



## Cultural Marriage amongst the Awi Agaw People: Changes and Continuities in the Age of Marriage and Mate Selection Criteria

\*Nibret Arega<sup>1</sup>, Sendeke Awota<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Lecturers and Researchers at Debarik University

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.10893591](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10893591)

Submission Date: 10 Feb. 2024 | Published Date: 20 Marh 2024

\*Corresponding author: [Nibret Arega](#)

Lecturer and Researcher at Debarik University

### Abstract

*This article examined the cultural marriage system of the Awi Agaw emphasizing on the early marriage and mate selection criteria with framework of changes and continuities. The study was conducted based on the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach tries to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people try to attach to them. It involves scrutinizing sources and eventually creating an analysis and drawing conclusions based on the analyzed sources (Creswell, 2003). The main sources of this study come from published and unpublished documents, and oral sources. The Awi Agaw have distinctive tradition towards the early marriage and mate selection criteria. The early marriage and mate selection standards have shown significant changes with passage of time amongst the Awi Agaw people. Thus, the cultural marriage system of the Agaw have been transformed due to administrative and legal measures of the government and economic and political changes of the country.*

**Keywords:** Agaw, Awi, Criteria, Cultural, Marriage, Mate, Selection.

## 1. Introduction

The institution of marriage is a universal cultural and social event. However, it is practiced in diverse manners based on the cultural system of the society (Zuzanna Augustyniak, 2009). Marriage is understood in various ways based on the diverse socio-cultural system of society. Accordingly, there is no unanimously accepted understanding and interpretation of marriage (Mulualem Atakilit, 2010). However, it is commonly assumed as the contractual agreement between men and women combining their labor and property to establish their household and family (Allan Hoben, 1963). It creates not only a new family but also a new linkage between two different descent families. Marriage forms the base of the family and maintains perpetuity of the society (Alex Minichele *et al*, 2017). According to the civil code of Ethiopia, marriage is the self-initiated integration of woman and man without the influence of others. The code asserts three types of marriages that have been practiced in Ethiopia i.e. cultural, civil, and religious marriages (William Buhagiari, 2009).

The socio-cultural diversity of Ethiopia is vivid and illustrated in abundant scholarly literatures. Thus, there are diverse nations, nationalities, and peoples in Ethiopia that have maintained and practiced their distinctive socio-cultural system (Robert Gale Woolbert, 1936). Agaw is one of those people who are widely mentioned in the literatures of Ethiopian studies. Agaw is a generic name designating the different Agaw dialectical groups who now live in different parts of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Awi, Hemira, Bilen, and Qemant are the groups that are widely mentioned by many scholars as the descendants of the proto-monolingual Agaw people (Desalegn Amsalu, 2016).

Accordingly, the Awi is one of the Agaw people. They are currently inhabited in Amhara Regional State, Awi Nationality Administrative Zone. Some others have lived in the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Metekel Zone (Alemayehu Erkihun, 2012). The Awi Agaw people have maintained and practiced their unique cultural and social system despite several centuries of interaction and integration with other peoples. Marriage is one of the unique socio-cultural practices of the Awi Agaw people. Cultural marriage is the most ancient and widely practiced type of marriage among the Awi Agaw people (Nibret Arega, 2010). This type of marriage is arranged through elders among the Awi

Agaw people (Nibret, 2010). A comprehensive and independent study has not yet been conducted on the cultural marriage system of the Awi Agaw people with the framework of changes and continuities. This article examined changes and continuities in the cultural marriage of the Awi Agaw people emphasizing the age of marriage and mate selection criteria.

## 2. Research Methods

This study was conducted based on a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach tries to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people try to attach to them. It involves scrutinizing sources and eventually creating an analysis and drawing conclusions based on the analyzed source (Creswell, 2003). Thus, qualitative research is applied to this study. Both primary and secondary sources were employed. The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and personal observations. The informants were selected based on their knowledge of the subject of the study. Accordingly, the local elders from the Awi Zone were selected as the informants of the interview. The secondary data were collected through systematic and comprehensive reading of documents: thesis, books, and journal articles. The comparison, cross-checking, and critiquing of the data helped the researchers maintain reliability and avoid biases in the sources. Thus, the technique of corroboration and interpretation is used to maintain the objectivity of the study.

## 3. Early Marriage

The Awi Agaw were thoroughly incorporated into the central state of Ethiopia during the Gondarian period in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Ayenew Fenta, 1998). Since the incorporation, the Awi Agaw people have been encouraged to interact with other people. Particularly, the subsequent conversion to Christianity has further consolidated their interaction and integration with their neighboring and co-religionist Amhara society. As Nibret noted, their interaction and integration led to the adoption of early marriage by the Awi Agaw from the Amhara society (Nibret, 2010).

Early marriage is a usual practice and challenge in developing countries (Berihun M. Mekonnen and Harald Aspen, 2009). Early marriage increases a woman's reproductive span, thereby contributing to a large family size (Innocent Research Centre, 2011). It is a parent, family, or guardians-centered arrangement between two families of different lineages in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian political and social system promotes early marriage. Early marriage had been a common practice amongst the Amhara society (Allan Hoben, 1975, and Haile Gabriel Dagne, 1994). The children at the early ages of four, five, and six in Christian Amhara society had been forced to 'marry.' This type of marriage was called *Ankaleb* (Baby Wrap) marriage customarily (Timkehet Teffera, 2017). The couple stayed with their respective parents and considered each other as siblings. When they advanced their level of maturity, they would be assisted by both parents to form their independent family. The boy's and girl's parents would provide agricultural and kitchen materials respectively (Nibret, 2020). Sometimes there was also a promise of marriage between parents even before the birth of offspring (Timkehet Teffera, 2017).

The Awi Agaw had no tradition of early marriage which was known amongst the Amhara society. The Awi Agaw had been practicing marriage at the age of 13 to 15 and 10 to 12 for boys and girls respectively (Qelemo Mekonnen, 2020, and Interview with Terekegn Kebede).<sup>1</sup> Some Awi Agaw were said to have adopted the early (*Ankaleb*) marriage after their incorporation and interaction with the Amhara society (Nibret, 2020). In particular, the Awi Agaw of *Achefer* and other areas adopted and practiced the early (*Ankaleb*) marriage from Amhara society (*Ibid*).

The legal age limit of marriage varies from place to place and over time (Berihun and Harald, 2009). Ethiopia is one of the countries which have a long history of legal system. *Fitha Negest* is one of the ancient legal documents of Ethiopia which deals with criminal and civil laws. This document proscribes marriage with nuns and women beyond 60 years and sentenced for adultery. Likewise, *Fitha Negest* strictly prohibits concubinage and marriage over three times in one's life (Zuzanna, 2009). The legal age of the marriage was also restricted in the civil code of Haile Selassie I. The civil code of the imperial regime prohibited marriage contracts for boys and girls who did not attain 18 and 15 years respectively (William, 2019). Similarly, the proper age of marriage was restricted to 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls during the Derg regime (Ayshashim Embial, 2012). In the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Revised Family Code of 2000, the minimum age of marriage is raised to 18 years for both boys and girls (FDRE, 2020). However, it is not fully implemented all over Ethiopia due to the diverse traditional, cultural, and religious settings of the diverse ethnic communities of the country (Timkehet, 2017).

---

<sup>1</sup> Terekegn Kebede is a native of Dangela wäräda, particularly, Chara sub- wäräda and explained the marriage practices of the Awi Agaw people. Ato Terekegn also provided god information on the transformation social structure amongst the society.

The legal development of Ethiopia shows that the ancient marriage of the Awi Agaw was still practiced at an early age. Various researchers associated the practice of early marriage in Ethiopia with political, economic, and socio-cultural factors. As Alemante mentioned in Berihun's work of 2009, early marriage was widely prevalent among the Ethiopian royal family for political reasons. The alliances were made by marrying daughters or sisters of provincial rulers (Alemante 2004, cited in Berihun and Harald, 2009). The Ethiopian royal family had arranged marriages with notable noble families during the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, marriage was made with the daughter of Menelik II, Zewdetu who was aged six, and the son of Yohannes IV, Arey Selassie whose age was seven. Likewise, the daughter of Ras Hailu of Gojjam, Seble Wengel was married to Menelik's grandson Lij Iyasu at an early age (Berihun and Harald, 2009).

The Awi Agaw are said to have preferred early marriage to secure and see their children's futures, raise their family's status, avoid social stigmatization, establish affiliation, and ensure a daughter's virginity (Awi Zone Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2007). The women who exceed the customary marriage age might be ridiculed. The girls who were not married up to 12 years old were ridiculed as ምረቃ (spinster) customarily. This situation also decreases the social status of the family and the girl's future opportunities (Mulualem, 2010).

Aysheshim Embiale (2012) pointed out that early marriage had been widely practiced during the Italian occupation (1935-1941) amongst the Awi Agaw people. The families who lost property during the war sought to marry their daughters at an early age to solve their food and other economic difficulties (Aysheshim, 2012). In the post-liberation period, Haile Selassie's government took legal measures to halt early marriage which continued as the tradition of the society. The most significant action of Haile Selassie's government on early marriage was the restriction of the minimum age of marriage to 15 for girls in the revised constitution of 1955. Despite such attempts by Haile Selassie's government, the practice of early marriage had continued devoid of social criticism till the 1940s. It was after the expansion of modern education into different parts of the country that early marriage was criticized publicly in the 1940s and 1950s (Aysheshim, 2012).

The 1975 land reform had eroded the socio-economic base of early marriage by avoiding the ancestral land-holding system and the rich peasant class which sustained it for centuries. Moreover, the *Derg* government had taken some radical measures to stop the practice of early marriage. The committee was established at sub-province levels to mitigate the practice of early marriage (Nibret, 2020.) The early marriage mitigation committee was organized and opened its office in Agaw Midir, Dangila in 1987. It was entitled to supervise and control the maturity and attainment to the legal marriageable age of the prospective couples. The establishment of the harmful tradition mitigation committee was another significant move of the *Derg* regime to control the practice of early marriage ((Aysheshim, 2012)).

The FDRE Revised Family Code 2000 stipulates a minimum age of marriage to be 18 for both boys and girls. The code prohibits marriage below the age of 18 because they should attend school rather than marrying at an early age. When they are 18 and above, they can decide whom to marry. The New FDRE Criminal Code Article 627 penalizes those who are guilty of sexual activity with a child below the age of 13 for imprisonment from 13 to 25 years. Sexual abuse of the child between the ages of 15 and 18 also results in imprisonment for 15 years (Berihun and Harald, 2009).

Because of the administrative measures of governments and socio-economic changes, the practice of early marriage has shown a significant decline in recent years amongst the Awi Agaw people (Shetu Ayen *et al*, 2003). Accordingly, there is improvement in favor of a rise in the age of marriage. Early marriage (for girls under the age of ten) is rejected and almost non-existent these days. However, the conformity to the legal marriage at age of 18 for girls is not fully applied by rural society. It is because the girls' opportunity to get their best husbands decreases when their age surpasses 18 (*Ibid*, and Interview with Belay Hailu at *Zigem*).<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Mate Selection Criteria

Every society across the world has its culture, attitude, and trends in selecting their mate/spouse. In the Ethiopian context, the mate selection requirements across cultural groups show some interdependences and distinctions (Onedera, 2008). In the Awi Agaw tradition, the marital partners are selected based on various standards cautiously. Selecting a mate is a salient task and requires avoidance of nonchalance to establish a better future life. Geographical distance, religion, wealth, occupational status and cultural background, virginity, assiduousness, ethics, and age are historical and widely used mate selection criteria among the Awi Agaw people (Mulualem, 2020). The physical beauty and love of the couples

<sup>2</sup> Belay Hailu is one of the well-known elders in Zigem district. He has a good knowledge about marriage practice of the Awi Agaw people.

are other mate selection standards amongst the educated and urban sections of Awi Agaw these days (Ibid and Interview Arega Fentahun at Ankesha).<sup>3</sup>

Ayshashim Embial, Nibret, and other researchers noted that the Awi Agaw had searched prospective wives from distant places at least crossing five parishes. It was because nearby people belonged to a similar lineage and were restricted from intermarrying religiously and customarily (Nibret, 2020 and Ayshashim, 2010). Besides, the tradition of looking for wives from a distance was envisaged to establish the affiliation with families located at a distance. The connection with families who live distant helps them to get home to rest whenever they pass through for trade, searching for lost cattle, and other purposes (Qelemo, 2020). In contrary to this, the oral sources supported that the Awi Agaw searched for prospective wives from the proximate areas. Hence it minimizes the hitches of inter-family relationships to attend social and cultural events together such as weeding and funeral ceremonies (*Ibid*, and Interview with Terekegn).

Religion is a dominant social institution that affects every sphere of human life. It is inevitably intertwined with the socio-cultural dynamics of the society. Religion has also a pertinent role in mate selection in Ethiopian Orthodox society (Alex Minichele et al, 2017). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church professes the endogamy, sanctity, and indissolubility of marriage (Donald Crummy, 1983). A marriage that is performed outside of the church would get sanctity after the couples go to the church for confession and receive the holy blood and flesh of Jesus Christ (Alex Minichele et al, 2017). Thus, the Awi Agaw are adherents of the "Ethiopia Orthodox tradition" (Tadesse, 1988), and thoroughly relied on religious homogeneity for mate selection. They profess to marry outside seven generations reckoning both mother and father sides cognatically (Interview with Belay). Marriage within seven generations is also rejected customarily (Desalegn, 2016).

The wealth of the family has also a vital role in the selection of marriage partner amongst the Awi Agaw people. Both bridegroom and bride families are anticipated to be balanced in wealth and capable of offering fair gifts. The tradition of cross-wealth equivalence requires the betrothal of affluent to affluent and indigent to indigent families. In addition to agricultural and household materials, the most valued type of gift during the imperial regime was cattle. The bridegroom is also required to pay a dowry (Abeje, 2011). It is paid based on the gift of the bride's family. In Awi Agaw tradition, the dowry for bride was/is paid in the form of money and jewelry. Similarly, the various types of cultural cloths (Näçkuta, and Ejä Täbab) have been paid as dowry. In addition to Näçkut and Ejä Täbab, Śás, and sheep have been paid if the bridegroom is a priest. When there is a disagreement in the payment of dowry, the shumagelli (elders) are involved and settle the difference. At these days, houses and land are used as vital economic mate selection criteria in urban areas (Ibid, and Interview with Arega). As Mulualem Atkelti stated, the type of marriage that is arranged without a gift is customarily called “ሊንዲሲስ ሊንዲሴ” which means "arms with arms". This type of marriage is arranged when the prospective couples are not capable of paying gifts and are based on the notion that they could create their household and raise children by a combination of their labor merely (Mulualem, 2020).

The occupational and cultural background of the family is a fundamental standard for searching for mates among the Awi Agaw people (Qelemo, 2020). During feudal Ethiopia, the people who descended from a certain founding father and entitled the hereditary land rights were called *balabäts*. However, the handicrafts and slaves, who were not 'descended from a founding father' lost hereditary land rights (Nibret, 2020). The intermarriage between the *balabäts* with the handicraft and slave families had been hardly conceivable since it was/is considered a cause for "deformation of heredity." It was also believed that the children born from *balabäts* and handcraft parents would not grow healthy (Getachew Senishaw, 2003).

The intermarriage between different cultural groups is common practice in the cross border and diverse areas. The Gumuz and Awi Agaw are neighborhoods geographically and interdependent economically and socially. However, these groups have not intermarried each other because of the distinction in the food menu, religion, psychological makeup, and other cultural characteristics. Besides, the Gumuz tradition prohibits intermarriage with highlanders including the Awi Agaw people (Alemayehu, 2015). Some researchers indicated that the social and cultural curtains of intermarriage have started to wear down due to the social and economic changes in the country. In this regard, the expansions of modern education, land reforms, and political changes have played a vital role in the decline of barriers to intermarriage between different groups of societies (Nibret, 2020 and Berihun and Harald, 2009).

The pre-marital sexual relationship is prohibited in many parts of Ethiopia traditionally. A girl's chastity (virginity) before marriage is highly valued and is considered one of the basic requirements for mate selection (Timkehet, 2017). The virginity is also the salient aspect of the marriage tradition of the Awi Agaw people. They accord great value to virginity. It is strict for women who would bring humiliation to their families. Thus, the prospective bride is expected to

<sup>3</sup> Arega Fentahun is born and grew in Ankesha district. He is knowledgeable in explaining indigenous administrative institutions, marriage, and funeral practices of the Awi Agaw over different periods.



be a virgin. A girl who is not a virgin at first marriage is considered unfit for family life. Virginity is also one of the requirements that couples should fulfill before *sere'atä täklil* i.e. holy communion marriage (*Ibid*, and *Awı Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2007*). The bride's loss of virginity had been and still to some extent is one of the reasons for divorce among the Awı Agaw people (Shetu Ayen *et al*, 1996). Currently, the tradition of considering virginity as a mate selection criteria is declining and contributed its parts to the decrease of early marriage (Mulualem, 2020).

Another vital standard for mate selection is the social status of the parents and relatives of prospective couples. The social status of the people mainly depended on the amount of cattle resources amongst the Awı Agaw people until the introduction of the rest system in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Besides cattle resources, the land has become the basis of social status since the introduction of the rest land tenure system. Thus, the land and cattle resources had been paid the greatest worth for mate selection to the end of the imperial regime (Nibret, 2020). As informants noted, the level of education was substituted as one of the basic standards of social status and mate selection criteria during the Derg regime. The value of males' educational level for marriage is illustrated in the famous Amharic saying, “የኛ ሙሽረት ኩረ ኩረ ወሰደኝ አስተማሪ”, which means "get pride our bride, you have been married to teacher." Merchants have enjoyed high social status and are favored for marriage these days (Interview with Asmamaw Belew at Injibara town).<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, ethics, age, and assiduousness have been used as prerequisites for mate selection amongst the Awı Agaw people. One who would be a spouse and parent should have good ethical attributes. The abstinence from theft, drunk, deviance, hostility, conflict, and other misbehaviors are required ethical standards for mate selection. Submission to Ethiopian Orthodox 'traditions' and culture of the society is viewed as a good ethical attribute. Although there is no restriction of age, females should be equal or younger than males to get betrothal for marriage. The marriage that a woman is older than a man is not experienced in this society. In addition, the habit of hard work (assiduousness) is an important part of mate selection standards. The skill in household management for females and knowledge of agriculture for males have been vital criteria for mate selection in rural areas (Awı Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2007 Qelemo, 2020).

Searching for and selecting a marriageable girl was/is the responsibility of the prospective bridegroom's family. After proving maturity, the boy's family searches bride through their social networks such as friends, relatives, and other relations (Desalegn, 2016). Accordingly, marriageable couples are selected by families before couples know and see each other (Abeje, 2011). Physical beauty and love were not criteria for mate selection earlier time (Interview with Terekegn). It is not yet widely applied to mate selection standards in most rural societies. However, the educated and urban sections of society have used it as one of the standards for mate selection these days (Mulualem, 2020).

## 5. Conclusion

Marriage is a universal socio-cultural practice. In the Ethiopian context, it signifies the contractual agreement between men and women including the combining of labor and property to establish a new household and family. In most cultures, marriage is considered a heterosexual and monogenic relationship. Marriage is the base for the perpetuation of society.

The Awı Agaw are one of the ancient people of Ethiopia who maintained unique cultural marriage system. The early marriage and mate selection criteria of the Awı Agaw people has some distinctive aspects. The age limit of early marriage is redefined based legal and social dynamics of the society. In this respect, early marriage remains the common practice amongst the Awı Agaw like other traditional African societies. The factors of early marriage have varied over time and across society. The Awı Agaw favored early marriage to secure a child's destiny, raise their family's status, elude social stigmatization, establish an affiliation with another family, and ensure a daughter's virginity.

Every society across the globe has its culture, and trends of selecting their prospective spouses. The geographical distance, religious conformity, wealth, social status, occupational and cultural background, virginity, ethics, habit hard work, and age are historical and widely applied mate selection criteria among the Awı Agaw people. House, land for constructing a house, beauty, and love are other mate selection standards particularly in urban areas at this time.

## 6. References

1. Abeje Birhanu. A History of Banja wäräda from its foundation to 1991.” BA Essay in History, Debre Markos University, (2012), pp. 28-30.
2. Alemayehu Erikhun. “Mapping the Socio-Cultural Landscape of the Gumuz Community of Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia.” African Journal of History and Culture, Vol. 7(2), No. 08B3B6F56037 (2015), pp. 211-221.

<sup>4</sup> Asmamaw Bellew is a teacher and an artist who has been contributing to the development of the Awı culture. Artist Asmamaw has a good knowledge of the general socio-cultural aspect of the Awı Agaw people.

3. Alemayehu, E. E. "State and Ethnic Interaction in Mätäkäl and Agäw Meder: The Case of Awi and Gumuz during the Twentieth Century." *MA Thesis in History*, Bahir Dar University, 2012.
4. Alex Minichele et al.. "Interreligious Marriage: Social and Religious Perspectives." *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol-3, Issue.6. (2017), pp. 355-357.
5. Augustyniak, Zuzanna. "Marriages in Ethiopia." *Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures*, No. 43, ISSN. 0860-4649, 2009, pp., 26-30.
6. Awi Culture and Tourism and Bureau, Begoji Lmemadwi Deregetoch Lay Yatederga Desasewi Tenat/ Survey conducted in Haramful traditions, Injibara (2008), p.34.
7. Ayenew Fenta. "A Short History of Awi People." BA Essay in History, Kotäbé Collage of Teachers Education. 1998.
8. Aysheshim Embiale. "Aspects of Cultural History of Awi (1901-2007)." MA Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, 2012.
9. Berihun Mekonnen and Aspen, Harald. "Early Marriage and the Campaign against it in Ethiopia." In *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele. Trondheim, (2009), pp. 101-111.
10. Buhagiar, William. Marriage under the Civil Code of Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Law*. Vol. 1. No. 1, pp.73-75.
11. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th Ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
12. Daniel Kibret. 2007. *YäItiyopya Orthodox Betäkerstian Märäja*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
13. Desalegn Amsalu. "An Ethnographic Introduction to the Kumpal Agaw." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 49. (2016), pp. 50-53.
14. Donald Crummy. "Family and Property amongst the Amhara Nobility." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 24, No. 2. 1983.
15. Gale, Robert Woolbert. "The Peoples of Ethiopia." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 2. 1936.
16. Getachew Senishaw. "Household Access to Farmland and Socioeconomic Status: The Case of Wonqa Qäbäle, Gozamin wäräda (Eastern Gojjam), Amhara Region." MA Thesis in Anthropology, Addis University, 2003.
17. FDRE. 2000. Federal Negarit Gazetta Extra Ordinary Issue No. 1/2000: The Revised Family Code Proclamation No. 213/2000.
18. Haile Gabriel Dagne. "Early Marriage in Northern Ethiopia, Reproductive Health Matters." *An International Journal on sexual and reproductive health and rights*, Vol. 4, ISSN: 0968-8080. 1994.
19. Hoben, Allen. Family, land and class in Northwest Europe and Northern Highland Ethiopia', in H. G. Marcus (ed.), *Proceedings of the First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, 1973. East Lansing, Mich., (1975), pp. 157-170.
20. Innocent Research Centre. Early Marriage Child Spouse, United Nations Child Fund, March 2011.
21. Minale Bezie and Dagne Addisu. "Determinants of early marriage among married women in Injibara town, North West Ethiopia: community-based cross-sectional study." *BMC Women's Health*, (2019), pp. 1-2.
22. Mulualem Atakilit. "Betrothal Practices in the Customary Marriage among the Rural Awi-Agew People: the case of Guangua Woreda." MA Thesis in Social Anthropology, Bahir Dar University, August 2020.
23. Nibret Arega. "A Socio-Cultural History of Awi Agaw people (c.a. 1769-1955)." MA Thesis in History, Haramaya University, 2020.
24. Onedera, J. D. (Ed.). *The Role of Religion in Marriage and Family Counseling*, New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, 2008.
25. Qelamo Mekonnen. Yaawi Behereseb Bahelawi Ese'toch Kefil Getseta/ Impartial Representation of Cultural Aspects of Awi Nationality. Authority for Research and conservation of Cultural Heritages: Addis Ababa, (2010), p.27.
26. Shetu Ayen et al.. "YaAwi Hezeb Bahelawi Getsetawoch/ Cultural Aspects of Awi People," Injibara, 1996.
27. Tadesse Tamrat, "Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of Agaw." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1. (1988), pp. 1-18.
28. Timkehet Teffera. "Wedding Music of the Amhara in Central Highland Ethiopia." Volume 1 Chapter II – Part 1. 2017.

## 7. List of Informants

No	Name	Title	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	Aräga Fäntahun	<i>Ato</i>	78	30 October 2023	Ankeša District	Aräga Fäntahun is born and grew up in <i>Ankeša</i> district. He is knowledgeable in explaining indigenous administrative institutions, marriage, and funeral practices of the Awi Agaw over different periods.
2	Asmamaw Bälläw	<i>Artist</i>	51	12 January 2020	Injibara Town	Asmamaw Bälläw is a teacher and an artist who has been contributing to the development of the Awi culture. Artist Asmamaw has a good knowledge of the general socio-cultural aspect of the Awi Agaw people.
3	Bäläy Hailu	<i>Ato</i>	87	7 November 2024	Zigem District	Belay Hailu is one of the well-known elders in <i>Zegäm</i> district. He has a good knowledge about marriage practice of the Awi Agaw people.
4	Taräkägn Käbäddä	<i>Ato</i>	80	19 February 2020	Dangila District	Taräkägn Käbäddä is a native of Dangela district, particularly, Chara sub- district and explained the marriage practices of the Awi Agaw people. Ato Taräkägn provided good information on the transformation the socio-cultural system of the Awi Agaw people.

### CITATION

Nibret A, & Sendeke A. (2024). Cultural Marriage amongst the Awi Agaw People: Changes and Continuities in the Age of Marriage and Mate Selection Criteria. In *Global Journal of Research in Humanities & Cultural Studies* (Vol. 4, Number 2, pp. 4–10). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10893591>