

Reconstructing the identities of Afran Qalo Oromo: A case of Babile Tribe a View of Recent Raiding Conflicts in Babile, Eastern Ethiopia

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Abstract: The Hararghe oromo are descendants of the Barentu confederacy who are found in eastern part of the country. They are classified in to Afran Qalo, Itu, Humbana, Dhumuga and Karrayu. The paper is focused on the Afran Qalo those settled in the Eastern Hararghe, particularly Babile tribe who landing zone in the peripheral boarder restrict with Somali ethnic clans. As a name indicate four Qalo sons Jarso, Babile, Nole and Ala living in this area. Jarso and Babile were live mixed together with Somali. Babile is the oldest son of Qallo who settled beyond the Erer River and the peripheral corner with the Somali in the eastern part. Currently, the town entitle Babile found in the eastern part and it proclaims the center of Babile Oromo tribe in ancient time. Because of the restricted with the Somalia ethnic in the peripheral area, the some Babile Oromo tribe were lost and forget their original identity. The researcher disclose two dissimilarity opinion based on the Babile have a child or not. Some were advocate have a children's and other elaborately Babile have an *ilma guddufacha*. The paper seeks to investigate the historical background of Babile Oromo tribe based on the literature and Primary data collected from informants which is the most important for the objective was gathered through interview. The paper argues that for the recent conflict, the role of political elite in ethnic and the intervention of religious leader in politics were highly visible. To accomplish this idea, the researcher utilized qualitative research method. Document analysis, group discussion and observation were part of this part.

Index Terms- ethnic identities, Babile, Afran Qallo, Hawiya, ethnic conflict

I. Introduction

Afran Qalo Oromo who settled in the Eastern part of Ethiopia are classified in to Babile, Jarso, Alla and Aniya tribe. Among these clans the Babile tribe are found in the Babile woreda and its environs. Oral Oromo tradition reveal that Babile is the first son's of Qallo, therefore due to keep enemies from his youngest brothers, Babile take duty and settled the count line places which edge with Somali. Currently, the area is a home of plural societies from different Somali and Oromo ethnic clans. The controversial Question raised is either Babile have a child or not? The recent raiding conflict in the area was a center of identities. The paper investigate the reconstruct the identities of tribe under the Babile clan and background of inter-ethnic conflict in the area. It's a kind of historical and documentary survey which achieves deliver complication on the different issues related with the Babile clans specifically the tribe embrace under the Babile. Due to the absence of clear literature which investigates on ethnic in the area, the researcher used under this paper the majority of the elder's informants and what the elite agree each other on the point.

II. The people of Babile

Babile is woreda located in some 561km from Finfine 30 km from Harar in the east direction and 72km from Somali capital's Jijiga in the west direction. Geographically, Babile is located surrounded by the Fik in the east and southeast, Gursum town in the northeast, Fadis Woreda in the southwest and Harari region in the west. According to central statistical authority's population census 1994, the Woreda¹ population is estimated to be 93,527, Numerically, Oromo and Somali population of ethnic group were dominating the Woreda specially the rural area, while, Amhara, Gurage and others ethnic grups were concentrating with Somali and Oromo in the urban dweller. The major ethnic group in the Woreda are Hawiya, Madigan, Akisho, Wara Doyo, Doyo, Maru, Ogaden and few other ethnic communities.

¹ Woreda is a unit of administrative structure in Ethiopia and it has equal weight with district

The population of the area were engaged in the farmers and Agro-pastoralists. Hence, countless of the western, southern and northern parts of the Woreda population are predominantly settled farmers, while, while in the eastern and south-eastern parts are dominated by agro-pastoralists.

In the area previously, sporadic violent clashes between these pastoralists of the local ethnic groups were occurred usually in the grazing areas because majority of them engaged pastoralist, and sometimes related with ethnics.

III. Survey of ethnic background of Babile Oromo tribe

Identities as served as pride and late or not lead nation in to contention, particularly complex in the Horn of Africa. Know our ancestors; history and your background serve a pleasure among the communities because it ambiguous and nature rule. It serve to search for their identity that they lost in the past system and feel comfort with their indigenous clan. Beside, identities collapse national identity that real possibility what we are seen today in Ethiopia. The question of nationalism had no long age in the Ethiopian context, launch by birth time of EPLF² and OLF³ latterly the issue were exacerbated almost entire the whole country since the coming of current regime to power. However, the issue of nationalism among the Oromo goes back to a period when the land of Oromo was conquest by the Abyssinian at the end of 19th century.⁴ Scholars define identities depending on the context; Wolbert describes identities as ethnic zones of confederation under a common identity or language where partially separate groups of people are unified. However, the author argue; is procession and seeks further clarification on the agents

² Eritrean People liberation front

³ Oromo People liberation front

⁴ Mukria, bulcha. “the survival and reconstruction of Oromo National Identity” Being and Becoming Oromo, Historical and Anthropological Enquiries, edited by P.T.W Baxer et al., 48-66. New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1996.

doing the identifying and the purposes for such an exercise e; it's distinctively conceive self-background and beyond self-interest being have sincerity for the rest ethnic clans.⁵

Geographically, Oromo people who are found in the eastern part of the country are considered as a Barentu Branch of ancient moieties of Oromo. They categorised in to different clans; some of them are Arfan Qallo, Itu, Humbana, Dhumuga and Karrayu. Among these clans, Afran Qallo are found in the corner part and neighbour with different Somali ethnic groups, located the presently named east Hararge. It refers to four decendent of Qallo who are Babile, Ala, Daga ans Obora. Among the Afran Qallo decendent, Babile is settled in the corner of the territory which presently located share border with some Somali ethnic ancestry. Thus, in this paper the author emphasizes investigate on the Afran Qallo specifically focused among on the Babile tribe identity.⁶

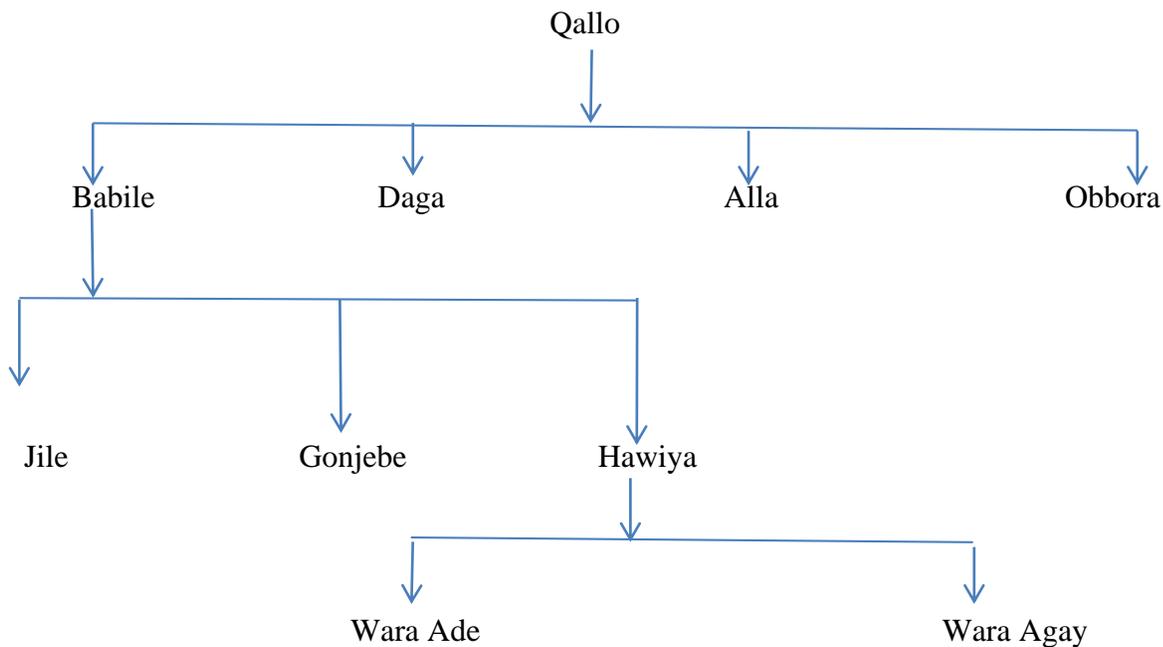
Ancient Oromo oral history reveal that, a person named Babile one of the Afran Qallo son's settled in the present location Babile town. His tribe was not like others Afran Qallo clan, it's so controversial. I raise a sensitive question for those indicate Babile have child. They respond what they heard from the oral tradition. the Hawiya are not classified an Babile ancestory, they are mainly settled the area due to Babile gave his daughter and adopt him an his son through Guddifacha.⁷ The other groups are those voiced Babile have a child to mention genealogically related with other Afran Qallo tribe. According to this group circumstantial evidence, people seek to deteriorated and erase the original history of Babile ethnic clan through voiced uncorroborated deliberately history due to an absence of literatures. However, the Oromo elders in the area culminate the above arguments; Babile is an oldest son among the Afran Qallo and settled the peripheral area of the region and he has no delivery son, so, he adopted Hawiya as a

⁵ . Wolbert C.G. Smidt "The Tigrinnya-Speakers across the Borders: Discourses of unity and separation in ethno historical context" *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa*, eds. Dereje Feyissa & Markus Virgil Hoehne (Suffolk: James Currey, 2010), pp. 67-68

⁶ Chala Abdurahman. "Harari-Oromo Inter-Ethnic Interaction in the city of Harar from 1887 to 1991" MA Thesis. (Bahir Dar University, 2010), p, 15;

⁷ Informant: Ato Muhamud Abdul-aziz

son.⁸ In anyhow, due to lack of literature and absence of better research, the researcher directly involves the argument for the readers. Later, for better interpretation, I attempt to classify the clan figure of Afran Qallo according to prominent elders Oromo elite from Hararghe in below figure.



Genealogical Tree of the Afran Qallo Oromo ethnic clans

IV. Hawiya Oromo or Somali

In the Somali socio cultural solicited life, identifying the person by genealogy is obvious. Undoubtedly, between an unacquainted person in Somali, usually, to be raised one question is mandatory. That is “*Tal maa tahay*”? Who are your clan? This kind of cultural achievement was also expanding with Oromo neighbours specially, with the eastern Oromo ethnic groups. Although, this can also refer to ethnic groups in Babile and its surrounding. Under this, the paper investigates the controversy of ethnic identity in the area. Hawiya is a Somali clan

⁸ Informants: Abba Gada Yuyya wario and Abba Gada Alisho Bakhar. Communication with these Abba Gada elders, who have knowledgeable about the Gada and history of Afran Qallo as much.

Many prominent Hawiya in Babile, include traditional leader, have identified themselves either Oromo or Somali. Since referendum held in the area, majority of them identified themselves as Somalis, though, we have still others that identify themselves as Oromo. Majority of Hawiya in Babile town speak both Oromifa and Somali languages, however, in the rural district, numerically, almost many of them only speak Oromifa. They lived with the Oromo tribes including Jarso, Nole and Obora of Afran Qalo clan. Identifying and understanding the conflict is important to for designing effective peace building strategies in the area.

According to Oromia administration report, a tribe where dominance of Oromifa language in the area including mayo, Hawiya, Madigan, Akisho Maru, and others belong to Oromo. Among these clans, the researcher focused on Hawiya due to two reasons, the first, numerically, hawiya is dominant in the area, the conflict appear in the area was directly involved with Hawiya. Beside above reasons, different manuscript elucidate Hawiya with other Oromo ethnic groups outside the study area, like in Mi'eso west Hararghe and Borana area.⁹ There was an argument among Oromo elite on the issue of Babile tribe; some are negating Babile's child and other brace having a child. According to eminent Oromo elders in the area, Babile was not born Hawiya.¹⁰

It's so hard to be investigating and announce the complex Babile identity clan, because it's controversy. However, the researcher attempt to identify either Babile had son or had an "adoption son" *ilma guddifacha* through an interview from local elder's elites. Hawiya, in Babile, under pressure from Oromo in the area interms of socio culture interaction, directly or indirectly claimed themselves genologically Oromo. Sometimes, they claim their descent as the Son of Babile. Social Simplification, they decoded as Oromo. Historically, Hawiya is an adopt son of Babile. Hence, according to Oromo cultural life, after accept the process of Guddifacha, then, the child adopt the Oromo identities and accept call him an clan who adopt him. However,

⁹ Fekadu, Gelaw. "The Sources of Ethnic Strives and Tensions among the Issa-Somali and Ittu-Oromo Pastoral Communities of Eastern Ethiopia" pdf (Haramaya University, 2013), pp,3,5.

¹⁰ Informants: Abba Gada Yuyya wario and Abba Gada Alisho Bakhar.

the situation over there is not like that, due to an existence of Hawiya ethnic clan in other places.¹¹

A history lesson taught us; Adoption is a common practice throughout the world.” It is the taking of one’s family child into another as son or daughter and heir, and conferring up on it a title to the rights and the privileges of such.”¹² Is a process adoption of child or children of someone by a family via fulfilling every necessity to the child as self or own in the presence of the community members and leaders such as ‘Luba from the Gada system official.¹³ In Oromo society, guddifachaa practice has a long history and started during the time of Gada system commencement. According to Oromo elders Abbaa gada, claimed that,

At the same manner, Somalia official believe, all tribes live in Babile town and it’s environs as being originally ethnic Somalis. They argue, speaking Oromifa language does not make them to be Oromo. Because of close ethnic interaction with Oromo, the local ethnic were culminated by the Oromo. Local Hawiya elders indicate the above statements strongly. Many literatures supports that, Hawiya is from Somali clan which live in both Somaliland and Somali Ethiopia region.¹⁴ According to Fox, Hawiya is a Somali clan and they are among the four main Samale

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Taka Daba, 1983 Law of adoption under the civil code and the custom among the

Oromo of Wallagga with particular reference to the experience of the people in Qellem administrative district. Addis Ababa University Law School Library, p,2.

¹³ Bekele Nadi (1958) Adoption among the Oromo of Shawa in Ethnological Society

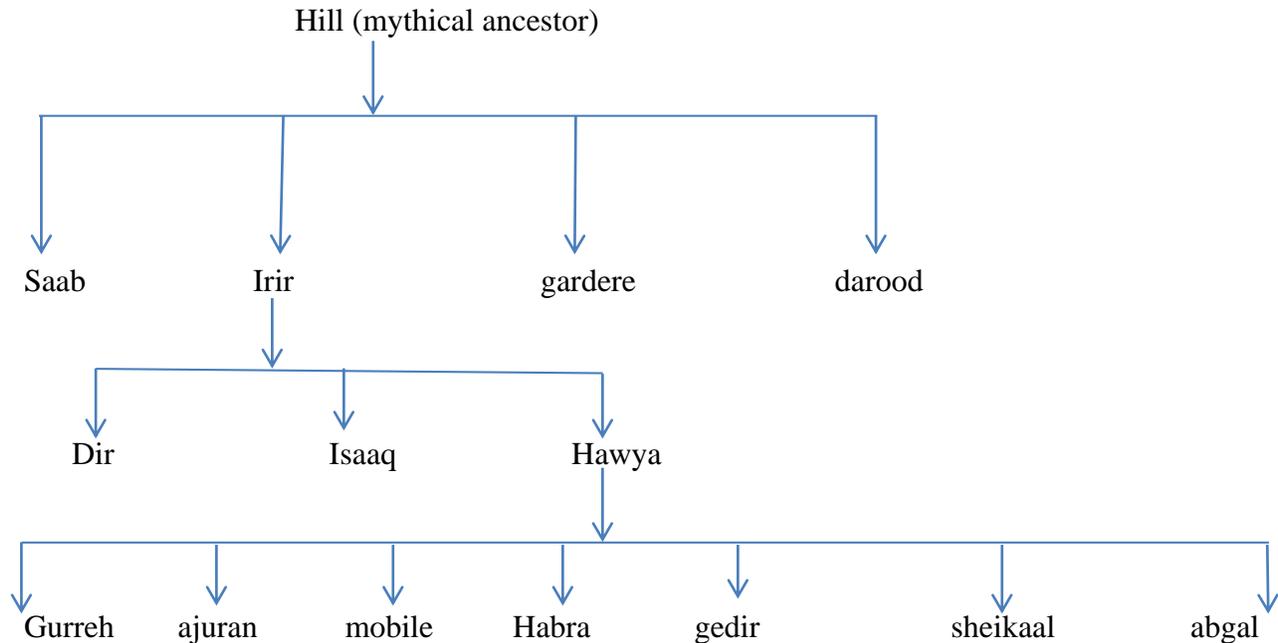
Bulletin Vol.1, No 1-10 and Vol. II, No1 1953-61. Reprint Edited by Alula

Pankhurst in 2002

¹⁴ Fekadu, Gelaw. “The Sources of Ethnic Strives and Tensions among the Issa-Somali and Ittu-

Oromo Pastoral Communities of Eastern Ethiopia” found pdf (Haramaya University, 2013), pp,3,5.

clans the rest are Darod, Dir, and Isaaq.¹⁵ Like many Somali, Hawiya tribe trace their paternal ancestor to Irir, the first son of Samaale. To be identify the Hawiya ethnic clan, elucidate the distinguished Somalia genealogical Lineages from the top to sub-lineages are draw it.



Notable Hawiya Somale Genealogical figure

V. Inter-ethnic conflict

In Ethiopia, majority of conflict squirrel ethnic are boundary between two regions.¹⁶ Several inter-ethnic conflicts have arisen across boundaries of regional states.¹⁷ The conflict appear in

¹⁵ M. J. Fox. *The Roots of Somali Politica*, (1 Culture, A DIVISION OF LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS2015) p,5.

¹⁶ Abbink, Jon 2006. Ethnicity and conflict generation in Ethiopia: Some problems and prospects of ethno-regional federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 24 (3),P. 389.

¹⁷ Legesse, Tigabu 2015. Ethnic federalism and conflict in Ethiopia: What lessons can other jurisdictions draw? *Africa Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 23 (3), p. 3.

the eastern part of the country was also the emblem ethnic phenomenal. Older elders of the region exposes had had a long history of cultural and linguistic interactions between other Oromo ethnic and Hawiya (majority in the area.) According to some elder's informants, during the Hailesilase government between Ogaden and Hawiya, there has been a conflict in the area. The main cause and effort for the violence were Hailesilase government's tribal land policy. During this violence, numbers of people were killed and livestock looted from both sides. Then, government had forcibly stopped the Conflict after gone nearly eight years.¹⁸ No violent conflicts between Somali and Oromo people during the Derg regime in the area as such. Post, 1997 there had not been violent confrontations in the area like the previous time. before the 1997 election, even in the town of Babile, both Somali and Oromo administration have open their offices and ruled the Woreda what is known by the time district. However, post 1997 election, the Woreda culminated under the Oromia region. According to local resident, post administration under one system rule, the numbers of local conflict are drop-off in the Woreda and with outside the Woreda too.

A numbers of conflict occurred since the current regime come to power between the local ethnics. The first incident of killing occurred in early 1993 after an active OPDO cadre was shot dead in the town of Babile. Late 1997, in the rural area, the conflict was exacerbated between Kebele militia in a place Darera-Arba. The competition between OPDO¹⁹ and ESDL²⁰ in the local communities aggravated the situation more before. Many informants confirm, the same incident as one occurred between the Somali and Oromo local groups in the area. Whatever the case may be, this is an evident that violent confrontations has started with the appearance of local

¹⁸ Ali, K. (2005) '*conflict and conflict resolution in Somali regional state*' Final consultancy

report for GTZ, Capacity Building in Governance Conflict Prevention / Transformation CPT, under Ministry of Federal Affairs (MFA), Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.

¹⁹ Oromo people's Democratic Party, governed the Oromia region at a time. currently they changed their name to ODP, recently, based on the change of political system in the country, they affiliated with Prosperious party, the same is true for ESDL.

²⁰ Ethiopian Somali Democratic League, a party which lead the Somali region currently.

political elites in the environment between the local ethnic groups. According to data 2004 referendum, out of the 27 kabales²¹ that referendum took place, Somali administration won 11 kabales, while Oromo state also secured 15 rural kabales and the Babile town. The committee out from the prime minister office, regional affairs and local elites made a regional settlement and decided that Babile town and other 34 rural kabales to be given to Oromia Woreda administration, while only 8 rural kabales were put under Somali district administration. The numbers indicate us; Babile is a center of competition for both ethnic groups. However, the Somali reject the result and Oromo accepted it.²²

Post referendum time, all disputed border area gather in Addis Ababa Conference. Hence, the local cadre from Somali and Oromo started coerce the local peoples those have share common culture with each other. Unlawful action held on the people to get the heart and minds of the local people. They gone to arrest and punish those opposed their campaign; initiate the people to conflict through ethnics.²³

In the past, in the Babile, local conflict appear around the rural area was caused by mainly due to stemming from competition over natural resources of land between the pastoral and agro-pastoral ethnic groups. However, related with the change of political system in the country, ethnic's conflict change the objective and scope in to politics. The recent contention which start from January 2015 up to September 2018, the major causes of conflicts were dispute over natural resources which appear in previous, ethnic boundary which lead the political disagreement between two regions. The political intention affected the relationship Oromo and Somali ethnic groups in the area. With the exception of control over resource land and political disagreement

²¹ Kabale is the lowest administrative unit of the new state structure of Ethiopia.

²² Ali, K. (2005) '*conflict and conflict resolution in Somali regional state*' Final consultancy report for GTZ, Capacity Building in Governance Conflict Prevention / Transformation CPT, under Ministry of Federal Affairs (MFA), Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, p.39

²³ Informants: Ato Muhamud Abdul-aziz, Sheik Abdulfatah Ayub: these are prominent elders and religious leaders who have better knowledge about the area and situation what's going on over there.

between two regions, there have not been open violent conflicts between ethnic Somali and Oromo communities in the area as such.²⁴ Therefore, the data convincing us; ethnic difference is the only causes of conflict between Somali and Oromia in General and in the Babile, identify ethnic self-assertion specifically in the area.

The big Question is how the political elite used the mind of aseptic people to dirty politics? In the area I have elucidated above, different ethnics groups were lived. Historically, Babile, the son's of Afran Qallo found in the region. In his ancestor, Babile have no child, except the adaption son (Ilma Guddiffacha) that is Hawiya.²⁵ Purposely, the political elite used this narrow hole between the people and bear on intensify the ethnic contention. The recent discourse indicated the above statement briefly. National Disaster Risk Management Commission report that; due to conflict between oromo and Somali, nearly, 1.7 million people has displaced within a very short period of time. Among these, 68,000 Somali planned site in the peripheral Babile border, and At least 256,000 Oromo planned to landing in the Babile town.²⁶ According local residents, Some of Hawiya descent flew to Fik where majority of Hawiya live it. This due to exacerbated the situation and make relate the issue with ethnics. Majority of them are those honours among the communities like Sheik, Haji and Ustad. However they are active to participate on politics. The residents confirm, many Emam²⁷ fade the town and runaway to Jigjiga and others to Fik.²⁸ Many of displayed from Babile, was denied to return when the mediation started by the local elders,

²⁴ OCHA (2018). "Ethiopia: Conflict Displacement Situation Report". For Public Circulation, January, 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

²⁵ *Guddiffachaa* practice is one of the common cultural practices of child caring, supporting, and right protection system used by Oromo society. For more detail go to under subtitle Hawiya Somali or Oromo

²⁶ Report by EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDTRxcoCb>
Report from FRANCE 24 English on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm3KePO2IEk>.

²⁷ Title used by religion leader who commands Masjid prayer in congregation.

²⁸ Informants: Aliyi Hasan, Sheika Abdosh. Communicate with author in the Babile town September 23/2017

religious leader committee invite them for discussion.²⁹ When I met the same people during the conflict time in Babile Town, one of my key Hawiya informant, an ordinary resident in the town, married the Jarso clan women and delivered child with her, inform me the situation briefly. According to him, people who fled from the area was those have relation with officials and no one frightened him by their ethnic.³⁰

Having a strong socio cultural affiliation between ethnic groups in area, the conflict has safeguarded by traditional conflict resolution mechanism before it turn to violence ethnic conflict. Having the same religion, culture and social life, there was no established animosity and violent conflicts at the grass root level in Babile at such.³¹

VI. Conclusion and implications

Ethnic identities are one of the big debates in the Ethiopian political discourse and it's very complicated issue currently. Eastern part of the country is a place where multi ethnic nation lived together and where ethnic tension appear several time specially, within Somali and Oromo ethnic groups. The paper aimed to identify the controverse of some ethnic identity which lead to contention. Geographically, the relationship between ethnic clan from Somali and Oromo in the area are complex one. Historically, in the area relationships are sanitary co-existence and cultural integrations. For example, some of the people who speak Oromo language claim that they originally belong to ethnic Somalis and the reverse for the Oromo.

The Oromo people who are found in the Eastern part of Ethiopia are considered as different clans. These are Afran Qallo, Itu, Humbana, Dhumuga and Karrayu. Among these Afran Qallo is settled with Somali ethnic groups. Afran Qallo refers to four decendent of Qallo who are Babile, Ala, Daga ans Obora. Among these tribes, Babile is settled in the corner of the territory which

²⁹ The Author was there at atime invited on the conference. Eminent Afran Qallo elite, great religious leaders gather and discused about the conflict issue.

³⁰ Informant: Xaha Ali. During the conflict period, I was visit the area due to gathering data for my MA thesis, and I communicate with different elders in the town.

³¹ Ibid.

presently located share border with some Somali ethnic ancestry and lived in present Babile town and its environs.

The ethnic identity is so controversy in the area due to mixed with Somali ethnic group. Hawiya, who call themselves an Babile ancestry, however, Somali genealogical placed their as an Somali. The historical elites in the area assumed, Hawiya is a Son of Babile through adoption Oromo Gada Process; Ilma Guddiffacha. Cultural and social life, these people were merged each other. Identifying and understanding the conflict is important to for designing effective peace building strategies in the area. In previous time, conflicts appear on the resource, however, recently, due to political identification the ethnic identities, conflict appear in the area. The situation more complicated after the referendum settle in the Babile town.

All in all, one must come to the conclusion, identify the ethnic identity in Babile and reconstruct their identity through recording is very necessary to regulate unnecessarily ethnic contention in the area. There was a general consensus, that the territory was the historical land of Afran Qallo son's Babile. Despite this, In contrast, the conflict between contending local political elites had triggered down and impacted a lot on local people in the area. Therefore, the researcher conceives consequences of identification on the ethnic in area need to be addressed and better investigation and the consequence is multifarious for the next work.

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