Assessing the Change and Continuity in the Social Organization and Practices among the Kore of Southwestern Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study was aimed at assessing the change and continuity in the social organization in Ethiopia taking an example of Kore society, among the Amaro of southwestern Ethiopia. Qualitative research methodology was applied to describe the issue under consideration. The researcher tried to define social organization features and several of its associated components and their linkages. The study examines the way conquest and modernization deteriorated the social organization of the indigenous communities of Kore. It also tries to see the role of other factors like the missionary activities and the adherence of socialism by Ethiopian state as contributors.

Key Words: Kore, Social Organization, Christianity, Modernization, Change and Continuity

I. INTRODUCTION

Human being has passed most of his history as hunter and gatherer by wondering from place to place. Settlement and social organizations are directly related with the beginning of river valley civilizations during the Neolithic era. This period was also characterized by permanent settlement, relatively advanced knowledge and complex socialization. The beginning of permanent settlement paved the way for domestication of plants and animals which facilitated the development of various socio-cultural aspects like religion, shelter and family formation. In the course of time, socialization, such as categorization of society into classes of religious agents, rulers, fighters, merchants, commoners, artisans and slaves were evolved (Abesha and Ratnakar, 2019) Understanding the evolution and adaptive nature of social organization is a major goal in the study of societies (Anthony, 1994). Human societies exhibit cooperation, coordination and division of labor, which are the three features that place them at striking variance with man. Cooperation involves doing something for the benefit of all in a social group, coordination involves every one doing things one way instead of another so that social activity can proceed efficiently. The division of labor results when different individuals undertake specialized tasks, and then exchange the products of their labor (Alexander, 1974)

Social organization may be defined as a pattern of relationship between and among individuals and social groups. It "describes the collection of values, norms, processes and behavior patterns within a community that organize, facilitate and constraint the interactions among community members". These interactions come together to constitute common features in basic social units such as family and community. The individuals in a social organization perform their activities according to their social positions called status. The activities done in the social organization are called roles of the members, and individual performs his/her roles according to his/her status. Therefore, status and role are the basis of social participation in an organization. Families are important institutions in fully understanding the concept of social organization in that families are the most basic and essential social grouping in a community with their own function in socialization (Jay, Gary and James, 2005)

The social organization of any society encompasses two basic and irreducible aspects, or more objectively, it includes two basic orders of social relations, institutions and norms. Familial domain and politico-jural domain, kinship and polity, moral and legal order are alternative ways of designating this dichotomy of structural arrangements, depending on which aspect one attempts to emphasize. The crucial issue, however, is that, these two orders of relations, institutions and norms, analytically differentiable in every society. They may be fused together in the actualities of conduct and behaviors so as to be superficially undistinguishable, but closer investigation never fails to differentiate them (Henry, 1971)

Pre-colonial African societies have had their own socio-political systems of governance and institutions that served to regulate the relationship among their people. However, colonialism and the subsequent social changes largely affected these systems which finally led them to collapse in many parts of the continent. Even though Ethiopia is one of the states in Africa free from European

colonialism, its Abyssinian Kingdom conquered and imposed its political and cultural hegemony up on many of East African independent Kingdoms, chiefdoms and communities (Firew, 2017)

The major decisive factor in concern to social organization is the intrinsic link between class status and property ownership. As is well known, land is the center of economic value purely and exclusively in traditional African society. Though not quite accurate, this feeling brings the idea of a highly stratified social order composed of groups with different functions, differential status and unequal power. In such society, status and power are more accompanied with commensurate economic privileges. Ethiopian culture recognizes social inequality and defends it with elaborate ideological rationales (John, 1973). Traditionally, the social structures of many ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia are less stratified and complex than that of the Christian society in the north. In southern Ethiopia, social organization is intensified by the existing ethnic and cultural differences between the land owners and the landless (*Ibid*) Therefore, it becomes appropriate to analyze the social organization of the Kore society in terms of class, on the basis of the evolving pattern of ownership, keeping in mind that land is still the dominant economic resource in Ethiopia.

The Kore people and their lands are one of the least studied Ethiopia areas while the available few literatures give remarks mainly on linguistic categorization of Kore language. The Kore community is one of the ethnic communities settling in southwestern Ethiopia of the Horn of Africa. Linguistically and culturally, they belong to the Omotic family sharing linguistic and cultural similarities with Wolaita and Gamo people of the Horn of Africa. The people call themselves Kore and their language is called Korete, while the people call their land Kore, to mean the land of the people who speak Korete. These people were incorporated to the Abyssinian Empire of Ethiopia towards the end of the 19th century. Before this time, Kore was an independent Omotic Kingdom. Since then, they were under the Abyssinian cultural and political hegemony and were victims of the losing many of the aspects of their cultural values (Awoke, 2016)

In the Kore social organization, the Kaate (the king) and his families had the highest social status. The Kaate and his families occupied the highest and most privileged position in the Kore society. Because of their social status, these group owned much of the most productive and fertile land in the area. They owned slaves as well household servants in addition to other social privileges. Moreover, great warriors or hunters have high position and sayings in the Kore society. Elders are highly respected due to their social and counselor functions under their council known as "Ohe" or "Baara Yaa'a". The Mana (tanners and potters) and the Wogache (smiths) on the other hand were the most unprivileged groups among the Kore. Usually these caste groups did not have land. They could not form marriage relation with the Shawwo, ritually 'clean' groups and they are prohibited eating in the utensils of the Shawwo and the reverse is also true. Their cattle even are prohibited to feed with those of the Shawwo cattle i.e., the Kana'e and Korese clans. The Kaate had strong power and influence over the social life of the Kore people. If a certain individual from Shawwo clans committed social taboo such as eating pork or wild fowl, the Kaate will automatically change this individuals clan to degraded and despised Mana (which includes potters and tanners) clans (Awoke, 1985)

Below these, came the slaves. Slavery had a century old history in Kore. Influential groups like the Kaate, his families and others had slaves for centuries. In fact, an average family with a good economic background owned slaves. Accordingly, there are different ways of acquiring slaves in Kore. First, influential persons who were heads of families and sub-clans could enslave their own families and relatives. For instance, the head of a sub-clan had the right to enslave children born from a female who belonged to his sub-clan, or the head of a family could enslave any child born to his sister who was assumed to be born from another sub-clan. Second, the poorest or weakest members of clans were enslaved by the strongest or richest. Criminals who were unable to pay their debt demanded by the borrower could also be enslaved. Men who were unsuccessful to till the Kaate land would also turn to slave. If the head of a family was enslaved his whole family was also turned to slavery. In addition to these methods of acquiring slaves, wars fought against neighbors were also important sources to acquire slave. This remained a source of conflict between groups in many parts of the Kore Kingdom and was the major factor for the social and political problems in the area until it was dismantled in the post-Italians period (Ibid)

Therefore, this paper tries to explore the change and continuity in the social organization of Kore and its deterioration by external factors like Abyssinian incorporation, modernization and Missionaries activities. The major objective of the paper is to clearly indicate how the imposition of alien political and religious systems by the Abyssinians gradually altered the indigenous one. In fact, the article also tries to examine the contribution of other external factors like the coming of Protestant Mission to the area. Furthermore, an assessment was made about the impact of the introduction of Socialism as the ideology of the state and the present condition of the social organization in the area.

II. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY
2.1. Introducing the Study Area
The Kore people are one of the ethno-linguistic groups in southwestern Ethiopia. Administratively, they are found in Amaro Special Woreda. Naturally, they are located between southern Oromiya Zone of Gujji and Lakes of Abbaya and Chamo. When

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described in relation to the adjacent areas, Amaro Special Woreda is found South of Gamo Zone, North of Burji Special Woreda, West of Oromia region (Gujji Zone) and East of Konso Zone and Derashe Special Woreda. The total land size of the Woreda is around 107,980 hectares and divided into thirty three (33) rural Kebele peasant associations and one town administration. The present political and economic headquarter of Amaro District is Kelle town. Geographically, Amaro is located at 5^0 62' and 6^0 02' North and 37^0 55' and 38^0 9' East, latitude and longitude respectively (Amare, 2011). Demographically, based on statistical projection of the result of 2007, the total population of the Kore was estimated around167, 379 out of which 49.56% were women (Zemach, 2018). Out of the total population, only 5.8 % are living in urban areas (Amare, 2011).

Agro-ecologically, Amaro Special Woreda is categorized into highland (Dega) with altitude ranges from 2301-3601 meters above sea level, middle altitude area (Woine Dega) with altitude ranges from1500-2300 meters above sea level and lowland (Kola) with altitude ranges from 1000-1500 meters above sea level, with 32% 38% and 30% of the area, coverage respectively. The Woreda is known for its bi-modal rainfall season. The first small rainy season is autumn (Belg), that occurs from the beginning of March to the end of April and the second main rainfall season is summer (Kremt) that occurs from the beginning of July to the end of November in normal years. The average annual rainfall of the Woreda ranges from 735-1200 millimeters (Zemach, 2019). The mean maximum and minimum temperature of the Woreda are 25^0c and 12^0 c. respectively (Eleni, Adugna and Ajebu, 2017). The dominant economic activity of the Kore society was and is subsistence agriculture and enset (Enset ventricosum) is the most important plant in the area. As the Kore society heavily relied on enset for their livelihood, the need for productive land for enset cultivation was most desired. Moreover, as enset has been the basic foodstuff for a long time, it has become associated with the culture of Kore. Though enset was and still is the staple food of the Kore, there are other foodstuffs including grains such as wheat, barley, sorghum, pea, and teff. But, all these are used as supplementary foods (Awoke, 2011). Moreover, livestock and livestock products are also an important source of income of the society. In addition, few earned additional income from non-agricultural activities such as employment and petty trade (Eleni, Adugna and Ajebu, 2017)

2.2. Methods and Procedures

The study was designed qualitatively as a cultural study and ethnographic research techniques were largely employed. Primary data was collected through interview and observation. Though primary data was very scanty specifically about Kore, review was made to the very few literatures related to the subject. The data obtained from different sources was filtered and organized for triangulation and systematic analysis was made appropriately.

2.3. Objectives

The main goal of this study was to methodically indicate the change and continuity through which the indigenous social organization system highly affected southwestern Ethiopia people with special emphasis on the Kore community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Bases for the Social Organization of Kore people

Kore society is based on clan, lineage and family organization. Every Kore is born to one clan and takes the identity of his father. The lineage, like the clan is patrilineal and exogamous but unlike the clan it is localized and members of the same lineage normally live in the same area for many generations. The smallest unit of Kore social organization is the nuclear family consisting of the parents and their offspring. The origins of Kore clans is claimed to different places and the origin of the people to the land has greater connection to the social organization. The families of first comers to the land of the current Kore were valued as seniors and clan head. The four clans are represented and organized into a fixed set of hereditary groups. The clan organization of the Kore helps them to regulate societal life and assimilate migrants from the neighboring communities (Wabela, 2015)

The social organization of Kore society is mainly based on clanship. They share different aspects of culture and show some kind of social organization similar with the adjoining communities of Wolaita and Gamo. Accordingly, the Kore have four main clans known as "Oma" having different status in the society. These are Kana'e, Korese, Mana and Wogache. The Kana'e clan includes the Kaate (the king) and his families and has the highest status. The Korese on the other hand has been believed to be the indigenous people of Kore land. Both Kana'e and Korese treat each other friendly. Both have been the most privileged, on the other hand; the Wogache and Mana members have been the most underprivileged sections of the society. Besides, the clan of Kore has sub-clan groups. Kore have more than 85 (eighty five) sub clan-groups. Kana'e clan has has three major sub-clans; these are Wotto, Woyra and Inkalo. Under the Wotto there are groups like Mara, Dale, Gota, Galabe, Abite, Mokisso, Sarse, Hayalo, Madayne, Shache, Gaze, Ziale, Iga, Ogale, Lollar are found. The sub-groups who belong under Woyra are Oataye, Wole, Share, Soma, Sibo, Woreda, Worme and Igasg, also groups under Inkalo are Berga, Sarmea, Chasha, Anke, Lotte, Paza, Ade, Alayo, Chanch, Worbe, Alatu, Zillo, Lakiso and Illacha. Groups under Korese clan include Masssa, Manse, Koso, Kake, Ale, Gona'e, Ayfare, Almome, Arkale, Gereme, Chankle, Borade, Wodume, Sude, Dora, Sibale, Gambele, Worze, Sirmplo, Chaw, Alale, Gadade, Kale, Golla, Oegeter, Mangale, Gade and Moga. Both Kana'e and Korese clans categorized under 'Shawwo"

which means ritually 'cleaned' clans. The Wogache clan has sub-clans such as Lomale, Gadume, Yabe, Zagise, Bada, and Galle. The Mana clan also includes groups like Kawse, Kige, Godede, Timae, Meke, Maylame and Degela. The groups categorized under 'Mana' and 'Wogache' are assumed as "impure" or polluted and has the lowest status and they are neglected throughout the area or community linkage to marriage, feeding and other aspects of life. Moreover, they are landless and they survive as potters and tanners and smiths or metal workers respectively (Solomon, 2017)

The organization into four clans is founded almost to regulate all aspects societal interaction in Kore and is still observed among the people. So, it could be possible to say that the purpose for which the social organization found is clearly observed.

3.2. Kore Social Organization and their Values

Since many times, people are convinced to accept the created clans and abide by the principles founded by the forefathers. Despite different oral accounts on the emergence of the Kore clans, there is confirmation of the four clans as the first organization of people to clanship. The four clans are therefore major clans that have existed based upon the agreements of forefathers as found essential for people to organize. Accordingly, cultural principles of the social organization are valued by the community and individuals are convinced to observe them. The value paid to the culturally bounded clans has persuasive implication to individuals of the community as they learn and abide by the clan organization. Fundamental principle of the clan organization is its basic purpose of serving as identity of a person. At the group level, clans also have implications as valued by the people. Cooperation for work on clan organization is common among the Kore for increasing agricultural productivity and construction.

The Kore clan organization is part of the whole Kore culture. According to informants, the social organization of Kore is intricately sewn with other institutions of the people and integrated into their social life and revolves around politics, economy, marriage, ritual and beliefs, warfare and the like. Families are founded on clan social basis. Accordingly, the role personality and the social status of individual are based upon the corporate environment of social organization. The social organization is based on lineage, which is believed as the extension of the same blood, the person at a given point convinced to accept any one belongs to his/her clan as brother and sister. This is world of social organization to the Kore people that helps to see each other and define roles within the social institutions.

3.3. Factors for the Change and Continuity on the Values and Principles of Social Organization of Kore

Successful social organization leads to achieving community ends-broad based shared outcomes desired by community members such as health and well-being, safety, sense of community and family resilience. Ends that are identified and valued by individuals and families in a community provide guidance for targeted application of resources to resolve issues and address concerns, as well as to achieve positive community objectives (Jay, Gary and James, 2005). Social organization and its cultural principles in the current context believed as existed with basic values observed. Fundamentally, the regulatory role of clan organization is determining marriage relationships and resulting family formation is maintained. With regard to procreation the values of social organization are maintained with relatively high tendency of observing the principles. According to the data gathered from the key informants, all of them confirmed that, regulation of marriage based upon social organization is not characterized with changes. Engaging in marriage with member from the same clan is prohibited as per the principle of the social organization of the Kore society. This is observed as main principle among the people which exists up until recent. However, cases of intermarrying are not common in the past but based on oral accounts; happenings are believed as treated with exclusion from community.

Orthodox Christianity has long history in Kore. For the realization of their objective, the Abyssinian conquerors converted the local people and traditional leaders to the Orthodox faith through baptism. Then, they delegated the local leaders to collect tribute from their own people. This Abyssinian policy of direct rule was more or less similar to how the colonialists transformed African traditional systems for their interest and was their stereos challenge that the indigenous social organization system of the Kore had faced. The impact of the religion has come from the direction of converting local people to their religious beliefs and making people follow religious identities. The people began to lose confidence on their traditional leaders, especially their conversion through baptism and circumcision made them to be viewed as eunuch of the conquerors (Awoke, 1985).

After incorporation, the Kore were quickly reduced to the status of *gebbars* or serfs. The Kore who had been the ruler of an independent Kingdom became a subordinate and an agent for the implementation of the *gebbar* system. Besides the *gebbar* system that reduced the Kore to the status of serfs, there was slavery which increasingly affected the Kore people in all aspects of social-cultural, economy, political and psychology. Although slavery had a long history in Kore, it almost became a number one trade item after the Kore land was annexed and incorporated into the Ethiopian Expire. Thereafter, new group of people began to involve as special slave dealers and raiders. The conquerors themselves started to engage in slave trade directly. So, it could be possible to say that the incorporation increased the harshness of the trade in human. To escape from harsh treatment of the conquerors policy of slave trade, many people from Kore was forced to fled to the neighboring areas of Burji, Konso, Borena end others. Usually, there was afraid and insecurity that the new comers might catch one at particular point in time. This psychological havoc had a direct impact on the socio-economic life of the people. Peasants were not feeling

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secured to plough their land. As a result of this, famine, hunger and disease became common and claimed the lives of many people. This was assumed to be one of the causes for the sharp decline of the number of Kore people (Awoke, 1985)

One of the factors that have brought changes to the practices of maintaining social organization among the Kore people is identified as modernization. In the context of this work, modernization is taken as introduction of education and literally and introduction of technologies of transportation, farming and medication. Accordingly, modernization has improved the traditional ways of living and people are attracted to the advancement and improvements brought up by the modernization. Besides mere introduction of modernization and its technologies, changes to the attitude towards modernization have gained more followers over time according to the data from the informants. While many authors believes modernization must be used to solve the problems, it brings about it has a hidden impact on social life. No one can deny the effect of modernization on different aspects of people life. Education, communication and even social relationship have undergone different changes. The models of adaptation have changed greatly under the influence of modernization and social relationships have paved the way of anomaly. Beside, societies enjoy certain features such as urbanization and literacy accompanied by highly developed transport system and mass media. As a result, those who live in such traditional societies have to shift their commitment from their parents and priests, who were their traditional sources of authorities, namely government officials (Soheila, 2015)

According to Soheila (2015), modernization has three characteristics. Firstly, the decline of traditional communities marks the modernization which results in dramatic fall in the importance of interactions among societies. Secondly, as modernization increases, the society becomes more bureaucratic and interaction is shaped by formal organizations. Consequently, the traditional ties of kinship, clanship and neighbors diminish, the member of societies begin to develop feelings of uncertainty and helplessness. Thirdly, religious institutions began to lose momentum. As life begins to get modernized, people start to feel that have lost control of their own lives, so as a reaction, they establish new religious groups and communities. Modernization brings a shift of traditional societies, a shift which is usually characterized by high rates of urbanization, the traditional values and norms are violated by rapid social changes (Soheila). So, modernization and its practices highly eroded the social organization and its practices of the Kore society.

When the Italian forces arrived in the Kore land after defeating the Ethiopian forces, at the beginning, they were viewed by the majority of the Kore as a liberator from the Abyssinian political and cultural hegemony. After conquering the area, the Italians arrested influential Abyssinian ruling elites. This was done to easily get the support of the mass and mobilize them for their colonial mission. Very soon, however, they started to collect tribute from the people. In addition, they started to force people to provide free labor for construction of administrative and residential buildings. The Italians who were viewed as liberators later became very harsh. In their stay in the area, the Italians also attempted to weaken the social organization of the Kore fearing an attack from the people if they had unity.

However, the most serious challenge to the social organization of the Kore came after 1950s. This was the coming of Protestant Missionaries. As part of his modernization project, Haile Sellase I (r. 1930-1974), allowed Missionaries to evangelize people in southern Ethiopia as far as they have provided education and health care services. After they started to provide health and education services, they were able to find few. Gradually, the people started to view their activities as a relief from Abyssinian pressure of exploitation. Protestant Missionaries arrived in Kore land in the early 1950s. Until 1960, there were still only a few mission churches and converts. However, although most of the first converts were juniors, the poor and artisans, religious transformation was already taking place. Protestant Christianity showed a rapid religious transformation within half century among the Kore community. Their evangelization targeted at core elements of the social organization of Kore society (Awoke, 2016)

Besides, the new churches prohibited polygamy and consumption of traditional and locally made drinks. More important, however, was the formation of new associations and networks of converts. Named Amana Mabara, meaning association of converts, these networks and associations reached out all over Kore community. These associations also started to change the social organization and power structures in Kore; eventually, this new power structures limited the authority of clan heads, *Kashaches*. Moreover, women and artisans for the first time started to participate in public affairs equally with others. The Mana (tanners and potters) became relatively with the Shawwo although still there are minor discriminations which was against the principles of the social organization of the Kore (*Ibid*)

The other most serious challenge to the social organization of the Kore society came from the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Between 1974 and 1976, when properties and land of the feudal lords including public institutions were made under the control of the local people, the indigenous institutions remained untouched in most cases. Nevertheless, after the coming of students for the campaign launched at the national level, *Ye'ediger Behebret Zemecha* (Development through Cooperative Campaign), attacking indigenous institutions began. Leaders of the campaign mobilized the mass convincing them that both the Abyssinian and indigenous systems have to be destroyed to realize the new order in its fullest form. Especially, local cultural values and their practices were portrayed as hindrances of progress and transformation. The destruction project targeted deities,

clanship organization and other symbols of indigenous institutions. Moreover, the Socialist regime with its principle of creating classless society adversely affected the social organization of Kore.

In the most recent time, the advance in science and technology, particularly in information and communication has an adverse impact on the social organization and their practices among the Kore.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Kore people are one of the indigenous communities in the Horn of Africa, residing in southwestern Ethiopia. Their indigenous social organization gradually deteriorated mainly because of the Abyssinian conquest, modernization, missionaries and other internal and external factors.

The clan organization is one of the fundamental forms of social organization for the Kore people determining procreation and shaping interaction. For the Kore organization into clanship is primary factor to humanity. Though the social organization is founded for procreation and marriage, it entails social implication of group. Along that line, clans cooperate for working parties and enticing for familial purpose. The interaction of the clans through marriage at large has greater contribution towards the people of Kore. Thus, the people of Kore are believed belonging to forefathers that unfolds across generations. This helps the people of Kore to create familial relationship with in shorter time.

The social organization is founded with the values set in the culture of the people. Values are inventions of the early emerged ancestors. In response to the invention of the forefathers new generations are adapting the inventions. Basically, the organization into four clans and the purpose for which the social organization founded are instituted into the culture as values. In making the principles, cultural values, identity of clans have sustained across generation. Above all, the social organization is essential that people maintain as their cultural identity, both individually and in groups. This is designed to function in the daily routine life of the individuals and families.

As a principle of social organization that determines sexual relation and family organization, social organization is founded on important values but the economic challenges and contact with other communities in the advancement of time has created omission of the cultural practices.

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