

## **Gurra Clan in Ethiopia's Somali Region**

The Somali region of Ethiopia is one of the 9 regional states that form the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is composed of three layers of administrative structures: namely nine zones, 52 woredas and about a thousand kebeles (the lowest government administrative units). The region has a total population of 4.2 million according to 2007 population census report (CSA 2007). The Gurra clan lives in three woredas namely- Gurra Dhamole, Goro-Baqaqsa and Qarsa Dulla although the latter not yet officially recognized by the region. These weredas are administratively among eight weredas that constitute Afdheer zone in the most southern tip of the region bordering southern Somalia and Kenya.



1000mm. 1000 being a good year for the areas neighbouring Bale highlands like in Guradhamole capital, Harodibe.oundary.

The two districts cover two ecological zones: the low altitude arid and semi arid, and the mild temperate zones. The arid and semi-arid areas at low altitude of 500 to 800 meters above sea level (ASL) are by far the most predominant and comprise roughly 80 percent of the total land area. The mild temperate zones cover areas bordering Bale Mountains in Guradhamole werda. There are dozens of perennial and seasonal rivers that flow throughout the zone. These are: Genale, Web and tributaries of Genale like Dumal, Mana, Welmal, Dayu and Doya.

### Population features and clan composition

The inhabitants of the two districts are ethnically Somalis and it has a mix population of nomadic transhumant pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and petty traders. The latter are mostly returnees who came back home from Somalia republic after 1991 change of government in Ethiopia and civil strife in the former. However, pastoralist livelihoods constitute about 90% in Guradhamole while Gorobaqaqsa can be considered a pastoral district with a very small population in the capital and few other settlements like Hargadab and Hagarmaqor. Guradhamole has fast growing agro-pastoral groups due to its rain fall and proxy to other agro-pastoral groups in Oromia neighbouring districts like Harodumal and Dallo-mena where significant Gura clan members reside and practice mixed farming.

The population of the two districts including Qarsadula, a village not yet recognized as district but in a pipeline for Somali region is 113,862 according Central Statistics Authority census of 2005. See below table for details.

### Population of the study area

Woreda	Urban + Rural			Urban			Rural		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Guradhamole	19,826	11,247	8,579	967	564	403	18,859	10,683	8,176
Gorobaqaqsa	51,267	29,366	21,901	4,107	2,338	1,769	47,160	27,028	20,132
Qersadula	42,769	23,539	19,230	3,631	2,007	1,624	39,138	21,532	17,606

**Source:** Population censuses, 2007

Qarsadula is yet part of Gura clan important rangeland in the Wallabu land classification. However, Guradhamole wereda population census have serious flaw according to local administration and clan leaders and felt far from representing the actual population which puts in doubt the legitimacy of census. The claim is a large portion of the wereda population has not been counted due to the erroneous map that was used by Central Census Authority.

There is no reliable data of livestock population in Somali region as whole besides mere estimates. So in the two weredas plus Qarsa Dulla according to elders each Gura household have on average 20 camels, 10 cattle and 50 Shoats. Therefore, total livestock estimates are 378,860 camels, 189,430 cattle and 947,150 Shoats.

## **Clan compositions in the two weredas**

The clan composition inhabited in the two weredas is Gurra which is majority clan that belongs to Somali wider Dir family. There are also minority Somali clans like Dhaweyd, Adjuran , Karinlle and Asharaaf. Some of the clans including Gurra are bilingual communities that speak both Oromo and Somali languages of the eastern Cushitic linguistic families.

### **Historical events**

Major events in the two weredas from the time of Emperor Menilik expansion towards the south and east, are related to resource and way of life protection wars. Around 1887 Guras along with other Siko-Menda clans fought the expansionist Emperor Menilik army at Magaalo near a well known Sofi-Omar cave. Particularly, Gura suffered heavy casualties from the modern weapons used by their opponents weakening severely their military capability. There was also long standing pastoral conflicts with a branch of Ogadeni clans over livestock raiding mainly camels recorded according to Gura oral history that caused displacement and migration from grazing land and sorghum farms in the Bakol valley.

The tow weredas also shares and has a long history of insurgency resistance and popular movements that highly influenced its history with Ethiopian state. The popular Bale up raises known as Ijoole Bale (The Children's of Bale) and the subsequent Liberation movements by joint effort of Somali and Oromo groups supported by Somali republic can be sighted as an example. 1964-1979 –Ethio-Somali contestations and wars over territory has marked the history of the clan and the adjacent areas. This era is known as the era of fire arms. For example the brand of arms introduced to the area gets its name for that decade, Jaan Cadde, Dhoobir, AK etc..

1991 – 2009 with the change of Government in Ethiopia marks special historical venue in the Gurra clan area. Huge population of returnees coming to the area from Somalia refugee camps and the introduction of Federal system in Ethiopia constitute contemporary history.

On the other, ethnic based administrative regions establishment brought both opportunities and challenges to the people of Gurra as also true for other communities in Ethiopia. The federal system provides opportunities to self rule that many sacrificed their dear life for it and introduced social services unknown to inhabitants in their history. In the process of constituting Federal system that resulted in turn the disintegration of old identities and reconstitution of new ones some violent conflicts affected the Gurra clan relations with clans that they used share common pastoral resources.