

A History of the Pastoral Way of Life in the Awash Valley, Ethiopia

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Abstract: The main objective of this seminar paper is to explore pastoral way of life in the Awash Valley. It is well known that pastoralism is a way of life mostly found in Africa that is based on raising livestock and using mobility as a fundamental technique for livelihood development and risk management system. In Ethiopia, there are a total of twenty nine pastoralist group. Yet, this seminar paper focuses on Debne Afar, the Karrayu, Arsi, Ittu, Jile, and Issa-Somali, the six pastoralist groups traditionally inhabiting on the Awash valley. Many research studies are conducted around pastoralism in Ethiopia by depending and explaining on the conflict between pastoralists, economic activities, and those prone to drought. However, the present seminar paper wants to fill a gap in providing a detailed examination with historic narratives available documents on the way of life and interaction of pastoralists in the Awash valley, conflict and traditional resolution mechanisms, government policy towards pastoralists, assess drought and traditional mitigation measures, which are the main focus of this paper. The survey of literature is restricted to the published secondary materials of books, reputable with peer reviewed journals, articles and unpublished materials of report, MA thesis and PhD dissertations that have been available to this writer to date. In conclusion, there are certain aspects of the pastoralist way of life that lessons can be drawn from their practices, unlike other pastoralist groups. Afar was able to found an organized local state of Aussa in 1577 AD under the leadership of Mohammed Jassa around Awash valley, still local clan leaders continued old administrative functions. The Karrayu pastoralists also began to intermingle and intermarry with Ittu pastoralist communities in the study area for a long period of time. There are a number of frequent conflicts in pastoral communities. However, the major conflicts are Afar against Karrayu and Afar against Issa-Somali clan was dominant ones. vis-à-vis of their conflict most pastoralists in the Awash valley in their long history have been able to develop traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as the Ittu Oromo have had belief systems known as Abarsa and Kakku, the unwritten rangeland pastoral law of the Issa-Somalia clan, also known as Heer Issa, and the Afar pastoralists also have a strong traditional clan leader named Finna.

Keywords: Pastoralism, Awash Valley, Pastoralist

1. Introduction

Pastoralism, is way of life and production system typically found in Africa's vast dry and semi-dry areas which are manifested by rainfall changeability, and related doubts in the spatial and temporal distribution of water resources and grazing for animals [3]. In Ethiopia context, pastoralists are traditionally transhumance ethnic groups that are highly mobile in nature, move from one district to another in look for of pasture and water for their livestock, and well adapted to harsh environment and extreme climates. Pastoralism is also closely associated with an economic system that is primarily based on raising livestock and hence, getting access and use

of natural resources, like water and pasture to their cattle, play a fundamental role in pastoral livelihood, identity and conflict. [57]. It has its own unique features it is highly associated with movable herds in the arid area and using mobility as a fundamental tactic for their livelihood development and hazard management system [57]. Pastoralists derive most of their income or food provision from keeping domestic livestock reared in conditions where most of the feed is natural rather than cultivated or closely managed [56]. In wide-ranging, the pastoralist way of life involves a complex set of elements that are linked together by a requirement for land and a responsibility to safeguard it first, mobility, second keeping or possessing large herds of

livestock third, herd diversification and splitting fourth, focused mutual assistance systems [25]. Recent studies show that in Ethiopia, pastoralist constitute over 10 million populations according to a recent census, they occupy the vast majority of marginal land in the country. The most well-known pastoralist of Ethiopian are the *Borana Oromo*, the *Afar*, the *Somali*, *Karrayu*, *Arbore*, *Nuer*, and other various smaller groups in South and South-West Ethiopia [60].

Totally in Ethiopia there are 29 different ethnic groups with live as pastoralism way of life in the country yet, dominate pastoralist groups in terms of human and livestock population are *Somali*, the *Afar* and *Borena Oromo* were mentioned. [18] The pastoral communities of *Somali* (53%), *Afar* (29%) and *Borena* (10%) are constituted. [2] In terms of economic potential Ethiopia's pastoral groups manage some 40% of the national cattle herd, one fourth of the sheep, three quarters of the goats and nearly all the camels. And about 90% of livestock export of the country comes from these areas. [2] This is particularly true for pastoralist communities, which are found in Eastern Ethiopia and rearing with camels, cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys for their living. [13] It is known that, most of the pastoralist areas are arid susceptible for drought this it in turn faces harsh decline in the availability of resources it leads to emerging of conflicts in the area of pastoralist exist. [59] Pastoralists *Afar*, *Karrayu*, *Arsi* and *Jile*, *Ittu*, and *Issa-Somali* the six pastoralist dominate groups traditionally in habitating on the Awash valley was well known as socially and economically well integrated groups in hamlet or village-sized settlements consisting of movable huts or temporary brush shelters and seasonally moved in response to climate and the needs of their livestock pastures and water. [35] Adding to the

above especially pastoralist in Awash National Park *Karrayu*, *Afar* and *Ittu* groups coexisted with each other and the wildlife for centuries, each group having its own territory for grazing and watering for their livestock. [22] The pastoralist area which found in the Awash basin had great economic value for Ethiopia, such as the area possessed Awash National Park, has high livestock number, great potential for irrigation schemes of sugar and cotton production, and had water reservation for hydroelectric power of *Koka Dam*. Tracing the above, objective of this seminar paper is to explore the pastoral life and relationships among the *Debne Afar*, the *Karrayu*, *Arsi*, *Ittu*, *Jile*, and *Issa-Somali* pastoralists.

2. An Overview of Study Area

Awash River Basin It is located between latitudes 7°53'N and 12°N and longitudes of 37°57'E and 43°25'E. The basin comprises the Central and Northern part of the Rift Valley and is bounded to the West, the Rift Valley lakes Southeast, by the Blue Nile and South, Wabi Shebele basins, respectively. [48] It covers a total land area of 110,000 km² and serves as home to 10.5 million inhabitants with total length of the main course of river is 1,200 km [31] and it end within the national boundary in the salty Lake *Abbe* bordering Djibouti. [48] The flood plains of the Awash Basins serving as the only sources for dry season pasture which available in the lowlands to the bounding pastoralist communities, by supporting, providing pasture and grazing for large livestock populations of cattle, camels, goats and sheep.

Besides, the Awash Basin is the largest and most accessible fresh water body during the serious dry seasons for surrounding pastoralist communities. [36]

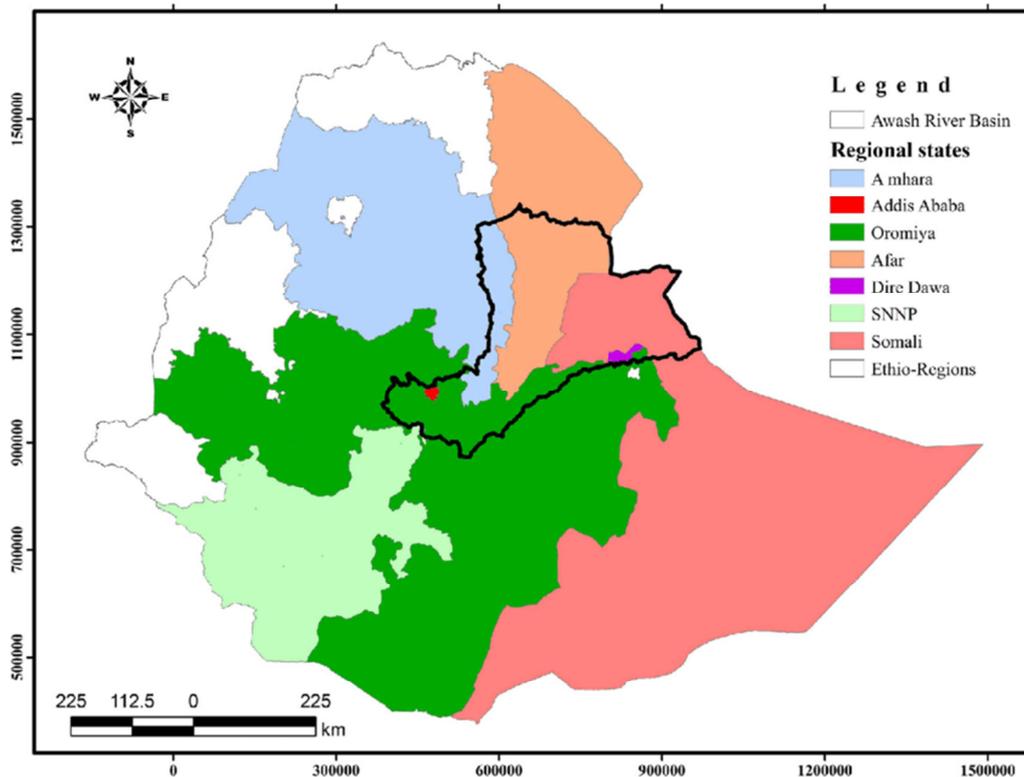


Figure 1. Regional Administrations in Awash River basin Source: Own processing of Internet.

3. The Awash Valley and Its Pastoralists

For long period of time *Jile*, *Arsi*, *Karrayu*, *Ittu*, *Afar* and *Issa*-Somali, all semi nomadic pastoralists, traditionally occupied the arid area of lowland region Awash Valley. The largest number of pastoralist tribe in the Awash Basin is the Afar and the smallest the *Jile* Oromo [36]. Afar pastoralists as living in well and highly traditional society with strong institution they developed a more centralized state under the hereditary rule of the Sultanate of *Aussa*. [58] As Lapiso described, Sultanate of *Aussa* was founded after the death of Sultan Mohammed IV, leader of Adal in the Wabi Valley war with the central government of Ethiopia in 1577. Mohammed Jasa, a descendant of Imam Ahmed *Gragn*, was appointed Adal Imam. At that time, the area was under great pressure from the Oromo community, and in 1577, Imam Jasa appointed his brother as Emir at the *Harar Jegol* and established himself as the new Imam of *Adal* in the Awash Valley, northeast of the Awash Valley. Thus, in 1577, the historical government of the Adal region of Ethiopia was divided into North and South by the Emirate of *Aussa Adal* and the *Emirate of Harar*. As a result, an Imamate of *Aussa* was founded. [37]

Because the seat of the Muslim Imamate of *Aussa*, which had become a constant target of Oromo raids, from *Harar* was moved to *Aussa* in the hope that it would be more secure because *Aussa* was surrounded by arid areas [8]. In the total history of the Afar people, the political organization and social control system were more unified and well organized than those of their Somali neighbors. The pastoralist Afar practiced different forms of political administration, such as sultanates, chiefdoms, and clan-based political systems. This evidence shows that the Sultanate of *Aussa* in the Lower Awash Valley still exists and is still in operation. [30] However, until recent years, it was at the clan level that the strongest and most effective leadership structures were found in all groups of Afar people. In addition to being their traditional and religious leader, the clan leader also controlled external relations, the distribution of land and water rights, and exercised legal functions. Each clan had an external representative in the form of a clan chief, whose powers were shared and controlled by the elders, who primarily served as arbitrators and judges in clan internal affairs. [35] It is known that, in pastoral and other communities living in dry land areas, there is a strong bond with the natural environment. Frequently, the environment is severe, and natural resources are few. For instance, though the Afar pastoralists do not customarily plant trees, they also do not cut them down. They do not use trees in any case without the approval of their clan leaders, known as *Finna*. [50]

The Afar people in Ethiopia, are sub divided into two sections - the *Adokimarra* (the whites) occupy the Middle Awash Valley and the *Asahimarra* (the reds) inhabit the Lower Awash valley. The Afar in the Middle Awash belong predominantly to the *Adokimarra* section that are further

divided into the *Waima* and *Debine* clan groups which consist of about fifty linked clans (*kedo*) [30]. Among Afar clans, *Debine* one of the biggest federations of Afar clans inhabiting the south west rangelands in the Middle Awash. [11] Traditionally, their subsistence as pastoralists, especially in Afar, depends almost totally on milk from their herds of cows, camels, goats, and sheep. [33] Because the majority of the region occupied by the Afar people is extremely inhospitable, the Afar people have been able to maintain a population of movable pastoralist's way of life, owing largely to the presence of the Awash valley. [7] To some extent, in the lower Awash Valley and particularly in the Awash delta, a small number of Afar have practiced agriculture for many generations. However, most people in Afar depend on pastoralists' livelihoods, especially in the southern Afar territory, where two-thirds of the population are wandering from place to place in search of grass and water for their animals. [8] The other dominant group in the upper Awash valley is the *Karrayu* pastoralists, known for their preservation of the original Oromo lifestyle and culture. Still, the community practices *Gada* as a governance system besides the traditional religion of the Oromo, called *Waaqeffata*. [59]. The *Metehara* Plain and Mount *Fentale* area are home to the majority of the pastoralists of *Karrayu*. The neighbors of the *Karrayu* are the Afar *Debine* in the North, the *Arsi* Oromo in the South, the Awash National Park in the East, and beyond the park, the *Ittu* of West *Harrerge*, the *Argoba* in the West, and the *Amhara* in the district of *Berehet* in the south-west. [12] *Karrayu* first came to the area of Awash Valley from the highlands in the West some 200 years ago. [21] In their long history, the *Karrayu* pastoralist way of life has principally been nomadic pastoralism, which is heavily dependent on natural environmental resources whose accessibility is determined by temporal and spatial variables. [32] The *Karrayu* are Muslim agro pastoralists who migrated to *Fentale* district to avoid conflict with the *Issa*-Somalia clan and in search for less populated area for farming and grazing for their cattle. [52] The *Karrayu* pastoralists also began to intermingle and intermarry with *Ittu* pastoralist communities. [35] Due to this, *Ittu* Oromo pastoralists were able to continue their arrival and systematic incursion into *Karrayu* communal land. [12] As a result, *Karrayu* pastoralists have enjoyed peaceful relationships with *Ittu* and *Issa* Somali as a result of their goal of unity against their common enemies, the *Afar* and *Arsi* Oromo. [59]

The *Ittu* are mainly agro-pastoralists who live in the West *Harrerge* highlands, particularly in Habro District. Most *Ittu* inhabitants migrated inside the *Karrayu* territory over the last forty years, particularly since the mid-1970s. Droughts in 1973–74 and again in 1984–85, as well as recurrent inter-ethnic confrontations with the *Issa* Somali, prompted their relocation. [11] The *Ittu* crossed the Awash River after receiving the consent of the *Karrayu* first, in search of a place where they did not have to fear being attacked by the *Issa*. Nowadays, the *Ittu* have largely given up their old ways of life. They changed their way of life from pastoralism to

agro-pastoralism after they occupied the fertile eastern part adjoining the *Metahara* Sugar Plantation and the Awash River Plains. [21]

Another ethno-cultural group in the study area is the small clan of *Arsi* oromo. Before they left *Madda Walaabu* in the 16th century, they were semi-pastoralists, dependent mostly on their animals and their products for survival. [17]

Furthermore, Kloss described the *Arsi* oromo way of life in the Awash Valley as a cultivator and a pastoralist way of life in the basin, which they inhabited on the *Nura* Era floodplain, now completely covered by the irrigation scheme of the same name, and the savanna in the hilly *Tibila* area. They also cultivated crops like barley, maize, sorghum and beans, in the dry season areas on the floodplains and on small rain-feed fields at higher altitudes and practiced transhumance with their cattle, which they valued higher than camels and goats. The *Arsi* migrated between their dry-season villages on the floodplains and the west-season pastures in the foothills and highlands of the Somali Plateau, occupied by the large *Arsi* farming population. Perhaps half of the *Arsi* oromo in the Awash Valley are now followers of Islamic religion, but also believe in various forms of the old Oromo faith. [35]

Other small group pastoral communities of *Jile* oromo remain in the upper part of the Awash Valley, primarily around the *Wonji* sugar cane estate and the man-made Lake *Galila*. They had been vast herds of cattle and some small stock such as sheep, goats, and donkeys before being displaced from these floodplains, and they produced maize, chickpeas, beans, and pumpkins in the periodically inundated areas after the flood waters receded. They stayed in the floodplains for eight to nine months, abandoning their dispersed homesteads and small crops for higher land only when the flood waters arrived, and returning when the waters retreated (September or October). The *Arsi* and the *Jile* had a lot of fights. In regarding religion beliefs some *Jile* Oromo have converted to Christianity and Islam, the majority of them continue to follow their ancestral religion. [35]

Attracted by the Awash River basin's great potential for livestock consumption, the *Issa* and *Hawiya* clans of Somali pastoral communities have penetrated approximately 50–150 km from Somalia, northward deep into the Afar land, where they have established small towns and village settlements around the Awash River basin. Currently, the *Issa*-Somali pastoralist communities settled have more than three resident areas, particularly *Gedamayto*, *Adeytu*, and *Unduffo*, all located along the Addis Ababa–Djibouti main road line just within the Afar regional state, while the *Hawiya*-Somali clan is located at *Hardim kebele* in the Afar area adjacent to the Oromo border of *Bordede* and *Obensa kebelles* through the railway line. [40]

The majority of *Issa* clan inhabited in *Shinille* zone of Somali region. [15] In describing the seasonal mobility of the *Issa*-Somali clan, the centers of population are the home wells, to which, in the dry seasons of July-August and November-December, tribes retire from the far grazing, and from which, in January-February, they move out to the new pasture after the April-May rains. In the dry season, tribes are

concentrated around home wells, which are often shared among friendly tribes. In addition to their pastoral livelihood, the *Issa*-Somalis are active participants in trade. [53]

4. Conflict Between Pastoralist Communities in the Awash Valley

As Abbink describes, conflict is a regular feature of life in traditional pastoral societies. These pastoral societies occupy large tracts of territory, often in border areas. Among the causes of conflict are environmental factors, livelihood decline, certain cultural values and traditions, and state economic or other policies, which in various combinations impinge on dispute generation and conflict behavior. In most cases, conflicts do occur in pastoral societies, usually on a collective basis. [4] The other factors contributing to violent conflicts involving pastoralists in the Horn of Africa, such as raiding and cattle-rustling, weakening and undermining of traditional governance systems and inadequate arrangements to cope with droughts and other emergencies in the pastoralist area are mentioned. [43] Regarding of conflict, a series of large-scale battles amongst Ethiopian pastoralists have occurred in the last decade, resulting in significant losses of life and relocation. The *Afar-Issa* (Afar and Somali areas), the Guji-Borana (Oromiya region), the *Anuak-Nuer* (Gambella), and the *Sheikash-Ogaden* are among the most well-known episodes (Somali region) these are some examples. [34] In the study area, there are a number of frequent conflicts that occur in the pastoral communities between *Afar-Karrayu*, *Afar-Issa-Somali*, and *Issa combat ittu*. Now let us see what the real causes are and how those conflicts become resolved through traditional means.

To begin with the conflict in *Afar-Issa Somali* in the Middle Awash valley, the root cause of the conflict between *Issa* and *Afar* pastoralists was traced to the fact that they shared a communal oral tradition or rival myth of origin. Both the *Issa*-Somalia and the *Afar* claim lineage from the first ancestor to settle the globe. According to the Afar account, the *Issa's* ancestor selfishly took the cattle patrimony, depriving his brother of his fair portion, and was cursed to live in the wilderness' barbaric barbarism. According to the *Issa* version, after the Afar ancestor settled in the fertile and hospitable banks of the Awash and *Erer*, his unfortunate brother (*Issa*) spent a long time in the wilderness, facing extinction, and requesting refuge from his brother from Aden, which the latter ungratefully denied him to doom. Apart from the foregoing, the antagonism between *Issa* and *Afar* has been solidified through hundreds of years of battles between the two groups during the successive south-northward migration of the two tribes. As a result, the Afar was pushed from the coastal kingdom of Zeila to their present-day homeland in the Awash valley. [44]

The invasion of Ethiopia by Italian colonial troops in 1936 was a watershed moment in the conflict's history, shifting military strength significantly towards the *Issa*. The Italians recruited the *Issa* as guides and foot soldiers to occupy

Ethiopian land, and they backed them up with weaponry and military training. During this time, the Italians began attacking the Afar who had refused to cooperate. The execution of clan chiefs, the bombing of settlements, and the confiscation of their weaponry by the Italians are all stories told by *Baadu* elders. An additional escalation of the conflict followed the independence of Somalia in 1960. With the intention of pursuing their irredentist interests to establish a "Greater Somalia", the Somalian government strengthened the military capacity of the Issa pastoralists, who again served as foot soldiers during the Ogaden war from 1977 to 1978. During that time, the Afar sustained massive territorial losses and towns like *Mieso* and important grazing areas like *Mulu* had to be given up. Afar elders argue that since the failure of the Somalian state at the beginning of the 1990s, *Issa-Somalia* has also received its main support from the *Issa*-governed Djibouti Republic. Consequently, in the conflict of the last 70 years, the Afar clans from *Baadu* have been pushed about 150 km westwards by the *Issa*-Somalia from their traditional rainy season pastures. Currently, they move with their animals all year long within a small radius in and around their dry season rangelands in *Baadu*. [49] To put it in short, Afar pastoralists, more than any other surrounding ethnic group, were challenged by the *Issa-Somalia*. This resulted in, clan *Issa* was pressing Afar towards the West in order to gain access to grazing land and pastures from the Awash basin. [47]

Moreover, the conflict with the *Issa* brought further risks like the loss of human life in clashes and the loss of animals in raids. The loss of land plays a prominent role in the local perception due to its economic as well as symbolic function. [49] The long-running rivalry between the Afar and the *Issa* has also led to the destruction of the Middle Awash's degradation of the rangelands. In recent years, *Issa* territorial expansion towards the Awash has increased grazing pressure on surviving rangelands, while a large portion of the *Alledegi* Plain remains a "no man's land" due to fear of *Issa* incursions on the Afar, or vice versa. [7]

The other major pastoralist societies' conflict in the study area is Afar and *Karrayu*. The main catalysts for the conflict were first, on both sides, the presence of cattle raids, practiced by taking away the pastoralist communities' basic source of survival. Secondly, in the context of Afar and *Karrayu* pastoralists, looting is carried out at an individual level while robbery is done on an organized group basis. Thirdly, the other triggering causes conflict between both ethnic groups during times of drought and famine. This leads both pastoral groups into conflict. Yet, they would not have been fighting during the rainy seasons. Lastly, the major spoilers in the inter-ethnic conflicts of Afar and *Karrayu* are the *Hawiya* clan of the Somali ethnic group, who deliberately spread fabricated lies that cause frequent and ferocious conflicts between the *Karrayu* Oromo and Afar. [9] One of the main results of the continuous expansion and fighting with the neighboring communities, such as the *Afar*, *Argobba*, *Ittu*, and Arsi Oromo, into the *Karrayu* territory is that their land has become smaller today. Furthermore, a number of

deaths have been registered, as well as the theft of valuable livestock, in particular camels. *Karrayu* Pastoralists are also losing grazing land in the area. [10]

Another two ethnic groups that frequently fight in the study area are *Issa-Somalia* and *Ittu* Oromo. Among the major factors that have contributed to the recurrence of conflict between the two pastoralists are resource scarcity, livestock raids, and access to grazing lands. Further socio-economic and political factors that triggered conflict between both pastoralists. [24]

5. Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism in the Awash Valley

Most of the pastoralist communities that are found in the Awash basin have their own traditional mechanism to resolve disputes, to mention some of them. For a long time, the *Ittu* Oromo have been belief systems known as *Abarsa* and *Kakku*, which are descended from the *Gada* system. *Abarsa* elders and religious leaders saying God hears and acts. Curse and swear are the literal translations of *Abarsa* and *Kakku*, respectively. On the other side Pastoralists of *Issa* -Somalia have well-organized conflict-resolution procedures and preserve equitable pastoral grazing resource distribution. *Issa* -Somali's conflict resolution system is known as *Xeer*. *Xeer* is a system of laws, regulations, and ideals that serve as the bedrock of Somali society. [24]. The unwritten rangeland pastoral law of the *Issa* -Somalia clan, also known as *Heer Issa*, was guarded by seasoned elders who had memorized the law and were passing it down from generation to generation. The elders' responsibility is to mediate, arbitrate, manage, and resolve the conflict. [6]

The Afar pastoralists also have a strong traditional clan leader named *Finna*. It plays a significant role in customary dispute settlement and the social control system in general. *Afinaa* leader can also be called upon to resolve disputes between the Afar and non-Afars within his clan land. The *Finna* clan leader is supported by traditional authority elders of the clan and has traditional law called *Afar maada*. [30] The *Gada* system, which is employed by *Karrayu* Oromo pastoralists, has proven to be the most effective method of conflict resolution in the study area. [39] Under the *Gada* system, *karrayu* society is governed by a council of decision-making led by *Damina*, who is responsible for a wide range of tasks, including domestic difficulties such as abusive spouses, herd and pasture management methods, and conflict resolution at various levels. There are also elder councils at each level of the social structure that oversee the performance of *Damina*, forming a system of checks and balances. [54]

6. The Pastoralist Economy and Government Policy at Awash Valley

Emperor Menelik II marched into the lowlands in 1895 and imposed a tributary relationship in the Awash basin

area, but the Ethiopian government was unable to properly administrate the territory until the 1940s. [47] Since then, the general perception among policy makers is that pastoral lands are underused and, therefore, policies have favored large-scale commercial activities. [23] Adjacent to this, Ethiopia's government policy toward the pastoralist region of the Awash basin is to expand commercial farms since 1950s, particularly cotton and sugar cane, and to resettle agrarian communities. This is clearly shown in the below discussions.

In the Awash Valley, large state farms developed during and after the 1950s at the expense of *Karrayu*, *Jille*, and *Afar* herders. [25] In the 1960s, when the Imperial Ethiopian government and international agricultural companies developed irrigated cotton and sugar plantations in the area of the Awash Basin, as a result, large cotton farms along the Awash valley were begun in the 1960s, which led to the establishment of the state-owned Middle Awash Agricultural Development Enterprise under the Emperor Haile Selassie I regime in 1969, and side-by-side sugar cane factories have been equally promoted. In 1965, the Ethiopian government leased 11,000 hectares of land on the *Metahara* Plains along the Awash River to the Dutch company HVA (Handels Vereniging Amsterdam), which had operated sugar plantations in Shoa since 1964. [27] In support of the above, Bahru elaborated that the Imperial Government of Ethiopia began widely participating in the agrarian transformation to commercial farming during the 1960s. This commercial farm had three main agents, like private Ethiopians, expatriate concessionaries, and the government of Ethiopia. The latter, particularly expatriate concessionaries (foreign-owned plantations), established the *Tandahoo* cotton plantation in the Awash River valley, which is operated by the British Mitchell Cotts Company, the other direct agent directly involved in commercial farming was the Imperial government itself, which established the Awash Valley Authority in 1962 to act as an umbrella organization, sponsoring a variety of agricultural, industrial, and hydroelectric projects. [14] Further it has responsibility to coordinate and administer the development of natural resources in the valley, and particularly those in the upper and middle areas of Awashbasin. By 1971, 9800 hectares of land had been converted to agricultural production. This has resulted in a restriction of movement for all pastoral groups, particularly in *Afar*, *Issa*- Somalia clan, and also including smaller groupings of *Karrayu*, *Jille*, *Arsi*, *Ittu*, and *Argoba*. [26] Because of the establishment of a dam and irrigation schemes on the Awash river, like the construction of *Koka* Dam and *Nura Erra* irrigation scheme, and the design-nation of a large national park, like Awash National Park. [26] In the post-1974 period, the military government greatly gave emphasis to agricultural-development plans. [51]

When examined *Derg* government policy in the Awash basin was best shown in cotton farming on the Middle Awash Agricultural Development Enterprise, a large irrigated state-owned cotton farm in the *Amibara* District of *Afar*, nationalized when the *Derg* came to power in the mid-1970s,

and plantation agriculture expanded to over 13,000 hectares in the mid-1980s following high levels of government investment. [16] The *Derg* not only promoted a rapid expansion of state-owned irrigation farms in the Awash basin but also included that the land reform policy that includes a villagization program was implemented in the area. [5] After land nationalization in 1975, the *Derg* pursued the settlement of pastoralists through peasant associations. This policy served the purpose of intensifying service delivery, resource conservation, and the herders' identification with state institutions. [34]

Pastoralist Document of Federal government in stating major aim is transforming the pastoral societies to agro-pastoral life complemented by urbanization. [34] To this end government was attempted to establish a Pastoralist Affairs Standing Committee by proclamation No 271/2002. [29] However, in practice EPRDF economic plans call for extensive development along Ethiopia's riverine resources in lowland regions that are normally occupied by pastoralists and agro pastoralists. Plans for these projects include the building of large hydroelectric dams and irrigation systems for large cotton, sugar, and rice estates in state-run and privately-owned businesses. [27] At present 150,000 hectares of Awash Basin reserved for irrigation schemes. [46] The Federal government continued to large mechanized farm in the Awash basin and scheduled expansion *metahara* sugar factory by adding 10,000 hectares. [21] Besides, government also established *Tandahoo* Sugar factory and possessed large scale of land to sugar cane Plantation Scheme along the Awash River Basin. [1] land privatization policy of in the study area favored agribusiness, administrative and agricultural towns, resettlement schemes, encampment of refugees and ranches purposes [25] like predecessor of *Derg* government, EPRDF government also implemented villagization settlement along pastoral communities of Middle Awash particularly Villagization in Awash *Fentale* and *Amibara woreda*. [41]

7. Drought Impact and Mitigation Measures in the Awash Valley

Drought is a weather-related natural hazard that can impact a specific region or the entire country. The lower and middle Awash have been hit by extreme and severe drought at a higher rate than the rest of the country. [55] Droughts have been recurrent in the basin as a result of below average perception. [38] For instance, in the lower Awash, the monthly mean annual temperature ranges from 29°C to a mean annual rain fall of as low as 160 mm. This proves that high evaporation occurred and a low amount of moisture existed in the area. [55] When we see the history of drought in the study area, it had the nature of a recurrent phenomenon, starting from the recent periods of 1973–1974 and 1984–1985. In *Afar*, the 1973–74 drought heavily devastated the cattle population by 90%, camels by 30%, sheep by 50%, goats by 30% and the *Afar* population by about 25 to 30%.

[55] In general, the early 1970s drought was the worst period of food scarcity that they had ever experienced in the Awash valley entirely. [35] During recurrent drought periods, conflict between ethnic groups of *Issa*, *Karrayu*, *Ittu*, and *Afar* is common and leads to the loss of human and livestock resources in the area. [55] The pastoral communities in the Awash valley have been responding in different ways to the effects of drought. The well-known traditional method for mitigating the effects of drought and coping options are:

- 1) Mobility of livestock's
- 2) reducing the amount of food consumed during drought periods
- 3) eating wild foods
- 4) use oasis mechanisms

The first most chosen traditional strategy used by the majority of the pastoralist community is livestock mobility. It is an inherent strategy of pastoralists. It allows pastoralists to utilize the available resources in a rotational manner, enables the vegetation on grazing lands to regenerate, search for water and forage, and reduces the risk of overgrazing. [45] For example, the *Afar* who live in the Awash Valley practice some sort of transhumance system of resource management within a radius of 30km between the north and south poles. [28] When shortage of pastures is severe *Afar* pastoralists move more often and longer distances with their herds [35] *Afar* pastoralists also use the *Dagu* method, which allows knowledge to be transmitted from one person to another via strangers or acquaintances. *Dagu* enables individuals to locate available pasture and water for their cattle. [20] Generally, pastoral communities like *Afar* employ mobility not only as a response to the coping strategy of drought and a mechanism of efficient resource utilization, but also as a strategy to optimize herd safety with the addition of an exchange mechanism for information. [1] Another strategy to minimize the impact of drought in the Awash Valley pastoralists' practiced well reducing the amount of food consumed during drought periods, for example. Pastoralist communities of the Somali region respond to food shocks through protected consumption and modified consumption. Protecting consumption requires buying or being given food to maintain food intake [45].

During times of food scarcity, *Karrayu* pastoralists chew any type of chat to decrease their appetite and allow them to miss meals. [32]. Besides *Karrayu* pastoralists, sale their livestock, including young and female animals, is an important coping mechanism after losses have been sustained. [32] Other traditional drought-relief strategies that were used by pastoralists in the Awash Valley include gathering wild plants and making hunting easier. [35] For instance, women of the *Afar* region make dietary changes. They prepare *fura*, the root of a potato-like plant, and *Burie*, a powder made from flowers that is ground to make bread. [45] *Afar* pastoralists in the Awash basin practiced *Erena*, which are traditional institutional arrangements within the community for the management of natural resources. It is known locally as the law of the environment. It has its own executive committee called *Medabena*. The president of *Erena* is

known as *Mekabentu*. It also has an information wing or minister entitled "Father of *Erena*." The father of *Erena* usually collects information about those who cut trees or kill wild animals. [42] As well as, when *Afar* pastoralists face food shortages during a drought period, they solve it by sharing what they have with those who didn't. This mostly occurs between relatives and close friends, locally called *Abino*. This also includes the slaughtering of livestock, ranging from goats to camels, depending on the size of the family and the intensity of the problem. [42] In addition to this, the pastoralist community uses oasis as a response to drought. That is deep-rooted water found in dry lands used for animals and as a source of water for humans. [28] Adding to this, the main water sources in the *Afar* Region for both human and livestock consumption are, shallow wells, boreholes, hand-dug wells and ponds. [19]

8. Conclusion

This study was conducted on the pastoral way of life in the Awash Valley. Pastoralism is a way of life mostly found in Africa that is based on raising livestock and using mobility as a fundamental tactic for livelihood development. In the same mode, pastoral populations tend to live in the drier and semi-arid lowlands of Ethiopia. The study focuses on the Cushitic-speaking pastoralist communities of *Afar*, *Karrayu*, *Arsi*, *Jile*, *Ittu*, and *Issa* Somali, the six pastoralist groups traditionally inhabiting the Awash Basin. Since those dominant pastoralists who live in the valley know the formation of an effective organization of local government, such as the *Afar* Pastoralists founded *Aussa* Muslim Sultanate in 1577 AD, other dominant groups include the *Karrayu*, minor *Arsi* clan, *Jille*, and *Ittu* Oromos, who used the *Gadda* system for a long time. The majority of pastoralists who live in the Awash basin are followers of the Islamic faith. Minors follow *waqeffeta* and Christian faith.

When we see conflict in nature in the study area, it is caused by environmental factors, livelihood decline, certain cultural values and traditions, and state economic or other policies. On the other hand, the conflict in *Afar-Issa* in the Middle Awash valley, the root cause of the conflict, was traced and catalyzed by the fact that they shared a communal oral tradition or rival myth of origin. Yet, conflict is one peculiar feature of pastoralists in the basin. Those groups that developed around traditional reconciliation mechanisms like *Ittu* Oromo have had belief systems known as *Abarsa* and *Kakku*. *Issa-Somali's* conflict resolution system is known as *Xeer*, and *Afar* also used the *Finna* system.

In 1895, the central government of Ethiopia successfully occupied pastoralists in the study area. However, the central government instituted effective administration in the area in 1944. Therefore the Imperial regime began launching new policies towards the Awash Basin by developing irrigated cotton, sugar on large scale plantations, building hydroelectric reserve dams, and establishing Awash National Park. Those trends were also continued until the current period. Since the study area is found in dry and semi-arid

areas frequently hit by drought, particularly the lower and middle Awash basins. The pastoral communities in the Awash valley have been able to respond to the frequent drought by using mobility strategies, using oases and eating wild fruits for mitigation.

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