

The Shinasha Relation with other Gongga People

Abebe Ano Alula

Department of History and Heritage Management, College of Social Sciences, Post Box No.44,
Wollega University, Gimbi, Ethiopia

Abstract

The Article deals, among other things with the traditions of origin, early patterns of expansions and the relation of Shinasha with other Gongga peoples such as Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo and others in south western peoples of Ethiopia. It attempts to show the Shinasha disintegrated from other Gongga people and dispersed to many district of Metekel and to show the historical relation of the Shinasha and Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo and other peoples in south western and north western Ethiopia region.

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*Corresponding Author:

Abebe Ano Alula

E-mail:

abebeano2001@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The Shinasha is one of the groups of the people, who are living in Metekel administrative Zone of Benišangul-Gumuz Regional state. They have different cultural, economic and social practices that distinct them from others. The main economic activity of the Shinasha people is agriculture. They produce crops like sorghum, millet, corn, pumpkins, cotton and others. In addition, they reared various animals like cattle, sheep and goats to satisfy their need of food items like meat, milk and for market. Furthermore, a small number of the society supplements their requirements by hunting wild animals and gathering fruits and roots (Ashenafe, 1989). According to oral traditions of the society, the Shinasha is one of the early settlers of the region (informants). The Shinasha people have their own language, which they called *Borenona'a*. *Borenona'a* literally means the Boro/Shinasha/ language spoken in most parts of the Northwestern Ethiopia, in Metekel Zone of the Benišangul-Gumuz Region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sources

The study is based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources have been obtained from informants and personal observations.

Methodology of the study

The data for this study were collected at Bullen, Dibate, Dangur and Wonbara Districts in Metekel. The data to this study were collected by qualitative data collecting methods. The primary data were collected through interviews with elders of study areas. Although it difficult to confidently to accept oral information as perfect, I carefully checked and counter-checked with secondary sources available different libraries of Addis Ababa University especially in the Institute of Ethiopian studies. Finally, I hope that his paper would give way for interested researchers on the study area.

RESULTS

The main outcomes of the study are the following:

- To examine the nature of ethnic and societal relations between Shinasha and Gongga peoples of south and southwestern Ethiopia.

- To show how the Shinasha disintegrated from other Gongga people and dispersed to many districts of Metekel.
- To show the historical relation of the Shinasha and Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo and other peoples in South ,Western and North western Ethiopia regions.

An Overview of the Origin Shinasha People

The Origin of the Shinasha.

The Shinasha known by different names, like *Boro*, *Dangabo*, *Sinicho* and *Gongga*. However, the most widely used term to designate the people by the rest of other ethnic groups of Ethiopia is Shinasha. The term seems to be a non-derogative Amharic designation, derived from *Shi-nna-shi* which literally means the multitudes of the people, who fled to and settled north of the Abbay River. Oral informants of the Shinasha confirmed that the word Shinasha was given by the Amharä, when they attacked the Damot area. The people of Damot asked one another. "What is a clamor"? It was said that a people become a multitude of Shinasha" or "*shi-nna-shi* had come against us to war, invade and plunder. Therefore, Shinasha is to say in the Amharic language: *shi na shi ye mihon tor wereren*. Literally means that Shinasha had invaded us in thousands (Ibid). With regard to this, *Aleqa* Taye asserted the Shinasha was called Shinasha by the Amharä, because a large number of people were uprooted in the highlands in thousands. So Shinasha has the sound of the Amharic word for *Shi-nna-shi* (Taye, 1987). This assertion is also confirmed by local informants. Thus, in the traditions of the people prior to this period their proper name is *Boro*.

Historical documents revealed that the term *Sinicho* is an Oromo designation for the Shinasha people, to mean hot pepper. According to Tessema Ta'a, the Shinasha people strongly resisted the Oromo expansion into Wollega area. It was most probably due to their stiff resistance that the Oromo associated the Shinasha with 'hot pepper,' '*Sinicho*' (Tessema, 1980). My oral informants confirm that in local districts of Wonbara, they called them as "*Sinicho*" by the settler Oromo of this area. Even, they further assert that sometimes the Oromo called Shinasha in the names of settlement places and in name of Shinasha clans. For instance, the following statement revealed this fact:

In Oromiffa

Ka'a lafa Dängäbo

Ka'a lafa Sinicho Anifo

Ka'a lafa Sinicho Indibo.

Literally means

The Village of the Dängäbo

The village of the Shinasha clan of Anifo

The village of the Shinasha clan of Endiwo

Dängäbo is also an Oromo designation for the Shinasha people for who live in Metekel, Dängäb. The term might have derived from the name of the place, Dängäb. Thus, the term *Dängäbo* indicated the settlement place of the Shinasha. So, the use of the term was used when some Oromo moved to this area, and they found Shinasha and referred to call them in the name of that locality.

According to oral traditions, *Boro* is thought to be one of their ancestral father and they would like to be called after him (Ibid). These informants argue that their original name is not Shinasha, but *Boro* and still call themselves as *Boro*. In relation to this, they claimed their ancestor to be Shao, who begot Ashinao, Assibo, Boro and Gongga. The descendants of Shao are said to have divided Gojjam among themselves Ashinao, Assibo, Boro and Gongga taking Shashino, Assi, Bure and G^wang^wa respectively(Ibid). Later, some of these groups moved further to the west and reached as far as Guba. But written accounts do not confirm whether these clans were direct descendants of the present Shinasha clans or not.

The term *Gongga* is familiar to the Shinasha people. In other words, the term *Gongga* is commonly used by the Shinasha people for many centuries. However, different historical documents described that the term *Gongga* language was used by the people of Ennarya (Hiop Ludolphs, 1982). For instance, D. Abbaddie and Charles Beke stated that the *Gongga* language was spoken around Nile Valley (in both sides of the Abbay River) as far as Kafa to the south (Werner, 1982). Therefore, *Gongga* seems to be a common term representing Kafa, Sheka, Boshia and Hinnaro dialects of the southwestern region as well as the Anfillo and Shinasha languages. It might have been for this reason that early Portuguese traveler, Manuel de Almeida used to *Gongga* to refer the Shinasha as one of the native inhabitants of Gojjam. He also mentioned *Sinasse* as a principal Gongga town but it seems to be Shinasha settlement area (Beckingham and Huntingford.1954). On the other hand, there is a place name *Gongo* in the districts of Bulän and in close proximity to Galasa vicinity and also there is a name of Shinasha clan known as *Gongo*. Therefore, these statements

suggested the long use of the term *Gonga* in the Shinasha localities of Metekel.

Both Marvin L. Bender and Herald C. Fleming, describe that the Shinasha is one of the Afro-Asiatic branches of the Gonga language speaking people of the Ethiopia (Bender, 1969 and Fleming, 1976). Thus, from above descriptions or arguments one can easily understand that most probably the same group of people is referred to as the Shinasha. And for our historical concern here, we would like to use the term Shinasha and *Gonga* exchangeably in this article.

It is obvious that oral traditions and oral data are the essential sources to reconstruct the history of illiterate society. So most of the Shinasha history is based on oral traditions. The Shinasha society has its own oral traditions of its origin. Accordingly, the Shinasha people traced their origin mainly to the Middle East. As local traditions made it clear they trace their origin to the land of Biblical Canaan from where they migrated to Egypt due to lack of pastoral land. They were led by Hamati. Hamati was thought to be one of the sons of Canaan (Yohannis, 1940). In addition to shortage of pastoral land; other factors for their migration were believed to be famine and conflict with local people. As a result, they followed the course of the Nile River and settled in the Central part of Ethiopia (Ibid).

Oral traditions indicate that they settled first in Šäwa. But later on, due to over population and conflict with the early settlers, they moved to northwest crossing the Abbay river and settled in different parts of Goġġam, particularly in Damot, Guman, Šendi, Näfro, Dinigaš, Bure, Wämbärma, Burešindy, Šašina, Gumär, Azäna, Gumyesuš, Zigäm and surrounding areas (Informants). The remaining groups of Shinasha were said to have moved to Gonder and western and northeastern side of Wollega (Nejjo, Mendi, Limmu, Amuru, Wasti, Harro, Guduru, Jidda and Horro). Later on, these clans were assimilated with the Oromo and Amharä people in the area (Ibid). It was also said that the other groups of Shinasha settled in the Region of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNPR) particularly in Sheka, Boshä, Ennarya and Kafa Zones (Ali et al, 1998). Among people in these places, Boshä and Ennarya were assimilated by the Oromo in their respective areas.

Almost all of my oral informants unanimously agree that the Shinasha were led by a man called Shao when they were in Šäwa. It was under his leadership that Shinasha dispersed into both sides of the Abbay River and founded the Gonga

states. That means they integrated with other Gonga groups. They settled for a long period of centuries on both sides of the Abbay river (Informants). To day, the Shinasha elders argue that their relatives are also found in Sheka, Anfillo, Boshä and Kafa, Southwestern Ethiopia. They argued that there is a linguistic and cultural similarity between them. Many researchers like d'Abdie and Werner J. Lange stated that the Gonga people like Shinasha, Boshä, Ennarya, Kafa, Anfillo and Sheka had historical, geographical and cultural (language) relations. But as far as the origin of these people is concerned writers like Johnston and Bieber stressed the Origin of the Gonga people to be Egypt. However, Werner J. Lange opposed this view and states that the states of the Gonga have been ruled by the dynasties frequently claiming descent from Tigre and occasionally tracing origins to Israel or Yemen (Werner, 1982).

Particularly, concerning the origin of the Shinasha people, *Aleqa* Taye states that the origin of Shinasha to be Canaan, Israel. He states that from Canaan they first migrated to Egypt and then in about 1061 B.C., the Shinasha migrated into Ethiopia following the course of the Nile River. So, the explanation of the *Aleqa* Taye reveals this fact:

The earliest ancestor of the Shännash is Hamati. Hamati, begat, Guma, Zhägät, Gonga and Dura, and these four brothers, the ancestors of the shännash [Shinasha], entered Ethiopia during the era of the Ag'azyän in the 29th year of the reign of Ayba, whose second name was Säbi II. When this happened was the 3,679th year of the world, at the time that Yacob entered Egypt in 1061 B.C. These ancestors of the tribe of Shinasha migrated to the land of Egypt when they were unable to find territory in the lands of Canaan. They became a very wealthy in Egypt, however, and they learned all the skills of the Egyptians, even sorcery. Nevertheless, they did not have land equal to even one qada; neither could they find grazing land for their cattle. They did not get any land which they could plow, seed, or obtain crops from, so there was continual disagreement and conflict between them and the people of Egypt... Therefore, migrated from Egypt up [following] the course of the Abbay and settled in Damot, between Kutay and Bamoru and on both sides of the Abbay (Taye, 1987).

According to oral traditions, the origin of the Shinasha people is widely accepted to be an ancient Israel. Contrary to oral traditions, Tsega Endalew states that the origin of Shinasha to be South of Goġġam particularly from the Southern

parts of Ethiopia, and they are one of Omotic speaking people. According to him, the main factors for the Shinasha to move out of their origin were the Oromo expansion and raids of Christian states. So, he summarizes this fact as:

The Shinasha claim their origin from outside Ethiopia. However, they are one of the Omotic speaking people and the outside Ethiopia theory needs to be refuted. Pressures from the Christian Empire, the Oromo expansion...forced Shinasha of Southern Gojjam and Northern Wollega to move into unfavorable spots and lowland parts of Metekel (Tsega, 2006).

Recent traditions collected recently on the issue showed the origin of Shinasha to outside which seems to contradict with the views of Tsega. Furthermore, concerning the origin of the Shinasha people, I shared the views of my informants because of the following facts; first of all their physical appearance is entirely different; most of the Shinasha people are light-skinned when compared with their neighbouring people. Secondly, their traditional beliefs, scarification functions and the use of traditional medicine for different purposes including Sorcery might have been influenced by the Egyptians while they were in Egypt. It was also suggested that the traditional Shinasha did not adopt either Christianity or Islam but adhered to the traditions of their forefathers. This assumption also tells us as they came from outside. Thirdly, according to *Aleqa Taye's* explanations as stated above traced the Shinasha origin to outside, Canaan, so it seems quite logical because it is correspondence with views of informants. Fourthly, according to Bekele Woldemariam, there was a strong relation between Shinasha and other Gonga people (Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo, Ennarya and others) due to their similar historical origin, outside of Ethiopia. Recently, due to these fact that, the representatives of Shinasha, Kafa and Sheka had held a meeting in Metekel Zone on September 16-18, 2007. They discussed different issues like their origin, cultural and language similarities and their historical relations between them (Bekele, 2010). Therefore, from this fact we can safely conclude the Shinasha people have most probably similar historical origin to outside as the case to other Gonga people.

Besides, the views of oral informants there is Sarah Vaughan. She stated that "Shinasha myths of origin mention Canaan as the place of origin of their ancestors, migrating from Egypt to Ethiopia, where they arrived a Debra Libanos [Central Ethiopia] before moving to their current

locations"(Sarah Vaughan,2007). Thus, she traced the origin of Shinasha to be out of Ethiopia.

The Shinasha Relation with Other Gonga peoples (Kafa, Sheka and others)

The relation of Shinasha with other Gonga people expressed in many aspects such as, tradition of origin, language, settlement and other related phenomenon's. As far as the language relation of Shinasha is concerned, the Shinasha people are one among parts of the Gonga language speaking group, living in northwestern Ethiopia, Metekel, near the Sudanese border. As mentioned above the term Gonga is described as a language spoken on both sides of the Abbay as far as Kafa to the south. It is divided into three groups: Southern Gonga, Central Gonga and Northern Gonga. The southern Gonga consists of Kafa, Sheka, Ennarya and Bosh, spoken in southwestern region in the vicinity of the Gojeb River. Central Gonga represents Anfillo in Western Wollega where as Northern Gonga includes the Shinasha (Harold C. Fleming, 1976). This seems to indicate Shinasha had very close language relations with other Gonga people. Their languages and the people themselves generally referred to call by many writers as *Gonga*.

According to Marvin L. Bender and Herald C. Fleming, Shinasha is one of the Afro-Asiatic branches of the Gonga language speaking people of Ethiopia (Marvin Lionel. Bender, 1969; Harold C. Fleming, 1976). Werner. Lange asserts that the term Gonga is principally linguistic categorization. That means he shared the idea of Herald, Fleming by stating that Kafa, Sheka, Bosh and Hinnaro dialects constitute southern Gonga. While the Shinasha language of northern Wollega and southern Gojjam form the Northern Gonga (Werner and Lange, 1982).

Marvin L., Bender and Herald C. Fleming also maintained that the same kind of relationships existed among the above dialects and they made the southern Mao (Anfillo) geographic and linguistic evolution between the Kafa and several Shinasha languages of northern Wollega and southern Gojjam (Harold C. Fleming, 1976). But Herald C. Fleming identifies northern Wollega and southern Gojjam groups collectively as northern Gonga including Guba, Boro, Naga and Amuru (Ibid). He also describes that linguistic similarity observed between Gonga people. The following table indicates this fact.

Table 1: Gongga Language Cognate percentages.

Guba							
Boro	81						
Naga	83	81					
Amuru	73	73	76				
Anfillo	56	57.5	65	66			
Bosha	52	54	58	55	61.5		
Mocha	50	54.5	55	54.5	60	68	
Kafa	46	48	53	51.5	53	70	69.5
	Guba	Boro	Naga	Amuru	Anfillo	Bosha	Mocha

Adopted from Harold C. Fleming (1976)

Therefore, from above table shown you, Shinasha (Boro) languages have similarities with other Gongga languages. Based on this, with Kafa 48%, Mocha 54.5%, Bosha 54%, Anfillo 57.5%, Amuru 73% and Naga 81%. As the result of linguistic similarities, Shinasha (Boro) language categorizes as Gongga language in general and North Gongga in particular.

However, concerning some of names, the available accounts, have different views. For instance, according to Harold C. Fleming, Guba referred to a place located in extreme south western corner of Gojjam (Ibid). Today, it is one of districts of the Metekel Zone in the Ethio-Sudanese borderland. Boro refers to a location south of Awngi [Agäw] in south central Gojjam (Ibid). But it seems to be a settlement place of Boro/Shinasha/itself. Naga indicates that before 1880's, they were speakers of dialectics of the Gumuz language around Limmu of Wollega (Ibid). Whereas Amuru is a place located in Wollega around Horro-Guduru (Informants). However, oral traditions and written accounts indicate Amuru as one of early settlement places of the Shinasha. On the other hand, some groups of the Shinasha crossed the Abbay and settled in Gojjam. But most of the Shinasha, who remained with Oromo in these areas, adopted the culture and eventually assimilated. Although all these places, which we have mentioned above don't refer present day of Shinasha, rather they refer to early settlement places of the Shinasha. So they seem to call them in the names of their settlement places except *Boro*.

In the study areas of the Metekel, there is striking similarity between the Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo and Shinasha languages (Table 2) as informants and some written accounts, which further consolidate linguistically categorized Shinasha as the parts of former Gongga kingdom (Vinigi L. Grottanelli, 1941). Here some words:

Table 2: Striking similarity between the Kafa, Sheka, Anfillo & Shinasha languages.

English	Shinasha	Kafa	Sheka	Anfillo
One	<i>Ekka</i>	<i>Ekka</i>	<i>Ekka</i>	<i>Ikkä</i>
Two	<i>Gita</i>	<i>Guto</i>	<i>Guto</i>	<i>Guto</i>
Three	<i>Keza</i>	<i>Keğa</i>	<i>Keğa</i>	<i>Keğgo</i>
Four	<i>Auda</i>	<i>Audo</i>	<i>Audo</i>	<i>Auddo</i>
Five	<i>Wussa</i>	<i>Uča</i>	<i>Uča</i>	<i>Amitto</i>
Six	<i>Širita</i>	<i>Širto</i>	<i>Širto</i>	<i>Širto</i>
Seven	<i>Šewatta</i>	<i>Šiwatta</i>	<i>Šiwatta</i>	<i>Šabatto</i>
Eight	<i>Šemita</i>	<i>Šimito</i>	<i>Šimito</i>	<i>Šimito</i>
Nine	<i>Jidiya</i>	<i>Yidyä</i>	<i>Yidyä</i>	<i>Yiringo</i>
Ten	<i>Täča</i>	<i>Ažerä</i>	<i>Ažerä</i>	<i>Aširo</i>
Eleven	<i>Täča Ekka</i>	<i>Ažeraikka</i>	<i>Ažeraikka</i>	<i>Aširekko</i>
Twelve	<i>Täča Gita</i>	<i>Ažerä gutta</i>	<i>Ažerä utta</i>	<i>Aširegutto</i>
Twenty	<i>Hiya</i>	<i>Hiyo</i>	<i>Hiyya</i>	<i>Hiyo</i>
Thirty	<i>Šaša</i>	<i>Šašo</i>	<i>Šašo</i>	<i>Šašo</i>
Forty	<i>Abba</i>	<i>Abbo</i>	<i>Abbo</i>	<i>Aribo</i>
Fifty	<i>Ballikäsa</i>	<i>Ačo</i>	<i>Acho</i>	<i>Ačo</i>
Hundred	<i>Bälla</i>	<i>Bällo</i>	<i>Bällo</i>	<i>Bällo</i>
Thousand	<i>Kuma</i>	<i>Humo</i>	<i>Humo</i>	<i>Humo</i>
Front (read)	<i>Barra</i>	<i>Barro</i>	<i>Barro</i>	-
Enjera (food)	<i>Miša</i>	<i>Mišo</i>	<i>Mišo</i>	-
Cow	<i>Miza</i>	<i>Mimo</i>	<i>Mimo</i>	-
Ear	<i>Wazo</i>	<i>Wano</i>	<i>Wano</i>	-
Cloth	<i>Taha</i>	<i>Taho</i>	<i>Taho</i>	-
Javelin	<i>Gino</i>	<i>Gino</i>	<i>Gino</i>	-
Teeth	<i>Gašo</i>	<i>Gašo</i>	<i>Gašo</i>	-
Hand	<i>Kišo</i>	<i>Kišo</i>	<i>Kišo</i>	-
Stomach	<i>Mačo</i>	<i>Mačo</i>	<i>Mačo</i>	-
Water	<i>Aca /Acha</i>	<i>Acho</i>	<i>Acho / Asso</i>	-
Mother	<i>Inda</i>	<i>Inde</i>	<i>Inde</i>	-
Dog	<i>Kana</i>	<i>Kunano</i>	<i>Kuno /Kunano</i>	-

The above table illustrates that the Shinasha is one among the several people of Ethiopian interior speaking a Gonga language. For instance, Shinasha and Kafa are very far a part, but both have common terminologies. It is possible to observe common terminologies between Shinasha and other Gonga groups. Therefore, Shinasha seem to have been part and parcel of the Gonga population who once lived on both sides of the Abbay River before their disintegration.

According to traditions collected by Bekele W/Mariam, the elders of Shinasha say that “Our brothers, like Kafa people flew like a bird once and all. The word ‘Kaffo’ means bird in both Shinasha and Kafa languages. So the Shinasha gave the name *Kaffo* to their brothers who left them. Thus, the name Kafa, according to the Shinasha elders is derived from *Kaffo*, the bird.” (Bekele and Mariam, 2010). On the other hand, this assumption led us to suggest that the Shinasha people were later forced to leave and separated from Gonga group (Kafa) and dispersed to present areas .i.e. Kafa might have left first and the Shinasha was assumed to be last(Ibid).

In relation to language similarities and terminologies of the Shinasha with Sheka and Kafa, Bekele further describes as:

...Three languages (Shinasha, Sheka and Kafa) have close relations but each word usage of Shinasha language indicates as if it were done in the near future, where as both Sheka and Kafa languages indicated the present tense. Three languages have similar starting pronouncing sounds. For instance, Shinasha and Kafa pronunciation sound relation is 71.6% and the difference is 28.4 % (Ibid).

Moreover, Lipsky also shared the same idea stating that “various dialects of the Kafa language groups are spoken in western and southwestern Ethiopia by more than 10,000 people. The major divisions are Kafa and Shinasha within which there are further dialectal sub-divisions” (George Lipsky, 1962). Similar traditions collected by Tsega indicated, “there was a place name showing similarities...called Minjo in Wonbara which is the name of the old (Minjo) dynasty of Kafa”(Tsega, 2006). My informants also confirm that not only name of a place which is similar but also there were names of clans (ibid). The following names of some clans in both groups of people stated below reveal this fact.

Name of the Kafa Clans	Name of the Shinasha Clans
Boro	Boro (Proper name of Shinasha)
Shauwnao	Shawono
Hinnaro	Ennoro
Hinnbaro	Endemaro
Gusenawo	Gusenao
Wasero	Wošaro

Thus, names of clan’s states above illustrate identical ones in accordance with the views of the informants and written documents that I referred. Moreover, the names of the clans in the above table obviously pointed out the indistinguishable ethnic origins and identity of the both groups of the people. This means that many clan names which are found in other areas of Gonga people are also found in Shinasha like *Ennoro*, *Boro*, *Endemaro* and so on. Therefore, all these indicated either their common origin or they were living together for the centuries in the past.

With regard to these oral informants argue, that due to pre-longed separation of their ancestors from the rest of Gonga language groups, their original names of the clans and languages was assimilated by other languages of the non-Gonga groups in their respective areas. The Shinasha looks like that of other Gonga language speaking group claimed their origin to the Middle East (Ibid). This means in general the Gonga people have common history of origin and language.

Equally, Bekele W/Maryam describes the settlement patterns of Gonga people, they inhabited north and south of the Abbay river and these Gonga groups included Kafa, Sheka, Hinnaro, Anfillo and Boro(Shinasha) (Bekele, 2004). He describes that these people had common ethnic identity, cultural practices and language. For instance, there is today a clan name called *Boro* in Kafa, which is the proper name of the Shinasha (Boro). He further argues that on the basis of the traditions and historical documents of the Gonga people; they traced their origin to the Middle East mainly Ancient Israel, Egypt and Yemen. At different period they migrated to Ethiopia following the course of Nile River and dispersed to Gondar, Gojjam, Tigray, and reached to the southwestern regions of Ethiopia. Furthermore, as he notes that in their tradition, these groups of people claimed that due to war and conflict at different period and Oromo population expansions and pressure caused

them to have dispersed into various parts of the country (Ibid).

My oral informants in the study area argue that their oral traditions indicated that as they departed from their Gongga groups and remained north and south of the Abbay River (south of Gojjam and Wollega respectively (Informants).

On the bases of the above arguments and some accounts, one can suggest that the Shinasha's are members of the Gongga language speaking people of Ethiopia (Edward Ullendorff, 1973). In relation to this, the Portuguese traveler Manuel De Alemedia, states that "Gongga group include: Kafa, Shinasha, Bosha or Garo, Mao or Anfillo, Sheka or Mocha." (Manuel De Alemedia). It seems that the term Gongga is used to include these people. Despite this fact that, Socio-cultural and economic similarities of these groups of people are not thoroughly studied. Therefore, it is very important to investigate their relationship. But it is beyond the scope of this study to give detail of their relations.

Summary

The historical documents revealed that the frequent raids of Christian kingdom in Gojjam and adjacent territories pushed some Shinasha groups into their present localities even prior to 15th century and later due to dynamic population pressure in the 16th century, majority of Shinasha pushed to hot lowland areas of Metekel.

The Shinasha oral tradition argues that in the courses of expansion to areas of Metekel, as claimed by tradition, Shinasha groups were led by Abuguri. Abuguri was said to have the knowledge of traditional medicine with which he seized the people. On the other hand, Abuguri was remembered for his special skill of making javelins and swords and made the people to settle in various areas of Metekel. Furthermore, informants confirm that their early expansion and settlement; as they were pushed the territories to particularly Guba and Ethio-Sudanese borderlands as well as in various localities of Wollega and Gojjam.

The presence of the Shinasha in some districts of Wollega and as they were also parts of Gongga confirmed by different scholars and travelers, who described the Shinasha as one of early inhabitants together with Gumuz, Gafat and the Damote people of the Wollega prior to Oromo expansion to the region. Although, the Shinasha of these areas was already dominated, assimilated by Oromo following their settlement in the above areas.

The other argument with regard to the Shinasha as they were parts of Gongga state before disintegration of the Gongga kingdom was Harold, Fleming. He indicates that a large and powerful kingdom of Gongga existed prior to the 16th century and this kingdom extended from southern Gojjam to the southwestern highlands. It weakened and disintegrated in the 16th century as the result of the Oromo expansion into the southwestern Ethiopia. Consequently, the Gongga kingdom was divided into three groups (Southern Gongga, Central Gongga and Northern Gongga), and hence the southern Gongga cut off from the northern Gongga to which the Shinasha belonged. He also states that "Sinasse", as an important town of the heathen Gonggas. Thus, according to his explanation, "Sinasse" seems to have been a settlement area of the Shinasha.

Moreover, as we have described above the Jesuit Missionary, Father Antonio Fernandes, who traveled from Gojjam across the Abbay from Wämbärma to Ennarya in 1613-14, also mentioned the Shinasha as part of the Gonggas and clearly described their presence on both sides of the Abbay.⁵⁷ This position is also graphically represented in Almeida's map of Ethiopia where the Gonggas or Shinasha are located on both sides of the Abbay). In early 17th century, groups of Shinasha identified as Gonggas. This was further confirmed by mid-19th century European explorers who visited and recorded the existence of the different Gongga groups in the valleys of the Abbay.

According to Antoine d. Abbaddie, who visited southwestern Ethiopia in the 1840's collected the genealogies of the people of the area and he explained most of the Shinasha lived in the Amuru and Jidda regions of Horro-Gudru, and their surviving descendants were known as "Wäskäto, Qitiso, Siddo, Ma'afo, Asisi, Dabino, Arnäy and Jarabru."

As stated by Antoine d. Abbaddie, his informants of Amuru, whom he met in Guduru, explained that the Shinasha who lived in the lowland of Amuru and Jidda districts used to pay tributes to the Oromo. D' Abbaddie was informed that by 1843, the social conditions of the Shinasha changed and they stopped paying tribute to the Oromo. Thus, the Shinasha's under their leader *Addo Ibsa* left the lowland areas and settled in the highland localities of the two districts. From the above view, one can understand that the Shinasha people were early settlers and the Oromo who came later forced them to pay tributes. This further indicated that the Oromo forcefully subjugated the Shinasha. In

other words, D' Abbaddie accounts reveal that tributary obligation imposed on Shinasha of Goġgam during the reign of *Dajazmach* Gošu (1823-1839/40). It was due to some factors that Shinasha groups escaped the heavy tribute they paid to Goġgam rulers moved to south of Abbay.

More importantly, data collected by Oljira, in Horro-Guduru asserted that, the Shinasha of this area with the coming of their strong relatives from Gojjam. Thus, the Shinasha of Horro-Guduru declared their independence and expanded to some parts of Amuru and Jidda. According to Tessema, the Shinasha people were well organized by their chieftains to resist the Oromo expansion to Wollega. He also states that the presence of Shinasha around the Abbay and between Däbus and Didessa rivers and also their further extension to Wonbara. This seems to indicate that Shinasha were early settlers of these areas before expansion of the Oromo people.

In addition, Oljira notes that the Shinasha people were the early inhabitants of Horro-Guduru. He also described that they had made a stiff resistance to Oromo expansion. He also further states that they were able to put a bitter and strong resistance, because they had a well developed form of social organization. They seem to have been relatively populous. In Horro-Guduru the Shinasha is found in large numbers in Amuru and Jidda districts in certain localities like Luquma, Wäsht, Wa'al, Jawajä and Horro of Jidda. In these districts the Shinasha lives closer to Abbay river valley. The oral traditions collected by Oljira also pointed that some Shinasha groups moved from Limmu and Jidda districts crossed the Abbay and settled in Metekel locality of Dängäb area. This investigation reveals the early existence of the Shinasha groups in Wollega areas prior to their settlement in Metekel.

The local Shinasha sources reveal that the Shinasha groups or clans like *Aušära* settled in places Čarä and Qurä in the northwestern parts of the Country. It was in such a way that the name Čära is derived from one of the Shinasha's clan *Aušära*. Today, the Shinasha oral informants from the study area traced that Čära as one of their former settlement place. This argument is prevailed in National Atlas of Ethiopia which described that in the 1570's and 1580's the main target of King Sarsa Dengil was to control various people like Oromo, Falasha, Agäw, Shinasha and Gumuz people in Begamidir, Wegera, Semen, Dembiya and Gojjam by the means of the conquest.

On the other hand, the above mentioned fact indicated the existence of the Shinasha people in the northwestern parts of Ethiopia and their assimilation with the local people. They were forced to abandon their ancient culture; language and even their identity by the dominant groups. Nevertheless, these communities have still strong memories of their Shinasha origins. Whereas, those Shinasha's who were displaced to Metekel by Christian kings have maintained their identity intact. This attributed to various factors, among this, the region is very remote from the centre and it was finally annexed at the end of the 19th century. This means the proximity of the time that the Shinasha of these areas was incorporated to Ethiopian empire.

Concerning early settlement and expansions of the Shinasha, different travelers of the early 17th century confirmed the existence of Shinasha on both sides of the Abbay river. For instance, as we mentioned earlier in 1613/14 when Father Antonio Fernades crossed the Abbay from Wämbärma to Ennarya, he found the people of Shinasha in both sides of the Abbay river. Thus, this indicates the presence of these people in the areas mentioned.

In general, historical documents asserted that the two major political and demographic developments, which occurred in the 16th century along with the early Christian raids on the Shinasha, might have led the majority of Shinasha to be disintegrated from other Gonga groups. They dispersed into their present areas. Of course, details of Christian expedition against Shinasha will be discussed next. But here I try to high-light how these developments caused displacement of Shinasha at various periods from the rest of the Gonga language speaking groups (Gonga people).

The Christian raids to the areas were with an intention to exploit the gold; in which the region is known historically. Besides, it ensure suzerainty over the people that could be dated back to the reign of King Yeshaq (1413-30), in early 15th century; who was thought to have made campaign into Gojjam and Metekel in particular. Tsega, who had made extensive research in northwestern Ethiopia asserts clearly this as follows:

Pressures from the Christian empire, the Oromo expansions and the search for better living conditions forced many Shinasha of Southern Wollega to move into unfavorable spots and lowland parts of Metekel. They sought refuge in naturally protected areas as they were

subjected to slave raids. They moved into malaria-infected into the Guba hills and then gradually trekked further into Dangur Mountain.

These Christian raids became regular affairs of the rulers after the reign of Sarsa Dengil (1563-97). These rulers were interested in the region's resources, like gold and attempted to bring its people under their control. The following reveals this fact: "In the 1570's and 1580's the other targets of Sarsa Dengil, were various Oromo tribes in south and Falasha, the Agäw, Shinasha and Gumuz People in Agäwmidir, Wegera, Semen, Dembiya and Gojjam." This pressure further pushed Shinasha to the lowlands of present Metekel localities. According to Richard Pankhurst the Emperor Sarsa Dengil, who was better armed than his predecessors, undertook war expeditions against several people of the western borderland. One of them was the Shinasha. Therefore; both Pankhurst and Tsega shared the same view concerning the expedition of the Christian kings to subdue the Shinasha and other minorities in the northwestern borderlands.

Moreover, the campaign to these areas became more intensive with the gradual shift of the centre of the Ethiopian state into the Lake Tana and Gondar regions in the 17th century. The expansion of the Christian kingdom into the area was aimed in exploiting its abundant resources and slaves.

According to Taddase Tamarat, Kings such as Sarsa-Dengil (1563-1597), Susenyos (1607-1632), Fasilades (1632-1667), Yohannis (1667-1683) and Iyasu the Great (1683-1706) had successively conducted devastating campaigns into the Metekel region. These rulers achieved a final break-through and attacked minority groups like the Shinasha and Gumuz through means of indirect rule by appointing the Agäw chiefs over them. However; they did not completely bring the region under their control until 1898.

It sounds that these developments forced the Shinasha to move in masses into the west of Dura River, to their present Metekel localities. On their way, the Shinasha fought and subdued the Gumuz. Some of whom were forced to live in the unfavorable lowland areas of this region, while others continued to live with them in harsh way. Thus, the Shinasha occupied places in Metekel like Bulän, Gongo, Dängäb, Dora Jällä, Galasa, Wagdi, Gasangasa, Dangur, Guba, Wonbara and the surrounding areas. It also shows that the earlier Christian raids into Gojjam and adjacent territories might have probably forced majority of

the Shinasha groups to move to their present localities.

Moreover, the Oromo settlement in the South of the Abbay pushed the Shinasha population to Gojjam to take refuge and these enriched the Shinasha community already living in the north of that River, Metekel. It should be noted that most of the Shinasha were subdued and assimilated into the Agäw, Amharä and Oromo people.

In 1570's the Oromo frequently over run the eastern parts of Gojjam, Damot, Agäwmidir and even the lowlands of Metekel which was occupied by the Shinasha and Gumuz. This pressure from the Oromo people pushed the Shinasha's further to the lowland areas of Metekel. As Taddase reveals that process of prolonged warfare between the Oromo and Christian kingdom, gradually forced the pre-Oromo inhabitants of the southwestern regions to move elsewhere and to take refugee. Many of the diverse population of Damot, Gafat and Shinasha fled across the Abbay into Gojjam and enriched the ethnic composition of the province.

By the first decade of the 17th century, the Oromo's had controlled almost all the lands between the Abbay and Ennarya. Much of the present day Horro-Guduru was already dominated by them and have made repeated attacks on the Shinasha. Thus, by the beginning of 17th century, the Gonga population in south of the Abbay river was already dominated by the Oromo, while the other groups living to the north of the river were frequently victims of the slave-raiding expeditions of the Christian rulers and their local representatives. As Werner J. Lange asserts that both pressure of the Oromo and continuous raids of Christian rulers in the early 18th century resulted in the Shinasha/Gonga/ people to lose their independence. He further describes that "Through repeated colonial expeditions of the northern Christian empire into Gonga territory in north and immediately south of the Blue Nile, the political independence of the Northern Gonga-identified in late 17th century as the 21st kingdom of Ethiopia was ended by the early 18th century." At the same time it was during this period that the expedition of northern Christian state enforced large number of Gonga people to seek refuge in the densely forested highlands of southwestern Ethiopia and forcefully pursue a way of life there lost to their kin in the north. This period was historical period in which the same members of Gonga groups (southern Gonga) actually separated and began to lead independent life from their relative Shinasha Groups.

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