

Mapping Historical Traces: Methogenesis, Identity and the Representation of the Harela: A Historical and Anthropological Inquiry

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Abstract

Harela village is found in Dire Dawa Administration, which is located at about 15 km away from the city of Dire Dawa. It is the only site that bears the name of historic Harela. Before the formation of a strong centralized state of Ethiopia, there have been numerous tiny and fragmented but semi-autonomous sultanates/kingdoms ruled either by traditional sultans/sheiks and/or chieftains/kings. However, till this time, very little information is found about the characteristics and statehood existence of these states located outside of the Christian Highland Kingdom of Ethiopia. The general objective of the study is to examine and map the identity, representation and the methogenesis of the Harela people from a historical and anthropological view point. To gather the necessary data for realizing the stated objectives, the study used both primary and secondary data sources. The secondary data has been collected from journals, books and archival documents. The primary data used in producing this study, were of qualitative in nature. Qualitative techniques were chosen for they help to see the multidimensional views of the people under study.

The findings reveal that Harela is mentioned in several authoritative literatures; it was a settlement of people who lived in eastern Ethiopian plateaus, and having Islamic spiritual traditions. Their existence has been affirmed by those scholars as they have distinct type of civilization like many of sultanates and kingdoms in Medieval Ethiopia. For many of the scholars, the Harela people had very advanced form of peasant agriculture and stone built settlements in the eastern plateau region between the 13th and the 16th centuries. Besides agriculture, they were also engaged in long distance trade; the route may have been extended to Middle and Far East regions. The heritage is not in a position of generating income in the form of tourism due to lack of awareness of the contribution of heritage to economic development among concerned institution and community members. Finally, recommendations include awareness creation on how to exploit cultural heritage resources; build the capacity of tour guides; conducting archaeological excavation, and developing facilities and infrastructure for tourists.

Key Words: *Harela, heritage, civilization, long distance trade, settlements*

1. Introduction

This chapter highlights the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and research methodologies used to conduct the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Harela village is found in Dire Dawa Administrative Region, which is located at about 15 km away from the City of Dire Dawa. It is the only site that bears the name of historic Harela. The Harela village is located between 9^o29'38"N latitude and 41^o 54'57" E longitudes and 1732m above sea level (Hailu, 2009). The Harela village which is the successor of the historic Harela as a medieval town was founded on the plateau surrounded by mountains and gorges. Harela is one of the early trade routes in eastern Ethiopia linked with Jeldesa and Zeyla ports.

The Harela people, once known by the locals as the race of the giants, are the origin of civilization in the region. It was the sources of flourishing traders. For over a thousand years they were doing trade from inland with overseas countries including with China, Middle

East and India. Their settlement site still exists though their descendants have spread around various regions in south eastern parts Ethiopia, from Awash valley to the current Somaliland. Dr. Philipp Paulitschke mentions Rare Harle Somalis (people of Harla) in Issa region and Ceruli mentions the presence of some Harla words in the spoken Somali language in Fafan area which is located between Gursum and Jigjiga.

The aim of this research, therefore, is to explore the origin and identity, the social representation and the material heritage of the Harela people and the importance of maintaining this material culture to the identity and the origin of the people. It is hoped that the study would contribute to shed light on the some of the controversy about the Harela identity and civilization.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Before the formation of a strong centralized state in Ethiopia, there have been numerous tinny and fragmented but self-governing and semi-autonomous sultanates/kingdoms ruled either by traditional sultans/sheiks and/or chieftains/kings. However, till this time, very little information is found about the characteristics and statehood existence of these states located outside of the Christian Highland Kingdom of Ethiopia. The only vivid account of these sultanates/kingdoms is the one that exists either in the chronicles of the Christian Highland kings or in the writings of foreigners who reached the country as geographical explorers, travelers, traders, scientific societies, religious missionaries or consuls serving their home country in Ethiopia. However, there is no adequate data pertaining to the culture, identity, economic and political structure of these sultanates/kingdoms. As a result of these facts, there is very scanty information on the extents to which their authority was delimited or stretched as well as the type of economic activities they engaged in, their origin and the unique features they possessed which identified them from neighboring communities. There existed also a very heated scholarly debate on the overall features of these sultanates/kingdoms throughout the period of ancient and Medieval Ethiopian history which provide divergent historical accounts.

Needless to say, this is also true to the civilization of the Harela. There is no comprehensive study on Harela by Ethiopian and Foreign writers. In some archeological literature (for instance, Domenico Patassini and Kebebaw Berhanu, (2004) and Meftuh S. Abubaker, (2014).) the people of Harela have been given only very short descriptions.

Generally, written materials in relation to the history of Harela in Ethiopia are marked by spatial, temporal and thematic unevenness. Relatively speaking, the available sources on Harela deal with the relation of the Harela people with the Christian Highland Kingdom and with their immediate neighbors such as the Argoba, Harari and the Somali. They also discuss the identity of the Harela people by mixing up with the people of Harari, Argoba, Somali, Afar and the Oromo.

Thus, the study intends to address the problems stated above. More specifically, the study will focus on the identity, representation and the methogenesis of the Harela people. Therefore, the study is centered on the following basic questions. What are the different mythologies regarding the origin and identity of the Harela people in the study area? What do the historical traces they left behind tell us about the Harela people? How are they represented in different literature (diachronic representation) and the neighboring people (a synchronic representation) in the study area? What are the social representations given to the Harela people in the study area?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to examine and map the identity, representation and the methogenesis of the Harela people from a historical and anthropological view point.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study specifically aims to:

- Discuss and analyze the mythological controversies surrounding the origin and identity of the Harela people;
- Analyze and appreciate the socio-economic complex, belief system and different social representation given to the people from a synchronic point of view; and
- Assess and analyze the archeological evidences and historical treasures of the Harela people and what they imply about their civilization.

1.4 Research Methodology

To gather the necessary data for realizing the stated objectives, the study used both primary and secondary data sources.

1.4.1. Data Source

This study has employed both primary and secondary data sources.

1.4.1.1. Secondary Data

The secondary data has been collected from journals, books and archival documents. These sources of secondary data mainly talk about issues pertaining to the historical bases of the Harela civilization. They were used in such a way that the different archeological and historical sources developed to grasp and shed some light on the origin, identity and the representation of the people were employed to support and corroborate the findings of this study.

1.4.1.2. Primary Data

The primary data used in producing this study were of qualitative in nature. Qualitative techniques were chosen for they help to see the multidimensional views of the people under study. It also helps to asses historical and archeological sources (i.e. the diachronic perspective) and squarely sees the synchronic reflections about the origin, identity and representation of the Harela civilization from the neighboring ethnic groups. The qualitative data were collected using interviews, focus-group discussions and observations (i.e. regarding the historical traces of the civilization).

1.4.1.3. Observations

To look into the historical traces they left behind the researcher has observed artifacts, ecofacts and the features of the civilization to the best elucidation about the topic under investigation. Moreover, the technique of participant observation has been used as a method to substantiate the historical and archeological evidences with the contemporary views of the Harela by the neighboring people in the study area. Though it is difficult to create a rapport within a short period of time, this method helps to get a very good insight about the

historical traces and evidences of the Harela civilization in contrast to the contemporary narration. More often than not, this method is also considered by social scientists as an imperative to crosscheck the ideal pattern of behavior with the actual one. To recap it, using this method, the researcher have got the chance to observe the current meta-narratives regarding the identity, methogenesis and representation of the Harela people by situating herself in different social and ethnic enclaves residing in the study area.

1.4.1.4. Interviews

To garner the necessary data this research has used unstructured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Unstructured interviews were used to gather data when people were looking after their routine or day-to-day life tracks. This enabled the researcher to garner the necessary data while informants are doing their day-to-day routine life chores. Issues pertaining to representation, myth of origin and identity in line with the views they have (i.e. whether it is positive or negative) have been discussed when the researcher approaches from an informal and iterative ways of interaction with research subjects (in this case the neighboring ethnic groups in the study area). Semi-structured interview has been used to gather data from concerned zonal officers, informants (from different ethnic backgrounds) and academics who have made a research on the topic. They were interviewed using an interview guide. Moreover, in-depth interview were conducted with key informants using an interview guide to ensure optimum coverage of different issues related to the research topic. This interview in particular has been employed to gather data regarding the identity, representation and the myth of origin about the people. Last, but not least, the in-depth interview has tried to uncover narrations regarding the economic, political and historical heyday of the Harela civilization by the neighboring ethnic groups in the study area.

4.1.5. Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)

The FGDs that has been used to conduct this study has come up with clear points on several issues such as the controversies about the origin and identity of the Harela people; issues related to economic, political and historical heyday and how does the people, whose mighty has gone to history, were/ are represented by history and the contemporary neighboring people. Thus, group discussions were valuable in that they help to crosscheck and validate the data provided by the different individuals in the group discussions and the information collected from the informants. In addition, group discussions help the researcher to identify the key informants for the research.

5. Scope, Limitations and Significance of the Study

5.1. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to the identity, representation, and myth of origin of the Harela people. Thus, it has to be taken into consideration that issues related to history, politics and economy of the people from a historical and archeological perspective is not the focus of this study. Also it has to be born in mind that the applicability of the findings of the study need to be judged based on the issues it has attempted to identify and assess.

5.1.1. Limitation of the Study

The research has the following the limitations. First, dearth of well-researched anthropological study on the issue has made the research to rely more on primary data (i.e. oral tradition, historical and archeological traces and a synchronic view point of different ethnic group's narration to mention a few). Moreover, the research has been limited by the

lack of adequate secondary data to review the literature since there is paucity of research on ancient Harela society. More so, because of limited historical evidence, it was difficult to find informants who are well versed about the past tradition and experiences of the Harela people. Besides, time and budget constraints have also limited the researcher's interest in pursuing the research for long in the study area.

5.1.2. Significance of the Study

This study deals with the identity, methogenesis and representation of the Harela people. Thus, the study tries to assess the issue based on anthropological insights and expositions so that a better picture regarding the identity, methogenesis and representation of the Harela people can be framed based on the findings of the study. Therefore, the study will have the following significances:

- The study will produce and provide an additional knowledge about the people from a synchronic and diachronic view point.
- It might fill the knowledge gap about the Harela people by substantiating the historical and archeological evidences with the contemporary living witness from different ethnic groups.
- It will serve as a base for further detailed anthropological studies about the people.
- It will also use for the City Administration of Dire Dawa as document for further knowledge about Harela.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

6.1. Origin and Identity of the Harela: Re-orientation Needed

The origin and identity of the Harela people and its civilization is the most controversial issue because of the dearth of data and scholarly work about the people. If we look at the contemporary debate about the Harela, though the existing literature is scanty, there was an attempt to mix the history of Harela either with Harar, Oromo, or Somali ethnic group. Thus, attempts have been made to triangulate the data garnered from the nearby ethnic groups (a synchronic analyses) and secondary sources (the little scholarly publication) as (a diachronic analyses) to vividly put the origin and identity of the people.

Regarding the origin and identity of the Harela people, the culture and tourism officer of Harar City, stated that the name of Harela appears in written sources during Yekuno Amlak in 13th c and the word Harela refer to the people of Harela and the place in/around a small village on the main road from Dire Dawa to Harar.

In his book titled *The Rise and Decline of the Solomon Dynasty and Muslim European Rivalry* in the region Mordochai Abir notes that: “..... Arabian immigrants who crossed the Bab al-mandab and settled among the Cushites of Harar- Chercher produced Semitized culture of the “Adare” of Harar, the Harela cultivators and the Worjih pastoralists of the region”. It is indicated that the Horn of Africa is also the home of a number of Semitic populations which stretches from the eastern escarpments of Shewa and along the coast from Zeila to Berbera. This argument is also mentioned by informants living in the Harela village they are not indigenous people. Abir said they come from the Arabian Peninsula and were Arabs. On the flip side, according to the informants from Culture and Tourism Office of Dire Dawa, the Harela people were not migrants from the Arab countries, rather they are indigenous people of Ethiopian identity.

Another thought regarding the origin of Harela people and its civilization is the one held by Braukamper who related it to the Cushitic group of the Oromo people. The argument is that though the civilization of Harela was destroyed, the people were assimilated into Itu and Karrayu Oromo who live in the vicinity where the Harela civilization reaches its zenith. On the other hand information found in folktales of the Oromo implies that the Harela was not directly related to the Harari, Argoba, and Somali ethnic groups. It means that the Harela was different from them. The oral source among the Oromo settled in the present day historic Harela village particularly asserts that their early forefathers had never seen the Harela. Then researchers can ask that, if there was no contact between the two, how do the Oromo come to narrate about people of Harela? This question is beyond the aim of this paper but the informants in the Harela village narrate the genealogical tale in articulated way. Genealogical counting of the Oromo denotes that there are assimilated groups of the Harela in the Oromo, for example, the Hargaya. This genealogical tale was narrated by the Oromo people now living in the Harela village of Dire Dawa. Because of this assimilation, the Oromo narrate about the Harela people as if they belong to them.

Contrary to the above argument, currently, there are some groups who claim that the Harela were related to the Somali group of the Ismail- Djaborit clan. The argument of this group is still based on the similarity of the material-culture of the Somali and Harela- for instance the ruins found in the Ogaden- Jigiga region which is similar with the ruins found at historic Harela village. Cognizant of the Somali connection to the identity of the Harela some sources put:

The Harla, also known as the Harala, are an extinct ethnic group that inhabited Ethiopia and Somalia. They spoke the now extinct Harla language, an Afro-Asiatic tongue of either the Cushitic (Encyclopaedia Aethiopica) or Semitic branches (Gebissa, E., 2004).

The Harla are credited by the present-day inhabitants of Hararghe with having constructed various historical sites found in the province. Although now mostly lying in ruins, these structures include stone necropoles, store pits, mosques and houses. According to the scholars Azais, Chambard and Huntingford, the builders of these monumental edifices were ancestors to the Somalis ("proto-Somali"). Modern traditions similarly link the Harela with the Ismail Jabarti and the Darod ancestors of the Somali Ogaden clan, in addition to other Somali clans living amongst the western Issa and in areas below Harar.

Field research by Enrico Cerulli identified a modern group called the "Harela" living amongst the Somali in the region between the cities of Harar and Jijiga. Encyclopaedia Aethiopica suggests that this population "may be a remnant group of the old [Harela], that integrated into the Somali genealogical system, but kept a partially separate identity by developing a language of their own." Cerulli published some data on this Harela community's language (called af Harlaad), which resembled the Somali dialects spoken by the Yibir and Midgan low-caste groups (Encyclopaedia Aethiopica)

Moreover, Meftuh S. Abubaker, (2014:10) consulting different sources discloses:

The Harela people once known by the locals as the race of the giants, the origin of civilization in the region, and flourishing traders over a thousand years ago were doing trade from inland to overseas including with China, Middle East and India. Their settlement citing still exist through their descendants around various regions south eastern part Ethiopia, from Awash Valley East to the current Somaliland. Dr. Philipp Paulitschke mentions Rare Harle Somalis (people of Harla), in Issa region and Ceruli mentions the

presence of some Harela words in the spoken Somali language in Fafan area which is located between Gursum and Jigjiga.

However, attempts to relate the Harela to the Somali ethnic group were not palatable as to the argument of FGD participants in the study area. They put their argument, contrary to the above assertion, the absence of the culture of architectural building among the Somali group can easily show that the Harela people might not be from the Somali ethnic group. And they concluded that the Somali did not build the ruins found in Ogaden-Jigjiga rather the ruins were built by the people of Harela.

The other issue discussed was the Islamization of Harela. According to some informants, the expansion of Islam in Harela precedes even Harar, which is considered as major center of Islam in the Horn of Africa during the medieval time. As described above, the Harela already accepted Islam before the arrival of Abadir. Therefore one can assert that the Harela were one of the earliest people who accepted Islam in the Harar and Chercher plateau. However, the identity of the people who found the civilization of Harela remains a puzzle to archeology and anthropological studies to these days. Thus, further studies are due in the future looking the unscathed nature of the studies made on Harela origin, identity and the dazzling civilizational traces they left behind.

6.2. Socio-Economic Complex, Belief System and Representation of the Harela

According to Moscovici (1963) social representation is a 'system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function. First to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it, and secondly to enable communication by providing a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their worlds and their individual and groups history.

Based on the above definition of social representation the researcher has tried to identify the clan structure, social representation of the people, marriage institutions and the subsistence strategy of the Harela people.

Symbolic Ascription of the Harela: Ethnic ascription follows various lines. For some, body character, profession, language, skills, residence and the network groups in which the individual operates as some variables used for ethnic identity. These differences in body stature, color of skin, etc., help to facilitate the identification of these groups. Identity seems to be about a lot of different things, but it has often to do, in one way or another, with social power.

According to Jones (1998:84), "*ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent (usually through the objectification of cultural, linguistic, religious, historical and/or physical characteristics)*". Further, it is claimed that as a process, ethnicity includes a consciousness concerning differences, which to a varying degree include reproduction and transformation of basic classification differences between groups of people which consider themselves distinct in one way or another (Eriksen, 1992: 3).

According to informants and FGD participants, the Harela people were described physically as 'giants' and they personify Harela as 'giant' people who used to gather heavy stones. This epitome might be from the very stone-based civilizational traces identified by archeologists and that is amazingly seen in the present day Harela village. Moreover, they have been represented as the 'giants' for it by the nearby ethnic groups residing in the

present day Harela village. These ethnic groups believe that if they were not physically giants how did they manage to build the huge stone-based historical traces which persists for a long time after the people and its stunning civilization has been ruined.

Likewise, a written document from Dire Dawa Cultural Heritage Office states:

<<ሐርላዎች በእርሻ በንግድና በከተማ እርባታ ላይ የተሰማዱና የሰከነ ኑሮ የሚኖሩና ከአካባቢ ነባር ህዝቦች ሁሉ በሀብት የከበሩ ነበሩ። ከዚህም ሌላ በቁመትና በተክለ ሰውነት የጎሉና ገዢዎች እንደነበሩ ይታመናል። >>

The Harela were known for their agricultural, trade and pastoral-based subsistence strategy with a permanent settlement. They were also known for their cattle wealth. Moreover, *they are known for their tallest and strong physical appearance [emphasis added]*.

Clan Structure of the Harela: According to local informants, the Muslim people of Harela are divided into six related family or clan structure, such as Yaqula, Arab tkale, Zamu, Barahe, Al-qa and Brazurahe. Moreover, a written document from Dire Dawa Cultural Heritage Office states about the clan structure of the Harela as:

የሐርላ ጠረጎሙ በሰደስት ጎሳዎች የተከፋፈለና የአጠቃላይ የሐርላ ጎሳዎች አገጣጥሞ መሪ ሰልጣን መሆኑ ሰልጣን አሊ የኢሙም መቃወሚያ አሰራሪም አልጋዚ የአክሱት ልጅ መሆኑ ሽሃብ ዲን ገለፀዋል። [.....] ሽሃብ ዲን አህመድ ቢን አብዱልቃደር በፋቲህል ሐሰቫ ላይ እንደ ገለፀው ይህ ሐርላ በሚሰሩ ስያሜ የሚታወቁት እስላማዊ ህዝብ በሰደስት ጎሳዎች ይከፋፈላል ጠቃሚዎች። በዚህም መሰረት፣ ዛሬ፣ ደቆላ፣ ባሪህ ፣ አረብ ተኝሎ፣ ባርዘራህ ና የአልቃ ጎሳ ናቸው።

As to the argument of Shabidne, the Harela people were organized in to six clan structure and the overall clan based organization of the people were led by Sultan Mohammed Sultan Ali- who were the son of Emam Mohammed Ibrahim Aligaze's aunt. [.....]Moreover, Shabidne Ahmed Ben Abdulkader in his book entitled Fetule Al Habesha the Harela clans were: Zamu, Yaqula, Arab Tkale, Barahe, Al-qa and Brazurahe.

Thus, it has to be taken into consideration the synchronic narrative by informants from the Harela village has been supported by a written historical document.

Marriage Institution among the Harela: According to one informant from local community ‘the marriage institution of Harela is exogamy, and this factor contributed to their assimilation into different ethnic groups. It might be also argued that this exogamy-based marriage system might have contributed to the contemporary debate about the identity of the Harela people. As discussed elsewhere, different ethnic groups claim as if they are part of their civilizational traces.

Belief System: As to the information from the FGD participants and elders-who were part of the in-depth interview, the Harela people were followers of Islam. They referred to the ruined mosque as a standing evidence (for more illustration see picture-10) of their assertion. Contrary to the above argument, Bahru Zewde, et. al. (1994:72) state that “*In terms of religious beliefs, the Harla practiced a pre-Islamic religion until around the 10th or 11th century CE. This marks the period during which the early Muslim leader Ismail Jabarti is believed to have introduced Islam into the community.*”

Subsistence Base and Economic Activity of Harela People: Basically, the livelihood of the Harela society depends on agriculture, mainly crop cultivation and herding. Probably, the use of grinding stone by Harela people could serve as the major indicator of crop production in the cooler highlands. These people were known for using indigenous agricultural techniques in eastern Ethiopia during the medieval period. The societies of Harela were

recognized for their peasant civilization during the medieval period between the 14th to the 16th centuries (Lester Sten Hause, 1985).

In Harela straight digging stick was found and used for cultivating the land. Later on, it had been modified by putting a stone weight at the top, weighting two to three kilos, in order to maximize its efficiency. The stone is perforated all the way through but is placed on the top of the digging stick and the shaft does not go through the stone. Nevertheless, crop cultivation seems dominant only in cooler and higher environments. Herding constitutes the major livelihood of a substantial number of Harela societies who settled in drier lowland. In addition, the Harela people used to rear various types of livestock such as cattle, camel, goat and sheep. At about the 14th to the 16th centuries, Harela had appeared as having highly developed agricultural economy (Braukamer, 1992).

The researcher has also observed that there are a lot of agricultural tools indicating that the subsistence strategy of the Harela people was agriculture as shown in the figure below (see picture-1). This claim has been corroborated by the informants and FGD participants.

Picture 1: Grinding Stone from Harela village



Source: Photo taken during Observation/field research: 2016

On the other extreme besides peasant agriculture, local informants and some written source assert that, the people of Harela had been engaged in a long distance/ caravan trade. The long distance trade was actually a common practice for all peripheral societies. As one of the peripheral areas in the eastern plateau, Harela might have been engaged in the long distance trade. Moreover, various minted coins imprinted with Arabic and Chinese scripts were found on the ruins of Harela, the coins unravel in the site can be vivid accounts for Harla's having a trading contact with the middle and Far East regions.

6.3. Archeological Evidences and Historical Treasures of Harela People: Navigating the Past

“Human beings have a history because they transform nature” (Godelier, 1988)

Bahn (1992:28), in his critical analyses about the relevance of archaeology and studying the material culture, defines archaeology as “the study of the past through the systematic recovery and analysis of MATERIAL CULTURE. The primary aims of the discipline are to recover, describe and classify this material, to describe the form and behavior of past societies, and finally to understand the reasons for this behavior.” Archaeology aims to study the relation between materiality and humans because material culture not merely reflects culture but it also actively constitutes it. Thus, to study the material culture of a lost civilization is to understand its world and the civilizational reaches of the people who constitute that civilization. That is why Miller (1994) discloses artifacts as: “a means by which we give form to, and come to an understanding of, ourselves, others, or abstractions such as the nation or the modern” (p.397).

Cognizant of this fact, it is logical to analyze the life-world people live in. It must be also included in archaeological analysis to reveal the lost identity and civilization of the Harela. One should grasp the relevant variables for an understanding of how material culture actively constitutes cultures, human perceptions and the world they live in. Thus, in the following sub-section, the researcher has attempted to give meaning to the material culture that the Harela people have left behind. In addition to architectural ruins, the excavation made by different archeologists in Harela has revealed a host of intriguing artifacts. Some of the most interesting of these relics are: stone tools, ruins of mosques, different seals and stamps and coins to mention a few. Coins with Arabic, Chinese and English language seals suggest a commercial connection between these civilizations.

6.3.1. Coins with Different Reprints: Gone too far?

Numismatics – coin studies- are one branch of archaeology that gives due credit to the implication of different coins about the civilizational zenith of a people under study. Coins are both historical documents and archaeological objects. The production of coins in all societies is linked to some kind of authority – in most cases historically documented – while the consumption (use) of these coins normally involves all levels of society, and can be traced archaeologically. Regarding the benefit of studying coins Thomsen (1836:81 cited in Fleur Kemmers and Nanouschka Myrberg (2011)) says ‘What especially distinguishes coins is that, generally speaking, they admit of being fixed and referred to a precise time with much greater accuracy and certainty than any other antiquarian objects’.

In this regard, scholars argue, coins were never minted, used, deposited, retrieved or studied in a vacuum. Every stage in the life cycle of a coin takes place within a context. Thus to discuss coins as archaeological objects is impossible without some initial notes on the contextual understanding of coins and what they stand and function for (Kemmers and Myrberg, 2011:89).

By the same token, the social world surrounding the object-coin has to be addressed. Understanding interactions between different people, and between people and objects, helps in comprehending the functions of coinage in a society. In the field of social anthropology this particular kind of context has been addressed by scholars like Parry and Bloch (1989) and Appadurai (1986), who demonstrated that the meaning and value of objects is culturally specific (Cited in Kemmers and Myrberg, 2011: .90).

Coinage not only represents a historical episode but also its symbolic representation of different values, deities they believe in and authority ruled during the then period. Monetary function is an essential aspect of coins, but not the only one. The visual/aesthetic aspect of coinage is apparent in the selections made when coins were transformed into jewellery. For instance, gold is meant purity and durability of the soul, sovereignty and religious authority, and was part of an aristocratic discourse in which un-minted gold and gift exchange was placed in symbolic opposition with silver and coins. In contrast with gold, silver was – particularly in Athens – connected with the people of the city and with trade (Kurke, 1999: 42). Thus, the meaning and values attached to coins are a complex embodiment of dualities, including object and idea, coins and money, issuer and user, all deeply linked with *identity*.

Nowadays we are so used to making everyday purchases with coins that it is difficult to imagine how we could do without such an apparently necessary means of survival. *Coinage* is one of the major breakthroughs that mankind has created ever. In addition to being prepared in units of standardized weight, the metal must be marked in some recognizable way with the stamp of an authority or a valuable representation of the people's historical and civilizational traces.

Cognizant of this fact, different coins with different language imprint have been found by archeologists in Harela Village. These coins are found in the hands of individuals of the present Harela village which are printed in different language such as Arabic, English, Chinese and Indians, as can be seen (see picture-2) on the coins. This indicates that the Harela had relations with the outside world. By common sense, the coins with different language imprints can be evidence to the level of Harela trade related contacts with the outside world. Harela coins are impressive and bravura that they speak of the level of civilization and contact that the Harela had established with different people in the east African coast. From history, trade, commerce, and political point of views, these coins can reveal different valuable information regarding the Harela people.

Meftuh S. Abubaker (2014) in his finding affirms the different coins as:

During our site tour in the village of Harela we found various archaeological materials or artifacts such as old Islamic coins, pottery, necklace jewellery and stone pit Mancala game board among others. Professor Marco Vigano who visited the Harla villages in recent years found 2 Chinese coins at the hands of peasants and confirmed to be dated 1039-54 by Prof. Qin. Marco Vigano suggests that Harla was trading with China possibly over 1000 years ago (p.10) [emphasis added]. The coin reads “Huang Song Tong Bao, casting in Song Dynasty Ren Zong reign”. The exact date they have been cast is from 1039 to 1053 AD” (Ibid: 11).

Therefore, the identification of different coins by archeologists was some of the hallmarks for the Harela civilizational heyday. However, how come coins from inner Far East China ever got there, about a thousand years ago? What do the coins with Arabic, Indians and English imprint refer about the civilization of the Harela people? What kind of coins do the Harela people use in exchange to these international trades? These are some of the academic questions that need an in-depth analysis by other researchers.

Picture 2: Arabic and other scripts coins found in Harela



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research

6.3.2. Harela Time Conception: Evidences from the Calendar

Needless to say that, philosophy of time and use of calendar is the major manifestation to measure the level of civilization that one society had. It shows us that a society that used calendar had been well acquainted with astronomy, lunar movement, rotation of seasons or also the flow of rivers. This helps society to adjust every activity on yearly seasonal bases. As mentioned by our informants, the Harela society had a calendar based on lunar movement. The people of Harela were Muslims who used their calendar based on the lunar movement which was divided into twelve months as referred by one of the informants. As we can see from picture-3 the codices and the archaeological manifestations of the calendar were circular with an intricate system of sub-division that refers the year and monthly based compartmentalization of time.

Moreover, Patassini and Kebebaw (2004) have tried to disclose the Harela calendar this way:

Coins written in Arabic and Chinese alphabet, pieces of glasses, ornaments, tools for knitting and pottery fragments have been found in the settlement by peasants together *with a stony moon calendar with two geographical coordinates (sinus geometry?). The calendar, nearly 10 cms long, 5 large and 1 tick, remains into two pieces, but still readable and in good condition. The tablet is maybe broken, but it would have been designed in two pieces originally, one orthogonal to the other to ease observing the seasonal moon movement in the sky from a given landmark.* This latter might have been a ceremonial place with great symbolic worth (p.1) [emphasis added].

However, detail multi-disciplinary research has to be made to look at their time division (for instance, clocks, days, months and years) with their rationale of naming, meanings and symbolic ascription. Similarly, the cultural, religious and astronomical aspects of their calendar and what makes it different has to be studied by other researchers.

Picture3: Calendars used by Harela society



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (*EC*)

6.3.3. Harela Stamps: Evidences on the Development of Bureaucracy

Archeologists, more often than not, attempt to uncover the historical traces of ancient civilization by analyzing the seals and stamps used during that period. They argue that usage and function of the seals, iconography, basic shape of the seals and the engraved device used for stamping the seal are good indicative of a civilization.

The ancient societies of Harela were using different forms of stamp in their territory, which was large and centrally structured, strong and powerful. The presence of stamp shows that ancient Harela societies were governed in accordance of law and centrally strong government. This is indicative of the power configuration, central command of chain and a strong bureaucracy-which is considered the hallmark of modern civilization.

Interviewees and FGD participants demonstrate the basic shapes of the seals symbol as the so-called astral signs, like stars and some sort of circular holes. The seals are small, often not more than 2.5-3 cm in diameter, and have circular holes and star, which is perforated and with a decorative adhesive stamp. Moreover, it seems most likely that the use of seals was restricted to a specific group in society. The seal was not a widely spread object, which vividly shows a hierarchical inequality among the society, but it seems to use for a trade and administrative usage. Given the wear patterns on most of the seals, it seems that seals were not disposable objects, but that they were used for a long time period.

Picture 4: the Stamp used by the Harela Society



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: *2008 (EC)*

6.3.4. Stone Tools

Ground-stone tools have different functions during the archaic human civilization. Among the functions the first and the foremost to human existence is for food-preparation activities. These functions are indicated by several tool types: grinding querns, hand stones, mortars, and pestles. The use of these tool types for food processing, processing hide, for pulverizing temper and clay for pottery manufacture and for sharpening bone artifacts (Kadowaki, 2006: 4).

These stone tools which are found in Harela village are tools used by the ancient Harela society as mentioned by informants and FGD discussants state that ‘these stone tools are found almost in the homes of every member of present Harela inhabitants. These stone tools shown below were used for different functions as agricultural and food-preparation activities at home.

Picture 5: Stone tools which are available in Harela village



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (EC)

6.3.5. Earthen Pottery Works

Pottery is clay that has been manipulated into a particular form and heated to harden and maintain its shape and durability. Clay is found on much of the Earth's surface. Depending on the area in which it is found, clay may have many characteristics. Clay may be found finer in texture, smoother and purer in some areas; in other areas the clay may be coarse with several foreign particles. Clay may also be found to be more flexible and pliable in some areas as compared to others. The characteristics and traits of the clay will determine the outcome and quality of the pottery that is produced.

The researcher has observed pottery works with different shapes and sizes used for different purposes in every Harela village. According to some informants, these pottery works were used for storing grains, containing water, milk or keeping a variety of jewelries valuable artifacts and other properties, some of the earthen pottery substances presently are still durable and utilized by the community in Harela village. This shows the durability and quality of the Harela artifacts, their knowledge of selecting clay soil, ingredients and technology of furnace.

Picture 6: Pottery Materials that Still Alive



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

6.3.6. Water Reservoirs and Wells

Water set the basic rhythms of human life. It has led to the development and generation of significant material culture. How to obtain it, how to store it, how to harness its power and conserve it has motivated human endeavor in a myriad of ways. It has also been the catalyst for the development of significant cultural practices which have generated intangible cultural heritage values. It has inspired poetry, literature, artistic endeavor such as painting, dance and sculpture. It has informed and inspired the development of philosophies and religious practice. The cultural heritage of water, therefore relates not only to the technology and architecture that humankind has developed to manage, utilize and celebrate its life giving properties but also to those intangible values that have shaped our beliefs and practices.

Cognizant of its necessity to human existence, the Harela people have developed a water harvesting scheme to minimize the risk of water shortage in the desert environs they inhabit for a long time. To put it vividly, the water wells found in the study area (see picture-7) are some of the living evidences in how they have been working to harvest water to get rid of environmental risks with a shortage of water and drought. The ancient society of Harela used water wells for many purposes as observed by the researcher and by informants and FGD discussants. It is stated that "The water from the wells were used for drinking, for watering their plants and terraces, animals and other purposes". These water wells still exist

in present Harela Village. This indigenous knowledge and skill should be preserved and promoted.

Picture7: A well still found in Harela Village



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

6.3.7. Stones with Human Foot print

The researcher was informed by one of the key informants, when someone is moving around the hills of the site; he/she will come across a stone having print that resembles a human foot and thumb of the hand. The foot print resembles with an adult man’s foot with a length of 26 cm. The foot print was stepped by a right leg from east to west with fingers pointing west. On the other hand, the hand thumb print had its fingers pointing to the east. The prints were stamped on granite stone which is harder and difficult to carve such foot and hand thumb print. Therefore this stone foot print needs further study by archeologists.

Picture 8: Foot print found at Harela village



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

Moreover, the human foot print that is seen in (picture-8) might be also evidence to the claim that some scholars (for instance, Patassini and Kebebaw (2004)) attribute to the loss of the Harela civilization to volcanic eruption. And also it might have some correlation, though it seems scientifically unpalatable, with local mythology for the extinction of the Harela people and their civilization.

6.3.8. Stone Buildings and Massive Ashlars Masonry and Tumulus

The Harela was typified by stone buildings and massive ashlar masonry and tumulus. The presence of such structures illustrates that the Harela were advanced with stone usage that can be used to build their houses, mosques and fortify their towns.

Picture 9: The Ruins of Massive Building of Harela



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

As to the argument of informants, these huge architectural ruins can show us the extent to which they have refined their stone based technology and show the arts cape they have developed in home design.

6.3.9. Ruins of Mosques

The Harela village is not simply related to historic Harela by name but there are many buildings, mosques and other structures that had been the home of the people of historic Harela society. The researcher was informed about the existence of nine mosques of which she could see the ruins of only three. These ruins are intact since the Harela community gives due respect for mosques as they are Muslims.

According to interviews from culture and tourism offices, the first mosque is located at the entrance of the village. It is 1.20mx 6.20m. The thickness of the wall is 70cm. the door has a width of one meter. The second mosque is smaller than the first one and it is 8mx6m. The third is almost ruined and its ruins are found in another plateau. These mosques are easily distinguished by the Harela society by the presence of a Qiliba, (a spot where Imams stand (for prayer). All the mosques were built from granite and sandstone cemented together by gypsum.

As mentioned above, there are about nine mosques in Harela village today which clearly show the earlier Harela societies were Muslim.

Picture 10: One of the Ruins of Mosque in Harela Village



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

6.3.10. Agricultural tools: Ripples of Change

Archeological evidence indicates that about 10,000 years ago human cultures began the practice of agriculture in several areas of the world.

The Harela were mentioned as agriculturalists possessing advanced agricultural technologies. In the agricultural tools shown below (picture-11) found from the site, for instance, demonstrate the use of bored stone for digging with stick dengora (hoe) and ruins of terraces and querns. The predominance of water pots/bowls and water wells are signs of an agrarian settled society.

Picture11: Huge Hoe found in Harela village



Source: Photo taken during observation/field research: 2008 (E.C)

6.4 Caught in the Net: Speculations about Causes for their Extinction and Collapse of the Harela Civilization

Harela civilization collapsed because of different factors. Based on traditions in eastern Ethiopia, it is claimed that disappearance of the family of Harela might be because of plague and famine penalized by God. In the same vein, according to local informants, the inhabitants of medieval Harela wiped out by natural catastrophes and hunger sent by God as punitive action for their rude sense of pride.

Similar to the above argument a written document, from Dire Dawa Cultural Heritage Office, collected from different local sources states:

<<ፈርላዎች በእርሻ በጎግደና በኮብት እርባታ ላይ የተሰማዱና የሰከኑ ኑሮ የማድሩና ከአካባቢ ነባር ህዝቦች ሁሉ በሁለት የከበሩ ነበሩ። ከዚህም ሌላ በቀመቅና በተክለ ሰውነታቸው የጎሉና ግዙፍ እንደነበሩ

ይታወቅል። >> እንደ አንዳንድ የአካባቢ አፈ ታሪክ ለሐርላ መካኛት ጦርነት ሳይሆን እነዚህ ከዚህ በላይ የተጠቀሱት የሀብትና የጉልበትን (የጦረኝነት) ባህሪያት ተዳምረው በሀብታሙ ላይ በፈጠሩት እብሪት ምክንያት በአላህ ቁጣ በወረደላቸው የተፈጠሩ አደጋና ረሀብ ለዙሆኑ አልቀዋል። በአፈ ታሪኩ መሰረት ከወረደባቸው ከአላህ ቁጣ የተረፉት ደግሞ ከሱሌና ከኦሮሞ ለዘረሰቦች ቀስ በቀስ የተቀላቀሉ ሲሆን የሐርላ ገርያ ያላቸውን በዘር ለረግ አቆጣጠራቸው መሰረት ይታወቃል።

The Harela were known for their agricultural, trade and pastoral based subsistence strategy with a permanent settlement. They were also known for their cattle wealth. According to some of the local mythology, the cause for the collapse of the Harela was not the war that they fought rather their militant behavior that has been created by the accumulation of wealth and power. To this arrogance, Allah has punished them with natural disaster and famine and most of them were dead. According to the local mythology, those who remained from Allah's wrath were in due time assimilated to the Somali and the Oromo people. Thus, it is easy to identify those who belong to the Harela people by making a genealogical count [among the Somali and the Oromo]. [Emphasis added].

However, according to information gathered from the Dire Dawa Culture and Tourism office reasons for the collapse of Harela civilization in the 16th century are related to the socio-military factors namely the 16th century Oromo movement and the wars of Imam Ahmed. The former factor probably led to the swallowing up of the Harela people and their civilization because of intermingling of the Harela with the Oromo people. The later factor perhaps led to the exhaustion of Harela human and material resources and resulted in the disturbance of masonry works and long distance trade which were the manifestations of their civilization.

Moreover, Patassini and Kebebaw, (2004) states the possible causes for the collapse of the Harela as follows:

Factors leading to the decline of the town are still uncertain: the defeat of Gragn mid of 16th century might be a likely one, but also internal social uprising or a wide earthquake that devastated the Rift Valley with epicentre in the volcanoes area of the present Awash Park (Fentale is the major one). Yet, climatic and political reasons might have affected the historical course of the town. In XVI century Haräla was already overcome by Harrar as political, religious and economical centre (p.2).

However, there are different conflicting views for their collapse. Thus, attempts have to be made by historians and the academia to identify the exact causes of their collapse and succumb to their decline.

6.5. Contribution of Heritage in the Study Area

Dire Dawa is a center of many cultural and natural heritages displaying historical changes and continuities unfolded in the region since its inception to the present day. These heritages are found in the city and its surrounding areas, in the rural woredas of the Administration. The site is also suitable and relatively secure for international and domestic tourists. There are still various material cultures of the Harela society to be shown to domestic and international tourists. Moreover, its nearness to the city of Dire Dawa also makes it one of the potential for international and domestic tourists. However, because of lack of awareness or the lack of commitment from the concerned institution and the community, the site is not generating income from tourism though tourists are coming from here and there every time.

The material cultures that will help the site as the major means of tourism attraction are found in the hands of individuals in appropriately. They may be damaged in the future unless collection and preservation is done. Moreover, many of the stone built buildings of

the Harela were already damaged and many of them were in a worst position of extinction because of farming and animal husbandry practices of the contemporary settlers of Harela village.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1. Conclusion

Harela as the name stands for was mentioned in several authoritative literatures as the people who lived in eastern Ethiopian plateaus, and having Islamic spiritual traditions. Their existence has been affirmed by those scholars as they have distinct type of civilization like many of sultanates and kingdoms in Medieval Ethiopia. For many of the scholars, the Harela people had very advanced form of peasant agriculture and stone built settlements between the 13th and the 16th centuries. Besides agriculture, they were also engaged in the long distance trade, the route may have been extended to Middle and Far East regions of the time such as Arabia, India and far more to China. Different material remains are found at one of the earliest settlements of the Harela people, a place 15 km from Dire Dawa City along the high way to Addis Ababa, commonly referred as 'Harela village'. According to many of the literatures the question related to the origin and identity of Harela people still remains controversial. There are different speculations about the causes for their extinction. And the heritage of Harela is not in a position of generating income in the form of tourism because lack of awareness of contribution of heritage from concerned institution and community.

7.2. Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following measures are recommended:

7.2.1. Awareness Creation: How to Exploit Cultural Heritage Resources

There is need to create awareness among the community (the present Harla village community) on how to collect, document, preserve and interpret the artifacts (and material ruins of earlier Harla society). In this regard, informants have ideas on how to preserve and make artifacts accessible. They say: "we can collect these materials into two ways; first by informing villagers about the value of artifacts they had and how to hand them over or transfer them to the concerned bodies; and secondly, regarding those who refused to hand over artifacts, the concerned bodies have to convince them to willingly sell the artifacts they had collected".

The lack of awareness on the cultural heritage attractions available in Dire Dawa as well as Harla has resulted in the absence of internal demand that has seriously restricted visitors. Therefore, the Bureau and other stakeholders need to publicize and educate tour operators, developers, investors and the public through seminars and workshops about the socio-economic benefits and tourist satisfactions that cultural heritage tourism can bring.

In this regard, conservation and preservation schemes are very important. The Administration needs to make concerted efforts in identification, documentation, and preservation of the available resource. The village community must participate and contribute its share. This will create a sense of belongingness, responsibility and attachment towards their heritage. This, therefore, will make the Harla tourist attractions to be beneficial right from the start.

In this regard, it is important to convince and persuade the Harla community to have their collections and objects of artifacts hand over or transfer in any way to the concerned bodies. The collections have to be displayed and preserved in museums for standard care and

preservation. So, in order to achieve sustainable tourism, support both from the Federal government and the Dire Dawa Administration is very important. In conclusion, it can be stated that sustainable tourism requires recognizing the values of cultural diversity. It is also important to encourage all stakeholders to participate in decisions that affect the future of their culture.

7.2.2 Train Tour Guiders

Cultural heritage sites are difficult to understand by just looking at them. To make them intelligible to visitors, they need to be communicated professionally. Because the majority of the visitors are unfamiliar with the cultural and/or historical literature, we should ensure that the messages of the past encoded in the items of the material culture are interpreted and presented effectively. For this training and educating the local community as guides and docents (for museums), is very necessary. This will make them assimilate the modern training and education they grasped with the local cultural, historical and social realities. This, therefore, will greatly allow them to communicate the real history and heritage of Harla to tourists and the tourism industry.

7.2.3. Archaeological Excavation

The Harla village is endowed with tremendous material culture such as coins, pottery works, jewels, stone tools and other similar artifacts have been identified by the village communities. These materials were found in earlier silt deposits, river beds and on agricultural fields. Farmers use to come across different artifacts while working on their plots of land. Thanks to them, they had kept what they found till now. This trend help develop a sense of belongingness and responsibility among the Harela community on any artifacts found in their village.

Yet, Harela needs more archaeological studies. An independent archaeological survey followed by extending excavation projects is very much necessary. Well done archaeological digout will result in uncovering new artifacts, other ruins and material that demonstrate Harela's immense resources. It is through excavations that very old artifacts could come in to light.

7.2.4. Facilities and Infrastructure

This refers to making CHR (cultural heritage resource) accessible to the tourist by providing access (e.g. roads, telephones etc) and direct services to tourists at the site (e.g., a rest house). To encourage the development and expansion of CHT (Cultural Heritage Tourism), the Administration ought to make available developmental incentives to local investors or selectively provide infrastructures such as clean water, electricity, hotel, restaurant, coffee shop and provide promotional assistance in some areas.

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