji pastoral peoples change their feeding style (both in amount and quantity) and other adopted means.

And Gujis have also a system of recovery mechanisms after the ending of hardships; based on their severity level they aided each other (cattle, goat, sheep, camel and other livestock) and them to have a starting point to own cattle and to live a normal life. There are around three types of cultural assistance systems among the Guji communities (i.e. *Haqaaaqqii*, *Hirba and Dabare*) and still now those systems are in operation among the East Guji pastoral and agrarian communities.

Because, for long periods of time the Guji societies did not get an attention from the central government and aids for their periodical drought; so, since they have not any option than of using it wisely. From those drought/famine periods, (hundred years) a number of cattles was perished. And, due to this reason Guji peoples have not a good perception for the previous government drought and famine responses. However, through using of those traditional methods and systems those peripheral peoples played an irreplaceable role through saving human and livestock live from destruction or any hardships and bad times for long periods of time.

Generally, those East Guji pastoralist communities home grown and age old traditions of hardship mitigating mechanisms did not get attention and recognition from the central government people. Due to this reason thus knowledge and skills were restricted to the areas of East Guji zone pastoralist areas alone.

Of course post of 1991, relatively those aged old traditions, norms, and values and questions of legality and started getting of recognitions; but, as compared to Ethiopian plural ethnic groups, giving recognition is no enough rather heavy works are expected to show and promote those communities home grown skills and wisdoms to other peoples and countries and even to treated those wisdoms co-equally with written legal documents.

To do so, when Government, scholars and NGOs should jointly put their efforts on it (like through researching, promoting and expanding as best works of those wisdoms and skills to other Ethiopian and drought vulnerable Africans ethnic groups); and thus exposure those would be used as a good lesson and experience sharing and may save peoples and animals lives from further occurring drought and famine catastrophic consequences.

References

- Aggarwal, Kumar (1996). Principles, Methods and Techniques of Teaching. (Second Revised Edition). New Delhi:Vikas Publishing House PVT.
- Asebe, Regassa (2007). "Ethnicity and Inter ethnic relations: the Ethiopian experience and the Case of the Guji-Gedeo." M.A Thesis Submitted to Dep't of Philosophy, Norway; University of Tromso. Unpublished

- Ayinalem, Temesgen (1998). "Guji pastoralist Women's Success Story on Key Drought Reserve and Protection Program from 1991--1998: The Kobadi enclosure Women's Model group". Nagale: Nagale Borana Printing Press.
- Bahru, Zewde (1991). A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1974. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Baro, M., Deubel, T. F.(2006). Persistent Hunger: Perspectives on Vulnerability of Famine and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa. Arizona: University of Arizona.
- Best, J.W., Khan, J.V. (1993). Research in Education. (7th ed.). New Delhi Principe Hall: Indian Private Ltd.
- Christopher, C. (1969). Haile Selassies' Government. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Clark, Jeffrey (2000). Civil Society, NGOs and Development in Ethiopia: A Snapshot View. Washington D.C, <<http://www.siteresources.worldbank.org/.../cs and Dv Ethiopia snapshot view>>..accessed on 09/04/2013.
- Dejene N. D. (2009). Gender and Culture in Southern Ethiopia: An Ethnographic Analysis of Gujii Oromo Women's customary Rights in African Studies. Monographs. Miami University.
- Dereje, Terefe Gemechu, Virtanen, Pekka and Palmujoki, Eero (2011). "Global Climate Policies, Local Institutions and Food Security in a Pastoral Society of Ethiopia". The Journal of Sustainable Development, Vol, 5 (1) .Finland: University of Jyvaskyla, <<http://www.consilience journal. org/ index. Php / consilience /article/view File/.64>>...accessed on 23/09/2012.
- Dhadacha, G., Jemjem U. (2006). The Politico-Legal System of the Gujii-Society of South Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Universal Printing Press.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution (1995). Addis Ababa.
- Federal Rural Land Use and Administration. No.89/1997 and No.456/2005.
- Flintan, F., etal (2008). Study on Women's Property Rights in Afar and Oromiya Regions, Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Care Printing Press.
- Gemechu, Taye (2002). "Indigenous Survival Strategies in the Face of Famine: the case of Borena Oromo in Southern Ethiopia". M.A Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies, Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University. Unpublished
- Gill, Peter (2010). Famine and Foreigners: Ethiopia since Live Aid. London: Oxford University Press.
- Gupta, Vijay (1995). "Ethiopia since Revolution 1977-1986", School of International Studies. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- Jemjem U., Dhadacha G. (2011). Gadaa Democratic Pluralism with a particular reference to the Guji Socio-Cultural and Polio-Legal System. Addis Ababa: Rela Printing Press. _____(2007). "Integrated Right-Based Needs, Responses and Economic

- Empowerment Activities in Guji Pastoral areas and the Role of NGOs”. Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Burka Sena Printing Press.
- Melkasa Agricultural Research Center (2007). “Managing Risk, Reducing Vulnerability and Enhancing of Agricultural Productivity under Changing Climate in the Greater Horn of Africa: Impacts of Climatic Change and Variability on Agricultural System,” Country Report. Ethiopia.
- Mellor, J., Gavin, Sarah (1987). “Famine: Causes, Prevention, and Relief.” Science, New Series, Vol. 235, No.4788. American Association for the Advancement of Science. _____ (1984). RRC’s food and non-food item aids for affected peoples, proclamation No124/1976.
- Of can say, Thomas P., Berry, L. (1996). Ethiopia: a Country Study. Washington: GPO Library.
- Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau (1998). History of the Oromo to the Sixteenth Century. Finfinne: Oromia Culture and Tourism Printing Press.
- Pankhurst, A. (1992). Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia: The Villagers’ Experience. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.
- Sen, Amartya (1981). Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tadesse, J. (2004). “A Contextual Study of Gujii-Oromo Proverbs Function in focus.” M.A Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies, Department of Foreign Language and Literature, Addis Ababa University. Unpublished
- Zakariyas M. (2010). Political Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Governmental Companies in Ethiopia. Oromia.