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Local Antiquities in the Collective Memory of Rural Settlements: A Case Study from Boeotia

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Abstract

The following article is under the modern research scope that concerns the investigation of the relationship of local communities with the archaeological environment of their area. It focuses mainly on rural communities that are in the immediate vicinity of archaeological sites which have not been highlighted and projected. One such case is Aghios Georgios, a village of western Boeotia which belong to the Municipality of Levadia. In its territory belongs the archaeological site of ancient Koroneia, which was famous in antiquity because of the cult of Itonia Athena. In the present study, an attempt is made to highlight the perceptions of the inhabitants for their archaeological environment, to investigate whether they are influenced from the academic point of view and to detect the role of the local archaeological past in the formation of their collective and cultural memory. The research is mainly based on quantitative data supplemented in cases by qualitative ones.

Keywords: collective memory, local history, Boeotia, Koroneia, Aghios Georgios.

1. Introduction and the theoretical context

How modern local communities in Greece relate to their archaeological environment and see through the ancient past of their place has been an issue of research for both archaeologists and social anthropologists. Recent studies have shown the gap between local communities and "official archeology," as has been characterized the archeology of modernity, which is considered to be expressed and practiced by professional archaeologists and academics (Sutton & Strulia, 2010). Apart from "official archeology," however, other alternative, non-institutionalized forms are recognized, which concern the perceptions and practices of the inhabitants regarding the material culture of the past. Those that were formed and cultivated outside the scientific and philosophical structures of modernity are defined as "indigenous archeologies" (Hamilakis, 2010).

This ascertainment introduces us to a broader theoretical reflection that has preoccupied many theorists of Memory (as a scientific domain). It concerns the scientific reconstruction of the past by specialized scientists (historical memory) and the reconstruction of the past by the average practical person (social memory). Some distinguish a subjective past identified by non-experts from an objective past identified by archaeologists and historians (Binltiff, 2013: 246). According to other scholars, the past is reconstructed by social subjects (individuals, groups, institutions) specialized or not, and it involves intra-individual and social functions that maintain a conflicting or interactive relationship with each other. In other words, it

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is a co-construction process, the final product of which is far from the original in multiple points (Mantoglou, introduction to Halbwachs, 2013: 18, 21).

Assmann (2017: 45-49, 77-79), however, based on Halbwach's analysis, points out that academic historiography has been de-semioticized and de-symbolized, as it deals with the past when it is dead or extinct from the nowtime, when this has lost its vital importance in preserving the identity of a social group. From this aspect, academic historiography differs from the lived memory, but also from the cultural memory (an Assman's term which he corresponds to the concept of Halbwachs' "tradition"), that is, the cultivated, preserved memory. The last one interprets the past in the sense of the internalized image and has a transformative power that provides directions for the future, as it contributes to the formation of consciousness and identity. Memory has been withdrawn from history, which is in a relationship of waiting and succession with memory.

The same could be said for archeology as well. As a science, it deals with a past far removed from the present, illuminating with scientific coldness only a few pieces of the puzzle. In the present study, therefore, are adopted the distinction of the subjective side of the narratives and the recruitments from the objective side of the data (archaeological and historical) and the substantiated research findings.

Cultural memory is associated and often confused with the collective one. In the present study the two concepts are used according to the theoretical model of Jan Assmann (2017). Collective memory is defined as the collective remembrance of the past in the present, which is considered as a cultural creation, a social construction directly related to the present frame of references (Halbwachs, 2013; Mantoglou, 2010: 24). Assmann defines collective memory as a "culture of remembrance", which is expressed in two distinct and different ways: as "biographical memory" or "communicative memory" covering the depth of three to four generations, or as "cultural memory" which signifies the reconstruction of collective memory, the institutional effort to bridge the chasm with the past.

These two forms of social memory are separated from each other in terms of content, time structure, forms, media and institutional bodies. Cultural memory establishes the relationship of a society with the past by overcoming the changes of social contexts that disrupt it and lead to oblivion. It is based on an organized work of Remembrance that interprets what is no longer possible to be understood and codifies it. It is characterized by the emotional bond, the cultural construction and the conscious relation to the past. The upgrading and reconstruction of social/collective memory into a cultural one is based on "mnemo political strategies" controlled by the respective each time political powers. In these strategies play dominant role the founding myth/history as well as the institutions and the means by which they are implemented (Assmann, 2017: 54-65).

The article at hand is part of a broader study focusing on the role of the local archaeological environment in the formation of the cultural memory of people living in rural areas. It is attempted to outline the views, perceptions and mentalities of a rural community, named Aghios Georgios (Fig. 1), regarding the archaeological site of Koroneia, which has not been highlighted and projected scientifically or institutionally, neither touristically promoted. The site of the ancient city is located in the village's immediate vicinity being part of its territory and its agricultural holding. It is a research question whether these recruitments are influenced and to what extent by academic positions, as well as the role of these recruitments in the formation of cultural memory.

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Figure 1: Modern settlements surrounding the ancient Koroneia

1.1 *The historical background of the site*

The ancient city of Koroneia is located on the southern shores of the Lake Kopais that once existed, at the foot of mountain Elikon (Fig. 1). It occupies a low hill, widely known to the locals as Pyrgos. The modern name of the archeological site is due to the remains of a medieval Frankish tower that dominate on the hill (Fig. 2), among other remains of Greco-Roman antiquity. Archaeologically confirmed habitation on the hill is attested from the geometric years until the 14th c. A.D. In the Byzantine period, the region experienced settlements of newcomers: Slavs in the 7th-9th centuries and Albanians during the period when the city is abandoned. During the turbulent, for the history of Boeotia, years from the 13th to the 15th century, various conquerors passed through the area: Franks in the 13th century, Catalans in the 14th century, Ottomans from the first half of the 15th century and afterwards (Bintliff, 2011, 2005: p. 12, Kalaitzakis, 2002: 131-134, the same, 2011).

Figure 2: The medieval tower on the hill of ancient Koroneia

In the present days, the archeological site has not been promoted culturally or as a tourist destination, on the contrary, it presents an image of abandonment. The ancient area is covered with olive trees, properties of the inhabitants of Aghios Georgios village, which is located about 2 kilometers southwest. This is the closest modern settlement to the ancient site (Fig. 1) and

is the heading and largest village (kefalochori) of the area, of approximately 1700 inhabitants according to the 2011 census. In the consciousness of its inhabitants the Aghios Georgios village is differentiated from the other neighboring villages that surround the hill of ancient Koroneia, which are thought up of arvanitic origin (arvanitochoria: Agoriani/Aghia Paraskevi, Koutoumoulas/(new) Koroneia and Steveniko/Aghia Triada (Fig. 1). Of these, mainly the residents of Steveniko proudly identify today themselves as Arvanites.

As early as the 15th century, all the aforementioned settlements are recorded in Ottoman tax archives of 1466, most of them as Greek villages. However, only Aghios Georgios is considered to be of Byzantine origin, while Agoriani/Aghia Paraskevi and Steveniko/Aghia Triada it is claimed to be Slavic settlements of the 9th century fully hellenized in the 15th century (Kalaitzakis, 2002: 134-136, 155). The only Arvanitic settlement recorded in the Ottoman archives is Koutoumoulas. This village was renamed in 1915 to Koroneia (Government Gazette, 180A-11/5/1915), after the name of the ancient city, and the last decades its old name tends to be forgotten. The name of the ancient city was also revived in modern years in the honorary naming of the Municipality of Koroneia (1836-1840 and 1999-2010), whose municipal seat was in Aghios Georgios.

In this work, will be presented quantitative research, the data of which will be attempted in some topics, in order to stand out better, to be combined with qualitative ones. The research, quantitative and qualitative, was conducted on residents of Aghios Georgios in 2019-2020.

The questionnaire was completed mainly by residents of Aghios Georgios, in December 2019 during a lecture given by the writer of the present article about the ancient history of the area. The lecture was organized by a local cultural association named "Itonia", which was founded by residents of Aghios Georgios who were interested in getting involved, among other cultural activities, with the history of their area and in promoting it.

2. Data analysis

The participants in the questionnaire were 32 people. Few (18.75%) were visitors from neighboring settlements (Levadia and Steveniko / Aghia Triada). Most of the residents of Aghios Georgios (68.75%) stated that they come from or live in the village, but some (12.5%) neglected or were unwilling to state their place of residence/origin.

The age range of the participants ranged from 19 to 86 years old, but the majority of them was between 50 to 70 years old (Graph 1). This element indicates the indifference of the young population to the issue of the lecture, without being excluded other reasons for its absence.

The questions of the quantitative research are grouped as follows: (A) views about the origin and foundation of the settlement, (B) knowledge and views about ancient Koroneia, (C) unconscious survivals of traditions, (D) views on the monument at the entrance of the village.

Graph.1: Age of participants

- not declared — 15,62%
- 70 up — 3,12%
- 60-69 — 34,37%
- 50-59 — 25%
- 40-49 — 9,37%
- 30-39 — %
- 20-29 — 6,25%
- 19 under — 3,12%
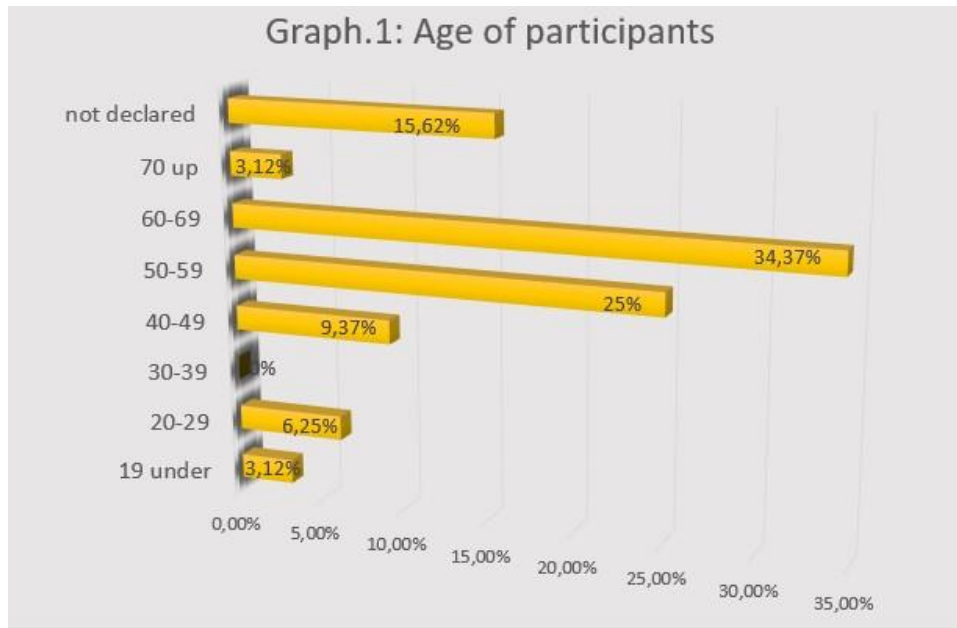
2.1 *Views about the origin and establishment of the village*
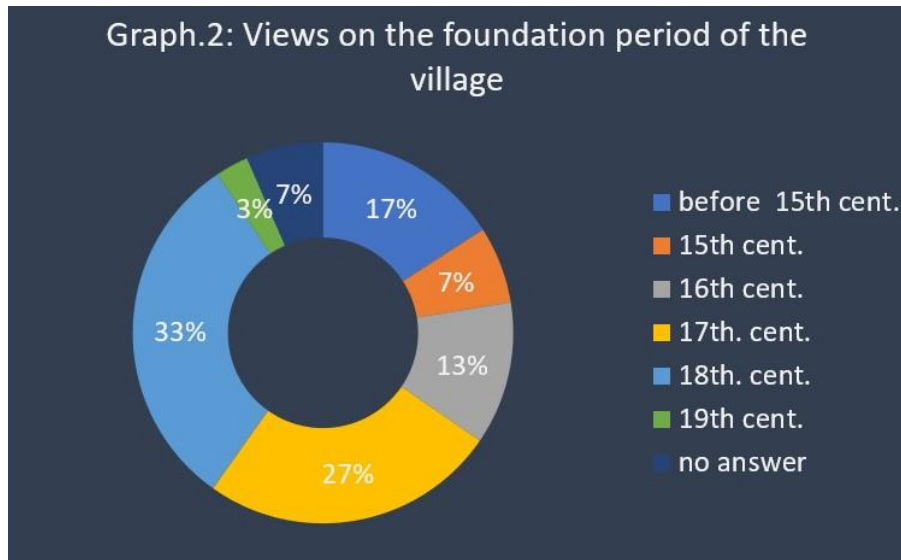

Figure 3. preserved "makrynari" in Agios Georgios. Property A. Aisopos

The settlement of Aghios Georgios is witnessed not only in the Ottoman tax records from the 15th to the 17th centuries, but also by the European travelers who visited the area and ancient Koroneia from the 17th to the 19th centuries (van Zwienen 2007, 11-12). Bintliff (2011) argues that the present village is a continuation of medieval Koroneia, abandoned at the end of the 14th century. The main evidence for this hypothesis is the presence of an architectural type of medieval farmhouse called "makrynari", some whole samples of which (Fig. 3) are still preserved in Aghios Georgios (Bintliff et al., 2013: 30).

As the survey shows, however, the locals have a different opinion about the origin of their village (Graph 2). The academic theory that the village exists since the 15th century, as a continuation of the medieval settlement of ancient Koroneia, was known to a very small percentage of respondents (6.25%), as a result of Professor Bintliff's speech in the village in 2012.

The dominant opinion of the residents (60%) was that their village is newer, from the 17th-18th century and in fact a small percentage (6.25%) stated a specific date of foundation, in

1756. As revealed by the qualitative research, the foundation of the village is attributed to shepherds from Epirus or Evrytania and Agrafa who descended lower. The opinion that the foundation of the village dates back to 1750 is found also in a teacher's notes from 1973 (archival material of the Community) and in a recent folklore textbook (Mitsou-Papalambrou, 2009: 11).

Graph.2: Views on the foundation period of the village

- before 15th cent.
- 15th cent.
- 16th cent.
- 17th. cent.
- 18th. cent.
- 19th cent.
- no answer

According to the teacher, the village was founded by great shepherds (tseligkades) from Parnassos and its population increased in 1783 with residents of Levadia who moved due to a plague epidemic, while the relevant Wikipedia entry attributes its founding only to the latter. According to the folklorist writer, the original birthplace of the village was the Liesta location (hill of Aghios Konstantinos) to the southwest of the current settlement, a point of view that many residents of Aghios Georgios (Aghiorghites), of various age groups, share, reproducing family stories that are passed down from generation to generation. In Liesta, habitation is confirmed in recent times, but, as the Ottoman tax records reveal, these are small and evanescent settlements with different names, appearing and disappearing at time to time from the 16th-19th centuries. These settlements are merging gradually in the neighboring settlement of Aghios Georgios, as testify also some elderly habitants of the village (van Zwienen, 2007: 21).

Graph.3: self-assessment of resident knowledge about the history of the village

|	
Nothing	6,00%
Few	81%
Enough	3,00%
A lot	10,00%
Too much	0%
No answer	0%

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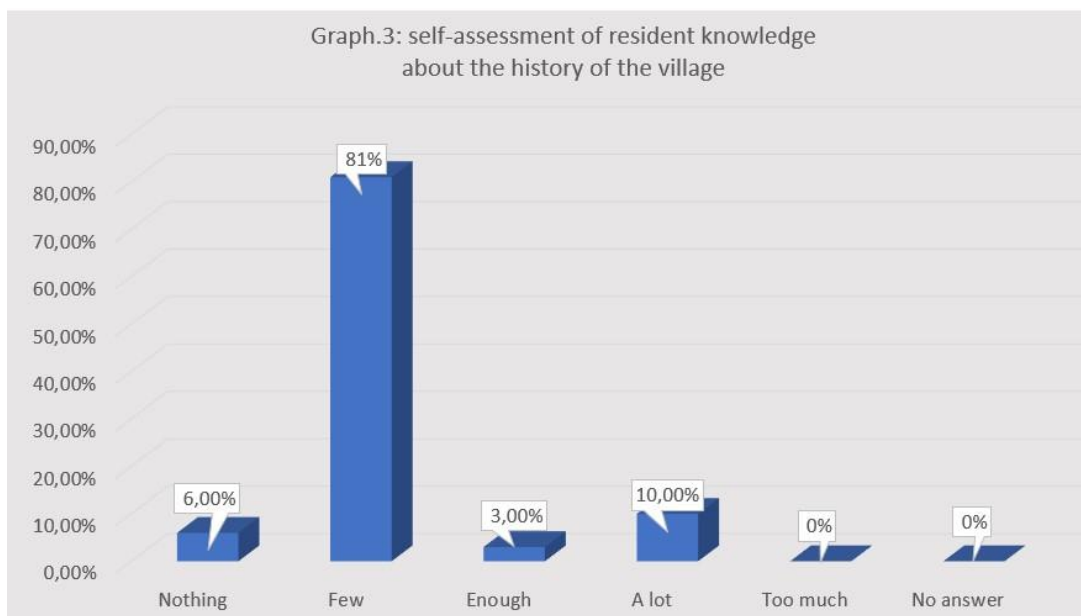
The academic, however, history of the village is not known to the residents (Graph 3). A small percentage of respondents (6%) declared complete ignorance of the history of Aghios Georgios. The majority of residents (81%), regardless of age, admitted that they know little, without specifying what this knowledge is concern, except for a few who stated the location Pyrgos (12%) or the Liesta site (12%). Very few, aged 57-62, said they know quite a bit (3%) or a lot (10%).

2.2 *Views about ancient Koroneia*

One parameter of the questionnaire was to investigate if the residents know the location of the ancient city, what their knowledge and their attitude is about it.

Most of the respondents (78%) beliefs that they know the location of Pyrgos and declared that they had visited it (75%) (Graph 5a-b). But it was found (Graph 4) that it was lower the percentage (62.5%) of those with good knowledge of the area, who could recognize the built with ancient material modern fountain, that is located there and which anyone, who visits the area, will definitely encounter. Some respondents (12.5%, of which 9.37% live in Aghios Georgios), confused the place with other sites of fountains, either inside the village (Alonaki) or nearby it (Kamari, Aghios Konstantinos). If all these are added to those who did not answer, is significant the percentage (37.5%) of those who did not identify the position with certainty.
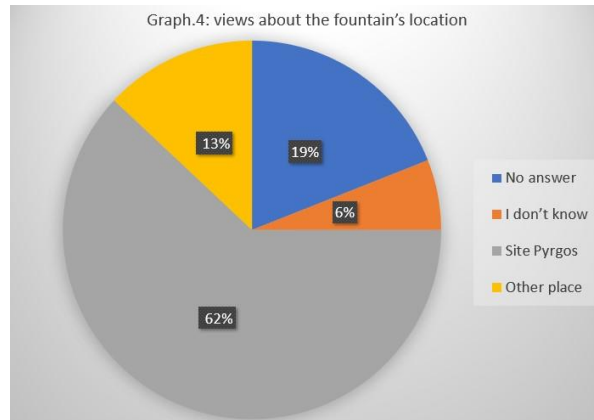
On the contrary, few residents (rate 12.5%, Graph 5a-b) described the location topographically, indicating the well-known hill, and half of them (6.25%) answered that they had noticed there "a wall" or "pieces of bricks" (3.12%), meaning with that the ancient pottery sherds. This shows that most residents did not know and/or had not noticed the surface archaeological remains that exist on Pyrgos hill.
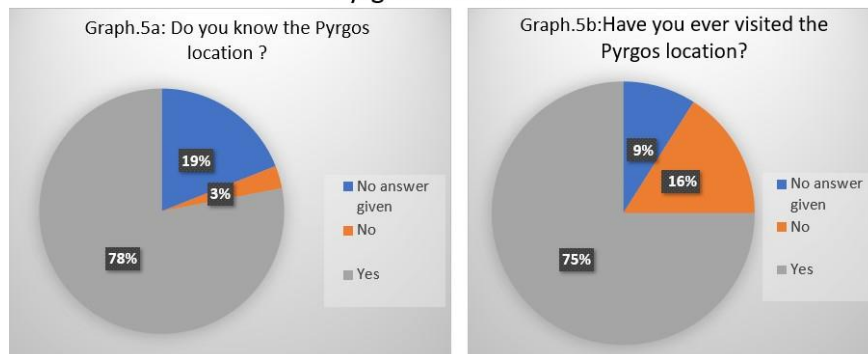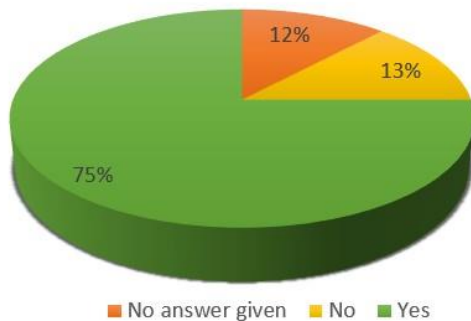
According to a large percentage of the respondents (81%, Graph 5c) the specific hill is a place of ancient habitation. They reported that there was a city (53.12%), or a citadel (28.12%), or something else (9.37%), such as a palace (6.25%), or a friktoria – a place from which someone could watch the movements of the enemies and give signal to his companions with smoke or fire-(3.12%). Very few (9.37%) did not give an answer and none stated "I have no idea."

Graph.5c: What did exist on the hill of the Pyrgos location?
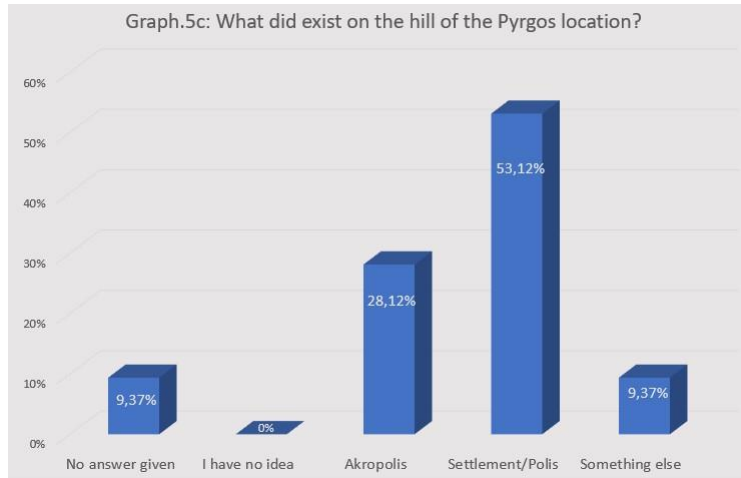
Regardless of whether they knew where Pyrgos hill was and whether they had visited it, the respondents knew that it was an archaeological residential site, but this did not mean that they necessarily identified it with ancient Koroneia.

Graph.6a: What have you heard/know about the ancient Koroneia?

Graph.6b: Do you know where the ancient Koroneia was located?
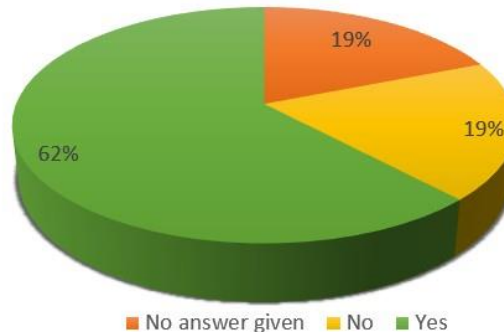
A large percentage of respondents (78%) stated that they knew of the existence of ancient Koroneia and had heard something about its history (Graph 6a-b). Few of them mentioned something more specific, such as an ancient city (3.12%), the battle of Koroneia (6.25%) or Pausanias as a source of knowledge (3.12%). Many (62%) also referred that they knew the location of the ancient city (Graph 6a-b). However, if we combine the negative answers with those who did not answer questions 6.a and 6.b, we have a significant percentage that seems to ignore both: the existence and history of the ancient city (25%), as well as its location (38%). In fact, very few (9.37%) identified ancient Koroneia with Pyrgos hill and only a percentage of 3.12% mentioned it explicitly. Therefore, it seems that they know that ancient Koroneia is somewhere in the surrounding area, but its exact location is not known for most of them.

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Graph.6c. What the word "Koroneia" reminds you?
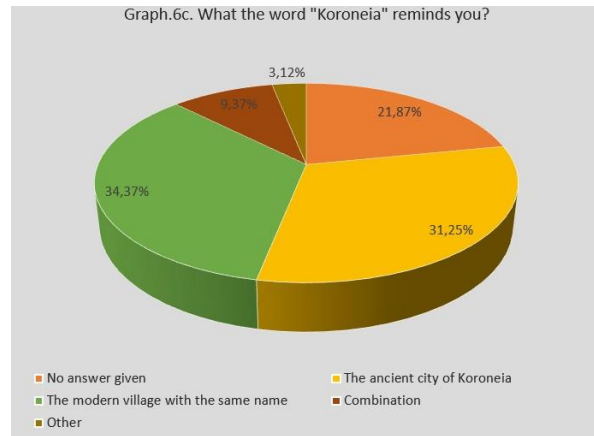
To the question "*what does the word "Koroneia" remind me of?*" (Graph 6c) approximately 1/3 of the respondents (34.37%) gave the answer that reminds them the modern homonym village (Koutoumoulas/Koroneia), the other 1/3 (31.25%) the ancient city – which also mentioned as "Koroni" (3.12%) – and very few (9.37%) answered both. Quite a few, however, were those who did not specify what it reminded them of (24.99%, if we add those who did not answer (21.87%) and those who stated "other" (3.12%) without mentioning what).

Therefore, the name of the ancient city does not seem to have a dominant position in the collective memory. It is primarily associated, in the perception of a significant percentage of the inhabitants, with the modern settlement of the same name. The impression that Koutoumoulas/Koroneia is the continuation of the ancient city is spread by folklore writings (Mitsou-Papalamprou, 2009: 125) and reinforced by the internet (Wikipedia, entry Koroneia), possibly influencing the opinions of the local residents. This trend is undoubtedly linked to the practice of naming non-Greek settlements with ancient Greek names.

Graph.6d: Any relation between the ancient and modern Koroneia?

Grpah.6e: Any relation between the ancient Koroneia and the village of Aghios Georgios?
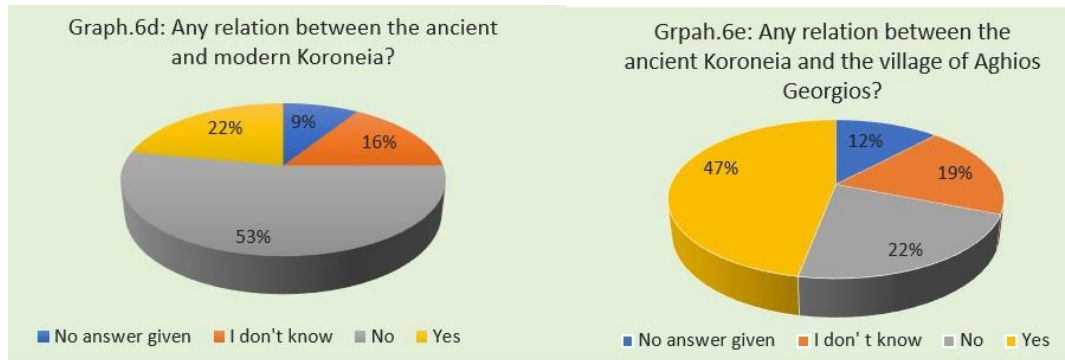
Regarding any connection between the ancient settlement and the modern homonymous village and that of Aghios Georgios (Graph 6d-e), a significant percentage declared ignorance (25% for the Koutoumoulas/Koroneia, 31% for the Aghios Georgios, adding those who didn't answer and the answers of "I don't know"). However, the dominant perception that emerged (53%) is that the ancient city has nothing to do with the modern settlement of the same name (because ancient city is situated lower, as noted by 3.12%). For many (47%) ancient Koroneia is related to Aghios Georgios, but most of them (34.37%) did not clarify this relationship, except for a few who answered that it is closer and belongs to the village territory (3.12%), or mentioned Bintliff's theory (3.12%) that the Aghios Georgios village is the continuation of medieval Koroneia settlement. But there is a remarkable percentage (22%) which believe that there is some connection of the ancient city with Koutoumoulas/Koroneia, although they did not specify it (18.75%), except for a few who mentioned that it is only nominal (3.12%) or due to geographical proximity (3.12%).

In summary, from the quantitative research it is found out that, contrary to historical data, Koroneia/Koutomoulas village is the modern settlement that is projected as a continuation of ancient Koroneia, a view that is not, however, universally accepted by the inhabitants of the area. On the other hand, the dominant belief of the residents of Aghios Georgios is that the origin of their village is not historically connected with ancient Koroneia. This conclusion is also confirmed by qualitative research. The current president of the Koroneia/Koutoumoulas settlement proudly claims that his village is the continuation of the homonymous ancient city (testimony Fountas, X. / Φουντάς, Χ., ex-president of the village), while a hitherto president of Aghios Georgios states with certainty that his village has no connection with the ancient city (testimony Christos Karatzalis / Χρήστος Καράτζαλης).

 So, the academic positions are unknown to the majority of the residents. Their views have been shaped mainly by oral family histories and the opinions of respected members of the community, while the influence of the internet does not seem as strong. As a result, local perceptions which have been consolidated they on the one hand are at variance with the official history/archaeology and on the other hand differ from each other.

However, although residents admit, according to the quantitative data, that their knowledge of their local history is minimal and, as the qualitative research reveals, vague and confused, they are not indifferent to it. Indication of their interest are the certainty expressed by the majority of respondents regarding the knowledge of the archaeological area, even if this does not correspond exactly to reality.

As the quantitative research reveals, for the majority of the inhabitants it is known that there was an ancient settlement on the archaeological hill. But it is found that although many have visited the archaeological site, few have noticed or are aware of the visible archaeological remains that exist there. Also, few identify the place with ancient Koroneia. Although they know that ancient Koroneia was in the surrounding area, its exact location for many remains unclear and its history almost completely unknown. No one mentioned the cult of Itonia Athena, the Boeotian Koinon, which had its headquarters in her sanctuary, and the Pamvoiotia festival, for which the area was known in antiquity (Strabo, 9.11.29, Pausanias, 9.34.1-5). Even the name of the ancient city does not seem to have a dominant position in the collective memory of the residents and for a significant percentage of the respondents (about 1/3) it is associated only with the modern settlement of the same name.

Combining the quantitative data with those of the qualitative research, it is found that in the age group from 60 years and above we could recognize manifestations of a folk "indigenous archaeology." The names given to the spots of the archaeological site, as Scoutela, Bricks, Loutros, Pyrgos, are due to the visible remains found there by the cultivators, which have been interpreted under a functional perspective.

In one case (Aghioi Theodoroi), the visible Roman remains are perceived in a Christian context and in the perception of some residents they are placed under the protection of the saints and the Virgin Mary who ask for the offer of the residents in return of the help that they offer to them. About the middle of the 20th century, a resident of Aghios Georgios village, when, after a night's storm, went the morning anxious to see his mare, which he had tied up injured and pregnant in a field, he finds her to have given birth and be healthy. Then a woman dressed in a black-clad presented to him and told him that she helped his animal, but in return she asked from him to protect her house, which is supported by four pillars and is located where she steps. At that point the villager found an icon of Saint Theodoroi and a pillar. He built a small eikonostasi there (it still remains empty and abandoned), in which he placed the icon of the saints (testimony Konstantina Goula / Κωνσταντίνα Γούλα).

The people of this generation, due to the direct and frequent contact they had as cultivators with the archaeological site, were connected to it, they felt it familiar, like an extension

of their home. They interpreted the antiquities they found in their own way in a context without historical distinctions. The objects which were hidden in this land and usually they perceived them as part of their property, not only excited surprise and admiration, but also, they used to become objects of respect, or even reverence, and sometimes their vague and unclear antiquity perhaps was perceived as something which give sacredness to the place. However, these representations are not reproduced by the next generation, which knows the existence of the archaeological site, but moves away emotionally, maintaining a blurred and unclear image of it. The younger generation, due to changes in living conditions and the socio-economic context, has lost contact with the archaeological site, even ignoring its existence. Indicative of this is the statement of a student of 3rd Grade of Highschool (2020) "I have the feeling that I live in a place that has no history".

Nevertheless, regardless of the age group, the residents of Aghios Georgios do not recognize material remains (such as "macrynaria") or traditions that connect them culturally with the antiquity. Not even toponyms that refer to the ancient past of the region are preserved. Probably, in the post-Byzantine years, when the preserved visible material remains were extensively used as building material covering practical needs, the ancient toponyms of the area were also condemned to oblivion. The Levithrio and Lafystio mountains that surround the archaeological site are today called Ismail and Granitsa. The Falaros and Kouarios rivers are known respectively as Potza and Karkari / Karkari stream. The new names refer to the inhabitants of different ethnicities (Franks, Catalans, Arvanites, Ottomans) who settled the area from post-Byzantine times onwards, for whom the ancient Greek, or even the Roman-Byzantine, past was something foreign, if not hostile.

2.3 *Unconscious survivals of tradition*

In Aghios Georgios, are detected some evidence, that would deserve further investigation, which indicate the old past and history of the Aghios Georgios village and differentiate it from the surrounding settlements. These are the local dialect (with several words of ancient Greek and Byzantine origin), the women's traditional clothing (the way of weaving and designs from the siguni (σιγκούνι)) and some customs that are preserved rather as unconscious survivals (Goula, 2023).

Figure 5. The ikonostasi of St. Georgios (as has been rebuilt the last decades)

One such custom was the offering of cotton to the saints of the settlement. This thanksgiving offering refers to the ancient custom of beginnings (απαρχαί), the offering of the first fruits, which had been imposed by the priesthood. This custom is characteristic of the ancient Greek rural world (Burkert, 1993: 156-159) that was preserved during Christianity (Varvounis, 2018). This used to be done in the additional small side hatch that had a small *ikonostasi* (εικονοστάσι) (that is a small builded structure in the countryside, beside the roads, which inside is hosting the icon of a saint) of Saint George. It is located just before the entrance to the village and directly opposite of the archaeological hill of Koroneia (Fig. 5). The initiative of some residents, at the beginning of the 2010s, to restore it and highlight it, apart from an expression of their respect and faith (testimony of I. Mavroides/I. Μαυροειδής) is mainly indicative of their intention to preserve and promote their special local customs.

As come out from the quantitative research (Graph 7), the unusual specificity of this particular monument was

known to one portion of the respondents (28.12%), which did not associate it with any ancient origin. For most of them (65.62%) it was an ordinary *iconostasi*. Ancient worked stones had also been built into the original building, an element pointed out by some respondents (18.75%). It is noted, therefore, in the modern era not only a gradual weakening of traditions, but also a forgetting of them, due to a change in the economic-social framework imposed by modernization and globalization.

Graph.7: Have been noticed/is it known any peculiarity on this eikonostasi?
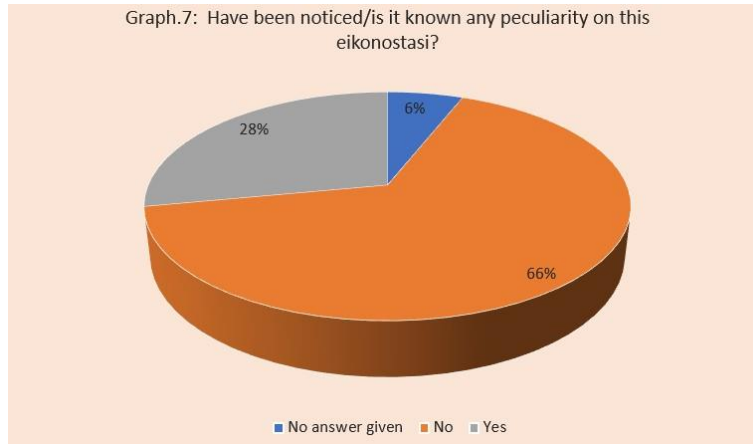
The practice of walling-in mounting ancient spolia (inscriptions, columns, worked stones) is also found in some churches of the village. One of them is of the patron Saint George. The church was built in the first decades of the 20th century upon a pre-existing one, of unknown date, which has not been saved. In the foundation of the church are visible built-in kiona's vertebrae which were evidently also present in the older building. Most respondents (75% Graph 8a) recognized what it is. Some, however, saw stones (9.37%), blocks of walls (douvaria) (3.12%), old foundations (3.12%), stonework of ancient or Roman construction (3.12%), or "something else" (3.12%) who did not know how to declare it. Regarding their feasibility (Graph 8b), more than half of respondents (57%) said they have no idea what it might be. The explanations given varied: for practical reasons (21.87%), for stability reasons (9.37%), because it was a ready-made building material (6.25%), in order to connect practicality with tradition (3.12%), in order to be stabled the saint's icon (3.12%), in order they be saved (3.12%), or to bury them (3.12%), due to illiteracy (6.25%), because of ignorance of their worth (3, 12%), because of Christianity anti-Hellenism (3.12%).

Walling in of ancient spolia in the church of Saint Georgios

Graph.8a:What can you see?

Graph.8b: . purposefulness's interpretations of spolias
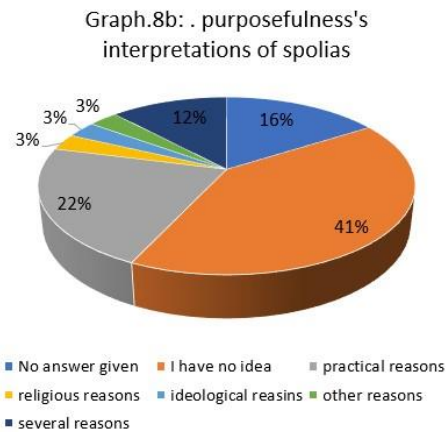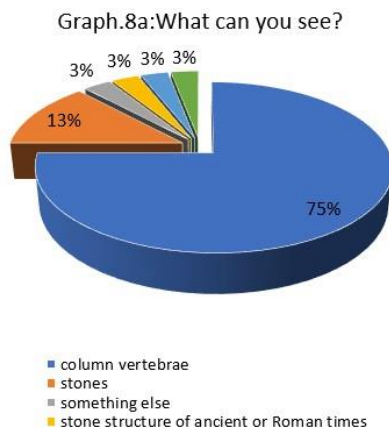
Regarding the origin of the ancient building material (graph 8c), 1/3 of the respondents seem to be unaware of it, the other 1/3 stated that they generally and vaguely come from ancient monuments (buildings, temples), while some identified the ancient Koroneia (15.62%) and the site Pyrgos (15.62%), but without identifying them with each other.

Walling in of ancient spolia in the church of Saint Georgios

Graph.8c: guessworks of their origin
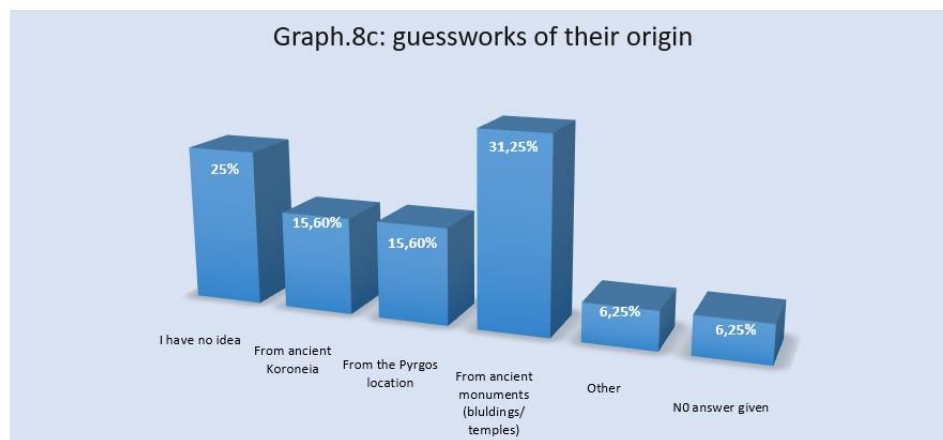
The archaeological site of Koroneia in the post-Byzantine years was a source of supplying ready-made building material for houses and churches of the surrounding settlements in the area (Papachatzis, 1992: 216). On an ideological level, the transfer of ancient stones is considered to symbolize the connection with the past and its appropriation (Meyer, 2013). It is established that the practice of incorporating ancient remains into churches goes back to the Byzantine era, and in particular to the 9th-10th century. It is a practice of the intellectual elite, and mainly of the ecclesiastical circle, with the aim on the one hand to put the pagan past under the control and authority of the Church, on the other hand to expose what was considered important and worthy of attention by teaching and connecting the uneducated peasants of Byzantium with their past, at the same time promoting the cultural value of the ancient Greek culture. (Papalexandrou, 2010: 64-65).

Using Assmann's terminology, we could characterize this practice as a mnemo-political strategy of connection with the ancient Greek cultural heritage. In the case of Boeotia, it probably also aimed at the cultural assimilation of the Slavic settlements in the region. In the wider region, the practice is ascertained since the 9th century in PanAghia Skripou of Orchomenos (Papalexandrou 2010: 66-68). In the territory of Koroneia it is observed in the Monastery of Aghia Paraskevi of the 11th century. where inscriptions from the sanctuary of Charops Herakles have been walled in (Papachatzis 1992: 219-220). Charopeio belongs in the territory of Aghios Georgios and it is argued (Goula 2021) that it was connecting with the ancient mystical cult of Itonia Athena. Epigraphic material from this sanctuary has been embedded in the post-Byzantine church of Aghios Taxiarchis, which replaced the ancient temple in this site, and in the church of Aghios Ioannis the Baptist in the settlement of Aghios Georgios (Papachatzis, *op. cit.*), perhaps indicating the appropriation of the attributes of the pagan deity (Goula, 2023).

Many residents today are unaware of the existence of these elements. But even if they were aware of them, the ideological purpose of this practice, that means the teaching and the connection with the ancient cultural heritage, is no longer recognizable, as the quantitative research showed. In our time the ideological framework for reporting and dealing with archaeological remains has changed as the next example attests.

2.4 *Views about the monument at the entrance of the village*

It has been pointed out (Bintliff, 2013, Forbes, 2013) that rural residents, feeling cut off from official history, try to link their place and its little-documented history to a famous past. According to Bintliff (2013) local communities try in various means and ways to certify that their community has appeared on the scene of history as a place of significance. This is a direct reaction to the neglect of their local history by official bodies. Their attitude is owned also to the absence of local traditions that convey reliable information about the remote past of the community. Thus, by highlighting (locating, selecting and displaying) outdoors ancient remains, which they associate with myths of origin that make them feel proud, they create alternative – to the official version-stories, and construct their present-day presence in a context of memory of greater importance than their own common frame of memory which they are able to project.

Bintliff (2013: 240) interprets, also, in this context the modern monument at the entrance of Aghios Georgios (Fig. 6).

Figure 6. The modern monument in the entrance
of Aghios Georgios village

This monument, which is not accompanied by any explanatory sign, was erected in the 2000s by the initiative of the Municipality of Koroneia of that time. The purpose was to emphasize and decorate the entrance of the village, a practice that was common at that time, but also to connect Aghios Georgios settlement, which was the seat of the Koroneia Municipality at that time, with the local archaeological environment (interview Mitsou, Nt. / Μήτσου, Nτ.), functioning in some way as a symbol of the municipality (interview X. Karatzalis / Χ.Καράτζαλης). An attempt was made to create a replica of the medieval Frankish tower that survives on the hill of ancient Koroneia. The interesting thing is that in the perception of the initiators of the modern monument, as well as of a portion of the inhabitants, the ancient monument, which they call "Tower," is perceived as part of the city wall and not as part of a building's masonry.

Modern Monument in the entrance of Aghios Georgios village

Graph. 9a: Views on the type of the monument

■ No answer given ■ Nothing ■ Wall of a town ■ wall of a bulding ■ something else
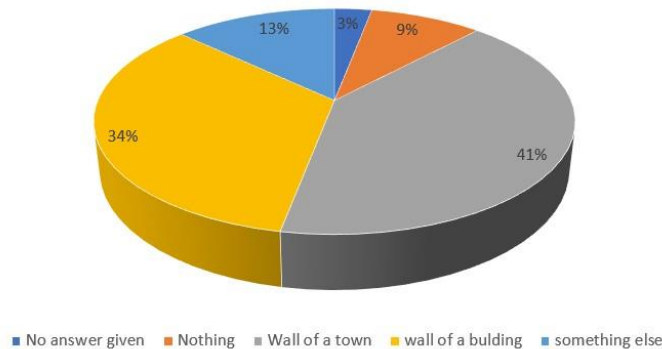
Several of the respondents of the quantitative survey (approx. 25% - Graph 9A), had no idea what the modern monument at the entrance of the village might represent. At the same time, a significant percentage of residents seemed confused as to whether it is a wall of an unknown city (40.62%) or a wall of a building (34.37%), which few (9.37%) associated with the monument on the homonymous location and very few (3.19%) associated it with ancient Koroneia. Regarding the symbolism of the modern monument (Graph 9B), a significant percentage (37.5%) considered it to be a symbol of the ancient history of the area. They associated it either with ancient Koroneia (6.25%), or the tower of the ancient city (9.37%) or the tower at the homonymous site (21.87%), or with a vague and unknown tower (6.25 %), which some (3.12%) described as "Catalan", or considered it be the symbol of some indefinite wall (12.5%). However, its symbolism and meaning seem to be unknown for a corresponding percentage (37.5% combining the unanswered fields with "don't know"). For some (9.37%) it represented nothing, while some depreciated and discredited it, noting that it is a "bad imitation" (because the battlements of the wall are turned inwards, intending the modern settlement), or that "*it is crappie.*"

Modern Monument in the entrance of Aghios Georgios village
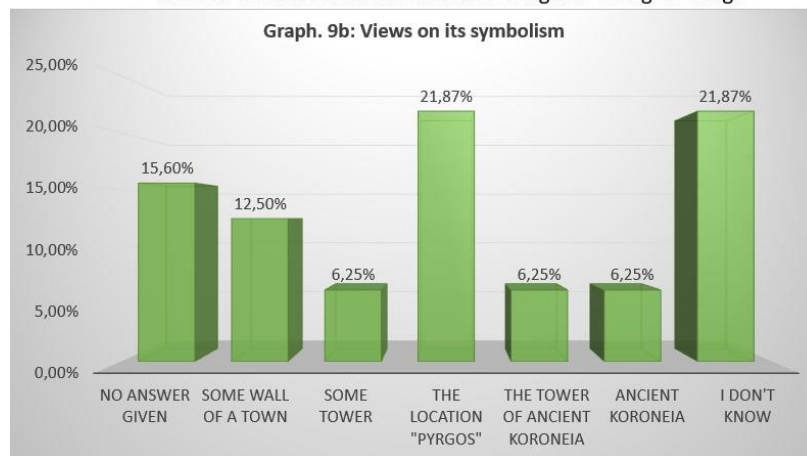
The ancient monument of the Frankish tower is not in the local collective memory a symbol of oppression and subjugation, as it historically was, because its history is ignored and its architectural type is misunderstood. In the common perception of most residents, it is confused with the city-wall of one town and it is perceived as a symbol of the ancient history of the area. For this reason, a part of the population – which its age is determined over 60 years old, consisting of those who still maintain direct contact with the archaeological site and/or have an academic

education – wishes to appropriate it and project it. However, this symbolism, which the initiators of the modern monument wanted to give it, is not accepted by all the inhabitants. Many ignore its connection with the archaeological site and consider its symbolism unclear, while a part of the population discredits or under evaluates the symbolic importance of the monument. It does not, therefore, touch the sentiment, nor excite the pride of the inhabitants.

3. Conclusions

In the example under consideration, as can be seen from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitive research, the academic positions do not influence the recruitments and interpretations of the residents regarding the archaeological environment of their area. The positions of official archeology-history are almost completely unknown to the local population. The non-diffusion of scientific knowledge in the local community has as result the ignorance or not valid knowledge of historical and archaeological data and by extension implies the reception of the visible remains in an ahistorical context. Also, the value of the local archaeological environment, which has a limited to non-existent role in the construction of the meaning makings of the ancient past, is not highlighted by the institutional bodies. Bintliff (2013), points out as a characteristic phenomenon of the Greek countryside, the displacement of local stories from the official narrative and attributes it on the one hand to the policy of highlighting famous and well-known places, such as Athens, and on local level Thebes, and on the other hand to the lack of connection of the local history with education.

The local population's perceptions of the history of their place are determined by variable factors, which act differently on a case-by-case basis, such as direct contact with the archaeological site, family histories, or the opinions of some respected members of the community. The local population in its majority is not indifferent to its local history and cultural heritage. However, as its meaning-makings are formed spontaneously, without the intervention of institutional bodies, it is to be expected that they will be differ or even contradict with the academic and institutional perspective. The image of the local population about the archaeological past of their area is blurred, confused and differs not only between the settlements, but also between generations of the same settlement, where a remarkable difference of perceptions is found.

The collective memory of the residents is expressed with inhomogeneity, it is improvised and spontaneous, without time depth, without coherence and is composed of daily, oral stories of the actor-subjects themselves. It exhibits all the characteristics of social memory that Assmann defines as "communicative" or "biographical" memory. This type of memory is separated from cultural memory, that means the conscious relation to the past, the internalized image of the past that becomes a guiding force for the future and provides cultural standards, allowing the formation of cultural consciousness and identity (Assmann, 2017: 52-53).

The relationship of the inhabitants with their archaeological environment indicates that this distant past has not been internalized by the population as a whole. Although the ancient remains cause respect for many, and the most sensitized, due to educational background, seek their appropriation and showing, these efforts, as we have seen, do not express the population as a whole, do not touch them emotionally, nor they stimulate their pride. On the contrary, the attempts to invent the past and reinterpret the archaeological monuments are characterized by a lack of coherence, are not universally accepted and are powerless to influence the conscience of the inhabitants.

Collective memory is made up of types of memory, in relation to time, and of places of memory, in relation to space (Halbwachs, 2013; Assmann, 2017: 38-40). However, it is established on the one hand that the archaeological sites and monuments of ancient Koroneia do not constitute a universally recognizable place of memory for the inhabitants of the modern

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communities, on the other hand that common types of memory are absent. The inhabitants do not share a common tradition for the origin of their settlement and the local archaeological environment.

According to Assmann, key factors for the reconstruction of biographical memory into cultural memory are the existence of a chasma with the past and the preservation of visible remnants that allow the connection with it, elements that are found in the example under consideration. Toponyms are a characteristic element which evince the chasma that separates the communities of the present from the ancient past of the region. Also, it is observed that the local archaeological past, although cloudy, is present in the consciousness of the majority of the inhabitants, therefore cultivable for the formation of cultural memory. But there is an absence of a dominant discourse (founding history in Assmann's terminology) that would make possible the codification of this past in places and types of memory and the conscious emotional connection of the local population to it, its internalization so that they feel it as part of their identity.

The above findings are indicative of the non-existence of mnemo-politic strategies aimed at actively connecting the local population with their local archaeological heritage. In this light, a different targeting of educational policies alone is not enough. The education should also be harmonized with the policy and targeting of other bodies managing culture and cultural heritage, such as the Principles of Local Government and above all the Ministry of Culture and the local archaeological services.

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Stages of Ancient Israelite Religion: From Polytheism to Monotheism

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Abstract

In the past scholars traced monotheism to the time of Moses, around 1200 BC. But in the last decades that date changed to 7th-6th century BC. Further, the discovery of the Ugaritic texts in 1928 on the north coast of Syria has helped historians of religion to notice the development of Israelite religion from a polytheistic Canaanite stratum to monotheistic Yahwism. Through examining biblical and extra-biblical texts, archaeological material, and inscriptions, this study traces the religious similarities of the Israelite and Canaanite culture. Genesis 49, Psalm 82 and Deuteronomy 32:8-9 are thoroughly analyzed and conclusions are made about Israel's original God, and the original tiers of the pantheon. In the pre-exilic period (and perhaps as early as the 8th century BC) Israel enjoyed perhaps a lesser pantheon than that in the Ugaritic texts, but certainly it was considerably more extensive than what the biblical record reports. The God of Biblical Israel may not actually be very different from the gods of the neighboring nations, but claiming that he is, is an important part of the rhetoric promoting devotion to that God alone.

Keywords: Canaanite religion, Ugarit religion, El, Yahweh, polytheism, monolatry, monotheism, history of religion.

1. Introduction

This study straddles the line between theology and the academic study of religion. Theology generally asks normative questions of what should be believed and, correspondingly, who God was and therefore is. Theology usually works on the assumption that the investigator defends the superiority of the particular deity.[1] In contrast, the study of religion asks descriptive questions about what people believed, and further about what goddesses and gods including Yahweh were or were considered to do and be. Religious research may presuppose that the investigator at least sets aside his belief in the object of inquiry.[2] It is not the historian's job to produce data to justify any particular theological system.

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[1] Dever (2005: 38) notes that from the very beginning biblical theology has been characterized by inherent weaknesses: "lacking sound historical foundations", "clerically dominated", "oblivious to revolutionary archaeological data", etc.

[2] Smith, 2001: 19.

> - According to Mark S. Smith, worship of Yahweh went from polytheism in the 12th century BC, through monolatry during the later monarchy, to monotheism after the Babylonian exile.
>
> - Yahweh was unknown to the patriarchs. Rather, they are depicted as worshippers of El.
>
> - During the Judges period, the major deities in the territory of Israel included Yahweh, El, Baal, and Asherah.
>
> - With the advent of monotheism all other gods were treated as either non-entities or created by Yahweh. Former gods, just as the lowest tier of gods in the Ugaritic texts, acted as messengers, the literal meaning of the English word "angel".

In the past scholars traced monotheism to the time of Moses, around 1200 BC. But in the last decades that date changed to 7th-6th century BC. Further, the discovery of the Ugaritic texts in 1928 on the north coast of Syria has helped historians of religion to notice the development of Israelite religion from a polytheistic Canaanite stratum to monotheistic Yahwism. But how did the rhetoric change from "Who is like you, O Lord, *among the gods*?" (Exod. 15:11) to "the Lord is God; besides him there is *no other*" (Deut. 4:35) and "the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is *no other*" (Deut. 4:39)?

According to Mark S. Smith, the worship of Yahweh went from polytheism in the 12th century BC (Yahweh was already the most important God, but one of several acknowledged gods), through monolatry during the later monarchy (Yahweh was the only God to be worshipped, but other gods existed; after c. 800 BC all of them condemned as bad) to monotheism after the Babylonian exile (587-538 BC). This process was shaped by two major lines of development, which he calls *convergence* and *differentiation*. Convergence involved the coalescence of various deities and/or some of their features into the figure of Yahweh. Differentiation was the process of Israel rejecting its Caananite heritage.[3]

2. Similarities in Israelite and Canaanite culture

The material culture of the West Semitic region exhibits numerous common points between the Israelites and Canaanites in the Iron Age I / Judges period (c. 1200-1000 BC). The record would suggest that the Israelite culture largely overlapped with, and derived from, Canaanite culture.[4] This extended to the realm of religion, evident from the terminology for cultic sacrifices and personnel.[5]

According to the Hebrew Bible, Gibeonites (Josh. 9:15; cf. 2 Sam. 21), Jerahmeelites (1 Sam. 27:10; 30:29), Kenites (Judg. 1:16; 4:11; 1 Sam. 27:10; 30:29), the descendants of Rahab (Josh. 6:25), Caleb the Kenizzite (Josh. 14:13-14; 21:12), and the Canaanite cities of Hepher and Tirzah became part of Israel (cf. Exod. 6:15). Presumably other groups and places were absorbed into Israel as well. The people of the highlands who came to be known as Israel comprised

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[3] Smith, 2001: 7-8.

[4] For example, some cooking pots and storage jars as attested at Giloh represent a pottery tradition continuous with the Late Bronze Age. Items such as the four-room house, collared-rim store jar, and hewn cisterns, once thought to distinguish the Israelite culture of the highlands from the Canaanite culture of the coast and valleys, are now attested on the coast, in the valleys, or in Transjordan. Both indigenous tradition and influence from the coast and valleys are represented also in burial patterns (Smith, 2002: 6, 20).

[5] Biblical Hebrew sacrificial language with corresponding terms in Ugaritic and/or Phoenician includes *zebah*, "slaughtered offering," a biblical term applied to sacrifices in the cults of both Yahweh (Gen. 46:1; Exod. 10:25; 18:12; Hos. 3:4; 6:6; 9:4; Amos 5:25) and Baal (2 Kings 10:19, 24; cf. CAT 1.116.1; 1.127; 1.148) (Smith 2002: 21).

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numerous groups, including Canaanites, whose heritage marked every aspect of Israelite society. In sum, Iron Age I Israel was largely Canaanite in character.[6]

Although one may not identify the local deities prior to and during the emergence of Israel by equating Ugaritic religion with Canaanite religion, the Ugaritic evidence is pertinent to the study of Canaanite religion since inscriptions from the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age I period in Canaan indicate that the deities of the land included El, Baal and Asherah, all major divinities known from the Ugaritic texts.[7] El was the aged and kindly patriarch of the pantheon; Asherah was his consort and queen mother of the divine family; Baal was the young storm-god and divine warrior.

Figure 1. Seated bronze figurine of El (Byblos, 14th-13th century BC. Negbi, 1976: Fig. 55)

Figure 2. Canaanite God, possibly El; bronze statue found at Mediggo
(Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)

The sacred tree – the *asherah*, the symbol named after the Goddess Asherah – is explicitly described in Judges 6:25-26, 1 Kings 16:33 and 2 Kings 21:7. An inscription from the 8th century BC in a tomb at Khirbet el-Qom, near Hebron, south of Jerusalem, reads: "May Uriyahu be blessed by YHWH, from his enemies he has saved him by his Asherah" (discovered in 1968). Another inscription from Kuntillet Ajrud (discovered in 1975-1976), a stopover for caravans in the Sinai desert, has a blessing formula, ending with the words "by YHWH of Samaria and his Asherah".[8]

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[6] Smith, 2002: 25-26.

[7] The proper name *ʾyʾl*, "where is El?" is contained in a 12th-century BC inscription from Qubur el-Walaydah, ten kilometers southeast of Gaza. Baal is mentioned in a 15th-century BC Taanach letter and in a 14th-century BC El-Amarna letter from Tyre (Smith, 2002: 26).

[8] Collins, 2004: 182. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Asherah's Ugarit name is Athirat. "Th" is cognate with "sh". It is the same name with a different line of development in the Semitic languages. William Dever (1983; 2005: 167) interprets the inscriptions as following: the Mother Goddess Asherah, having been consort of El, would have become Yahweh's consort in Israelite folk religion.
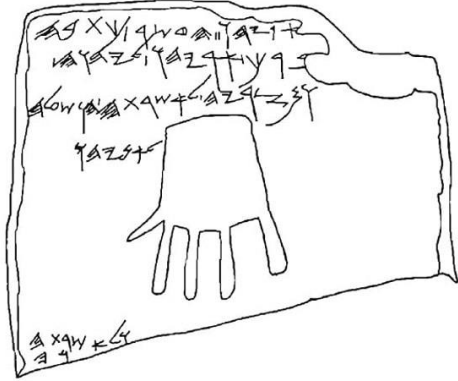
Figure 3. Inscription no. 3, from T. II at Khirbet el-Qom, c. 750 BC (Lemaire, 1977: 598)
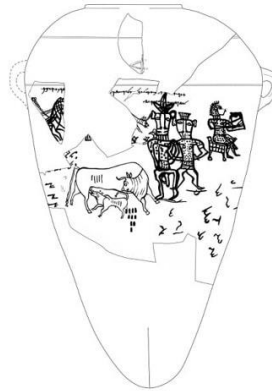
Figure 4. Painting on a jar found at Kuntillet Ajrud, c. 780 BC

Figure 5. Detail of Fig. 4 with an inscription

In addition, after the fall of Samaria in 720 BC, hundreds of 8th-7th-century BC pillar-base figurines of a nude female figure have been found in Judea, presumably of Asherah.[9] The Bible records that "the Queen of Heaven" was worshiped in Judah at the time of the Babylonian crisis in the early 6th century BC (Jer. 7:18; 44:18).
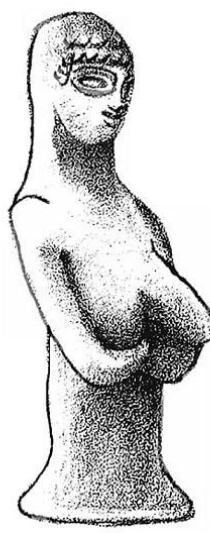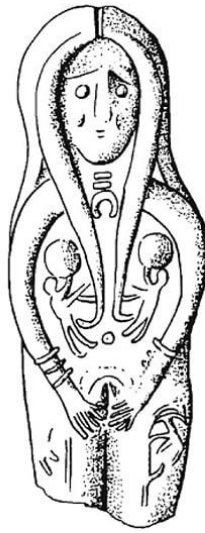
Figure 6. A terra cotta of the Great Mother, displaying her vulva and nursing twins (Revadim, Israel, Late Bronze Age, 13th century BC. *Israel Antiquities Authority* 1982: 219)

Figure 7. Drawing of Fig. 6 (Keel & Uehlinger, 1998: Fig. 82)

Figure 8. Pillar-base figurine. Jerusalem, 7th century BC (Becking et al., 2001: 13)

Figure 9. Nude female figure. Lachish (modern Tell ed-Duweir), Israel, 8th-7th century BC (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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[9] All figurines emphasize the breasts. In the ancient world, breasts were associated with their most basic function – nursing an infant, whose very life depended upon the mother's having sufficient milk. According to Dever (2005: 187) the figurines were used as talismans for conceiving babies, safe birth and successful rearing through infancy.

Baal had his own temple in the environs of Samaria (1 Kings 16:32), apart from the cult of the national God, Yahweh (2 Kings 10:21-27). The word *ba'al* forms the theophoric element in the biblical name Jerubbaal (Judg. 6:32; 8:35). Two members of the family of Saul, Eshbaal (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39) and Meribbaal (1 Chron. 8:34; 9:40), likewise have names containing the element *ba'al*.

During the Judges period, the major deities in the territory of Israel included Yahweh, El (see below), Baal, and Asherah. In sum, the Israelites may have perceived themselves as a people different from the Canaanites. Separate religious traditions of Yahweh, separate traditions of origins in Egypt for at least some component of Israel, and separate geographical holdings in the hill country contributed to the Israelites' sense of difference from their Canaanite neighbors inhabiting the coast and the valleys. Nonetheless, Israelite and Canaanite cultures shared a great deal in common, and religion was no exception. Deities and their cults in Iron Age I Israel represented aspects of the cultural continuity with the indigenous Late Bronze Age culture and the contemporary urban culture on the coast and in the valleys.[10]

Given the above facts we might offer an evolutionary outline of four major periods in the development of Israelite monotheism:[11]

(1) The period of the Judges (1200-1000 BC) may be called the stage of *convergence*, which continued down through the first half monarchy until El and Yahweh were identified (accomplished c. 8th century BC in Judah[12]). Features belonging to El, Asherah, and Baal were absorbed into the Yahwistic religion of Israel. As warrior fighting on Israel's behalf, Yahweh exercises power in Judges 5 against powerful peoples and deities.

(2) During the first half of the monarchy (1000-800 BC) first attempts at centralizing cults in royal sanctuaries and the development of royal theology brought Yahweh to unprecedented power as a unifying national deity and patron deity of the monarchy. During the 9th century BC, the role of Baal seems to have been perceived as a threat to the dominant status of Yahweh, thanks to the efforts of king Ahab and his wife Jezebel to elevate him in the northern kingdom. This led prophets and authors of early legal codes in the 8th to 6th centuries BC to criticize Baal and increasingly promote the exclusive worship of Yahweh (Hosea 2).

(3) The second half of the monarchy (800-587 BC) witnessed growing emphasis on *differentiation*, with most of the features of the practiced by the majority of people folk religion,[13] traditionally considered as legitimate parts of Canaanite heritage and Israelite tradition, now being rejected as non-Yahwistic. A significant factor in the enforcement of monolatry is Josiah's reform in 621 BC – he abolished the high places, centralizing worship in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23), by removing the cults of Baal (23:4-5) and Asherah (23:4, 6-7, 14).

(4) The period of the Babylonian exile (587-538 BC) would lead Second Isaiah (Isa. 45:5-7) to unambiguous formulations of a monotheistic belief, relegating other deities not merely to an inferior status but to nonexistence altogether.

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[10] Smith, 2002: 27.

[11] Uehlinger, 2003.

[12] Smith, 2004: 403.

[13] Dever (2005: 237) offers a list of proscribed activities, mostly derived from the Deuteronomistic and prophetic writings: frequenting local shrines (high places in all the cities of Judah and all around Jerusalem, even at the gates of the city); setting up standing stones; making of images of various deities; venerating the goddesses; burning incense to Baal; baking cakes for the "Queen of Heaven"; making vows; performing rituals having to do with childbirth and children; conducting funerary rites and "feeding the dead"; making pilgrimages to holy places and saints' festivals; engaging in various aspects of astral and solar worship; divining and "magic", except by priests.

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3. El and Yahweh

Outside of proper names, the word *ʾēl* occurs about 230 times in the Hebrew Bible. Israelite inscriptions include 557 names with Yahweh as the divine element and 77 names with *ʾl*.[14] At some point, a number of Israelite traditions identified El with Yahweh or presupposed this equation. The Hebrew Bible rarely distinguishes between El and Yahweh or offers polemics against El. West Semitic El lies behind the God of the patriarchs:

> He set up an altar there and called it *El Elohe Israel* [=*El is the God of Israel*]. (Gen. 33:20; cf. NABRE).

> He said, "I am El, your father's God." (Gen. 46:3 CEB).

Later tradition clearly intended that this God be identified as Yahweh. For example, the priestly theological treatment of Israel's early religious history in Exod. 6:2-3 identifies the old God El Shadday with Yahweh:

> And God said to Moses, "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shadday, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them."[15]

This passage shows that Yahweh was unknown to the patriarchs. Rather, they are depicted as worshippers of El.[16] "El Shaddai" means "El of the mountains". The title "Shaddai" is known outside of the Bible for mountain deities, belonging to the divine counsil or assembly, who meet on the divine holy mountain (thus resembling Mt. Olympus from Greek mythology). The most extensive Bronze Age source about El comes from Ugarit. In Israel El's characteristics and epithets became part of the repertoire of descriptions of Yahweh. Both texts and iconography present El as an elderly figure with gray beard, enthroned sometimes before individual deities, sometimes before the divine council.[17] Similarly, Yahweh is described as the aged patriarchal God, enthroned amidst the assembly of divine beings.[18]

4. Was El Israel's Original God?

Biblical texts do attest to Yahweh and El as different gods sanctioned by early Israel. For example, Gen. 49:24-25 presents a series of El epithets separate from the mention of Yahweh in verse 18:

> I wait with hope for you to rescue me, O *Yahweh*. (18)
> . . . because of the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, (24)
> because of the *El* of your father who helps you,

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[14] Smith 2001: 139, 141. There are also a handful of names with the divine component *bʾl*.

[15] "El Shaddai" in Hebrew is conventionally translated as "God Almighty".

[16] It has become a commonly accepted view both in Egyptology and Biblical studies that the name of the later god YHWH makes an early appearance in Egyptian topographical lists of the New Kingdom. From the putative Egyptian evidence and the perspective of Judg. 5:4-5 and Ps. 68:8-9, YHWH is grounded in a southern place outside of Israel. The Egyptian evidence would suggest at least a 15th century BC date for the cult of YHWH if not earlier, while the biblical references even in the most optimistic scenario would not date prior to the 12th century BC (Smith 2017: 23, 26, 28).

[17] Gray beard: CAT 1.3 V 24-25, 1.18 I 11-12. Enthroned: 1.3 V, 1.4 IV-V. Before the divine council: 1.2 I.

[18] Aged patriarchal god: Ps. 102:28; Job 36:26; Isa. 40:28; cf. Ps. 90:10; Isa. 57:15; Hab. 3:6; Dan. 6:26; 2 Esdras 8:20; Tobit 13:6, 10; Ben Sira 18:30. Enthroned amidst the divine assembly: 1 Kings 22:19; Isa. 6:1-8; cf. Ps. 29:1-2; 82:1; 89:5-8; Isa. 14:13; Jer. 23:18, 22; Zechariah 3; Dan. 3:25.

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because of the *Shadday* who gives you . . . (25 NOG)

This passage does not show the relative status of the two gods in early Israel, only that they could be named separately in the same poem.

If El was the original God of Israel, then how did Yahweh come to be the chief God of Israel and identified with El? Smith posits three hypothetical stages (not necessarily discrete in time or geography) to account for the information presented so far:[19]

(1) El was the original God of early Israel. The name Israel points to the first stage. So do references to El as a separate figure (Gen. 49; Ps. 82).

(2) El was the head of an early Israelite pantheon, with Yahweh as its warrior-god. Texts that mention both El and Yahweh but not as the same figure (Gen. 49; Num. 23-24;[20] Ps. 82) suggest an early accommodation of the two in some early form of Israelite polytheism. If Ps. 82 reflects an early model of an Israelite polytheistic assembly, then El would have been its head, with the warrior Yahweh as a member of the second tier. Yet the same psalm also uses familial language: the other gods are said to be the "sons of the Most High". Accordingly, Yahweh might have been earlier understood as one of these sons (see below).

(3) El and Yahweh were identified as a single God. In Judges 5 Yahweh, the divine warrior from the south, is attributed a victory in the central highlands. The merger probably took place at different rates in different parts of Israel, in which case it was relatively early in the area where the text was composed, but possibly later elsewhere.

El as a separate God disappeared, perhaps at different rates in different regions. In comparison, Yahweh in ancient Israel and Baal at Ugarit were both outsider warrior gods who stood second in rank to El, but they eventually overshadowed him in power. Yet Yahweh's development went further. He was identified with El: here the son replaced and became the father whose name only serves as a title for the son. This paradigm of convergence of divine identities succeeded the older paradigm of divine succession in the ancient Middle East (for example, Ea's replacement by his son Marduk in *Enuma Elish*). With a distinct father-God erased, the son's identity as son was also erased. And then there was only One.[21]

5. Israel and the Tiers of the Pantheon

The evidence that Yahweh headed a pantheon consisting of other figures known from the second tier of the Ugaritic texts is unfortunately vestigial. In Psalm 82:6-8 the assembly of the gods consists of all the gods of the world:

> I myself presumed that you are gods,
> sons of the Most High (Elyon),
> yet like humans you will die,
> and fall like any prince.
> Arise, O God, judge the world;
> for you inherit all the nations.

According to Smith, here Yahweh in effect is asked to assume the job of all gods to rule their nations in addition to Israel (to fill the "power vacuum" created by the demise of all other

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[19] Smith, 2001: 143-144.

[20] Numbers 23-24 contain the name of Yahweh (23:8, 21; 24:6), but it is considerably rarer than the name of El (23:8, 19, 22, 23; 24:4, 8, 16, 23).

[21] Smith, 2001: 144.

gods).[22] Verse 6 addresses the gods as "the sons of Elyon", probably a title of El at an early point in biblical tradition (cf. El Elyon mentioned three times in Gen. 14:18-20 NOG). If this supposition is correct, Psalm 82 preserves a tradition that casts the God of Israel in the role not of the presiding God of the pantheon but as one of his sons. Each of these sons has a different nation as his ancient patrimony (or family inheritance) and therefore serves as its ruler. Yet verse 6 calls on Yahweh to arrogate to himself the traditional inheritance of all the other gods, thereby making Israel and all the world the inheritance of Israel's God.

This family view of the divine arrangement of the world appears also in the versions of Deut. 32:8-9 preserved in Greek (Septuagint, or LXX) and the Dead Sea Scrolls:

> When the Most High (Elyon) allotted peoples for inheritance,
> when he divided up humanity,
> he fixed the boundaries for peoples,
> according to the number of the divine sons [gods]:
> for Yahweh's portion is his people,
> Jacob [Israel] his own inheritance.

Until the recent NRSV translation, the traditional Hebrew text (Masoretic text, or MT) perhaps reflected a discomfort with this polytheistic theology of Israel, for it showed not "divine sons" (*běnê ʾĕlōhîm),* as in the Greek Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls,[23] but "sons of Israel" (*běnê yiśrāʾēl*). E. Tov labels the MT text here an "anti-polytheistic alteration".[24]

Another example is Deut. 32:43 preserved in the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls (until NRSV):

> Rejoice, O *heavens, together with him;*   [MT: *O nations, with his people*]
> *and bow down to him all you gods*,   [not in MT]
> for he will avenge the blood of *his sons*,   [MT: *his servants*]
> and will render vengeance to his enemies,
> *and will recompense those who hate him*, [not in MT]
> and *will atone* for *the land of his people*.[25] [MT: *his land, for his people*]

The number of gods in Deut. 32:8 is the basis for the number of peoples and countries in the world. The final phrase implies not only that there was an identical number of gods, peoples and territories, but that each people received its God as well as its territory (or each God received his or her people and territory). According to Simon Parker, as one of the divine beings, Yahweh received Israel at the hands of Elyon, as each of the other gods received his or her people and land from the same source.[26] Of course, later tradition could identify the figure of Elyon with Yahweh,

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[22] Smith, 2001: 48.

[23] For the evidence, see Tov, 1992: 269.

[24] Tov, 1992: 269.

[25] Abegg, 2002: 193.

[26] Parker, 1999: 796. Parker (p. 797) assumes that in Deut. 32:8-9 the divine beings appeared originally as Yahweh's peers, but the text is reread and eventually rewritten to make Yahweh the supreme, and then the only, deity. In Psalm 82 Yahweh again appears as one of the divine beings, but only to expose his peers as total failures and to displace them as ruler of the world. In the remaining cases, the divine beings appear as Yahweh's court – his servants and worshippers.

Other passages, while not using the specific term, nevertheless seem to refer to these divine beings as Yahweh's peers. In Gen. 3:22 Yahweh says: "The human has become like one of us". Only two kinds of being are envisaged here: divine and human. The human has acquired one of the divine characteristics (knowledge) and is threatening to acquire another (immortality, 3:22b; cf. 11:6-7). The phrase "one of us" clearly refers to anyone of the group of divine beings, of whom Yahweh is first among equals. In the priestly text, Gen. 1:26, Yahweh again uses the first person plural when proposing to make humanity "in our image, according to our likeness". In this case, human beings are modelled on the divine beings.

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just as many scholars have done. However, the title of Elyon ("Most High") seems to denote the figure of El, presider par excellence not only at Ugarit but also in Psalm 82.[27]

The author of Psalm 82 deposes the older theology, as Israel's deity is called to assume a new role as judge of all the world. Yet at the same time, Psalm 82, like Deut. 32:8-9, preserves the outlines of the older theology it is rejecting. From the perspective of this older theology, Yahweh did not belong to the top tier of the pantheon. Instead, in early Israel the God of Israel apparently belonged to the second tier of the pantheon; he was not the presider God, but one of his sons. Accordingly, what is at work is not a loss of the second tier of a pantheon headed by Yahweh. Instead, the collapse of the first and second tiers in the early Israelite pantheon likely was caused by an identification of El, the head of this pantheon, with Yahweh, a member of its second tier. This development would have taken place by the 8th century BC.[28]

In the 8th century BC, the neo-Assyrian empire presented a new world order – in Babylon, the traits of numerous deities were attributed to Marduk, not only in the fifty names that he receives in *Enuma Elish*, but also in the characterizing of over a dozen deities as aspects of Marduk in a small god list.[29] One might assume that after this alteration of the world scene Israel needed a different "world theology" in order to centralize and strengthen its political power. That not only advanced Yahweh to the top but eventually eliminated the second tier altogether insofar as it treated all other gods as either non-entities or created by Yahweh. By the last centuries BC the dominant view of gods among Jews was that they were angels, a lesser order of heavenly beings at the one God's command. A common task for such former gods, just as the lowest tier of gods in the Ugaritic texts, was to act as messengers, the literal meaning of the English word "angel".[30]

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[27] Smith, 2001: 48. David Frankel (2010) argues that El is the speaker of Psalm 82:6-8, playing the role of the high judge, in which he condemns the gods and appoints Yahweh to rule in their place. According to Frankel (p. 4), the one who presides as head of legal proceedings, which is what Psalm 82 clearly depicts, is generally presented as seated, while the litigants stand before him. Yahweh, however, is said in v 1 to *stand*, not sit. Also, Yahweh is situated not in front of the council, but *in the midst* of the council. These formulations most naturally imply that Yahweh is a litigant or accuser in the ensuing legal exchange. The Psalm is a visionary report of a mythological drama in the cosmos. It depicts a trial against the gods of the nations, in which these foreign gods are condemned to death.

Frankel concludes: "Psalm 82 reflects an extreme version of nationalism. It seeks to have all the territories of the nations annexed to Israel, the national 'inheritance of Yahweh'" (p. 8); "we may well assume that Psalm 82 is programmatic in orientation, seeking to justify the king's aspirations to conquer the world for the dominion of Yahweh" (p. 14).

[28] Smith, 2001: 49.

[29] Aspects of Marduk: "Urash (is) Marduk of planting. Lugalidda (is) Marduk of the abyss. Ninurta (is) Marduk of the pickaxe. Nergal (is) Marduk of battle. Zababa (is) Marduk of warfare. Enlil (is) Marduk of lordship and consultations. Nabu (is) Marduk of accounting. Sin (is) Marduk who lights up the night. Shamash (is) Marduk of justice. Adad (is) Marduk of rain. Tishpak (is) Marduk of troops. Great Anu (is) Marduk of . . . Shuqamuna (is) Marduk of the container. [. . .] (is) Marduk of everything" (Smith 2001: 87-88).

The Israelite presentation of the divine council differs little structurally from the Babylonian presentation of Marduk in *Enuma Elish*. Both *Enuma Elish* and the Hebrew Bible present a divine ruler surrounded by subservient divinities. Many (though hardly all) Israelite texts differ from *Enuma Elish* in neither the notion of assembly nor the radical polarization between Ruler and ruled (Smith 2001: 51).

[30] According to John Day (2000: 232), once monotheism took over Israel, the seventy sons of God, originally denoting the gods of the pantheon under El, with whom Yahweh became identified, now became demoted to the status of angels, the seventy guardian angels of the nations attested in *1 Enoch*. Greenstein 1997, 50: "There is a distinct trend toward monotheism and a reduction of the various deities to the status of angels or nothings"; West 1997, 123: "In more orthodox parts of the Old Testament the lesser divinities surrounding Yahweh are reduced to emissaries and agents of his will, his "messengers" (*mal'âkim*, the so-called "angels"),

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6. Conclusion

In sum, in the pre-exilic period (and perhaps as early as the 8th century BC) Israel enjoyed perhaps a lesser pantheon than that in the Ugaritic texts, but certainly it was considerably more extensive than what the biblical record reports.[31] Edward Greenstein concludes: "The God of Biblical Israel may not actually be very different from the gods of the neighboring nations, but claiming that he is, is an important part of the rhetoric promoting devotion to that God alone."[32]

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but this shift does not always succeed in concealing their originally independent status". See also Parker 1999: 798.

[31] Smith, 2001: 49.

[32] Greenstein, 1997: 58.

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Inter-Ethnic Conflicts Between the Hadiya and Halaba of Ethiopia: Major Factors, Resolution Mechanisms and Current Trends

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Abstract

Inter-ethnic conflicts become a pervasive and salient dimension of socio-political discourses in several countries of the world. Most of such conflicts are linked with resource management at the mosaic boundaries of ethnicities. In the present study populations, violent conflicts have been experienced in the years 2012-2014 and peaceful co-existence in border areas has been affected since then. The two communities had a long history of close relationships. The major objective of the study was to investigate the underlying causes and consequences of inter-ethnic conflicts between the Hadiya and Halaba ethnic groups, SNNPR, Ethiopia. The study also targeted to explores the triggering factors of conflict and institutions involved the conflict resolution process. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative research approach with purposive sampling method. The tools used to collect data were in-depth key informant interview, focus group discussion, case study and relevant documents analysis. Data analysis was made thematically and narratives were included. The major findings of the study indicated that economic, political and socio-cultural factors have played a great role for inter-ethnic conflicts in the study area. Furthermore, the ethnocentric actions of exclusion and marginalization of a minority group (Muslim Halaba) adjacent to Halaba Zone by a majority group (Christian Hadiya) in Hadiya Zone led the conflict to antagonistic featured competitions. Efforts that have been made so far by local system of conflict resolution mechanisms to curb these conflicts through formal and informal institutions have been useful. However, sustainable peace-full co-existence among the two groups couldn't be maintained.

Keywords: inter-ethnic conflict, ethnic group, Hadiya people, Halaba people, Ethiopia.

1. Introduction

Conflict is a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals, whereby one of the actors' experience damage and the other actor causes this damage intentionally, or ignores it (Wolf, 2006). According to Gololcha (2015), conflict is a common phenomenon among human beings. Groups and individuals experienced it in their day-to-day life while they are interacting among themselves. Conflict is a worldwide reality that knocks at the door of developed and developing nations (Jalali & Lipset, 1992). Conflict takes its origins in economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development and political organization. Ethnic conflict is one particular type of such conflicts that the goals of at least one

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conflicting party is defined in ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions (Wolf, 2006). In ethnic conflict whatever the concrete issues are there over which conflict erupts, at least one of the conflicting parties will explain its discontent in ethnic terms (Nguyen, 2010).

Ethnic conflict is now a pervasive and salient dimension of political and social conflicts in several countries of the world. Wimmer (2004), cited in Jinadu (2007), has observed "Over the past decades, ethno-nationalist conflict has become the dominant form of mass political violence. The overwhelming majority of civil wars in the post-cold war era were fought in the name of ethno-national autonomy or independence." Since the end of the Cold War, the number of ethnic conflicts continued to increase.

It is true that, in Africa, since the mid-1960s there have been prolonged and protracted ethnic-related violent political conflicts (Jinadu, 2007). Similarly, Abdala (2002) stated that since the end of the Cold War the majority of conflicts in Africa are internal conflicts; in other words, conflicts between social groups. Furthermore, the UN General Secretary Report on Africa (1999) stated the multi-ethnic character and politicization of ethnicity in Africa as a cause to conflict. Yatiani (2015) also stated that African societies, like other developing nation societies, have been undergoing a crisis due to inter-ethnic conflicts since pre-colonial times. This trend did not break even after colonization. From the inception of colonization, the range and magnitude of these conflicts have escalated to different shapes and dimensions posing serious conflict challenges in the world today. Multi-ethnic Africa is troubled by such ethnic conflicts. Together with other factors, the recent waves of democratization in continental Africa have added a momentum to the conflicts and have highlighted the salience of ethnicity and ethnic identities in both the political arena and other areas of national activity (Asebe, 2007).

Ethnic conflicts have been a long and pervasive problem in Ethiopia. There is a consensus among scholars (Bantayehu, 2016; Bahru, 2008; Dagne, 2014) that the inter-group conflict, particularly in recent times, is on the increase. The country has gone through a long history of ethnic suppression, discrimination and ignorance (Sara, 2003). Accordingly, in the imperial system, the defining features were the exclusion of the mass of the population from the process of government activities, and the economic exploitation of the producers by an ethnically defined ruling class. The successor of the regime, the military government, had made an effort to build a unitary nation out of many with rhetoric and military actions.

The military regime failed due to massive resistance from wide range of forces and replaced by transitional coalition government power. The transitional power was replaced by the ruling party Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), with the quest for ethno-cultural justice, equality and self-determination of ethnic groups. While EPRDF assumed power, the politicized ethnicity arguably was securitized and the FDRE Constitution has chosen to concentrate on federalism with the positive elements of ethnicity: its ability to provide a group of people that share language and cultural values with a sense of common identity, collective purpose, advantages which it believes can be usefully harnessed for social, economic, and political development (Sara, 2003).

The frequency and magnitude of inter-group conflicts have been increased and the causes of conflicts and the actors involved have become more complex in the world (Asnake et. al., 2013). According to Eriksen (cited in Abraham Asnake, 2015) for instance, between the years 1990-2002 there were 58 major armed conflicts in the whole world. Among those violent conflicts, the ethnic ones comprised the greater part, Africa hosting the lion share of all (19 ethnic conflicts) followed by; the Asian, Middle East region, Europe and America continents which witnessed 17, 9, 8, and 5 ethnic conflicts, respectively. These conflicts have been directly responsible for increased deaths, destruction of property, poverty, hunger, starvation, disease, fear, suspicion, mistrust, insecurity and general hopelessness within the warring communities (Crawford, 1998).

Hadiya and Halaba have co-existed in a complete peaceful and harmonious way in different governmental rules (Alebachew & Samuel, 2010). Despite such earlier situation, the relationship between these two ethnic groups has basically changed following the downfall of the Derg (military) regime and with the succession of EPRDF to power. The frequent occurrence of violent ethnic conflict since then and its devastating effect on human security made this problem an important topic for the present study.

Several researches on conflict have been done at the regional state contexts, SNNPR (Abraham, 2015; Bantayehu, 2016; Asnake et al., 2013). Different researchers and experts believe that still ethnic conflict researches are not properly addressed. The persistence of inter-ethnic violence suggests that there is still much work to be done in terms of understanding why such violence arises, what is their effects on socio-economic activities and how it can be resolved. The same holds true for the Hadiya and Halaba case, which so far was not exhaustively addressed. Thus, the following emerging issues required further investigations: (1) what are the underlying causes that lead to conflict between the Halaba and Hadiya ethnic groups in SNNPRS? (2) What have been the socio-economic effects of the conflicts existed between the two communities? (3) What are the roles played by governmental bodies (regional and local governments) and local customary conflict management institutions in controlling and managing inter-group (inter-ethnic) conflicts in the study area?

2. Methodology

Considering the ontological dimension of the topic to be investigated, considering social reality is subjective fact (constructivism), the researchers utilized a qualitative research approach to apply in-depth considerations of socio-political realities. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized to obtain relevant information required to carry out the study. The primary data were collected through key informant interview, focus group discussion, case studies and casual conversations. A key informant was selected on the basis of the diverse knowledge background they have on their respective professions and institutional representations. Accordingly, those individuals who are well versed in the culture, tradition, and history of their respective groups were selected as key interviewees. Case interviews were incorporated in connection with earlier violent conflict situations. Secondary data from different sources (published journal articles and books, unpublished *Kebele* archives and *Woreda* police reports) pertinent to the conflict and its resolution endeavors were used. Collected data was analyzed thematically and narrations were incorporated.

3. Findings

3.1 *The pre-conflict relationships between the two groups*

The Hadiya and Halaba peoples have social and economic ties and shared various cultural practices. These common elements have made their resemblance far much stronger, deeper and ample than their dissimilarities. These two people have a long history of friendly relationships, as per elders. Hadiya and Halaba have lived together peacefully under different governmental rules. During the imperial regime, both ethnic groups belonged to the then *Kambata Awuraja Gizat*. Consequently, in the course of time both ethnic groups, like any other ethnic groups, were subjected to heavily centralized administration from the ruling political centre. In effect, the relations of both ethnic communities with central ruling authorities were thus more or less similar. Although the Derg military regime carried out an administrative restructuring within the former province, the two adjacent communities continued to live within the same provincial administrative structure.

Correspondingly, in the present study, the interviewees and FGD participants of both groups indicated that both of the group had collaborated with each other during good and bad times when they were administered under the same administrative structure. They also used to participate in different forms of social institutions and events of one another, such as funerals, weddings and inter-marriage ceremonies. Their strong bond also goes to the extreme of wishing good fortunes to one another in proceedings like rituals and yearly holidays and collaboration in times of external threats.

3.2 *Contributing factors for inter-group conflicts*

From our discussion in the preceding section, we can comprehend that there were concrete social inter-connections and cooperation among the two ethnic groups. We didn't observe any significant violent conflicts among the two groups that can be considered as inter-ethnic conflicts. Therefore, if ethnicity by itself is not the fundamental cause for the violent conflict existed in the recent years among these two groups, the question becomes, what caused their contemporary contention and inter-group conflicts? It is elusive to find a single factor that accounts for every conflict. A number of interwoven and intercepted causes contribute to conflict in one way or the other (Sisay, 2007). Likewise, as the results from key informants, case studies and FGD participants indicated, a blend of factors can be considered the causes inter-ethnic conflict between Hadiya and Halaba. Accordingly, the contributing factors of Hadiya-Halaba inter-ethnic conflicts can be classified as structural and triggering factors. The structural factors include subsistence economy, ethnicity based political system, and socio-cultural issues.

3.2.1 *Economic factors contributed to inter-ethnic conflicts*

The study found out that the land use issue is a central conflict problem in the area. Based on the data obtained from FGD participants, key informant interviewees and case study participants, the major factor is linked with land use. Related to progressive increase in population size in the study area, share of land to be used by each house hold decreased progressively and led to smaller land holdings. This problem is acute in *Misrak Badewacho Woreda* where the total population practices farming as subsistence economy. The population size pressure sped up the competition over the land resource that led to conflict between the two groups. The results of such land resources limitation become vibrant in conjunction with the subsistence agricultural practice of the area on which the livelihood of the total population depends. One of the key informants stated that, both the Hadiya and Halaba led their economic activities and earned their means for living through agricultural activities. They are agrarian people whose economic activity dominantly depended on farming. In effect, most of their cordial and conflictual relationship revolved around the land resource. The land resource is used for both crop production and animal husbandry, the mixed agricultural practices.

3.2.2 *Political factors contributed to inter-ethnic conflicts*

The Halaba informants at *Gegera Kebele* state that, in our joint existence we have experienced a long history of harmonious relations. The Hadiya-Halaba conflict was not produced by the existence of ethnic differences or ancient hatred. Instead, it was the result of modern ethnic manipulation of administrative issues for political interests and other instrumental features. The new political system put in place the ethnic difference as a politicized existing difference and added a dimension of "us" and "them" between the two groups. "Us" and "them" polarity surpassed the elements of similarities (shared socio-cultural features) and magnified the differences. In this regard, the existing empirical fact in the study area shows that there is a trend of institutional

exclusion and marginalization of a minority ethnic groups by a majority (Hadiya) ethnic group in the study area. In this connection, not only ethnic minority group exclusion but also religion-based exclusion and marginalization was observed within the Hadiya ethnic group.

Likewise, many Halaba ethnic group informants reflected their deep dissatisfaction of being dominated and discriminated during their historical relation with Hadiya. As a result, there is an uneven job opportunity and unfair power distribution, unfair distribution of natural resources, and prejudiced administrative treatments. The *Halaba* minority ethnic group members, who are living in the same *Woreda* (district) with Hadiya have no representation in administrative structure. The Halaba who are living in Hadiya Zone are treated as secondary citizens; hence marginalized in all benefits related to social, economic and political spheres. As to them, it was these ethnocentric actions of the Hadiya authorities, which lead to antagonistic featured competitions, then questions of self-administration and latterly, to ethnic related conflicts between the two groups of people. Thus, the border districts are in a continuous stress related to power relations among the ethnic group members.

3.2.3 *Socio-cultural factors contributed to inter-ethnic conflicts*

Information obtained from key informants, FGD participants and case study members revealed that dominative actions and attitudes upon language, culture and traditions was another underlying cause of conflict between two groups. Dissatisfaction of the Halaba ethnic group members grew to an increased demand to exercise their own language, culture and traditions, particularly following the promulgation of the new constitution in 1995. The constitution of the country gave the right to education through the mother's tongue; but as of 1995 the Hadiya have planned to give education to all children in the zone by *Hadiyissa,* regardless of the children of other ethnic groups living in the Zonal administrative structure. The children of the Halaba ethnic group members in *Misrak Badawacho Woreda* were forced to learn in *Hadiyissa*. It had a significant negative impact on their educational development related to the future of the children. Thus, medium of learning in education and the mother tongue issue become the major conflict issue. Most of children from the Halaba ethnic group households gave up the learning process. The Halaba group dissatisfied with the language issue in the education system and confronted the administration by claiming "the right of children to learn with their mother tongue".

The people of Halaba in Misrak Badwacho District did not have access to judiciary, administrative and public services due to the language barrier. As a result of this, the Hadiya and Halaba who were allying or having friendly relations altered automatically to competitive relations. Thus, some of extreme competitions among the group members ended up in a conflict.

In sum, in the present study, we have seen a kind of different but interrelated justifications and causes for the rise of ethnic based conflict between the Hadiya and Halaba. These three major contributing factors and other related factors have been re-enforcing one another leading to current violent conflicts. Therefore, it would not be necessary and appropriate to choose only one of them and consider it as the basic cause of the hostility among these people. The conflicts have created insecurity, devastated economic development and increased abuses. The people have experienced violations of human rights in the study area.

3.3 *Repercussions of the conflict*

Where ever it occurs, ethnic conflict is characterized by negative impacts (Dagne, 2014). Likewise, the findings of the present study revealed that the conflict between the Hadiya and Halaba has affected people in different ways. The Halaba ethnic group case study respondents confirmed that the conflicts which took place in 2012-2014 resulted in displacement of people,

loss of many lives, disruption of family ties, destruction and looting of properties. The destructions include damages of houses, damages of farms, and looting the cattle and the households. Information obtained from FGD participants from both groups revealed that, effect of the 2012 ethnic conflicts had resulted in a deeper social, economic, psychological and political repercussions in the area.

As per the Hadiya Zone administrative structure report on Hadiya and Halaba ethnic conflict, loss of human life was the first of all social impacts in the study area. Even though accurate data is not mentioned regarding the exact number of displaced people, the Zonal administrative structure report indicated that in the 2012 violent conflict many people were injured, left homeless, displaced and killed. In the conflict, most of the victims were women aside from youth and adults (front fighters). Moreover, during the conflict women who gave birth and who were pregnant were forced to move from their home. The conflict destroyed social cohesion between the Hadiya and Halaba. Inter-ethnic marriages and familial ties between the two ethnic groups were broken and traumatized as animosities and questions of identity replaced love, romance and rapport. The interviewees from different government bodies confirmed that the ethnic conflict between Hadiya and Halaba damaged the economic resources of the area. For example, in the 2012 and 2014 conflicts, several individual properties were looted and damaged. In the 2012 conflict, social services such as markets and health institutions were destroyed. Moreover, individual houses particularly Halaba ethnic groups were burned and the people displaced from their home/residence.

The conflicts created psychological anguish, perplexity and discouragement in the area, that resulted various negative effects in addition to the revealed and unravelled conflict. As data obtained from the interview confirmed, because of fear and stress people lost their identity, assimilated and changed into Hadiya. Therefore, a number of Halaba communities who were living in the area were forced to change their residence to their own ethnic identity. Halaba ethnic group FGD participants stated that the ethno-linguistic division served as base for the growth of unusual ethnocentric outlooks between the two conflicted groups. The conflict also created a new categorization of "us" and "them".

Political effects are other impacts of the conflict between Hadiya and Halaba. As many of the informants stated, the conflict not only had socio-economic and psychological impacts but also made political impact a reality. According to both FGD discussants and interviews with affected individual respondents, political anxieties were extremely intensified as the result of the 2012 violent conflict between the two groups. From the 2012 conflict onwards, there is a trend to politicize any dispute between an individual Hadiya and Halaba. Most of the clashes among Hadiya and Halaba individuals or groups are inferred in terms of ethnicity, no matter what the cause (boundary of farm land, dispute arisen over marital affairs, etc) and where the disagreement or dispute occurred (in the market, play field, in schools, etc). People opt to enter into the fighting immediately by joining their respective ethnic fellow men in the dispute.

3.4 *Formal conflict resolution efforts*

It is the prime responsibility of a particular government structure to keep peace and stability of its citizens. Due to lack of proactive leadership and preventive measures in the study area, a loss of many lives and damage of properties occurred in the past years. However, the military intervention 'stopped' the 2012 conflict after the enormous loss to life and property. There were various attempts at various levels, in regional and local governments, to alleviate violent inter-ethnic conflict between the two groups. The Hadiya-Halaba inter-group conflict management process started amid conflict tensions, which required military interventions of the responsible government organ. The primary responsible government organs to intervene in the conflict and made ceasefire possible are the regional government security forces. To this end, the

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regional government sent regional peacekeeping armed forces; the violent actions between the groups were immediately put under control. The armed force managed to control the violence by arresting some pioneer leaders of the violation acts, robbers and other criminals related to the conflict process. The security forces created stability for continued discussion between the two group representatives. The Halaba ethnic group members in some villages of the Hadiya District started to return to their home that were forced to flee from their native localities for safety at the time of violation.

To stabilize the peace process, the armed force remained in the area for a year. However, after a year the armed peace keeping force left the area before creating a peaceful co-existence situation. The conflict situation remained unsolved. This gap opened the way for the violation to be re-erupted in 2014, after two years. Therefore, again the regional peace keeping force came to settle the problem in the conflict area until the final resolution was established in 2015. As the key informants from Zonal government structure offices stated, local and regional government established peace committees after the 2012 Hadiya-Halaba bloodshed violent conflict to manage the conflict. The committee was organized from regional security forces, administration office, police commission; Hadiya Zone police and security department; Halaba Zone security and administration office; and *Misrak Badawacho* District security and administration office. The composition of the peace committees also comprised representation of different sections of the communities. As such, elders, women, religious leaders and the youth constitute the membership of the committees. These joint committee members were led by the Regional Justice and Security Bureau representative and the SNNPR Council of Nationalities representative. The committee members were trying to handle problems in time, before they escalate and expand to other areas. The committee, therefore, was overlooking, assessing and investigating as well as managing the conflicts occurring between the two ethnic groups.

3.5 *Customary conflict resolution efforts*

In 2015, the regional government at last has taken a measure of integrating a customary structure known as *Seera* to mediate the two groups through council of elders and made reconciliation between victims of the recurring clashes. This shared customary mechanism of the Hadiya and Halaba people was very important in resolving conflicts of any level to ensure social stability and maintain peaceful co-existence (social relations) among the two peoples. For instance, if conflict has taken place between two individuals, small groups of people or amid ethnic groups traditional elders of the two people intervene and sort out the problem following their traditional conflict management regulations. The same was done by elders of both groups during the conflicts which erupted among them.

The council of elders (*lommanna*) recruited from Hadiya, Halaba and other neighbouring communities got involved and made great efforts towards achieving sustainable peace. Particularly, both regional states and local governments' peace committee, organized elders (*lommanna)* from the Hadiya and Halaba ethnic group members and other neutral representations, such Oromo and Kambat-Tambaro. In such cases, the council totally comprised fifteen members, to mediate the conflicted groups through their own native conflict resolution system. As Hadiya and Halaba informants explained, the committee of these elders first gathered together and talked about the way they settle the conflict in a typical and harmonious manner. Then, they made promises not to side or demonstrate ethnic preferential treatments at the time of their arbitration and reconciliation practice.

According to the interview with key informants with regards to *Seera*, the conflict settlement and reconciliation process by the traditional system has been started following discussions among the elder group members. Then what follow was council of elders' influenced people from their respective sides to come together, and discuss on the issue of disagreement and

eventually arrive at consensus as to how to resolve the problems. They then conclude their agreements with the oath under the *Hidiil seera* ritual. The process in general took about two solid months to come to a peaceful end. Then "*Xiigguula*" (purification ritual) was performed to clean the killers for having bloodshed in the conflict. At the presence of both ethnic groups together, first one black sheep was slaughtered then, one white as well. Elders facilitated oath performance procedure, by tying the killers' and deceased group representative thumbs and toes with intestine of the killed black sheep. Finally, the elders encouraged the conflicting parties to cut by themselves.

Culturally, this Oath performance procedure implies that the bloodshed type of conflict recognized the final resolution. Then, after this purification act, families of the victims and criminals from both groups joined together to signify their reunification and finalised with a big feast. As a final phase, the elders declared that if any one of the two groups tried to avenge or kill one another again, they would be alienated and face rejection from the society. This social sanction is considered legal according to the oral law of *Hidiil Seera*. Through such an indigenous conflict resolution mechanism, the two sides formally declared that the conflict was over and promised not to fight against each other in the future. Following this assertion, it was agreed not to enter into conflict any more against one another.

4. Conclusion

The Hadiya and Halaba people shared a common social and cultural practice, cradle land, ancestral myth, economic relations, and intermarriage alliance. They have experienced peaceful co-existence for long period. Following the succession of EPRDE regime into power in 1991, inter-ethnic tensions and rivalry began to be a common experience between the two groups. They have faced unprecedented violent conflict first in 2012 and again for the second time in 2014 which adversely impacted the image of long-standing cooperative relations among the two peoples.

The major contributing factors for the inter-ethnic violent conflicts between the Hadiya-Halaba found to have economic, political, and socio-cultural dimensions. Among the economic factors, land use for subsistence livelihood contributed to the major position. Among the political dimensions, the divide "us" and "them" contributed to the greater extent which resulted in the breakdown of the usual traditional conflict resolution process by the elders. Similarly, among the socio-cultural factors, the education system and the mother tongue issue by the Hadiya that resulted in marginalization of minority group members contributed most important.

From the present study, we have learned that political elites of both groups in using ethnicity as an instrument in mobilizing the people in order to immerse them into violent conflicts. The political elites of both the Hadiya and Halaba ethnicity had immensely contributed to the Hadaiya-Halaba violent conflicts of the 2012. The second-round violent conflict of 2014 has been the result of negligence from the political elites of both sides. These violent conflicts that took place in 2012 and 2014 caused several civilian casualties, large numbers of human displacement and other diversified forms of social, political, psychological and economic repercussions.

From the present study, we have also studied that there were attempts to resolve the conflicts at various levels, by both regional and local governments. The measures from government side have been initiated after the first violent inter-ethnic conflict of 2012 between the two groups. Thus, the intervention of the government in managing conflict in the study area was after much bloodshed and destruction of properties. Furthermore, the local and regional government structures failed to finalize the formal conflict resolution process immediately after the first-round violent conflict. The security forces from the regional government (SNNPR) who have managed to

stop further bloodshed among the two peoples in the first-round conflict left the conflict zone and the second-round violent conflict happened in 2014, after a year.

The second-round violent conflict was similarly made under control by the efforts of the regional security forces. Following the second round conflict of 2014, formal efforts by both the regional and Zonal government bodies facilitated the mediation and reconciliation process among the two groups. Mediation and reconciliation process was done via customary conflict resolution mechanism. The council of elders (*lommanna)* were recruited from Hadiya, Halaba and other neighbouring communities. With the assistance of political elites in the formal government structure, the council of elders got involved in conflict resolution process and made great efforts towards achieving sustainable peace and co-existence. Finally, a traditional purification ritual ("*Xiigguula*") was performed to clean the killers for having bloodshed in the conflict process and to build the broken peace among the two peoples. Culturally, the purification ritual implies that the bloodshed as a result of violent conflicts have got recognition and the final resolution is set by both parties.

Even though the collaborative efforts of local elders and the formal system ended the conflict, the study has revealed that the efforts were not totally able to solve the inter-group conflicts among the two groups of people. The government structures didn't give a lasting solution to the fundamental causes of the conflict. There are still some sorts of grievances and ethnic tensions among both parties. Halaba ethnic group affiliated Muslim minorities who are living in border villages (*Kebeles)* of the *Misrak Badewacho* District (Hadiya Zone) are tirelessly raising the issue of integration with their fellow Halaba ethnic group government structure (Halaba Zone), of SNNPR State. Thus, the present study confirmed that ethnicity based government structures in the country, used as instrument of political power, structurally affected the co-existence of at least the border area peoples and the present Hadiya-Halaba conflicts can be taken as a typical example.

5. The way forward

Based on the result of data analysis and presentation, the following suggestions are forwarded as a way to address the existing challenges of managing and resolving the conflict and effectively building long lasting peace between Hadiya and Halaba.

Most of the time, ethnic conflicts lead to violence; social strives and convert into felonious crimes and civil wars. Thus, if there is any, it should be handled properly from the very beginning. If it is treated well, it might not have led to destruction of property, loss of human life and threats to development. A proactive early warning and response system is needed to identify conflict risks at an early stage and take action to prevent the escalation of tension into violent conflict. Early warning involves a systematic collection of information, analysis and reporting which should then trigger proactive early response.

Interventions by the government will not only be a fire brigade service rather there should be a long lasting solution to the problem by the concerned bodies which require a holistic and integrated approach. Such an intervention can create an obstacle in resolving conflict sustainably. Such measures might be possible to control the tension. But it doesn't end in a positive peace, but negative peace. At this time, it looks that there is comparative amity in the Hadiya-Halaba neighbourhood's and normal relations among the groups regained. However, complete stability is not yet secured. Therefore, supposed to be priorities for community-based local peace building endeavours. It is crucial that these interventions are designed through dialogue with local communities to ensure that they reflect community needs and priorities and they do not exacerbate conflict or mistrust between communities by fuelling perceptions of unfair advantage to some groups.

People in the area should be thought of about the values of tolerance in order to eliminate the possibility of occurring of conflict. The concerned bodies should give to the people in the area continuous training to create awareness about the benefits and advantage of peaceful co-existence and vice versa. Fraternity of people should be promoted in order to maintain peaceful co-existence between the two conflicting societies.

The SNNPR state, Hadiya and Halaba Zonal administrations should involve themselves and attempt to radically solve problems thereby participating elders from both sides and using customary mechanisms of conflict settlement. In order to benefit from the customary methods and to make a meaningful link between the two systems, the government should work in the direction of integrating and strengthening the indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution into the conventional legal system. Commitment on the part of the local elders, and local government authorities from both sides could no doubt help to handle the situation. It is also very important to encourage the role of women, youth, NGOs and the media in peace making processes. More, all members of the societies should be involved in peace building procedure.

The two Zonal administrations should work hand-in-hand in order to identify the conflict provokers and take corrective actions against them in such a way bothers can learn a lesson. In the study area, competition over natural resources (i.e. farm land) is one of the underlying causes of the conflict. Majority of the competitors over farmland and front fighters during the conflict are youth and adults. Therefore, to alleviate the problem, the Regional and Zonal governments should create alternative income generating economic activities for the youth and adults through enhancing job creation and job opportunity.

The questions raised by the people should require timely response as delays may lead to devastation of property and human lives. It is clear from the research findings that fundamental cause for Hadiya-Halaba friction is related to social, political and economic institutional discrimination and relatively marginal position of the Halaba resulting from the new state restructuring. Throughout the study, it was displeasure over uneven distribution of financial resources, trade benefits, political power, job opportunities, schools, health centers, and other forms of infrastructures, which has led the two groups into violent conflicts. Thus, through increasing impartial delivery of the above mentioned resources and infrastructures it is possible to resolve the problem.

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