

The State-Gumuz Conflict in North Western Ethiopia: Periphery-Center Attempts and Its Response (1974-1991 Revolution)

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Abstract

The Gumuz people of Mätäkäl are one of the peripheral marginalized peoples in northwestern Ethiopia. They were subjected to protracted slave raids by the rulers or agents of the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, the Sudanese authorities and local regional lords. Infact, this characterized their history up to the first half of twentieth century. In due courses, the Gumuz strated to put up an organized resistance to this age old discriminating and dehumanizing socio-political processes. This expressed itself in various forms such as taking subtle actions against their former masters or the neighboring ethnic groups; or by open revolt against the government. Hence conflict and violence dominated the relation of the Gumuz with both the government of various period and the neighboring ethnic groups. The government of Haile Sellassie devised and implemented various administrative reforms to contain and control these actions of the Gumuz. Administrative centers and police stations were opened in different districts of Mätäkäl deep in Gumuz land. This episode paved the way for the migration of peoples mainly from Wollo and North Gondar to Mätäkäl. The Gumuz lost a significant portion of their land as they retreated from the newly established administrative centers. Such losses were further worsened with the arrival of state sponsored resettlers in the region during the mid 1980s. In spite of this, the expansion of the political center in to the Gumuz periphery created conducive condition for the closer interaction of different peoples that facilitated the socio-economic and cultural transformation of the Gumuz people. In fact, the Gumuz have been seen considerable changes in their traditional way of life and different aspects of their life since then. Forinstance, the event paved the way for the birth of the Centre-Periphery approaches in to the Periphery-Centre developmental changes.

Keywords: Settlement, Re- Settlement , Villagization, Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1. Settlement and Villagization Projects in Mätäkäl.

Before I begin to discuss on the historical experience of resettlement and villiagization programs in Ethiopia, it's better to introduce some discussions on the meanings and its objectives in particular.

According to Guyu, Villagization is a program or a rural based strategy introduced to collect sparsely distributed households in to nucleate villages with a motto of improving their access in the social, economic and administrative /political services.¹

For Bogale, resettlement is a global development policy to be implemented mostly in the rural areas of developing countries with the aim of mitigating both naturally occurring and manmade problems such as natural disaster, population pressure, unemployment and poverty. Therefore, to solve such problems throughout the World or a nation or a region or a given district, the government practiced the program of relocating the population from famine droned areas to the non-affected lands of south western Ethiopia.² Comparing with the settlement program of the imperial period, the Dergue implemented and brought the resettlement programs in to the largest scale and magnitude. Although they both had different political ideologies, they were said to have had common views as the resettlement program is concerned. However, its relocation program was lesser during the period of the former than the latter where the government exercised to succeed his political goals and motively widened the program in to large scale and magnitude than ever.³

Similarly, by comparing the resettlement programs introduced during the imperial period with that of the Dergue, Bogale conceptualized that the 1950s and 1960s resettling program was applied based on interest the of the people and its self-initiation. Where as in the case of the *Dergue*, the resettlement programs of the 1970s and 1980s were introduced without the knowledge of the famine affected people. Even worse, they were not given awareness about the objectives of the program.⁴

Immediately following the deposition of the Monarchy by the military government, the latter stood against

¹ Guyu Ferede, "Voluntary Villagization Scheme (VVS) for Transforming Semi-Pastoral Communities in Benishangul-Gumuz Region, North Western Ethiopia: Challenges and Local Development Indicators." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 14, No.5 (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2012), p.163.

² Bogale, Conflict Resolution---, 2013), p.83.

³ Informants: Mäkönnän Wolde-Giorgis, Assäfa Abäjéhu, Adämu Éndäléw, and Qänaw Gobbäna

⁴ Bogale, Conflict Resolution---, 2013), p.86.

on the policy of the former for marginalizing different ethnic groups from political involvement through out the country. Thus, two years later (1976), the *Dergue* came with the Program of National Democratic Revolution (PNDR) as a counter part to the mistakes committed during the imperial regime. Depending on this new political re-arrangement, Mätäkäl was said to have elevated in to the level of independent administrative region.¹

This regional re-structuring during the *Dergue* marked the end of the dependence of Mätäkäl from Gojjam administrative region. Hence, this new regional formation gave relatively some equitable chances for the Gumuz people who were exploited, suppressed, raided, and marginalized during the reign of the monarchy.² It was also said that the military government had an ambition to recognize the socio-cultural history of the Gumuz by allowing them their own regional administration.³ It is already known that the Gumuz were nomadic hunter cultivators where their total life has been relied on primitive communal system with miserable living conditions. By taking their problems in to consideration, the *Dergue* tried to settle the Gumuz permanently and introduced them the knowledge of the oxen- drawn plough system. For instance, this form of farming experience of the *Dergue* was initially said to have applied in the Gumuz inhabited areas of Dibaṭé.⁴

On the one hand, the *Dergue* was said to have announced the new agricultural technology to the Gumuz people motively to end the poor living conditions from their surface, on the other hand, the state speeded the pressure on the Gumuz lands by accelerating the encroachment policies such as the rapid move of the state farms and resettlement programs.⁵ For example, the establishment of Pawe State Farm and the villagization programs implemented by the state without considering the Gumuz inhabitants can be mentioned worse. Thus, the state farm and the resettlement policies practically applied in Mätäkäl have affected not only the environment but also forced the Gumuz to leave from their traditional land resources.⁶ The successive state policies have further aggravated insecurity and tensions on the Gumuz inhabitants. They have been facing stresses while trying to maintain their land resources from the settlers' encroachment.⁷

Before the arrival of the state- sponsored re-settlers of the 1980s in to the region of Mätäkäl, the area was inhabited by various ethnic groups with different languages, socio-economic formations and different cultural diversities resulted from the earliest inhabitants, the immediate successors, the immigrants(since 1950s), and the state sponsored re-settlers.⁸ As stated earlier, there were two forms of immediate encroachments emerged during the early periods of the *Dergue*. To mention them, the first is "the Bäläs State farm" which established in the subsequent years of 1978/79, where as the second is "the massive state sponsored resettlement scheme" implemented since 1980s.⁹

When come to see these government policies of the 1970s and the 1980s, the area where the Bäläs State Farm established was largely inhabited by the Gumuz. However, they were forced by the state to leave from their home villages and most of them were said to have displaced to the low lands far away from the farm sites.¹⁰ Based on the oral accounts of the informants conducted at Dängur and Gelgal Bäläs, before government's re-location of the state sponsored settlers around the state farm, the area was priorly inhabited by at least two groups of Gumuz communities. From these community villages, one was located north of the state farm closer to the present day town of Mambuk and said to have named after *Gerazmach* Yésmaw Šabur, who was a great figure and respected Gumuz member in the case of diplomatic works in both the two contesting groups in his district.¹¹

After the government established the state farm, *Grazmach* Yésmaw, together with his community was said to have crossed the Mambuk River and settled on the other side of the river, on the opposite side of the state farm. While the second group of the Gumuz community was settled along the southern part of the farm "near a small hill located to the left of the main Chagni-Guba winter road and where a prominent Awi elder, known with the name of *Woreña*, together with his descendants and other Awi community had been inhabited by forming large villages."¹²

As regards to the programs of the resettlement schemes, particularly since the first ten years after the collapse of the imperial regime, Wolde –Sellassie has indicated the following assumptions so as to clarify its

¹ Informants: Mäkonnan Wolde-Giorgis, Assäfa Abäjéhu, Adämu Éndäléw, and Qänaw Gobbäna

² Informants: Guädié Abäbä, Assäfa Abäjéhu, Adämu Éndäléw, and Qänaw Gobbäna

³ Informants: Admassié Semeñ, Zewdu Čekol, Bälätä Lakew, and Qänaw Gobbäna

⁴ Fekadu Gedamu, "The Soco-Economic System of the Shankilla and the New Resettlement Programm in Mätäkäl: Conflict and/or Cooperation." *In proceeding of the Workshop on Famine Experience and Resettlement in Ethiopia* (IDR. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1988), p.50.

⁵ Wolde-Sellassie, Highland Resettlers in---,2004),p.109.

⁶ Wolde-Sellassie, p.109.

⁷ *Ibid*,p.109.

⁸ *Ibid*,p.221.

⁹ *Ibid*,p.116.

¹⁰ Informants: Mäkonnan Agajie, Däbässu Yésmaw, and Wändäyā Bukrus; Wolde-Sellassie, Gumuz and Highland Resettlers---,2004),pp.117-118.

¹¹ Informants: Mäkonnan Agajie, Däbässu Yésmaw, and Wändäyā Bukrus.

¹² Wolde-Sellassie, Gumuz and Highland Resettlers---,2004),pp.117-118.

objectives:

The objectives of settlement which at the beginning were designed to be a form of long term rehabilitation of famine victims were enlarged considerably. Resettlement was now to be employed as a means of assisting poor and landless peasants, relieving the employment crisis in the urban areas, accelerating the sedentarization of transient populations, promoting resource, conservation and sound agricultural practices in the densely populated areas, bringing under cultivation...¹

As indicated above, following bad climatic problems in some parts of the country, there was no food crop to fulfill the daily demand of the people. As reply, the *Dergue* tried to re-settle them in different areas of the country where soil availability and natural resources are conducive for the new comers. However; this had an adverse effect for the early inhabitants. Among the ethnic groups living in and around Mätäkäl, the Gumuz were the prime victims who suffered a loss of resources, their farm lands in particular.² They were then evicted from their home bases and even worse, they were forced to leave the area as soon as possible. At the end, they were retreated back to the border areas not only to search new land resources for cultivation but also to save their lives from the inhuman action of the government and the devastation from the re-settlers.³ Thus, side by side with the resettlement program, both governmental and non-governmental funding organizations were said to have treated the re-settlers where as the Gumuz were marginalized.⁴

According to the accounts of Sisay Gebre Egziabher, in the 1980s, the *Dergue* under took the most organized resettlement programs in different areas of Mätäkäl where the natural resources are still abundant and satisfy the daily needs of different ethnic groups in the region. However, due to the resettlement's pressure and adverse consequences on their daily life and livelihood, the Gumuz started gesture looking against the re-settlers in general and the *Pawe* Resettlement Scheme in particular.⁵ Due to the eviction from their traditional land resource, the Gumuz started expressing their grievances by killing the re-settlers those whom the government located bordering the former. Therefore, comparing with the settlers of the 1950s, the relations between the Gumuz and State Sponsored re-settlers of the 1980s were characterized by miss-trust and polarization, throughout the period of the political history of the *Dergue* until its demise.⁶ Finally, Sisay concluded that both the Imperial periods (1903-1974) and the Military regime (1974-1991) have been blamed for monopolizing the State power and economic resources in "ethnocratic form by few or one ethnic group and for excluding other ethnic group's access to the state power."⁷

1.2. The 1984-1985 Resettlement Programs and Its Response of the Host Communities

The 1980s resettlement program was strictly different from that of the pre-revolutionary periods in that, the former was made through the sponsor ship and motivation of the state. Even the government was said to have declared and announced prior information and created awareness among the community as regards to famine and drought prevention, food production and national security.⁸

In line with the 1984-1985 famine disaster in Ethiopia, the oral informants whom I conducted during the field study discussed and forwarded that the period was directly coincided with the *Dergue's* celebration of the ten years anniversary where the government gave priority to the national holy day without giving due emphasis for famine victims.⁹ However, due to the national and international pressures against the state, the government tried to relocate the already affected people by removing from the famine droned areas of the north to the sparsely populated areas of south western Ethiopia. For instance, Mätäkäl was said to have attracted the eyes of the government where the tremendous number of the immigrants were relocated.¹⁰

From the total, 300,000 famine affected people in Ethiopia during the period under discussion, the government resettled at about 250,000 families in the low land areas of Mätäkäl Awraja. However, this program later marked the beginning of hostility between the host community and the newly arrived immigrants. Then, here in Mätäkäl, *Pawe* or the Bäläs resettlement site alone was re-arranged to receive about 82,000 re-settlers. This huge number of immigrant population immediately created tension among the host community and then the

¹ Wolde-Sellassie, pp.137-138.

² Informants: Mäkönnän Agajie, Däbässu Yésmaw, and Wändäyā Bukrus.

³ Informants : Tiruworq Eyasu, Zewdu Čekol, Mäkönnän Agajie, and Qānaw Gobbāna

⁴ Wolde -Sellassie, Gumuz and Highland Resettlers---,2004),p.169.

⁵ Sisay Gebre-Egziabher, "paper to be presented at the Fourth International Conference on Ethiopian Development Studies(4thICEDS) on The Challenges and Opportunities for Peace and Development in Ethiopia and North East Africa(Schneider Hall,Haworth College of Business,USA: Western Michigan University,August 2-4,2007),p.8.

⁶ Sisay, The Challenges and its Opportunities---, 2007), p.9.

⁷ Sisay, p.12.

⁸ Informants: Mäkönnän Agajie, and Däbässu Yésmaw.

⁹ Informants: Qānaw Gobbāna, Adāmu Endalāw, and Mäkönnän Wolde-Giorgis.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

action agitated for the reaction.¹

Before formulating the program, the government gave no emphasis to the Gumuz inhabitants what to be their fates in the future. To the opposite; the only thing that the state thought was how to solve the immediate problems of famine victims without considering the host communities.² Even worse, the state has not deeply considered about the feeling of the inhabitants and the re-settlers. For instance, the government had no knowledge about the internal division of the re-settlers where some of them were hopefully interested in seeking food supplies as the response to the immediate hunger, while some others were aspired to have land for future famine prevention.³

The Gumuz areas of Mätäkäl then hosted a huge number of famine victims of Ethiopia, particularly those who were affected badly were relocated and hosted. From the victims those who relocated in the Gumuz areas of Mätäkäl Awraja during the *Dergue*, Kambata and Hadiya from southern Shewa were the pioneers. In their footsteps, the immigrants from Gojjam, Gondar, Wollo, and northern Shuwa followed. Then, since their relocation, the Gumuz were evicted from their lands and pushed back to the remotest and far distant areas of Mätäkäl.⁴

Even worse, what angered the Gumuz even than before was government's donating of food, clothing and any materials to the re-settlers without considering the host community who lost its own land resources since their encroachment. The Gumuz were also said to have lived without fulfilling their daily needs. Although they sought daily needs like food, the State gave deaf year to them. They were ignored in any cases. Even though their life was directly relied on shifting cultivation and hunting, they lost all since the arrival of the re-settlers. As soon as they arrived, they fired the forest lands for resettlement and cultivation. This resulted in the absence of hunting, gathering and farming. By these and other related problems, the Gumuz started to move towards the Ethio-Sudanese border areas and the Abbay Valley of Wälläga.⁵

During the relocation programs, government officials were blamed in their absence of consulting the host communities. The development operated in the host land had not given due emphasis to the Gumuz inhabitants. Even worse, their land resources were threatened without their knowledge. Let alone asking them for permission, they were not even considered as humans.⁶ As regards to the impacts of resettlement on the host community, Maru in his turn has indicated both positive and negative consequences resulted immediately following the resettlement program.⁷ As positive, the program launched by the government created good socio-cultural interactions and sense of friend ship in between the re-settlers and the host community, i.e. the Gumuz. As negative, the settlers put endless pressure over the hosting people, where their natural resources were said to have graved by the former. They left nothing land for the host community. Then, the latter were evicted from their communal lands.⁸

An endless resettlement program of the *Dergue* later angered the Gumuz and since then both the re-settlers and the host communities started the individual and group forms of fighting. The clashing which initially started in the individual forms later intensified and involved different Gumuz communities in Mätäkäl and its environs. They started separate killings against the non-black highlanders where ever they found them either by ambushing or by opening direct confrontations during day and night times.⁹

To solve this problem, the government was said to have trained and equipped the militia men by recruiting from the settlers. The goal of the government after having done the preparation was keeping the security of the settlers and developing peace and order in the region. However, no one stopped the Gumuz from deliberate killings. Besides, their re-challenging effort against the freshly trained settler militia was highly reluctant.¹⁰ Thus, on December 10, 1991, just a year after the demise of the *Dergue*, the first confrontation broke out in Mätäkäl where the re-settlers of both Kambata and Hadiya were jointly fought against the Gumuz. During the exchanging of fire in both contenders, the Gumuz scored the first resounding victory over the re-settlers. For the formers' victory, the nature itself supported the victors due to their knowledge of understanding the entry and exiting gates of the terrain better than the re-settler militia forces.¹¹ Even worse, the Gumuz attacked them while they were attending the program of protestant church in Village three (V.3). Encouraged by their continual victory, the Gumuz attacked the re-settlers repeatedly by ambushing around the roads while the latter's were returning from the nearby markets. For instance, on September 11, 1993, the Gumuz killed large number of passengers

¹ *Ibid*

² Informants: Mäkönnän Agajie and Däbässu Yésmaw.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Informants : MäkönnänAgajie, Däbässu Yésmaw, and Wändäyā Bukrus.

⁶ Informants : Admassié Semeñ, Zewdu Čekol, Bälätä Lakew, and Qānaw Gobbāna

⁷ Maru Seyoum, " A History of Resettlement in Metekel Since 1974"(M.A.Thesis in History, Bahir Dar: Bahir Dar University,2011),p.53.

⁸ Maru," A History of---,2011),pp.53-54.

⁹ Maru, pp.53-54.

¹⁰ Informants : MäkönnänWolde-Giorgis, Assāfa Abājéhu, Adāmu Éndäléw,and Qānaw Gobbāna

¹¹ Informants: Zāwdu Čakol and Wändäyā Bukrus.

while they were returning from the nearby markets.¹

After having heard the massacre, the government tried to change the victims (the re-settlers) from Gubelak areas in to Pawe resettlement areas by surrounding the Bäläs River. Then, as retaliation, the re-settlers killed many Gumuz inhabitants by remembering their humiliation of the September 11, 1993.² Above others, the absence of forest products, fishing and the question of land for cultivation due to the land tenure system were the major manifestations for the beginning of Gumuz arrogance against the re-settlers. These and other related minor and major problems between the two groups might lead in to the inter-ethnic conflict in Mätäkäl.³

In line with these hard ships resulted from the question of their land resources, my oral informants has discussed and forwarded the following views:

The problem of the Gumuz with the re-settlers in Mätäkäl was basically the question for land. Then, we had no land owner ship right. Our land was communal, but not privately occupied. Before the settlers' arrival, our land was big and huge where we have worked all together without saying its mine or yours or theirs. During the harvest time, we all together, including the young stars equally share what we believe is our effort. This is our cultural tradition came across from our descendants through the gradual process of change. Since their foot holding on our land resource, they evicted us from our virgin lands. Since on, there is no even an inch of land left for our community. Therefore, these and other factors encouraged us to kill the re-settlers in and around Gubelak and its environs.⁴

According to the oral accounts of the former government officials in Mätäkäl *Awraja*, there were two inter related events that affected the Gumuz community since government's implementation of the resettlement program in north western Ethiopia. These were; firstly, the government's relocation of the settlers on the Gumuz land without consulting the hosts. Even worse, the state forced them to leave from their farm lands without giving the substitution or any support to resist hunger periodically until they should re-arrange their daily needs. Secondly, the resettlement program not only affected shifting cultivation but also it had adverse effect for fishing and honey production due to deforestation for the purpose of searching new farm lands.⁵ In line with these two factors, Bogale has discussed in his account quoted from Jira, as "these new developments formulated by the state marked the beginning of the disruption of shifting cultivation as the means of life. The Gumuz communities who were directly affected by the resettlement policies were in a real crisis due to the absence of alternative surviving mechanisms."⁶

As the result of income reduction, the Gumuz community's land tenure system was diverted from the communal system to private control, where the Gumuz began to earn their way of life based on the land rent (leasing land) and selling of wood, where the price of bamboo has a good value for both fencing and house construction.⁷ As regards to perceptions of the Gumuz towards the re-settlers in Mätäkäl, Bogale has indicated the following assumptions:

The host communities expected something from the provisions of infrastructure and social services designed for the re-settlers. When their expectations are not succeeded, their attitudes may be more hostile and aggressive towards the resettlement schemes. Hence, to develop a common interest among them and to succeed the resettlement programs by reducing its hostility, planning for the provision of economic and social services must be taken in to consideration for the needs of the Gumuz and the relocated population.⁸

2. Methodology

This research was conducted based on the qualitative approach where both primary and secondary sources of data are significantly used. To mention some of them; key informants, focus group discussions, archival materials and analyzing both oral and written sources.

The oral sources were collected from Awi, Amhara, Gumuz, Shinasha and Oromo informants who are living either together with the Gumuz or neighboring them. In most cases, the informants from Awi, Amhara, Oromo and Shinasha were those who directly involved against the Gumuz revolts of 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s where the newly arrived re-settlers were victimized by the host community. While some others were also those who knew about the history of the resistance with its causes and effects either directly from their families or indirectly from the deeds of their descendants.

¹ Informants : Yäšewas Mamo, Zewdu Čekol, Nāni Wāzet, and Mākonnān Agajie

² Informants: Tēlahun Fāntahun and Semeñ Eyasu.

³ Informants: Assāfa Abājēhu, Adāmu Ēndālēw, and Admassié Semeñ.

⁴ Informants : Embālā Qewi, Bālātā Lāqāw, Abdel Deboč, and Qānaw Gobbāna

⁵ Informants: Mākonnān Wolde-Giorgis, Adāmu Ēndālēw, and Mākonnān Agajie.

⁶ Bogale, "Conflict Resolution--", 2013), p.96.

⁷ Informants: Mākonnān Wolde-Giorgis, Adāmu Ēndālēw, and Mākonnān Agajie.

⁸ Bogale, "Conflict Resolution--", 2013), p.98.

Some of the Gumuz informants whom the researcher interviewed were directly evicted from their lands because of their resistance against overdue taxation and the allocation of the settlers on their farm lands in the 1950s and 1960s. While some others were those who run into safety at the age of 15s and 16s in averages. Those who survived the protracted war grew with their relatives if any who escaped from the devastation. Furthermore, written materials were also tapped in an effort to fill historical gaps. The researcher has also exerted great effort and succeeded in assessing vital archival sources from the study area.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. The roads developed from hostile to friendly Relations

As I have discussed about the ethnic dynamism with my informants, the relations between the Gumuz and the re-settlers have been both hostile and friendly. Among others, the attitude of the host communities against the re-settlers of the 1980s was too aggressive. This was because of the absence of generosity from the latter, where they strictly forced the former to leave their home villages without letting them to share their natural resources with them (the re-settlers).¹ The hostility even broken initially due to the economic problems was said to have widened beyond the economic shifting to the socio-cultural and religious interactions. Gradually, these multi developmental interactions strengthened both assimilation and integration. This event later attracted both contesting groups to develop positive out looks on both sides and facilitated the re-settlers to acquire the new environment by minimizing the tension (frustration) among them.²

Based on the informants' testimony, the Gumuz and the highlanders were said to have engaged even the right after 1994. Perhaps, this was probably emanated from government's silence in the case of boundary formation that clearly demarcates the Gumuz districts of region six and the region three.³ The then, to cool down the situation in Mätäkal, the federal government immediately assigned the committee from each ethnic members and allowed them to discuss about the problem and indicate the final solution that can consolidate long lasting peace in the region.⁴ Accordingly, the following individuals were said to have selected from each ethnic group in order to put their final decisions as regards to boundary demarcation between Benishangul Gumuz and Amhara National Regional State. These periodic committee members were: ደመጠው ጎበና----- ከሸናሻ (Dämtaw Gobbäna---from Śinaśa), እምቤላላ አለሙ-----ከኦሮሞ (Émbela Alämu---from Oromo), ታደላ ለረታ---ከአገው. (Tadälä Reta -----from Awi), አላሻኝ አካሉ ---ከአማራ (Alehañ Aqälu-----from Amhara), and ሞላ ለቀው---ከሙስሊም (Molla Läqäw-----from Muslim).⁵

ነገር ግን የጉምዝን ብሄራዊ የሚወክል አካል ከራሳቸው አልተወከለም፡፡ ለዚህም ምክንያት ሊሆን የሚችለው ራሳቸው ጉምዞች ወደ ቀዳሾች አደባባይ መምጠት የማይችሉ ፋሪዎች በመሆናቸውና የበላይነቱን ለሸናሻና አሮሞ ስለሰጡ ነው፡፡⁶

As tried to state above, the afro-mentioned individuals were the core makers in the case of boundary demarcation between the two neighboring regional states by representing their ethnic community except the Gumuz. In the case of the Gumuz, the oral informants stated that the Gumuz are above all represented by the Oromo and Śinaśa officials. Because of their fearing, they are not active enough to attend the meeting together with the highlanders.

Through time, the Gumuz changed its mentality and tried to develop good attitude towards the re-settlers from whom they shared the knowledge of farming practices in the new model. Since then, they began to cultivate by using the oxen draw plough after having shared the experience from the re-settlers. Furthermore, they started crop production and income generation. They also started crop sharing and exchanges in the market by erasing their bad legacies left behind by their fore fathers or closest relatives or their descendants.⁷

Therefore, the first enemies are now turned to be the first friends, where both rivals were said to have solved the problems through the traditional peace building institution known as *Wadaj*⁸ system. As tried to state in the proceeding sub-chapters, the *Wadaj* strategy has been played a pivotal role in the case of solving minor and major problems among different ethnic groups in Mätäkal based on the community elders on both sides.⁹ Thus, both the state sponsored and self-initiated re-settlers created friend ship bonds with the host community by the help of this traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Since the birth and the development of the *Wadaj* institution, the re-settlers began to rearrange land leasing (land rent accord) system with the Gumuz lasting for the periods of two or more years based on their lease agreement.¹⁰

¹ Informants: Embälä Qewi, Bälätä Läqäw, and Abdel Deboč.

² *Ibid*

³ Informants: Ali Hässän, Zägäyē Mängēstu, Admass Séyoum, and Awäqä Ayéhu.

⁴ Informants: Ali Hässän, Zägäyē Mängēstu, Admass Séyoum, and Awäqä Ayéhu.

⁵ Informants: Zägäyē Mängēstu, Admass Séyoum, and Awäqä Ayéhu.

⁶ Informants: Ali Hässän, Zägäyē Mängēstu, Admass Séyoum, and Awäqä Ayéhu.

⁷ Informants: Mäkonnän Wolde-Giorgis, Adämu Éndäléw, and Mäkonnän Agajie.

⁸ *Wadaj*, It is a Gumuz term for the best friend.

⁹ Informants: Tälahun Fántahun, Amdäworq Dämäkä, and Adämu Endaläw.

¹⁰ Informants: Embälä Qewi, Bälätä Läqäw, and Abdel Deboč.

Fortunately, the Gumuz community, who inhabited by neighboring the re-settlers had been attracted by the establishment of elementary schools where they allowed their children to attend primary education together with the re-settlers, particularly in Village 3,10 and 134.¹

4. Conclusion

Through time, the Gumuz and other ethnic communities in Mätäkäl were said to have solved their periodic skirmishes by using the traditional peace building mechanism, locally known as *Michu*². It is the traditional basis for conflict resolution among the ethnic groups living in and around Mätäkäl either together with the Gumuz or by neighboring them. Thus, *Michu* played a per amount role in mitigating ethnic conflicts arose either individually or in a group form. Therefore, this traditional peacemaking institution has laid the foundation for cultural tolerance among ethnic diversity in countries like Ethiopia with multi-national state.

This traditional institution also brought about extra mutual benefits among different ethnic communities in Mätäkäl. Gradually, this conflict resolution strategy was transformed from conflict solving to cultural assimilation and inter-ethnic interaction. Immediately following the post 1991 revolution in Ethiopia, the government allowed a chance of self-determination to the nations and nationalities throughout the country. By using the opportunity, multi-ethnic communities throughout the country started to discuss freely, to participate genuinely, and to advance their equality, to appreciate good governance, to fight against poverty, HIV/AIDS and corruptions and then, stand for advancing peace and order in the region in particular and the country in general.

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¹ Informants : Näni Wäzet, Embälä Qewi, Bälätä Läqäw, and Abdel Deboč.

² *Michu* ,stands for peace building mechanism.