The TRANSFORMATION OF CONFLICTS AMONG ETHIOPIAN PASTORALISTS:

Ethnography of the Notion of Conflict among the Karrayyu in the Upper and Middle Awash Valley

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF UNIVERSITY OF BASEL

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF
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Summary

This PhD thesis is concerned with studying the conceptualization, performance and transformation of violent conflicts among the pastoralists of the Upper and Middle Rift Valley of Ethiopia. It focused on a particular socio-political context that differs from contexts to which Western scholars are familiar. The research in particular challenges prior studies that reduced violent conflicts in pastoralist areas to purely natural resource-based. Although the link between natural resources and conflict is less contested, the extent to which one enforces the other are not always substantiated with evidence. The research contributes towards a less hegemonic understanding of violent conflicts by avoiding prior definitions, and instead explaining how they appear to, and are performed by, each respective actor in a specific time and place.

Violent conflicts in pastoralist areas of the Upper and Middle Awash Valley of Ethiopia are increasingly known and are of great concern to actors in the region because they have changed in their nature and have not yet achieved full transformation to peace. The research supports the notion that violent conflicts are basically embedded within other forms of social interactions. Violent conflict in particular mainly manifests itself in form of cattle raiding or homicide as it has been characteristic to pastoralism. Nonetheless, its notion and its performance has transformed as more actors with diverse interests have come onto the scene. The expansion of state farms, new forms of local governance, such as ethnic federalism, and increased settlements by outsiders has affected the balance of power among local groups and their capacity to restore balance.
The Karrayyu, the pastoralist group I dealt with, are the most marginalized groups in the country in terms of their economic and political participation. They felt their neighboring groups have better access to automatic weapons and administrative institutions rendering them more power and domination over them. Local administration and development agencies have often understood conflict as intrinsic to pastoral mode of production, and thought of its transformation to peace with changing the economy and forms of governance. In practice however, they soon learn that conflict has been reproduced with such changes. The state has growing interest to expand commercial farms as well as private investments that takes away a great share of resources from the local people. The Karrayyu went through a series of interactions with various external groups of which violence is overriding.

In attempting to understand such violent conflicts, the research has adopted two approaches. The first is an approach publicised by Schlee (2004) about the importance of people’s reasons for fighting, who fights with whom. The research gives all actors in conflict situations equivalent voices as to their conceptualisation of violent conflict. Specifically, this would mean a) inquiring into the reasoning, preferences and motivations of major actors engaged in violent conflicts.

The majority of the Karrayyu pastoralists I consulted saw violence as a necessary and discursively constituted action in their particular context, which is characterised by a lack of peaceful and productive alternatives. It is true that violence entails damage to property and human lives, and it would be naïve to argue that the Karrayyu would feel no remorse about the death of their animals or people as a result of violence with their neighbours. They have
their own ways of expressing sorrow and sympathy for the dead and yet such sentiments do not, in their perception, contradict the legitimacy of the violence. To engage in violence in certain empirical conditions is to be realistic. One has to defend one’s cattle, one’s land, and one’s people from those whom one thinks would pre-emptively render harm. Therefore, the Karrayyu feel as though they ought to continuously engage in violence so as to incapacitate their enemies.

The second approach focuses on the importance of looking at deeper patterns of relationships to gain a better understanding of conflicts. As violent conflicts are juxtaposed with other forms of social interactions, they are not always and overtly discussed, expressed and acted upon. The research looked at the structural incompatibilities that arose from differences in values as well as the institutions that embrace them. The research also brought to the fore the significance of primordial ties in the process of conflict reproduction.

Methodologically, precipitations of violent events can, therefore, be better understood by examining both manifestations of violent events and their contents on the one hand, and structural, deep contradictions, experiences and histories on the other hand. Pastoralist societies are known as ‘Stateless’ societies, the implication being that defence and the monopoly of violence are largely a task imposed on the societies themselves. Violence is often selected as the best option because of its advantages over other means at their disposal. The availability and supply of choices for bargaining, as well as the historical primordial ties that set boundaries between them and others, help to explain why violence is selected in one situation but not in another. Pastoralists cannot be warriors all the time, but rather should be
ready to employ violence when the need arises. This capacity to employ violence will continue to exist as long as alternative forms of violence transformation is not put in place.

At present, the practice of peace conferences in this region actually increased power imbalances among groups in the Rift Valley instead of transforming violent conflicts to peace..
Acknowledgements

The completion of this research project is evidence to the support I received from a number of people and organizations. It is difficult to point out everyone but surely more people have contributed to the success of this research project than could be mentioned here. I thank all the people who provided professional and technical support, made comment, and showed interest to learn from this research.

I acknowledge full support from the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North–South: Research Partnerships for Mitigating Syndromes of Global Change, co-funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

I thank earnestly all my informants in the Upper and Middle valley of Ethiopia including government representatives, NGO staffs particularly GTF staff who have provided significant support during my field work between 2003 and 2005.

My great gratitude goes to Professor Till Förster, Director for Institute of Social Anthropology at University of Basel, for supervising and offering his valuable time to advise on each and every aspect of the research and for his intellectual inputs which often made me think how wonderful it would have been had I been trained by him before the commencement of this project. He has been among a few professors I know who despite his extensive knowledge and experience in the discipline, still show interest in learning from young scholars like me. His patience, diligence and gift to listen to others have been the best lessons I received and helped me recognize what means to be a prized social anthropologist. His visits to my ‘field work’ site and consequent discussions cleared my frustrations about a grounded theory which I dreaded for years. I benefited a lot from the Institute of social anthropology in Basel. It provided me a place of work during my stay in Basel which made it easier for accessing materials that are needed for writing the thesis. I was also able to involve in regular academic discussions and seminars.
My sincere thanks go also to my second supervisor, Professor Laurent Goetschel, director of Swiss peace, who closely followed my project and facilitated all the institutional support so that everything goes right and the outcomes are good.

I like to thank wholeheartedly my mother, Muluwork Shiferaw, who unfalteringly provided her time; energy and love to enable me complete this research. She also extended her love and care to my daughter during my absence, compromising her own comfort and responsibilities. She has been a reason for me to try and keep on trying to be a better person, to be daring to contribute to the world.

My deepest love, great admiration and respect go to my husband, Dr. Muluken Melese who has been always encouraging, practical and loving. His continuous reassurance and support made this to happen. My daughter, Michu, the comforting one, has paid the cost due to my absence even when I am physically there. And yet, she has been my foremost motivation to finish and come back to her, to give her all the time and love she was not able to cherish during five years of study.

My parents, Ato Ashenfai Degafaw, my brother Allehone Mulugeta and my sister Fikir Ashenfai, have been my treasures not only during my study but the whole time. I always received a very good insight and contribution from my brother, Allehone whom I envy for his energy, thought and articulation of many social science themes. His extensive reading on Ethiopia and experience has been a great support for me from someone near.

The merit of this research is owed to all the people involved in NCCR north south network. My special gratitude is to Ato Berhanu Debelle, Dr. Eva Ludi, Dr. Tobias Hagmann, and Dr. Didier Péclard, who were interested and involved in my research project both administratively and professionally and contributed to the outcome of the research.

My colleagues at the institute of social anthropology in Basel provided their friendship and support during my stay in Basel. Finding my way in a small city like Basel was the most challenging part of my stay in Switzerland, which I survived with
the help of these friends and not due to the Swiss maps that I never managed to read in short time.
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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATE, STATHOOD AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

State and statehood

In the field of social sciences, students are often expected to explain research phenomena in terms of generally recognised and accepted concepts in order to facilitate comparison with similar works and to make research more widely understood. Nonetheless, the process of formulating concepts and definitions sometimes overlooks empirical attributes that should be examined in context. In order to overcome this challenge, a number of scholars seem to strive to deconstruct what has been constructed so far, calling old concepts ‘normative’ and ‘simplifying’. Thus, it becomes increasingly challenging for young researchers to explain certain phenomena by using frameworks that are continuously being contested, regarded as inefficient, and incapable of being applied to diverse situations. Of course, there is often sound reason for discrediting certain well-known theories and definitions due to a growing awareness of their shortcomings and emphasis on structures, without analysis of those processes that are central to a continuously changing social life. Establishing an appropriate balance between ethnographic detail and generalisation is the aim of this research. I also presume that such a balance is even more relevant when it comes to scholarly works on topics such as state and conflicts in Africa. The relevance of re-examining state as authority in this particular research has two aspects: first the state institutions play major role in conflict and conflict resolutions. Second state is also one major arena around which diverse actors play their role over violence.

Today a number of sociologists and political scientists are preoccupied with questions related to studying and understanding the definition of the ‘state’. It is debatable whether a state should be understood as an autonomous entity, separate from society, or rather as a concept that has become too dependent to be considered a distinct unit of analysis (Migdal 1988). While this debate is old as state itself, recent literature has focused on the quest and desire to re-conceptualise and disengage from
simultaneous fear of losing established understanding and knowledge about what was once called political system. What is more interesting, however, is that when scholars refer to state, they aspire to comprehend and make it tangible to everyone. Some suggest that it should be given a different name, such as the ‘hidden reality of politics’, the ‘public household’ (Sharma & Gupta 2006), or a ‘politically organised subjection’ (Abrams 2006).

Defending the older common understanding, Abrams (2006) argued that the conception of everyday politics in Marxism and political sociology is well grounded, despite its contested nature and difficulty of being operationalised. He also noted that a major reason to follow the older version of thinking is, ‘the existence of a still hidden reality to political life…a bad stage of institutionalisation of power behind onstage agencies of government, which resists identification and discovery’ (2006:112-113). Subsequently, studying this entity that defies any attempt to full identification and discovery would require, according to him, moving from state to studying the actualities of political subordination.

On the other hand, an increasing amount of pressure is coming from scholars who work in non-Western societies, emphasising the peculiarity of African states. Most specialists on state argue that the Weberian concept of the state is too localised and alien to represent states other spheres of the world, such as Africa. In response to the question of why African states in particular differ from the mainstream conceptualisation of Western states, Clapham (1996) argue that African states operate according to a different geographical set up, ethnic make-up, economic frailty, and colonial history, which make it difficult for them to replicate the Western models of state; and yet the survival of most African states, with all of their weaknesses, is explained in terms of the support and legitimacy provided by the international system. ‘When talking about the African states….., we are less likely to refer to the state in the first place’ (Doornbos 1990:180).

A similar but different articulation of the problem comes from Chabal (1990), who saw politics in Africa as lying outside the sphere of the state. Social anthropologists, even before the colonial encounter, contributed a great deal to the understanding of
pre-existing African political systems by using empirical data. Some were criticised for distorting the meaning of these political systems, whereas others were said to serve the colonial rule by providing insider information to their colonising patrons. Even then, to the anthropologists, it was not just the state, but also the non-state, the stateless and the intermediate forms of state that appeal to their interest for investigation.

Particularly after the Cold War, increasing emphasis has been placed on studying the state in Africa afresh, and this raises the question of why the topic of African states reappears as important to scholars and politicians. Of course, one can only make an educated guess, and one of reasons for such urgent emphasis could be the fear of terror and disintegrations that have flared up in the region. Recently, Western scholars have become particularly fascinated with the manner in which many states in developing countries operate in relation to their own societies and constituents. A number of authors are occupied with explaining states in Africa and, in the process, have entered into unremitting debates with regard to the formation, development and characterisation of African states. Although some scholars appear to argue that African states should not be discussed within the framework of the Weberian states, the temptation we mentioned earlier to seek a comparison to a ‘universal’ (often Western) conceptualisation in order to achieve intelligibility within academia continues. The following quote is one example of such arguments in favour of comparison:

As the failure to develop a more helpful generalisation is also increasingly hurting the study of Africa itself . . . similarly the study on the relation between capitals and chiefs, has with few exceptions been developed on a country-by-country basis with no hint of a comparative effort. As a result, the study of African politics has sometimes been in accord with the critique of area studies: more a jumble of accumulated facts than a clearly scholarly project that has sought to continually test facts against hypotheses. It is possible to answer that critique without abandoning the study of African states qua African states. To do so requires the development of an analytic perspective that allows the African experience to be understood in a comparative perspective (Herbst, 2000:6)

This interest on comparison is more discernible when looking at the many recent works that proliferate containing a number of typologies of African states. One can
confidently claim that the exercise of characterising African states, both in time and space, has gone awry. It is a challenging task to exhaust all of them, without being exhausted by such diversity. Failed states (Reno, 2003), shadow states (Reno, 1999), weak states (Migdal, 1998), Patrimonial states (Erdmann 2002a; 2002b; Van de, Walle 2001; Eisenstadt 1973); no-state states (Englebert 1995; Doornbos 1990) are but a few of the many types of states that exist.

For the purpose of this research, I will only emphasise two very important enquiries that are related to studying state: the first enquiry relates to the question of why many African states unlike many western states generally fail to develop the capacity of being developmental, in other words, ‘Why some governments fail to adopt these polices and institutions, instead turning predatory, while others do adopt them and become developmental’ (Robinson 1997). These questions are not easy to answer, but their relevance is clear. As its core, Africa’s problem is one of underdevelopment:

People are poor, resources are underutilised; institutions are ineffective in facilitating the very individual and collective action needed to solve these problems. Services such as health, water and education are poor to non-existent; infrastructures cannot be maintained, much less built; environments are degraded and overused, and civil conflicts are unresolved (Wunsch 2000: 489).

By way of reacting to this question, some have emphasised colonial experience. Englebert (2002) argues that African states in particular, after their colonial experience, opted more for patrimonial than developmental polices; the former being exogenous and imposed upon pre-existing institutions. Some of their constituent societies were even stateless and organised under a completely different set of principles. Personal rule and neo-patrimonialist rules tend to dominate because of a lack of moral rights and the disposition of loyalty of pre-existing society, which in turn encourages the attainment of legitimacy through a patron-client relationship and

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1 I am aware of the normativity of the notion of development or underdevelopment- all actors can use it to legitimize their own political agenda
informal ad-hoc alliances (Erdmann 2002a; 2002b; Van de, Walle 2001; Eisenstadt 1973).

The second enquiry is forms of relationship between state and society; to such questions, some responded that the problem with African states lies in our expectation; namely, that we expect more than what it actually is. A state could persist at some times, but not others; in other words, a state does not persist permanently over the term of its jurisdiction (Jacson 1982). Migdal also saw state as a distinct part of a society, playing a special role that sets it apart from other social groups and ‘as not more than an artefact of a small segment of human history’ (1988:16). Migdal and other authors reserve a special place for society, viewing it as having the power to create a parallel and authoritative order; keeping the balance between society and state, instead of claiming that state is the best and most pervasive political order. ‘State is one form of social organisations among many that is capable of having a grander social control over a society because it is able to insert itself into the strategies of survival of its citizens’ (Migdal 2001). In Addition, Migdal suggests that weak states are highly capable of penetrating and extracting, though they are markedly weaker when it comes to regulations and appropriations. This duality is inherent in many post-colonial states that are present in all sectors of society, but generally powerless to affect social change.

A number of scholars still exist who resist to characterise African states and rather argue that emphasis should be given to the study of actual performance of the day-to-day state (Gupta 1995). The formation of state implies a ‘continuous transformation, growth and differentiation, the manner in which it tries to create linkage with its constituents, the extent of the autonomy it has left them. It also implies processes in which absorptions, confrontation and adjustments take place’ (Doornbos 1990:181)

The perception of the disintegration and collapse of African states has been contested at several levels (Jacson 1982). In his seminal work known as ‘Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Order’, Chabal argued that states in Africa are characterised as weak only when seen through the Weberian lens (Chabal & Daloz 1999). Most states in Africa are not structurally differentiated from society and are not institutionalised
The leaders, despite their adoption of institutions such as democracy, have generally been incapable of detaching themselves from their patrimonial links and roots within the society, which has led to personalisation of power. Along the same lines, Fain noted ‘one should not be misled by the rights and authority given to a government to command a territory without looking at whether that government has sufficient power to do so’ (1972:24). According to Englebert (2002) and Allen (1995), the characterisation of the African state as the only single political system has been a most misleading one and is a common problem facing students of African studies. I share the claim that political systems are overlapping and as Migdal’s developed in ‘state in society’, state just as one form of organization may help mould, and also be moulded by the societies within which it is embedded.

Violent Conflicts

Studies on violent conflicts are very much interdisciplinary. A number of grand theoretical approaches have been developed to try to understand the ‘root causes’ of violent conflicts, ranging from Malthus-with-Guns to the New Barbarianism and Greed not Grievance. Although there is a clear difference between the inter-personal violence that manifests in every-day social life and the wider regional group violent conflicts, these theories, when considered separately, are incapable of explaining both forms of violence sufficiently. Part of the reason is due to the varying emphasis on forms of violence across disciplines. However, I believe that studying violence ethnographically by no means opposes its theoretical implication.

The interest of this section of the thesis on conflict lies primarily in reviewing the dominant perspective of violence in the field of social anthropology. In this regard, two dominant approaches prevail: the functional and the symbolic. Since the functional approaches focus on law and order, they view violence partly as subversive to order and on the other hand as an extremely instrumental in maintaining order, whereas the symbolic approach sees it as an act best understood within a specific cultural and social setting from the subjective and diverse viewpoints of the actors. For the symbolic approaches, contexts are of great importance to understanding whether the role of violence is distracting from or
creating order (Stewart/Strathern 2002). The concept of order, therefore, becomes central to both approaches. Again, the question would be whether or not the concept of ‘order’ itself is subjective. In response to this, Stewart and Strathern noted:

“What constitutes order and how it is to be attained and maintained vary according to people’s position in society and according to their own personal perception. As anthropologists and sociologists, we may tend to construct models of systems in which order is implicated as an objective, ongoing property. However, these are indeed only models; they may contain ideological or value-driven components that in fact reflect the subjective preferences or perception of dominant classes in society” (2002:2).

On the other hand, expressing his doubts, Heelas (Riches 1996) observed that the diversity of the ordinary understanding of violence across cultures conceals the core understanding of violence as a social action to the extent of creating doubt as to the significance of using violence as ‘a sociologically useful category.’ In response to this, Riches (1996) insisted on the possibility and need of defining, clarifying, and theorizing violence through the use of a superior model that takes into account the performer, the victim and the witness of violence in their many respective social roles. He developed what he called the ‘basic triangle of violence’. He argued that for anthropologists, whose aim it is to explain the act rather than label of violence, the performer’s viewpoint in particular provides more insight about the practical and symbolic functions of violence than its disorder function, as is so often depicted by the witness. Violence lies in the contradiction between the performer’s definition of the act as legitimate and the witness’ and the victim’s definitions of the act as illegitimate. In his own words:

Violence is a means of social advancement whose recipients, victims and witnesses have to be persuaded of the act’s acceptability, for the performer certainly wishes to dampen down the possibility of a like reply. The purpose of violence, which best meets this contradiction – through which advancement is achieved and a measure of legitimacy claimed – is tactical pre-emption (1996:5).

Legitimacy is another related and very central concept in the study of violent conflicts; legitimacy is central to Riches’ understanding of the notion of violence as already for Hobbes and Weber. One of the most important points he demonstrated is
that, in order for violence to be performed, it has to be legitimated at least by one or two of the social actors. His approach relates legitimacy with the rationale for violence based on instrumental and expressive grounds; moreover, the concept of legitimacy can readily be associated with Weber’s conception of violence as a legitimate action of the State. One of the shortcomings of such a triangle of violence, however, is the fact that it tends to see the victims, the perpetrators, and the witnesses as three distinct groups, and this does not sufficiently explain situations where such clear demarcations do not exist, as in the case I dealt with and will explain in further detail. The rationale for violence has been discussed by many social scientists (Stewart and Strathern, 2002); however, the attribution of rationality to the performance of violence has its limits, because violence has consequences that extend beyond the intended aim.

Despite the pressure to construe a theory that explains all forms of violence, nonetheless, we have come to the understanding that violent conflicts connote different things depending on one’s personal experience of violence. When one thinks of violence, one might think of any of its various forms, such as outright warfare, genocide, mob riots, terrorist attacks, or inter-personal aggression. I should mention from the outset that the forms and the level of violent conflicts that I examined in this research refer to group conflicts, but did not take place at the grander level. Even so, I have to admit that the most challenging aspect of my work was to define and situate it comprehensively within existing general theories or expositions. One of the reasons for this difficulty arises from the way in which the ubiquity of the violence I studied obscures its visibility and, at other times, its invisibility obscures its commonplaceness. Violent conflicts I observed neither were not full-fledged aggressions nor were time-bound; the participants involved in these conflicts did not act as individuals but in the name of their groups, and the victims were not clearly distinguishable from the witnesses or perpetrators, as Riche argued. I, therefore, opted to adopt ‘the ethnographic perspective’ developed by Richards, which emphasises explaining violence rather than defining it. The most frequently stated claim that violence is embedded within a society still holds true and yet falls short of a comprehensive explanation because it does not sufficiently indicate the repressiveness of this conception. In other words, I agree with Stewart and Strathern
(2002) that violence can destabilize the society depending on how it is framed in a particular society. Another attribute of such violent conflicts is that they are the sum of numerous precipitations of violent events, histories of capitulation and accumulated grievances. I can only better understand them by looking at deeply seated contradictions and grievance-driven perceptions than at the actual expressions alone. This means that, in some cases, violent acts may be less performed than structured.

The minimal definition of violence by Riche (1986) ‘the inflicting of physical harm upon someone else’, might be just a starting point, and yet does not answer fully the question as to how it is justified and/or what if the perpetrators are elusive? This is the case in my research, where violence is depersonalised and group violence is justified on the basis of collective claims. In other situations, cattle raids or killing can occur in very disconcerting ways and can be orchestrated by a few individuals without requiring approval from their affiliates, and yet a specific group can claim the act of violence and take responsibility without referring to the perpetrators. In such cases, the mere execution of violence may serve as a political purpose, namely that of defining an opponent or an enemy.

1.2 Ethiopia and its Multi-levelled Society

Written history has it that the Ethiopian state experienced various periods of contraction and expansion. The basis for its expansion in the 14th, 15th, and 19th centuries was due primarily to the desire to expand trade, as well as to control and tax more people. This was not always easy, as counter-attempts were made by other powerful groups from various directions. Ethiopia’s attributes, as a multi-levelled society, are entrenched within these interactions and confrontations among different groups of people and followed no single pattern. Ethiopia is one of the world’s most ancient countries with both a written and an oral history. According to Levine (2000), Ethiopia has, for centuries, been conventionally portrayed by the rest of the world as:

‘A terribly remote land, home of pristine piety, a magnificent kingdom, and bastion of African independence...The image of
Ethiopia as a bastion of African independence became particularly widespread in the late nineteenth century. While peoples all over Africa were being subjugated by foreign powers, Ethiopians were winning victories over a series of invaders … Ethiopians gained a reputation as spirited fighters determined to maintain their sovereignty (Levine 2002:12).

Levine argued that although these images have their own basis, they were at the same time admixtures of poetic fancy, religious aspirations, and political ambition. It is important to mention that representations of Ethiopia have often been fraught with contest. Many of its authors (foreigners and local scholars invariably) were criticised for representing Ethiopia with a lot of ideological and political proclivity. Questions about the state-society relationship, that is., whether the Ethiopian state emerged basically out of a subjugation of alien people or an ‘ingathering of people with deep affinities’, has remained a bone of contention. Donald Levine’s (1974; 2000) representation of Ethiopia as a cultural area where autonomous and loosely related groups of people evolved over time and moved towards a single societal system that was dominated by the Christian Amhara society has been influential. In his portrayal of Ethiopia, He created the image of a country where a single ethnic group called Amhara dominated politically, and another incongruous social system, called Oromo, existed; since then, many authors and researchers have uncritically accepted and referenced this portrayal as fact. Levine understands of Ethiopia as a multi-ethnic society showed his analytical bent towards an evolutionary view, wherein the nation’s different ethnic groups had gradually been consolidated under two dominant systems.

According to his critics, variations and inequalities among different groups within the imperial state (which would have been visible at the time of his work) were overlooked (Paul 1975; Turton, 1975). For instance, John Crummy in his book ‘Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia’ noted that historic Ethiopia is identified socially as constituting farmers who produce cereals and pulse seeds, but little is known about its herding people.

In the written history, it is said that the last quarter of nineteenth-century Ethiopia is characterised by a series of conquests of the Minilik over distant territories and tribes.
The expansion from the North toward other regions that possessed their own respective regional characters has been assessed differently by politicians and historians. One reason for this diversity of opinions and understandings is, as I mentioned, due to the deeply rooted political motivation of scientists and, in particular, historians both at home and abroad.

Notwithstanding the contradictions that exist among scholars themselves, I refer to a generally held narrative, which claims that the historical expansion from the centre to the periphery was made by means of ownership or land grants through a lineage system called rist, through the expansion of the Amharic language, and through a religious conversion to Christianity (Keller 1981). However, the meaning of a periphery changed frequently and was somewhat relative until Minilik accessed firearms from outside and changed the power such that it fell into his favour.

Later during the Haile Selassie regime, Bahru wrote, the country transformed from an indigenous feudal society into one, which headed toward world economic order, capitalism (Crummy 2000). Of course, the question of whether Ethiopia was primarily a feudal state has been disputed (Perham 1948).

Although the modern Ethiopian state did not emerge as exogenously as many other African countries that inherited their modern state from their colonial predecessors, it is doubtful that the state-society relation was in any meaningful manner different from the rest (Tesafye 2002). In other words, although Ethiopia has the advantage of having existed as a multi-ethnic polity for two thousand years, it could not remain immune to the dynamics of political modernisation throughout Ethiopian history. There have been tensions between the national centre and diverse regional and ethnic groups. Levin explained the processes of Amharanisation following World War II in terms of the geological and military success of the empire, whereas the weakening of this capacity led to the tendency of separatist, as well as the proliferation of primordial-based, sentiment:

Political modernization quickens sentiments like ethnicity, because it involves new extensions of central political institutions into

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2 Rist is a land given out to the individual landlords as a gift for the service and patronage they provide for the State
personal lives at many points such as nationally organized schools, judicial systems, media broadcasts, taxation and road construction, land development programs and electoral campaigns. Persons whose lives are circumscribed by local customs and authorities become ambivalently linked to a national centre. They want the benefits such a centre provides but not at the cost of humiliating subordination (2000).

It is conventionally assumed that pastoralist frontiers and peripheries since Haile Sellasie period have been integrated into the nation-state, and thus those non-state types of authority and social organizations have disappeared. In many instances, for example in the case of peripheries of the Karrayyu and Afar this is not true. Although the state has a long history of intervention mainly through land appropriation, it is only since 1994 that the state is being ‘decentralized’ to utmost peripheries. And yet, the state has not managed to fully assert its power and to impose its norms over other types of Karrayyu and Afar norms and their social organizations. This is particularly visible in the field of conflict resolution in pastoralist areas where local social organizations and multitude of individual actors to a large extent circumvent and appropriate power and thus gave local governance a different expression.

A great size of the hinterland of Upper and Middle Awash Rift valley is inhabited both by the local people such as Karrayyu the, the Afar, the Argoba, a small portion of Somali clans and settler groups coming from different part of the country. Cattle raid and associated small scale warfare among indigenous groups are very rife. The hinterland of this particular area is not physically remote from the seat of the central government, as 100kms drive from Addis Ababa; one arrives at the upper part of the Rift valley. Violence of such kind has been for long time associated with scarcity of resources. However, recent work argue that conflicts of such nature are not entirely a result of resource scarcity but also other dynamics and changes taking place in the areas such as state expansion and other transnational processes.

Another very important characteristic of these hinterlands is that one barely finds police stations, court, schools and other formal social institutions. On the other hand, many of the local customary organizations that were once believed to serve legal, judicial and political roles lost their dominance in governing all spheres of public
lives. Therefore, the question I pose and at the same time wish to answer is how this apparently vacant looking public space is governed. I try to explore state of governance and the role groups and individuals play in conflict. I make a special reference to containment /foster of cattle raid and associated violence.

1.3 Methodology

*The Foundation*

My first contact with people in the dry lands of Ethiopia was in 1998 when I fortunately received a small grant from Organization of Social Science in East and South Africa (OSSREA) to conduct field research in the western part of Ethiopia, in a sub-district known as Jikawo. My research focused on studying Nuer women’s role in local resource management and was the first icebreaking exercise for further prospects and exposure, not only to dry lands, but also to academic debates that were going on around pastoralism in the Horn of Africa. Later, I had the opportunity to participate in workshops, conferences and field researches on pastoralism organized by different development organisations; and I ultimately stayed on as a programme officer for Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia, the only umbrella association that works on pastoral policy advocacy in Ethiopia.

For most organisations and institutions that work on pastoralism, pastoralist groups in the Horn represent groups that are highly marginalised due to, as they argue, unfit state polices, harsh environment, and most importantly, their vulnerability to violent resource-based conflicts. Development agencies have conducted myriad of meetings and conferences to discuss policy issues surrounding pastoralism, to put pressure on the state to modify inappropriate polices, and to help develop appropriate polices in pastoral areas (). Recommendations were ubiquitous and very diverse; and yet most of the time, they focused on the retrieval and strengthening of local/indigenous institutions. This development was not limited to Ethiopia, but ran across countries in eastern and northern Africa, such as Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Chad, Mali and Tanzania.
Since my thoughts were initially very much influenced by all the events that were going on at these conferences and in these meetings, my initial proposal focused on studying local/indigenous institutions and their potential to transform violent resource-based conflicts. The difficulty I faced with such a proposal was that, first, conflict in the area where I planned to do my fieldwork had not transformed in the same way as described in academia (Lebarch 2003). Second, such a topic entailed a ready-made definition of what conflicts were. Thus, I shifted the emphasis from attempting to understand the potential of local institutions to transform conflicts to attempting to understand the notion of violent conflicts.

*The Informants*

The group of people I worked among call themselves Karrayyu. They also use the term Oromo to differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups who live in the same district. Initially, my interest was to limit the research to the Karrayyu, which later proved not to be a very helpful unit of analysis, because the Karrayyu often shift their identities and thus, include other groups, such as the Ittu, as one of them as well. This means that the Karrayyu often prefer not to distinguish between themselves and the Ittu when they refer to the inter-group conflicts against the Argoba, Afar and Arsi, their neighbouring groups. Their identity is unsurprisingly fluid, but it can also at times be very conspicuous that they distinguish themselves from other non-Oromo groups, as if those distinctions had always naturally existed.

One of the challenges and the major contributions of this study, I believe, is to provide insight into which identities are similarly constructed by outsiders, including the researcher, and how the local actors view themselves differently depending on different situations, such as in the fields of actual life and research. For many of the social scientists who have worked in the area of identity, this may not be a grand revelation. For good reasons, actors who are categorised and brought together within a specific rationality may change their identities and attributes when treated in another situation. Thus, when I was treating the Karrayyu as a more or less homogeneous actor, the first question I had to tackle was where and in what
situations the Karrayyu stand as a single group that is distinct from others and I ask readers also to be reminded of such fluidity.

When studying the perception and performance of conflict, in particular, it is necessary to understand multiple actors and their shifting identities in conflicts. This research is an attempt to understand the notion of conflict from the viewpoint of the Karrayyu in the context of their relationships with outsiders, at the level of a district. Much emphasis is given in this thesis to the Karrayyu, but the Karrayyu notion of conflict can only be understood in relation to other groups of people with whom they interact. Data was, therefore, collected in other contexts and among other groups. A number of informants were included from the Afar and Argoba groups, district administration officials, state farm staff, and NGO staff. I took part in a number of workshops and conferences at different levels (at regional level and national level) to gain a better understanding of the public representation of conflicts. I spent a lengthy period of my fieldwork with herdsmen who had actually engaged in violent conflicts and elder representatives who speak on behalf of those involved to outsiders in both informal and formal arenas.

This study is not litigation and should only be read as providing a perception of a group of people about their practical situation and how they try to cope based on their own rationalities and perceptions about the groups of people with whom they interact. My data collection technique includes all major actors who were available and receptive to these collection techniques. In this research, a significant voice is given to the Karrayyu, due to the interest of the researcher to concentrate and engage as much as possible in an in-depth study. I did, however, make a significant effort not to overlook factors and actors that could compromise the contribution and findings of this study. As a social anthropologist, my main objective is to understand social practice within the contexts that could be specified. I strongly believe that this study provides crucial information, not in its providing of facts as such, but in regard to how people construct the reality around them in such a way as to make it sensible, manageable and survivable.
Choosing a Place and Patterns of Communication

Dhebiti

Finding a place where I could be safe and, at the same time, learn all I needed was ideal. In 2003 I spent the first three months of field work in Dhebiti, a permanent village. I was generously provided a room by Gudina Tumsa Foundation (GTF) within staff resident quarters that had been built for the primary school teachers. I found my residence very strategic, as there were Karrayyu households within five minutes walk from where I was staying. Many young Karrayyu students who were attending a primary school in the village used to visit me and share with me information about events that had taken place around their homesteads. They served as conduits to their parents, introducing me as a woman who had come from Addis Ababa to study the ‘culture’ of the Karrayyu. It is very interesting to note that everything that a researcher would like to learn about is construed by the students in school as ‘culture’. ‘Culture’ is employed from their own perspective to mean all knowledge and practices possessed by the Karrayyu alone and not by others. It is like a secret kept that should be told and given out by few members of the society, often the elders, to the outsider, to the stranger. Due to the connotations of this term, there is often a tendency by the members to consign the matter of inquiry of the researcher, to elderly men who are assumed to be a repository of that ‘culture’. This provided me with the opportunity to understand and learn the ‘official’ knowledge from elders. I also learnt that women and herdsmen are tacitly were invisible than others because of such strategic pattern of communication. I found selective observation of events and spontaneous questioning as better techniques for learning from women and young herdsmen. Women are at ease to answer questions that are related to events taking place at the time of conversation and offer explanations in terms of processes and relations, whereas the moment I began asking questions that requires authenticity from their side, they suggest that I should discuss with elderly men.

Every conflict event comprises multiple actors; some actors are more visible, powerful and strategic than others. Every actor attempts to justify their role as the victim of violence and, by so doing, attempts to influence the researcher’s
interpretation of the violence (Nordstrom 1995). In circumstances like this, interviews are not the ideal way to gain a comprehensive understanding of conflicts. During the first phase of my field work, my communication with the Karrayyu was about everyday events while visiting sick children who had stayed home due to malaria, asking primary and secondary school children about their dreams, talking about fashions and hairdos with herdsmen who graze cattle, and sharing water bottles (which are very much needed in the village). The issue of conflicts came to them as a matter of course rather than as a designed selection. In mid 2003 I was invited by a librarian to visit the school library in Dhebiti village. The school teachers were very proud of the library, which was obviously the only one in the district. While sitting in the library, I heard a scream from a distance. It looked like everyone except me knew what was going on. I went out to check and saw many children in the school dashing out from their classrooms and run out of the compound. Later, I was told by the teachers in the school that:

It is often like this, whenever there is a skirmish in the village between the Karrayyu and the neighbouring Afar or Argoba groups, we hear the screams of women in the villages. This is how information is exchanged and help is sought. We cannot stop the children from going out of the compound because they left their families behind in the villages and they have to know what is going on and they have to help if they get there in time. (T, Personal communication, June 12, 2003, Dhebiti)

At that point, it became easier to discuss with the school children that particular conflict event, their interpretations about the cause and those involved. It was easy to understand that primary school children shoulder the responsibility of defending their families from ‘enemies’ at the time of such skirmishes who are grazing animals in the field. They are the first to respond to calls for rescue even before the militia or the police would arrive from town. This reminds me of a statement made by Bates ‘in stateless societies, no one is a farmer nor warrior at any given time but rather possesses the capabilities of both’ (2002:603).

Teachers in the primary school (who are migrants) had their own interpretations of such rife but unpredictable violent conflict events. They stayed in the village in a separate compound that had been constructed by GTF. On the weekends nothing
much happened on the compound, and this provided an opportunity for discussion with the Karrayyu about events in the village, including their own points of view about violence and norms.

Women in permanent villages\(^3\) generally appreciate visits to their houses. During the first phase of my field work, my husband accompanied me in the field and consulted a patient in a household. This helped create a stronger bond with this family, through which I later gained trust in Dhebiti village.

Dhebiti was an important site, not only because of the availability of lodging, but also due to its proximity to the Bulga (Kesem) River and the Arole hills, where the Karrayyu often confront the Afar and Argoba groups, respectively. Here, I could easily observe events and gradually became member of the village. Young men in a household were often divided into two groups: the first was comprised of those who were sent to school; and the second was comprised of those who attended to the cattle and were not permitted to go to school. The cattle herders would often spend up to three months away from their homes, especially during the dry seasons.\(^4\) The direction of their journey depends on the availability of water, pasture, as well as conflicts with neighbouring people; however, the journey is a necessity. While it was possible for me to follow them, the migration to this area was not safe or comfortable for anyone travelling with the cattle. The young men were often scared of enemies, lived on milk alone, and spent days in the desert and with kins. During my travels with them, I continually faced problems related to food and accommodations.

\textit{Metehara and Haro Adi}

During the second phase of my field work, I realised that the towns of Mehtara and Haro Adi were home to many elderly men; and second. Most men and women who come for the market in Metehara do not return to their villages immediately when the market was over. The towns of Metehara and Haro Adi are increasingly becoming

\(^3\) Permanent villages are villages where mainly women, young children and elderly men stay for an extended period of time, building a house and taking care of small animals such as goats, sheep and milk cows.

\(^4\) The dry season traditionally comprises the foothills of the Fentale Mountain and stretches up to the borderlands of the Bulga River in the West and the Gran plain in the East. The Ona Gunu roughly consists of the areas of Dheebitti, Alakka, Haro Husba, Midhadu, Haro Qarsa, Gababa, Gonnitti, Dhaga Heddu and the Sabober plain, as well as the area from Muka Sara in the West to the Awash Sebat Kilo in the East consisting of the Summa plain (which is currently located in the Awash National Park).
fields for dispatching and exchanging information, not only with the district administration, but also with Karrayyu residents from other villages who have no regular or frequent face-to-face interaction. The residents who come to trade stay in the town of Metehara until the sun goes down, when it is less tiring to walk. Most of them prefer to sit in hotels that are owned by the Ittu and Arsi people. The Arsi are considered more welcoming to the Karrayyu than other settlers who own similar hotels. These owners also provide them with mats to sit outside on the veranda and water per their request. I stayed in one of the hotels frequented by these men for two months. It was a quieter place than many hotels in Metehara, which enabled my discussions with the elderly men to be freer, more private and longer. They also had ample opportunity to learn about me, asking me questions about my work and my plans. Despite my standard description of what I do and who I am (i.e., I am a researcher and no other mission), adult male informants would loved to take their own perceptions of me, particularly with regards to my ethnic background, marital status and origin. Most women were interested in what I wanted from them. The young men were interested in knowing if I was studying in Europe or Addis; they liked to see what opportunities I might open up for them.

The towns of Metehara and Haro Adi have become valuable arenas for Karrayyu men to discuss important public matters among themselves. Old and middle-aged men exclusively chew *Khat* in the afternoon almost every day, but particularly on Thursdays and Saturdays, which are market days. The men gather together, basically to chew Khat, but also to discuss interpersonal, clan disputes as well as marital issues. Since such meetings are mainly held by men, my presence as a woman was only tolerated because I was an outsider and a guest. In these sessions, it was very difficult to raise questions relevant to my research. Instead, I could only listen, not record, the routine matters that were going on. Nevertheless, at the end of their discussions, when they had time to relax, I could raise any questions I might have and engage in quite individualised discussions.

In public discussions on topics such as conflict resolution between clans and individuals, women do not take part, but are told of the resolutions once the men

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5 Khat is a perennial shrub that grows in Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen, and is used as a stimulant.
return to their home. I also observed, however, that some women were invited to chew Khat and drink some beverages among the men from the same village without actively engaging in the discussion.

For the Karrayyu, Khat chewing is not part of their usual ceremonies, but various ceremonies that used to be held in the villages under trees in the past are held in small hotels in Metehara, accompanied by chewing Khat and drinking beverages today. Clearly, Khat chewing is becoming a growing trend among elderly men. In fact, the official reason they provide as to why they stay in towns is to access Khat and soft drinks. Of course, they can have access to Khat only if they stay close to the main route that comes directly from Harer and Dire Dawa where the plant is produced. Coming together and staying in towns is becoming important for the Karrayyu as a whole also because of the increasing importance of the district administration in their lives.

**Gelcha and Fate Ledi**

I spent three months of field work in Gelcha and Fate Ledi villages with families. I was able to visit the Sugar Estate farm and conduct both informal and formal interviews with staff working in the Estate. I could observe their interactions with the Karrayyu and Ittu farmers. During this period, I also made frequent travels to the neighbouring Awash Fentalle district of the Afar state and the National Park where I conducted formal interviews.

**Formal Arenas**

I took part in a series of formal arenas, in which I conducted interviews. All of the peace-making conferences hosted by the district administrations, district officials and development workers provided me with a wealth of information about what was going on from their perspective. They were important sources of information that helped me understand the various power relations at play and enabled me to understand who speaks to whom about what and when. I should also note that the formal arenas were places where information was often withheld. For example, the police and militia were often reluctant to provide some information, which was
understandable, and for which reason I found that dealing with them through formal interviews was less productive. In such circumstances, I relied on observing their day-to-day activities and communications with the local people.

Social anthropologists are proud (for good reason, of course) of their methods of data collection. Doing field work in conflict situations, however, particularly when violence is an active phenomenon, or lacks obviousness, affects the researcher and his research in various ways. Not only that one must be competent in regard to a particular methodology in order to grasp the meaning of the famous assertion that violent conflicts are embedded in everyday social life, but one must also spend extended time and energy studying the different levels of interactions that often go beyond a district (Gupta 1995).

**Observation**

Participant observation as a technique of data collection in a conflict situation often presents a number of challenges. In this particular study, conflicts were not taking place at the grander level, such as many social anthropologists have experienced (Nordstrom & Robben, 1995; Daniel, 2006). The violent conflicts I studied were less manifest, more intermittent, and involved a lower scale of violence; they did, however, arise spontaneously and often in places where cattle was grazing, far from villages. Even then, participation does not necessarily mean planned involvement in violence, although it could be a possibility. I am aware of the difference between participation and observation. Participant observation in this kind of a context is wider than observing and participating conflict events; as processes of conflicts can be generated even at homestead area where everyday activities are accomplished and everyday discourses take place. Conversations are seen as part of the daily interactions or constituted, for lack of a better term, expanded interactions where dreams, grief and happiness were shared, and the opinion of the researcher was often sought. Thus it was not always easy to position myself as ‘impartial’. In some cases, my impartiality may have been considered as a position itself, not that of ‘a neutral scientist’, but that of someone who preferred to keep quiet about what was going on.
I also managed to observe day-to-day actions and utterances with regard to the theme of the research, and I made observations on most institutional discussions (frames) with the neighbours during peace conferences with government officials, peace committees and NGOs. I found contexts and frames very crucial in understanding the contents of the data.

Secondary Resources

Secondary resources, such as written archives, reports and NGO documents were employed, but with caution. Some documents were more useful in understanding the general context in which particular information was used than in providing valid information by themselves that could substantiate interviews. This is particularly true with regard to studying conflict events in the past. The past is dealt here as a construction of actors’ perception of what happened, which is substantiated by available written documents. The problem with relying on written materials is that they were scarce; and when they were available, they tended to be very general. Furthermore, they focus on institutional and policy issues, and lacked narratives of ‘everyday’ events and interactions. I, therefore, relied more on informants who had a good recollection of the past. There were a few elderly men and women who could talk about their interactions with the state during the time of Haile Sellasie, however, these people’s memories were taken with caution.
CHAPTER TWO

2. SOCIAL ACTORS

This chapter introduces the major social actors who have been involved in violent conflicts with the Karrayu of the Upper and Middle Awash valley of Ethiopia over three decades. Social actors, for this specific purpose, are defined as a group of people who share a similar perspective on violent conflicts in the area.

For the sake of simplifying the discussion, I have divided the chapter into three sub-sections on the basis of three regimes – the Imperial regime, the Derg regime, and the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Republic regime. Of course, some factors related to regimes’ policies and plans reinforce specific patterns of social relationships among social actors and even shift and change some social actors, making some more visible than others, whereas others remain unaffected by change in regimes.

The first part of this chapter deals with major social actors during the Haile Selassie regime (1941-1975). The data is drawn from elderly men and women, as far back as their memories take them. I also try to review some historical written materials when they became relevant. The second period in which I framed my discussion is the Derg regime (1975-1991). In similar fashion, I extracted information on this period, mainly from elderly men and women who more clearly remembered what happened during this time. The third period would be the EPRDF regime, which has lasted from 1991 up to the present. Field work through interviews were the major means of data collection used to map social actors during this period. Because this thesis is mainly concerned with studying violent conflict, the choice of social actors was basically made according to the extent of their relevance to conflict. Social actors who were less dominant at one time often become more dominant at another. In such a situation, I discuss them within the context that they became dominant. Those minor social actors, such as churches and opposition parties that remain less visible during the period of study, are not considered, although it should be noted that they might indeed appear in the future.
2.1 The Karrayu as an Ethnic Group under the Haile Sellasie Regime

2.1.1. The Notion of Ethnicity

This particular section of the thesis aims to explore how the Karrayu as a group were taken and were considering others within the framework of notion of ethnicity and ethnic sentiments during the Haile Sellasie regime. As an entry to my presentation, however, I briefly present general and permeating perspectives of ethnicity and formations of ethnic groups. Ethnicity, in the present day, is one of the most elusive concepts, not only for the ordinary people who perhaps never conceptualise it but also for those in academia who refer to it with a particular intended meaning. Thus, any generalisation about it falls short of producing consensus in the social sciences. In many scholarly materials, terms such as ‘ethnicity’, ‘ethnic groups’, ‘tribes’ and ‘ethnie’ have been used to signify certain forms of relations among groups of people. Such concepts, however, don’t seem to greatly ease the anxiety behind concepts that are used for comparative studies. Still, the academia is confounded with the question of whether we need a universal ethnicity concept in order to make comparative studies or whether the particularities of every situation defy such universal concepts and make them worthless.

With regard to this, I briefly review debates that have been going on for a long time in relation to concepts such as ethnic groups and ethnicity in order to determine their relevance to my case study. Primordialism is often taken as a starting point for discussing ethnic groups and their formation. When Geertz points to primordial sentiments among groups of people, he emphasised the binding forces that arise more from the ‘givens’ than from the social interactions. To quote his words:

One is bound to one’s kinsman, one’s neighbour, one’s fellow believer, ipso facto as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributable to the very tie itself . . . and these forms of attachment seem to flow more from a sense of natural than from social interaction (Geertz1963:109).
His conviction placed him against many, as more and more constructivist views emerged on the scene. And yet, primordialism takes the credit for laying the foundation for continued discourse on ethnic groups and their formation. Not to mention that there are still few scholars who ‘modestly’ (Cohen 1999) and even staunchly defend it (Grosby 1996). Cohen for instance accords significance to primordialism by referring explicitly to it as not easy to discredit, partly because primordialists are not naive enough to think so crudely and they describe the overwhelming and change-resistant forces that bind people to each other in groups. It is an approach that reveals the real limits of the manipulative use of identity change, be that phenotype, manner, or language. Apparently, a closer look at the polemic around primordialism lies mainly in the realm of explicitly defining and understanding the intended meaning of the ‘primordials’. On the contrary, vexed with the persistence of primordialism, Eller and Coughlan call for the termination of its use because they decried it as a useless concept for the analysis and description of ethnicity. ‘If primordial is to mean “from the very beginning a priori, ineffable, and coercive” . . . then the evidence suggests that the term is only inappropriately assigned to most of the ethnic phenomena of our day’ (1996:45). Grosby (1996) argued that to think that primordialism is all but about affect and ‘emotional attachments’ is to fail to understand the basic features of primordialism. Fredrick Barth (Hutchinson & Smith 1996) discerned along the same lines that ethnic groups exist and continue to exist because, despite the change in content of the cultural traits that mark their differences (which could also change due to changes in the organisational forms), they possess a higher capacity for maintaining clear boundaries between them and others that fall outside their group. His theory, which aligns more with the primordial aspect of ethnicity, fairly explains both the social and political interactions between ethnic cleavages within what has commonly been called ‘nation-states’, particularly in Africa (Udogu 2001).

The theory of ethnic boundaries largely fits those places where ethnic boundaries are solidified and solidify social behaviors for the purpose of political organisations, which make it more difficult to penetrate than other forms of social interactions, such as trade (Barth 1996). Despite such a defense and support, however, more and more
instrumentalists have recently emerged who embrace constructivist views. Some call for a separation of discourses on primordialism from that of ethnicity (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Based on substantiation from African experience, Ranger argued that ethnicity as we know it, is a colonial creation and that group primordial sentiments that existed prior to and after colonialism have nothing to do with the ethnicity that pervades today. The ethnicity that developed in relation to, and as a result of, colonialism has to be examined through a different analytical lens from the ones we use to analyse other forms of group identities. Theory of social closure developed by Max Weber could be more relevant to the latter. Social closure is formed in relation to resource competition whereby groups use it as a strategy to block others from gaining access to the same resources. Theories of ethnicity are more meaningful when explored in the context of territory.

In present-day Africa, the context of a state for example is paramount to understanding ethnicity. The relationship between state and ethnicity, particularly in Africa can be understood from two angles. One is by focusing on the state itself as a major actor in the construction of identities for inclusion and exclusion of groups; this means that the state does not involve itself in the construction of ideologies, such as ethnicity, as much as ‘to use it as rallying cries to whip up support from group members’ (Udogu 2001, 19). The second is to make ethnic groups the centre of concern, whereby groups maintain the emotional intensity underlying their bond that existed even long before the emergence of the state, particularly as their interaction with the state became competitive. Lying somewhere between these two perspectives is, Amoo’s observation that, ‘although ethnicity may appear instrumental, it is structurally primordial, possessing an intrinsic absolute value, involving and demanding a level of loyalty which transcends that given to any other group or state’ (1997: 16).

Taken as a whole, the extent to which ethnicity is malleable/tenacious has become a noteworthy attribute in understanding ethnicity from both objective as well as subjective angles. Primordialists provide less attention to the fact that such ‘givenness’ could be used for the purpose of political supremacy (Geertz 1963).
Their views were disputed mainly on the grounds that they did not efficiently explain ethnic differences nor provide much weight to the contractedness of our own world (Daniel 2006). Some scholars generally criticise anthropology for not being more concerned about studying groups of people as independent isolates and for giving little thought to relations of specific groups with their surroundings, whether that be a social or economic environment, and the consequent social processes (Morin & Saladin d’Anglure 1997). On the other hand, a critique such as this, however, could be regarded as obsolete, as today’s social anthropology has accomplished an enormous task with regard to contributing to a better conceptualisation of, or a greater confusion in relation to, understanding ethnic groups and ethnicity.

More and more constructivist approaches (i.e, ethnicity as a way to satisfy socio-psychological or politico-psychological needs) and structural approaches (ethnicity as a response to deprivation of economic resources, rights or security) have thus been developed (Gilley 1994). Instrumentalist views are more subjective and leave much more room for exploring those historical contexts in which groups choose to open up or become closed while interacting with their social environment. Ethnicity as a form of organisation could also enable to gain political, economic and social resources for those different interest groups (Brass 1991; Cohen 1974). In a similar fashion, however, instrumentalists underestimate people’s perception of ethnicity as permanent because people are living it. They also tend to essentialise their views as:

… they become definers of their own identity much as racists, ethnicists and culturalists become definers of theirs . . . The best student of a culture had never assumed that cultures were anything but constructed. But in the excitement to find nothing, but constructions, there has been a flattening down of culture to a single dimension and a loss of perspective on the relative differences in resilience among the various cultural constructions as well as their relative latency. Some cultural constructions are sturdy but obvious and others obvious but fragile – both sorts revealing their constructedness on the slightest reflection even to those who live in and with (Daniel 1996: 12-4).

In Agreement, the greatest works so far accomplished lie somewhere between the two extremes. Ethnicity, since its constructedness is indisputable, has the capacity to lift itself to a level of malleability or tenacity that is conditional. Lentz(2006)took her
example from the Dagara of Ghana to show how a tribe could be created; she argued, however, that the malleability of this ethnicity had its limits because it had to serve as a strong agent of community building, and, therefore, needed to be anchored in real social experiences and familiar modes of collective identity, requiring local cooperation (Cohen & Odhiambo 1989).

*The Ethiopian Context*
Ethiopia during the Haile Sellasie regime was just emerging as a result of the constellation of different ethnic groups. This constellation was a result of both forced and natural interaction. Ethiopian history is characterised by group migration, confrontation, empire building, resistance, and submission. The modern state was formed, and is being formed continuously, out of these diverse forms of interactions. As it is in process, the Ethiopian state as a predetermined multi-ethnic state, where each group is placed neatly, knowing its position within the bigger state is merely a perception. This, however, by no means contradicts its existence in both legal and political terms. Fascinating are the processes and forms of group interactions that produced this concept called the state and translated it into its modern form.

I introduced the brief literature review on ethnicity above in order to clarify the relevance of ethnicity for the study of Ethiopia. Ethnicity in Ethiopia, I would say, is worth noting due to, among other things, the fact that Ethiopia does not share an external colonial history with the majority of other African countries, whose notions of ethnicity suffered significant repercussions, as mentioned earlier. For example, in Ethiopia, we cannot simply discuss ethnicity as a formation of colonialism. On the other hand, the absence of external colonialism does not mean that ethnicity was not produced as a form of mobilisation for political and economic ends (Gudina 2003). In fact, state expansion towards the south in Ethiopia has been repetitively considered to be part of the colonial scramble and hence, the relationship between the state and the larger portion of its population, the southern part, is portrayed as one of internal colonialism (Jalata 1996; Keller1995). The same relationship/expansion to the south was explained by some scholars on the other hand as part of the struggle against Western colonialism, by incorporating groups which would otherwise remain subject
to external colonizers. Leaving this debate as it is, The Ethiopian state had to emulate the Western nation-building project to satisfy the requirements of a state, like most African countries did after their independence. In other words, the thesis that portrays most African states as having little legitimacy in the eyes of a significant number of their constituencies remains largely valid for Ethiopian past as well. The Haile Sellassie regime during the 1950s and 1960s showed even less interest in gaining political legitimacy than economic benefits in much of the lowland areas that are characterised as hostile environments. The state expanded toward the periphery mainly for the purpose of extracting taxes and economic gains by displacing local people when necessary. The investments in the Rift Valley by the Rift Valley Authority in the early 1950s and 1960s were based mainly on economic calculations. Expansion to these areas began first by allocating land to individual patrons who did not reside in the area and whose knowledge of the local people was scant. For the most part, they had little interest in directly using the land except for the purpose of collecting taxes, which proved to be impractical. Although it was known that the Karrayu spoke Oromiffa and were part of the larger Oromo groups, they were likened more to their neighbouring Afar groups than to the rest of the Oromo groups. State patrons, who later became investors, considered the Karrayu as jungle killers, not much different from the neighbouring Afars. ‘Both kill people who drive cars through their territory; they never forgive anyone who by accident crashes their cattle; they are irrational people and it is impossible to sort out matters with them before they kill you’ (D, Personal communication, January 7, 2004, Metehara). As much as there is a construction of the Karrayu, however, the Karrayu have also constructed the state officials settling in their location in a specific way. They perceived the state officials as a group of people who speak Amharic and grab land unlawfully. It is quite important to mention at this point that the Karrayu had already had previous contact with a group of people who spoke Amharic. For instance, labor migrants who followed the railroad construction in the early 20th century came from nearby Amharic-speaking areas, such as Minjar. These groups, in the eyes of the Karrayu,

6 Oromiffa is the language spoken by the people of Oromo.
7 Amharic is the national language and it is also spoken by a majority of the Amharic ethnic group. It is often stated as one of the criterion used to homogenise people of the south during the State-building period.
were poor people without livestock and land and received sympathy from them until recently.

The emergence of the state as a dispossessor of resources, and particularly land, remained very prominent in the collective memory of the Karrayu and led to the image of the state as having an ethnic identity. State representatives were perceived as having a different ethnic identity, with a different language, and using state machinery as an apparatus for commandeering resources. The state as a bureaucratic and administrative institution to introduce normative functions was too far from existing in the eyes of the Karraayu.

According to my informants, the state during this period was not known by its monopoly of violence, nor did it play a valuable developmental role for the local people; rather, it was considered a foreign ethnic group that grabbed land. Such a perception of the state as a different group or ethnic created consequent disengagements from any form of cooperation be it political or economical. Therefore, for a longer period local chiefs were left to handle intra- and inter-group conflicts through blood compensation, retaliation and violence.

Evidently, primordial affinities and differences existed before the presence of the state. The state did not evolve from within, but emerged as a foreign group of people who forcefully or with little legitimacy grappled with the local people for meager resources that existed. Such an interaction configured the existing primordial differences and ties; the Karrayu became suspicious of their neighbours, the Minjar settlers who speak Amharic and had long co-existed with them due to their shared history.

Hypothetically, the perception of domination by a ‘different’ group could generate an automatic engagement in other types of counter-ethnic mobilisations to presumably defend rights. The Karrayu, however, had other challenges to overcome in order to form such an alternative alliance. This challenge is the mainstream perception of them by the Oromo as nomads who are not enlightened enough to become involved
in movements such as Oromo ethnic nationalism. As I explain further below, the emergence of Oromo nationalism began during this time and the role of the Karrayu, both as a group and as individuals, was almost insignificant in the whole process. Oromo nationalism remained one of ethnic nationalisms that emerged and sustained in a continuous construction of similarities within and differences from others. As we proceed, the role of urban elites rather than pastoralists has been more paramount in the formation of such a political community.

Oromo elites, in Diaspora as well as at home, regarded for long the ‘Ethiopian state’ as imperial. They provoked common sentiments to consolidate ethnic identity from all groups who traced their origin and language from the same ancestry – the big Oromo rubric. Like many nationalist endeavors, this one strived towards community building through first essentialising what is referred as Oromo ethnic identity that the Oromos are born with their identity a priori:

Orommuma, derived from the name Oromo, refers to all those elements that constitute the Oromo personality. This personality is shaped by all those features of the internal and external environment that bind Oromo to their land, with its mountains and its rivers, its plants and animals, its seasonal patterns and the other culture with which it interacts (Gemechu 1996: 92-4).

The (re)writing of his tory, as well as the emphasis on cultural markers, such as retrieving local institutions, were very much used to strengthen ethnic identity. I maintain that the processes in which primordial sentiments work are different from those of ethnicity. There are, in my view, at least two major reasons for this: the first is that ethnicity in the form of nationalism, for instance, has a tendency to contract or expand ethnic boundaries artificially for a specific reason and more quickly, whereas ethnic groups and boundaries can naturally shift in terms of their content and yet, as Barth (Hutchinson 1996) argued, maintain their margins for a relatively longer time.

The Oromo as a primordial tie developed not only out of common descent, but also through adoption and marriage with other ethnic groups, whereas ‘Oromo ethnicity’, for it to work, had to underestimate such incorporation and even aim at a conspicuous
consolidation and resilience of a certain dominant group. As a student of culture, such emphasis on difference for the sake of internal consolidation is understandable:

Essentializing ethnicity drives both from the necessitation of making construction latent and consolidate (and yet it can readily be far deconstructed) for the purpose of such as nationalism, or the identity itself has become inconspicuous that they are apparently complex not to be easily distinguished from their nature of deconstructability (Daniel 1996: 21).

The second reason, while related to the first, refers to the marginalisation of certain groups within the larger ethnic group. A closer look at the interaction of the Karrayu with other Oromo groups showed that the Karrayu were not among those who took the initiative to form ‘Oromo ethnicity’, neither were they chosen to be major participants. They were known predominantly as pastoralists with little formal education. Thus, they were neglected as not being central to the political forum, even though their a priori ties as members of the Oromo were still intact.

The resilience of ethnicity in a form of ethnic nationalism is a product of competitive interaction between groups who demand a state of their own within the bigger nation-state. Such nationalisms target the state, and the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is often played out around state versus non-state spheres. There, we observe a difference between the elites who produced ethnic nationalism and the local people in defining who the others are. Within Oromo nationalism, the ‘others’ were the settlers, whereas, according to the Karrayu definition of ethnicity and otherness, ‘them’ is not just settlers – it extends to other neighbouring groups, such as the Afar, the Somali, the Sudani (Bellashangul) and the Argoba, with whom they coexist and compete for common resources.

It is noted that Oromo nationalism was more pronounced during this period than in previous times, and that the response of the imperial state towards emerging ethnic nationalism was repressive. The regime was characterised by a government that followed suit to previous attempts of building a nation-state by institutionalising Amharic as an official language through which it aimed to form a multi-ethnic state.
This attempt was influential on the emergence and growth of any other ethnic nationalism that could challenge such a political enlargement. For example, no political parties were allowed. The state tried to integrate those elite Oromos who were suspected of having entertained opposing ideas by offering them political positions, converting them to Christians, and seeking their alignment through inter-marriage. Later, however, in 1965, the formation of the Mecha-Tulema association\(^8\) which aimed to strengthen Oromo identity created the first impression that such assimilation requires strict measures such as banning. The Karrayu role nonetheless within both the cliental state system as well as Oromo nationalism was insignificant or absent.

### 2.1.2. The Necessity of Identifying an Object and Partner

For Administration

In this particular section, I show what forms of interaction existed between an expanding state and the Karrayu people during this period. Of course, the relation between a central state and the peripheral groups in Ethiopia began long before the Haile Sellasie rule. The scramble for power that was commonly called Zemene Mesafint\(^9\) left a profound expansionist legacy for the regimes that were to appear for years afterwards. I only had to make a choice with regard to the periods from which I could make a departure for my account. More importantly, the Karrayu considered the Haile Sellasie period the most significant part of their relationship with the notion of the state because this period signified a time when they experienced the ferocious face of the state and its adverse implication in shaping their future. The following description is fashioned to balance both the emic and etic perspectives of how the Haile Sellasie rule continued to expand to peripheries inhabited primarily by the Karrayu, who were predominantly using a vast area of the land for livestock production. I hold a view that one cannot reach a comprehensive understanding of

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\(^8\) The Mecha Tulema association was established as a development association, initially representing the Oromo people for the Oromo ethnic groups.

\(^9\) Zemene Mesafint is often translated as the age of judges or princes was a period in Ethiopian history between 1755 to 1855. This period was characterised by endless war between landlords for power and supremacy.
historical nodes and modes of interaction without first giving attention to local people’s memories of what happened.

As was the case with state expansion in many frontier areas, the central state expansion towards the peripheries of Ethiopia basically began by first encouraging farming groups to settle in those areas and then proceeded by establishing local administrations that functioned on behalf of the central state. Much in the same fashion, encouraging planned resettlement in Ethiopia began to be realised this time vigorously. To quote Scott ‘In Ethiopia, a country which was never colonised, resettlement can be seen as a century-old project of the imperial dynasty to subjugate non-Amharic-speaking peoples and, more generally, to bring fractious provinces under central control’ (1998: 248). Haile Sellassie was much known for his modernist views. In addition, his period of rule required a fast entry into the world economy that encouraged the export of cash crops, as well as implementation of high modernist programmes that were sweeping the world at that time. Whenever possible, farmer-settlements and mechanisation were considered easier and better ways to modernise peripheral groups for the purpose of administrative control and increase sources of state income (Kloos 1982). Settlers were encouraged to farm in peripheral areas through the provision of big plots of land for settlers, which made controlling local people easier than directly confronting them through military force.

In line with this discussion, I will examine two major state business ventures – the Metehara Sugar Estate and the Awash National Park – which presently remain the most influential nodes of interaction between the Karrayu and the state. It is crucial to mention that the Rift Valley programmes initially comprised many farming schemes both in the Upper and Middle Valley, such as Wonji, Nura Era, Golgota, Abadir, Melkasedi, Awara Melka, Kesem Kebena, Amibara, and Gelcha Dora (Kloos 1982). According to my informants, however, these farms did not lead to as many violent interactions as the Sugar Estate and the National Park state business ventures did.
As early as in the 1950s, the intervention of the state in the Karrayu territory began with a land grant by Hailesellasie to two farming men from His nobility. These men were brothers, named Bezabih Sileshi and Mesfin Sileshi. They were granted 8,000 hectares and 4,000 hectares of land, respectively (Lemissa 2006). Initially, the benefit they got from the land came from the taxes they collected on the basis of their grant. Later on, Bezabih planned a joint venture with Greek investors and changed the land to an agro-industrial enterprise. The project was given a new name: P. Sarris – Bazzabih Siles. This company had to displace many of the Karrayu’s temporary camps, and this, more often than not, led to violent confrontations with the local people mainly the Karrayu and the Afar. The resistance was fierce, and the functioning of the enterprise was often challenged.

As the central state’s interest in the region grew, grander plans were slowly introduced. Among them, the strongest plan envisaged a future wherein the country used mechanised farming and earned revenues from cash crops. This became clearer through the second Five-Year Plan (1962-67) and the third Five-Year Development Plan (1968-73), which aimed to develop the country through large-scale commercial farming (Kloos 1982). The 10,000-hectare piece of land that had been used by the nobility was bought on the basis of the existing price by a Dutch company called the Handles Veneering Amsterdam (HVA), which had already taken concessions in the neighbouring areas. With the significant support of the central state, both in terms of deploying military force to protect the company and engagement in strategic negotiations with clan leaders, HVA became the first to take concessions and start functioning in the upper Awash valley. The company was expanding; it was established first in the Wonji area in 1951, followed by a business in Shoa in 1958, and then the Metehara Sugar Estate in 1965 (Ayalew 2001; Buli 2001). An agreement was soon signed between the Ethiopian state and the HVA concerning steps to be made for the smooth functioning of the Estate and the allocation of profits. More and more Karrayu settlements were demolished, as it was the company’s opinion that no nomad should reside in the area around the plantation.
The Karrayu were living in Kuissa houses, they did not have proper houses. Demolishing these kinds of houses did not take long and they could construct the same houses anywhere else. It was risky for the company to let them reside nearby the Estate. They could easily trespass into the cane plantation and cause damage (Personal Interview, Asseffa Sodere, June 20, 2003, Metehara).

Individuals who wrote on the Karrayu argued that negotiation with regard to land use in this area took place independently between the central state and the HVA Company with little involvement of the Karrayu people (Buli 2001; Ayalew 2001). Such argument is valid at the level of a general critique of the modes by which the company was established; however, the argument itself did not tell specifically the role that the Karrayu had during their interactions both with the state and the company at the time of this dispossession of land. A fair account of the interaction between the company and the people is included here in order to fill the gap with regard to the role of the Karrayu.

According to my informants who were present during that time, the state authorities and the company authorities used different approaches to negotiate with the Karrayu on the matter. The state facilitated the company’s operations as it was its desire to increase the production of sugar for export:

A continent unable to produce sufficient food to provide the majority of its citizens with a barely minimal diet has been able to record sharp increases in its annual production of agricultural goods destined for the external market. Many of the large commercial plantations favored under Haile Sellassie’s legal order turned fertile lands into the production of non-essential food stuffs such as sugar. (Bondestam 1974:)

The authorities were prepared to support the company even if it might require the use of force against the local people. They viewed the deployment of the militia as an option to consider if the Karrayu resisted state programmes, whereas the HVA Company sought less coercive means. The then-liaison officer, Dejazmach Asseffa Sodere, played an important role in the effort to promote such cooperation:

The Karrayu at the beginning resisted the idea of giving away the land they thought was theirs. It was not possible to discuss with
them that the state de jure owned the land. They gradually agreed to the proposal. But they demanded a lot from the state in return. They asked for water points, schools for their children and health posts. Agreement was reached on the basis of these conditions. I further elaborated for them on the importance of the Sugar Estate. I even showed sugar to the local chiefs. Most of them had not seen sugar before. They tasted it and knew that it was sweet. I told them they would also receive their share from the profit. On the other hand, I very much recommended to the state officials not to use force. There were officials who recommended the use of military force as indispensable in bringing the Karrayu to terms to agree to give up the land. (Personal communication, Assefa, June 20, 2004, Methara).

The second crucial period began when the company commenced its operations. At this point, the Karrayu entered into another level of interaction with state representatives, the company authorities and the company workers. Neither the company nor the state had fulfilled the promises they had made in regard to the redistribution of the profit. On the contrary, supported by the state from the centre, the company launched a massive importation of labour migrants from other regions – mainly from the southern highlands such as Kambatta, Hadiya and Sidamo and a few from the northern highlands. The rationale for the importation of labour migrants was to obtain efficiency (Kloos 1982). From the company’s point of view, the criterion for eligibility was based on a history of farming skills, which was a necessary condition for making a profit. To this effect, the Kambatta and Hadiya people proved to encompass a range of farming skills and possess the strong physique that was needed to maneuver machines, pull siphons and cut sugar cane stalks. Among the HVA authorities, it was common to hear sayings such as ‘the profitability of the industry largely depends as much on Kambatta muscles as it does on Caterpillar tracks’ (PC, Aseffa, 2004). In contrast, the Karrayu and Ittu majority were defined as pastoralists par excellence and fell among those least eligible for farming jobs.

The semi-skilled and unskilled plantation migrant workers stayed in resident quarters at three different sites. Basic social services such as schools, hospitals, water points and electricity were available for them, although they were of poor quality. Based on the information that I gathered, it was the belief of both the imperial authorities and the company that the children of the labourers should go no further than the sixth
grade; advanced education was thought to raise consciousness and rebellion. The migrant labourers were allowed to return to their places of origin upon completion of the contracted work: the maturing and harvesting of sugar cane can take over a year (15-24 months) to complete. For the first few years, the Estate management provided transportation services for all seasonal workers upon completion of their contracts in order to enable them to maintain contact with their families back home before renewing their contract. Gradually, the transport service offered by the Estate discontinued, and the labourers were compelled to stay within their camps for an unlimited amount of time. Some labourers still traveled home, covering their own costs to visit their families, until it became unaffordable. The discontinuation of transport service laid down the foundation for a slow detachment from their homeland and a permanent settlement in the Karrayu territory following retirement.

The Karrayu were allowed to use the health posts and the school that had been opened for the labourers near the Estate; due to their need to remain mobile for pasture, however, they rarely used these services. They were more resentful, though, towards the Estate management than to the seasonal laborers. Later on, when the dispossession of the land was inevitable, violent confrontation became less common, and the local Balabats\textsuperscript{10} insisted on the deliverance of promised compensation. The company refused to give them compensation since it had dealt with the central state on the matter, but for fear of violent confrontation, the Estate management offered them jobs as game guards. In many instances, this was not a successful arrangement. According to the Estate liaison officer at the time:

\begin{quotation}

The Karrayu Balabats asked for compensation in the form of cash for more than 10,000 hectares of land. The company could not give them money; instead they were told to choose men among their people to work as game guards in the plantation. Accordingly, some men were hired. Nevertheless, these men rarely came to work; instead, they sent their children and wives to work and they came only to collect their wages. However, the company refused to give the wages to them since they never worked themselves (PC, Asseffa, January 7, 2004, Metehara).

\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{10} Balabats are leaders of clans and are appointed to represent the local people to the state.
Labourers at the Estate were mainly confined to their residential camps and had less contact with the Karrayu. Their children had schools constructed inside residential sites (often called ‘camps’) and had little contact with Karrayu children. The Estate also grew fruits and vegetables that could be sold to the estate workers at a cheaper price. Grains, for instance, could be bought from the Arsi people and other highland retailers on market days that were held twice a week.

The administrative quarter of the Estate appears remarkably refined for the area. The residential quarters for top management officials were designed according to the Dutch officials’ preferences. These houses have their own bathrooms and kitchen, and they are reserved for each staff member in the top management and his family. Each family maintained their own garden in front of their house. Because of the area’s harsh climate and lack of infrastructure, the Dutch company obviously made a big attempt to modify the Estate farm into an attractive environment for management and technical staff in order to keep the company attractive. From the viewpoint of the non-Estate settlers in and around Fentalle town, the Estate staffs were the most privileged group of people in the district – they were provided with pleasant houses for free; they lived in an environment where the vegetation protected them from the hot weather. Compared to other government workers in the district, Estate officials were well paid. Their children could attend schools without having to work. Unlike the majority of the residents in the district, women who were married to Estate workers were considered privileged to be able to buy most of their food items within the Estate and often buy their clothes in the larger towns, such as Nazareth and Addis.

The Karrayu also recognised the differences between their standard of living and that of the Estate workers; unlike the townspeople, the majority of whom were highlanders and migrants, the Karrayu were not impressed with the designs of the houses, bathrooms, gardens or even the wages that the Estate workers enjoyed. They rather tenaciously expressed resentment in regard to issues related to the land, particularly ‘that part of the land that offered them a good deal of pasture for their cattle; the part of the land that had been transformed into cane plantations and flower
gardens’ (Personal Interview, R, June 23, 2003, Haro Kersa). That experience remains very much alive in the memory of the group. Some even pointed out a particular plot within the plantation area where their grandfathers and forefathers were buried. During this period, few occasions afforded the Karrayu with opportunities to develop contact with the Estate workers except few Karrayu men selling milk and milk products for the Estate workers.

The Awash National Park

The Awash National Park and the Awash wildlife reserve were established by proclamation in 1969, with a total surface area of 756 km². Jacobs & Scholoeder wrote ‘The Park was a product of the imperial government’s adoption of an exclusionary protected area policy, whereby all kinds of human use, such as settlement, exploitation of natural resources, grazing of livestock and mining, except as required for the management of the wildlife and conservation are prohibited’ (2001: 15). Thus, the eviction of pastoralists, who were previously using the land, was, mandatory.

The state representatives tried to solve the problem of displacing pastoralists who had primarily resided in the gazetted areas of the park in two ways: first, by validating state ownership of the park. That is, the plot of land was an area primarily protected for the king as a private hunting reserve in regard to which no complaints could be presented; and second, by providing other plots of land for the displaced Karrayu groups to reside with neighbouring groups of people. The second initiative was accompanied by a reminder that they should try to coexist peacefully with their neighbours. They were given plots of land in places such as Borchetta in the Boset district and places close to the Kesem River. Since resettlements were more than changing scenes, as Scott (1998) put it, dislocation produced changes in lifestyles, confusion and hopelessness, and this was the case with the Karrayu who entered into violent confrontation with neighbours, such as with other Oromo groups in the areas to which they were relocated (Ayalew 2001).
The state, in order to preserve the fauna and flora, not only excluded the Karrayu, but also imagined them as dangerous and as impediments to development. On the other hand, the Karrayu’s resentment towards the state’s continued practice of ‘grab’ land failed to bring about cooperation in terms of preserving their environment, which was something the Karrayu had always believed to do well, and instead changed the very meaning of their relation to the land. In other words, once they knew that the land had been taken by the state, they became destructive toward it; they even began killing beasts, overgrazing their cattle inside the Park, and burning the grasses. The Park administration wrote a number of letters to the regional administration as well as the district administration in regard to this violence.

2.2. Blurred Identities: Karrayu as Citizens and ‘Nomadic People’

The politics of the Derg period (1975-1991), particularly its state-building mission, were similar to those of the Haile Sellassie period, except that the former attempted to revolutionize the complex society into a nationalised and developed country overnight (Markakis 1987; Donham 1999).

...while planners tend to work with an idealized, timeless and depersonalized version of an imagined world, which is to be regulated, local people are often clearly aware of the personal, particular nature of the specification of policy or law in practice (Hobart, 1993:16).

It is often argued that the 1975 land reform in Ethiopia did not have a strong impact on the people living in the lowlands. The argument for this comes from the a general conviction that the initiative for land reform emanated mainly from a strong objective to end the exploitative relationship between a feudal minority and a majority of farmers with small landholdings (Dessalegn 1985). The country’s central production force relies on the farmers; grand reforms such as this one, therefore, directly concerned the majority of farmers. Further, they argued that the reform even placed pastoralists in a better situation because it recognised their right to possess land. They also refer to the specific article that reads: ‘Nomadic people shall have possessory rights to the land they customarily use for grazing or other purposes related to
agriculture’ (Land Reform Proclamation, Article 24., 1975). The argument is as follows: pastoralists, with the exception of those who owned mechanised farms, did not view land reform as a danger. Land reform was inherently about land redistribution, and was more linked to pastoralists whose relation to the land was permanent (e.g., farmers) than to pastoralists who did not primarily own land or whose relationship to the land was temporary. This being contestable, however, what can be mentioned at this level is that the de-institutionalisation of previous individual landlord-farmer relationships might well be less meaningful for those pastoralists who have no personalised relationships with the feudal minorities. Of course, the role of some Balabats and traditional chiefs in negotiating land was automatically cancelled, which might have resulted in some sense of defeat (Dessalegn 1985).

The majority of the Karrayu, being in constant mobility, thus retained the same communal use of the land as they had enjoyed prior to the reform. It should not come as a surprise that the majority of Karrayu were unclear. A few local Balabats lost their power and they instigated violent resistance to seize the Sugar Estate at the peek of the government overthrow around 1975. This violence was soon brought under control, and the Karrayu became aware of the fact that the company remained a state property, capable of evading the local people. The state as a ‘de facto surrogate of the people’ became once more the sole owner of the plantations. It is crucial here to differentiate the majority of the Karrayu from the few Balabats and chiefs who knew what was going on before and after the reform. For the majority, even the change of government was incomprehensible until they were tested in real life. According to the then liaison officer Dejasmach Asseffa Sodere:

The majority of the Karrayu indeed thought that I owned the company; they even believed I was the government itself. Following the chaotic transformation, they very much hoped for the retrieval of the land that was taken from them. I saw the contempt they had and kept for long when they swore to kill me. When they know that I did not own the land and that the government took over the company, they were really furious and came back again to me to pledge to the state on behalf of them (personal Interview, January 7, 2004, Methara).
2.2.1 Settlement – Criterion for Citizenship

It is of crucial importance to mention that when ownership of land was vested in the people, ‘people’ was implied to mean those who work on the land. The provisions of the proclamation (No. 31 / 1975) include: public ownership of all rural lands; distribution of private land to the tiller; prohibitions on transfer-of-use rights by sale, exchange, succession, mortgage or lease, except upon death and only then to a wife, husband or children of the deceased; and in the case of communal lands, possession rights over the land for those working the land at the time of the reform (Yigremew 2002).

The practicality of such a proclamation was implicit in its preferential treatment of settlers to ‘nomads’, who could not settle in one area permanently, as they were unable to organise under peasant associations and pay taxes so as to qualify for the rights to stay on the land. The organisation of people under ‘peasant associations’ as a means to foster development, as well as bureaucratise and modernise, was less effective among pastoralists. They rarely fulfilled the administrative dues expected of them, such as paying taxes. Although they were asked to pay their taxes directly to the peasant associations, their continuous movement provided them with an excuse for evading tax payments. In addition, the focus at the time was more on sedentary groups and, as a result, the nomads were given less attention.

2.2.2 Ittu Settlement – The Beginning of Otherness

Settlement is not a new development. For decades, the practice of voluntary and temporary (re)settlement has been a general rule among the Karrayu and their neighbours:

People who came originally from different places and settled in the Karrayu territory for a long period may be incorporated into one or the other of the clans through a ritual called Mogassa. They are required to undergo this ritual in order to meet the obligations and thereby secure benefits that come with being a legitimate member of a given clan. The foremost of such obligations and privileges has to do with the payment of blood prices (Gumma) in murder cases. Hundreds of people from other groups have thus become
incorporated into Karrayu clanship through the ritual of Mogassa (Ayalew 2001:167).

In similar manner, outsiders’ access to rangeland is legitimised through inclusion upon consensus and accompanied rituals among members of the Karrayu. Membership to a group was thus a continual construction through marriage and adoption. Following the land reform, the Ittu and the Argoba, who are immediate neighbours to Karrayu, pushed further into Karrayu territory, taking advantage of the land reform. Some of them had previously sought a better plot of land for farming and were looking for new plots of land even after land distribution had stopped. Settlement was, therefore, taking place without any consensus being reached with the Karrayu, but instead with state representatives’ approval in the district. The migration was exacerbated by the drought that occurred in 1974. The number of Ittu Oromo that arrived in search of land increased dramatically after the drought.

The Karrayu were extremely keen on maintaining the old relationship between themselves and the Ittu. Their reaction was first to inform the district administration officials and request that the latter find ways to halt the Ittu migration. The response they received, however, was off-putting. The officials made it clear to them that the state could only recognise people who settled on the land. After this response to their complaints, the Karrayu were very discouraged in regard to pursuing the matter further. Instead, they felt that they should strengthen their relationship with the Ittu, who could be a potential ally in times of skirmishes between themselves and their age-old enemies, the Afar and the Argoba.

Such a reaction is commonplace in countries where similar interventions have been made. In Sudan, for example, Tayeb stated, ‘where nomadic pastoralists were in direct competition with settled cultivators, it should be the policy that the rights of the cultivator be considered as paramount’ (1985: 35).
2.2.3 Labour Migrant Settlement – Enemies Within

As mentioned above, the majority of labour migrants who stayed in the sugar plantations did not go back to their places of origin after their contract were completed. After the land reform, most of them were doubtful about having access to land at their places of origin because they had not been present when the land reform was declared, and, thus, could not claim land. In 1988-1989 about 1,800 pensioners applied to the state for land within the Fentalle district, where they had already settled for quite some time.

Fissha Desta (then Vice-President) came along with members of the police force and vice-president Debla Densa and Hailu Yimenu (Minister of Industry) to discuss with the people who were retired. Some of the pensioners were staying within the Estate after their retirement and that was generally unacceptable. Most of the pensioners at the time did not want to settle in Metehara town or Wonji. It was agreed that these people had worked so hard for the development of the industry and it was necessary to give them land to construct their own houses. The plan was to settle them with local people in the Berhet area; they did not come agree with the selected area. It was finally resolved that they would get a plot near the Estate. They were also given iron sheets and wood for the construction of the houses. In addition, strong men among the pensioners were given jobs as guards. (Personal Interview, pensioner, Dec, 14, 2004, Metehara)

The establishment of this new pensioners’ settlement was no easy undertaking. The Karrayu showed violent resistance. The Karrayu’s animals began grazing inside the cane plantation, damaging the cane tops. The Estate had to negotiate, and agreement was reached between the top management of the Estate and the clan leaders. One of the deals was to allow the Karrayu to graze their small animals in restricted part of the plantation. They could also sell milk to the plantation workers. This deal was in large part coordinated by the then liaison officer Dejazmach Asseffa Sodere. Due to his connection with all involved parties, he was considered very crucial in
negotiating on behalf of the Estate as well as on behalf of the labourers. In an acknowledgement to his contribution, the migrants had a song for him that portrayed him as the father of the poor.

As a result, Tureta Sefer (settlement for pensioners of the Estate) emerged as a new settlement for the pensioners. Some of their grown up children became plantation labourers and vendors, and occupied various positions within the district. Gradually, the relationship between the settlers and the Karrayu took on a different form. That is, the Karrayu no longer characterised the labourers as poor people who lacked cattle, but instead as settlers who gradually competed for land they never owned.

2.2.4 Bureaucratisation and Modernisation of the Administration

During the Derg period, the state was emerging in pastoralist areas through its formal administrative functionaries. There was an obvious interest in ‘measuring’ and controlling the pastoralists, because the aims and objective of pastoralist governance (dominated by local autonomy and mobility) stood in stark contrast to the notion of formal government, which is characterised by a formal exercise of power through law and coercion (Mearns 1996). The state, as a form of institution, and its structure began to be visible. As I mentioned above, there was a strong tendency to encourage local people to settle the transhumant pastoralists in order to be able to ‘see’ them so that they could be more easily administered (Scott 1998).

The result was peasant associations were replicated in pastoralist areas, in most cases without even changing their names. Since the 1975 proclamation, which led to the nationalisation of rural lands, rural producers in Ethiopia have been organised into peasant associations (PAs), which are responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for the implementation of government decrees in rural areas. All adult household heads were members of the peasant association in the area where they reside, and are entitled to nominate members for election and vote in the elections for various peasant association committees. Elections are normally held every two years. PAs are further empowered by the government to form service cooperatives (SCs), which are combinations of two or more peasant associations for the provision of
basic economic services, such as production inputs, credit, consumer goods, and marketing services. Once a peasant association becomes a member of a service cooperative, individual members of that association are required to pay a small registration and contribution fee in order to capitalize the service cooperative. Legal recognition of the service cooperative is delayed until the cooperative has attained certain standards of bookkeeping and accountancy, as laid down by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Although pastoralist associations had normative roles and functions similar to those of the peasant associations, the pastoralist associations functioned differently and with less resilience. They worked closely with the district administration that oversaw their activities. Among the sedentary pastoralists, the pastoralist associations were crucial in terms of distributing land, local land dispute settlement, and political mobilisation – all newly emerging issues that came with the reorganisation of the society. They were not, however, functional with regard to land distribution and management at the local level. In the area of conflict settlement, some administrative interventions were prevalent, such as the banning of the practice of blood compensation. According to the modern law adopted by the state, individuals who commit homicide had to face trial. In some specific contexts, elders were expected to report names or else they were punished or even flogged for the concealment of information.

2.3. Remerging Identities: Karrayu as a Group that seeks the best Option

What is different during EPRDF period (1991 to present time) is that it is characterised by clearer and better inclusion of ‘pastoralism’ within the nation’s development agenda. The international financial resources offered to pastoralism also increased during this decade (see Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiatives of the WB and IMF). At present, there are more than 25 registered non-governmental organizations that work mainly on pastoralism, and an increasing number of civil society organizations are including pastoralism as part of their programmes. Despite the fact that both the national state and non-governmental
organizations show an amplified interest in pastoralism, this interest is expressed in a much polarised manner. Much of the advocacy work done by the NGOs is to create awareness about pastoralism and policy advocacy is central to their work. They advocate for their free mobility and the optimum use of rangelands. In contrast, the state still pursues the goal of having the pastoralists settle along major rivers, and this has been clearly laid out both in the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programmes, as well as in national rural development strategy papers.

Mainly due to pressure from international donors and promising aids ‘the belated recognition of pastoralism’ has become the epitome of improved governance for the national government and symbol of addressing the issue of minority rights for the NGOs. In the process, pastoralists were portrayed as what they were imagined to be, marginalized and poorest section of the society. More than ever, this period is characterised by gathering of information on pastoralists ranging from drought-related reports by the UN to consultancy documents and academic archives. Except for a very few, most of these sources failed to endorse the changes that the pastoralists had undergone in recent times. This is particularly true of those pathetically produced documents that lack accurate information with regard to pastoralist population size, land size, representations, and even changes within the institutional setups of the economic and political spheres. Hence, both international and governmental organisations and associations found it easy to craft information and enter discourse with regard to pastoralists and relevant issues to suit the financial and administrative demands of their donors. The feebly produced national census (that did not take place for 20 years) made the construction of statistics more convenient and possible. The 1994 census contained no specific details about the pastoralist groups and even less detail with regard to the population size of the Karrayu. Thus, most studies and reports are unreliable as they have been fabricated in relation to specific interests.

The relationship between the state and NGOs with regard to pastoralism is another interesting topic; relations have become more competitive and sophisticated as NGOs
have been pushing for increased pastoral rights and policy reforms that differ from the desires of the state. The state has sought to overcome the emerging pastoralist mobilisation and minority rights issues by creating parallel structures working on pastoralism and by co-opting pastoralist representatives. Most of these structures are meant to facilitate a ‘smooth’ transition of pastoralism towards sedentary farming practices. Achievements on both sides did not go further than changing the names of groups that had been relegated as ‘nomads’ to a readily and briefly transformed name: ‘pastoralist’. These people have also been amalgamated with other forms of typologies, such as indigenous groups, minorities, and marginalised groups, to suit conditions set by the state and international donors. In the following discussion, I attempt to assess how the Karrayu comply, conform to, or manipulate such new identities and use them to their own advantage.

2.3.1 Options at the International Level as Represented by NGOs

Associating NGOs with civil society is commonplace in development spheres. The existence of civil societies in Ethiopia is far from being perennial; this does not, however, mean that rhetoric over the existence of civil societies is absent. In fact, most political forums and development lexicons are loaded with trans-national concepts, such as civil society and democratisation:

The widespread consensus about the desirability of democracy and civil society is not simply a matter of a sudden change in morals. Such orientations are also a product of heavily supported projects in the name of democracy and civil society, the available resources creating strong incentives to become a devotee (Sampson 1996: 124).

This is also the case in Ethiopia where many organisations use the name ‘civil society’ in order to access available resources from the international community, which is keen to reproduce new cultural values and practices. In addition the agenda is mainly held by urban elitists who promote the perspective of the urban minority without linking it to the interests of the rural majority in substantive terms (Pausewang 1997). It is also worth mentioning that societies that have been functioning independently of the state existed long before being labeled as civil
societies. These associations were not established by proclamation, contrary to the ones that are formally and legally established and dubbed ‘civil societies’. The latter rarely survive long. There are so many reasons that could be mentioned for their short life. The major reason is their intervention in political/advocacy spheres which lead to their label as political dissenters.

Another problem related to linking NGOs with civil societies is the fact that, by way of being part of civil society, they are characterised as ‘good,’ as opposed to the state, which is more often than not characterised as ‘bad’. The interactions between NGOs and local people, in terms of the extent to which the former allow the participation of the general population, for instance, and what forums they provide to facilitate the local people’s preferences and create opportunities for future participation in decision-making processes, remains doubtful. In dealing with my own case here, I very much prefer to use the term ‘NGO’ rather than ‘civil society’ for at least two reasons. The first reason is due to the uncertainty of the definition of ‘civil societies’ – I found little that fit with the characterisation of the NGOs I discuss here. I therefore, choose to stick to the term NGOs throughout this section of mapping non-governmental development agencies that interact with the Karrayu.

*The Karrayu and the NGOs*

The Karrayu, despite their geographical proximity to a geo-political centre, are known to the developed world as a completely marginalised pastoralist group in Ethiopia, which has lost much of its means of livelihood due to remorseless national, market-oriented agricultural strategies and environmental conservation programmes. As part of a major marginalised pastoralist group, they have slowly managed to draw the attention of the international institutions that work on development and advocacy. The UN Special Humanitarian envoy paid them an official visit in 2006 to listen to their predicament.

Non-governmental development agencies, being formal organisations from specific origins, cannot be separated from their values of eliciting changes in local practices. I
will not assess whether these values are inherently bad or good, but I will identify what these values are, how they are reproduced in a very small village, such as the Karrayu villages, and how the Karrayu view and adopt them.

To begin with, the number of NGOs working in the upper and middle Rift Valley as a whole is very small. Care Ethiopia is among these few organisations that have been in the Rift Valley for over a decade. It first launched the Awash Conservation and Development project in 1995, which aimed at facilitating community-based conservation after the failure of the national conservation programme that was based on the principle of exclusion. The organisation made an effort to integrate the local Karrayu and neighbouring group so as to create a sense of belongingness to the national park. Nevertheless, the programme hardly succeeded. The idea of abruptly and quickly changing exclusionary-based conservation to community-owned conservation schemes was possible only in the minds of experts and planners and not in the everyday lives of those who practiced and adopted them. Both the Karrayu and their neighbouring group, the Afar had long histories of land dispossession for the sake of animal conservation and thus it was difficult for them to disregard this experience and become conservation practitioners, especially within such a short period of time. Local compliance to the institutional change was, therefore, minimal. In addition the political demarcation that divided the park into two neighbouring but separate regions made local management difficult. Letters written by the park administration to the district administration reveal that after more than a decade of such attempts to implement conservation practices, the local people still use the park as a dry land reservoir, kill wildlife in the park, threaten tourists who come to the park, and open fire on officials working in the park as a form of resistance to their dispossession. Of course, more reasons could be accorded to this failure. Despite the failure to conserve the fauna and flora with a standardised model, only few local people have participated in the organisation effort to change the practice.
Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE)

Despite a noticeable increase of NGOs since 1991, coalitions of organizations under a common theme in the form of an association, network or think-tank group have been a very recent development in Ethiopia. Organizations, as well as activists that work for pastoralists, have come to learn that the intricacies and complexities of the policies that surround pastoralism are beyond the ability of individual organizations to influence. A coalition was planned accordingly to boost the capacity of individual organizations to lobby for pastoral policy. PFE is the primary association that was born out of the pastoralist agenda. The association was first initiated in 1998, later to be registered legally in 2000; since its establishment, four annual pastoralist days have been commemorated till this date. It is not, however, my intention to delve deep into the achievements and failures of this association. I am interested primarily in showing how this association opens up opportunities for the Karrayu and other pastoralist groups in Ethiopia.

The Karrayu accord great importance to PFE and similar institutions due to the opportunities they offer for participation, albeit on an individual basis, to describe and advocate for their conditions. Of course, most Karrayu participants cannot differentiate between the various organizations that call upon them for conferences, but they have been able to ‘participate’ in conferences that were considered important to them and to the institutions that invite them. Interactions of such a kind not only provide them with the opportunity to voice issues and speak about their situation, but also serve as a learning forum in which they can gain understanding of the outside world and learn to recognise other groups that are categorised in the same pastoralist slot.

Being labeled as a ‘pastoralist’ also offers opportunities that are otherwise quite rare. Karrayu elders as representatives of pastoralists were co-opted by development partners, recognised as articulate public speakers and received what is euphemistically called ‘daily subsistence allowance’ – namely, remuneration for their contributions, participation and partnership. At this juncture, it is important to note that the Karrayu are groups. By the same token, only few individuals named
‘representatives’ or ‘elders’ actually benefited from the opportunities mentioned above, and such opportunities were exclusive for those particular individuals. ‘Representative’ is a label that is extremely static; the same individuals are used without a specified office term, and they benefit from available opportunities and representations. Even when they represent, they are asked to conform to the agenda at hand. It is not surprising that elders who are co-opted by development partners rarely conceal the fact that their representation is more professed than actual. According to an elder who spoke to a journalist, ‘dancing with them [organisations] does not yield changes that are very needed by the group’. Opportunities, in this case, should be seen from the perspective of individual participation, which may or may not extend to the rest of the group. The question of representation is always tricky, and it is questionable whether groups are actually being represented or not. Obviously, Karrayu elders (adult men and women) are invited to share their experiences and tell stories of dispossession. Given that most of them usually only traveled for conferences, having families and assets to return home to, they happily share their city experiences with their local people. Whether they share any detailed content and information from the conferences with the local people, however, requires a closer look at how these conferences are conveyed, how communication is used, and whether there exists a local forum for treating what I like to call ‘the new knowledge’.

2.3.2 Option at the National Level

The state’s focus towards pastoralism can be attributed to two major forces: a) internal forces in the form of group struggle, such as by the pastoralists and NGOs as they sought greater participation in the decision-making processes involved in development; and b) the external force that came along with the cultural change package, i.e., the ‘process of democratisation’. ‘Democratisation’ being among the most extensively used concepts in the political and development lexicon. It is often described more as a formal institution than as behaviour. Such a tendency excludes other forms of institutionalised actions and behaviours that might have affected public policy without being directly involved in the formal political structure, such as elections and parliament. The fact that it embraces elements ranging from
institutional setups to behaviour and culture becomes nebulous when one tries to evaluate a situation as democratic or not. It is not exactly clear which definition is being used by the current Ethiopian government. We can only fairly claim that a general agreement is held, quite normatively, in regard to the importance of popular participation, including participation by disadvantaged groups in both public policy making and its implementation.

The reason I mention democratisation here is because part of the milieu that favoured pastoralism as a discourse in Ethiopia was the ‘process of democratisation’ as well as popular participation that spread to Africa. The present decade in particular is characterised as a period during which African states are compelled to introduce democracy and local participation through the representation of marginalised groups. The international community, despite its persistent complaints about many African states’ failure to establish democracy, has never ceased to provide funds and grants to facilitate the democratisation process. Such funds, more often than not, are accompanied by a set of conditions such as the involvement of local actors.

In this section of the thesis, I will concentrate on how the state is becoming increasingly involved in a particular way of viewing and perceiving pastoralists (e.g., the Karrayu) and how the Karrayu are reacting to this. Moreover, I will also look into the process by which the Karrayu are being situated in the pastoralist space and assess whether this categorisation of them is surfacing other categories that have existed before, such as ethnicity, as seen by the group themselves.

I argue that the category of pastoralists in Ethiopia, as exclusively distinct social actors, is used by the NGOs as a harangue in raising issues of policy remedy and by the state as a political mobilising force. Moreover, for both parties, it serves as a donor conditionality to gain resources. It is one of those ‘slots’ that has been continuously and sensibly reproduced. This reproduction, however, has had to have an inherent logic in order to endure. The existence of the group of people whose major livelihood was gained through livestock production became the target for this categorical reproduction. Democratization and participation from outside being the
major factor, however, it is also important to mention that there are internal transformations that have contributed to and facilitated the awareness on pastoralism at the level of rhetoric.

Since 1991 political restructuring within the country has played a role in increased interest by the state toward pastoralism. The strategy of pulling support from other political constituents that had been marginalised in the past, such as the pastoralists, was considered imperative. This has been particularly visible in the formation of the standing pastoralist committee (SPC). The recommendation forwarded in the parliament for the formation of the SPC was accepted partly on the basis of the need to gain more support from a significant number of non-highlanders who had been neglected by the political forum before. In addition, the regions in which the pastoralists reside are considered to be among the most unstable areas in the country, and connecting to them was, therefore, a necessary action (Liter 2004).

The official institutionalisation of an ethnic-based federal system, as it was ratified by the Constitution in 1994, placed the Karrayu under the regional state of Oromiya. Ethnic federalism is basically considered a panacea for ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, even though this arrangement obviously created new political dynamics and competition for political office between different ethnic groups within the same regional state (Tobias 2008). The place of the Karrayu within the Oromiya regional state, in terms of representation and participation in political spheres, grew very slowly while the Karrayu became progressively conscious of their marginalised positions. Although discourse on political and economic marginalisation is often juxtaposed, the issue of pastoralism as it has been handled by the state concerns itself less with ethnicity. The new identity and label ‘pastoralist’ was, in all probability, made in order to surface ethnic differences that were emphasised by federalism. Moreover, the new identity of pastoralism does not fit the historical alliance and grouping made by the respective groups themselves. I will present illustrations to verify this claim by using instances in various contexts where I made observations.
**Illustration 1**
The third Ethiopian pastoralist day was organised in Jinka, in the Southern Nation and Nationalities and Peoples Region. Pastoralist groups from regional states were invited to celebrate the day together under the auspices of the Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia and the respective regional administrations. For most pastoralist groups, the day presented them with a new category of groups, situated under the pastoralist slot. The Afar, the Karrayu, the Somali, and the Southerners were all mixed together under the cluster of ‘pastoralist’. In addition to their differences in terms of ethnic groups, some of them were, however, also enemies. Enmity was, to some extent, considered by the local people as one criterion for ‘otherness. Some consider themselves more civilized than others.

**Illustration 2**
The Karrayu often assume more similarity with the Ittu than differences. This is particularly true as far as their history of origin, language and marginalisation are concerned; and they have always assumed that if any opportunities should come up, they would benefit equally. During the Derg period, they became aware that the Ittu settlers had more say with regard to resource use rights and management than they did. This has continued until today, as the state has continued to pursue its plan of sedentarisation. In addition, more Ittu and other settlers have been appointed as government officials at the level of district administration.

Both illustrations are used to show that the Karrayu as a group, however, view their economic and political representation less than other pastoralist groups in the country.

*The Karrayu in the Pastoralist “Identity Category”*
The Karrayu as pastoralists, an emerging label for this group of people, should, therefore, be understood in light of the above economic and political contexts. In the past, the bulk of Ethiopian ethnography and development reports on pastoralism seldom referred to the Karrayu. A review of the ethnographic archives clearly reveals the scant information on this group. The strong competition that emerged among NGOs and the state help the Karrayu representatives, however, to be able to play out
their expected roles without compromising these diverse forces that seemed so strikingly opposite.

*A Tongue between Jaws – Perception of Themselves*

We are like ‘a tongue between jaws’ is a very common saying among the Karrayu elderly men. A tongue between jaws can move, but cannot move as far as it wishes. Some of my informants even went further to state that the tongue is already split and would soon be cut off altogether. They employed the statement to express how they are being pushed and curtailed from all sides. Their physical movement as herders is restricted, and they are encircled by more powerful groups such as the sugar estate, the Afar and the Argoba.

The hardest, most heartbreaking challenge for the Karrayu has been to loose significant plots of land to which they accord their emotional, spiritual, and physical strength. They also refer to themselves as forgotten people who are not given a chance for better education or health services in comparison to other groups in their country. They refer to themselves as having no access to arms (unlike their neighbouring enemies). It is interesting to note that the Karrayu are increasingly considering cooperation with the state as useful way forward. Similar to their engagement with the NGOs, they are increasingly participating in state-organised conferences and projects at the regional and national levels. Still, there are very many state initiatives, such as the Pastoralist Community Development Project (PCDP) which are not clear or made available to them because of their invisibility at the local level.

The PCDP, under the Ministry of Federal Affairs, was established to promote pastoral area development, mainly through a slow process of encouraging pastoralists to settle down in the long run. The background for the functioning of PCDP is the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper that emphased on the empowerment of the local people. It concentrates on strengthening the link between national-level and district-level authorities and channeling more resources directly to the districts. The Ministry of Federal Affairs (MOFA) is responsible for the emerging regions that comprise
many of the pastoral areas. It is the body that assumes responsibility for executing activities related to the PCDP project. The existence of the PCDP as a structure has facilitated communication between NGOs and the state. However, the PCDP’s mission of improving the Karrayu’s life is still far from being realised.

The PPG (Parliamentary Pastoralist Group)
The Parliamentary Pastoralist group (PPG) is another structure established by proclamation in 2002. The size of the group is limited to 13 by the Parliament. Civil societies represented by NGOs and pastoralists claim to have put great effort into the formation of this group. NGOs in particular accord a great importance to the establishment of an independent pastoralist parliamentary group because they strongly believe that such a group, in the long run, will inform the direction of the pastoral policy processes. The majority of local people however only knew that Members of Parliament or PPGs working with the government are given housing in Addis and receive salaries, but know little about what PPGs do. It is important to state here that the majority of the Karrayu still have little knowledge about Parliament, how it functions and its policy-making processes; they are often uninformed as to how they could address their interests and concerns to the Parliament through their representatives. From my observations, the Karrayu are content that members of their groups have gained a chance to work with the government, something which was not the case previously. The meaning of ‘representation’ here is understood in terms of individuals belonging to the groups that participate in government work. For the time being, they seem to care little about the substantive nature of this participation. Such a seemingly cynical position with regard to participation can be traced back to the interaction between the state and the Karrayu in the past, where Karrayu participation within the state structure was very minimal.

2.3.3 Options at the Local Level

Based on the new administration arrangement, the district administration forms the second tier of administrative structure from below. The current Fentalle District was previously administered with the same status as the Yerer and Karrayu Awraja of
Shoa administrative region. When the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front took power in 1991, the former district-level administrative unit was abolished, and Fentale appeared as Fentalle-Berehet. In 1995 the new Regional State was established based on ethnicity. Part of the former east and south Shoa administrative regions were brought together to form the east Shoa Zone. This again brought about the restoration of the former district-level administrative structure. Thus, Fentalle has become one of 12 districts in the east Shoa zone in the Oromiya region.

Fentalle district has an area of about 1,340 km$^2$ and covers 4% of the total area of the east Shoa zone. It forms the northeastern extreme part of the zone bound by Amhara region in the north, and northwest, Afar in the northeast, west Hararghe and Arsi zones in the east, and Boset district in the south. The district consists of 18 farmer associations dominated by pastoralists, and two Kebeles$^{11}$. Administratively, the district is divided into two parts – the rural section and the town – each of which is managed by two parallel executives, the judicial and the militia organs. Such splits and merges have been going on ever since 1994, depending on administrative needs.

The Fentalle District is another arena where the state and the local people interact. The administration has become an important social field where one can clearly see the state’s interaction with local people. I limit myself to two social arenas – peace-building processes and women’s right issues – at the district level, and provide first-hand information on how the regional government through peace committees and women’s rights groups, tries to engage with the Karrayu.

*The Security and Justice Department*

The formal structure of the district administration shows that chairman of the district is responsible for security and justice, the court, women’s affairs and food security. The neighbouring regions’ affair office is part of the executive committee that was established in 1995 under the Security and Justice department of the district administration. This department is responsible for facilitating the work of the peace committees. Along with it are the militia, the police and the court, which are directly

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$^{11}$ Kebele is the lowest tier of political administration in the Regional State
accountable to the Security and Justice Department. The court in the district is also accountable to the chairman of the district.

The Peace and Justice Committee

The initiative of the peace committee is not a purely Ethiopian creation. The same is being tried out in pastoral areas of other African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, where pastoralists account for a significant size of the population and where violent conflicts among such group have become widespread. The objective of establishing such an intermediate local structure is to support the progress of district administration activities with regard to local peace-building processes by engaging local representatives. The initiative also intends to increase elders’ ability to mobilise the local people.

The normative meaning of peace committees is that they are loose structures, elected by the people, and function mainly on the basis of volunteerism. Their major responsibilities at the district level involve linking district security to the community within and beyond the district boundaries, monitoring community migration, and informing relevant authorities and other peace committees about possible conflict incidents and sharing ‘intelligence’ information with them.

In the following chapter, I will address issues related to the functioning of the peace committees as well as their ways of interacting with the local people and the Regional State at the district level. My intention here is limited to explain whether these structures open up opportunities for the Karrayu in terms of appointment within the district administration and decision-making processes.

It is of great importance to mention from the outset that most district officials do not belong to the Karrayu group. In almost the entire district structures mentioned above, officials belong to other Oromo groups from neighbouring places such as Arsi, Harerige, and Ambo. Thus, the administration is run by ‘settler’ Oromo groups. These officials are working within the administration on the opinion that they have received a certain level of formal education and have gained work experience in government
offices. Their relationship with the Karrayu is marked by a superiority complex, whereby they tend to look down at the Karrayu as being too unqualified and inexperienced to administer their own district.

The security and justice department works closely with the neighbouring districts at the level of exchanging information on violence such as recording incidences of violence and individuals who participate in group violence. Peace committees are formed under the department for neighbouring regions’ affairs, representing the community in each village. Each committee at the time of this field work did not exceed 15 members. For their participation in peace conferences, committee members are not officially paid except for a daily subsistence allowance (DSA).

The roles of the peace committee can be examined at two levels as follows:

The National / The Normative: As mentioned above, it is not very surprising that many of Ethiopia’s pastoral development designs such as peace committee are either shared with or borrowed from the experiences of neighbouring countries. The idea is to form a locally based structure, capable of integrating both the traditional and modern means of conflict prevention, management and resolution. The committees are responsible, among many things, for mobilising the local people to enhance security, advocating for peace, conducting reconciliation meetings with neighbouring groups, tracing, retrieving and returning looted cattle to the owners, and sharing information with the district authorities.

The District / The practical level: At the district level, the Department of Security relies largely on the peace committee’s reports on incidences of conflict. The committees are selected according to the knowledge of their locality and inhabitants of the villages; they are thought to possess insider information. They are solicited to give information to the Department of Security in the district administration about incidences of violence, instigator lists, and cattle rustling events. The officials appointed in the department have little knowledge, mainly due to the fact that they reside and work far from the frontiers where violent conflicts generally take place. They often say: ‘We cannot easily identify participants because they fight in the
jungle ’and peace committees as members of the community are assumed to know more about these frontiers.

‘Beke Deda’ as a Frontier
The term Beke Deda is commonly used by the Karrayu in everyday life. The literal meaning of Beke Deda is a ‘place that lie outside a homestead.’ It is mainly used to refer to a geographic area, but it is usually employed to refer to distant places where animals and people have migrated to access pasture and water. Most officials (both Oromiffa and Amharic speakers) in the local administration call this ‘Chaka’ which means a remote dense forest.

The context in which I refer to Beke Deda as it is employed by the Karrayu is not, however, the geographic meaning, but rather as a political arena or sphere where there is little control of the state. The Fentalle District is in the centre of the Rift Valley which is suffering from the process of desertification and soil erosion, and it hardly has any areas that could be characterised as Chaka in its literal and original sense. Nonetheless, it is a commonly used expression to refer place that is not inhabited and my intention is to elaborate upon the use and context in which this expression is used.

As mentioned before, district officials in Fentalle are mainly settlers from other regions within the Regional State of Oromiya, and they might possibly associate Chaka with places far away from towns, as is often the case in urban areas where people understand far rural places unfit for human habitation. The term, however, becomes crucial and interesting when we see the contexts in which it is used and understood by district officials. For the purpose of our discussion here, however, it is important to first try to characterise places that are identified under the name Beke Deda or Chaka:

- Such places are considered sites where violent conflicts occur.
  - They lie outside the Fentalle town, in places where police are absent. Until recently, the police were mainly engaged in handling matters occurring in towns.
• These are places where the Karrayu interact with their neighbours and, by and large, are grazing areas that cross district borders.

• They are places far from the seat of the administration (Fentalle town), so officials have little knowledge of the residents, neighbours, and potential incidents of conflict.

• They are places that the district officials or their militia are unable to access, either because of lack of logistic capacity (e.g., transportation, arms) or because they have no state representative working there to provide them with firsthand information about any conflict incidence.

These places, according to officials, are categorised as Chaka. The task of the local peace committee is of crucial importance in such frontiers. They are used as informal extensions of the district administration. A number of people from the Karrayu groups are elected as members of peace committee; these are important people for the Karrayu too. Their dual function as informers for the district administration as well as negotiators on behalf of the local people renders them more importance than officials who are placed in the district.

GTF (Gudina Tumsa Foundation)

GTF, a local NGO, launched its programme in 1994/1995, first by opening a primary school in a village called Dahebiti (‘Place of Thirst’), one of the villages in the Fentalle district where I made my focus. The NGO expanded its primary school to a junior school, in near by town named Fentalle to accommodate those who had finished primary school from different villages of the district. In addition to the educational programme, the organisation also launched an integrated rural development programme that consists of activities such as water development, reforestation, and the promotion of women participation in development. The most influential area of the programme, however, has been raising local interest and involvement in formal education.

Most Karrayu men and women associate the coming of GTF as a blessing to give the much more needed formal education. For many years, they considered lack of formal
education among the major reasons they were unable to benefit from the changes taking place around them. As predominantly cattle keepers, they were regarded by outsiders as uncivilized and unfit to be part of any formal institution. When GTF agreed to open a primary school for their children in 1994, they were overjoyed. GTF’s development work was, however, equally driven by its religious vision to proselytise. At the core of GTF’s vision is addressing the spiritual and physical needs of people. The organisation was formed in homage to the work of the Reverend Gudiana Tumsa, who had been persecuted by the Derg for his religious missions. GTF continued to build on his vision that reads as: "GTF works to help those who are suffering physically as well as those longing for justice and freedom; their desire is to be healed by medical means as well as by the forgiveness of God." From the discussion I had with my informants, the Karrayu, at least in the beginning, were not aware of the evangelisation aspect of GTF’s mission, and this later knowledge disappointed them. GTF’s religious vision was contradictory to the Karrayu’s optimism that their children, after completing their studies, would gradually strengthen the belief that their parents held for long. The majority of the Karrayu were already frustrated with increasing number of immigrant Ittu who had converted to Islam and began traveling for pilgrimage abroad. Most of them rejected the importance of the Qallu, spiritual leader of the Oromo.

Despite such apprehension, however, they did not strongly resist the operation of the organisation. GTF also continued its development work with a subtly conducted proselytisation instead of an outright religious mass conversion. And yet, almost all staff members were enthusiastic Protestants, and always had opportunities to influence their students. Particularly school boys were happy to spend their after-school time in the GTF compound with the staff, where they could listen to religious songs and prayers and read religious materials, such as leaflets. In addition, teachers who came from other places after completing their training in pedagogy and relevant courses, represented the ‘urban’ and the educated, and serve as models for local students. Among the students, a few stayed closer to administration of the organisation, thereby gaining an advantage over the rest of local young children in terms of accessing resources. These students were sometimes exceptionally invited to
staff residences in Addis. Interactions such as this created an increasing interest in formal education among school boys and girls and opened up their exposure to places beyond their villages.

Seen as a whole, the impact of GTF through formal education is more visible than any other development agency in the area, particularly when it comes to influencing young peoples’ lifestyles, dreams and hopes. As I mentioned before, the Karrayu, after such a long time of frustration and dispossession, had begun to rely heavily on their children for a change, and they believed that this could only happen if their children obtained a formal education.

It is worth mentioning that the Karrayu families often decide on the number of their male children to send to school. Not all male children can go to school, since that would jeopardize the families’ survival which is based on intensive labour. They still need young, strong boys to take care of the cattle. Trekking with animals to distant places for pasture and water, confronting enemies, and separating stock at the time of an epidemic on a long trip requires labour force. Based on this reality, decisions are made and, in most cases, older boys remain at home (this is not strictly the case; it depends on the amount of labour required and other factors). The young men who stay at home have different dreams than those who go to school. The young men who never went to school, for example, are expected to marry early and produce many children. They very much enjoy spending lengthy periods with their cattle in distant places and engage in cattle raids.

For those who attend school, formal education has led to a dramatic change in their dreams. These young men and women invariably want to leave their villages upon completion of their studies. None of them whom I interviewed wished to stay, neither in Fentalle nor in any of the nearby towns. They planned to go to distant places, such as Addis, Europe, or the United States. They complained that their district was hostile, hot, and conflict-ridden. Most of all, they did not want to live on livestock production. Both boys and girls who entered school had little interest in entering marriage as early as those who did not join school.
Girls’ education is another value that is publicised by GTF. A general opinion held by GTF is that girls have fewer opportunities to go to school once they reach the age of marriage. Noticeably, very young girls come to school and then drop out when they reach the age of marriage. According to the parents, girls need time to prepare for the marriage, and preparedness has more to do with the household chores and caring for children. Formal education is less likely to help in this regard. GTF’s emphasis on girls’ education, although still part of the development lexicon, was mainly a result of the need to encourage girls to stay within the formal education system. As part of this intention, it recently provided a hostel for girls near the school. From the organisation’s point of view, the hostel will reduce their workload at home and shorten their commute to school. Obviously, the cost for such a rapid change is quite immense for the girls. The majority of the Karrayu, for example, including school boys, are not very enthusiastic about girls staying overnight outside their village. Girls who refused to accept an arranged marriage and who are in disagreement with their parents also come and stay in the hostel. For various reasons, the girls enjoy staying with other girls in the hostel, cooking food for them, and reading their books. It allows them more freedom to act upon their preferences, and they build strong relationships with the GTF staff members on whom they rely heavily for change in their lives. Nevertheless, during the last phase of my field work in 2005, the district administration was preparing to take over the school from GTF. Since GTF has existed for more than a decade in the area, a strong pressure was coming from the government to pass on the project to the community.

The integration of women, including adult women, was another aspect of the organisational values within the framework of gender streaming in development and women’s rights. An impressive amount of women participation was seen in the area of the conservation programme. The reason for this active participation was linked more to the enthusiasm and work ethics of an individual staff member than to the organisation’s overall participation strategy. As a result, a few women gained experience in horticulture and spent some days in the junior school compound in Fentalle town.
An interesting arena in which GTF interacts with the local people, particularly with men, is the practice and training of the technique of land enclosure. The practice of individual enclosure (Kello) is often considered as land use change from communal to private. This has also been the case particularly in places where farming is being increasingly practised around water passages close to the Awash River. In Fentalle district alone, agro-pastoralists in Gelcha, Kobboo, Soggido, Dega Iddu, and Benti are mainly enclosing land in order to exclude others from use (Ayalew 2004). The practice of enclosure is associated with the increased practice of farming.

In the past enclosure is also well known but had a different logic. When the majority of the Karrayu were practising animal husbandry, they always had a common pool of pasture reserve, which could be used later in the dry season by all members of the clan. Such types of enclosure were vast because of the large number of users. As the range land became smaller and no longer allowed such a practice, only a few individuals could do enclosures. The practice of enclosure has both advantages and disadvantages. Enclosures can be advantageous by providing owners with better access to reserves during times of drought. On the other hand, it is difficult to exclude neighbours from private enclosure and it has become one field where conflict arise between individual households.
CHAPTER THREE

3. LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

The intention of this chapter is to introduce institutions that have direct and direct relevance with violence. My understanding of institutions in this thesis not only refers to the formal institutions that serve as frames of action, but also includes all social actions that are regularised and standardised.

The study of institutions is never new to social sciences such as sociology, political science and economics. The new theorists do not deny the fact that early works by Karl Polanyi, Thorstein Veblen and Max Weber have greatly shaped their thinking. What is evolving as new, however, according to their argument, is that the new institutional approach proposes to provide a better means of understanding the actual behaviours of individuals that cannot be grasped by exploring formal laws, rules and administrative structures. Thus, they suggest a different methodology for understanding informal rules. New institutionalism developed in three major forms: the rational choice theory that dominates economics; the historical institutional perspective or bounded rationality of the political scientist; and sociological institutionalism.

Rational choice theory argues that an individual’s strategic and calculative decision is at the centre of the formation of institutions. Individuals within institutions have a clear understanding of the outcomes of their institutions and contend that, once put in place; the institutions will enforce further actions. Institutions, according to rational choice theorists, are, therefore, intermediary variables (Koelble 1995).

On the other hand, for historical institutionalists, institutions include both state structure and societal institutions that shape individual behaviour, defining their interests and actions and, thus, their outcomes. They adopt the definition given by Peter Hall(1992)as ‘formal rules, compliance procedures and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of polity and economy’(Thelen & Stenimo 1992: 2). Historical institutionalists emphasise the
role of institutions in determining the outcomes, but, at the same time, argue that institutions are not the only cause of specific outcomes. They rally against the rational choice theory, which situates the individual actor at the centre of the investigation in influencing outcomes. Although historical institutionalism accords importance to the rationality of individuals in maximizing utility, it strongly refutes the optimistic claim that individuals are free. Rationality, in the view of the historical institutionalists, is bounded within a structure or a setting in which actors perform their actions. Hence, preferences or outcomes are not fixed, but rather are formed in the process or within the context of the institutions. Unlike the rational theorists whose contention reads as ‘institutions matter’, they emphasise that institutions not only matter, but also determine outcomes (Thelen & Steinmo 1992). Historical institutionalists plainly state that ‘individuals follow routines, they follow well-worn paths and do what they think is expected of them’, and they further argue that, ‘Human action is an attempt to satisfy and fulfil expectations that are formed within a context-specific and cultural, socio-economic and political structure’ (March 1989: 9-19). Historical institutionalism is relevant because it provides due weight to institutions.

The third important approach to institutions is that of sociological institutionalism, which asserts that the very concepts of self-interest and preferences are more the products of a larger cultural field than merely a product of a specific institutional setting. Authors of this approach give greater emphasis to culture, society and organisational identity (Powell & DeMaggio 1991). They define institutions not only as rules and structures, but also as customs and conventions. Most people are inherently conservative, and once they establish a routine, they tend to stick to it without even conceiving of alternative institutional arrangements, preferring instead to stay with the tried and true. Granovetter’s (1992) view shuttles between the rational decision making of individuals and economic, political and social embeddedness. He argued that individuals tend to be rational but within the larger structure, and the underestimation of this larger structure in regard to the actions or rationality of the rational individual according to him is the major shortcoming of rational choice theorists.
The challenge facing new institutional theorists lies in their inability to fully explain institutional order, stability and change. Scholars such as Greif (2003) argued that each new institutional approach maintains a weaker explanation of the emergence of individual preferences. He, therefore, suggested that ‘a key to further development of analysis of institutions understands the common aspect of various definitions . . . bridging the ‘agency’ and ‘structural’ dichotomy in institutional analysis’ (2003: 79). In his proposal, he adopted the following definition for institutions:

A system of social actors (institutional elements) that conjointly generate a regularity of behaviour. An institution motivates, enables and guides the behaviour of individuals with particular social positions to follow one rule of behaviour among the many technologically feasible ones, thereby generating regularities of behaviours (2007: 4).

So far, institutions have been understood in general terms and no distinction has been made between formal and informal institutions. The old tradition simply links formal institutions to the state and informal institutions to society. Such a link, Helmke and Levitsky (2003) argue fails to identify the informal rules that are at play within the state spheres and the formal rules that operate within society. In other words, the informal institutions and formal institutions are not so neatly divorced. It is along these lines of argument that this thesis pursues its discussion of institutions. By working on a range of deductions from the earliest conceptualisation of informal institutions, Helmke and Levitsky have thus come up with a new definition. They contend that, unlike the formal institutions whose rules are codified and communicated through official means, informal institutions utilise socially shared rules that are usually unwritten, created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels (Ibid). Moreover, informal institutions are constructed out of regularised behaviours, which mean that they entail expectations and sanctions.

The conviction that state should be considered a formal institution, whereas the rest should be considered informal is itself prone to debate. What is more relevant and appropriate for this thesis, however, is a discussion of non-state institutions that
affect and influence the power politics of the specific areas where I conducted my field research.

I posit that the institutions on which I concentrate in this chapter are beside the formal institutions concerned with unwritten rules, involve regularised activities, and present expectations and sanctions among its members. In addition, these rules are enforced more by mutual response than through state intervention. For these particular institutions here, I also endorse the state-societal distinction because the formal state, in this specific context did not emerge out of the local governing institutions. What is also significant is before the arrival of the state as an external institution, there existed other forms of governance, frames and arenas for social actions that were separate from the formal state we know today. Some of these institutions still exist, and they adopt and interact, influence and are influenced by the formal rules that now come from outside.

I will begin with a description, as opposed to a definition, of these local institutions with which the Karrayu as a group govern and coordinate particular behaviours in conflict situations, acting through a fulfilment of expectations and receiving sanctions. In short, these are local organisations that harbour rules and internalised norms.

It is important to note that a number of institutions exist in which the Karrayu can and are expected to organise their lives, but I limit myself here to those that are relevant to my inquiry in regard to conflict. I focus on institutions that existed and still exist outside the sphere of the state, but which interact with state institutions. In other words, the distinction between state and society is important to maintain, at least for this particular discussion.

3.1 Intra-ethnic Group Institutions and Organisations

*Family and the Household*
Marriage among the Karrayu, as with most African pastoralists, is characterised by parental arrangement, bride wealth, and polygamy. The combination of these three forms, according to Ensminger is ‘an extremely effective mechanism for the concentration of women in fewer hands in the pastoralist context’ (1997:10). Marriage can, however, also occasionally take place through elopement, and in such a situation, the couples often decide to relocate far from their clan territory. Cross-cousin marriage is the most preferred form of marriage. It is considered ideal because it is believed to further strengthen the existing relationships. The amount of bride wealth in this situation is not central to the marriage, i.e., a girl can be given for marriage with a smaller amount of bride wealth than is generally expected. Instead, weight is given to the alliances that emerge as a result of established affinity.

*Levirate/Sororate Marriage Forms*

A man is entitled to take the wife of his deceased brother. The possibility of such a marriage arrangement prevents brothers from taking their cross-cousin wives from the same house, anticipating that if one of them were to die, then the other would end up having two wives who are sisters. Oftentimes, levirate marriage can take place one year after the man dies. In a similar fashion, upon the death of his wife, a man is entitled to marry her sister if she has not yet been engaged to another man. This latter arrangement in particular often leads to marriage of young women to elderly men.

The above forms of marriage are considered ideal; in practice, however, not all marriages fall into these categories. Intermarriage with neighbouring groups, such as the Ittu, Arsi and Afar, is another possible way to form alliances with outsiders as well as ‘absorb’ women from outsider groups who run away and are unaccompanied. Marriage between conflicting clans is considered to be one mechanism for ensuring the restitution of prior relations. By exchanging girls for marriage, it is assumed that a relationship becomes fortified and the conflicting members of clans become affine.

Arranged marriage in its pervasive form is not often a decision made by the marrying couples, but by natal families and consanguineously affiliated groups within the clan.
The choice as to which family shall form an affinity is not a function of couples’
concern, but rather of the families who wish to fulfil certain goals:

In most pastoral societies, arranged marriage through bride wealth is considered part
of the social norm, and provides the greatest benefits to those who possess the most
cattle. Elderly men who managed to possess a greater number of cattle, for example,
are more likely to benefit from this form of marriage because by giving more cattle,
they are able to gain more women for themselves and their sons. This is particularly
true in areas where livestock production constitutes the largest share of livelihood. In
places such as Fentalle and Illala, bride families tend to accept marriage proposals for
their daughters as early as when their daughters are eleven years old. The amount of
bride wealth is a major factor in agreeing to the proposal, but, as mentioned above,
not the only factor.

The father will tell his son that he will propose on behalf of him
to such and such a family to marry their daughter to them. The
son who marries does not propose himself, but his father does.
The father may have a number of reasons to choose that
particular family for marriage, belonging to a renowned clan is
one factor. Then he will take elders along with him to make the
request. If the other family agrees to the proposal, they will
consent by swearing an oath and blessing the elders. This means
that the two families are now allies. The son-in-law then will start
paying his tax: gifts (Sebokka) and bride price (Gebbara), grazing
animals for his in-laws when needed and paying due respect and
visits. (Personal Interview, Worke, June 18, 2004, Dhebiti)

Some families ask for two to three heads of cattle, whereas other families ask for
between ten to twelve heads of cattle. The size of cattle varies across families. Some
families’ concern is very much on the conduct of the families they give their daughter
to, whether they are obedient to norms and reliable.

A Karrayu household (Manna) usually comprises a man as the head, with his wife
(possibly wives) and his children. Almost every person is integrated within a
household. Generally, the house is owned by a woman and she takes care of most
management tasks within the household. Although a man can possibly marry more
than one woman, each household takes care of its own domestic tasks separately and
thus constitutes a productive unit (Ayalew 2001). At the time when a need arises for pulling labour, wives in different households who are married to the same man can coordinate their labour, even if the labour is meant to fulfil individual household objectives. This coordination is done based on the expectation of the other women to receive the same assistance when the need arises. A woman is responsible for the wellbeing of the family through the preparation and provision of food, gathering of water for household use, taking care of children, and managing the resources at her disposal, such as milk and milk products. The man is in charge of the management of the livestock in general. Children are an important source of labour; when they are young, they can take care of the small ruminants with their mothers and sisters around the homestead. Unmarried adult men accompany their fathers to distant migration areas, and some of them coordinate with other young men from the same homestead area in order to head to the migration areas for longer periods of time.

**Lineage Clan and the Gossa**

The Karrayu, like any other Oromo groups, depend on descent (Illma Oromo), language (Afan Oromo) and common territory (Biyya Oromo) for tracing their common identity (Hirut 2000). They commonly use the term ‘son’ (Illma) to signify their similarity with other Oromo groups as well as their difference from non-Oromo groups. The term ‘illma’ goes to the smallest unit or category, and they employ it consistently.

According to their own description of their story of origin, Oromo had two sons: Borana and Barentuma. Borana was the older brother. Both Borana and Barentuma begot ‘sons’. Borana begot Mecha and Tulma, whereas Barentuma begot Tumuga, Humbana, Ittu, and Karrayu (Asseffa Jalata 1993; Buli 2001). All these groups are sons of Oromo, ‘Illma Oromo’, and thus are Oromos.

The Karrayu, who are the son of Barenthuma, in turn are divided into two parts – Dullacha and Basso. Each son begot sons, and these children are known as ‘children of the same house’. The ‘same house’ is formed on the basis of a patrilineal descent that traces to the same apical ancestor, and it is headed by men called Hayyu.
Marriage among members of ‘the same house’ is prohibited because they are assumed to be sons and, thus, brothers (Ayalew 2001). Dullacha has two ‘sons’, called Shanan Dayyu (five Dayyus) and Booxa Saden (the three Booxas). In addition, each of these gave birth to sons. On the other hand, Basso had three ‘sons’ known as Torban ilu (the seven Ilu), Torban Koyye (the seven Koyyes) and Abbayyi-Diga Beerre-Kuutaye (Lemissa 2006).

In the past, the Dullacha and the Basso resided in distinct territories next to one another. The Basso inhabited all the area that extended from the Dega Iddu locality east of Mount Fentalle and areas that were later taken by the Awash National Park, namely Woliqite, Gelcha Dire Redi, Ajotere, Dega Iddu, Denbi, Kobbo, Mogassa and Gebaba. The Dullacha inhabited the land that is now used by the Argoba, namely Chercher, Melka Jillo, Kogne, Arole, and Bulga (Ayalew 2001).

The smallest group that comprises five to ten households, which trace their descent to an identifiable descent, reside in a single homestead (Worra). A homestead is often made out of a blood-related group of men. It comprises brothers and their sons, along with their wives and children. It is characterised by a number of households owned by brothers, and their sons who use a single cattle enclosure for keeping their livestock. A group of homesteads can come together at the time of grazing or watering to maximise coordination and to decrease the cost of labour required for taking care of the livestock. The small ruminants usually graze within a relatively short radius around the homestead. When they are kept in the enclosure, they require special care due to their vulnerability to fast-spreading diseases. Especially when their number increases, they should be kept separate from other livestock and in groups that are as small as possible.

The smallest group, which hereafter will be mentioned as residing under a single homestead is called a lineage and maintains its own head. The head (Damina) plays a significant role in defending individual rights, asserting group expectations related to resources and managing disputes within the lineage. Heads of lineages are elected depending on their ability to resolve problems. Their responsibilities and
interventions can be understood at two levels: at the household level and at the lineage level. At the household level, any domestic violence and economic decisions made by heads within the household that compromise the interest of household members are brought to heads of the lineage. Decisions relevant to the use and sale of property at the household level are made prior to consultation with the head of the lineage. For instance, the head of the household cannot sell his cattle without discussing and getting consent from them.

At the lineage level, the head is authorised to penalize individuals for wrong acts and facilitate cattle contributions from households at times to recover a weakened household. Selection of heads is made through consensus. In everyday conversation, the role of heads of lineages (Daminas) is often associated with penalizing those who do not abide by rules. This is perhaps mainly because of their authority to enforce negative sanctions, including flogging of individuals who do not abide by the rules.

A number of lineages come together to form clans headed by a man with the title of Hayu. Dullacha, one of the Karrayu sections, comprises fifteen clans, whereas eighteen clans are held together under the Basso section (Aregay 1999). The elders’ council, called Aba Halenge is the highest authority and clan-level office, and it comprises the clan leader, leaders of sub-clans, and elders of the sub-clans. They are elected at a general assembly called the Kora. Their responsibilities are mainly concerned with resource management and social control within the clan territory.

The Karrayu, for internal purposes, divide themselves into four groups: the Dirmedu, a pure unmixed group of people that trace their descent from the same apical ancestor; the Dalata, a group which integrated into Karrayu as a result of intermarriage over a long time; the Worra Melcha, a group that integrated by adoption through a ritual called Mogassa; and Elman Dubri, which refers to children born to women out of wedlock. Except for the first group, all of the other groups are integrated through inter-marriage, birth and adoption, and thus become de facto Karrayu. Such forms of integration make such a distinction for outsiders imperceptible. Once they fulfil the expected rules, they can mix and settle with pure
clan members. Due to this reason, the settlement pattern within the village (Genda) does not necessarily entail pure blood affiliation. A village could be both an increased form of a single homestead and consequently constitute people of the same descent or groups of homesteads that are unrelated by blood to one another, but also comprise groups that have been integrated through marriage and adoption. In order to be incorporated as a member of the clan or the group in general, a number of rules need to be fulfilled by the outsider. Among these rules, the major one is the payment of blood money, which is reinforced by the clan. Conflict is embedded within the social life; individuals or groups from one clan can possibly engage in disputes with other clans, and such a dispute might cause human causalities or damage to properties. According to internal rules, all members of the clan of the perpetrator, including those integrated through inter-marriage, adoption and descent, assume responsibility for the act and thus contribute the blood money owed to the victim group. Cooperation is necessary in assuming responsibility. Sanctions against those who resist cooperation are rarely made by the heads of the lineages and sub-clans. Conflict settlement through compensation in the form of blood money goes hand in hand with cooperation, hence facilitating stability. The centrality of blood money payment for membership partly shows the belief that conflict is commonplace. It is part of the day-to-day life and its presence is felt not as a separate affair, but as one that is integral to social interactions. The incorporation of outsiders also has a strategic advantage for the Karrayu who, through such ties, have befriended members of other neighbouring groups, allowing them to share resources that are scattered and unevenly distributed.

### 3.2.1 Conflict-redressing Institutions among the Karrayu

Conflict-redressing institutions within Oromo groups, such as the Karrayu and Ittu, are to some extent different from conflict-redressing institution mechanisms between the Karrayu and other ethnic groups, which I will explain. In the former, the institutions place more weight on the prevention of violent conflict and avoidance of side effects after its occurrence. The rules embrace aversion to violent actions within the group by extending sanctions against individuals who commit undesirable acts,
such as killings. Thus, it is a strongly held belief that any dispute that arises among the Karrayu should not be allowed to escalate to a degree of violence such as murder. Killing a member of one’s own clan, a Karrayu (by descent, adoption or marriage), is a highly disruptive act. In rare circumstances where this happens, sanctions against those who disobey become severe. ‘Kuppa’ is a term used to describe an act of killing a fellow clan member and refers to the person who commits the homicide. The individual becomes a highly despicable person. As a form of punishment, he will literally be ex-communicated from all social interactions within his group. The sanction remains in place until compensation is made to the victim’s clan. The peace process is further strengthened by an exchange of wives between conflicting parties, as described earlier.

3.2.2 Inter-group Conflict Redressing Institutions

The Karrayu’s interaction with the neighbouring Arsi, Afar and Argoba groups exhibits both political and economic attributes. Natural resources in these areas are not evenly distributed throughout the seasons, and mobility across a vast area of land which also entails entering others’ territory is important. In order to make such mobility possible, however, the Karrayu have to enter into a contract with the neighbouring groups. Application to the village leaders in the host territory is a prerequisite if the migrating clan is not affiliated through any marital or adoptive ties. Such an application, in most cases, is accepted if there has been no killing between the clans and/or if the animals do not have a disease that may spread (Ayalew 2001). It must be mentioned that the right to use resources, which are already claimed by other groups, requires abiding by the rules set by the hosting group. If the Karrayu clan wants to move to the Afar territory, it is inevitable that the former clan would act in accordance with the Afar rules. The same principles would apply to those groups that share Karrayu resources. Ties such as inter-marriage and adoption facilitate cooperation in the sharing of common resources. And yet withdrawal and scouting are also used as the main strategies for avoiding confrontation with neighbouring groups when taking cattle to distant areas without the hosting groups’ permission. ‘Salfa’ is a categorical name given to those men who are sent to migration areas (Beke Dada) in others’ territory to inform their clan about the safety of the areas for
grazing animals. Such a description should not, however, give the impression that the relationships between the various clans have been harmonious in the past. These relationships were characterised by both violent and non-violent practices, but were resumed through negotiations, and often accompanied by compensations.

It is often argued that by local people, in the past, a peace resolution institution (Arrarra) used to work effectively between the Karrayu and their neighbours, such as the Afar, the Arsi and the Argoba. Other than the resumption of cooperation, however, there is insufficient evidence within my reach to prove that the redressing of conflict means resolution. The only insight that I could gain was that everyday group interactions were characterised by a move from stability and skirmishes and vice versa. The practice of conflict redressing ceremonies was limited to short-term solutions. Conflict settlement through compensation was part of the arrangement that was used to avoid future retaliatory plans based on previous conflict. The use of elders to enforce the giving and receiving of compensations clearly shows that they played the role of mediators. Compensation is believed to assist conflicting parties in coming to terms. The term Arrarra refers to a body of rituals and associated rules that are applied to bring conflicting parties to agree to stop violence through the help of elders who effect moral sanctions on perpetrators and arrange compensation for the victims.

The procedure of Arrarra, as I learnt from my informants, begins with a process of making peace with outside groups, such as the Afar and Arsi, by sending women and rich pastoralist elders (Halekie) as conduits to the conflicting parties. These elders inform conflicting parties of the need to engage in conflict redressing and negotiations. Once the consent of the parties is achieved, then the course of action begins with preparation for the actual ceremony: setting dates, purchasing items, such as bullock for slaughter, mats, blood money, and cigarettes for the elders. On most occasions, the ceremonies are held at the place where the violent conflict took place; the host group is, therefore, expected to organise accommodations for the elders during their stay. The content of the ceremony largely depends on the damage and result of the conflict.
Elders nominated for Arrara often are assumed to be neutral, and their position is relatively permanent. The Arrara are composed of senior elders, former Gada leaders and ritual men (Ayalew 2001; Hamdesa 2000). They are often expected to initiate the peace-making process on their own, immediately after violent conflicts are made known to them. According to my informants, the Arrarra institution is effective in keeping some conflicts from worsening; it is, however, incapable of preventing further conflict from arising.

Since the major focus of conflict-redressing ceremonies is to resume pre-existing relations that set a minimum condition for further cooperation, any individual complaints as to sufferings, loss and instigations that are believed to deter the process are deliberately undermined. If a conflict involves human causalities, the victims should be compensated with blood money; and it is important that both parties agree on the amount of blood money paid. Once consensus is reached, the ceremony is concluded with the slaughtering of a bullock to the satisfaction of the victim party members. The last step of the peace process ritual is to mix the conflicting parties, particularly herders, by having them settle in the same migration area (Beke Deda). This last step is made to ensure that the parties have internalised the peace and do not invalidate the initiative by reversing it.

The effectiveness of the Arrarra institution depends on timing and the power dynamics between the conflicting groups (bargaining power). The conflicting party that has greater bargaining power (causes more damage and causalities) initiates the peace process immediately before the other party begins planning any retaliation. In situations where the number of causalities is high and the opposing party identifies an alternative means to attaining a similar effect, the chance is minimal that it will comply to the rules of negotiation as they are initiated by the other party. At the level of rhetoric, local conflict redressing institutions are depicted as possessing a high degree of transparency to all members of the groups and maintain a comparative degree of compliance with the resolutions.
It is, nevertheless, my view that the aforementioned rules should be read as ideal guidelines. This means that realistically these rules are not always upheld. Studying social contracts and rules does not help us much in predicting their outcomes as observing their actual implementation:

Instead of focusing on the process through which rules are stipulated, we have to study why some behavioural rules . . . are followed and others are not. After all, rules are behavioural instructions that can be ignored, implying that for any prescriptive rules to have an impact, individuals have to be motivated to follow them. Motivation mediates between the environment and behaviours whether this behaviour is rational, imitative or habitual. (Greif 2003: 3)

Following Greif’s line of thinking, I argue that the non-compliance of members to a community action is just as common as cooperation. Some scholars in this field contend that factors such as the degradation of land, resource shrinkage and new institutional impositions by the state are driving forces for a change from cooperation to violence or non-compliance. Such reasons being relevant, I would still argue that a particular action, such as conflict or cooperation, is considered useful as it informs members in regard to whether to rally among themselves or not. Institutionalised belief systems that sustain and justify acts are restrained unless they are really necessary. I illustrate my statement in the next few chapters by looking at how the Karrayu relationship with neighbouring groups is equally constructed around a belief system of enmity that could easily be activated should violent behaviour towards a neighbouring group be found necessary.

3.2 3. Gada: A Genealogically Based Local Institution

Gada is an organisational system, that comprised of people (actors) who are arranged into patri-classes locally called Gada shenen, which dictate group performances (social practices) and are comprised of sets of rules (social norms). Accordingly, all Karrayu (born and adopted) were organised into one of these five patri-classes. Each patri-class is provided an opportunity to alternately assume public responsibilities for eight consecutive years. Each patri-class elects its head, Aba Gadaa and its council. Different names are given for each class, and the names vary across different regions.
For the Karrayu, they are called Robelle, Dirmeji, Melba, Michele, and Halenchissa (Ayalew 2001). The segment of each generation that forms the patri-class is called the generation set (locally Rubo), i.e., each class is maintained by a series of new generation sets that form new patri-classes, ideally every 40 years.

Patri-classes (Gada Shenen) are not age-related grades through which a set of people pass, but are themselves groups of people who assume different Gada-related responsibilities in successive terms (Ibid: 171). These classes, therefore, do not necessarily relate to similar-aged peers; children, for example, enter along with their fathers into the same Gada patri-class every eight years. Within the generation set, ‘Male members of the society changed their social and ritual status, functions and responsibilities, and privileges through their life cycles along with their generation set after a given period of time (Amborn 2006).

Gada is one of the most often cited local institutions that governed the public life of the Oromo people, particularly before the 1900s, a period during which Minilik II conquered the southern people (Donham 2002). Many current anthropological, historical and development-related materials still contain echoes of its democratic attributes (Baxter 1978; Legesse1973; Pausewang1983; Hamdessa2000). Development organisations also refer to this institution to emphasise the potentialities and efficiency of local institutions in resource management and community actions (Megerssa & Dahl 1990; Hogg 1990). For many Oromo elites, Gada is an identity marker around which Oromo solidarity was established and a democracy envisioned. With regard to its function in a very generalised form, however, two major interpretations prevail: one of the views, which places emphasis primarily on its ritualistic character, argues that Gada had little decision-making or coercive power; the other view sees it as a democratic system where a group of officials hold political, economic and social power for an eight-year period, although these roles diminished for various reasons over time. A third analysis deals with its function as an ideological superstructure for the maintenance of peace (Bassi 2005). Bassi studied local assemblies among the Borena Oromo, who practice Gada in a relatively pristine
form and he argued that generation set and kinship are the two important units of analysis that help understand how power operates at the local level.

I emphasise as a caveat that the description of the Gada provided here is not meant to enlighten the reader about all of the values bestowed upon the institution. Gada is a more complicated local institution than can be described within a short text, and it is not my intent here to deal with the institution in terms of its parts and functions in detail, but rather to explicate some of its growing role in this society as an identity marker when all its encompassing functions are actually reduced to ritualistic performances.

In present day, Gada plays a very small economic and administrative role among the Karrayu. Its salience is limited to its ritualistic and identity-marking function, but Gada transition ceremonies still take place at regular intervals. The Basso are said to maintain Gada in a very simplified form, if at all, and the Dulecha Karrayu still maintain some of the Gada ceremonies and rituals. In fact, what is interesting among the Karrayu is that the preponderance in their everyday conversation with each other and outsiders about Gada can easily blur one’s understanding of its limited role in its old political and judicial sphere. Its cultural value and usage as an identity marker however is so pervasive and strong despite its actual diminished role in the sphere of political decision making. The Gada institution as an identity marker for the whole Oromo group has been considered its most pervasive attribute (Amborn, 2005: 71). Asmerom noted:

So deep is the people’s identification with this institution that it stands at the core of the Oromo cultural identity. It continues to play that role today and serves as the Oromo national icon, even in areas where the institution has lost some of its functions under the weight of colonial rule, cultural assimilation, religious proselitization, and a communist revolution (2000: 103).

There is enough evidence from oral traditions and local practices to enable us to deduce that Gada has played a significant role in the economic and political spheres among the Karrayu in the past. The present role of Aba Gadas is limited to consultation and decision making around family issues and economic affairs at the
level of the settlements where they reside. Gada cycles are still used to reckon events that happened in the past. Most importantly, however, it is recalled and brought forth in its function as an identity marker, less to justify what the Karrayu are, than to justify who they were so as to claim a better position in the present based on their past. The following is an attempt to elaborate more on this aspect of their search for identity by looking at the past when Gada was relayed.

Gada as a Heritage of the Past
For the Karrayu, the past includes a time in which they were completely organised under Gada, when Gada councils and leaders had decision-making power over every aspect of their public lives across their claimed territory. It signified for them a time when their general situation was far better than today, more prosperous and autonomous. In order to understand why the past is honoured, one has to understand the present situation of the Karrayu. As I described in the first chapter, despite the growing intervention by the state in their territory as early as the 1880s and 1940s, there were hardly any development opportunities in the past in which they could be considered partners; instead they were relegated to the role of relatively passive subjects. Due to the way in which they were portrayed as nomadic, disinterested and unchangeable, they were rather seen as a cost and challenge in regard to development trajectories. While conversing with many elderly men and women, I realised that the Karrayu perceive themselves as the group most neglected by their local government, as well as the least educated. They put across how they have been made poor and weak by the shrinking of the land that has been left for them and the limited access to arms, in comparison to their neighbouring Afar and Argoba, who, in their eyes, are gaining power due to the support they receive from the state.

Our regional government never recognised us! People from other regions are heard when they complain about problems in their farms, when their goats disappear, when their houses are burnt. The radio even tells us that a lady gave birth to triplets in other regions whereas nothing is told about us. When we and our animals die of hunger and a number of people are killed in clashes, no one knew (PK, B, 2004: Dhebiti).
In such bewildering circumstances, there emerged a strong consciousness about their own identity. Gada situates them at an equal if not higher position in relation to their adversaries. Gada, for them, is not just a system that divides responsibilities among themselves, but one that refers to a time in the past when they dominated through their leaders, their military strength, their kraals full of livestock, their land full of abundant pasture and unrestricted movement from one seasonal zone to another, assimilating others and compelling enemies to play the game by their rules.

As a heritage that has been transferred from generation to generation through practice, it contrasts a written history, which in their eyes demystifies their role both by its presence and absence. The Karrayu are not keen on the writing of Gada as part of their history as it was very much an oral and practical tradition that was passed on, but they greatly appreciate when it is inherited and perpetuated through practice. We received Gada from Waqqa\(^{12}\). We did not receive it as written by men. It is not men’s rule like government rules. It is known to men only by practice, not by studying. We should transfer it through practice and not through writing. Those who are blessed will learn it by practice; those who are not blessed will not understand but only write (Personal interview, H, June 11, 2003, Dhebiti).

As Amborn pointed out for many societies, Gada represents a ‘human time scheme which is divided into clear periods and its emergence was divinely inspired, although it was created by the ancestors’ (2005: 79). Attributing the origin of Gada to the Divine was important for more reasons than simply its linkage to the past; it also attempts to dissociate itself from the bureaucratisation that characterised the state. The Karayyu largely associate writing letters and summons with the state and other influences that lie outside of their heritage. Linking Gada to God (Waqqa) also gives it a superior position over the state institutions that the Karrayu despised. Our young people whom we sent to school did not strive to learn the practice. They ask us to teach them so that they can write it on paper. We do not like that! We want them to appreciate the Aba Boku, to listen to the elders. We want them to follow the

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\(^{12}\) Waqqa
rules. Most of them do not follow the rules now. They only say that Gada is their tradition! (Personal interview, Haro Karssa: 2004)

### 3.2. The Transformation of Local Institutions

Even though the concept of social change is inclusive of all social phenomena, in reality, we cannot study and comprehend change without knowing where it takes place. (Vago, 2004: 5)

The question of why institutions change and what driving forces lead to their dynamism has been a difficult question to answer deductively. Here, I am going to deal with transformations and changes and try to answer the question of exactly what it is that is changing. What makes specific institutions change and what makes them resilient? A few scholars have investigated the ecological and external pressures that affect society and have examined the ways in which a force from outside the society shifts it from a mutual response to a level of compliance. Ensminger argued that this does not always happen, and mentioned that in some societies, such as the Orma for example, ecological stress and external attacks have always been present, but that the Orma never considered changing their institutions until very recently. He further argued that one major factor that best explains institutional change is to look into the supply of institutional options, which are far more attractive than the ones available (1990: 664). His arguments need to be verified with more case studies, however, in order to be explicated as a theory. The other aspect is that most institutional changes are so slow and incremental that situating them in a specific context might lead to overemphasising certain factors over others and, at the same time, underestating their salience.

The starting point for this chapter is the generally maintained assertion that development in a number of areas (population dynamics, technology or alternative institutional availability, immigration of groups, development engineering, which is often backed by the state), have weakened the local institutions’ control over the local domain. It is argued that local institutions are increasingly being dominated by the powerful nation-state and its institutions. Whereas a range of formative and
planned changes through reforms and polices have been observed, the extent to which these formative changes have shaped everyday social practices and relationships is given fleeting attention or is not analysed as deeply as it merits. With respect to the ubiquitous penetration of the state into economic and political interests, it is true that this penetration has often taken place without including the effected local population. The local population has no control over it, and yet it is the local people who give meaning and shape to such changes; although they appear weakened by these impacts, they have also become more resilient in this way.

A number of explanations that range from endogenous factors to exogenous and socio-cultural factors have been posited. For example, those who understood institutions as the ‘by product of strategic conflicts over substantive social outcomes’ tend to grant a considerable role to individual actors in determining the outcomes of the institutions. Specific case studies have been conducted by some scholars explaining institutional changes in terms of bargaining theory, supply of institutional choice that pays due significance to the role of agency (Ensminger 1990: 92). Dealing with institutional analysis, however, Greif argues, requires first looking at a single institution at a time and, second, a range of ‘institutional elements’. Questions related to institutions are, therefore, not basically answered by defining them as such or delimiting them as a means of achieving some goal, nor are the answered by making them more than the individual when the individual can only follow rules. Instead, they can be understood well by looking at various empirical contexts in which they are meant to provide different objectives, caused by multiple ‘motivations’.

My presentation also follows along the same lines as Greif’s argument in that ‘outcomes depend on the details of the historical context that economic actors can potentially matter, and the non-economic aspect of historical context can influence outcomes’ (Greif, 2003: 9).

This section reflects back to the history of the interactions among various actors, and it looks at how local institutions interacted with the new emerging institutions. Two
local institutions, one related to the communal use of resources and the other to conflict settlement, are selected for assessing the transformation. I argue that it was not the social actors’ preferences, nor their institutions, but rather the history of interactions among actors and their institutions in sum that determined the outcomes.

As I have tried to demonstrate, the central state initially entered the Rift Valley apparently as an economic actor. It could be deductively said that since the major interest of the state in the 1950s was large-scale mechanised farming, it was, therefore, motivated by the economic benefit that could be drawn from the region. Such a motivation seemed valid in the beginning. The Karrayu were forgotten, and were not asked to go to school because they were known as pastoralists, who travelled, crossed rivers with their cattle and maintained their own way of dressing and house arrangements. Despite their location within the Shoa region, they were less Christianised and Amharanised than in other places where the Oromo resided. As elsewhere, the agents of the new institutions had a different cultural belief system, which shaped their views as to who the pastoralists were and what they did. In the first chapter, I tried to show the outsiders’ characterisation of the Karrayu – namely, that they were uncivilized jungle people, fond of warfare, who liked living in isolation. As such, there was not much contact between the agents of the new state institutions and the Karrayu, except that the former used force and persuasion.

Since the 1900s, land was transferred to the state by proclamation (Proclamation 70, 1944; 1960, Ethiopian Civil Code and 1995 Constitution), but the question that lingered was why the state created new institutions to bring about change instead of enforcing the existing ones. There are divergent views on this – the most prevailing one claim that the local resource management mechanisms, if they had been kept, would have increased the cost for political agents because they focused on long-term societal advantages. According to some scholarly arguments, political agents were less interested in favouring communal institutional arrangements for similar reasons (Bekele, 2006: 7). Thus, the state had to develop or consume institutions that would reduce its costs, and that is why it envisaged a new form of land use and practices by using its ultimate political authority.
The operations of new institutions, however, do not necessarily bring the intended outcomes or changes, at least not always. The explanation for divergent outcomes as they are intended by the actors – in this context, the state – ought to be sought beyond the institutional structures.

In light of the definition of a state and what it does, it should come as no surprise that the Karrayu found the idea of state ownership of land incomprehensible. The ensemble of their interests is, from their point of view, reflected more by the clan administration and not the state, which, in a sense, possessed a history of distance and alienness. The disposition towards communal land ownership is so strong because it justifies their ownership of land much better than state ownership. According to the Karrayu’s belief, land is transferred to them from their ancestors, their forefathers and fathers who defended it from the Afar and the Argoba.

During the Haile Selassie period, the clan leaders managed to keep some of their authority within their group. The settling of local conflicts among groups still involved the help of clan and Gada leaders through blood compensation. The leaders could still organise inter alia raids (Orea) with neighbouring groups and settle disputes through compensation afterwards. Informants affirm that Gada leaders were still playing a dominant role in the political, social and economic affairs of their respective group. The clan leaders had much more accountability to their people than to state officials; this brought a growing suspicion towards the state, which had never really set foot in the area nor managed to gain trust among the local elders. The state, therefore, had to produce a duplication known as Balabats who could serve as intermediaries between the local people and itself. These intermediaries spoke the local language and easily convinced the local elders because they lived with them and shared the same lifestyle; some were known among the Karrayu for their pleasant personality. The negotiations between Balabats and the local elders were often fuzzy and lacked clarity when communicated to the local people.

As mentioned before, one of the characterisations of this period was that the state was less interested in the people than in the land. Although the state had the capacity to evict the local people forcefully, it was more cost-effective and prudent to first
enter into a process of negotiations through incentives and persuasion. It is evident that a series of negotiations and persuasions took place to this effect between the Sugar Estate management and the Karrayu at the time of its establishment. Settlement through the provision of water points, schools and other social services, as well as monetary compensation was granted through intermediary clan leaders. Some Karrayu were accepted to work within the Sugar Estate as seasonal workers, and those who resided nearby were allowed to use cane tops and molasses that were by produced by the factory. Such processes helped in part to prevent local destruction fuelled by anger. There were incidents when the Karrayu shot and killed people who installed factory materials, but such behaviours were soon brought under control. The Sugar Estate not only claimed the land that had been used by the Karrayu, it also demanded that they distance themselves from the plantation. Their proximity to the Estate was considered dangerous for the security of the sugar Estate and the Park because it was thought that if they were nearby, there animals would likely graze there. In order to avoid this, water points were dug in nearby villages where the Karrayu were relocated to. This was problematic for the Karrayu, for they had obtained a large portion of their water from the Awash River, which was, at this time, channelled and diverted to the plantation.

The Karrayu sometimes lacked the capacity and, at other times, the enthusiasm to resist the statutory laws that endowed the state with ownership rights and enforced such practices. They knew their position in relation to the state, the latter being powerful in terms of technology and military. Another reason for compliancy could be the assumed advantages they were promised if they would accept the changes – schools, water points, and electricity – all of which did not exist in the area. Some of the elders who were involved in the negotiations passed away, but a few were still alive at the time I conducted this fieldwork. They recalled that the Estate had even promised, to no avail, to compensate each Karrayu family with a quintal of sugar.

During this time, the Karrayu could be taken as a single actor due to the insignificance of economic differentiation among them. Of course, as pastoralists, opportunistic farming was common and should not be regarded as a result of the
changes enforced by the state. Despite the statutory law, all the Karrayu are governed by the same local institutions that apply across all clans, and they acknowledge communal rights with regard to the use of land.

During the Derg, the reforms were radical both in the economic sphere and the political sphere. Collectivisation, which was soon followed by nationalisation of private properties, transferred all private properties over to state properties. The change had promised, at least in the beginning, a positive direction for the majority of farmers – they had been told that they would benefit directly from the land – whereas the same radical reform brought little change for the pastoralists, particularly the Karrayu. In fact, the change once again proved to them that restitution of the land was unattainable. This brought the Karrayu the hope they kept needed to bring back their communal ownership to a close, i.e., land ownership remained the same, but state administrative structures began to become more visible. Committees of Pastoralist Representatives were established, made up of local elites and Gada leaders, thus intermingling these two institutions (Ayalew 2001: 176).

What became even more prominent at this time was that the state not only demanded land, as in the past, but also assumed responsibility for the development agent. Districts, Kebeles\textsuperscript{13} and sub-Kebeles first appeared as new structures to ensure the implementation of government laws and policies, thereby intending to bring about socio-economic development. These government-initiated organisations included development and extension agents, health sectors and tax collectors to name a few, and these structures were crucial, particularly in areas where farming was practiced.

Obviously, the Ethiopian experience over the last half of the past century was marked by vigorous interest and work towards what Scott called ‘high modernist programmes,’ with an emphasis on ‘thin, formulaic simplifications or schemata of natural and social processes and hence application of generic knowledge that is devoid of the local experience and knowledge’ (1996: 309). He took settlement programmes as an example of the means by which the state maps and measures

\textsuperscript{13} Kebeles are the lower tier of State administration.
society and social processes. The intent to imitate such institutions, in fact, aims to produce hard-working people who will eventually contribute to the country’s development. Such economic behaviour was thought to be lacking, particularly among the pastoralists. Although these grand reforms had positive goals, they utilised faulty strategies:

These rather extreme instances of massive, State-imposed social engineering illustrate a larger point about formally organized social actions. In each case, the necessarily thin, schematic model of social organization and production animating the planning was inadequate as a set of instructions for creating a successful social order. By themselves, the simplified rules can never generate a functioning community (Scott: 310).

State ownership of land allowed the state to use the land in whichever way it considered most efficient. As efficiency was normatively established, the state had a clear preconceived idea of what would be efficient for the environment and for the people. Out of this vision of development, mechanised farming in the Rift Valley was enforced with a strong vigour. Settlement schemes became a major part of the project that organised displaced Karrayu and the Afar into the areas called Amibara, Asayita, Gewane and Dubti. The Public Settlement Authority was given responsibility from 1977-78, later to be replaced by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (Ayalew 2001: 98). The notion of settlement farms, Bekele argues, was not contradictory to the notion of communal use: ‘the settlement farms were organised in a system of collective farms where all plots were managed together and all registered pastoralists shared the final output’ (2006: 20).

As far as working within the Estate was concerned, the Karrayu remained the least eligible people to work in the Sugar Estate or in the National Park. It was assumed that they lacked skills in the areas of farming, cutting stalks, processing, porting, and fixing machines, as well as office management. They were themselves also more keen on entering into a discussion with the Estate about access to water and pasture within the plantation area. On a few occasions, they requested positions as watchmen, and the Estate often provided them these positions in order to lessen the tension between them and the state. According to my informant working in Estate:
They are not fit to be there either. To put Karrayu as a guard is an ill-thought decision because once you employ them as guards, they permit all the cattle from the village into the plantation. They do this often after 5 pm because all the plantation supervisors go home by then and don’t see what is going on. The cattle damage all the ripe cane stalks, and we see this only the next morning after the damage has been done. (Personal Interview, Metehara Sugar staff, August 1, 2004)

Indisputably, the establishment of large-scale farms and the National Park along the river has limited the mobility of livestock and humans; past patterns of movement across three ecological zones is no longer possible due to the expropriation of the dry season areas by the Sugar Estate and the Awash National Park.

The relationship between the Estate and the Karrayu was obviously asymmetrical; that is, the state, which had already gained its strength elsewhere, gained more power by forcing or persuading the Karrayu to settle through incentives. Some of the Karrayu in the lower Awash had already begun to adapt to the new circumstances by picking up farming as a means of dealing with the changes. They settled voluntarily as part of a non-violent response to the changes. The development of farming is extensively explored by Ayalew Gebre in his ethnographic work among the Karrayu. The groups of Karrayu who adopted farming are mainly those from Basso moiety who maintained a closer relationship with the Ittu. It is, in fact, difficult to claim that the state implicated the change from pastoralism to agriculture. One thing that is true is that farming was made easier for many as a result of the incentives provided by the state.

Many more families from Karrayu groups incrementally began practicing farming, making it a more dominant part of their activities and for a longer period of time. This period saw the classification of Karrayu into two major groups. The first group was comprised of those who reside near the Reverine sites and who picked up farming. This group in particular used farming as a way to take advantage of the irrigation systems and stop other neighbouring groups from expanding. The second
groups are those who were still far from the Awash River and were predominantly pastoralists who maintained communal land use.

Enclosure for the purposes of farming and private grazing were conjointly being practised along farming villages such as Algea, Golala, Gara Dimma, Kanifa, Fate Ledi and Badanota. Intra-group conflicts were mostly related to enclosures and were often settled by the emerging Kebelle structures as well as clan leaders. The clan heads, council of elders and neighbourhood leaders maintained their prior positions; their roles, however, became more dynamic and resilient than before in order to enable them to switch between the state institutions and the local leadership. Some of their primary tasks, such as organising migration and raid campaigns, were no longer necessary simply because the economic activities themselves necessitated less and less organisation and clan leadership. As an increasing amount of groups settled in one area for a longer time, and migration became difficult due to the territoriality of other neighbouring groups, it became less important to consult clan leaders as to where they should move, for how long, and so on.

Nevertheless, in villages where the Karrayu were dominantly pastoralists, such as Haro Kerssa, Dhebiti, Illala, Tututi, Dega Iddu, Kobbo and Banti Mogassa, the clan leaders still played a significant role in conflict resolution through compensation. It is also important to mention that the Derg officially banned the role of balabats as mediators and tax collectors, and the pastoralists themselves could pay the Kebelle representatives directly per head of cattle. In addition, the state also banned compensation as a method of settling conflicts. This was more or less achieved in farming areas, where clan leaders worked with Kebelles to handle conflicts; the absence and inefficiency of state institutions in predominantly pastoralist areas, however, enabled the practice of compensation to continue.

During the EPRDEF period, committees became chronic. During this time, they were loosely and informally assigned under Kebelles. Conservation and Development Committees were established with the responsibility of following up on matters related to the use of resources and the conflicts arising from it. Each committee was
formed under each peasant association, headed by the chairman of the Kebelle. The main task of the committee involved having Kebelle residents arrange enclosures around their homesteads and facilitating farming initiatives. Unlike the primary organization of clan leadership, the new committee sought to involve women, young men and professional agriculturalists. In the political sphere, the clan leaders were similarly integrated into the Peace and Justice Committee. The latter became dominant in the area of conflict resolution, not only in farming areas but also in predominantly pastoralist areas. The state assumed an authority that claimed to supply resources to meet groups’ needs or regulate the conduct of those under its control in matters affecting individuals, as well as in their relations to authority and to each other.

In the predominantly pastoralist areas, the state maintained its interest in two spheres: the Sugar Estate, which the state still plans to expand, and in regard to which it had to enter into countless discussions with the local people; and the issue of conflict resolution between the Karrayu and their neighbours.

With regard to the expansion plan, economists argue that institutional changes are likely to occur if both the state and the Karrayu could benefit from these changes in a similar way; however, due to the fact that power is asymmetric between the two parties, the Karrayu will likely be compelled to accept institutional change with meagre compensation because they recognise the state’s capacity to apply the change anyway. Such an argument, although logically sound, runs the risk of simplifying a very sophisticated matter. To begin with, although the state assumed land ownership at the level of policy, it has, practically speaking, no capacity to govern a significant expanse of land, which means that some land will still be taken care of by clans and through communal use. Secondly, according to the principle of communal use, every Karrayu (descended, born, adopted and intermarried) has access to the whole territory of the Karrayu, and it would be ridiculous to think that the State could enter into negotiations through compensation and limit the number of the Karrayu with whom it is making a deal. To elaborate this further, I present two examples of the challenges of persuasion through compensation:
The Sugar Estate has been planning for a few years now to include 20,000 hectares of land in addition to what it has already expropriated. It has been discussing the plan for quite some time with the local elders. The Estate informed us that it has no intention of taking the land from us, but wanted us to farm the land on our own and sell to the Estate on the basis of the price which is 2 birr/kg. Many of the elders did not make a final decision yet because they are doubtful about how realistic these deals from the Estate actually are (Personal Interview, Metehara Sugar Estate staff, 2005: Metehera).

The elders, due to their diminished legitimacy, are also hesitant to make decisions on behalf of the Karrayu. Their closeness to the local administration and their time spent in town has cost them the authenticity of being an elder. On the other hand, the Estate, working closely with the district administration, which oversees development work in the district, attempts to bring the elders into play as authentic representatives. Whatever is discussed, negotiated and agreed upon by the elders becomes binding, and it is possible to influence their views. Despite the Estate’s persistence to get the deal done, however, the elders have tactically suggested that the Estate should discuss the matters with Karrayu students who are more familiar with what would benefit the group. Accordingly, the district administration, in conjunction with the Estate management, has organised a forum for discussion with the students. The students have raised issues such as who owns the land. From their point of view, ownership is still discussed within the framework of communal use, and such compensation becomes difficult due to a large number of people who claim the land. Simply put, the land belongs to the entire community of Karrayu because they all had access to this part of the land. In addition, persuasion is difficult due to the intangibility of the land to the local people, i.e., land is known not only as an economic asset, such as pasture land, trees, and water points, but is also comprised of graveyards and ritual sites to which groups claim intimate connections. These connections are hard to evaluate in economic terms, and Karrayu elders and students often emphasise this aspect as a strategy to resist state expansion.
For the Sugar Estate it was clear that land is the sole property of the State and as to the question of who uses the land, the Sugar Estate has an easy answer: it gets used by those who live permanently in the place at the time of the negotiations.

Between these two extreme views, ‘negotiations’ continued. In the meantime, 1,600 households from Algea, Kobbo, Benti, Ajo Tarea, Jara nunu, Dega Iddu, Jarr, Mudda and Leddu were requested by letter to leave the area by February 1990. The displacement did not take place, however, until after I finished my fieldwork in 2005. During my short visit to the area in 2007, some new five thousand hectares of land had been prepared for cane plantation in the surroundings of Fate ledi, and I was told by the plantation supervisor that the Karrayu had sown grain on this plot of land to counteract the Estate’s action.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Karrayu’s past experiences with, and relationship to, the Estate left a profound impact on the Karrayu, which still affects the relationship it is attempting to maintain today. This past history has made negotiations with the local people very difficult. For the sake of staging the negotiations, meetings are held with elders mainly to inform them and compel them to convince the local people. The elders, however, know that a consensus will not be reached unless the Estate proves that the Karrayu will benefit from the expansion, which again is difficult to prove. As the number of actors who claim to have a stake in the matter are also increasing, consensus is becoming even more difficult to reach. There are at least four actors to consider – the policymakers who foresaw change through the application of a change in ownership; the agents/experts of the State who applied these planned changes on the ground; the local elders who negotiated in regard to what would be beneficial for the Karrayu; and the regular Karrayu, who needed to function under these new changes. The practicality of the institutional change is very much dependent on the interface between all these actors, all of whom have different motivations and strategies.

The State agents are generally, as described in the first chapter, settlers from outside the area. These individuals are motivated to execute State plans due to the economic
benefits they will gain in terms of jobs. A few also entertain a moral response to changing the society as a whole and its work ethic. As a result, the district administration plays a strategic role in contributing to organising the elders, influencing their decisions in meetings, and protecting the Estate from angry Karrayu who might try to send the cane plantation up in flames.

Similarly, the Sugar Estate, as a promising enterprise for the State and those who work for it, has attracted many individuals due to the benefits it has presented, such as housing and medical care, many of which cannot be obtained anywhere else.

A few elders have internalised the belief that the land belongs to the state and that the state can make use of the land in any way it wishes. The elders have essentially been co-opted by the state to inform and convince their groups so that the relationship between the state and the people will run more smoothly. Their position as ‘elders,’ however, has not transcended their role of intercessor in favour of intended institutional changes by the state. One of my informants told that they spend most of their time in towns, discussing matters with district officials and NGO staffs. They have forgotten to live the Karrayu way and nobody listens to them. Their capacity to convince people has been reduced to that of ordinary men. They spend less and less time in the villages or migratory area and, therefore, know little about the everyday life of the Karrayu. They are less powerful to defend the Karrayu at meetings with the district officials. By agreeing to the Estate proposal, they like to give an impression that local people have also agreed to the decisions. The Estate only wants them only to provide their signatures, nothing else. They did not know that they were pawns (Personal Interview, June 14, Fentalle, 2004).

At the practical level, the ordinary Karrayu has to go through a series of negotiations on a daily basis with respective securities and officials in the cane plantation. Some Karrayu pastoralists still graze small ruminants within the plantation area, but only in selected areas so that they do not destroy the cane plants. A few pastoralists are reckless in not ushering ruminants away from the cane plantation. These pastoralists
are then prohibited from grazing there again. A number of pastoralists who also reside nearby the Sugar Estate are allowed to take cane tops for their cattle.

Given all this, tension looms around the Estate. After the Estate recently announced its plan to expand the plantation area by 20,000 hectares, depending on its management capacity, there has been growing apprehension that this would lead to increased conflict and resistance. The area of the Estate has become more protected from outsiders than the National Park. Estate management rarely allows photographing within the plantation and indirectly discourages interviews about interactions between the Estate and the local people. One can easily become discouraged from going inside the Estate as a researcher due to the series of procedures involved and the limitations on access to information and sightseeing within the Estate. The plot of land that is now in the pilot stages for expansion covers 2,000-3,000 hectares. The intention is to increase it by 20,000 hectares in the near future, and the elders expect ferocious reactions to this planned expansion.

From the above description, one can see that the change in institutional arrangements with regard to the use of land has not, by its mere presence, produced local cooperation. The historical past, in relation to the notion of a State and the local meaning of ownership, cannot easily be overcome by providing readymade institutions. In the meantime, however, new institutional arrangements have contributed to reconfiguring social relationships and the emergence of new strategies.

3.2.1 Marginalization of Gada

Gada, as it has been narrated in both the literature and oral tradition, reports a high degree of stability in the past and places less focus on the changes, clashes and conflicts that were presumably present in the society. As an elitist description has it, there was an ‘emphasis on sovereignty’. In other words, initially, there were Oromo indigenous people; they were quite a unified community, largely at one with nature, who possessed leaders with identifiable responsibilities and status. They were true representatives of the people and everyone in the group complied with their final decisions. Even members from neighbouring groups who were often at war with
them assimilated through ritualistic adoption and intermarriage and accepted the rules set by the Oromo. This story continued until empire building came into the picture, mainly during Minilik II.

The new Ethiopian ruling class typified by emperor Minilik . . . found it necessary and profitable to denigrate the Oromo people, their culture, and their history in all ways great and small. This ruling class especially perceived the danger of the larger Oromo population to its empire. Consequently, the ruling class systematically depicted the Oromo as people without history, and belittled their way of life, and their religious political institutions. (Hassen 1990: 2)

An immense amount of material has been produced on the Oromo and their local institutions, and a promising advance has been made with regard to documenting the history and ethnography of the largest group in Ethiopia. Although this is a tremendous step forward in scholarly work in the area of Ethiopian history, the general resistance to deal with diversity within the group has also somehow undermined the worth that could have been gained. As a result, the Karrayu, while maintaining a distinct historical relationship with the State as well as with their neighbouring groups, ‘passed’ as Oromo, as most groups in the highlands passed as Amhara. Most writers (Bulcha, 1994; Jaleta, 1998; Megersa, 1996; Hassen, 1996) centre their work around dichotomies, such as Ethiopian history against Oromo History, north against the south. As a result, they are more concerned with constructing history by deconstructing that which currently exists.

We know that in the past the Karrayu did not constitute a closed unit. Their history is full of mutual exclusions as well as alliances. They had many complex social relations and networks, stretching far beyond their actual territories. What could be reduced based on local and historical accounts is that they were extremely flexible local groups with complex allegiances, in which the process of group formation never came to stop. Gada as an identity marker consolidates solidarity among Oromo groups by emphasising similarities rather than differences among the groups.

Gada as an identity marker functions through the values perpetuated by narration, thereby keeping the group where they were and paying little attention to changes in
terms of the everyday practice. This, however, in no way implies that the Karrayu are less conscious of these changes. It only means that through narration of the past, they keep their history and identity intact.

The decline of the role of Gada is felt and lamented by the elderly people. They refer to changes in Gada by making reference to the change in the counting of seasons. The generation that exists thirty years and onwards knows little about Gada; in fact, the normal procession is often held. Elders go down to the rivers, Climb Mountains to do transitions from one Gogissa to another.

The Qalluu accompany them and still pray to God to bring us rain, but can we say Gada still exists? Our fathers used to reckon their children’s age using Gada cycles. We say that my child was born at the time of this Dori. It is only now that we have started using different names for reckoning time. We also use seasons instead of months. We call them Birra, Dadamota, Korchabis, fermata, Amajjo, Abrassadubba, Kamu, Buffe, wattabajja, Adolessa and hagayu. The knowledge of seasons is important even in our prayers; we say ‘wakkato Biltu Birra irra Yaggin, Obbassi’. Now even the Oromo elders themselves are mixing up names and started to use Fulababa, Ankolessa, and sadasa. These are new names that came in this government. We never had them before.

In the older times, the Oromo elders knew events of the past by heart. They could tell you events that occurred a long time ago using Gada cycles. Nowadays, not many of them can do this. You can find only a few elderly men who can tell events of the past. Such men do not often come to town and are not involved in politics of the country. The problem is they are not esteemed by anyone. If a few students come and ask them about Gada, they start to shriek from nostalgia. You see, in the Gada system, individuals who cut trees were not afraid of people, but were afraid of the norms. Now people can easily cut trees and make charcoal for sale. They fear no one (Personal Interview,M, July5, Bulga, 2003: Dehibiti).

Although most of my informants had a clear perception of the changes that had come about, they lacked accuracy when referring to specific dates of changes. They also seem to care less about precision than the content of the changes. Some of the factors they raise can be situated within a timeframe because of available written data that matches up with their narration, as in the example of when exactly men started
cutting trees without permission or when elderly men started using different names for seasons. Changes are, however, often discussed in a much generalized way. Part of the reason could be the fact that changes are basically incremental. Thus, it would be difficult to argue that due to such and such a policy or external intervention, people started to behave at this particular time in such and such a manner. For example, while Islam is sometimes mentioned as one factor contributing to the decline of Gada practices among the Karrayu, the conversion from Gada to Islam cannot be specifically located in time because, according to the Karrayu, conversion to Islam is associated with intermarriage and assimilation of the Ittu and the Somali groups over a range of time. In addition, the co-joint practice of Islam along with Gada rituals further blurs the possibility of predicting changes in terms of a particular time. The link between the Gada decline and conversion to Islam not only lacks a clear time reference, but also verification as to the correlation. The link is established mainly on the basis of the fact that Muslim Arsi, Ittu and Somali migrants were intermarried to the Karrayu and, as a result, the process of Islamisation began. Such a link is equally shared by local people:

The Arsi ceased to practise Gada a long time ago, and the Ittu and some Karrayu have also now begun to tell us that they would not worship a man named Aba Boku who is given a stick from a tree and made God. But we believe that Gada is given from Waqq and Qallus are created by Waqq. There are still a few people of course who follow Islam and still participate in the rituals of Gada. But these are few and are rarely considered serious Muslims. If you ask a child who his relations are, he will count up to twelve lines through his lineage. In all those lines, you only find the name Gada, not Sharia (Group Interview, B, 2004, July 5, Dhebiti).

The other possible factor contributing to the reactivation of the Gada institution as an identity marker is the recent development in political decentralization that has supported the regional government’s right to develop its own language, culture and institutions (Article 39, 1994, Ethiopian Constitution).
Following such a provision in the Constitution, regional governments were burdened with the task of identifying cultural elements and local institutions within their constituents. Obviously, many local people were displaying what can be called their ‘cultural traits’ through a range of costumes, songs, and belief systems that were actually artefacts assumed to illustrate the beauty and unique characteristics of pluralism.

On the other hand, the development in this regard raised local expectations with regard to the reactivation of their cultural values:

We want to request Chaffee Oromia to assign a budget for the strengthening, revival and reconstruction of our Gada institution. We think Chaffee Oromia likes our Gada and, if so, it should have to support us and help the strengthening of Gada. We like our Gada very much. We have an interest in Gada being administered side by side with the formal government administration. We have an interest to select and include certain important elements from the Gada institution and discard a few others. Hence, we need our representatives to administer us via Gada rules and regulations by getting positions in the government organs (Group Interview, Dhebiti, and July 6, 2004).

### 3.2 Arranged Marriage: A Form of Segregation for Women

Some families are now using marriage merely as a way to gain economic benefits. Most families did not used to take riches as a major criterion for marriage. Establishing an alliance through marriage was given priority. Nowadays, parents give (marry) daughters to rich men even though they had promised her to someone else. (group Interview, Dhebiti, Aneni, 2004)

This social norm, according to some scholars who analyse their case studies in terms of bargaining power, will slowly shift as other groups with less bargaining power, such as women, improve their status. Of course, what changes the status of women from the lowest position of bargaining to a better one differs from situation to situation. Such an analysis places an emphasis on individual actors that often tend to maximize their benefits and, as such, produces social norms that enable them to gain these benefits. We also see that marriage in this form not only fulfilled the individuals’ goal, but also the collective goal.
We do not own idirs like you have in other areas; we seek support from the most closely related people and these are our affine. Through marriage, we are respected and gain closeness among ourselves and between clans. Sickness, death, funerals, and condolences are all handled by people related by marriage. Failure to appear at such occasions, for example, leads to extreme punishment, including flogging by clan leaders. They can also take your cattle and slaughter it in order to prevent others from doing similar things. In the process you become poor and learn that you cannot live without satisfying expectations entailed by marriage. (Personal Interview, Naga, December 12, 2005, Gelcha).

Information gathered through qualitative means reveals that the amount of bride wealth has generally declined due to the decrease in the average holding of livestock per family and the growing attempt of the State to control cattle raids through various actors. It is very difficult to reach a conclusion, however, with regard to such a change, simply because quantitative data is lacking to substantiate it. In places where the pastoral production system constitutes the major means of livelihood, women are burdened with a number of tasks to be performed by them and their children. Often, the household is split into two or three parts, each functioning separately, but with related activities. Even children between the ages of five and twelve are expected to be involved in the management of stock with their mothers in permanent settlements as well as nearby villages where the household has formed agreements to graze its animals (Ayalew 2001: 148). Women are considered an important source of labour for polygynous families, as the separated households are more labour-intensive and often split across various locations.

In areas around the national park and the commercial farms, where men are engaged in farming activities as well as wage labour that are far from their homes, the wives increasingly take over responsibilities related to stock management along with their older sons. Their workload has thus increased due to the absence of their husbands, who were responsible for the major task of livestock management. Despite the workload, though, these arrangements provide opportunities for most women to have greater decision-making power over the distribution of resources within the household. In addition, most women have now engaged in a number of credit and saving associations among themselves. Such independence is likely to bring about changes in their power to negotiate over arranged marriages. Widows now prefer to
maintain their independence by rejecting the custom of being inherited by the brother of their deceased husband. The number of female-headed households is on the increase, particularly near commercial farming areas.

The other potential factor contributing to the change in the form of marriage is the growing destitution of Karrayu families in terms of livestock ownership. The majority of groups engaged in farming and wage labour as a primary activity consider themselves, and are considered by their pastoralist neighbours, as the poorer Karrayu brothers. For such groups, it is becoming difficult to maintain marriage through bride wealth payment. Some directions are already underway; for example, families are increasingly sending their children to school in the hopes that that they will be able to improve their future by preparing to obtain jobs not only outside the pastoral production system, but also outside the localities.

*Executing Polices and Plans*

The rejection of arranged marriage, particularly to elderly men, is becoming common place among schoolgirls. Girls who reject arranged marriage are likely to consider running away and eloping as their main options. Love for a young man is a possibility as well as a pretext for a girl to reject marriage to an elderly man. In such situations, elopement is organised by the couples, but it is unlikely that the couples will reside in the same neighbourhood as the young man’s natal family.

Even the men are changing. According to our custom, even if a woman loved a man and insisted that the man marry her, the man would not accept her, especially if he knows that she is given to another man. He respects the rules that he cannot marry her if another man is paying Gabra. He tells her not to put obstacles in his way to live with the others. This has been changing now, and many men elope with girls, and parents are forced to return cattle to the man they received (personal Interview, Dhebiti, Bulcha, July 9, 2004).

Most girls who reject arranged marriage, however, are students in primary and junior schools and are keen to further their formal education. These girls either go to the
district administration to seek shelter or to Gudina Tumsa Foundation, which they believe can convince their parents to forgo the marriage.

Divorce is another option that is becoming more prevalent. Surveys have not yet been conducted with regard to the divorce rate in this particular area, so I cannot claim that it has increased. What can be stated at this point though is that, on rare occasion, women who feel mistreated and no longer want to stay in their marriage run away to areas outside the Karrayu territory. Such a woman can, for example, go to the Afar and marry there (which is very common). Nowadays, my informants argue, it is possible for a woman to divorce her husband and marry another who lives in the next neighbourhood:

If a Karrayu woman divorced her husband, no one married her again on the Karrayu land. She had to leave the Karrayu territory and marry a man from the Adal or Arsi, or she had to travel long enough past Wolenchite to find a husband. It is inviolable that she would marry among us again. Amazingly this is now changing. There are now a few women who have divorced Karrayu men and have remarried another Karrayu man in our neighbourhood. (Group interview, D, 2003: Tototi)

Notably, there are qualitative changes that are visible in the area of social norms linked to marriage. Despite the lack of statistics to better support my argument of change, I have tried to evaluate the pervasiveness of these changes in terms of qualitative data. What is important is to identify the forces behind these changes. The following description constitutes the core of my discussion.

A girl around the age of 16 came to the Fentalle district administration, Department of Women’s Affairs, to present her complaint that her father had forced her to marry. She further pleaded that she would like to continue her studies at school and needed protection from the office to stop her parents from forcing her to marry. The officer said that the girl should not return to her parents before convincing her father to cancel the marriage. However, the office did not have a sufficient budget to accommodate the girl till her father could appear for consultation, which could take
up to four days. She called the EWLA office to request four days of accommodation, and the only money she managed to get was to buy food (bread and tea). Another challenge was lodging. The officer called the police station to allow the girl to stay in their custody since it was thought that she would be safe there. The police officer declined, arguing that it was not in their mandate to keep a girl in the police station for four days without being suspected of a crime. After a lot of persuasion and discussion, the police officer agreed to offer help.

The present Ethiopian government has signed and ratified a series of important regional and international instruments that promote and protect the rights of women. Among these instruments are the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was established in September 1981, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, established in December 2002, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), established in September 1990.

Parallel to other social policies, Women’s National Policy was formulated and adopted in 1993 to address gender inequality. In order to implement this policy, the Women’s Affairs Office was restored as a Ministry in October 2005 with the duties and responsibilities of ensuring participation and empowerment of women in political, economic, social and cultural matters. The Ministry is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of CRC on the basis of the convention.

The National Plan of Action for Gender (2000-2010) is another instrument that tries to address gender-based violence and harmful practices. Early marriage is categorised as a gender-based violence and, in the new criminal code, it is a punishable act (Article 648).

It is understandable that the potency and cogency of such instruments change as they travel and infiltrate through various layers of administration and institutional settings.
As part of the government institutions at the lower level, the officers at the Women’s Affairs Office are expected to manoeuvre between existing overarching concepts and local practices. In their daily work, they contact women and girls in villages and introduce women’s rights in a variety of ways. They also inform them about the harmfulness of early marriages by explaining how it jeopardizes their advancement in terms of rights. The office also guarantees legal protection against forced marriage by coordinating with relevant institutions, such as the police. For that reason, many girls run away from their parents when they learn of marriage arrangements.

The task of such officers is very taxing. With the major challenge being financial constraints, they have to weigh the options of every case on the basis of the practical outcome since some solutions involves the breaking of formal rules.

As I described earlier, the Women’s Affairs Office at the level of Fentalle district is one of the most visible department working on women’s and children’s rights other than NGOs. When a girl reports that she is being forced into arranged marriage, the office informs the police about the situation, and the police office has to prepare a summons to ask the father to appear at police station or at the Women’s Affairs Office. During this time, the girl needs a place to stay in town where she can be protected from her families that often come and try to take her by force. The Women’s Affairs Office, due to lack of finances, often asks the Ethiopian Women’s Lawyers Association to provide accommodation for these girls. Having a practical problem at hand, the girls prefer to stay at the police station for protection from their families however; they are not allowed to stay in police stations.

Once summoned, the fathers appear before the administration office for a session. According to the Police officer, most parents were unaware or pretend not to know that it is illegal to force their daughters to marry without the their daughter’s consent. In the end, many of them are convinced that their daughters should continue their studies. Nevertheless, among those accused of forcing their daughters to marry, most have already accepted the bride wealth and sworn before elders to give their daughter as a wife. The consent to a marriage proposal is accompanied by a number of
swearing oaths and blessings that are hard to rescind without making a bad impression. To cancel a marriage, therefore, means both returning the bride wealth and abandoning the potential alliances that were to be established. This costs the family dearly, and most parents appear in the office just to give the impression of agreeing and then get their daughter back home so that they can still try to force her to marry.

They [the government officials] tell us that girls should marry the men they love, and they tell us they should choose, themselves, whom to marry. We are not sure if what the government tells us is good or bad, but we have a problem then. Once parents have consented to their daughter’s marriage with someone and have even received bride wealth, their daughter says she loves someone else and refused to marry. She says it is her right not to marry. This is what they did to us! (Group Interview, F, Gelcha, September 17, 2003)

’Selling of a Girl’ (Dubarra Gurguruu)

Another template that has provided girls with more bargaining power is the one used by NGOs: ‘Selling of a girl’. This banal phrase is used particularly in villages that are mainly engaged in the pastoral mode of production and where bride wealth is understood as a means to economic gain. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the role of GTF in the provision of schooling and its focus on girls’ education was crucial in increasing the interest in formal education among young girls, particularly in villages such as Dhebiti Haro Kersa.

No wonder the Karrayu as a group show great interest in formal education for their children; at the household level, however, they are confronted with a series of challenges. For one, they have to decide which of their children to send to school. Obviously, sending all of their children to school would not be rational because it would create shortage of labour force in the household. The demand for labour also depends on many factors. Some families require more child labour during the wet season because they send their children to distant areas when the water points in the wet season are not good for all ruminants, particularly for the sheep, if they use it every time (Ayelew 2001: 165).
As I observed during my fieldwork, however, parents are more likely to send younger boys to school than older boys, who they think are already too old to begin school. Besides, as the boys reach the ages of eighteen and nineteen, they are ready to marry and take responsibility for stock management; thus, educating these boys is considered less profitable in the short term and less promising. So, younger boys and girls go to school more often. Girls’ education is thought to be conditional and temporary. Girls can go to school until their marriage is arranged. At that point, their parents make them stay around the house, taking lessons from their mothers on how to assume responsibility as a wife. The pastoral production requires such a division of labour, and it is important that the girls know how to deal with the animals, with the household affairs, and with their husbands. Such logic particularly carries great weight for them when they consider short-term gains. In addition, in this particular environment where formal education is just starting to yield competent students, the promise that it is likely to offer good results in a short time is minimal. Along this same line, Iverson argued, ‘Where education precedes employment and in the absence of wage labour opportunities, education by itself does not necessarily lead to economic benefits; by contrast where women household labour is highly valued (as in much of sub-Saharan Africa) and where access to non-household employment is scarce, early marriage to wealthy men produces immediate economic benefits for the natal family of the bride.” (1992:109).

For the last four years, girls are attending school. GTF and a few other people have contributed a lot towards this change. People working in GTF come to our village with their cars and tell us to send our daughters to school. In our opinion, it would be good if girls were educated at home. If they attend school, we fear that they also learn bad behaviour (Group Interview, Bulga, September 17, 2003: Dhebiti).

Formal education for girls who have reached the age of marriage is considered a threat for various reasons. Parents argue that many village girls think going to school means knowing their rights, and knowing rights means deciding things on their own and not having decisions made for them by their families.
When a girl’s marriage is arranged, she says plainly, ‘You cannot sell me’. Parents refrain from applying physical punishment because otherwise the girls run away to the district administration and accuse their parents of violating their rights. As mentioned above, once a girl runs away and files a charge against them, the administration summons the parents (father) to appear in the district administration. Such parents are the cause for amusement in the neighbourhood, and are considered to be losers.

GTF, as transmitter of global concepts, however, stresses that all children have the right to education. A special emphasis is also given to girls whom the organisation regarded as benefiting less from formal education. To discourage absenteeism, GTF provided food in school for students coming from long distances. It is apparent that many girls can now attend school, but the problem, according to my informants, is that girls who have transferred to the junior school are now using school as a pretext to spend more time in towns.

We do not like our daughters to spend more time in Fentalle town. What do they do there? They learn bad things from town women. Most girls have now started to listen to music and they even dance with songs on the radio just like the ladies in Fentalle bars. We do not like this, and this is not a good change. Young Karrayu boys also now buy tape recorders and carry them on their trip to graze cattle. We are aware that girls from the village accompany these boys because they say we go to the same school and we are studying together. But we know what they do there! Truly speaking, we are not happy about this. Our girls who are attending school now in Dhebiti and Fentalle have changed so much, they are like boys. They come to the village, not to help us, but to see if they can get milk (PC, 2004: Bulga: Dhebiti).

Another argument goes like this:

We want our daughters to marry a man and have children. This is more important for us than anything else. We also know that when our daughter finishes her school, no one will marry her in the village. She will be different. Her option is to go far in another town and find a husband – an educated man. But we also like to see her settling here, having married a man and bearing children who will be our grandchildren. We see so many girls in Fentalle who went once to school. After they finished their school, they are
without husbands and children (Group Interview, D, August 10, 2005, Boditi).

People in the villages are sensitive. In small villages, such as Harao Karsa, there are a couple of cases that have very fundamental implications worthy of generalisation. My informants often mention these two cases:

X and her sister Y were attending Dhebiti Primary School. Their parents decided to marry Y because of her age, and Y refused to accept the marriage. The NGO had to intervene, and it was difficult to convince the parents to cancel the marriage, so Y, in order to escape the marriage, left for Addis. Her travel and stay in Addis was sponsored by people working in the NGO. In contrast, her sister continued her studies without disturbance and was able to join a high school. She very much hoped that she would get a score that was high enough to enable her to attend a university. Unfortunately, she was not able to get the required results. Again, the NGO staff decided to take her to Addis, where she could pursue her education in a private college (Group interview, N, August 18, 2005, Fentalle).

Despite all of the frustrations, however, parents are giving way to the changes, and more and more children are being sent to school. Sometimes, the change is also coercive for the parents whose decision is not necessarily be followed. If their daughter does not agree to the marriage, they cannot force her because she can easily run away and charge them with violation of women’s rights (or children’s rights). In 2005 five girls opened file against their fathers, and as a result, their prearranged marriages had to be cancelled.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS: Old and New Perceptions of Conflicts that have surfaced during field work with the Afar

What makes the Rift Valley a violence-prone area? Is it different from other areas in the country? What form do violent conflicts take? Such questions are central to this chapter. It is imperative to state that violence between the Karrayu and neighbouring groups never excluded cooperation. For this reason, some scholars place greater emphasis on the general cooperation and stability that underlie violence than on specific violent events. In some contexts, however, violence could be a more regularized and normal activity than peace. There are also incidences where violence has become protracted that resuming balance may no longer be possible among groups engaged in violence.

In this case study, despite the dual nature of a social relationship that it is both cooperative and violent, there is an overriding, generally held belief and practice of violence. I found that those belief systems sustained boundaries of otherness and, thus, perpetuated enmity.

Ever since Haile Selassie’s time, competition over water points and rangelands between the Karrayu and the Afar groups has increased as a result of the constant expansion of state owned commercial farms in both Afar- and Karrayu-claimed territories. Melka Sedi and Melka Worer concession farms and Awra Melka mechanised state farms in the Afar region displaced the Debine Afar groups that subsequently put pressure on other segments of the Afar group, namely Weima, who in return pushed further into Karrayu territories. It is said, however, that although the Debine Afar could have pushed further into the eastern part of the Somali region where they could make use of the suitable and extensive rangelands in Alligedi Plain, they pushed further into south-eastern Karrayu-claimed territories due to the presence of Issa Somali, whom they considered to be more powerful. Such competition was often accompanied by violence through which access to the pasture and water
became effective. The dry season in particular brings about intensive pressure from the two groups on areas such as those surrounding the banks of the Kesem River – Sifie, Silkie, Tafie and the Awash National Park (Beleadi, Aroretti and Dinikuku Pond) (Ayalew 2001).

Increased pressure on water and pasture resources and intensified stress were the most dominant and official explanation for the cause of violence between the Afar and the Karrayu. Nevertheless, these reasons only partly explain violence as one among many strategies to gain access to such exhausted resources. As mentioned in the last chapter, violence is also perpetuated through positive and negative sanctions (through institutions). During observation in the field, I learnt that narratives about violence were more prominent between the Afar and the Karrayu than between any other groups in the area. The Karrayu strongly believe that the Afar are incapable of changing their negative attitude towards them; and that they will remain their enemies forever. I will explain the concept of otherness in terms of enemies more extensively in my discussion of cattle raiding in Chapter Five.

Distinguishing between new and old conflicts is a discomforting task as it tends to freeze the histories and experiences that underlie and contribute to new forms of relations. On the other hand, there are new perceptions of forces, problems and strategies that should be grasped in a comprehensive way. Every conflict event is new and different from those that existed before, but the contents of conflicts often make them appear similar. The issues of water points and pasture lands were the most common ones in which conflicts between the Afar and the Karrayu were framed. Access to such resources still contributed a great deal to the violence that arose between the two groups, and yet the contexts for these conflicts varied from time to time. During my field work, the same violence that began in migration areas spread to towns and included more actors and places than it was thought before.

In 2003, when I first reached Fentalle town, Karrayu men could not travel to and through Awash town or sell animals at Sabure market without disguising themselves in order not to be identified and killed by the Afar men. I observed that young men
were wearing trousers instead of traditional Karrayu men’s robes to pretend that they were city men on their way to Afar region. They also avoided conversation as much as possible once they entered the Afar region to avoid being identified by their use of the Oromiffa language. On the other hand, the Afar were doing the same when they came to Fentalle town or marketed at Haro Adi. In particular, the barring of a group from trading at their own market was considered by local people as an important sign of exacerbated conflict. In 2003, along with other Ph.D. students and researchers in the region I met some Karrayu elder representatives at a workshop organised by the district administration. During this occasion, we learnt that conflict with the Afar at the time was the most pressing issue than other conflicts with other neighbouring groups.

In contrast to previous studies, which discerned that the Afar still form alliances with the Karrayu through marriage, Karrayu informants at Dhebiti stated that they would not marry Afar women if Afar women did not abandon their clan and run away to Karrayu territory. The same informants doubted the importance of forming alliances through marriage with the Afar today as they stated that such an alliance would not prevent the Afar from raiding Karrayu cattle or killing the Karrayu who are affiliated with them. There are still many Afar people who have been adopted by the Karrayu within the Karrayu clans, and these individuals are considered one of the Karrayu. However, the Karrayu informed that in 2003, an adopted Karrayu man was killed within the Afar territory, which was against adoption rules that had worked for a very long time between the two groups.

In recent years, non-compliance to inter group rules has become common. Even women who were assumed to be neutral and free from harm (because of their gender roles in peace making) are now scared to cross the two areas unless the trip is of great importance. There were also varying opinions with regard to blood compensation procedures that had once existed between the two groups. Some of my informants even doubted whether blood compensation ever existed between the Afar and Karrayu since they had never witnessed one. Men of the older generation, though, argued that during the Haile Selassie period in particular, blood
compensation formed major aspect of conflict resolution between the Afar and the Karrayu. During my fieldwork, however, I did not witness any blood compensation ceremonies despite inter groups killings. In the old times, people were more or less homogeneous and agreed on communal decisions; these groups nowadays are no longer cohesive group. For example, the Dulecha Karrayu might fight with the Afar near the Kesem river where as the Basso Karrayu marry the Afar around Summa, near the National Park.

Most of the participants in my study, as well as those in other similar studies, recognised no major eruption of violence between 1991 and 2002 between the two groups. This supposed stability, however, did not exclude cattle raiding, which occurred from time to time during this period within the framework of the pastoral domain. The stability was measured in terms of the opportunity to exchange agricultural produce in the same market, form alliances through marriages and establish jalla (bond-relationships). On the other hand, since 1994, the establishment of the new regional administrative units had begun to continuously relocate and reconfigure villages between Afar and Oromiya administrative units, and produced new forms of antagonism among residents of such bordering villages. Around the same time, the Peace and Negotiation Committee of the clan elders was established, comprising a district chairman, a police commander and a representative of the militia as permanent members of the committee. Although the committee bestowed upon itself extensive tasks, its day-to-day activity was mainly linked to the retrieval of raided cattle by jointly working with both Regional States. The retrieval of raided cattle through the committee, however, only added a third party that swung the balance of power from one side to another and thus escalated the conflict.

In 2002 it was observed that the violence that had been thought to be a purely pastoralist affair was shifting its locus from migration areas (Beke Deda) to towns, and targeting district administration officials in particular.

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14 Jalla is an alliance formed either out of a marriage relationship with clans that are outside the Karrayu groups, for example, with the Afar, Mecha Tulema, and Ittu.
In April 2005, an Afar leader was killed while travelling in a car that was owned by the Sabure/Awara Melka Agricultural Enterprise. As was the practice, and based on the information received, the Awash district administration informed the Fentalle district administration about the incidence. Wario Ararssa, an official in Fentalle district administration, was sent to the place in the Afar region to investigate the matter. While Wario was making his way to the place, he was himself killed on his way. Many of my informants said the Afar killed Wario because he was from the Ittu group who they believed killed the Afar elder. (Personal interview, F, July 2, 2005, Fentalle)

The killing of the Afar community elder and Fentalle district administration official concerned both district administrations that often thought of violence as an affair purely between pastoralist groups. Both district administrations in the two regions had generally treated violence as an act linked mainly to cattle raids.

Nevertheless, my informants in Dhebiti and Haro Kerssa often recognised the growing involvement of district administrations in violence. They strongly stressed that the Afar were becoming more powerful than them because, they claimed, officials in the Afar district administration strongly supported their own clans and hesitated to give away information with regard to violence and the identity of perpetrators. Similarly, they criticised their District administration based in Fentalle for not collaborating with them at the time of violent conflict against their neighbours. The violence that occurred in November of that same year is often mentioned when they seek to validate the Afar district administration’s support of Afar perpetrators in the 2002 violence where eleven Karrayu men lost their lives. The following narration is given by men residing in Dinkuku village:

Early in November 2002, Karrayu and Ittu young men planned to raid the Afar’s cattle. This plan was a response to a previous raid by the Afar. The Karrayu were unsuccessful in their mission and engaged in very fierce violent encounter with the Afar. As a result, eleven Karrayu were killed. If you ask me who supported the Afar? These are district militia coming from Awash. When we fought the Afar, the Awash administration sent a car to deliver water and food for them. Those who were fighting against us received water. We
saw packets of biscuits in the car that was delivered for the Afar. We know that biscuits come from town. We do not have biscuits in the migration areas where we fought. Our men who talked about Awash militia involvement in the violence were put in jail for telling the truth. They were accused of misrepresenting what happened by saying the Awash militia helped the Afar. These people were not even given a chance to bury their relatives before they were sent to jail. We were to fight with the militia, not with the militia. (Personal Interview, M, July 5, 2005: Dinkuku).

The provision of food and water during clashes that take a longer time is considered an important aspect of expressing alliance in conflict. Often women from the respective groups are responsible for the provision of water and food. If a third party gets involved in the provision of food and water, it automatically implicates alliance with the group it provides support to. There is no evidence for this particular incidence, however, except for the victims’ perceptions with regard to the Awash administration support at the time of this skirmish.

The violence between the two groups mentioned above was considered to be one of the fiercest since 1991. The regional governments had to deploy their police force near bordering areas between the two groups in places such as Mogassa, Gubaba, Banti, Haro Qersa, Haroressa, Halemo, Hartu, Tiro, Buren, and the Dinkuku pond in order to scale down the conflict and restore stability. These areas are mainly grazing areas where herdsmen from the two groups often confront each other. The killing of men who are perceived to be neutral, residing in town and working on conflict resolution has alarmed most of officials working in the administration. Perhaps due to this reason, the peace and justice committee that had been functional since the 1990s ceased to function for some time that year because of fear of killings.

Officials working in the district administration are also conscious about the escalation in violence. Since 2003 a department named Neighbouring Regions Affairs was established at the district level. This particular department was planned to work closely with the elderly representatives from villages on conflicts and conflict resolutions, organise peace conferences, and keep records on cases of killings. The department also organises joint peace conferences, gathers representatives and committee members of the peace from both districts, depending
on the availability of funds for the organisation as well as the urgency of new violent events. The Karrayu are increasingly seeking support from the district administration to defend themselves from potential attacks they think might be planned by groups in Afar.

On August 16, 2005, a few Karrayu elders from Benti Kebelle came to Fentalle district to collect food aid. They informed the district administration that many people from their area are stuck on the way because they suspected some Afar men were organised for an attack. The Karrayu elders pleaded to Fentalle administration to send militia men to the area. The chairman of the administration called and informed the Awash district administrator to countercheck the information received. In the meantime, some militia men were sent to the stated area to prevent unnecessary violence. At the time this was happening, I was talking to one of the militia men, among the few who were available at the time. He said he had to leave because he had just received an order to go to the site. It was obvious that the militia men were tired of such incessant but ad hoc violent events. He had gather his own weapon and protect himself from being killed because that was the possibility. After the killing of their colleague, Wario, violence was no longer an issue of pastoralists but it is the concern of the administration as well. After a few hours, the militia men returned back from Benti and reported that the Karrayu report was based on only footsteps observed on their way which they thought were of the Afar. (Personal communication, C, August 16, 2005, Metehara)

Since the 2002 conflicts, agreement has been reached by the two regions to take care of violence as crimes at the place where they occur. Accordingly, the Karrayu who were found committing crimes such as cattle raiding and killing in Afar were to be sent to Assayita in Afar State where their case was presented before the court. The Afar who committed crimes in the Oromiya region were dealt with in Oromiya State in Ziway town. This legal arrangement did not last long before it failed, according to the Fentalle administration; it failed due to weak regional collaboration and the Afar regional government’s lack of capacity to trace criminals. In addition, the Afar State at the time had not yet established a parallel department like the office for the
Neighbouring Regions affairs, which was already in place in the Oromiya region.
The Karrayu bear a grudge about the Karrayu criminals that were sentenced by the
Afar State and put in jail in the Afar region with out a similar decision on the part of
their own region.

A Karrayu/Ittu who is found raiding cattle is taken to Assayita for
trial. And they (the district officials) tell us also that the Afar who
raid Karrayu cattle will be sent to Zuway for trial. Till now, we
have not seen Afar coming to our region for trial, whereas men
from our group are often sent to Assayita. Our people die in the
Assaita jail because we are told they were killed when they try to
escape. These men were heroes; each man was like 50 men. These
men were very strong. Having them with you at the time of battle
was like having a whole brigade. They organised and led so many
raids. These are the men given to the Afar administration to put in
jail. These men were given poison with their food. When we were
talking to them, they could not even recognise their relatives and
friends anymore. This does not happen to the Afar who are coming
to be prosecuted in Oromia region (Group Interview, D, July 4,

The Fentalle district administration also shares this criticism by the Karrayu men.
According to them, the idea of exchanging criminals was primarily done to fulfil the
requirement of the law. The law required that criminals should present before the
court in the place where the crime took place. Subsequently the two district
administrations agreed to exchange criminals and the Fentalle district passed six
individuals it suspected of committing crimes, while the Awash administration failed
to deliver except one person.

4.1 With the Argoba
The Argoba are the neighbours of the Karrayu bordering them in the West. Some of
this group reside in Fentalle town farming and live in relative peace with the
Karrayu. The Arole rangelands (Edo, haya, ledi Roba, Harro Hubo and Haro Huba)
and the banks of the Kesem River, however, are two key frontiers for violence
between the two groups (Ayalew 2001). The Dulecha Karrayu who reside in Haro
Kerssa, Dhebiti and Kereri in particular are in frequent contact with the Argoba
because the Karrayu used the Arole rangelands as wet season areas before the
Argoba encroachment of the land to cultivation. The Karrayu argue that the Arole
plain was given as compensation to those that were displaced from the Awash National Park at the time of its establishment in 1969. Since that time, the Karrayu have used this argument as a basis for excluding the Argoba. The situation could only continue until 1975 during which the overthrow of the imperial government created a vacuum in terms of defending their claims. Not only that, the Derg regime had also accentuated the violence by creating imbalance between the two groups through its recognition of sedentary groups over pastoralists. As a result, the Karrayu resorted to frequent violence with the Argoba to guarantee their access to the rangelands and to exclude the Argoba from pushing further. The Argoba, however, were able to push further in some areas, settle on the land, and slowly change the names of these places they now occupy. Areas such as Beru Bodda, Eddo Guddo, Karra Suta and Korqe, were accordingly changed to names such as Shelem Gara, Netche Sar, Suta Ber and Awra Godana (Ayalew 2001). Livestock raids constitute one of the major forms of violence between the Karrayu and the Argoba throughout these periods.

During the first phase of my field work, which took place in 2003, I spent most of my time in Dhebiti village where the Karrayu were not far from the Argoba. In my daily conversations with the villagers, I learnt that the nearby Arole rangelands were the commonly shared resources with the Argoba. These rangelands have been points of competition and infrequent raids by the two respective groups. Between 2003 and 2005, the everyday rhetoric on violence among the Karrayu revolved around the Afar, who they thought were strongly inflicting upon them through frequent raids and skirmishes than the Argoba. Since then, violence with the Argoba was aired in April 2005 for the first time to dominate the discourse on violence among them.

On August 16, 2005, at 11:00 am, a wounded Karrayu man from Tututti village was brought to the only private Higher Clinic in Fentalle town. The man was shot during the clash that flared up between the Karrayu and the Argoba herdsmen near Tututi village. The district administration, upon receiving information, sent a few armed militia men to stop the clash. Nevertheless, they were not able to trace the specific site and arrest the men who shot the young man. They said the perpetrators were out of sight, hidden in the Chacka, which was, according to them, inaccessible even by
cars. The same day in the afternoon, an additional four men appeared at the same clinic wounded. I was later told by Roba, one of my informants that the wounded men came in a car that was sent from the district administration. Among these wounded men, four of them were young men in their twenties and had shots in their legs and hips. The fifth man looked older, probably about the age of their fathers. This man was shot in the back of his head.

I had been informed by those accompanying the wounded men that the shooting stopped by itself at about midnight after a series of fire exchanges during the course of the same afternoon and the evening. Four men and two women accompanied the victims to the clinic. Upon their arrival at the clinic, they asked the assistant to tell them where the doctor was. The assistant in the clinic informed them that the doctor had left for Merti Hospital, which is outside Fentalle town near the Sugar Estate. Basically the doctor only works in Merti Hospital, which is far from the town and the clinic, in his spare time work to earn more money. My presence at the clinic was a matter of chance as I was sitting in front of a small hotel (Chillao hotel, next to the clinic I could easily see when the victims were carried to the clinic. The doctor’s assistant seemed excessively callous in regard to the situation. The explanation given for me was the normality of such incidences.

The men who accompanied the wounded were very anxious, impassive in their emotions and undecided about what to do next. They had two options: either to wait for the doctor or to take the wounded men to Merti Hospital. Particularly the old man who was shot in the back of his head was bleeding excessively. At one point I thought he was going to die, but to my surprise, he did not. I asked them if it was a good idea to take them to Merti Hospital instead of waiting for the doctor; they nodded in agreement, but they did not react. Instead they decided to stay and wait for the doctor. Time went by, and the doctor finally arrived after 6:00 p.m. Until then, the men had been sitting on the ground behind the clinic. The two women who came along to the clinic had carried food and water for the men. These were sisters of the wounded men. These women did not show their anger or grief, at least there was no obvious physical sign I could see. They were rather quiet and once in a while talked.
to each other about activities back home. I was quite baffled with the emotional atmosphere surrounding them, with no one looking worried about the five men who were shot and whose outcome was up in the air.

Since it was getting late in the night and the wounded men were admitted to the clinic, I also had to go back to my hotel, and was left wondering what it meant to show anger and grief.

As I stayed longer in this area, I realised that it is only the newly arrived stranger who finds such violence unusual. For the Karrayu, for their neighbours and even for residents of the town, including the doctor’s assistant, violence such as this is commonplace. It is rare that people are killed amass in such skirmishes, but it is true that small groups of men get shot, wounded or killed so frequently that the security department within the district administration keeps a long list of men killed in such group skirmishes.

To return to my narration of the violence I witnessed in August 2005, I went back to the clinic the next morning to pay a visit to the wounded men and, of course, to find out more information about the clash that arose between them and the Argoba men. The clinic is a big villa with a wide reception room along with a few undersized, dark rooms attached outside for those in-patients admitted to receive their daily medications (often injections). Practically, these rooms were intended as lodging for those who came from distant villages and could not afford to come every day to take prescribed medications. The rooms have very little medical equipment and facilities; the floor is mud-covered, filthy, and it was difficult to sit there to talk for a long time.

The five men that came from Tututi village occupied these rooms. The old man had minor surgery on his head. He could even speak slowly, but I refrained from talking to him that day. The other young men were a lot better; their knees were all covered with white bandages. They could converse without much pain. The young men

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15 Although the rooms are less costly than the transportation fees they have to spend to come every day from the village, most Karrayu can still not afford to pay for the rooms. Thus, they rent a room in a hotel next to the clinic and stay there until they finish their prescribed medications.
explained to me that they had been in the midst of their animals, which were grazing, when they heard the shooting them behind. They said they did not even have a chance to see who shot them, but they swore it came from the Argoba.

The victims understood that the Argoba’s motivation to instigate violence came from their intention to raid Karrayu animals and take advantage of the situation, that is, all the Karrayu villagers had gone to Tututi to receive food aid that day, and the herdsmen were vulnerable.

No one from our village heard the gunshots. All the villagers — men, women, young, and old, weak, strong — left for Tututi to get food aid, which was being distributed by the government. It was fortunate that this old man who was on his way to Tututi heard the screams and could save us and the cattle. Otherwise they would have finished us off. We thought we lost none of our animals, but today, we heard from the villagers that thirteen heads of cattle are missing from the stock (Personal Interview R, August 18, 2005, Tututi).

Violent events such as this one often appear spontaneous and remain invisible to many except those directly involved in the event itself. One of the reasons is perceived isolation of violent Beke Deda sites, those places distant from where the villagers settle permanently and the district administration is situated. In the second chapter, I tried to briefly describe such places as non-state spheres. These places, as I will explain later, have varied meanings to different actors (i.e., victims, perpetrators and witnesses), who, by manoeuvring these meanings, change their positions and strategies in dealing with the violence. Places of actual violence are also points of relay where each actor tries to achieve its goals (whether to raid cattle or to have access to water points or good pasture) and, at the same time, perform violence to add further meaning and forcefulness than what is actually at stake in that specific moment.

Beke Deda or ‘Chaka’ according to Argoba provide an excellent opportunity for local actors to affect their intention of conveying what an outsider (including the state) should know, and not necessarily what happened, because they lack visibility in the eye of the state and lack evidence (are not subject to prosecution by modern law).
This is a typical feature that characterises violence in these areas. The following narration of the victims on August 15, 2005, tells us what the victims think of the violence and what meaning they want to convey to outsiders who, in their view, cannot directly witness it. As I stated, the security and justice department knew about the violence just few hours before I did. This is quite usual because the district administration is based in Fentalle town and, due to its isolation from these sites (although they are not very distant geographically), it receives information about the violence through its representatives, such as peace committees, commanders, and the chairman of the Kebele. These representatives in turn rely on the victims (who could be perpetrators), their friends, and their families for information on the violent acts. In the process, the information is filtered through a series of victims, as well as actors who often assume themselves to be neutral witnesses.

4.2. Narrative Two: New field of Violence

Z, a commander (Kebele representative) in Tututi village, is an uncle of one of the young men who was shot in the above-mentioned violent incident. I met him because he accompanied the wounded men to the Metehara Higher clinic. He stated that a month ago, his brother, who was the father of one of the young men who was shot by the Argoba men as well was severely wounded and had to be taken by him to Addis Ababa, where he stayed in the hospital for seventeen days.

This man stated that, to his knowledge, there had been no killings between the two groups for the last five years (before 2005) except for sporadic skirmishes and raids. He situated the present violence within the framework of a dispute over boundaries between regional administrative units that had been underway since 1995. Nevertheless, the dispute gave way to violence only in April 2005, a month before the national election. He clarified the situation further:

It was one Wednesday in April 2005. We fought with the Argoba in a village called Borechata in Boset district. Because of Rabi (God), no one from our side was killed and all our cattle were safe. After two days, however, on Friday, the Argoba again opened fire on us. Our men were grazing their animals in our territory. The
Argoba always opened fire while we were amidst our cattle. There was not a single day when we went to their territory to raid them. That day they killed a Karrayu man known as Roba Chefera, who lived in Borechota. Fifteen days after the death of this man, we heard that two Argoba men had been killed. In less than a week’s time, the Argoba killed again – this time a Karrayu man named Dube Kumbi, who lived in their village. They killed him while he was sitting under a tree in the shade.

We have had disputes over bordering villages, such as Awra Godana, which have become part of the Amhara regional administration. This village used to be Karrayu territory. The Argoba still wanted to push further into our territory. In April, just before the May election, some Argoba groups who wanted Qinijit\textsuperscript{16} to win began to plan violence against us. They hoped that if Qinijit won, they would get more land from us. They started to fight us because they wanted to obstruct people from voting. They assumed that if people in village voted less, and if all the townspeople voted for Kinjit, then they would achieve their goals. The problem we have with the Argoba over regional boundaries is now becoming as serious as the one between Somali and the Afar. It is becoming dangerous. We are not Shabia,\textsuperscript{17} that they should be fighting. We used to fight with the Argoba over pastur- elands, but now it is a different situation, the conflict is over disputed boundaries between the Amhara and Oromiya States (Personal Interview, August 24, 2005: Tututi).

Z attempted to stress the growing level of violence due to new elements in how the violence was being conducted.

The Argoba have access to better small arms and are better organised than us [the Karrayu]. They even build fortification everywhere to defend themselves, as if they have a big war to wage, as if they have strong enemies. They wait for us in these forts. They are very good at aiming too; they never miss. If they have ten bullets, it is for ten people, they do not lose a single bullet. The only thing they do not have is a fighter aircraft. They throw grenades at us. They have various types of weapons we have never seen before. Each Argoba has three or four weapons; the Kebelle only knows one of these weapons. In the past they were raiding cattle; nowadays, they raid arms.

We, on the other hand, are fighting them with small Kalashnikovs. We finish our three or four carts of bullets . . . within two days of action. In Borechata, we realised

\begin{footnotesize}
16 Qinijit is the Amharic name for the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), an opposition party that ran in the May 15, 2005 election.
17 Shabia is the ruling party in Eritrea, which was recently waging war with Ethiopia and with the Derg before Eritrea’s secession from Ethiopia in 1995.
\end{footnotesize}
that they were using weapons we had never seen before. They have heavy weapons in places like Konge and Bubisa. Their plan is to push us far behind Metehara and blend us with the Afar in Awash. Nevertheless, Korke is Karrayu land, and I have built a house there because it is my land. Where am I to go?

The difficulty we have now is how to get access to automatic weapons. We know that the Argoba get weapons from surrounding Berehet and Kobbo areas. It is difficult for us to have access to these places; our government [Oromiya State] does not provide us with arms either (group Interview, August 19, 2005, Bulga).

One can argue that the availability of ammunition can obviously change the balance of power between the two groups; in the absence of clear evidence with regard to who has greater access, however, it becomes difficult to pass judgement about loci of power. Of course, the Karrayu perceive the imbalance and, understandably, this perception ultimately defines their actions toward their neighbours.

With regard to the issue of geo-political mapping, it is important to understand the larger context in which federal states are established and administrative units are delimited. The present constitution established Ethiopia as a Federal country in 1994. The arrangement was enforced in 1995, and yet no official map of Federal Ethiopia was established until 2001. The boundaries of a respective regional government are made visible by the administration of its constituents. Simply put, local people learn which state they belong to and the boundaries that exist between federal units when they are required to address their public matters to a specific administrative unit. Various scholars have addressed the way in which the Ethiopian form of federalism has produced regional states that are asymmetrical, but ethnically heterogeneous.

Most of these studies concentrate on the vicissitude of federalism in terms of conflicts between constituents and only indirectly address the challenges of the delimitation of administrative units. Some argue, for instance, that the delimitation of regional state boundaries was arbitrary and was drawn across ethnic lines, which does not guarantee the rights of minorities within specific regional states. And yet, only a few have addressed how the delimitation of geographical boundaries relates to cultural boundaries and local perception of boundaries in general.
I raised this issue because there are so many varying opinions among the many groups as to which specific areas should have been included in which regional state. Since such disagreements are expected, borders are always domains of disputed and contested power where groups negotiate relations of subordination and control. It is also worth understanding how this power dynamic plays out.

Nugent and Asiwaju claim that the interplay between the ‘official intention and popular perception is what imparts the qualities of the borders’ (Tronvole 2007). In many regional states, competitions between ethnic groups or clans for regional hegemony are frequent. Some have argued that most of these competitions, and even conflicts, have not yet destabilised the regional states because they have been managed by regional states or the groups were not strong enough to form alliances to come forward with sufficient pressure.

Obviously, the fixed federal arrangement, particularly in pastoralist areas, does not allow shifting circumstances or new claims from national groups (Pausewang 2002). Regional borders, as well as Zone and District structures that were adapted with lesser emphasis on socio-cultural aspects, are often ambiguous for local actors. Nevertheless, it is this ambiguity of borders that frequently gives confidence to some groups to act on their expansionist aspirations; as well this ambiguity can serve as an arena for manifesting and expressing deeper. Such controlled, but deep discontent, as mentioned above, is expressed in the form of violence whenever forums are available to air tensions, such as during the 2005 pre-election period. The pre-election period has generally been characterised as being filled with a tense and violent atmosphere (Abbink 2006).

The majority of the Karrayu who neighbour the Argoba are pastoralists. Clan ownership of a territory has always provided a clear picture of where the boundaries separate the Karrayu from their neighbours. These boundaries, although maintained at the level of awareness as fixed, were, on the ground, actually quite loose in their meaning and open for negotiation. It is only through such a loose understanding of geographical boundaries that pastoral mobility across territories becomes possible.
The subsequent establishment of administrative units and delimitation of regional units, however, created a geographical boundary that is relatively fixed, and involves a very different perception of territory than the local perception. These changes have reconfigured their relationship and created another arena whereby the state has established a new power dynamic based on this new structure. An example of this is the changing of the names of the disputed areas, once they have been incorporated into the various different states’ administration, leaving no room for group negotiation about who gets to live there.

I will present here one case of a border area named Qorke that was incorporated into the Amhara regional state and, in the process, reconfigured the power balance between the two groups.

4.2.1 Qorke (Awra Godna): local perception of territoriality and national policy of borders

The place presently known as Awra Godana had an older name known Qorke. The name was changed during the Derg period, after the arrival of the Road Works Authority that was responsible for the construction of the road. At that time, big trucks were transporting sand that had been extracted from this location, and many labourers who were working on sand extraction were camping there. Following the labourers’ camping, the Argoba began settling around the area to sell tea, bread and other basic items. When the construction workers completed their work and left, the Argoba kept on selling charcoal for passer by. The Karrayu did not resist their settlement; instead, they were very sympathetic to them since they did not own any cattle and were exclusively dependent on the sale of charcoal for their survival (Group Interview, D, August 21, 2005: Arole).

When the government formed a new regional administration, Qorke became part of the Amhara Regional State because the Argoba were settling there. This place, however, is claimed by the Karrayu based on older Oromo names such as Kogne Dalku, Melaka Jillo.
The Argoba were then living above Kerra Adi (white street) and not below. In Oromiffa, we say ‘Korke Galma Elemo’ (the residence for Elemo) to show that the place belonged to the Oromo people. This place also has ritual significance for us, and every Karrayu used to go there for celebrations. This is the place that is changed to Awra Godana because of a red truck that transported sand to the village.

The Karrayu even had a name for the hill nearby, calling it Funate Gara, which means ‘the hill for camels’. The name is given because of the height of the hill, and it was only the camels, not the cattle that could reach this hill. This place also connects us with the Boset people who are also Oromos. The Argoba slowly crept like rattlesnakes between us. Our Qorke was a small village, and now it has grown to a transit location for Shiftas. They also bring arms from Minjar and Dire Dawa to sell there (Personal interview, C, August 20, 2005, Qorke)

Interview with Y.

I live in the Arole neighbourhood in a village called Haro Buba. Eight years elapsed before we clashed again with the Argoba. During these eight years, there were incidences of raiding, but no killing was involved. Last April, one man from the Argoba group was killed. After the death of this young man, our cattle could not easily graze in Argoba neighbourhood. We began to spend every day in fear because we were not sure if our men and cattle would return unharmed. We still experience this fear today. To my knowledge, the Argoba have invaded our territory four times since April. Out of these four invasions, three of them targeted the Karrayu in Chercher. During the first invasion, nobody was wounded. In the second invasion, one of our men was wounded; in the third invasion, again one man was wounded, and in the fourth, which is today, five men are wounded.

At the time that these five men were wounded, there were six men tending the cattle. They were attacked by Argoba men within their own territory (region). Among these wounded men, three of them were shot because they hesitated to leave behind the two men that had been shot before them. The fifth man was shot because he was rushing to the site when he heard the scream for help.

The elders in Haro Karsa and Arole are bewildered with the Arogoba. If I have to say the truth, no one cares about us. When the Arogoba came to fight us with grenades, it was Rabi (God) who saved us! No one asks why we are fighting with the Argoba, is it because there is no government among us?
I think the Argoba also lost some men, but we do not know how many. Since April, we have thirteen men wounded and two men dead. It is true that some men from our side sometimes instigate the clash. But the Argoba are worse, they raid our cattle in our own region. If you ask me, I lost seven heads of cows and three camels in the month of May alone. These cows had calves, and we had to slaughter the calves because we did not know what to feed them. (Personal interview, N, August 5, 2005: Arole)

4.3. Restoring Balance

Those Karrayu who live bordering the Argoba express a growing imbalance between themselves and the Argoba. As mentioned above, they perceive that the Argoba have been using different strategies to dominate them (the Karrayu). In one of the peace meetings held between elders of the two groups on December 15, 2005, at the district administration, the Karrayu described the violence as follows:

We are friends with the Argoba (Minjar) people. We used to eat together and share everything together. In the past, the Argoba (Minjar) cattle graze through our land and our cattle did the same with theirs. Then we elders all did our best to find the cattle and make sure that they returned to their owners. Now the conflict between us has flared up in the Boset district. We were all aware that the conflict would spread to other areas too, and we were working hard to prevent it from expanding. Our cattle intruded into Boda Kebele, and we inquired about their whereabouts. When the Argoba told us they were taken by the Shiftas, we were very sad to hear this. Then the Karrayu who had lost their cattle to the Argoba also refused to return Argoba (Minjar) cattle that trespassed through their district. The elders from Argoba (Minjar) came and pleaded to us to return the cattle. They told us that they did not have oxen to till the land with and the calves were separated from the cows. We told them that the cattle were with us. But in order to return their cattle, they would have to return our cattle as well (Personal interview, C, February 15, 2005, J Bulga)

The Karrayu argue that the Argoba, after raiding Karrayu’s cattle and killing their men, later blamed it on the Shifta men. The term ‘Shifta’ is used loosely to refer to lawless individuals that take advantage of the administrative gap in order to plunder cattle. Shiftas, in this specific context, have been given no identity in the sense that
they are unrecognized people who appear from somewhere else to steal cattle. In the Argoba’s elders’ opinion, they cannot take responsibility for cattle they did not loot. The Karrayu elders argue that the Argoba construct ‘Shiftas’ in order to avoid the responsibility of returning livestock that they have stolen themselves:

The Argoba tell us these are Shifta men who are fighting us and talking our cattle. If Shifta are real, then are all Argobas Shifta? If they can be excused because of this, we can also use Shifta as an excuse for looting. We can be Shifta as well and escape from responsibility (Personal interview, Februrary 5, 2005, D, Bulga).

The Karrayu argue that the Argoba raid cattle mainly for commercial purposes. Once cattle have been raided by the Argoba, one no longer get them back because they sell the animals to the Afar where the Karrayu could not trace. They also argue that the Argoba come back with the money and construct houses in Metehara town. “They start businesses there. Our banks are our camels, and whenever the Argoba want to rob banks, they come to our camels and raid us (Personal interview, K, January 17, 2005: Tututi)

_The Starved Cows Take Us Towards the Park!_

Another field of conflict between different actors is surrounding of the Awash National Park. Encroachment on the park by pastoralists in the area including the Karrayu, the Ittu and the Afar is linked mainly to shortages of pasture and water, particularly during the dry seasons. The pastoralist deliberately ignore the fact that range land has been transferred from a communal grazing land to a national park. They tried to resituate the park by force when governments were overthrown first in 1975 and for second time in 1991. In 1975 the existing Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation (EWCO) made a request to the provisional Military Administrative Council to evict the pastoralists from the park-controlled areas. The 1985 drought also forced some pastoralists to invade the park again in huge numbers, and the park administration, due to the compelling situation, had to permit them to use areas near the Sabore Plain and Ajo Terrre areas (Lane 1995). Again in 1991, the pastoralists attempted to retrieve the park, but they failed because a military measure evicted them.
The most compelling time for encroachment on park is during the dry season. For the majority of the pastoralists surrounding the park, the park ranglands have somehow slowly transformed itself from a game reserve into a relatively fair dry season reserve. Livestock presence inside the park is tolerated at a time when most of the pasture in the permanent settlement areas are exhausted.

In other seasons, the National Park administration often attempted to block the intruders by withholding livestock that trespassed the park and fining their herdsmen. The amount of fines paid by the herdsmen was often too expensive for the majority of the Karrayu and Ittu – 10 birr per head of a cattle, 5 birr for ruminants, and 25 birr for camels. Many herdsmen would venture to the park at night to hide from the park scouts and they thereby evaded the fines. And yet many livestock still got caught, and the herdsmen did have to pay. The fines were supplemented by further threats of administrative measures such as detention. Despite the fines, however, the amount of the livestock that are grazing within the National Park’s domain is increasing. Within the Oromiya region, residents from Legebenti, Mudda, Ajoteri are considered the main groups grazing livestock within the National Park territory. The eastern part of the park, which takes to Degega following the bank of the Awash River, has been among the sites that have been most affected by overgrazing animals.

Although it is generally believed that the majority of the pastoralists feel resentment about the Park being a state-owned territory, it is also important to note that they like the way the park is enclosed by a third party which is the state. That is, the modus operandi for the time being allows pastoralists to use the ranglands in the park (even if they have to pay) as a big pasture reserve that is available when they exhaust other sources without engaging in violent conflicts with their neighbours, such as the Afar.

According to EWCO, the park made about 60,000 birr from tourists every year whereas data compiled by Ayalew (2002) showed that the park made 51,000 birr in three years’ time through fines from pastoralists who have been grazing their animals within its territory. This is pretty good business for a park that does not receive as
many tourists as it had planned. Moreover, because of the fact that the park is split between the Oromia and the Afar States, and because there is a growing dispute over bordering areas between the Afar and the Karrayu, the park has, to some extent, indirectly prevented conflicts from flaring up over territory between the two groups by excluding them both.

Information gathered from residents in Benti-Mogassa shows that their dry season areas that lie within the proximity of K’okofe, Butugi, Bokujallo, Gotti, ButuJik’allala, Bachalla, Korkonch, Koytu, Chafo, Degaga, Siman and Degatika have been closed by the National park, and in order to have access to pasture and water, the residents have to either circumvent the park, which would require travelling over five hours, or use the traditional path, which entails trespassing into the park. Grazing within the park and the sugar plantation areas is the best option for the majority of the pastoralists. The extent of access and the choice of which route to take, however, largely depends on awareness of less coercive alternatives.

In the last letter to the District Council(letter written on 06.01.97, the park administration noted major growing concerns as:

- an increased amount of cattle grazing within the National Park
- the killing of beasts by organised and armed groups
- the proliferation of settlements in core areas of the Park
- spoken threats of robbery to tourists and Park staff
- dismantling direction signs within the Park

The National Park is the least developed and most weakened game reserve in the Country. Its hotel management is poor, and the animals are disappearing more and more. It must be mentioned that the National park management is progressively weakening as well. Despite the fact that figures show an increase in the number of tourists since 1992, the park has suffered from a wide range of difficulties in administration, staffing, and legal backing with regard to resource management and funding (Schloeder 1995). The Awash National Park is among Ethiopia’s giant national parks, but the park is losing its original features, and the animals within it are disappearing and migrating to other areas. Due to the problems faced in the area,
the park has now dwindled to half its original size, yet even the existing land is facing pressure from the Ittu people in the surrounding areas. It has been reduced from its original size, which was 752 km², to 252 km² and is now limited to what are called the core areas, such as the Illala Sala plain, which lies to the south and southeast of the Awash-Metehara road. Even then, for much of its protection of its frontiers, it depends heavily on the district administrations of both the Oromiya and Afar regions.

Writing letters urging the district council to apply administrative measures to stop pastoralists and their livestock from trespassing in the park is one of the routine activities of the park administration. The Karrayu and Ittu groups who are encroaching on the park are becoming increasingly aware of the park administration’s limited capacity to be in command of its land.

Clashes between the Karrayu or Ittu and park scouts may arise at times when the scouts attempt to prevent animals from grazing. Some pastoralists argue that the cattle escaped and ran towards park territory due to the fact that they were hungry. There are some occasions when the scouts accept this excuse, but in many occasions, they resort to violence in order to stop the cattle and fine the pastoralists. Lane (1995), noting the mistrust and antagonism that exists between residents and park authorities, discerned that such a relationship unfavourably affected future collaboration in regard to the two parties’ joint use of the resources.

The park administration has been trying to tackle the problem, but so far, the problem has surpassed their capacity to handle it. The surrounding pastoralists graze a significant number of cattle day and night, and have asked the Fentalle district council to provide support to stop other groups from grazing their cattle within the national park (letter written to the Fentalle district in 1996). Some of the residents have showed a tendency to settle in these areas. The cattle spend their whole time in these areas, and this limits the availability of pasture land for future grazing. Despite the letters written to the council of the district, no administrative measure has been taken by the council, and that is why the National Park wrote another letter to the
regional government, Department of Rural Land and Natural Resource Administration Authority, asking the Authority to instruct the District Council to provide administrative measures (letter written to Department of Rural Land and Natural Resource Administration Authority, Dec, 12, 2003).

In the letter written to the Fentalle Administration, the park administration mentioned that the villagers in Lege Benti were collaborating with NGOs in order to construct schools, and that the constructions of schools near the park encourages settlements around the park, which is a potential threat for the park. The park administration has, therefore, asked the Fentalle Administration to stop the construction of the school (29.08.1996).

In 2002 and 2003, an area of about 1,500 hectares was burnt near Fentalle Mountain. This was said to be an act of resistance against the National Park administration, which had excluded the local people from using the park.
CHAPTER FIVE

5. CATTLE RAIDING: A Case Study in Conflict Transformation

5.1 A Description of Cattle Raiding as an Inter-ethnic Conflict

5.1.1 Whose Perspective?

Cattle raiding is in general discussed as being as constitutive of the many adaptive strategies that contribute to the sustenance of the pastoral production system within a challenging environment. It is defined as group invasion or the forceful attack of an outside group whose main objective is to take cattle and not necessarily engage in territorial expansion (Markakis 1993). As an institutionalised practice, it has been a highly esteemed and justified activity among many pastoralists and, thus, is enforced by socially accredited values and beliefs when it takes place on a small scale (Turton 1996). Although acknowledging cattle raids as a legitimate part of a culture may be seen as repressive, many local narratives and understandings substantiate its institutionalisation, efficient organisation, and military skill as having contributed greatly to restoring the balance between groups and defending their pastoral possessions.

In the past, cattle raiding among the Karrayu is said to have been employed under the supervision of local leadership that determined the extent of its undertaking. Cattle raiding entail military preparedness and the men’s capacity to use coercion. The use of coercion is not only to take others’ possessions, but also to defend one’s own. Retaliation through cattle raiding mainly results in the restoration of the power balance and tests capacities between the groups. Despite the huge involvement of men in cattle raids, the amount of human causalities was generally insignificant.

In most pastoralist societies, there are at least three basic reasons to explain and justify cattle raiding: a) the requirement by the pastoral society for its individual members to own cattle in order to qualify engaging in socioeconomic relations; b) due to pastoralists being mobile across territories that are claimed by other groups;
confrontations are bound to occur and often result in cattle raiding and c) the need to replenish depleted livestock or ensure the presence of livestock upon unexpected mishap (Osamba 2000). Among the Karrayu, the cattle raid is not only about cattle and the repossession thereof; it is compounded with other forms of warfare between them and neighbouring groups.

‘Orissa/Orea’ is a local term used to refer to an organised form of invading a neighbouring group’s cattle camp or cattle congregation with the aim of taking the cattle forcefully. The cattle that are brought back through such an organised cattle raid are called ‘Orea Mogesse’ (booty of the raid). The practice is carefully planned and carried out with intensive excitement and morale. Men in the group assume different roles, such as scouting and leadership, in order to maximise their efficiency. Scouting has been a main strategy, both to facilitate cattle raiding of rivals and to prevent cattle from being stolen. Proper education is mandatory for the young men as to how best to defend their cattle and carry out raids. In addition, all young herders are armed on their trips to grazing areas in far-ranging lands or across neighbouring territories.

Organisationally, the raiding group elects its leader (Aba Dula) and junior leader, (Jejebi) to direct the invasion. In an invasion of the enemy cattle camp, the number of people in the invading group can extend up to five or six hundred. The group that actually dashes off with the cattle is comprised of no more than four to eight men. These men are called Gaddu. The rest of the men guard the Gaddu to ensure their victory over their enemies.

Although cattle are considered the core reason for cattle raids, the employment of cattle raiding could amount to killing those who are defined as enemies, and continuously testing their power. This has been evident among the Karrayu, where local warfare with neighbouring groups is not separated from cattle raiding. In fact, the term that the Karrayu have for the cattle raid is an ‘invasion’, or ‘Orea’.
In the past, the practice of such an invasion sometimes required the involvement of all members from all clans across the Karrayu territory, depending on the objective of the raid. Although the raids were sometimes carried out for economic reasons, they could also be carried out as retaliation if the group thought it had been insulted by the neighbouring group. I was once told that a group of young Afar men told young Karrayu men to go back to their mothers’ belly to hide from the Afar, which was considered a highly offensive statement sufficient to motivate the young men to organise a retaliatory assault. In fact, a higher level of cattle raid often takes place in response to a raid by the other group.

Narratives about cattle raids in the villages often describe them as taking place in the night. The young men take their food with them to walk through the night, and this is done, according to my informants, to encounter the enemy before they get dressed and before the women light their fires. This gives the victim less of a chance to defend his cattle and himself.

Another sphere of cattle raid takes place in grazing areas along the border of the two territories, and this form of raiding is usually carried out in the daytime. The effectiveness of the cattle raid largely depends on the precision of the scouting with regard to the number of herdsmen, the number of armed men and the scouts on the other side. This is to determine the level of organisation of the raiding group and thereby to maximise the chance of the cattle raid’s success. In daytime raids, once the number of families grazing their animals is known, a strategy can be chosen in regard to whether to attack them directly and take their cattle or postpone the raid at night.

Among the Karrayu and the Afar, cattle raiding has been reinforced through institutions such as the initiation of young men. In the traditional practice of the cattle raid, the manner in which it is conducted has as much significance as the achievement of the act itself. In other words, cattle raiding is not merely a matter of taking cattle from other groups, but also of proving one’s competence and achieving a certain privilege within one’s own group on the basis of one’s skill and role in the raid. For this reason, the marauders are categorised into different groups depending
on their role in the raid. The following is a description of these groups of men. ‘Menjolla’ is the name given to a man who goes straight to the cattle camp of the enemy and raids cattle after killing the enemies who defend their cattle. The name is earned only if the individual engages in repeated cattle raiding. ‘Lolle’ refers to a man who has confronted his enemy, but he may not necessarily have been able to steal cattle. This name is given to honour his bravery in facing his foe. Bejje: Herds can easily trespass territories and be held up by herdsmen from the rival groups. The name ‘Bejie’ is given to a man who by chance is able to get the cattle of the enemy while animals are grazing. This man is not honoured as much as those who risk their lives in raids. ‘Debessa’ is the name given to a man who never went raiding, who ran away from the enemy, who spends his time watching his concubines, who stays around his home and never went to grazing areas or borders with other neighbouring groups. Men who raid cattle swear at the men who stay back: ‘You stay with your Shagno, and when I get back, you will hear my elation!’

Many recent studies in the field show that the practice of cattle raiding has been changing in terms of its objectives and outcome as a result of the drastic changes the pastoralists are facing and their relatively easy access to light automatic weapons. The recent forms of cattle raid reflect a society that is stressed as a result of being subjected to inappropriate development projects and irrelevant policies that have negatively impacted and overwhelmed them. ‘Restricting movements, a fatal decision meant that when animals of one group died, the only way to replenish stocks – the most naturally and socially available to lowly developed social formation was cattle raiding’ (Osamba 2001). Such a rationale, however, viewed cattle raiding as transforming from an adaptive strategy to a maladaptive one, taking the form of a new predatory mechanism for gaining resources (Gray 2003).

Recent information with regard to the extent of the use of light weapons and the frequency of this practice is very scant among the Karrayu and groups of people in the rift valley in general. What I observed during field work was that the practice is being carried out in an increasingly disorganised manner as compared to the more

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18 Shagno is a married woman who is a lover to another man.
organised approach described above by local groups, mainly small groups of young men.

According to my informants, during the Haile Selassie regime, the local people were pretty much left to settle their own affairs through local leadership. Violence and cattle raiding were an internal affair that was managed and settled by clan leaders. Since 1975 the Derg regime banned any public exaltation of warriors during initiation and wedding ceremonies. Any organised form of assault was prohibited. Informants from Haro Karssa village told the following:

To my knowledge, the last Orea took place in 1992, one year after the EPRDF took power. That time, we went to the Afar territory to a place called Mulki Issa and Urga. This place is a border between them and us. During that raid, we took around three to four Kraal of camels from the Afar. The Afar lost many men as a result of this cattle raid. In 1998 the Afar, as a form of retaliation, invaded a family in Haro Karssa, killed a father and son, and took their cattle. We managed to get the cattle back from the Afar, but again they killed the other son of the same family and took all the cattle (Group Interview, B, August, 23, 2005, Haro Karssa).

The initiation of young men (Quondalla), and the consequent expectation of these groups of young men to show their courage and competency in public, has been greatly reduced along with reduced autonomy of other local institutions. Nevertheless, the proscription of organised cattle raiding did not stop cattle raiding from being carried out; to the contrary, it caused the practice to occur at a much disorganised level and more frequently than ever.

Since 1991 cattle raiding has become an ever-growing concern to both Afar and Oromiya regional states. The approval and establishment of regional states in 1995, which replicated the central state in the peripheries, vested regional states with power to control and administer their respective constituents through instilling and maintaining law and order. These regional states also assumed control over the means of the monopoly of violence and ensured security in these regions, which remained peripheries for a long time, but became visible through such institutional arrangements. The cattle raid, as an inter-ethnic conflict, contradicts such a notion of the state’s monopoly of violence as well as its autonomy to guarantee regional
stability. From the perspective of the regional governments, cattle raiding is outright violence and an infringement on human rights; it is against the rule of law and detractive of a democratic process. It is taken as a major obstacle to ensuring a stable society, and doing away with it is believed to be a major step towards warranting stability and democracy. Managing the issue of cattle raids is, therefore, more the aim and responsibility of the regional governments than of the local leadership.

The mechanism for dealing with cattle theft at the local level is mainly through an instrument called ‘conflict resolution’. It is of great importance to mention that there exists no single body that is responsible for conflict resolution at the local level. Any organisation can appear one morning and provide training or arrange a meeting on conflict resolution. I have witnessed many organisations coming and gathering elders together to discuss conflict resolution. The availability of funds to organise such meetings is a key piece in the matter.

Recently it has become clear that cattle theft among the Karrayu has increased, not only with the Afar, but also with neighbouring farming people, such as the Arsi and the Argoba. Handling cattle theft between the Karrayu and farming groups through statutory law is becoming a challenge, as the motivations and actors are both becoming increasingly complex and diverse.

5.1.2 Defining the “Enemy”

Violence and enmity are reproduced to a great extent through the notion of otherness. The Karrayu’s cattle raiding and the accompanying unplanned killings is somehow an accepted and expected behaviour, as long as it takes place outside their sphere of ‘Sons of Oromo’. What is of great significance here, however, is to expand this particular identity construction of otherness through violence.

In this section, I would like to discuss in particular the symbolic construction of enmity and violence of the Karrayu with their neighbouring groups. I will use the culturally articulated notions of enemy (Mirga) and brother/son of Oromo (Biyya) as they are defined by the conception of Kuppa (one who is caught in Oromo blood), to
differentiate between those who are indexed as an enemy and those as a brother. Enmity goes with otherness, and otherness with not being one of us. ‘One of us’, for the Karrayu, however, is not just a matter of descent, but rather, a creation of historical factors or constructs. In other words, the question of why a certain group is constructed as a ‘timeless enemy’ requires an understanding of earlier contacts and relationships. The characterisation of an eternal enemy, in contrast to what it sounds like, may also have changed over time. The references I make, accordingly, only refer to the observations I made during my stay among the Karrayu between 2003 and 2005. Before explaining the Karrayu notion of enemy, however, I will first explain how violence and homicide within one’s own group in particular, is described and discouraged.

Among the Karrayu, all those Oromo who are adopted and born within the group, including their neighbouring Ittu, Mecha and Arsi who claim to have the same ancestor and the same derivation, belong together as brothers. Oromo are defined mainly by shared use of Oromiffa language, and by sharing the same migratory history and institutions, such as the Gada organisation. Nevertheless, the local conception of Oromo identity should be understood differently from the one described in Chapter 2 (as refereed by the Oromo nationalists). For the Karrayu, Oromo is constructed around language, but also around participation in common rituals and internal blood payment rules. In other words, the group’s entitlement to Oromo identity depends on the extent of involvement in blood payment, according to the rules for settling internal conflicts.

First, homicide within the group should be prevented as much as possible. People who fall into the category of one’s own are not to be subjected to violence. Any form of competition for resources, such as water and pasture, within the group must not lead to human killings. Killing a member of one’s own group is a highly violent and condemned act. ‘An Oromo never intentionally kills another Oromo. If an Oromo accidentally kills another Oromo, he is doomed. All the women rush out and shriek with shock (Personal Interview, B, August 27, 2004, Dhebiti). The heavy moral sanction against killing one’s own brother, however, does not necessarily prevent
sporadic violent acts and homicide within the group or between individuals of the same group.

Individuals who commit violent acts within this group are dealt with in a different way, depending on whether the act was done intentionally or unintentionally. The term ‘Kuppa/Kuppla’ is used when a Karrayu man kills one of his own group or an Oromo. It also refers to the individual who committed homicide. The treatment of such a perpetrator was described to me like this:

This man cannot enter his house or his neighbours’ houses. No one eats from the same dishes he ate from. All the food left from him will be thrown away. He will be fenced around, and the families pass him food over the fence. Men from the clan pull out his nails and shave his head. They throw away the cloth he wore to the river and dress him up with a new one. He is referred to by a name Kuppa, which means ‘one who bears Oromo blood’. The man lives under these conditions (that could last up to two months) until blood compensation is made and his clan, which assumed responsibility, provides girls for marriage to the victim’s clan in order to restore the broken ties (Personal interview, C, August 25 2004, Gelecha).

It is important to mention that blood compensation and its related rituals play a very significant role in deconstructing the isolation that arises between families within the larger group as a result of violence.

The Karrayu have two major groups that they call eternal enemies: the Afar and the Argoba; however, violence against non-Oromo groups, particularly the Afar and the Argoba, does not entail the negative sanctions described above. This perception of them as eternal enemies does not contradict the long-existing cooperation the Karrayu have had with these groups, nor does it explain the violent acts encountered within. It is, for example, evident that the Karrayu experience more disputes, and even violence, against the Arsi and Ittu, but these groups are not considered eternal enemies.

Violence towards the Afar and the Argoba is justified and is a mutually reflected form of their relationship. It is, however, difficult to attribute the origin of such construction of enmity to any one single cause, as the notion of violence itself has
most likely changed through various periods and no ethnographic study has been made with regard to violence at different times in this area. What can be done is to reflect on both the symbolic and performative aspects of this hostile relationship as far back as the groups can recall.

Another point worth mentioning here is that the Karrayu notion of an enemy is collective. They understood their enemies not as individuals, but as a collective group. It did not matter who inflicted violence on them. Importance was given to what the perpetrator represented. The violence perpetrated on track drivers along the highway who have no connection to an act that was previously committed exemplifies this elusiveness of the enemy category. That is, one kills a person, not because that person is responsible for a previous act of violence, but because he represents the collective enemy.

The Argoba are categorically called an ‘historical enemy’ to the Karrayu, especially because they are associated with highlanders whom the Karrayu view as having dominated them for a long time through their expansionist tendencies. In the eyes of my informants from Dhabitī, the Argoba are considered to be a group of people that is potentially dangerous because of perceived superior military capacity, accompanied by strategic location on the hillside. As farming people, the Karrayu feel threatened by the Argoba’s expansionist tendencies. The lack of shared rules and rituals has also contributed to the label of otherness, by which violence is justified.

Such a hostile perception has always existed with the simultaneous need to coordinate and collaborate with the Argoba. A considerable number of Argoba people still co-reside with the Karrayu in the same district while farming land. These groups, unlike other settlers who are engaged in hotels and shop business, have continued to exchange produce with the Karrayu. Some of the Argoba residents talk about how the Karrayu used to have smooth relationship with the Argoba in the 1950s. At present, there are still plots of lands at the fringe of the town that are claimed by the Karrayu, but rented by the Argoba for farming.
The other ‘enemy’ to the Karrayu is the Afar. The Karrayu attribution of enmity to the Afar is, my informants argue, due to the Afar’s continuous territorial infringement and breach of rules. Narrations about violence and retaliation between these two groups are particularly widespread and more consistent than any other groups. ‘We are different from the Afar. Our reconciliation with them never lasted long. We soon resort to fighting again. We never stop fighting with them even during Haile Selassie’s time and the Derg time; we pay compensation but then never stop fighting with them’ (Personal interview, February 10, 2005, Bulga).

The Karrayu further explained that the major reason for their failure to reach lasting conflict resolution is due to the Afar’s violation of the rules that are set during conflict resolution.

The violation of agreed-upon rules is a typical characteristic of the Afar. They never abided by any law, they want to kill us because they want to talk big of themselves and their deeds at the time of a local wedding. They have a tradition called Kolla Mura where they celebrate the men who killed the Karrayu. They are honoured even when they kill old men among us. We kill them too for the same reason (Personal Interview, K, 2003: Dabti).

Despite the fact that the Karrayu hold similar belief systems and rituals that reproduce violence against outsiders, a common discourse among the Karrayu is that violence is often an act that is imposed on them by outside enemies. Gada transitions and wedding festivities were important occasions for honouring a person who killed an enemy; songs are sung to pay tribute to such warriors. The warrior puts all his booty from the enemies on show. He wears a charm around his head called Kupama. This special men’s jewelry is only transferable from fathers to sons upon accomplishment of the same deeds. It is stated that such exaltations of warriors are no longer practised in public but doesn’t mean that they don’t practice. From the Derg time onward, the government has banned such practices, and yet it is important for the young men to be prepared militarily on their trips to other territories, and such activities require organisation and education. Training in how to face the enemy is conducted privately by close family members and young men in the migration areas.
The act of violence against the enemy is not justified by its mere presence, but also by the form it takes. In other words, the degree of prestige that a warrior achieves depends not only on how many men he kills or cattle he raids, but also on the way in which he conducted the act of violence. As described above, the men who simply stole the cattle without facing the enemy are considered less daring than those who confronted the enemy face to face and killed them.

Men who raid in daylight are more courageous than men who wait until night time; men who finish off the enemy’s family during a raid have better reputations than those who merely steal the cattle while hiding behind the cattle camp; men who go to the enemy’s cattle camp and take cattle by force frequently, without being overcome, are more honoured than those who do it just once; and men who are in charge of fighting when they let their friends take the cattle are more competent than those who run with the cattle.

The notion of otherness is a theme not only for the Karrayu but also for settlers and outsiders. Outsiders who have recently settled in the Fentalle district and the surrounding areas perceive the Afar and the Karrayu as being different from the rest of the settlers who kill people for simple reasons or for no articulated reason at all. They describe them as people who kill humans ‘even to test their weapons’ or treat other humans as ‘an object to shoot at in order to test the accuracy of their rifles.’ For most outsiders, there is little difference between the Karrayu and the neighbouring Afar, who are thought by outsiders to look similar in terms of their styles and demonstrate the same violent behaviours. The fact that they carry their rifles around with them also creates the general impression amongst highlanders and settlers that they are unpredictable and aggressive.

Narration about the Karrayu’s and the Afar’s violent acts are ubiquitous and capricious as they have been told by many groups of people in the area. Although all of the narratives reflect the violent behaviours of the Karrayu, the stories vary depending on the kind of contacts that these groups of people have with the Karrayu. Narratives by truck drivers who travel the Djibouti–Addis route are particularly
persistent in one form of perception. The drivers often chat on their way about how the Karrayu suddenly emerged from an ambush and killed a driver who had unintentionally knocked over their goats or who had been completely unaware about an accident that had happened previously, but was killed as a scapegoat for representing the other. At the level of discourse, what is baffling for outsiders is why the Karrayu and the Afar consider the outsider as a category, instead of dealing with them as individual persons. In particular, the recounting of stories about the Karrayu killing innocent drivers has produced a generalised fear and characterisation of the Karrayu as irrational people. New visitors often ask whether it is safe to spend the night in villages without being killed by impulsive young men who want to test their rifles. This fear is shared by many outsiders, particularly by settlers who have not yet established contact with the Karrayu. Based on my observations, the relationship between old settlers and the Karrayu has improved over time. I was able to find women who had come to work in bars when Fentalle was just becoming a transit town after the completion of the reconstruction of the Djibuti–Addis railway, which had begun in 1917.

At that time, there weren’t many houses except a few thatched houses here and there owned by some Minjars along the street. The Karrayu did not know us well, we did not have contact with them, and we did not even need to know their language. We were interested in the traders who were coming through the town on their way to Djibouti and back to Addis. Our business was more with the traders. But we knew that the herdsmen did not like any other people coming from nearby regions to their territory. They had a particular hatred for drinking houses and sex workers. I cannot remember a single Karrayu man visiting the bars at that time. Even now, when they come to the town, they prefer to stay in hotels that are owned by Arsi and Ittu people. Nevertheless, they are slowly becoming modern and less aggressive (September, August, 2004, Lady from Minjar, Fentalle).

Although it is commonly believed by settlers, particularly recent ones, that the Karrayu are violent towards settlers, most of them also perceive that this violent behaviour has decreased over the course of time. Particularly settlers who owned hotels and sex workers have maintained a little contact with the Karrayu, if there was any. According to one of the girls who worked in one of the Fentalle hotels ‘They are
honest, but with no money to spend on women and beer, and, therefore, not worth soliciting. They hate us too, and I think they hate women working as sex workers. I never saw a Karrayu man coming to us and asking to buy sex’ (Personal interview, February 20, 2004, Fentalle).

5.2 Cattle Raiding and the Dual Legal System

For a discussion such as this, a general description of institutions such as courts, the police, the militia and the jail fails to fully explain how these institutions work at the grassroots level. Rules and laws that function according to these institutions are continuously tailored and made to fit local situations in order to make them workable and appropriate to local conditions and, in the process, they transform instead of always transforming the society. Cattle raiding is one major and important field where the local people and the state as an institution interact at the grass root level.

Institutionally, ethnic federalism, with its attendant division of the administrative units, has eased the process of state penetration into these areas. State functionaries, such as the police and the court, have become more visible at the district level. Consequently, the Fentalle district established its own militia, police and court; the court, however, is not independent from the district administration, which presently executes state policies at the local level. The court is accountable to the chairman of the district administration, and this chain of command is evident in the district’s organisational structure. Until 2005 the police had been concentrating solely on two towns, comprising two Kebeles. The 18 rural Kebeles were left to handle their own issues unless violence worsened and necessitated the deployment of militia, based on reports by the peace committee written by the chairmen of Kebeles. Around August 2005, due to the district reform, the 29 existing policemen were divided between the district’s rural and urban areas.

Officials in the district administration are very aggressive in controlling cattle theft through statutory laws. Cattle theft is both a criminal act and a concern of regional security. The administration holds a series of five-day training sessions for the peace committees, women representatives and young men involved in peace initiatives. The
administration often lacks funds to organise such training, and sponsorship is obtained from organisations such as Care Ethiopia, which has been involved in reproducing a series of transnational concepts that range from participatory development to conflict resolution.

Most of the groups who are involved in cattle raiding, now simply called ‘thieves’, conceal themselves from being identified by officials of the district administration. During my stay, I observed many young men who resisted going to the hospital in town after being shot in a cattle raid due to their fear of being identified as criminals by the district administration.

On the other hand, due to lack of budget for transportation and other related logistical difficulties, many officials in the district have been posted in town full-time. Even when they are called upon to intervene, they rarely reach the site in time. Thus, despite their increasing interest in controlling cattle theft, the outcome according to their own measurements has so far been insignificant. On the other hand, the Karrayu generally have an aversion to the idea of police and the court.

We hate court. It is a very difficult place. You have to stand in front of people for a long time and make a speech. There are not many people standing beside you. You cannot even move your hands as you wish. We are scared of it. Men who killed men go there; other men who are just suspected also go there. All of us stand there. We often do not know what has been decided. The language of the court is unintelligible to us. We have to look for other people who could tell us about the decision. We do not understand them. We like to avoid this entire problem; we would prefer to pay as much as possible to avoid going there (Group Interview, J, March 2, 2005, Metehra).

It is important then to elaborate on how the local people prefer conflicts to be treated and how conflicts are actually handled. For many violent encounters among the Karrayu and the Ittu, customary laws are seen as the best alternative forms of adjudication. In this customary adjudication by the council of elders, no one has to go to court, which takes a long time, nor to jail. Through local adjudication, homicides within are often prevented; and if they occur, they are forgiven and the victims are compensated. Domestic disputes over property and entitlement, issues of marital relationships, and conflicts between individuals from different families and clans

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19 Other people referred [to] as those who understand the formal communication styles of the court and modern law.
often go to the council of elders and Gada leaders who reside in the locality. Men who abuse their wives receive punishment that can even extend to flogging.

If, however, the nature of a conflict lies outside what is called the traditional adjudication of the elders, then it might involve the court. For example, land enclosure near the Awash River had become very popular for farming in order to prevent other groups and individuals from accessing the same resources. Such cases sometimes involve the court upon the request from the affected group.

Inter-group conflicts, however, are mainly addressed with same large-scale group acts of violence that can easily escalate to a higher level. Regional governments wish to ensure their control over the means of violence by dealing directly with cattle theft and the accompanying violence. During my stay, conflict between the Karrayu and their neighbours, particularly with the Afar and with the Argoba, had exacerbated, and I did not observe any local initiative towards conflict resolution, only retaliatory actions. Most attempts toward conflict resolution were organised between the confronting groups through government-represented elders in the presence of district officials in towns where the administration sit.

State intervention in conflict resolution is a recent phenomenon. The Karrayu prefer to settle conflicts through blood compensation within and violence with external neighbouring groups. It appears that no forum presently exists to adjudicate inter-group conflicts except that initiated by the regional governments and local NGOs.

In addition, it is a strongly held conviction of district officials that cattle theft and homicide are criminal acts and, thus, should be treated under statutory law. The district administration assumes the responsibility for providing stability in the area, which can only be accomplished by bringing criminals to court. According to chairman of the district:

Conflict in this area is a concern to us. People should not be left to feel insecure all the time. We have witnessed that those individuals who are directly involved are not often affected by the violence; instead, other people who have not heard of the incidence are prey to such violent acts by their mere belongingness to the group, and we have a responsibility to stop this from going wild. Blood compensation encourages killings because we know that many
Karrayu say to one another ‘Kill your enemy and you pay only three cows!’ We do not like to encourage such a predisposition. (Personal interview, B, August 18, 2005, Fentalle administration)

Other individuals from the district administration share a similar view; they see the establishment of statutory laws as an inevitable outcome and as an indication of the development of the society. The traditional institutions are considered contrary to the statutory law based on the misconception that they encourage the perpetuation of violence against individual human rights, such as an individual’s right to life. The traditional conflict resolution mechanism is considered outdated to the point of being incapable of handling matters related to modern times, where respect for individual human rights is becoming a primary concern. The functioning of the statutory law also confirms state control of its territory and its presence. The state mentioned control of violence by the state as a basic criterion for state recognition, and this can be achieved through the application of formal legal laws.

If we leave the Karrayu to settle their own issues, then a man kills a person and they want to redress it by paying money. If a man caught his woman committing adultery, then the husband will be the sole decision maker as to the form of punishment applied to her, and this raises the question of human rights (Personal interview, C, August 19, 2005, Fentalle Militia)

On the other hand, there are still more state officials at the local level who believe that ‘law’ only refers to modern statutory law and that the time the Karrayu spent without formal law is to be considered as ‘lawless’. I heard the following story from an old man who had been working in the area representing the government since the 1950s. He mentioned the story to exemplify the fate of a society without law.

There was a man who wanted to live in a place where there is no law. His friend told him there is a place without law and suggested that he go there. The man took his wife and children and left to go to this place. As he arrived at there, he was warmly welcomed by the residents. They provided him and his family with all they needed. As he was supplied with everything he needed, he thought of relaxing at home and not working because there was no law to force him to go to work. However, all the residents were working hard the whole day. After three days of relaxing, the neighbours came to see him and asked him why he was not working. They also
saw that he had a woman and children in the house. They asked him who the woman and the children were. He told them they were his wife and children. They asked him what that meant, and he explained that it means they belong to him. They all laughed and they informed him that there is no such thing (since ownership depends on law) in their community and for as long as they want, they share all the children and women equally. The man was so frustrated and went to the king to sue these men. The king listened to the case carefully and when the man finished talking, the king roared loudly with laughter. The king said that in his kingdom he never heard of a woman and children belonging to one man. In his government there was no law. When the man heard the final decision from the king, he came home and fell sick (Personal Interview Asseffa, 29 August, 2004, Haro Addi).

The old man mentioned that if the Karrayu were not bound by the formal law, then they would be the ones disadvantaged in relation to other groups who use modern law of handling violence. At the level of discourse, formal law is considered an important instrument for defending property such as livestock. The district administration attempts to avoid livestock theft and make possible the return of stolen cattle within the Oromiya region, but has no jurisdiction over the territories that fall under the jurisdiction of Afar and the Argoba regional governments. Until 2005 the Afar region had not established the department called Neighbouring Regions’ Affairs, and the absence of this office hindered collaboration at the district level. At a time when many Karrayu criminals were being sent to Assaiyta, the failure to bring in criminals who had been involved in cattle theft was attributed to lack of commitment by the Afar region to establish a strong department within its jurisdiction to collaborate with the Fentalle district on violence. ‘There are many occasions when we ask for the involvement of the zones in dealing with cattle theft and the accompanying killings because we also become emotionally involved and we cease to be neutral in dealing with the matter with other regions’ (Personal interview, C, N, 2005, Fentalle administration).

Despite the growing interest in handling cattle raids as crime, violent encounters related to cattle raids and human killings do not generally end up in court because, according to district officials, there is often insufficient evidence to file charges against the person/people behind such criminal acts. The district administration, however, regard cattle raiding as a prominent criminal act characterizing violence and
killing between the Karrayu and their neighbours. Thus, they accord great importance to tracing the criminals who stole cattle and facilitating the return of stolen cattle. Despite its wish to eliminate cattle raids, the district administration is nonetheless becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of information and cooperation from the local people.

On the other hand, the local people are unhappy about how the formal law at the local level was practised. An incident is mentioned as a case where going to court and jail thus is one if the most dreadful situation for the majority who never had such experience:

The prisons they sent our men to [were in] the Afar region. The Fentalle administration gave these men away to Assayita. I myself know these men. They were my friends. One of the men was called Bulla Jillo and the other man was called Fento Roba Ado. These men were warriors. Each one was worth fifty men. These men never left their friends during a raid against the enemy, never! They have crushed many men from our enemies! These are the men the government sent to Afar jail (Personal Interview, K, March2, and 2005 Arole).

5.2.1. The Uneasy Position of Elders as Mediators

Organisationally speaking, the peace and justice committee is comprised mainly of clan leaders, the district chairman and the commander of the police. Although the establishment of a peace and justice committee had a wider objective with regard to stability and justice, as mentioned before, its daily activity is much more focused on providing information to the district administration in regard to incidences of cattle raiding and violence against humans. Members of the committee also participate in both regular and occasional peace conferences and training sessions organised under the auspices of the district administration and other NGOs such as Care Ethiopia. The notion of elders as used by the local administration, however, consists of more than peace committee members and also includes representatives of the local people.

Clan leaders, Gada leaders, and chairmen of the Kebeles all constitute elders. On many occasions ‘representation’ refers to participation in the meetings and
conferences that are organised at various levels. Representatives are expected to make speeches that are intelligible\(^\text{20}\) to participants from the government as well as development organisations. While representation of the local people in peace conferences, as well as meetings at the district, zonal and regional levels is still an important task for many elders, it has lost its meaning and authority for the local people. Elder and peace committee representatives are well-versed in the language of government and non-government organisations. It is evident that most of these elderly individuals frame their communications according to the places and people with whom they interact.

The trend of co-opting local elders has become clearer since Haile Selassie’s time, when feudal lords were collecting taxes through the help of local leadership. Even during this time, the elders maintained a special position within the Gada system. Through different ceremonies and initiations, they went through different levels of education. Their official conduct and performance was closely supervised. Representation of the local people by the elders in communication with the state administration and development organisations initially followed a similar mode to that which was used for selecting elders within the local institutions. As a result, many of the elders who were co-opted by the state were also co-opted by non-governmental organizations.

In practice, those elders who have been co-opted by the district administration often lose legitimacy in the eyes of the local people. They attend all the state-sponsored peace meetings, and they have been indoctrinated with state laws and plans to such an extent that ‘They even forgot how to live in Karrayu tradition’ (Personal interview,, 2005, J, Gelcha). They receive money as a form of daily subsistence, allowances that pretty much suffice to spend the money in towns.

The loss of legitimacy for these representatives is evident as many local people even doubt their membership as Karrayu due to their loyalty to the local government. As a result, they have earned the name ‘luke’, which can be loosely translated as ‘informer’. I often heard people saying, ‘The government has established a

\(^{20}\) Intelligibility in this context means speaking development and state lexicons.
committee, a commander and a chairman among us. These are our own people, they sit among us and are paid by the government to inform about their own people.’

And yet the elders live simple life just like the ordinary people. Many of them could not write or read. They often live and own a house in the villages, and they equally share experiences with the rest of the locals. They are part of a lineage and a clan, and thus occupy a role to defend and protect their members within their own clan. The reward they receive for being a member of a peace committee rarely matches the gains they receive by staying loyal to the clan and to the local people. Being an elder in this context neither improves one’s local social status nor provides a better position within the district administration.

On the other hand, working with elders is considered the only best option available to deal with cattle theft for the district office. The assumption behind relying on the elders is that these elders and representatives are located in villages, live with the locals and thus know the individuals with whom stolen cattle may stay, as well as persons capable of performing a theft.

On the other hand, as members of a clan, they also remain responsible for contributing cattle if any has to be returned as members of the clan which is believed to commit the theft. In other words, they would be held responsible themselves. Their position is ambivalent as to report the names of persons involved in cattle raid (which is now cattle theft) is giving away their members for detention. This automatically antagonizes them with members of the clan. They, therefore, have to set a strategy for adjusting to both the state and their clan’s expectations.

The elders always prefer to cooperate on the retrieval of stolen cattle rather than giving away persons who commit the cattle raid as criminals from their own community. The elders should often play a double role – one for the government and another for their people. As part of the clan leadership, they wish to be loyal to their people and at the same time not to miss the economic and political advantages of working with the state. As such, they do not want to expose their members to the government who may detain them for theft. They, therefore, negotiate with their
people to return the stolen cattle directly to the victims. For the security department that is representing the state, the return of the cattle although is a mandatory for resuming peace and creating stability, as a state it also has an obligation and accords significance to detaining the person who is responsible for stealing or killing. This is where the elders are generally incapable of giving support. The elders can only help in finding the stolen cattle, but not reporting the names of persons who are involved in cattle raid. Although the person who stole cattle or killed the enemy may be known to them, they will never give that information away because that would cost them their relation with their own groups.

In some cases, the district administration expected more than what the elders could provide. Indeed, there were situations in which the elders did not know where the stolen cattle were. According to some members of the peace committee, the population increase made it difficult for them to be aware of every person’s actions. When a raid or killing occurs in such a large population, it is not known to them as quickly as it would have been the case in the past.

Another factor that challenges elders as mediators is that they are also part of the community instigating cattle raid and also victims another time. It is common to hear from officials that many elders have sons and nephews who directly participate in cattle theft and these elders are rarely prepared to inform about these individuals. On the other hand, an elder who has spent all day in conflict resolution meetings may find upon returning home that his cattle has been stolen. In such contexts, they are less likely to cooperate with the security department.

The conflict resolution initiatives always began by the security department in Fentalle district. Sometimes the militias were also present in the meetings. The number of people who gather in such a meeting is increasing from time to time, but they are less productive in terms of their outcome.

Conflicts may be resolved today, but tomorrow you may hear that more men have been killed. The elders are elected from the zone, district and Kebeles – they all gather under trees. The next day, we lose our camels and cattle, and if they did not manage to take animals, they kill people. You cannot trust them. The conflict
resolution even makes us relax which totally backfired, given the subsequent killings (Personal interview, K August 30, 2004, Boditi).

The district administration has become increasingly aware of the elders’ partiality in these matters. The office strongly argues that criminals should be presented before the law. Most criminals, even when found, are released for lack of enough evidence. The police are based in towns and thus are seldom witnesses the acts. The elders hide the criminals and the community does not cooperate in providing evidence.

Furthermore, the administration cannot force the elders to inform criminals and present evidence because then the elders would stop cooperating further with the state and no cattle at all would be returned. Partly because of their disappointment with this arrangement and partly due to the need to fulfill the participatory approach, the district administration has now changed the criterion for selecting elders for conflict resolution. Instead of elderly men, women and young men are now increasingly being co-opted as members of the peace committee.

It should be mentioned that the growing differences among regional governments in how they manage cattle theft has also affected the elders’ position with regard to reporting the names of persons who participated in such acts. The district administration office also noticed the varying levels of awareness about laws with regard to cattle raid and consequent killings between the Karrayu and their neighbours.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Argoba also tend to treat criminals as bandits. I will present here one of the peace meetings that was held between the Argoba elders and the Karrayu elders on December 17, 2005, just after a cattle theft had taken place. The administrations of the Fentale district and the Boset district of the Amhara region organised a meeting with the elders to discuss the insecurity that surfaced at that time in the Kebeles that border the two districts. The meeting followed up on previous meetings. There were two agendas for the discussion. The first was to receive a report on the elders’ accomplishment with regard to the return of stolen cattle by members of the two districts. The second agenda was to hear a report on the
general activities of the elders in maintaining regional stability. Sixteen elders were present, eight elders from each district. District representatives from the Department of Justice and Security were present to open the meeting and asked the groups to start reporting on what had been accomplished.

Representatives from the two groups began to argue about which group should start the report. The Argoba elders asked the Karrayu to start, and the Karrayu elders insisted that the Argoba start. Twenty minutes elapsed as they continued disputing over who should start and, eventually, the Karrayu agreed to begin.

We are neighbours to the Argoba people. We used to eat together and share everything together. Unfortunately, we have now clashed with them. In the past the Argoba cattle used to trespass through our land and so did our cattle trespass through their land. We elders would then do our best to trace the cattle and make sure that they were returned to their owner. Violence arose in the Boset district. We all were worried that the conflict would spread to our area too. We were working hard to prevent that from happening. Following this conflict, our cattle trespassed the Boda Kebelle and we were inquiring as to their whereabouts. They [the Argoba] told us that the cattle had been taken by Shifta not them. Then, we also refused to return their cattle that had trespassed through our district. The elders from Argoba came and pleaded to us to return the cattle. They told us they had no cattle to till the land and the calves were separated from the cows. We told them that the cattle were with us. But in order to return their cattle, they should return our cattle. We told them our strong belief that we are one. Thus, we returned their cattle (Personal interview N, December 17, 2005, people from Boset).

From listening to the reports, it became clear that the elders from both sides had not managed to trace the stolen cattle, and they informed the administration that they needed more time to accomplish the task. This was an official meeting, but the elders often stressed the importance of peace and brotherhood. As mediators, they try to be neutral in their speeches and depict the cattle theft and violence as an issue concerning others – that is, young men whom they should be dealing with the help of the district administration. I observed that the term ‘Shifta’ was mainly used by the Argoba elders when framing the actors involved in cattle theft. The label ‘Shifta’ has a long history, particularly in this part of the region. The circumstances in which it
emerged vary according to factors ranging from pauperisation of the disfranchised group to lawlessness, the administrative gap, and the state military’s inability to absorb a militant group that was, instead, left to plunder as a group or as individuals in order to win bread. The loose meaning bestowed upon the term has given rise to the possibility of its manipulation in the context of cattle theft. Shifta are used because of their elusive identity and because they exist outside the social control of the groups. Such manipulation of the elders with regard to questions of who stole the cattle automatically take the burden off of the elders to trace and present criminals in situations where they may be involved themselves or where tracing becomes costly in social terms.

5.2.2 How the Young Men View Their Own Position

In the context of this study, the references made to young men are fluid and generally refer to a group of men who are still actively engaged in cattle herding in distant grazing areas. In the traditional sense, as in the context of Gada, the youth as a category is unambiguous because they are categorised under a prearranged class and are aware of their status and capacity for definite periods of time. They are also aware of their rights in relation to other groups of people such as the elderly (Bernardi 1985).

As I explained earlier, most Karrayu families began sending their sons to school due to the increasing pressure from the outside, such as NGOs and the unpredictability of their future as pastoralists. As the Karrayu are still engaged in livestock production, they continue to require that some of their children work as herdsmen. Young married men also engage in herding in distant migration areas. It is often common to see two types of young men within a single family, one who never went to school and another who did. The young men who never went to school are mainly responsible for grazing their family’s cattle in distant areas, along with other young men in the neighbourhood. These are mainly the men who confront young men from neighbouring areas, such as the Afar, the Argoba and the Arsi.

For many young men in villages who have never had a chance to attend formal school, living on animal husbandry is the next best option to wage labour. Most
young herdsmen missed the opportunity to go to school because their parents had to let them stay and share the work of livestock production. These men are responsible for continuing the pastoralist lifestyle, learning pastoral traditions and customs, such as livestock production, family making, defense and engagement in cattle raid. I had a chance to interview a herdsman from Harro Kerssa Kebele on how he feels about his position as a herdsman:

My parents did not send me to school and I only know how to work with cattle. I am twenty years old. It is too late for me to go to school now. It takes at least ten years to finish high school. If I start now, I would be 30 by the time I finish high school. By then, I will be too old to have family of my own and to do many things in my life if I start at thirty. My father is a herdsman too and I followed him. I am also happy to follow my father in this respect and I want my son to follow me.

I know some young men, including my young brothers, who go to school, and we ask them what the benefits are. They tell us education makes life easier and an educated man can live on working less and doing easier things. I sometimes think of that and say to myself that if I were educated, I might not fight with the Afar and the Argoba. Life would be easier. I then feel badly that I am not educated. Now I am a herdsman, and I have to be good at it. I have to protect my cattle from enemies and make sure that I get them back by force if they are taken by force. This is necessary (Personal interview, August 29, 2004, Bulga)

It is evident that Karrayu pastoral mobility has been reduced to a great extent due to both endogenous and exogenous factors. The herdsmen found themselves maneuvering situations based on available information and strategies to access pasture lands and water points, which have become increasingly inflexible. The same is true for the neighbouring Afar young men who have been squeezed in their territory and pushed towards the Karrayu territory to access the meager resources available to them. Territorial infringement is just one aspect of pastoralism, and violence has always been there as a strategy for accessing resources across territories that were claimed by others. The manner of employing violence and its extent, however, was previously handled by local leaderships and alliances. As I have described in the preceding chapters, such mechanisms are changing. The challenge, however, is that despite the fact that pastoralism is under pressure, it is still carried out with a reduced mobility.

Young herdsmen are faced with a reality that is characterised by extreme poverty and few options to satisfy their economic and social needs. One herdsman said ‘I do not
own a hotel. I do not own a mill house like people in town. My mill house and my hotel are my camels and my cows. How can I remain quiet when my cattle is taken from me by force. I have to defend my stock from the enemies. In the process, I might be killed and I might kill my enemies (Personal interview, C, P, August 25, 2004, Dhebiti).

The extent of cattle theft seemed exacerbated for a number of reasons, one of which is the fact that the amount of livestock per household is generally decreasing and there is an increasing demand by young men to own cattle through cattle theft. Most men argue that they engage in cattle theft in order to regain the cattle that they have lost through the same act. Men who lost their cattle to rival groups when they were unprepared have only to organise themselves for another cattle theft in order to get their cattle back.

We need to be prepared at all times, and that is the best strategy to protect our property. We cannot rely on the government to protect our cattle from being raided by the Afar or the Argoba. If we, by chance, get raided by the enemy we plan among ourselves for the next undertaking. It may take time, but we have to take our turns; otherwise, we remain without our cattle. These conflict resolution meetings have no value at all. The elders meet and they tell us they will help us get the stolen cattle back, and they have never been capable of doing that (Personal Interview, R, August 25, 2004, Fentale).

These young men argue that the district administration and the elders are interested in discovering the names of those young men who participate in cattle theft for trial, but they are not engaged in protecting the properties of the herdsmen (i.e., cattle) from being raided by young men of neighbouring regions. The young men see the Fentalle district administration trying to be neutral when, in their eyes, the administration should be protecting them from their enemies. The young men also associate conflict resolution meetings with manipulation by the elders from the rival groups to avoid the other group’s retaliation so that they can keep the cattle they have stolen. One young herdsman stated that conflict resolution meetings are often held immediately after cattle raids or killings. The perpetrating group takes the initiative for the meeting. This is because they know that they will be retaliated against. The elders promise that they will help return the cattle back. The young men wait for their cattle,
and often, they are not returned; or when they are returned, they are never returned in full. Besides, one might have lost his brother or his friend, and there is no compensation to redress that. The only option at hand is to wait till the right time to fight back and regain the lost cattle (Personal interview, J, August 25, 2004, Fentalle).

From the young herdsmen’s perspective, the district administration’s attempt to end cattle theft within the framework of the existing situation is, to a large extent challenging, if not impossible mission. Among the herdsmen whom I talked to, most believed that district administrations in neighbouring regions defend their people who engage in cattle raids. They referred to the unity maintained by the people of the Argoba and the Afar, and showed discontent in regard to the Fentalle district administration’s failure to do the same for the Karrayu.

5.3. Co-opting Strategic Partners

5.3.1. Immigrants as Temporal Partners (Ittu)

During my first year of field work, the name ‘Karrayu’ was almost interchangeably used to mean ‘Ittu’. No demarcation was made between the Karrayu and the Ittu as far as violence with their neighbours, the Afar and Argoba, was concerned. I need to note here, however, that Karrayu interaction with the Ittu is a most complex and interesting topic, because the Ittu are currently the only Oromo group with whom the Karrayu include as an ally in violence against their enemies.

Before explaining who fights with whom and why, it is important to briefly mention why the Karrayu need alliances with the Ittu in order to fight their enemies. I am not discussing past alliances here per se, but recent and strenuous efforts to form alliances with particular groups. As I mentioned in earlier on, the Karrayu group recognises a power disparity between themselves and their enemies, the Afar and the Argoba. They often say that both rival groups have better access to automatic weapons than they do and are defended by their regional governments and elders. As the population and its heterogeneity increases on the basis of economic production, the chances of getting support from sub-clans within the same group are reduced. It is

\[21\] This is particularly evident between the Karrayu who reside near the bank of the Awash River and far from the river.
quite common to hear that the Dulecha Karrayu received no support from the Basso in their fight against the Afar along their borders. In addition, the Karrayu argue that they are losing young warriors who could defend their cattle because more and more young men are now going to school. Out of this growing frustration about domination and perceived progressive imbalance of power, it is inevitable that they would seek alliance among other groups who are willing to engage.

At a general and structural level, the Ittu are of the same descent and language, and they pay loyalty to internal blood compensation – all of which gives rise to a common identity construction. Thus, the Karrayu are generally more willing to create an alliance with the Ittu than with other groups with whom they possess no common lineage or organisations. The Ittu, however, are not the only group with whom the Karrayu share common descent and language. The Arsi (i.e., the Mecha in the neighbourhood and in distant areas whom they call ‘sons of Oromo’), also share a similar descent and language. Nevertheless, other than having established bond relationships and marital affiliations that made access of resources easier, these groups did not fight against the Afar and the Argoba every time that the Karrayu demanded their support.

The Arsi are among the strongest neighbours of the Karrayu who have maintained strong economic ties with the Afar and the Argoba. Most cattle that are raided from the Karrayu are sold to the Arsi or through the Arsi who function as the middle men. I was told by my informants that Arsi Oromo groups were excluded from the Karrayu category of ‘friend’ ten years ago because they turned down the Karrayu’s request of blood money that was demanded of them after the ferocious bloodshed between the two groups. From that time onwards, cattle raids between the two groups have been occurring at a higher rate than between any other groups (Ayalew 2001).

Compared to other Oromo groups in the neighbourhood, the Ittu are the group that is most eligible and available for alliance with the Karrayu. The Ittu have been progressively adopted into the Karrayu group and have proved to be dependable in their commitment to being part of the blood compensation. An alliance with them
could easily be struck through reactivation of their shared identity in order to band together in a time of violence. On the other hand, it is equally important to explain why the Ittu also consent to form alliances with Karrayu in their fight against their enemies. The Afar tend to view the Karrayu and the Ittu as one. Both groups speak the same language, they live in the same mixed villages, they retaliate against the Afar together, and they have the same dressing styles. Besides, the Afar call both groups by same name Galla\textsuperscript{22} and make no distinctions between the two at the time of an attack. The same is true with the Argoba who mix all Karrayu and Ittu groups together. This means that whether the Karrayu and the Ittu distinguish between themselves or not, as far as the Argoba and the Afar are concerned, they are the same and must be fought as one single enemy. It is, therefore, logical that the Karrayu and the Ittu create alliances with each other instead of trying to attack their enemies separately. Due to their alliance, the Ittu also are allowed to share resources that are at the Karrayu’s disposal. The Karrayu are the group of people who came to rescue the Ittu when the latter experienced great economic shock from the drought in 1984 and expulsion by the Issa and the Afar.

Many studies in this particular area, however, argue that the Ittu are increasingly taking over the Karrayu territory for farming, and that a fierce competition between the two groups has surfaced in recent times. Mentioned are places near the Awash River where cultivation from irrigated water is possible (Ayalew 2001).

5.3.2. Trying to Make the Best of the State’s Presence

At the level of the district administration, Karrayu representation is very low, mainly due to a lack of education and administrative capacity. Until 2005 the majority of the people who had been working in the administration were Oromos coming from neighbouring areas, such as Ittu, Ambo and Arsi. Karrayu resent the lack of Karrayu representatives in the administration and argue that it is one major reason why their

\textsuperscript{22} The name Galla, despite its pejorative meaning and reduced used in official discourses, it is still used by ordinary Afar herdsmen to refer to the Karrayu as well as the Ittu. It is worth mentioning, however, that the name is no longer officially used at the level of the elders, district administrators, researchers and officials due to its pejorative connotations.
interests are not pursued in conflict situations with neighbouring groups. In 2005 a chairman was appointed from the Ittu group, replacing a previous chairman who came from Ambo, west of Addis Ababa but had settled at Methara for long time.

The chairman, however, soon had to leave his position because of his enrollment in the Civil Service College. Following this, the Karrayu pleaded to the zonal administration to have a man from Karrayu group appointed as the next chairman in which they were successful.

It seems that the regional state tries to fill up some of the local administrative positions with people coming from the locality. However, due to position demand for an educated personnel, the Karrayu often fail to gain the job in their own district.
CHAPTER SIX

6. DRIVING FORCES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATIONS

6.1 Shifts in the Mode of Production

Structural change in the upper and middle valleys had considerable impact on the shift from subsistence pastoral production to farming. A huge amount of material has been produced illustrating changes in social phenomena, such as economic diversifications, impoverishment, conflicts and commercialisation in pastoralist areas. Some of these changes are viewed within the framework of structural changes, such as changes in the land tenure system, State policies of commercialisation of the economy and an increase in sedentary lifestyle. The shift from a principally subsistence pastoralist production system in the Rift Valley can similarly be explained in terms of such structural changes. Structural changes are often discussed not only as being driven by external factors, such as the presence and expansion of state, but as a response to endogenous forces, such as land degradation, dwindling livestock and population growth.

Throughout history, the state in Ethiopia played a very autonomous and leading role in land use policies, planning for transition of production systems, and political decentralisation. Since the 1950s, the state has played a significant role in creating a commercial economy in pastoralist areas by providing with land and legitimacy to private companies and then providing the legal framework for their functioning. The state (Kamara 2004) encouraged and provided formal support for cultivation, endorsement of private claims and subsidies for agricultural inputs, thereby creating incompatible interests that sometimes resulted in violence between groups and the state or among different groups, depending on the nature of the property rights. This, of course, depended largely on the manner in which these property rights were implemented, and the way in which the local people understood and integrated these rights into their own fashion of working.
Since the 1950s one important feature that changed the relationship between the Karrayu and the land is the shift of property rights from communal use of land to state ownership. In previous chapters, I have explained how new forms of property rights were enforced by the state with the aim of facilitating commercialisation. Evidently, economic commercialisation was sought more in the direction of large-scale mechanised farming than within the framework of pastoral production. The state considered the Rift Valley the most suitable land for the production of cash crops such as sugar cane, fruits and cotton, and it was absolutely necessary to certify its sole ownership over specific land before attempting to produce anything.

On the other hand, it is obvious that water and pasture land are important resources for the pastoral production system as well. Nonetheless, the availability of water and pasture depends largely on the prospect of migrating over extensive areas following the seasonal availability of these resources. For most Karrayu pastoralists, rangelands and water sources on the bank of the Awash River are very important resources during the dry season. With the establishment of commercial farming, however, both the state and the Karrayu laid claim to the same resources. The state’s assertion of their ownership and use of the land had legal support, and this same legal entitlement prevented the pastoralists from using these resources for grazing. Few Karrayu pastoralists however adopted to the new property rights because they could not depend on subsistence pastoral production system.

For the majority of Karrayu pastoralists, access to the Awash water outlet in particular became challenging, but when water became very critical, the Sugar Estate avails water to the pastoralists by switching on its water canals whenever it wishes. The Sugar Estate maintains exclusive rights over these water canals, and accordingly, determines the time and amount of water to be channelled out to the pastoralists. It is not uncommon to see the Estate using these water canals as a means of controlling those pastoralists whom it deems disobedient by switching the canals on and off. Conflicts often arise between Karrayu pastoralists who would like to ignore such exclusive rights of the Estate and the Estate, which justifies its position on the basis of its legal entitlement. Access to water sources in particular has become very critical.
as the attempt made by the state to provide alternative sources failed, due to its quality and management, and even exacerbated conflicts between the Karrayu and their neighbours. This is particularly noticeable in areas of Dinkuku pond and Kesem River, where both Afar and Karrayu livestock come together for watering; this also generates situations where young men from both sides confront each other.

What should be noted, however, is that the changing relationship to land and water resources or changes in property rights among the Karrayu did not come about solely because of the presence of the commercial farms, but also due to the increased flow of Ittu farming groups from neighbouring areas (Ayalew 2001). The Karrayu have been overwhelmed by the ever-increasing number of Ittu farmers who keep enclosing land along the banks of the Awash River for the purpose of farming and grazing. The sedentary lifestyle of many Ittu, followed by the Karrayu along the irrigated schemes, is also encouraged by state incentives, such as the accessibility of irrigated water and inputs for agriculture such as improved seeds and tools.

Enclosing land for private farming and grazing has transformed the conceptualisation of communal ownership that gives all Karrayu the right to enjoy equal access to available resources, according to local rules. Some Karrayu have responded to the situation by tailoring a solution from the same problem, that is, they have begun enclosing land for private use to ensure their access to the irrigated rangelands and water points and prevent others from expanding further. This, however, has caused conflict among different groups within the Karrayu and their neighbours because not all Karrayu have equal opportunities to enclose land. Still, a significant number of Karrayu pastoralists reside outside these areas, lead a subsistence pastoralist production system, and need to have access to these rangelands and water points, particularly during the dry season. These groups of people can only benefit if access is based on communal land ownership and not on private ownership, whereas farming is viable if the individual is first ensured his exclusive rights, or on the anticipation that others would enclose land even if he would not. Competition and conflict in these particular areas are becoming increasingly pernicious and routine, mainly between individuals from the Karrayu and Ittu groups. Those individuals who
have enclosed plots of land assume ownership rights and often engage in farming, renting out the land to individuals to farm on the basis of crop sharing, and giving out sections as gifts to friends and relatives. This is true of areas in Abadir, Gelcha and Elalla.

To return to the state-owned commercial farms, during the earlier periods of their establishment, the role of Karrayu pastoralists in production within the Estate was insignificant, mainly due to the availability of surplus migrant labourers who were more efficient in farming than the Karrayu. Besides, the Karrayu themselves opted to engage more in livestock production than in farming. They also often gave the impression to the Estate that they despised farming. Nevertheless, even in the 1960s, there were a few occasions when they were given a chance to work in guard positions. The men generally preferred to control the livestock and often sent the women to work in the plantation.

The Karrayu’s intension to engage in the Estate increased out of desperation, particularly during times of drought, when many pastoralists among them lost significant amounts of their livestock and became destitute. Nevertheless, the Estate is basically a profit-making establishment that has standardised eligibility for certain tasks on the basis of economic calculations, such as efficiency. At present, the Karrayu are eligible for a very limited number of positions, such as watering the plantation and guarding. They are not qualified for many of the other tasks, even stalk cutting, because their efficiency and experience does not match the standards set by the Estate. A number of my informants expressed their grievance towards this little involvement in wage labour. They often see migrants dominating the plantation work.

Wage labour, even when it is available, does not usually compensate livestock production. Most wage labourers are still envious of those who posses livestock. Besides, whenever such jobs are available, they can only be seasonally, and thus cannot produce as much pay required to sustain their large families. Along with wage labour, some have started farming near the watered rangelands on the banks of
the river, leaving their families with the remaining livestock in temporary settlements. Given that many of them still keep livestock, the household clearly has to reorganise to engage in farming. Thus, what often happens is that, in the case of households maintained by men, the man spends long days in distant places around irrigation schemes where he has found land available for cultivation with part of his family (often first wives and some young men), while the rest of his family (young wives with young children and older men) remains behind and assume responsibility for livestock management, which was traditionally the men’s sphere of domination.

It is also very important to look at the distribution of costs and gains and thereby identify those who have benefited from this gradual shift from a principally subsistence pastoral production to farming. It can be stated officially that most top management officials of the Metehara Sugar Estate are content about the increasing profits that the Estate is making. They often explain that the profits are made for the nation as a whole and that it is very crucial to keep up with the industry. They argue that the importance of the Estate should be understood in light of national development, and that gains and costs cannot be judged in terms of the Estate’s relationship with the local pastoralist groups who always get irritable at the mention of the Estate. Karrayu have so far provided little in terms of supply of labour to commercial farms, such as the Sugar Estate, particularly in the early stages following its establishment.

The other opportunity created by land use change has been the hiring of labour. This happened in situations where the pastoralists themselves were aware of the availability of farmlands in areas where the traditional clan ownership had been dismantled, and the best possibility for accessing such land was on an individual basis for the purpose of farming. Many Karrayu pastoralists have, therefore, taken land as farmers and hire labours who work on the farm and take their own share of the produce.

It is evident that most Karrayu who engaged in farming with the long term consideration of eventually changing to farmers have experienced a gradual
impoverishment in regard to their livelihood. In addition, overlapping claims over ownership of land have often been a bone of contention among different groups who would like to manipulate the absence of any definable property rights.

6.2 The Interplay between Actors

Structures and reproductive requirements can cause and transform nothing. But if an explanation is sought for the emergence, persistence and transformation of social phenomena, the focus must be on a different mode of determination where the projects, strategies and tactics of collective actors (operating within structural limits allowing a lesser or greater number of alternatives) are the centre of analysis. Any attempt to brush aside actors, or to present them as mere effects of systemic constraints, inevitably leads to teleological explanation (Mouzelies, 1980: 367).

In this section, I will attempt to look at the interplay among actors through their action. That is, appropriation, resistance through avoidance, and violence.

6.2.1 Appropriation

At the time pastoralism was being discussed as a development agenda, the concern over violent conflicts in pastoralist areas gained impetus across the country. Most development institutions and scholars established a direct link between violent conflicts and the scarcity of resources such as land and water. These same scholars pointed out that any other ‘assortment of factors’ that have contributed to violent conflicts in pastoral areas should be understood within the domain of this linkage (Flintan 2002). Violent conflicts in pastoralist areas, it was believed, could be resolved mainly by dealing with equitable distributions of scarce resources and reclaiming the local institutions that empower marginalised groups. Such arguments often base on the existing intervention of the state and big investors and thus creating imbalance of distribution of resources and generating conflicts.

A general belief is held particularly by the state that violent conflicts in pastoralist areas are of major concern because they render wide-ranging negative repercussions
on local and national development. Strengthening the state’s capacity to have control over violence as well as over resource management by formalising rules such as statutory laws and establishing courts, police, jails, and peace through the work of stability departments and committees is considered to be of paramount importance. There was much hope that these institutional arrangements might help resolve conflicts, and sensitize the pastoralists to changing their attitudes of pride and prowess over violent behaviour. From the onset of these programmes, however, it was clear to the officials, particularly at the local level, that the outcome of these formal programmes and rules much more dependent on the commitment and perceptions of the local actors (e.g., local representatives, peace and justice committee, elder councils, and ordinary people) than the rules themselves.

Within a short time of staying in the field, one soon realises that conferences, public meetings and trainings on stability and conflict are very pervasive and endemic to the district, to the extent that practically the whole district was consumed by official public meetings. As a researcher, it was difficult to arrange meetings, not only with the district administration officials, but also with locally represented elders because of their unrelenting preoccupation with meetings and conferences that were already underway. Conflict/peace conferences were more visible focal points of collaboration than any other development collaboration between these elders and the district officials. Participants in the conferences were selected based not only on their knowledge of the local situations, but also based on their ability to be precise (i.e., having developed adequate formal language skills), concise, and willing to cooperate with the local administration. The acquisition of state’s language of conflict by the elders is evident. ‘We fight among ourselves because we are backward and we need to change this violent behaviour’ is a very common statement made by elders who are trying to please state officials, development agencies, researchers and even tourists. The local people adopt the term ‘criminal’ when they appeal to the government to support them in repossessing stolen cattle and organising peace conferences.
Currently, the elders prefer to carry out conflict negotiations between clans and households in towns where state officials sit than villages where ordinary pastoralists live. Based on the information I received from my participants, I can infer two explanations of this phenomenon. The first explanation is that the provision of money for transportation and food during development agency and state-organised meetings. This is often used as an opportunity for local elders to continue discussion on their own local affairs in towns accompanied by chat ceremony. Many elders are now less interested in holding intra-group negotiations of any kind in villages under shades. The dissemination of information to the villagers requires other small sessions in their respective villages. What is more significant about this kind of town-based meeting is that the elders can gain more information about the state easily (which is based in the town), its plans, and its positions, if they come to town.

Women have recently been forced to participate in such meetings as some elderly men have been found to be uncooperative, as in the case of identifying cattle looters. Depending on which organisation hosts the conference, meetings are held at district, zonal, regional and national levels. Although the government-represented elders are often known as ‘informers’ due to their major task of identifying individuals who had raided livestock, they are also used by the local people as links with the local administrations. They are important source of information for men who are engaged in raiding, for instance, and cannot escape being identified. Once the elders have identified the men who stole the cattle, they start negotiating with the local administration to organise a peace conference with the victim group. The elders can use their position and autonomy to propose conditions to the local administration. This means that they can state to the administration that they will only collaborate in identifying the stolen livestock as long as the administration does not give the criminals away to the other conflicting party, but instead organises a conflict resolution meeting, during which peace is made. This arrangement with little comfort to the administration proceeds and forms part of the peace process, retrieval of the stolen livestock.
6.2.2 Resistance

Pastoralists’ resistance took different forms depending on where and when it occurred. I argue that, in recent times, avoidance has been one form of resistance toward state intervention in local conflict and conflict resolution. Among the pastoralists and the elders, opinions with regard to conflict resolution conferences are diverse. Many Karrayu pastoralists, particularly the young herdsmen, are very doubtful about success of conflict and organisation of peace conferences because they see these as strategies used by their enemies to gain advantage over them.

A herdsman from the Boditi area once said to me ‘The peace conferences themselves made us believe that the problem with our enemies was solved. We came back home believing peace was made and there would be no more violence. Once we were back home, we realised that the peace meeting was just a counterfeit and all our cattle are gone, raided by our enemies (Personal Interview, 2004: Boditi).

In this thesis, I am discussing protracted violent conflicts that transformed in terms of their content, actors and strategies. The forms of resistance are not always violent and their contours are continually shifting, such that not all of it can be comprehensively grasped within a single research. For this reason, I only present a few cases where I noticed resistance by the local people in relation to the emerging notion of conflict and conflict resolution.

Despite the few successes that they achieved in negotiating with the local state on behalf of the local people, the majority of government-represented elders are still considered inefficient, self-serving and lacking sufficient knowledge of other conflicting group’s tactics of domination. The Karrayu elderly men who stay in the villages and not co-opted by the state or NGOs gave greater recognition to young men who were able to go attend school and achieve a certain level of education. More local people are increasingly opted for young students to represent them in any type of negotiation/collaboration with outsiders. In addition, Karrayu students are very critical about government-represented elders. They often accuse these elders of

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On the other hand, the students raise several questions with regard to the amount and forms of compensation for land taken for mechanised farming, the role of NGOs in the area, and the politics of food aid and how it should be distributed. These students believe that the Karrayu do not benefit from the development work initiated by the Oromiyaa regional state and NGOs. They do not perceive that the Karrayu have benefited in any way from the development activities that have been going on in their areas. There was a strong tendency to form organised groups and articulate their problems and needs with possible plans for mitigations. Most young men personally considered migration to other areas as the best solution for their situation.

Against this background, students organised and formed a union called ‘Woldda Mancaafftuo doofumma’, which means ‘anti-illiteracy programme’, aimed at creating awareness about education across villages, maintenance and preservation of traditions, and awareness about HIV/AIDS. Membership was initially limited to the Karrayu group, but later opened to other Oromo-speaking people as well. In its initial stages, members were 150, and they gained a very positive reputation. The union had representatives in each village, consulting village elders in matters that were relevant to them. Villagers try to raise local funds for the union in the form of sheep, camels and goats to enable students to accomplish their tasks. Members of the union claimed that the district administration was initially positive about the union, but later changed its attitude and even refused to collaborate or recognise the union as official. The students stated that the district administration had refused to provide transport services for students on their way to villages, and had even begun accusing villagers and elders of promising the union money while they had refused to contribute to development work initiated by the district administration. The elders’ positions were ambiguous. In one hand, they insist on the union to first gain recognition by the district administration so that they work as legal instituion. The Sugar Estate also promised to provide support for the union, only if they can get a recommendation letter from the district administration, which was impossible to attain. On the other
hand, the union was thought to be promising as it was locally initiated and legitimate to the local people, thus can voice local concerns and decisions. Nonetheless, the union slowly weakened as a result of lack of support from the local administration and institutions and its size was reduced to 50 by the time I completed field work in 2005.

6.2.3. Violence

Within the framework of pastoralism, violent conflicts are used as strategies for self-protection and are based on the ideology of maintaining group honour and reputation. They are reproduced through socialisation within local institutions and narratives, and members of a group employ violent conflicts as self-fulfilling actions of these narratives. Violent conflicts are often considered as part of the pastoralist culture (Galaty & Bonti 1991; Schlee 1994).

The understanding of violent conflicts as inherent to pastoral culture by no means contradicts its legitimacy or logic to those involved. This follows what Riche (1996) stated about violence. That is, violence cannot take place if it is not considered legitimate by at least one of the actors or perpetrators. It does not just take place anywhere or for no reason. Violent conflicts, within the framework of pastoral productions, are highly selective and rational actions. Physical equilibrium is maintained through animal and human mobility. Physical mobility often leads to a forceful occupation of territories claimed by other groups, which are sometimes sedentary. Nevertheless, violence does not occur every day because the withdrawal from a specific place and the establishment of alliances through cross ties are also used to prevent violence. And yet violence could be used as the most efficient and available means to recoup losses during unpredictable natural calamities, such as droughts that decimate the livestock.

In this context, livestock for pastoralists is more important than land and thus is often a source of conflict. Violence is not only produced by conflict, but also used as a means to end conflict.
Factors that underlie a shift in economic production from pastoralism to sedentary farming are explained in previous sections. With a growing tendency toward farming, land obviously becomes a major source of conflict as the notion of access and ownership is redefined and land becomes less and less accessible by the local pastoralists. Encroachment by outside groups, as well as private enclosures for farming and private grazing have aggravated conflicts between groups that had contradictory land use practices. As a result, more and more conflicts have become individualised, transforming inter-group conflicts to intra-group conflicts; this change, however, by no means implicates a complete departure from the old forms of conflicts.

A large area of land still remains available for pastoral production, and conflicts occur as a result of cattle raids and pastoral warfare. There still exist pastoral groups who need to cross boundaries into other regions and engage in physical confrontations with neighbouring farming groups. Conflicts appear to be an ongoing, almost a permanent, feature, and violence underlies the surface, always ready to emerge.

One of the attributes of recent violent conflicts is a shift from being organised to disorganised in nature. When violence occurs in an organised form, it means that a group collectively assumes leadership for its employment as well as responsibility for its repercussions. Collective representation is central to the pastoralist production system, and compensation is possible only if contestants are made visible through collective representation. Organised violence can increase efficiency and become more productive than destructive. The present reality in the upper and middle Awash Valley is far from what we can call organised violence. Following local leadership of resource management and the ban of organised cattle raids, no laws or institutions are in place that permit and defend pastoralist property, be it rangeland, water or cattle. Instead, the newly emerging informal rules and institutions create access for non-pastoralist groups at the expense of the local pastoralists. This context only transforms the manner in which violence is conducted. That means in such context, all important needs in life can only be met through the use of coercion.
What happens on the ground is that young married and unmarried men who engage in livestock production secretly plan to invade neighbouring groups for cattle raiding. Such invasions are often disconcerted, may be spontaneous and are rarely organised due to the young men’s anxiety about being caught and identified by state officials and peace committees. Thus, they perform violence in haste and tend to be more destructive. The stolen animals are also immediately dispatched and sold in distant markets before they can be identified, instead of being distributed to clan members who would later assume responsibilities. In this manner, violence as well as responsibilities become individualised as the rest members of the clan are not aware of whether the raid has been conducted or not, and have received no share of the booty.

The other recent context that has contributed to the transformation of the conflict is the process of decentralisation. The transformation is twofold. Firstly, the state as a formal institution came closer and is more visible than before. This implies that boundaries have become more fixed and that control has strengthened, exacerbating and creating new forms of conflicts over boundaries and giving them new patterns. Secondly, the delimitation of administrative boundaries has limited the relative ease of pastoral mobility, and caused the Karrayu to enter in a pattern of confrontation with neighbouring groups over resources across borders.

6.3 Cultural Confrontation and Negotiations

Every shift in economic production essentially moves through a particular political and cultural stream, and every structural change stimulates cultural and political encounters. Values in regard to land and water, their use and management, violence, stability, marriage, participation, even development as articulated by the local Karrayu are often at variance with those of outsiders, such as state representatives, NGO officials, or development experts. These differences of opinions are the products of differential patterns of socialisation, life experiences and realities, and often lead to cultural confrontations and clashes of values. These clashes or confrontations of opposing cultural models and values are important starting places
for changes. This particular theme is intended first to show such discrepancies in meanings as a source of conflict, particularly as they are assigned in the area of land use and management, conflict and conflict transformations, and later to explain their appropriations by different actors to elicit change.

Cultural confrontation with outsiders has been an ongoing process since the beginning of human history for the Karrayu who have always had to coexist with outsiders, such as farming groups who followed different principles of production and organising. As pastoralists, the Karrayu have had to find a means of safeguarding their territories from farmers who often engaged in expansion, domination and encapsulation (Fratkin 1997). The interplay between surrender and domination are often considered as rules of interacting with others.

As mentioned before, political and development interventions through formal State structures and development agencies in this particular area began in the 1940s. Both the state and development agencies share similar attributes in their pattern of intervention because both are acculturated outside and attempt to place a number of transnational concepts to the local context. The motivation for importing such concepts from dissimilar and normative cultural models is based on development values and strive for positive social change. Nevertheless, since the principles of the governance and development are often fashioned by external forces, the interaction of the state and NGOs with the local people is frequently characterised by interference by the former. This particular process of interference, however, cannot be understood separately from power dynamic.

For this particular aspect of the discussion at the local level, the merging of the state and development agencies is deliberate because both the state and NGOs assume development responsibilities. Their operation and interaction with the local people is similar in the sense that it is subject to power relationships. That being said, it is no wonder that a discrepancy exists between the local people and state/development agencies in regard to meaning and values, derived from varied cultural affiliations.
Both endorse their own collective memories and experiences in order to accrue meaning over a specific social fact.

What is often presumed is that such discrepancies in meaning and understanding of certain social phenomena such as violent conflict is slowly appropriated, tailored and made sense of by the local people for the purpose of cooperation and coordination. Nevertheless, the process of local appropriation is not straightforward, and quite often, such discrepancies cause a communication void that often leads to misunderstanding, misrepresentation and unfruitful cooperation before the intended outcome. I will further elaborate this statement by looking at some discrepancies in values with regard to land, land use and violent conflict.

Based on the various qualities it has, the Karrayu divide land into sections that are diverse albeit interrelated with one another. Pastoralism as an economic production is viable only with the exploitation of all the various parts of the land – we often call them ‘ecological zones’ – that are spread out over an extended space and time period. The distinction that local people make between wet-season and dry-season grazing areas is an apt demonstration of an understanding of the land as a whole. The trees, the mountains, the waters cannot be viewed in isolation from each other. The meaning bestowed on the land is even more complex when symbolic meanings are added to it. The land is often viewed as symbolising the deepest sense of expression of one’s spiritual distinctiveness from others. These values that the Karrayu bestowed on the land and water extend beyond their practical use as mere economic resources.

On the one hand, it is known that the state is the ultimate owner of the land, and this entitlement gives it the option of making decisions with regard to the use of land. On the other hand, customary rights are also recognised in the Constitution, and the regional governments are granted full power to recognise these customary rights. This being very normative, however, the two systems (the official and the local) carry two very different sets of values and contradict each other when applied on the ground. For an ordinary Karrayu man, there is no valid explanation as to why his clan cannot maintain its previous control over the use of the land and why land should be
allotted by the district administration to outsiders, such as the Itu and Argoba people, for farming purposes. Simply put, at the local level, there is an absence of communication with regard to questions such as whose control over the land is legitimate.

One example may serve to illustrate this point. When the elders representing their respective villages sit down with government representatives and Estate officials to negotiate land claims, different meanings permeate the communications and create ambiguity. ‘We need compensation, not because we are to be displaced, but also because this is Karrayu’s land and we are selling our land’ is common statement made by local elders. In local discourse about the land, the Karrayu’s ownership of land takes a high value. References to local names for plots of land, graveyards, and ritual residences are indications of territorial ownership. They also argue forward and backward in time and narrate stories about how the Methara sugar estate has failed to fulfil its promises. They also often end up to such socially embedded meanings to demand a warranty by which the state will be held accountable for its future deals.

In contrast, for local district administrators, the past has little to do with the present. There is often a tendency to cut off the past because it is considered a major obstacle in the way of achieving ‘development.’ As far as they are concerned, there is no link between graveyards or past local names and ownership and rights over resources. Rangelands that are not currently being used are often considered idle, vacant and capable of being used efficiently with the development of technology, such as irrigation schemes. The expansion of irrigation-based agricultural schemes that developed on the banks of Awash River is evidence for a purely utilitarian conception of the land. Development planners think of the land in terms of its productivity, based on cost and benefit analyses and thus, argue agriculture is more profitable than pastoralism because of its increased production per capita.

While the contemporary Ethiopian Constitution indicates that all land still belongs to the state, the appropriation of land is easily achieved on such basis that provides an easy entry and a quick benchmark to influence and, if possible, make a quicker arrangement with the local people without returning to local narratives of history,
spiritual connectedness and cultural meanings. The lack of cultural fluency on the side of the development planners has often made dealings with the locals tedious and slow. The sugar estate officials, for instance, are not really interested in hearing the elders say that the land they are negotiating over belongs to the whole Karrayu people without specifying a particular group. The officials often tend to ignore complexities and challenges, and seek a quick resolution in order to proceed with their plans. My informants mentioned to me that the Sugar Estate put pressure on local elders to sign contracts on behalf of the pastoralists. These contracts are agreements between the elders and the state for future expansion of the sugar plantation and the appropriation of more land from the Karrayu.

Another sphere of contradiction surfacing at the local level between the Karrayu and the government representatives/ development agencies is in the area of governance. Ethnic regions received full recognition in Articles 74 and 78 of the Constitution in regard to customary and religious courts of law. The Constitution also gives the regions the power to recognise customary resolution mechanisms (Unruh 2006). Following ethnic federalism, the Karrayu pastoralists had hoped very much that self-governance would provide them with an opportunity to receive support from the Oromiyaa regional government that had been officially established. From the point of view of the ordinary Karrayu, noticeable in their daily discourses, self-governance mean increased alliance and shared gains from spoils as it true of the clan leadership.

In the context of clan organisation, clan members provide both support and advice in times of conflict. The clan, at most, attempts to avoid pinpointing the individual. A member is not given away to enemies for trial, even if he was involved in homicide. And if self-governance means being governed by one’s own people, then support is sought from administrators in times of conflicts with neighbours. In other words, the local administration is expected to act as an extension of clan principles if it must be considered as belonging to the self. The essence of self-governance, therefore, does not fit the Karrayu’s needs as long as their regional government fails to support them in defending and defeating their neighbouring enemies. At the level of local
discourse, they often argue that lack of the regional government involvement in violence in support of them is because they are not represented by Karrayu.

The local administrators, however, stress the significance of implementing state policies and rules that are not necessarily same as local needs. Local officials are required for instance to keep records of homicides, identify the names of those killed if possible, the names of suspected criminals. In the case of violence and homicide, it is considered to be of utmost importance that instigators and participants come before the law and face prison terms. This is inconceivable for the Karrayu, who believe that the individual participating in violence should live incognito while the clan assumes responsibility and pays the compensation that has been set by the victim group. The support of the state is being sought only to facilitate such compensation.

Nonetheless, state representatives need to follow the rule of law and demand its operation by referring to policies and laws, as this is the condition against which their work is evaluated. Neutrality at the level of rhetoric is often emphasised by these officials when dealing with violence. Nevertheless, such a tendency to maintain a neutral position is by no means appreciated by the Karrayu, who believe that such neutrality is falsely maintained only to exclude them from gaining power over their enemies.

*The Police, Court and Jail*

It is critical to avoid the abstraction of the state as an autonomous agent and instead to focus on the individuals who make up the state (e.g., bureaucrats, military, etc.) and how they implement, manipulate and instrumentalise official laws and policies.

Until 2005 the district police have been posted in Fentalle and Haro Adi towns and thus their function was restricted to handling crimes related to people in town. After the reform in 2005, however, the existing police staff was split between the towns and the rural areas. This meant that their work slowly expanded, albeit with little capacity to deal with territories that are located outside their control. Police stations in towns often deal with settlers and rarely relate with the Karrayu. The Karrayu
hardly ever come to the police to inform crimes, rather they tend to hide from the police whenever possible, even when they are the victims of criminal acts. The police, court and jails are phenomena that have been introduced very recently, particularly after decentralisation when the regional government became stronger and more visible in its institutional form. It is difficult to claim that these statutory mechanisms and legal codes are functioning according to the written rules. What can be said, however, is that the introduction of these mechanisms is underway. The attempt to exchange suspected criminals between the Afar and the Oromiyaa regions for trial is one instance that illustrates such an attempt. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the Karrayu find the court language difficult to understand and complaints are widespread about its incomprehensiveness. The same is true for manner which the court requires such as special styles of presentation and lucidity with regard to communication.

The third sphere of divergence in meanings between the local people and state/development agencies is the conflict itself. In recent times, many regional governments that encompass pastoral areas have expanded their primary roles to include dealing with conflict (Abule 2005). Conflict resolution process as it is initiated by the local state administration and NGOs, entails confrontation or interpenetration of different worldviews, value systems and socio-political experiences.

From the point of view of development agencies including the state, violence is often seen as destructive and problematic for achieving growth and, hence, their intervention often follows a hierarchy of problem-solving activities through what is often regarded as a planned and ‘rational’ way of solving a particular social phenomenon. The state conception of conflict resolution follows standard models and makes the local means of dealing with violence unnecessary. Inter-group violence, whether aimed at showing competency in safeguarding a group’s property, redistributing resources or testing contenders, is construed as anti-stabilising, irrational and to be prevented and halted. The district administration representing the state takes a supreme role as a problem-solving institution with the support of NGOs working at the local level.
From the point of officials working within the administration as well as NGOs, intergroup violence is certainly an attribute of people who are less civilized. They, therefore, strive to engage local elders and women, in addition to the young men who are active in violence, to help the society in eradicating it. The elders are co-opted as close associates to the state and the NGOs as agents who can bring this task to the local people and teach them about the backwardness of inter-group violence.

The government representatives expect the elders to speak in terms of specific details that lead to practical solutions capable of being implemented and measured, such as a list of people involved in the act of cattle raiding or human killings. Discussions on processes, feelings and the larger context of conflicts are not important to them. That is why many of the records and reports on the desks of the NGOs and district administration fail to grasp the crux of the conflict situation.

As it constitutes past practices and patterns for collective action, a common understanding of violence exist among the Karrayu. The resolution of conflict is accordingly shaped and outcomes are determined by both collective and personal memories of state-society relations, local initiatives and inter-institutional struggles.

Despite such formal campaigns and sensitisation accomplished by development agencies’ and state officials, however, there is built up information and knowledge among of the Karrayu with regard to social realities, interests and consequent actions to be taken. When dealing with neighbouring groups who are constantly infringing territories in the absence of any strong institution to defend their property, the use of violence is often the most attainable means of justice. Here, the discrepancy between locals’ and outsiders’ understanding of violence is huge.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7. A WORD ON VIOLENCE: WHAT DOES CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION LEAD TO, IF NOT PEACE?

The transformation of conflicts can be discussed from a range of angles, such as the shifts that occur in the content of conflicts, the nature of actors and the strategies. It is important to note that, in this specific context, I understand conflict transformation in terms of such features. Nevertheless, the research does not argue that conflict transformation has been a peaceful process, nor do I imply that it has led to peace. So, why has conflict transformation not led to peace?

7.1 The Depersonalisation of Violence and the Meaning of Peace

In most cases, the imposition of a different worldview and socio-political setting by outside institutions often causes an opaque interpretation and utilisation of cultural values from both sides as they deem fit.

It is relevant to ask whether ‘peace’ meant the same thing and was sought for same reasons by all involved actors in order to see what has gone wrong in the process of conflict transformation. I have witnessed a series of peace conferences that took place at the district level from 2003 to 2005 between the Karrayu and neighbouring groups, such as the Afar and Argoba. The loose meaning bestowed upon the term ‘peace’ has given rise to the possibility of manipulating it in order to undermine the rationale behind it and disparage its effect if the desired goal is not obtained. In the context I observed, peace conferences have meant nothing beyond retrieving stolen cattle. Conferencing is a very commonly used practice at the district and national levels. Cattle raiding often are at their peak when peace conferences were held, changing the balance of power between the various groups. As we saw between the Afar and the Karrayu, commitments do not exist between different actors.

In all the conferences, there were no actors from either the victim or the perpetrator sides of the conflict. Conflict resolution conferences are big meetings between
representative elders from each group and state representatives. Both the officials and the elders, however, try to maintain a ‘witness’ position, wherein they are impartial and would like to end violent behaviour among their respective groups. ‘In places where there is peace, one can grow grass and live on grass;’ such is the motto they use to show the importance of peace. Some of them are members of peace and justice committees and, by the same token, their task is to inculcate in their villages the importance of peace and non-violent behaviour.

I can specify a plethora of reasons why conflict transformation does not lead to peace, at least at present, in this area. Firstly, actors involved in conflict events are rarely identified. There is often a tendency to depersonalise violence and perpetrators. Invariably, identification of actors in conflicts has been problematic for the local administration representing the state, for the elders and for researchers. The shift of roles from that of a perpetrator to victim to witness is so fast that no single group can be identified in the efforts to reach transformation.

Secondly actors, and particularly perpetrators, are hard to pin down because their identities are obscured by peace conference participants. This happens because the elder representatives can easily stress collective responsibilities over that of the individual participant. They can adopt the State’s perception of pinning dawn individual responsible for violence to escape the task of identifying perpetrators which often are groups. Between the two extremes are a number of ambiguous strategies. Ambiguity, and not transparency, is the essence of the official conflict resolution. Various strategies are used to conceal participants in violence. On the one hand, the Karrayu hide perpetrators through obscuring the places of violence with the term Beke Deda, where elders have no access to know the identity of the perpetrators. The Argoba, on the other hand, argue that the actors are not members of their group, but are unknown ‘Shifta’ from neighbouring areas. The Afar claim that they would not know who the perpetrators were because the perpetrators have left their territory to Djibuti where the Afar Regional government has no power to trace them, a neighbouring country.
It may be asked why ambiguity is used as a strategy if it only reproduces the practice of futile peace conferences and allows violence to go unchecked.

7.2 New Elements and New Actors

The recent compelling trend towards sedentary farming has led to further disequilibrium, and also aggravated conflicts. Decentralisation promised the devolution of resources. Public services were largely concentrated in towns (Hagmann 2005). Representation and appointment at each level of political administration was made on the basis of affiliation and formal administrative experience at best. The Karrayu, who resided largely in what was considered the rural periphery, were unable to reach state resources as was guaranteed by the decentralisation arrangement. Representation in political office, as a potential way to gain resources, subsequently became a relay for conflicts between the Karrayu and the district administration personnel from neighbouring areas with Oromo ethnic background. This trend not only shifted the direction of conflict from cattle to state resources, but also changed the actors with whom the Karrayu engaged in conflict.

7.3. Lack of a Balancer

Beyond every episode of violent conflict, what matters in the context of pastoralist production is the stress on general cooperation and reciprocity. Social equilibrium is founded on a balance of power among interacting groups. Equilibrium is maintained through optimised mobility, shifts in alliance and the presence of a neutral group. Pastoralists were characterised by a production system that kept the ecosystem self-regulating and the social system viable. What was often believed by many scholars who followed the modernisation theory was that the expansion of the state in what was called a ‘stateless pastoralist society’ would end pastoralist violence.

Once the State can move around freely in rugged and remote areas and move troops and weapons to inaccessible areas, the previous advantages held by the nomad disappear. Only if the state is too impoverished to outmanoeuvre the pastoralists in this can the nomads persist with dissent (Blench 2004:15).
The experiences among the Karrayu, however, show a different picture. The state represented by sugar estate play a major role in the conflict because of its great interest in land and water resources. The manner in which it needs these resources to be managed and used is often at variance with the local pastoralist groups. There is a deepened rift in values, which is not as easy to overcome as a gap in interests. Development agencies seldom engage in conferencing conflict resolution or if they do engage, it is indirectly, that is, through financing the conferences with the district administration. The concern of the district administration is often to solve immediate problems such as the retrieving of stolen cattle, keeping records of victims and, if possible, the alleged individuals, organising meetings, and dispatching tasks for elders to work on the sensitisation of the villagers in relation to non-violent behaviours. On the one hand, the district administration resonates its adherence to the principle of impartiality and, on the other hand, it puts leverage on the group to agree to its requirements. For the majority of the Karrayu pastoralists who have suffered continuous eviction and lack of economic and political space, conflict resolution sponsored by the state has been a most disempowering experience. The same district administration facilitates district development works and, as a result, collaborates with the Sugar Estate, which plans to evict more people from their land.

7.4. Contradictions in Values

One of the classical ideas in conflict resolution is to distinguish between the positions, underlying interests, and needs of contesting groups. The pastoralists and the farming groups, including the state, engage in conflicts over resources. The Karrayu claims that the land is theirs and, according to them, to compromise is not an option. On the other hand, the state also claims the land, and yet the other groups make similar claims. Positions with regard to how to use the land and who should use it are contradictory. It is even more difficult because the conflict is also over values, which are often non-negotiable. Since the historical relationships shape the present values and positions, it is easy to predict that transforming a conflict relationship into a peaceful one requires a deeper level of understanding and working on underlying structural incompatibilities.
7.5. Is Conflict Transformation Relevant?

It is the destructiveness of war, and the human misery that underlies the aspirations of conflict transformation and is the basis for the concern about making a transition to other methods of conflict management.

Transformation of conflict is the result of the struggle itself where the contention transforms the parties, their interests and actions, thus transformation can occur through victory or through conflict resolution, but can best be understood on a more general level. It is no longer the individual war or the battle that is of interest; rather the focus is the more general experience of conflict over a longer period of time. Transformation may occur as a result of a repeated experience involving struggle, victory, defeat, resolution. Transformation, in short, is a generalized learning from historical experience. (Wallenstein 1991: 129)

Conflict transformation through peaceful means can occur under conditions where the costs of peaceful means are less than the costs of violence, but this alone is not enough. Conflict transformation also requires actors’ access to mediums for peaceful means to help them maintain a balance of power, negotiate, know their opponents and their interests better, and thereby find ways of dealing with their conflicts in a manner that is acceptable for all actors engaged in violence. This is a cumbersome task and demands dealing with a series of processes. With regard to this particular research, conflict transformation, as clarified by Lederach, has not been achieved and is currently far from being possible. My understanding of conflict transformation in this study, therefore, concerns the violent conflicts that have transformed and mutated. Thus the question whether the local people perceive the conflicts as transforming? In order to answer this question, I will return to the third party. Inter group conflicts for the third party in our case the state become more of a concern when violence ensues at a larger scale. The role of the state, therefore, becomes reactive. In times where large-scale violence does not occur, intervention is minimal. For the local people, however, conflict is a concern when the normal way of relating to each other ceases to be possible. The normal way of having a relationship is
characterised by a situation where, even if there is violence, a parallel option exists, namely cooperation. The balance of power is maintained through revenge and mediation. Despite small variations in time and place, this has characterised the violent conflicts between the Karrayu and neighbouring groups.

I argue, however, that violent conflicts have recently been transforming because of the change of these relationship traits. Due to the perceived imbalance of power, for instance, it has become difficult to mediate between the Karrayu and neighbouring groups. The application of the rule of law has taken different forms and has occurred at different paces in respective groups, leaving the communities and old conflict mitigating means, including violence, in a vacuum. I have made a significant effort to situate the transformation of these violent conflicts within their own contexts by locating them in their respective people’s ways of doing things. Ultimately, though, in order to start talking about conflict transformation, some questions still need to be answered, such as: who are the victims, the perpetrators and the witnesses?
CHAPTER EIGHT

8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I wish to avoid reducing the previous chapters and their contributions to the creation of a comprehensive understanding of inter group violent conflicts in context. Violent conflicts, I must admit, in the beginning of this research, appeared like incoherent phenomena. Personalised accounts, the infrequency of violent conflicts, the invisibility of those involved in violent conflict, local people’s apprehension about discussing violent conflicts in public, and even the difficulty of explaining violent experiences made it all initially quite incomprehensive and challenging.

There was also frustration on my part as a researcher with regard to the theme. This frustration arose mainly from the assumption that the mention of violent conflicts might lead readers to imagine violence as group riots, terrorist attacks or genocide. In other words, I was uncertain as to how such inter group conflict such as this would draw scholarly attention as compared to contemporary violent conflicts that are much larger in scale.

This dissertation is concerned with studying the conceptualisation as well as the performance of violent conflicts in a socio-political context that differs from the one which Western scholars are typically familiar. The intention is to contribute towards a less hegemonic understanding of violent conflicts by avoiding prior definitions, and instead explaining how they appear to, and are performed by, each actor in a specific time frame. As a corollary, what would be more critical is to give major actors in conflict situations voices in the research as to their conceptualisation of violent conflict. Specifically, this would mean a) inquiring into the reasoning, preferences and motivations of each actor engaged in violent conflicts, and b) understanding performances of violent conflicts from different angles. I very much share Riche’s perspective that gives importance to explaining violence not only from the viewpoint of the victims, the perpetrators and the witnesses.
I presume that there are more institutions and companies in the world that work on conflict and conflict resolutions than specialised academic departments. Most of these institutions employ different typologies of conflicts to enable them to deal with an experimental situation (Kratli & Swift1999). I would have very much liked to avoid making any typology of violent conflicts. Nevertheless, I also saw the importance of mentioning the limitation of the research by way of presenting the arena in which it was conducted. This entails more of a context than conflict types.

My Ph.D. was part of the conflict project within the NCCR that had focus on natural resource-based violent conflicts. Although the link between natural resources and conflict is less contested (Humphreys 2003), the extent to which one enforces the other has remained a bone of contention for long. Thus, despite my intention to link natural resources with conflicts in the beginning of the project, I soon realised during my fieldwork that such a classification was wrong because it would be like searching for a butterfly in a field, assuming that there was one. Definitions and categorical thinking are more understandable and less complex at the level of scholarly discourse than on the ground.

For some scholars, the understanding of conflict is more possible if one knows what the content of the conflicts are, whereas others may place greater importance on knowing the actors and their motivations. Methodologically speaking, one may find it difficult to understand what motivation actors have for engaging in violent conflicts without engaging in a deeper observation and analysis. Motivations and rationales for violent conflicts are difficult to understand through interviewing people for short time. A researcher is less likely to detect and understand why groups engage in violent conflict upon his/her arrival in a village or during the conduction of peace conferences. The reason why many governmental and non-governmental peace-making efforts fail is partly due to generalisations they make based on hasty observations about a given society’s interaction with its environment. Violent conflicts are basically embedded within other forms of social interactions and may not be directly and overtly discussed, expressed and acted upon. The second problem
we face when studying violent conflict is the ambivalent role that the state plays in conflict situations. The state is an institution that takes responsibility for dealing with conflicts, yet it is one of many actors that interact with the groups and, in the process, depending on the forms of this interaction, could potentially endorse violent conflict as a means of communication or handling conflicts.

The third aspect of conflict is that studying conflict requires looking at the structural incompatibilities that arise from differences in values as well as the institutions that embrace them. Violent conflicts are largely embedded within social interactions rather than existing in isolation, which would make the researcher’s job not easier. One can clearly see that a person was shot and killed. This practice might occur so often that it is considered normal. The fact that it is considered ‘normal’, however, informs a researcher that there is more to the conflict to be explored than the actual performance. A researcher also comes from her own background, which affects her view of the events and the context that surrounds them and tend to take for granted the rules that underlie violent performances.

In everyday life, the formal norms are replaced by more pragmatic ones, which are in turn constantly being negotiated and manipulated. Sometimes the rules are unknown or are ignored by those who are supposed to abide by them. The elders, for example, maintain ambiguous positions. They are objects of avoidance and are held in contempt by the local population. They can also sometimes protect the pastoralists who are involved in violence by helping them avoid state sanctions for violent action.

This thesis is about understanding the notion of violence on the basis of perception and observation, as well as its transformations over three periods of time. In this area, conflict transformation as it has been understood by scholars, has not yet taken place. It is too early to try to analyse conflict transformation in terms of its attributes. By providing an analysis of conflict and violent conflict, however, I leave the reader to make their own judgment about the possibilities and mechanism of conflict transformation.
This thesis has dealt with three major themes – what is the notion of violence, what forms of local institutions exist, and what relevance do they have in regard to violence and its resolution. To understand violence, whether it takes place through cattle raiding or homicide, as contingent and inherent to pastoralism may seem repressive in itself. The notion of conflict, even among the local people, has changed as more actors with more interests have come onto the scene. The use of automatic weapons (although this aspect did not reach the same level of concern as among the Karamojong of Kenya, for instance), or new forms of governance, such as ethnic federalism, have affected the balance of power and local people’s capacity to restore balance.

The Karrayu are not just an agglomeration of killers or heroes, but a group of neglected people who live in fear and frustration. As much as they hated the sugar estate being around them, they sought out state’s support in an environment where their neighbours were becoming increasingly powerful as a result of their access to automatic weapons. Violent conflict, to use the most popular term in social sciences, is not an exception. It is both structured within various kinds of institutions or can appear spontaneously. It can be practised to immediately demand change or can be used as a symbol to transmit meanings such as enmity and alliance. To understand and deal with conflicts, therefore, we must use various lenses that catch different realities of the conflict (Lederach 2003).

Although violent conflicts in the Rift Valley draw little attention both within and outside the country, they are of great concern to actors in the region because they have changed in their nature and have not yet achieved full transformation to peace. It is difficult, however, to claim that they have become more persistent than ever, since such a statement requires substantiation by quantitative data.

Realities and Rationales for Violence

In attempting to understand violent conflicts in the Rift Valley, two approaches are worth noting. The first is an approach publicised by Schlee (2004) about the importance of people’s reasons for fighting, who is fighting with whom, and why.
The other viewpoint is by Lederach (2003) about the importance of looking at immediate problems, as well as deeper patterns of relationships to gain a better understanding of conflicts.

Still, the majority of the Karrayu pastoralists I met with view the violence as a necessary and discursively constituted action in their particular context, which is characterised by a lack of peaceful and productive alternatives. It is true that violence entails damage to property and human lives, and it would be naïve to argue that the Karrayu would feel no remorse about the death of their animals or people as a result of violence with their neighbours. They have their own ways of expressing sorrow and sympathy for the dead and yet such sentiments do not, in their perception, contradict the legitimacy of the violence. To engage in violence in certain empirical conditions is to be realistic. One has to defend one’s cattle, one’s land, and one’s people from those whom one thinks would pre-emptively render harm. Therefore, the Karrayu feel as though they ought to continuously engage in violence so as to incapacitate their enemies.

Precipitations of violent events can, therefore, be better understood by examining both manifestations of violent events and their contents on the one hand, and structural, deep contradictions, experiences and histories on the other hand. This way of examining offers significant implications as to understanding conflicts in diverse contexts.

Violent behaviours can be repressed for short intervals due to many factors, such as: conflict resolution, state-reactive responses through deploying militia when violence has escalated, and the defeat of one group by another. Such ending of violent conflicts transforms the conflicts, but can disguise them by changing them from manifest to latent.

Of course, there are many interesting aspects within conflicts in this area, one of which is the issue of whether past experiences of violent conflicts between the Karrayu and neighbouring groups have shaped present conflicts in the upper and
middle Rift Valley, and if so, how? The experience of conflicts themselves have taught the Karrayu and other actors involved how to shape subsequent actions, strategies and even their interests. Multitudinous violent events have taken place in this area since its early history. An account of each violent conflict is not feasible, nor is it as interesting as noting the general patterns of their transformations.

Local administration and development agencies have often understood conflict as caused by violent culture, which they want to do away with as best and quickly as possible. In practice, they soon learn that the continuous production of actors with incompatible interests, such as the expansion of commercial farms as well as private investments, only help to increase conflicts. The local people have to defend themselves and their properties. The Karrayu have gone through a series of patterns of interaction with various groups. Violence, mediation, resolutions, defeat and bargaining are all aspects that have ultimately transformed all actors involved in the interaction. Conflict transformation means different things to different actors, depending on the meaning they bestow on the conflict itself.

Among the various mechanisms available, violence is often selected as the best option because of its advantages over other means at their disposal. The availability and supply of choices for bargaining, as well as the historical primordial ties that set boundaries between them and others, help to explain why violence is selected in one situation but not in another. It is not a purely economic rationale why the Karrayu engage in violence with the Afar and the Argoba, the Ittu and the Estate. Violence can be considered as a means of social advancement as well.

Pastoralist societies are known as stateless societies, the implication being that defence and the monopoly of violence are largely a task imposed on the societies themselves. Pastoralists cannot be warriors all the time, but rather should be ready to employ violence when the need arises. In this case, although the rationale of violence is unquestionable, the extent of violence should also be explained in terms of the nature of interaction with the state and local organisations. This mean that the
capacity of the state to have monopoly over violence or other alternative institutions should not be assumed, but rather explored in their everyday practice.

The practice of peace conferences actually increased power imbalances among groups in the Rift Valley. Imbalances had already begun through the favouring of sedentary groups, the infiltration of automatic weapons and grenades, the access to information and education, and the introduction of human rights. This left the Karrayu at the lowest position, compelling them to seek support and alliance from their regional state.

I am aware that recent works (Lederach 2003) in the field of conflict studies are more inclined to view conflict as a norm than an exception. While it is still relevant to view conflict more as a norm than the exception, what is more relevant is the question of whether it is possible to transform conflicts into non-violent, peaceful relationships in all contexts.
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